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### ***What is a Self-Hating Jew?***

***Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer***

Jews who have internalized the claims of anti-Semitism and have gone over to the other side, are said to have become "self-hating Jews." Similarly, hostages who start to show signs of sympathy for their abductors and their causes are said to experience "Stockholm syndrome."

In the case of "self-hating Jews," this might be a useful term if used clinically, but in popular parlance it has been subverted as a pejorative expression by one group of Jews to demonize another group for not conforming to their own version of the party-line either politically or religiously. Liberal-to-left Jews, for example, who support a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, are pilloried as being disloyal to Israel – and obviously self-hating – by the right. Likewise, secular humanistic Jews like myself, who are no small fringe group but comprise half the population, are nonetheless accused of self-hatred for choosing our form of secular, cultural Judaism that doesn't rely on prayers to an intervening supernatural deity.

To be sure, there are people – but not exclusively Jews – who have been so beaten down – in some cases by outsiders, in other cases by members of their own group or family – that they want to reject their heritage, religious affiliation, family connection, and even skin color, if they could. They may speak spitefully and manifest anger in a subconscious effort to push people away. The more generous response, however, is not to take the bait and push back, but to feel the hurt, and to reach out with empathy.

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