



## Catch the Jew!

*Tuvia Tenenbom*

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### **Catch the Jew!** Tuvia Tenenbom

Catch the Jew! recounts the adventures of Tuvia Tenenbom, who wanders around Israel of our time calling himself “Tobi the German.” In the course of numerous interviews Tuvia extracts information, sentiments, hidden theories and delusional visions motivating the miscellany of peoples forming the present-day Holy Land.

Does Palestinian wife number one hate the Jews more than she hates wife number two? Who does a young German tourist hate more, her dead Nazi grandpa or the just-born Jewish baby? Who finances cash-rich NGOs pursuing a Judenrein Israel? Who sets Palestinian olive groves on fire and why? What do you see from a Piper Cherokee above a Bedu camp? Who are the flaming feminists who sacrifice their lives for the rights of polygamists? Whose land is this, anyway?

In the course of his seven-months journey Tobi the German discovers Syrian flags growing inside apples, she-asses who used to be men, five-star refugee camps, flying prophets, cash-loving guardians of the poor, masturbating monks in eternal love of Palestinians, human rights activists in eternal hatred of Jews, cash-rich rabbis without congregations, families growing in cemeteries – among many others.

Catch the Jew!, the most humorous composition on the Middle East to date, is a polyglot spin around a cultural miscegenation in a very small space. However, its never-daunted author finds that with labneh, strudel, olive oil, apple pie, kebab, rugelach, hummus and schnitzel, a happy tummy can bear us through even the most appalling matters. Except the conclusion.

### **Catch the Jew! Details**

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## From Reader Review Catch the Jew! for online ebook

### **K says**

I recently saw an unfamiliar title posted as to-read by one of my goodreads friends, followed by an enthusiastic thank-you from another goodreads member for alerting them to that book's existence. The title of that other book sparked my curiosity, and I read the description and sighed. Yet another book about Israel, billed as non-fiction, reportedly "eye-opening" and revealing the "hidden truth" about Israel. Every time I read a book like this, the "hidden truth" appears to be that Israel is a simple place with blameless victims and evil aggressors. This "truth" is revealed through emotionally manipulative narratives, one-sided interviews, and a distinct lopsidedness when it comes to critical thinking.

I lived in Israel for many years, and the truth is far from simple. A conflict that's as deep and longstanding as that taking place in Israel is clearly not a Disney movie with unequivocal heroes and villains, and I have a hard time trusting any author who would imply otherwise. And yet, the world seems to swallow these stories whole.

Along comes Tuvia Tenenbom, described as a "gonzo journalist," here to share his experiences posing as a German Christian in Israel. Well, talk about shocking hidden truths and a lack of intellectual honesty. Although some of my fellow readers questioned a few of Tuvia's narratives, if even half of this book is true (and it's hard to imagine the whole thing is fabricated; too many people were mentioned by name who could easily call Tuvia out if that were the case), it gives one pause. At the very least, wherever one's sympathies lie, I hope people will read this book and reexamine their gullibility on this topic.

This book was packed full with narratives that were both amusing and disturbing, and I couldn't possibly do the book justice if I tried to recount them all. Tuvia is clearly a bombastic man with a lack of social boundaries, and if you want hidden truths, especially in Israel, you're probably more likely to get them that way than by being polite. All I can say is, this book is easy to read, compelling, and will hopefully make you a more critical consumer of books about the Middle East.

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### **Laila Kanon says**

It's a pity that I didn't read this book before my 4-day trip to Israel recently; otherwise I would have observed and experienced Israel with a better insight because nothing that I've read on Israel (mostly scholarly works) really prepared me with the reality on the ground.

I love this Tuvia fella, I think he's the kind of person that I would easily talk to for hours over food and drink or maybe take a long walk and talk together and I know I would come away with things to think over. I totally get his sense of humor, his curiosity and his audacity to satisfied this curiosity to whatever corners and paths it may leads him. He's an intelligent, articulate man though he tries to dampened it down by playing dumb or a little crazy fat man.

It's actually helps that this book was written with a high dose of humor and sarcasm, but as a matter of fact the subject matters are not easily digestible. I'm appalled by the level and the extent of meddling by the European countries, the EU, and the UN, and the NGOs who are doing nothing but undermining Israel stability as a democratic state and make life harder for the Jews. The concerted effort of anti-antisemitism is

blatant and unrepentant. No wonder peace has no meaning over there. I've heard of the lack of Arab-Israeli loyalty toward Israel and their contempt towards the Jews (be it Muslim or Christian) before; they just grab what they can as their entitlements and devoid of gratitude. Having said there I'm also aware that there's a minority who buck the trend and indeed pledge their allegiance to Israel and in fact served in IDF by choice. Bravo to you. What most appalling to me reserved to the self-hating Jews who live in Israel and doing their utmost best to undermined the survival of their fellow Jews and Israel as a Jewish state. What the hell is wrong with you people? Supposed you got what you wish for, that the Jew becomes the minority in Israel, do you really think the Arab majority would treat the Jew as well as the Jew treats the Arab minority presently? The Arabs in Israel fare better than those in under PA's authority. Here's reality check for the self-hating Jews out there: Iraq, where are your Jews? Iran, where are your Jews? Lebanon, where are your Jews. Syria, where are your Jews? Egypt, where are Jews? Turkey, where are your Jews? God forbid: Israel, where are your Jews?

For Israel to survive as a Jewish state and the only functioning democracy in Middle East for many years to come, the Jews as people need to find unity that binds but this endeavor, I am afraid only the Jews can do it for themselves. For certain, being the fifth column in your own country doesn't help. It's like a band of termites who rotting the house from within.

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### **Shlomo Fisherowitz says**

I've been reading this book for several days and can't put it down. The author has made me laugh, upset me, educated me and insulted me; but all in all has brought an amazing book to the table. The Israel/Arab situation with points of view I haven't seen elsewhere. Truth prevails as he strips away rhetoric and self serving fluff. A definite read, but forgive the occasional bad language...

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### **Gideon says**

Must read expose focused on European attempts to undermine the state of Israel. Tenenbom is hilarious and simply talks to a lot of people never hiding that he's an author but at times pretending to be German and he gets quite the interesting results. He talks to leftists and rightists, Jews, Muslim, Christians, Arabs, and Druse. The result is a detailed fascinating look at Israeli society as well as the people who seek to destroy it.

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### **Rebecca says**

It's wildly popular to be anti-Israel these days and it was so refreshing to read something that pushed back against that. Tuvia tries to show what's really going on behind the scenes in Israel and Palestine and it was easy to get through despite the heavy topics at hand. Rarely do I read a book that I want to buy for other people, but this really feels like a book that everyone should read.

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### **Steve says**

What a strange book/experience/travelogue/political commentary/indictment....

Imagine your favorite Bill Bryson (or Tim Moore) book about walking (or traveling) in a familiar land, randomly meeting people, and chronicling unusual stories. But, no, that's not the right place to start, because Bryson and Moore are masters of self-deprecation, relentlessly poking fun at themselves, their surroundings, and their experiences. It's all about the laugh, and it's great fun. And, sure, there are a handful of yucks here, but this is too close to investigative journalism, too political, and - far more importantly - too sad, if not pathetic, to sustain any semblance of humor. Here the topic is Israel, Palestine, Antisemitism, and the bizarre forces percolating beneath some (but by no means all) of the tension in the Middle East.

It's a modern, unique, and, in some ways, refreshing take on the unlikelihood of achieving peace and resolving any number of ongoing conflicts between Israel, Jews, Palestine, and the Arab community. But it's much more. And - and this may be the most compelling aspect of the book - it appears to conclude at a very different place from where it began. My sense - and I concede my perspective may not be authoritative - was that the book began as an ex-pat/ex-insider's travelogue of his journey to where was once home but is no more. By the end, however, it read like (just another) expose of long-simmering, intractable, perverse, and, sadly inexplicable, elitist European antisemitism.

I don't expect that Tenebom's book is going to change anyone's opinion. The stereotypical self-hating Jew/Israeli, no doubt, is immune to this. I doubt that Arabs, generally, Palestinians, specifically, or anti-Israeli-inclined (or ardently antisemitic) Europeans will be reading the book. And I'm guessing that, no matter how many examples Tenebom articulates of Arabs/Palestinians, having been educated (at no charge) at Israel's universities, spewing venom at their "occupiers," while European-supported Arab/Muslim institutions (from entire cities to holy sites) exclude and suppress Jews will change anyone's minds. The positions - and the hatred - runs too deep....

Tenebom's style of reporting or journalism is somewhere between unconventional, unethical (in that he consistently misrepresents his status, among other things), and anecdotal to meet any professional standards, but that's not his concern. As a result, however, it's hard to take him seriously, which is a shame, because, by the end, in his bizarre way, he assembles a case - of European, and particularly, German, funding and fueling of not only antisemitism, but strange and irrational pro-Palestinian priorities and misinformation - that's as depressing as it is compelling.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that, assuming he's sane, Tenebom has guts. Part of me thinks the book should be sold with a bright orange sticker that reads: *Kids, don't try this at home!* It's quite an undertaking/enterprise/project, but it's just too depressing for me to recommend without hesitation....

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## David Miller says

I prefer my 'serious' books to be serious in tone (for instance one of my major dislikes about 'Inconvenient Indian' was the author's sarcasm and glibness) and this book suffers from a lot of the same smugness that I disliked in that book. Aside from that I found this book to be truly eye-opening- which I believe is saying something about a book about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict considering how much time I have spent living in Israel and reading various books on the subject. Tuvia/Toby/Abu Ali is a unique guide to the messed up world of Israel circa 2013 since he seems to be a German citizen with German press credentials and at the same time speaks both Hebrew and Arabic. Combining this with a willingness (bravery? stupidity?) to go places most Jews in Israel wouldn't dare go he is able to provide firsthand accounts of a host of interesting things. For the experienced observer of Israel and its people and politics there are no major surprises but the book is definitely a very good read- especially in the surgical way he dissects the hypocrisy

and barely-concealed anti-semitism of the various NGOs operating in Israel- most of which are supported by European countries. Like I said- no real surprises here- but the book does point a powerful 'J'accuse' at Europe and their proxies working inside of Israel.

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## Yulie says

probably greatest book i've read in a while

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## Trish says

Tenenbom is Jewish, Israeli in fact, and though he has “carried no flag for any country,” at the end of this book he finds himself holding a Palestinian flag in a group of stone-throwing demonstrators in Bil’in, being filmed by European television and documentary crews. It hadn’t been Tenenbom’s idea to be a part of the show, but since traveling around Israel for some months claiming he was Abu Ali the German or Tobi the German journalist, he’d been invited to this celebration of Palestinian Independence Day, all staged for the benefit of the cameras and their international audience. In Tenenbom’s view, finding himself in this position was the height of absurdity.

Tenenbom went to Israel in 2013 at the request of his publisher. His earlier book, *I Sleep in Hitler's Room: An American Jew Visits Germany*, about a six-month walking tour of Germany, appears to be a critique of European attitudes towards Jewishness, and became an international bestseller. Tenenbom had been born ultra-Orthodox in Israel from a long line of European rabbis. He was groomed to follow that path himself until, as a young man, he moved to the United States and to pursue higher degrees in mathematics and literature. For thirty-three years he pursued a career as journalist and columnist for media outlets in the U.S. and Germany, and as playwright in the Jewish Theatre of New York, which he founded and manages with his wife Isi. His role as journalist, playwright, and failed rabbi gave him the perfect platform to ask probing questions about the Israeli/Palestinian situation.

His playful yet incisive questioning and manner allowed him to re-state and re-frame arguments in which sides have been drawn for some time, giving us another angle from which to view the action. This book, about his several-month stay in Israel in 2013-14, begins light-heartedly enough, laughing along with the little deceptions of both sides in the Israel/Palestinian debate, expressing a sense of camaraderie, appetite, and deep joy at spending time again in the Middle East.

The longer he stays, however, the more Tenenbom sees traps for the Jewish state in the language Israelis and Palestinians use when describing the actions and positions of each side. There is a huge under-informed army of NGOs and Christian religious organizations that have developed very effective propaganda tools to support the Palestinian cause at the expense of the Jewish state. Tenenbom can see it is big business and grows more distressed when Jewish newspapermen like Gideon Levy writing for *Haaretz* do not ask better, more thorough questions and instead seems to accept the self-flagellating viewpoint that Israelis are racist.

By the end of the volume Tenenbom is losing his sense of humor about Jews he calls “self-hating,” who are not pressing hard enough in their self-examination about what is expected of them, or are not keeping their minds nimble and open to the realities of the situation. The Palestinians may be milking the “conflict” for all it’s worth, but some of the truly needy are being overlooked in the rush to help the more polished actors. *Pay attention* we can hear him say in subtext. Stay skeptical.

Tenenbom is very persuasive, and very likable: he has an earthy, warm, and intimate way of pointing to our similarities rather than our differences. It is when he meets a uncompromising right-wing settler who insists on his right to burn the Palestinian olive trees because he is "at war" that Tenenbom's attitude receives its most damning blow. Tenenbom responds that the man sounds like a Goy, like any other non-Jewish farmer he'd known, not like a normal Jew.

"Personally, I hardly get to meet conviction-driven Jews, say-what-I-think Jews, farming Jews, if-you-slap-me-on-one-cheek-I'll-slap-you-on-both-cheeks Jews. The Jews I know are neurotic Jews, weak Jews, self-hating Jews, hate-filled-narcissist Jews, accept-every-blame Jews, bowing to all non-Jews Jews, ever guilt-ridden Jews, ugly-looking Jews, big-nosed and hunch-backed Jews, cold Jews, brainy Jews, yapping Jews, and here-are-both-my-cheeks-and-you-can-slap-them-both Jews.

To me, the biggest proof that Jesus was Jewish is this: Who else, but a Jew, could come up with this statement: 'If someone strikes you on the cheek, offer him the other one as well?'"

If your convictions haven't been shaken up in awhile, Tenenbom stands ready to help out. He is funny, and those who appreciate self-deprecation will have an easier time of it. His extra layer of thoughtfulness rearranges the Middle East so that we must go back through our understanding and look again, do more work on examining how the ground game has changed since the last time we looked. At the end we may not agree that Europeans, Americans and Palestinians can exhibit anti-Semitism commonly and regularly, but he will have us looking closely, to make sure. What he *is* saying is that Jews are really just like anyone else—no better but certainly no worse—and any attempt to categorize them or assign a 'national character' is specious.

This enormously interesting book makes immoderate readers of us. Tenenbom is someone we'd like to encounter again. He makes us think, he makes us laugh, and he seems a perfectly ethical sort. His book is divided into chapters called "gates." Those familiar with the Torah will know of the Fifty Gates of Wisdom or the Fifty Gates of Understanding. Well, Tenenbom has fifty-five gates, but the idea is the same: "Being worthy of receiving prophecy requires character improvement." The thing is, Tenenbom is not optimistic about Israel's longevity in the world. Poor leadership, perhaps, and I agree.

Tenenbom has written a new book on travels around the United States in the lead up to the last election, called *The Lies They Tell*, just published March 2017.

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## **Irene Adam says**

I received an advance review copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. This book contains the author's observations and conversations with politicians, religious leaders, human rights workers, soldiers, and the ordinary people living in the area during his journey over a period of several months throughout Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. I enjoyed the author's sense of humor and satire. He writes very honestly about what he sees and hears. According to the author racism and hypocrisy are extreme and rampant on all sides throughout this area. Everyone has a different agenda. I got the feeling that everything was about money. Per the author's observations some of the news that we receive from this area is inaccurate, and at times the violence is staged. I found this book to be very revealing and a book that everyone should read.

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### **Ronit Gagin says**

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### **Doris Jean says**

Definitely five stars. This is an amazing book. It rings with bold, shocking truths free of propaganda and it is sprinkled with humor and irony and a bit of sarcasm. I now want to read all of Tenenbom's books, he seems highly intelligent and trustworthy.

I wish the world could read this one. This is a most unusual book. I loved it, and I loved the unbiased information and the interesting facts I learned, like "Bethlehem" means "house of bread", "bet" is "house" and "lechem" is "bread" in Hebrew. This book is truly a "good read" about the Holy Land.

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### **Benjamin says**

I hate hasbara and pro-Israel literature, really. I don't think people should excuse themselves for being who they are, and mostly hasbara media/literature is about this, about trying to downplay your desires, about trying to be political correct or fit in.

Catch the Jew! is the opposite of this. It's funny, sincere, sad and tragic.

I spent an awful lot of time in Israel and my impressions were exactly the same: the perceptions people outside Israel have of it- for a series of external and internal interests- is distorted to the point of no resemblance with the truth.

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### **Toby Stupp says**

I wanted to hate the book and personally I don't think I am crazy about the author but he holds up a harsh picture and it makes me uncomfortable.

He is clear and honest and doesn't allow you to look away. He insists that the things we accept because ... (no good reason) , is silly and enough is enough.

He writes well, is very interesting. He is a former intellectual, which is funny since he comes from an unstated position, simply asking questions and waiting for answers which he seldomly gets.

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### **Moritz says**

Funny, witty, amazingly well researched and written, exposing bias and inconsistencies in dealing with the 'Israeli issue'. The best book ever written on the subject. I was laughing a lot reading it, although sometimes through tears.

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