



Tucker Carlson, Chabad, and the Accidental Badge of Honor

Why conspiracy narratives always target the most visible Jews

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Uncompressed Thinking

If you are looking for the secret lever that moves world history, blaming the Jews has always been the fastest way to find one.

Something interesting happens whenever the world becomes politically unstable. People begin searching for hidden forces behind complicated events. Wars, crises, economic shocks — surely someone must be secretly pulling the strings.

And sooner or later, in almost every era, someone discovers that the explanation is surprisingly simple. The Jews are responsible.

Recently Tucker Carlson decided to join this long historical tradition, suggesting that the Lubavitch-Chabad movement is somehow helping to push the United States toward war with Iran. It is a remarkable theory.

Not because it reveals anything about Chabad — but because it reveals something very familiar about how conspiracy narratives are constructed.

And if one looks carefully at Tucker’s choice of target, the irony becomes even more interesting. Because if you were determined to invent a global Jewish conspiracy, you could hardly have chosen a more visible — or more misunderstood — movement.

Tucker Carlson is once again the talk of the town. The discussion ranges from antisemitism in America and abroad to the war in Gaza, the looming confrontation with Iran, and the broader instability of the Middle East. In that sense Tucker is hardly unique — the global political conversation today is loud, emotional, and often confused.

What is more interesting, however, is how Tucker has repositioned himself inside that conversation.

Tucker began his media career firmly planted in the conservative camp, strongly aligned with the American right and, by extension, with the MAGA movement. For years he was seen as one of its most prominent voices. Yet over time his trajectory began to drift. The criticism he directed at what he called the “ultra-right” increasingly resembled the rhetoric of the ultra-left — a curious phenomenon that

happens more often than people like to admit. Political horseshoe theory occasionally proves to be less of a metaphor and more of a description.

Eventually the drift became large enough that Donald Trump himself publicly declared a complete break between his MAGA movement and Tucker.

The immediate trigger for that rupture was Tucker's recent claim that the Lubavitch-Chabad movement is somehow responsible for Israel convincing the United States to start a war against Iran. That is a serious accusation, even if it was delivered in the tone of commentary rather than formal analysis.

Tucker built this argument around Chabad's foundational belief in the eventual rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the coming of Moshiakh. In Tucker's telling, this theological idea somehow transforms into a geopolitical engine capable of pushing the United States toward war.

Army of Hashem.

He also pointed to something he clearly found alarming: the Chabad youth movement known as the Army of Hashem.

Now, to anyone even modestly familiar with Jewish religious life, the Army of Hashem is simply a children's educational program. Its goal is not military training but something much more modest — encouraging children to do good deeds, study Torah, and develop pride in their Jewish identity. Children collect "mitzvah points," attend gatherings, sing songs, and occasionally wear small shoulder badges identifying themselves as members of the Army of Hashem.

In other words, it is an army whose principal weapons consist of charity, prayer, and homework.

But when viewed through the lens of conspiracy thinking, even something as innocent as that can suddenly begin to look suspicious. A youth movement. Badges. The word "army." A global Jewish organization speaking about redemption and Moshiakh.

From there it does not take much imagination to transform a children's educational program into something far more ominous.

Once that interpretive leap is made, the rest of the theory almost writes itself. A worldwide Jewish movement with a messianic vocabulary and visible symbols of belonging can easily be repackaged as a shadowy force shaping world events.

And just like that, the Army of Hashem — which in reality organizes children to help elderly neighbors, light Shabbat candles, and perform acts of kindness — becomes, in the imagination of critics, something resembling a geopolitical command structure.

The transformation is impressive.

And entirely fictional.

Whenever Jewish communities become highly visible in a particular sphere — finance in nineteenth-century Europe, intellectual life in early twentieth-century universities, or national politics in the modern State of Israel — conspiracy narratives quickly follow. Visibility invites imagination. A movement that

operates quietly inside its own community rarely attracts such theories. But a movement that appears everywhere — in cities across continents, running schools, organizing public events, speaking openly about its beliefs — becomes a far more convenient canvas onto which global anxieties can be projected.

Seen in that light, Tucker's focus on Chabad is not surprising at all.

From there it becomes only a short step to the old and familiar conclusion: Jews are secretly driving the machinery of world events.

And just like that, Tucker stepped firmly into territory that history recognizes very well — the territory of antisemitic conspiracy narratives.

But at this point I want to pause and ask a slightly different question.

Why Chabad?

There are many Jewish movements in the world — Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, secular cultural organizations, political organizations, educational institutions, charitable foundations. If one were determined to construct a theory about Jewish influence on global events, there would be many possible targets.

Yet Tucker selected Chabad.

Why?

To understand that choice, it is useful to compare Chabad with another highly respected and successful Orthodox Jewish movement: **Young Israel**.

Both movements operate within the framework of Orthodox Judaism. Both are deeply rooted in Jewish law, tradition, and religious life. Both believe in Moshiakh and the eventual redemption of the Jewish people — because that belief is woven into the fabric of Jewish theology itself.

But the two movements express those ideas very differently.

Young Israel functions primarily as a federation of synagogues and community institutions. Its focus is local. It builds religious communities, supports synagogue life, organizes prayer services, teaches Torah, and strengthens Jewish families. Its influence is meaningful but largely contained within the Jewish community itself.

Chabad, by contrast, operates according to a radically different philosophy.

Chabad is outward-facing.

Its emissaries — the famous **shluchim** — are stationed all over the world. They build Jewish centers in cities that previously had little or no organized Jewish life. They run schools, universities programs, holiday celebrations, humanitarian initiatives, disaster relief operations, and community centers. They welcome Jews regardless of their level of religious observance and often without asking a single question about background.

In modern language one might call this approach **radical inclusiveness**.

To Chabad, every Jew matters. Every Jew is reachable. Every Jew is part of the same story.

That philosophy naturally produces something Young Israel does not attempt to create: a **global network**.

But visibility always carries a price.

A quiet synagogue in a suburban neighborhood rarely becomes the center of international conspiracy theories. But a worldwide movement with thousands of emissaries operating across six continents inevitably becomes more visible — and therefore easier to imagine as something much larger than it actually is.

And mythology, once created, rarely checks the facts.

From Tucker's perspective, Chabad therefore becomes the perfect target. Young Israel is too local, too quiet, too internally focused to serve as a convincing villain in a global narrative. But Chabad — with its messianic language, its global outreach, its Army of Hashem youth movement, and its unmistakable presence in cities around the world — fits the storyline much better.

Once the story requires a Jewish actor capable of shaping world events, Chabad becomes the convenient candidate.

In reality, of course, the idea that Chabad could manipulate American foreign policy or push the United States toward war is absurd. The movement has no political command structure, no geopolitical strategy, and no mechanism for directing the decisions of sovereign governments.

What it does have is something else entirely.

It has an unusual level of confidence in Jewish continuity.

It believes that Jewish life should not retreat into private spaces or defensive silence. It believes that Jewish tradition should be visible, joyful, and active in the public sphere.

It believes that Jewish education should reach every corner of the world where Jews live.

And yes, it believes that history is moving toward redemption.

For critics who are already predisposed to see hidden forces behind world events, that combination can look suspiciously like ambition.

But from the inside it looks very different.

It looks like resilience.

For someone like myself who appreciates the Chabad philosophy — its readiness to help people during crises, its presence during natural disasters, its outreach to Jews who might otherwise remain disconnected from their heritage — Tucker's choice of target is almost ironic.

If one must be accused of global influence, one could certainly do worse than to be associated with a movement dedicated to hospitality, education, and communal responsibility.

In that sense Tucker's decision to single out Chabad unintentionally reveals something interesting.

He did not choose a marginal Jewish organization. He did not choose a quiet synagogue network. He chose the movement that represents one of the most visible expressions of Jewish vitality in the modern world.

And that, perhaps, explains the title of this essay.

When critics searching for villains single out a movement whose primary activities consist of teaching children, welcoming travelers, and helping communities survive crises, the accusation tells us more about the critic than about the movement.

So if Tucker believes that Chabad represents a movement powerful enough to bend the direction of world events, he has unintentionally paid it a remarkable compliment.

He did not accuse a small synagogue somewhere in a quiet suburb. He did not accuse a minor Jewish organization few people have heard of. He singled out a movement whose entire purpose is to make Jewish life visible, confident, and impossible to ignore.

And if that visibility occasionally provokes suspicion, conspiracy theories, or even accusations of global influence, it may simply be the price of refusing to disappear quietly from history.

In that case, Tucker's accusation says far less about Chabad than it does about the old and persistent human habit of searching for hidden forces behind complicated events.

But if someone insists on turning Chabad into a symbol of Jewish presence in the world, then perhaps the appropriate response is not outrage.

Perhaps the appropriate response is a small smile — and the quiet acceptance of what might indeed be considered a **badge of honor**.