



Transcript - Hadassah Magazine Presents: Searching for Solutions With Dara Horn

[00:00:00] **Dara Horn:** I think often we make this mistake of saying, "Oh, antisemitism is this mutating virus." I really hate that language. It's not mutating. It's exactly the same for thousands of years. Jews are destroying what you value the most. It's the same in 40 CE in Alexandria in Egypt. It's the same at the Durban Conference in 2001 in South Africa.

It's the same. Jews are destroying what you value the most. The only thing that's changing in there is what you value the most

[00:00:31] **Lisa Hostein :** Hello and welcome to Hadassah Magazine Presents, a podcast for those who love *Hadassah Magazine* and want more, and for those who have never heard of the magazine and are looking for stimulating conversations with acclaimed Jewish authors, thinkers, celebrities, and culinary stars. I'm your host, Lisa Hostein, the executive editor of *Hadassah Magazine*.

I'm honored to be in conversation today with Dara Horn, whose work continues to impact our thinking about the times we are living in. Her new book, *The Final Solution to the Jewish Question: A Love Story for the Living*, is a wide-ranging manifesto that explores how we got to this place where anti-Semitism is so rampant and what might be done to begin to alter its course.

In addition to her latest work, Dara is the award-winning author of seven other books, including five novels and the nonfiction work she is best known for, *People Love Dead Jews: Reports from a Haunted Present*. Named one of Granta Magazine's Best Young American Novelists, she is the recipient of three National Jewish Book Awards, among other honors.

Her books have been selected as *New York Times* Notable Books, *Booklist's* 25 Best Books of the Decade, and *San Francisco Chronicle's* Best Books of the Year. And they've been translated into 13 languages. Her nonfiction work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *Smithsonian*, *Tablet*, *The Jewish Review of Books*, and *Hadassah Magazine*, among many other places.

She is also the creator of the history podcast, *Adventures with Dead Jews*. She has taught Jewish literature at Harvard, Sarah Lawrence College, and Yeshiva University, and she lives in New Jersey with her husband and four children. Dara, welcome. It's such a pleasure to have you back at Hadassah Magazine Presents, and you are our inaugural guest at this new recording studio at Hadassah headquarters in Manhattan.

So really a special welcome.

[00:02:36] **Dara Horn:** Thank you, and it's a *Shehecheyanu* moment.

[00:02:38] **Lisa Hostein :** It is a *Shehecheyanu* moment. Should we say it? You have a special place in your heart for *Hadassah Magazine* because you were first published in *Hadassah Magazine* when you were just a child. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

[00:02:57] **Dara Horn:** Yes, this is actually true. The first article I ever published in my life was in *Hadassah Magazine*. I was in eighth grade. I wrote a piece for Hadassah. My family had taken a trip to Spain. This was in 1992, so now you know how old I am. I was 14 years old, in eighth grade in, in 1992.

This was 500 years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and the piece was about exploring these Jewish historical sites in Spain, which is funny because now this is so much of what I think about is the way that Jewish history and memory are used. The subtitle of that piece was, "The Jews in Spain Are Mainly on the Plane Back to Newark Airport."

That was a piece I wrote in eighth grade, and this is tribute to Hadassah's ability to be open to new talent, honestly, because I had no connection with the magazine. I had no connection with the organization. I always kept these travel journals when my family would travel and- I had shared my travel journal of our trip with my mother, and my mother said, "Oh, you should send this in to *Hadassah Magazine*," just because she was a fan of the magazine.

And we all were quite astounded to get a phone call from the editor-in-chief, Alan Tigay, a couple weeks later asking if he could publish this, and it was very, very strange. It truly was slush pile. And then I wrote another piece for *Hadassah Magazine* a year later. I was 15, and it was about March of the Living.

So this is also very much what became my work as an adult writer. That piece actually was nominated for a National Magazine Award. That was the first time that a Jewish publication was nominated for the top award in the magazine industry. I was the youngest person ever nominated in the history of the award.

So that was the beginning of my publishing career. Full credit to Hadassah Magazine picking me out of the slush pile.

[00:04:33] **Lisa Hostein** : That is so amazing. It's also an amazing story because I didn't realize that your earlier thoughts in writing were focused on these issues that you came back to because I know you went into literature for many years-
Yes

and I thought you kind of just came to this. So we'll 100% take credit for launching your career. Yes. And it's something that we're very proud of, and we're so happy that you're here. So this new book of yours, *The Final Solution to the Jewish Question: A Love Story for the Living*, a provocative title, right?

I mean, there's so much-

[00:05:03] **Dara Horn**: I mean, it's a beach read.

[00:05:03] **Lisa Hostein** : It is, yeah, a beach read for sure. There's so much in there. It's a must read for anybody who cares about these issues spanning from ancient Jewish history to the definition of Jewish peoplehood, which we will get to 'cause you really come up with a good one that I think everybody's quoting now, to the threats from AI.

There's so much in there. I think you said in a recent interview your goal is to, quote, "Make people uncomfortable and to jolt them out of the assumptions that they make." So first I wanna know, I'm assuming that the title idea was yours.

[00:05:34] **Dara Horn**: Yes.

[00:05:34] **Lisa Hostein** : And I wanna know whether the publishers gave you any pushback, and more importantly, who is it that you're trying to make uncomfortable?

[00:05:41] **Dara Horn**: This book is published by Simon & Schuster, and my editor there completely understood why this was the right title for this book. She went to bat for me with the rest of the company, dealing with a lot of nerves from the sales staff and people like that who are like, "How am I gonna present this to my account at Barnes & Noble?"

You know, to her credit, she really understood how important this is. In terms of who I wanna make uncomfortable, I mean, the answer is everyone. Obviously, this is a phrase that immediately resonates with the Jewish audience. Yes, there have been Jewish readers who have been upset about this, but it's also resonant with a larger audience.

There's been an absolute misunderstanding of the dumpster fire that American Jews have been living in for the last three years. That misunderstanding is with the broader public, and it is also within the Jewish community as well, and I am upending a lot of the assumptions that people in the Jewish community and beyond have been making about this problem.

[00:06:37] **Lisa Hostein** : In *People Love Dead Jews* you diagnose the problem. People are more interested in venerating and memorializing dead Jews rather than celebrating living Jews. And in this book you try to present some solutions. So what evolved in your thinking between those two books that led to this publication?

[00:06:56] **Dara Horn**: *People Love Dead Jews*, which came out the end of twenty twenty-one- As you said that the take-home from that book was, "Oh, people venerate dead Jews more than living ones," it's actually a little bit sharper than that.

The real point of that book is that the non-Jewish world only finds Jews acceptable when Jews have no power, whether that means they are politically impotent or dead. So that book was really exposing that dynamic. I wrote that book as an intellectual exploration of this issue. It was something I had seen in my scholarship, in my work as a journalist, as a travel writer.

I didn't even really even think about it as a book about antisemitism. I really saw it as a book about this sort of weird intellectual problem. What happened after that book came out, it was like a floodgate opened. I was suddenly inundated

with Jewish readers telling me their own horror stories about antisemitism, their own personal contemporary experiences, and asking me for help.

I had no idea what to do about this. The next book I had lined up to publish was literally a graphic novel about a talking goat.

[00:07:56] **Lisa Hostein** : We talked about that one too.

[00:07:57] **Dara Horn**: Yes, we did. Yes. That was *One Little Goat: A Passover Catastrophe*. It's a book for children that I published in 2025. That was the next book I was planning to publish.

At that point, I was already thinking about it and starting to work with an illustrator. But suddenly I was just inundated with this stuff, and I had not realized the extent of this problem. I had not realized it And what happened was I suddenly had people asking for help, and it was true for my non-Jewish readers also.

I had made a mistake with that book. I didn't realize that when you write a nonfiction book about a problem, people expect you to solve the problem at the end of the book. And so I had all my readers asking me, "What's your solution to this problem?" And this was my tasteless response was, "Do you really want me to give you the final solution to the Jewish question?"

After October 7th, this became institutionalized. For example, a couple weeks after October 7th, I was recruited to participate in the antisemitism advisory group to the now former president of Harvard. She didn't take a whole lot of our advice. I wound up as a witness in the congressional investigation of Harvard.

That was one of many sectors where people were coming to me with these institutionalized problems. I had people coming to me from the tech sector talking about data poisoning plots to poison AI sources with antisemitic propaganda, bringing me all of the evidence. I had people coming to me from psychology, from teachers unions, journalist unions.

I mean, this was sort of this insanity that, like, all these people were coming to me asking for me to solve this problem for them. I'm like, "Again, my last book was about a talking goat. Like, there's gotta be someone better than me to do this." But then I started really thinking about what could we be doing differently.

And because I had all this exposure to all of these different sectors because all of these people were coming to me, I could really see the shape of the problem in a way that no one else could. Because, I mean, it's sort of like that story about blind people who are examining an elephant, right? And one person thinks that they touch the ear and they think it's a fan, and one person touches the trunk and they think it's a hose.

And it was like that. It was like all these people from different sectors coming to me describing the part that they saw, and I'm the one who can see the elephant because of that. Mm-hmm. And so suddenly I'm in this position where I'm like, "Wait a minute It's really clear all of the things we could be doing that we're not doing to solve this problem.

Like, it actually is solvable. It actually is solvable. Mm-hmm. And so then I embarked on this project to really address this problem for the American public and for the Jewish community as well.

[00:10:18] **Lisa Hostein** : Mm-hmm. And to address the elephant in the room, I guess you would say- Absolutely. Yes ... to continue your metaphor there.

Yes. So I wanna get to the heart really of your argument. You write, and this was actually in the excerpt that we also had from your book in Hadassah Magazine- Yes ... "Antisemitism, I have come to understand, isn't primarily a bigotry or bias. It is a lie told by people who wanna gain or maintain power. That big lie is always the same: Jews are destroying whatever a given society values the most.

That big lie fools people into thinking they are standing up to their ideals while they are actually just pushing Jews out of public life. Today, the big lie is winning." I want you to unpack that. First, what changed to lead you to believe that antisemitism is not just this ancient Jew hatred that we've always said was just the worst and continued for millennia?

What evolved in your thinking to lead you to believe that it was really about power and maintaining power?

[00:11:16] **Dara Horn**: Seeing the evidence, it was, like, so blindingly obvious. Like, what happened at the universities is a great example of this. This was not an organic student movement where students all sort of just came to this conclusion and the movement was building strength.

No, they literally had a toolkit that was given to them, published on October 7th, in some cases even before the attacks were public. That's the most amazing thing is this toolkit with the paragliders and everything before people even saw the paragliders. It was so transparent. This was a 30-year-long plot.

There's an FBI wiretap from 1993 of Hamas operatives in meeting in a hotel in Philadelphia, so Hamas' operations in the United States. And in that wiretap, they talk about how their goal is to take over the universities because those are the pipelines to American leadership, and they even say in that wiretap, "If we're going to do this successfully, we can't raise an Islamic flag.

We can't be barbaric talking." They even use that language. They say, "Instead, we need to talk about justice. That's the language we need to use to capture these universities." And they did it. Like, this is a plan. There's billions and billions of dollars behind it. It's not subtle. I don't know why we're pretending that this is some sort of organic movement of people rising up.

No, this is a, a movement that's orchestrated by billions of dollars from tyrannical regimes, billions of dollars from tyrannical regimes. And the reality is that's always what antisemitism has been. It's not about, like, you know, someone has hate in their heart. It's about the public being manipulated.

When I talk about the lie of antisemitism, this to me is also very important. I think often we make this mistake of saying, "Oh, antisemitism is this mutating virus." I really hate that language First of all, it's not mutating. It's exactly the same for thousands of years. Jews are destroying what you value the most.

It's the same in 40 CE in Alexandria in Egypt. It's the same at the Durban Conference in 2001 in South Africa. It's the same. Jews are destroying what you value the most. The only thing that's changing in there is what you value the most. That's the same, and also I hate the language of it's a virus, because when there's a virus, that is like an organic process, force majeure, no one's benefiting from it.

This is a lie that someone is telling and is benefiting from. Why would you adopt this language and this understanding that absolves everybody of responsibility? This isn't an organic thing. This is not the weather. This isn't force majeure. This is a tool of tyranny that we've seen for thousands of years, so why are we pretending that it's something else?

And I think also this language of, oh, it's hate or something like that also I think is not helpful in fighting it because it's a totally different toolkit that you use to

fight hate versus fighting a lie. If you're fighting against hate, you're using tools like empathy, get to know each other as human beings, you know, we need to, like, have dinner together.

And those things are important. I wanna be clear, I'm not making an argument against empathy. But those tools are not useful when you're fighting a lie that people have fallen for. If you're fighting a lie that people have fallen for, what you need to do is expose the lie. And also, what that means is that the people who have fallen for this lie, they are not the ones who are at fault.

That also changes how you fight back against this, because to sit around and accuse people who have fallen for this BS of like, "Oh, you're a hateful person. Oh, you're, you know, an anti-Semite," like, that only makes those people defensive. Those people are the victims of this lie.

[00:14:47] **Lisa Hostein** : So let's talk a little bit about that because it does raise the question as how this trickles down to the ordinary offenders, right? The ones who aren't necessarily seeking to gain power or maintain power, but yet engage in offensive comments, vandalizing institutions, and even violent acts against Jews. So where is the connection between those involved with this plot and the billions of dollars that support it, and the ordinary people who are engaging in all kinds of crap right now?

[00:15:18] **Dara Horn**: The engaging in all kinds of crap right now piece, by the way, is how you know that this is orchestrated by tyrannical regimes and that this is a tyrannical ideology.

[00:15:27] **Lisa Hostein** : How?

[00:15:28] **Dara Horn**: Because this movement, this is an eliminationist hate campaign whose purpose is to push Jews out of public life. And we have to sit here and waste all this time being like, "Oh, isn't there a slippery slope between criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism?"

It's like, no. These are two completely unrelated things. One is discussion about a country and its policies, and another is driving a truck full of explosives into a Jewish preschool. These two things have no connection to each other. One is a conversation about people who care about the future, and the other is an orchestrated eliminationist hate movement that relies on criminal activity to function.

Here's what I mean by that. The movement is what the movement does. Here's what the movement does: harassment, intimidation, as you say, vandalism, assault, stalking. These are things that are against the law. Also discrimination. I'm gonna give an example of this I recently spoke in Louisville, Kentucky, and I heard from people in the community there that over the summer, the Pride Parade in Louisville, Kentucky, had an Israeli DJ who was scheduled and contracted to participate in the Pride Parade, and the people organizing this Pride Parade started receiving 10 million emails, phone calls.

People were calling their employers. This was like, you know, protests, all this kind of stuff, to get this Israeli DJ out of their Pride Parade. The people organizing this Pride Parade, they didn't know what hit them. They truly didn't know what hit them. They didn't-

[00:16:55] **Lisa Hostein** : Which is interesting because this has been happening for three or four years already. Specifically in Pride Parades, right?

[00:17:00] **Dara Horn**: Okay, but, like, whether they knew what hit them or didn't, they rolled over. They rolled over. It was easier for them, whether they knew what hit them or they didn't, and were just like, "Wow, it seems like people in the community really care about this issue."

Maybe that's what they thought, or maybe it didn't matter because this movement will not stop until it achieves its goal. They will cross every line. It's criminal harassment and stalking, right? I mean, to send somebody nine million emails, call them nine million times. These are not elected officials.

These are private citizens who are part of an organization. Harassment, harassment, harassment. That's what it relies on until people roll over. And what's so interesting is what was the end result of this? They fired their Israeli DJ. And guess what? That's against federal civil rights legislation. Guess what?

It is against American law to discriminate in employment based on someone's national origin. That's how you know that this movement is part of tyrannical regime.

[00:17:53] **Lisa Hostein** : Mm-hmm.

[00:17:54] **Dara Horn**: Because not one dissenter is allowed. Not one. Not one. There's no diversity of opinion within the movement. Mm. Right? If you think of other organic social movements- Mm-hmm

in the past, right? Like if you went to an anti-Vietnam War protest more than 50 years ago, there's lots of different slogans. There's maybe some slogans the movement's adopted as its thing, make love not war, whatever, but if you went to one of those protests, people are bringing their own signs with their own slogans.

These protests, if you show up with your own sign, they will throw you out. They will throw you out. And we of course now also know that these protesters are paid. That has also now been- Mm-hmm ... exposed and very obvious. Mm-hmm. There's a something called Network Contagion Research Institute. This is a media lab that studies billions of online postings and things like that and traces them to their origins.

Network Contagion Research Institute is based at Rutgers. I think they also have one at University of Maryland, and there's maybe one or two other locations, but it's an academic institute. And they were able to trace these protests back to, like, five 501(c)(3)'s. They were all financed by someone named Neville Roy Singham, a person who essentially is an asset of the Chinese government.

He had sold his company to the Chinese government. He's now basically a mouthpiece for the Chinese government. I mean, it's like, the... It's so transparent. There's no organic anything about this.

[00:19:16] **Ad:** Did you know certain genetic variants linked to Parkinson's disease are more common among people of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry? Researchers at the Michael J. Fox Foundation are studying genetics to help advance more targeted treatments. Eligible participants can take a free at home genetic test and receive their results online.

Together, we can help shape a better future for families impacted by Parkinson's. If you're Ashkenazi Jewish and living with Parkinson's, learn more about genetic testing at michaeljfox.org/jewishheritage. That's michaeljfox.org/jewishheritage.

Lisa Hostein : You mentioned, though, a little bit about online and social media. So, I mean, it seems to me that maybe one of the links, and again, kind of back to those ordinary offenders, like you have an example in your book of some guy in the supermarket with his son, and somebody said something obnoxious about, you know, we don't want that Jewish whatever. That person probably is not being directly influenced by this network, right?

[00:20:23] **Lisa Hostein:** but

[00:20:24] **Dara Horn:** Oh, they are. They are.

[00:20:25] **Lisa Hostein :** this is... Yes. Well, because it's because of what's happening on social media. In other words, you don't have to be necessarily directly connected to this plot to be exposed to everything that's happening.

No,

[00:20:35] **Dara Horn:** okay, so... Oh, yeah. So, so to answer your question from earlier, you don't pay for TikTok. You don't pay for Instagram. That means you're the product. People don't understand how much they are being manipulated, and the reason they don't understand it also is, again, because this... And I think this is why it's so important for your listeners to understand the structure of anti-Semitism being a lie that's used by people who want to gain or maintain power, and the lie is always the same.

Jews are destroying what you value the most. The people who are pushing this lie, and you want to be clear, like it's not only tyrannical regimes. This could be anyone who wants to gain or maintain power. It doesn't have to be like the Ayatollah. This could be social media influencer who's looking for more clicks, right?

I mean- Mm-hmm ... it could be the middle school kid who wants to be the cool kid in the group. It works through this saturation of the messaging People don't realize how their messaging has been saturated. Social media is built for this, right? The algorithms push you toward greater and greater extremes.

You don't even realize you're being pushed into these extremes. Person making anti-Semitic comments in a supermarket, honestly, they are motivated by these things. You know, when my niece is being harassed at Disney World by someone who's screaming at her that she's a genocidal baby killer, my niece is 14 years old.

Does that person have hate in their heart? I mean, yeah, probably. But where did they get this idea that it made sense to harass a 14-year-old at Disney World who's wearing a Jewish star?

[00:21:59] **Lisa Hostein :** Right.

[00:22:00] **Dara Horn:** This is where they got the idea. This is where they got the idea. Like, I think people don't understand the extent to which this messaging can saturate everything they see all the time.

If all you hear all the time, 24/7 on your phone, is Zionism is genocide, Zionism is genocide, Zionism is genocide, Zionism is genocide, suddenly you're like, "Somehow I have this association between Zionism and genocide." Yeah. "I wonder where that came from." It's like you weren't presented this with evidence.

You know, you didn't come to this conclusion because you read some peer-reviewed article somewhere. Yeah. You came to this conclusion 'cause you heard it seven million times. This is what psychologists call the illusory truth effect. It's a concept in psychology which is when you hear a lie repeated often enough, you start to believe it, even if it contradicts what you already know, even if it's something, a topic you don't understand or don't know anything about, even if it contradicts your prior beliefs, because there's something cognitive in your brain where you're like, "I'm drowning in this," or you don't feel like you're drowning, you're just like, you know, it's like swimming in water and not knowing what water is.

Like a fish being like, "What's water?" You don't even understand that you're saturated in, in this. This is just your world. And so it's weird to not accept the lie when that has saturated your world.

[00:23:10] **Lisa Hostein :** Hmm.

[00:23:11] **Dara Horn:** This lie has been around for a long time. Are there people who are hearing this through their families or older versions of this that come through church teachings prior, that predate Vatican II or something?

I mean, yes, there's those kinds of channels, but, I mean, this is the obvious source of this. The idea that, oh, there's right-wing antisemitism, there's left-wing antisemitism. It's like this is a meaningless distinction. It's, it's all the big lie. Jews are destroying what you value the most, and it's just what do you value the most in your social circle.

[00:23:42] **Lisa Hostein :** And to your point, and you mentioned this before about this plot poisoning online and the Wikipedia example- Mm-hmm ... specifically, which you write about, and the ADL just came out with a report, what, yesterday, I think- Mm ... um, emphasizing what they exposed last year about editors being part of this- Yes

right, campaign to distort and lie about Zionism in particular, right? Yes. I mean, it's obviously it is more than that, but it's the fact that this campaign is happening and they are infiltrating these sources that become such critical sources of information. So whether you got it from your family or you're directly exposed to these beings and entities.

So before 2022, Wikipedia's main article on Zionism defined it correctly. "The national movement of the Jewish people that supports the reestablishment of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic land of Israel." So I looked it up and saw in your book also, like I think in early 2024, it had changed, and much more anti-Israel definition.

This morning I looked it up, and it looked like it was tweaked a little bit but still obviously problematic. So it says, "Now defines Zionism as an ethnic nationalist movement that emerged in the late 19th century Europe to establish and support a Jewish homeland through colonization in the region of Palestine, which roughly corresponds to the land of Israel and Judaism, itself central to Jewish history."

So tell us a little bit about what exactly was happening at Reddit and Wikipedia, these major sources not only of information, but also feeders now to AI.

[00:25:19] **Dara Horn:** Again, I had this weird front row seat to this, where this is one of the examples of people from a sector coming to me to, as whistleblowers about this.

Someone who was a moderator of a Jewish forum on Reddit came to me asking me to participate in a, you know, an ask me anything event in a Jewish, they're called subreddits, I didn't know these, this lingo either, to participate in answering readers' questions. Before I did this, he said, "You know, oh, could we just find a time to speak before you do this ask me anything event?"

I just wanna fill you in on what we've been dealing with." It turned out what he was dealing with was this data poisoning plot on Reddit and Wikipedia. This person who came to me as a whistleblower about this, which I later realized is what he was doing. In real life, he's a data scientist. He's a volunteer moderator on Reddit, but in real life he does work in technology, and he had...

essentially, he, he had uncovered this plot where it was involving moderators on Reddit, where what he had noticed was that there were moderators on some of these very anodyne Reddit forums that have millions of subscribers, so

something like documentary films, or there was another one that is about people post blooper videos or something.

After October 7th, they're suddenly saturated with this content that's, you know, globalize the Intifada, Hamas is the resistance, this sort of thing. And he's like, "Well, this is weird," right? Because these were forums that had nothing to do with the Middle East. They had nothing to do with Israel. They had nothing to do with Jews.

They had nothing to do with Arabs. They had nothing to do with... You know, it's like, like why is this blooper video forum suddenly posting all this globalize the Intifada stuff? He started tracing the people and the accounts that were involved in this, and he was basically able to f- find, even though it's not like a big secret, but like, you know, there's all these Discord servers and Telegram channels where people involved in these campaigns organize to flood the boat with this information.

He was able to sort of trace this back to some of these... And he's not the only person who was doing this. There's now actually several groups that are tracing these problems and these accounts. He's able to trace these back to Hamas' English language propaganda channels. So I mean, it's not a big secret.

Mm-hmm. And you know, as you mentioned, like, you know, you gave the obvious example of the Zionism entry, which as you point out, at least it has been scaled back very slightly in the past year since I was writing about this. It used to not even mention that the land of Israel historically was a Jewish homeland.

Now it at least, yay, it mentions that. What they also did was wipe the entire terrorist history of Hamas off of Wikipedia. Oh. They were erasing 30 years of terrorist activity of Hamas, so to make it look like a non-terror group. This is a foreign terrorist organization that's proscribed by the State Department.

It was just so clear the way that these edits were happening. The problem is that this was sort of being covered in the media as, "Oh, edit wars on Wikipedia."

[00:28:15] **Lisa Hostein** : Everybody's trying to manipulate Wikipedia."

[00:28:16] **Dara Horn**: This isn't just editors or people who are fans of a certain band who are changing this. This is an organized plot, and the reason that these groups were targeting Reddit and Wikipedia is because these are the major feeders for large language models that are part of AI.

For example, Reddit, a platform that I, as a person who I don't spend a lot of time online, didn't seem like it was so important to me, Reddit has a contract with OpenAI.

[00:28:40] **Lisa Hostein** : Hmm.

[00:28:40] **Dara Horn**: The contract is not only to be a feeder for AI, they had basically contracted with them to be a, an information vetter for AI. In other words, any link that was posted to Reddit that had three upvotes was then considered a higher quality piece of information-

[00:28:57] **Lisa Hostein** : Mm

[00:28:57] **Dara Horn**: by these LLMs. So I mean, you know, this was like, this is a reason that these forums were being targeted. I mean, Wikipedia has, let's just say, a mutually beneficial relationship with Google, where Google uses that as their top feeder for most searches through Google, and obviously Gemini and other Google products are drawing very heavily on Wikipedia, which in turn gives Wikipedia credibility, which it otherwise frankly shouldn't have.

This is an encyclopedia written by random people.

[00:29:26] **Lisa Hostein** : What can be done to fix this problem, and are there any opportunities?

[00:29:30] **Dara Horn**: There are many opportunities to fix this problem. The way to fight a lie is exposure. These institutions don't need to magically have credibility. They don't. So exposure is a huge piece of this, people understanding.

Schools already understand this. I mean, my kids who go to public school, like, you're, you're not allowed to use Wikipedia as a source. Credibility, huge issue. The platforms have a role to play in this. Government regulation has a role to play in this. There's a role for understanding, tracing foreign malign influence in our information channels.

I mean, this is a problem for American intelligence agencies. This is part of honestly protecting our country from foreign terrorist organizations. There are also technological adjustments that can be made to these LLMs, and this is way beyond my ability, but there are people I know in the tech world who are working on those kinds of problems.

This is what the tech world calls alignment, the way that AI agents are aligned with greater social good. That means that you have to define what the greater social good is.

[00:30:28] **Lisa Hostein** : Um- Very

[00:30:28] **Dara Horn**: subjective. Yes, exactly. Well, this is the challenge. This is the challenge. Right. But there's ways of adjusting how LLMs determine what's credible.

This is a problem we dealt with before, and this is also the way I teach about this at the Tell Institute, which is my nonprofit that is introducing this to students in public schools and also in the Jewish community. The big why always accelerates through new media in every era, and the reason for that is because new media is the Wild West.

You don't yet know who's credible and who's not, and because you don't yet know who, who's credible and who's not, the only criteria you have for credibility is exposure. Whatever you're hearing the most of is what turns out to be true, and that's how these LLMs, these AI systems determine what's credible.

They determine it based on, quote, "consensus." Consensus means the thing that's the most people are saying. This is recipe for antisemitism. But that was true at the beginning of radio. That's true at the beginning of television, right? That was true at the printing press. The case of Simon of Trent, it was a blood libel case from 1475 in Italy.

That case, quote, "went viral" because of the printing press, was new at the time, and everybody was so dazzled. You could print a bajillion woodcuts of, you know, Jews killing and butchering this child. You know, that wasn't organic either, though. All the information about Simon of Trent that was claiming that this Jewish community had murdered this innocent boy, there's a book by the historian Magda Teter called Blood Libel.

This book came out in 2020, and she unpacks that case. And what she determines from archival research is every piece of information that comes out of the printing press about Simon of Trent, this blood libel case that went viral, it all traces back to one person.

[00:32:12] **Lisa Hostein** : Hmm.

[00:32:12] **Dara Horn:** There was this one bishop in Trent who paid what we today would call influencers to publish about Simon of Trent.

He paid poets who were popular. He paid artists to do woodcuts that became these things that they were broadsides that they post on all the towns. He paid people to publish sermons about this. He was manipulating court records. Almost every document that came out of the printing press about Simon of Trent traces back to this one guy and his friends and people he paid.

Mm-hmm. So this is a very old problem.

[00:32:43] **Lisa Hostein :** History repeats itself, right? Yeah, in

[00:32:45] **Dara Horn:** this

[00:32:45] **Lisa Hostein :** case, yes. In so many different ways and percolating through the centuries.

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[00:33:36] **Lisa Hostein :** I do wanna shift to the solutions that you talk about and this Tell Institute that you have founded.

Describe what its main goals are and who, again, you're really trying to reach. When do you determine success with this kind of approach?

[00:33:51] **Dara Horn:** The Tell Institute is something I founded in my goal to find solutions to this problem. This is a nonprofit whose goal is to educate the broader public about Jewish civilization and the dynamics of anti-Semitism, starting in educational settings.

So we actually started in public schools. This is a crash course in Jewish civilization and the dynamics of anti-Semitism. It's eight lessons. It's not a big

lift. It's designed for people who have no background at all. And what is unique about our program is this is completely different from anything else that's out there because we are teaching about the content of Jewish civilization.

Specifically, we are teaching about Jewish civilization as an anti-tyrannical movement since ancient times. We are tying that anti-tyrannical movement since ancient times to the history of anti-Semitism for thousands of years, because when you have an anti-tyrannical movement, it pisses off tyrants. We are teaching this as a non-conformist movement for thousands of years.

And when you have a non-conformist movement, it pisses off dominant societies that need everyone to conform in order to validate whatever they think is true this week. We've completely intertwined the content of Jewish civilization and the dynamics of anti-Semitism, and our goal is pattern recognition.

So the way we teach about anti-Semitism, it's case studies about the big why. We've set this up so that a 13-year-old can understand it.

[00:35:12] **Lisa Hostein** : I was just gonna say, this is for middle schoolers- Mm-hmm ... I think primarily. Yes. And you know, you start using terms like anti-tyrannical and things like that, they, they're not gonna get it, right?

[00:35:20] **Dara Horn**: Oh, no, they get it. Yeah? They get it. Mm-hmm. They do because what we talk about is what are the groundbreaking ideas of Jewish civilization? Mm-hmm. What are the groundbreaking ideas? One god, monotheism. Well, what are the other people doing in the ancient world? They're worshiping lots of gods. One of them's the dictator, right?

One of them's the Pharaoh. One of them's the Roman emperor. So what does it mean when the Jews aren't bowing to other gods? Who else aren't they bowing to?

[00:35:47] **Lisa Hostein** : Mm-hmm.

[00:35:48] **Dara Horn**: We do it that way. We talk about the Torah in public school settings, actually the way we frame it is laws that don't come from kings.

[00:35:55] **Lisa Hostein** : Mm-hmm.

[00:35:55] **Dara Horn**: In other settings, you know, Code of Hammurabi gets its authority from Hammurabi, right? Here, even the kings have to follow these

laws. Doesn't mean they always do, but even the kings are expected to follow these laws. Mm-hmm. You know, we talk about the story of freedom. This is what we would call the Passover story.

But we talk about how unusual this is in the ancient world, right? It's not The Odyssey. The Odyssey's about the king has to come home to his rightful place in the palace, right? This is about the slaves being freed. The king is the loser in this story.

[00:36:25] **Lisa Hostein** : I also like the way that you write about it and you set it up in terms of combining.

It's not just the negative. It's not just anti-Semitism. It's not just the Holocaust, and it's not just Jews as heroes. But you're really trying to say this is one story that needs to be elucidated.

[00:36:43] **Dara Horn**: Yes. We don't use that language of there's the positive story and the negative story. It is one story, and it is a one story of a tiny, tiny minority.

That's the other thing we keep doing. We keep showing the map of the world. Can you even find Israel on this map? Good luck. We show all these other empires, right? Here's how Christianity took over all of Europe and the Americas and beyond. Here's how Islam took over all of the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, and beyond.

Can you find Israel on this map? How many Jews are there in the world? People don't know this. People really are like, "Oh, Jews are, like, 10% of the world's population, 20%." I'm like, "Mm, 0.2." They're shocked. 0.2. Let's talk again about colonization. Here's a world map. Let's talk about who's colonizing. We put this in terms that children understand.

We talk about what we call the big lie. That's a thing a child can understand. Anti-Semitism, bigotry, these are harder for kids to understand, actually. Kids know what a lie is. Kids know what it means to fall for a lie, and they also know that there's something called a liar who benefits from the lie. And this whole like, oh, it's a mutating virus, blah, blah, blah, like we're using this language that makes people think that this is a, a weather pattern that they can't control instead of making them understand, like, wait a minute, where am I on this chart, right?

Here's the chart. Who's the liar in this situation? Again, we do this with simple case studies. Who's the liar? What's the value in this society or in this situation,

and how does the liar say the Jews are ruining it? So plug and play would be, like, the Iranian regime capturing the Durban Conference. This one we do for high schoolers.

You know, what-

[00:38:17] **Lisa Hostein** : And for our listeners, I was very involved in covering the Durban Conference way back when, which coincided with 9/11. Mm-hmm. So it did not get the press that it deserved. Just for our listeners, refresh briefly what, what happened there

[00:38:29] **Dara Horn**: This was a UN conference against racism and xenophobia and related intolerance that was taken over by the Iranian regime and other authoritarian regimes so that the entire focus of the conference was condemning Israel.

At the conference itself, Jews were hounded off the stage, and it left the UN and 3,600 NGOs completely bereft of any kind of language to talk about Islamist terrorism four days later, the 9/11 attacks. So the way we explain this for children, I mean, is this was a conference that was supposed to be about human rights.

Who is the liar? You have the Iranian regime. What is the Iranian's regime attitude toward human rights? And we have, you know, primary sources. They're like a sentence, you know. Here's the Iranian regime's president talking about, "Death to America, death to Israel." Here's the report of how the Iranian regime executed tens of thousands of dissidents, right?

Here's how many people Iran executed that year, something like that. And then we show who is the liar. There you go in your chart. Because they captured the whole Asia-Pacific part of the conference. They would not allow Jewish delegates to attend. They'd not issue them visas to Israeli delegates and to Jewish NGOs.

They kept them out of the conference. They didn't even issue visas to Australians because that was, and New Zealanders, because those were states that recognized Israel. So they created a Jew-free conference where they drafted all these things. So who is the liar? There you go, Iranian regime and other-Mm-hmm

dictatorships in the Asia bloc. What is the value? Human rights and anti-racism. How are they saying that Jews are the violators of this? The statement that

comes out of this conference, 70 pages long, only one country is mentioned as a violator of human rights. How is new media used to accelerate the lie?

This is the beginning- Mm-hmm ... of the internet, right, in 2001. We have a case study on Soviet anti-Zionism. Mm-hmm. That one really surprises the kids because they see the Soviet propaganda.

[00:40:26] **Lisa Hostein** : Mm-hmm.

[00:40:27] **Dara Horn**: All the same slogans they're hearing now on their phone. Zionism is genocide. Here it is from 1975. Zionism is racism.

Zionism is colonialism. Zionism is apartheid. And then we tell them about the Soviet Union and how it was persecuting two million Soviet Jews, how there were all these countries that were its colonies that it was trying to keep in line.

[00:40:50] **Lisa Hostein** : Yeah.

[00:40:50] **Dara Horn**: That they, those countries all expel their, and persecute their Jewish communities.

I mean, it's like, it's not hard. You know, we have a case study about Henry Ford from the 1920s publishing the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. He was a businessman. You know, "We're a pro-capitalist country. Jews are communists," right? "Jews are just trying to destroy capitalism." It's a fill-in-the-blank. It's a fill-in-the-blank.

Wow. And it's so easy for children to get this.

[00:41:14] **Lisa Hostein** : How do you define Jews for these people who may not even be exposed to Jews or- Yes, they're not ... or have very few, and how do you define the connection between Jews and Israel?

[00:41:27] **Dara Horn**: Yes. So we begin these lessons. So I wanna be clear, like the part about anti-Semitism is, like, integrated completely with lessons on Jewish civilization in ancient times and in the present, and in the present.

That's very important. We talk about the survival and resilience of the Jewish people. We talk about modern Zionism, and we bring it to the last lesson is about living Jews today. We explain at the top who are Jews, because that is like, no one ever has answered that question for people. And we explain Jews are older than every identity category you've heard of as a modern American.

Jews predate the modern idea of race. They predate religion. They predate nationality. They predate ethnicity. And there's an answer. Jews are a type of social group that was common in the ancient world, uncommon today. Jews are a joinable tribal group with a shared history, homeland, and culture. In English, that's a sentence, and in Hebrew it's one word.

It's two letters long that your listeners know, Am. Jews are Am Yisrael, the Jewish people, the people of Israel. So we explain this as this is basically like every other indigenous group on the planet. This is a civilization that the culture is connected to the microclimate of the place where it's from.

For example, why do we have all these holidays in the fall? It's because Israel then and now is a place where rain only falls in the autumn, and they don't have a major river, so this is like a big rain dance. All the fall holidays are we're pleading to God for rain. All of the holidays that are based on pilgrimages to Jerusalem basically present this as a land-based group, very similar indigenous practices to every other indigenous group on the planet.

But then we introduce what is unusual about this group, which is these groundbreaking ideas that have this huge impact on world history, and then we go into these ideas like monotheism, laws that don't come from kings, story of freedom, et cetera. We ground them in those things. We then talk about what is the most important piece of this is how did this group of people survive?

Because I will tell you that certainly in the non-Jewish schools, that blows people's minds. This is the response that students have given for this is like, "These people have been around for 3,000 years? Like, seriously?" They're blown away. And then the question is, how? And there's an answer to that, and we spell it out for them.

We're like, "Here are the choices that these communities made to preserve this civilization." We talk about the maintenance and revival of Hebrew. We talk about Zionism as a typical national movement from the 19th and 20th centuries. There's dozens and dozens of other national movements that arise at exactly the same time when empires are being partitioned into nation-states.

We talk about how this is the same thing that happens every single case nation-states emerge through these partitions with massive and violent population upheavals. What happens to the state of Israel is very similar to like the partition of India, Greece and Turkey, Germany and Poland. I mean, it's like you could keep going.

We present this as a typical national movement, but what is atypical is the preservation of this culture. And we bring it up to the present day. At the end, we talk about living Jews today. We talk about things like Safaria, contemporary Israeli society. For the non-Jewish groups, we have little videos of contemporary American Jewish teenagers talking about their lives.

And I want to tell your listeners what started happening is I started getting a lot of demand for this program from within the Jewish community. People started coming to me saying, "Our kids need this also. They also don't know this." And so in response to demand, we created a program for bar and bat mitzvah students, which is taught in synagogues.

We now have 45 synagogues that, that entered our initial pilot in October of 2026 as we're recording this. I have another 45 that are a rolling basis because we don't have the capacity to meet the demand that we have. We're still a very small organization looking to grow. Everybody needs this story is what we've discovered.

It's amazing how this story changes the way people think changes how non-Jews think. I've had non-Jewish teachers sort of come to me and they're like, "This is an astonishing story." I had one principal who went to one of our trainings who came to us afterwards with tears in her eyes, and she says, this was an African American woman from a primarily minority school, and she said, these are her words, she says, "I need to bring this story back to my Black and brown students because they need this story."

[00:45:44] **Lisa Hostein** : Mm.

[00:45:44] **Dara Horn**: Because it's not a story about victimhood. This is a story about the choices that people and communities can make to build a future together.

[00:45:52] **Lisa Hostein** : It sounds so impressive, and obviously you're starting small because that's where you have to start, and the problems that you describe are so large.

[00:46:02] **Dara Horn**: Yes.

[00:46:03] **Lisa Hostein** : Where do you see the possibility of success?

What needs to happen to get to success?

[00:46:10] **Dara Horn:** Scale. We are thinking about how to build this bigger, how to expand this. To be quite honest, right now we have two people working in this organization, and it is not adequate for our demand, so we are looking to expand. We have this sort of very upside-down problem that most startups don't have, which is that we have more demand than we can handle.

Usually it's the other way around. The people I have to say no to or not yet to, it's kind of astonishing. We've been talking with people in the Australian Parliament, state commissioners. Right now it's like we are still figuring out our strategy- Mm-hmm ... for how to build. To be clear also, this isn't me parachuting into your classroom.

These are taught by the teachers in the classrooms, and same for within the Jewish community. This is taught by rabbis in these synagogues, or it's being taught by educational directors in these synagogues. But it has become more clear to me through the demand that we're getting that we're going to need many more versions of this story for many different audiences.

So I really see the school version as a starting point, not an ending point. I see this expanding into many different sectors. Ultimately, our wish list is we wanna create a version of this that's gonna be for adults, for example- Mm ... like interfaith groups, right? Mm-hmm. I've already gotten a lot of demand for interfaith groups.

Mm-hmm. I've gotten a lot of demand for people doing this in Jewish student union in the high school who are like, "Well, my school might not do this, but we'd love to just do this for our Jewish student union," right? Mm-hmm. I have to make a version like that that a teenager can- Mm ... be- take the lead on.

There'll have to be a direct-to-consumer version. Many people have said, "I wanna take this class." I'm like, "Okay, well, right now you can't," but maybe a version like that, a version that's suited for social media. I've even had people approach me about, "Can we turn this into a video game?" If you wanna reach young people, that's where you're gonna reach.

Right. Right. So, you know, there's a lot-

[00:47:49] **Lisa Hostein :** Just have to be careful with it.

[00:47:49] **Dara Horn:** You have to be careful with all of these things. People need to be trained. Even Jewish educators need to be trained.

[00:47:55] **Lisa Hostein** : And education is so often the solution, right? A very key solution.

[00:48:00] **Dara Horn**: It's a piece, I will say.

[00:48:01] **Lisa Hostein** : I also just wanna ask you, and we're gonna, we're gonna wrap soon, as if you're not busy enough, you've just been appointed vice chair of the commission to determine whether the Weisman National Museum of American Jewish History will be- become part of the Smithsonian.

[00:48:13] **Dara Horn**: Yes.

[00:48:14] **Lisa Hostein** : Now, this is a museum that actually is in my hometown, so I'm very familiar with it. Philadelphia for your listeners. Philadelphia, yes. Thank you. First of all, it seems like the members of the commission, like, it's probably a fairly unanimous position that the answer is yes. And I guess the question is, like, what's the likelihood that it'll actually happen?

And more importantly, how will this contribute to telling the Jewish story, which obviously needs to be told much more?

[00:48:37] **Dara Horn**: So I was appointed by Congress to participate in this commission. We had our first meeting earlier this week, and all of us were sworn in by the two Pennsylvania senators, John Fetterman and Dave McCormick.

So it was actually this kind of moving moment where we all take the oath of office to participate in this commission and to defend the Constitution, and I had never had that experience before, and it was actually quite moving, um, to serve my country in that way. Yeah, this is a commission to explore and to give a recommendation on whether the Weitzman Museum should become part of the Smithsonian.

It's not a foregone conclusion. I mean, that's why we have a commission. It is a bipartisan commission, which is very rare in American life these days, but it is absolutely... I mean, there's... To give some examples, I mean, there's Kathy Manning, who's a former Democratic congresswoman from North Carolina, is on the committee.

Tevi Troy, who's a politically conservative presidential historian, is on this commission. So I mean, this is actually a group of people from a lot of different political viewpoints.

[00:49:35] **Lisa Hostein** : But all very strongly Jewishly- Oh, yes ... connected and backgrounds.

[00:49:39] **Dara Horn**: Mm-hmm. Yes, yes. Absolutely, yes. People who are very invested in the future of the American Jewish community.

To me, this was important because the Weitzman is an example of an institution that is educating the public about Jewish life. It's doing it from a perspective of American Jewish life. It's the only museum that's telling the story of American Jewish history in its entirety. It's at an inflection point right now.

They have a new CEO as of the past year or so who's really reimagining the kind of stories the museum needs to be telling. To me, it just seemed like an opportunity to elevate this sort of really amazing story about the role of Jewish life and civilization in the history of America.

[00:50:20] **Lisa Hostein** : I wanna end asking you how you are grappling with dealing with these issues, talking about these issues, writing about these issues.

They're very hard issues. You have hope and you have- Yes ... ideas about how to at least address them, if not solve them. As you go around the country, you talk to various audiences, what gives you hope even after writing such a difficult book?

[00:50:44] **Dara Horn**: I have this front row seat to Yeah, like what I would frankly describe as the dumpster fire of this problem that we all have been living in for the past few years.

I was living in that dumpster fire before a lot of other people were because I had this exposure to it well before October 7th. I also have a front row seat to all the possibilities. I get to meet people that most people don't get to meet. I'm gonna give a couple of examples. I had the opportunity this summer to participate in a conference from a group called AMWEQ.

It's a American Muslim Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council. I'm

[00:51:19] **Lisa Hostein** : familiar with AMWEQ.

[00:51:20] **Dara Horn:** Yes, and this is a truly heroic organization. They're Muslim American leaders who are against Islamist regimes. And to meet these Muslim American leaders who are taking trips to Israel for their leadership, working with Jewish communities, pushing back against these tyrannical regimes that frankly have been persecuting their community.

I mean, it's funny, when I told them about this problem with how Wikipedia had been poisoned, and Aneela Ali, who's the leader of that group, said, "Yeah, you know, they wipe- they wiped us off of Wikipedia back in twenty fourteen." So I mean, we're all sort of fighting the same battle against tyrannical regimes.

These are enormously courageous people. I've met people in the Christian community pushing back against the sort of right-wing version of this problem. There's a group called Generation Zion. This was created by this evangelical pastor, which is to promote young Christian Zionists to leadership positions at universities and to sort of push out and to counter the influence of what the Internet calls Groypers, right, this sort of like racist, antisemitic wing of that that has gained ground among young people in those communities.

They have a T-shirt that they wear that says, "Jesus is a Zionist." This is not the kind of thing that most American Jews encounter, but I get to meet these people. I had the privilege of meeting a woman, Alice Nderitu. She's a former undersecretary of the UN who was essentially pushed out of her position for pointing out that Hamas had massacred people in Israel.

She's a Kenyan politician. She has pointed out to me how many friends the Jewish people have around the world. She's like, "You know, a lot of sub-Saharan Africans are on team Israel, essentially. In Kenya," she's like, "this is where the jets landed for the Entebbe rescue. Because I'm Kenyan is why I am on the side of the Jewish people."

She says that's true actually for a lot of people in sub-Saharan Africa, especially because they're dealing with the same problem in terms of these Islamist terror groups that have attacked their communities. So as I said, I get to meet people who are working on these problems. I get to meet people in the tech sector who are pushing back on these problems.

I get to meet people in education who are pushing back on these problems. I mean, I have great news for your listeners from my travels around America. There's so much more ignorance than malice out there, and that is a huge opportunity. I truly can tell people that this is winnable. What it's going to take is courage

[00:53:43] **Lisa Hostein** : Well, that's a very important note to end on.

Dara, I thank you so much for being here and sharing these ideas and your experiences and your hope and your wisdom, and thank you.

[00:53:55] **Dara Horn**: Thank you for having me.

[00:53:57] **Lisa Hostein** : A shout-out to Arielle Kaplan, the magazine's digital editor, who produced and promoted this podcast episode, and to Leah Finkelshteyn, our senior and book editor, who helped plan and organize it.

A special thanks to Eli Hershko, Hadassah's multimedia guru, who is behind the camera today at our new recording studio, and to Adeola Saul, Hadassah's marketing project manager, who devoted a lot of energy into setting up the studio

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