

# Critical Social Justice's Inconvenient Misfit

*James Lindsay's 2020–2026 Alarm on Anti-Jewish Sentiment, the Paradoxes of Power and History, and a Covenantal-Republican Synthesis of Particularism, Non-Domination, and Enduring Liberty*

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## Abstract

James Lindsay's October 13, 2026 post on X reaffirmed his October 2020 alarm that Critical Social Justice (CSJ)—the fusion of Critical Race Theory, postcolonial theory, intersectionality, and neo-Marxist conflict analysis—harbors undeniable anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiments as a structural consequence of its framework. Quoting his earlier statement that CSJ is “neither sophisticated nor liberal enough to handle the straightforward facts of Jewish life and history,” Lindsay asserted that the problem has intensified “on steroids.” This essay provides an updated, expanded, deeper analysis of that claim and the surrounding discussions, summarizing diverse opinions and approaches while analyzing and criticizing them through a rigorous synthesis of Orthodox Jewish Theology and Thought with academic theories and republican political theory.

Drawing on exhaustive public research (Lindsay's “Critical Race Theory's Jewish Problem,” Bari Weiss's “Stop Being Shocked,” academic sources on Critical Theory, and recent 2026 data on antisemitism), the author's prior Covenantal Realism essays (which sync Torah brit, tzelem Elokim, venahafoch hu, Rebbe teachings, Rav Kook, and Rambam with Philip Pettit's non-domination and Hebrew republican influences), and up-to-date information, the paper argues that CSJ's zero-sum oppressor/oppressed binary and racial/colonial reductionism create an irreconcilable “Jewish problem”: Jewish history of profound oppression alongside high achievement and particular covenantal identity (people, land, Torah) cannot fit without contradiction, often resolved by coding Jews as “white”/privileged or Israel as settler-colonial. Orthodox sources affirm universal dignity (tzelem Elokim) without erasing particularism, covenantal mutual non-domination under G-d rather than arbitrary power, and resilience (venahafoch hu). Republican theory's freedom as non-domination aligns with biblical limited sovereignty and founders' Hebrew influences, offering a constructive alternative to CSJ's equity-of-outcomes domination. Critiques of competing views (realist reductions, liberal idealisms, intersectional alliances) lead to recommendations for covenantal-republican clarity against ideological totalizing. The inclusion of personal archival materials enriches the analysis with lived Pittsburgh-Jerusalem synthesis of grit and emunah.

## I. Introduction: From the 2020 Alarm to the 2026 Confirmation – Sounding the Banner Amid Ideological Contest

On October 13, 2026, James Lindsay (@ConceptualJames), founder of New Discourses, posted: “In October of 2020, I decided it was time to sound an alarm about the Woke Left's undeniable anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiments. This all still holds, now on steroids and with so much more.” He quoted his own earlier formulation: “Critical Social Justice is, in its vulgar simplicity and pretentious racism, neither sophisticated nor liberal enough to handle the straightforward

facts of Jewish life and history, which make an inconvenient misfit to its profoundly inadequate notions of social power and conflict.”

This post reactivates the context of Bari Weiss’s October 14, 2020 Tablet essay “Stop Being Shocked,” which warned that a new “successor ideology” to liberalism—mixing postmodernism, postcolonialism, identity politics, neo-Marxism, Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, and therapeutic mentality—had captured elites and institutions, with dangerous implications for Jews. Weiss, a Squirrel Hill native, urged acceptance of reality rather than repeated shock at progressive antisemitism, including from figures like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez withdrawing from a Rabin memorial.

The central research question is: How and why does Critical Social Justice generate anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiments as a reliable consequence, and how can Orthodox Jewish theological resources (brit, tzelem Elokim, particularism within universal ethics, venahafoch hu) be synchronized with academic critiques of Critical Theory and republican political theory (non-domination, limited sovereignty, Hebrew republican influences) to analyze, criticize, and offer a constructive alternative?

Thesis: CSJ’s frameworks, rooted in oppressor/oppressed binaries and racial/colonial analyses, cannot accommodate the straightforward facts of Jewish history—repeated persecution, cultural and intellectual achievement, continuous peoplehood, and covenantal claim to the Land—without contradiction. This produces the “Jewish problem” Lindsay identified, intensified post-October 7, 2023, and still visible in 2026 campus, media, and political dynamics. Orthodox theology provides the anthropological and ethical depth (all in tzelem Elokim, yet Am Yisrael’s particular brit) that CSJ flattens; republican theory supplies the political architecture of non-domination under higher law that CSJ’s equity pursuit undermines. The author’s corpus of Covenantal Realism essays (e.g., July 27, 2026 expanded versions) supplies the lived integrative voice—Pittsburgh grit meeting Jerusalem emunah—making the synthesis distinctive.

This paper proceeds by establishing background, synthesizing literature and personal sources, analyzing Lindsay’s argument and academic theories, integrating theological and republican perspectives, critiquing alternatives, and offering implications.

## **II. Background and Context: The Rise of Critical Social Justice and the Jewish Question**

Critical Social Justice, or “Wokeness,” emerged as a fusion of several intellectual streams: Critical Theory from the Frankfurt School and its neo-Marxist heirs, Critical Race Theory developed by Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and others in the 1970s–90s, postcolonial theory associated with Edward Said, intersectionality as articulated by Crenshaw, and elements of postmodern skepticism toward objective truth and universal liberalism. Its core operating assumption is that society is structured by interlocking systems of power and domination along identity axes—primarily race, but also gender, sexuality, and others—where the privileged (especially “Whiteness”) hold unearned advantage, and justice requires equity of outcomes through recognition of systemic oppression rather than formal equality or individual merit.

As Lindsay details in his October 22, 2020 essay “Critical Race Theory’s Jewish Problem,” this framework generates a specific “Jewish problem.” Under Critical Whiteness Studies, many Jews (particularly Ashkenazim) are theorized as having been granted the status of Whiteness,

benefiting from systemic racism despite a history of profound oppression including diaspora, expulsions, and the Holocaust. This creates an intolerable paradox: victims of extreme persecution who nevertheless achieve high levels of success in open societies are coded as privileged oppressors who must “check their privilege.” Postcolonial theory compounds this by framing Zionism and the State of Israel as settler-colonial white supremacy imposing itself on indigenous brown Palestinians, erasing Jewish indigeneity and continuous historical presence.

Bari Weiss’s contemporaneous “Stop Being Shocked” captured the cultural moment: progressive spaces that had once been relatively hospitable to Jewish particularism were increasingly demanding that Jews subordinate or abandon support for Israel and Jewish peoplehood to remain in good standing. The October 7, 2023 massacre and subsequent campus, media, and political responses—including glorification of the attacks and “globalize the intifada” rhetoric—confirmed and amplified the dynamic Lindsay had flagged. As of October 2026, the pattern persists in academic departments, activist networks, and some political formations, even as counter-movements have grown.

Personal context from the author’s archives of Covenantal Realism essays (July 2026 and earlier iterations) frames this as part of a broader contest between covenantal particularism under G-d and totalizing ideological systems that seek arbitrary domination. The Pittsburgh-Jerusalem lived experience—steel-city self-reliance and reciprocity meeting Jerusalem’s covenantal fidelity and daily Chitas—informs the analysis throughout.

### **III. Literature Review and Source Synthesis**

#### **Lindsay’s Primary Analysis**

Lindsay’s 2020 essay argues that CSJ is “parasitic on liberalism” yet anti-liberal in practice. It replaces equality under law with group-based justice measured by outcomes, treats victimhood as currency graded by intersectionality’s “Matrix of Domination,” and views power in Marxian zero-sum terms. Jews present a contradiction because their historical oppression does not map cleanly onto the Black/White binary of Critical Race Theory, nor does their national particularism fit postcolonial settler-colonial narratives. Quotes from DiAngelo, Dyson, Berkovits, Said, Sarsour, and others illustrate how Theory either demands Jews atone for “Whiteness” or dismisses antisemitism as non-systemic while elevating anti-Zionism. The conclusion is that CSJ lacks the sophistication or liberality to handle Jewish facts without generating anti-Jewish outcomes.

#### **Academic Theories**

Critical Race Theory’s founders (Bell, Crenshaw) emphasized the permanence of racism and interest-convergence. Intersectionality maps overlapping oppressions. Postcolonial theory (Said’s Orientalism) analyzes Western constructions of the East to justify domination; applied to Israel, it casts Jewish sovereignty as colonial. Critics such as Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay (Cynical Theories) document how these ideas migrated from activist scholarship into institutions. Balázs Berkovits’s work on Critical Whiteness Studies and the Jewish problem is directly engaged by Lindsay. Recent scholarship (e.g., Stögner) examines how critical theory can simultaneously critique racism while enabling antisemitic tropes through Israel demonization.

## **Jewish and Orthodox Responses**

Bari Weiss's *How to Fight Anti-Semitism* and "Stop Being Shocked" emphasize that any ideology attacking the Hebrew roots of liberalism (agency, equality before G-d, particularism) will eventually target Jews. Orthodox voices vary: Coalition for Jewish Values and figures such as Rabbi Dov Fischer have strongly opposed CRT as racial essentialism and a vehicle for antisemitism. Other Orthodox writers have called for greater attention to racism through *kavod habriyot* (respect for creations) while rejecting intersectional demands that require denial of Jewish indigeneity or Israeli security. The author's own prior essays provide an extended synthesis: covenantal realism that integrates Rambam on *milchemet mitzvah*, Tanya's two souls (animal soul risking domination vs. divine soul oriented to justice), Rebbe teachings on *bitachon* + *hishtadlut*, Rav Kook's particularism serving universal *tikkun*, and Soloveitchik's covenantal community.

## **Republican Political Theory**

Philip Pettit's Republicanism defines freedom as non-domination—the absence of capacity for arbitrary interference—rather than mere non-interference. Quentin Skinner's neo-Roman republicanism and Eric Nelson's *The Hebrew Republic* document how rabbinic and biblical sources (Devarim 17 on limited kingship, rejection of absolute monarchy as idolatry) influenced 17th-century English republican thought and, through it, American founding ideas. The Liberty Bell's inscription from Vayikra 25:10 symbolizes this inheritance. CSJ's pursuit of equity through group hierarchies can be read as a new form of arbitrary power; covenantal frameworks limit human sovereignty under higher law.

## **IV. Main Analysis**

### **Lindsay's Core Argument and the Structural Jewish Problem**

Lindsay demonstrates that CSJ's notions of social power are "profoundly inadequate." Jewish history features both extreme vulnerability and remarkable resilience and achievement. The ideology's binary cannot process this without either denying the oppression (Holocaust as "white-on-white crime" or obstacle to criticism) or denying the achievement (success as illegitimate privilege). Israel's existence as a Jewish state in its ancestral land is an "inconvenient misfit" to settler-colonial theory that erases Jewish indigeneity. The 2026 post's claim that the problem is "on steroids" is consistent with post-October 7 patterns that monitors such as the ADL have reported. Is a large share of politically identifiable incidents now coming from left-identified actors and spaces, as some monitors report? The question deserves the data. So does the campus rhetoric that treats Jewish particularism itself as illegitimate.

### **Critique of Academic Theories**

Critical Theory usefully questions concentrations of power but, when totalized, reduces complex histories to single axes of domination and treats dissent as evidence of false consciousness. Intersectionality can illuminate overlapping vulnerabilities yet often subordinates antisemitism to other oppressions or treats Jewish success as proof of complicity. Postcolonial applications to Israel ignore archaeological, historical, and genetic evidence of continuous Jewish presence and the refugee status of Jews from Arab lands. These frameworks frequently reproduce older antisemitic tropes (dual loyalty, excessive influence, blood libel variants) under updated academic language. Competing opinions—defenders who claim CSJ is

merely about equity and critics who see it as a closed ideological system—are summarized and evaluated: the former understate the anti-liberal consequences Lindsay and Weiss documented; the latter sometimes overgeneralize but correctly identify the structural incentives.

### **Orthodox Jewish Theological Resources**

Torah affirms tzelem Elokim (Bereishit 1:27): every human being is created in the divine image, grounding inherent dignity and rejecting racial essentialism. At the same time, Am Yisrael's particular brit (covenant) with G-d establishes peoplehood, land, and Torah as constitutive, not optional. This particularism is not chauvinism; it is the vehicle through which universal ethical monotheism and the Noahide framework for the nations are transmitted. Devarim 17 limits the king under Torah, modeling non-arbitrary power. Rambam's milchemet mitzvah frames defensive war against existential attackers as obligatory. Chassidic sources (Tanya on the two souls; Rebbe on bitachon paired with hishtadlut; venahafoch hu as redemptive reversal) emphasize agency and resilience against concealment and domination. Rav Kook sees national particularity as serving universal redemption. These resources critique CSJ not for opposing injustice but for its reductionist anthropology that erases Jewish history and covenantal particularism while claiming universal justice. As elaborated in the author's July 2026 Covenantal Realism essays, authentic strength flows from fidelity to covenant rather than zero-sum identity conflict.

### **Republican Non-Domination and the Hebrew Inheritance**

Pettit's non-domination aligns with Torah's prohibition on arbitrary oppression (Vayikra 19, Devarim 24) and protection of the vulnerable. Freedom is secured when no actor—private or public—holds unchecked capacity to dominate. The Hebrew Republic tradition (Nelson) and American founders' biblical influences (Dreisbach) show that covenantal consent and limited sovereignty under G-d prefigure republican liberty. CSJ's equity-of-outcomes approach, enforced through institutional capture and cancellation, functions as a form of arbitrary power: individuals and groups are dominated according to identity status rather than deeds or law. Jewish achievement in open societies is not “illegitimate privilege” but evidence that non-domination (rule of law, free institutions) enables flourishing. The author's personal synthesis treats alliances and domestic institutions as brit-like: relational, conditional on fidelity, oriented toward mutual non-domination.

### **Synthesis, Criticisms, and 2026 Implications**

Diverse opinions are engaged: progressive defenders of CSJ view Jewish concerns as “privilege” or distraction from larger justice projects; classical liberals and some Orthodox voices prioritize individual rights and particular covenantal claims; realists emphasize power without sufficient moral architecture. The covenantal-republican synthesis criticizes pure power-reductionism (whether CSJ or cynical realism) for lacking redemptive potential and constructive vision, while rejecting liberal idealisms that underestimate ideological drivers. As of October 2026, Lindsay's alarm remains relevant: ideological systems that cannot process Jewish particularism continue to generate anti-Jewish outcomes. The alternative is not reactionary particularism but integrated lionhood—Torah depth fused with worldly strength, Pittsburgh grit with Jerusalem emunah—under the banner of Yehuda.

## **V. Discussion**

The integration of personal materials (prior expanded Covenantal Realism essays) enriches the analysis by supplying a consistent, lived framework already synchronizing Orthodox theology with republican theory. Public sources alone document the problem; the personal corpus provides the constructive alternative in the author's authentic voice. Remaining questions include the precise mechanisms by which CSJ migrates into specific institutions and the conditions under which covenantal-republican alternatives can scale.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Lindsay's 2020 diagnosis, reaffirmed in 2026, correctly identifies CSJ's structural inadequacy regarding Jewish history and peoplehood. Orthodox theological resources and republican political theory together offer a deeper account of dignity (tzelem Elokim), limited and mutual non-domination (brit and Pettit), and resilience (venahafoch hu). From the steel furnaces of Pittsburgh to the luminous hills of Jerusalem, the call is to build, guard, and hope under the Lion's Banner—rejecting vulgar reductionism while pursuing justice grounded in covenant and liberty under G-d.

Am Yisrael Chai.

## **Extended and Expanded Bibliography**

### **Primary and Contemporary Critiques of CSJ/CRT**

James Lindsay, "Critical Race Theory's Jewish Problem," New Discourses, 22 October 2020.

Bari Weiss, "Stop Being Shocked," Tablet, 14 October 2020.

Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories* (2020).

Balázs Berkovits, "Critical Whiteness Studies and the 'Jewish Problem'."

Additional: Jewish Institute for Liberal Values white papers; ADL incident reports 2021–2026.

### **Academic Critical Theory and Related**

Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw (CRT and intersectionality).

Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*.

Works by Stögner and others on critical theory and antisemitism.

### **Orthodox Jewish Theology, Halakhah, and Thought**

Torah: Bereishit 1:27 (tzelem Elokim); Devarim 17 (limited kingship); Vayikra 25:10 (liberty/jubilee).

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Melachim (milchemet mitzvah).

Tanya (Likutei Amarim, two souls; bitachon and hishtadlut).

Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Likutei Sichot* and related on strength, outreach, venahafoch hu.

Rav A.I. Kook, Orot and related on particularism and redemption.

Rav J.B. Soloveitchik, The Lonely Man of Faith (covenantal community).

Contemporary Orthodox responses (Coalition for Jewish Values, etc.).

### **Republican Political Theory and Hebrew Influences**

Philip Pettit, Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government (1997).

Quentin Skinner, Liberty Before Liberalism.

Eric Nelson, The Hebrew Republic.

Daniel L. Dreisbach, Reading the Bible with the Founding Fathers.

Yoram Hazony, The Virtue of Nationalism.

The Federalist Papers; Montesquieu.

### **News, Reports, and 2026 Context**

X posts and threads around Lindsay's October 13, 2026 post.

Contemporary reporting on campus, political, and cultural antisemitism dynamics.

*Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI*

All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine.