

Jewish Space Lasers: The Rothschilds and 200 Years of Conspiracy Theories

Mike Rothschild

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Mike Rothschild's *Jewish Space Lasers* is a cutting exposé of centuries'-worth of antisemitic scapegoating, often done with one influential family at its center.

"Where myth and mystique meet outsized wealth and great historical events," Rothschild ("no relation") writes, "conspiracy theories are sure to follow." The descendants of the brilliant eighteenth century court Jew Mayer Amschel Rothschild know this better than any. Their family rose to prominence in the waning days of the Holy Roman Empire because of his fiscal savvy. And even though their career paths were limited by prejudice, they accumulated great wealth—and with it, the ire of suspicious and resentful people across the globe.

"Almost all conspiracy theories are rooted in antisemitism, and almost all antisemitism is rooted in conspiracy theories," Rothschild notes. Indeed, across the centuries, those looking for people to blame for the world's ills knew where to look: the Rothschilds have been accused of political and financial machinations tied to slavery, wars, presidential assassinations, Napoleon's fall, and COVID-19. They've been the target of dictators, prominent rabble-rousers, and would-be assassins too. They've even been suspected of magic.

Sifting through historical pamphlets, texts, and rumors as well as early internet detritus, Rothschild traces the conspiracy theories from their beginnings onward, following a direct line from the Battle of Waterloo to the 2024 US presidential primary season. There are foreboding echoes of the recent past herein: rumors about the Rothschilds feed into contemporary nationalist movements, just as they fed into the nationalist movements of the 1930s. Caution and awareness are encouraged throughout.

Dissecting centuries-old antisemitic canards that maintain their hold on the popular imagination—with staggering political implications—*Jewish Space Lasers* is a thorough and sobering text.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September / October 2023)

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