No Vacation from Antisemitism

July 10, 2026

Is it possible to discriminate against a Jew for being a Jew without knowing that this is what one is doing?

Yoni Birnbaum, a Jewish man and rabbi, reports on what happened after he reserved a vacation rental in France.

The property owner emailed to say that he had noticed the word "rabbi" in Birnbaum's email address and therefore felt it necessary to inquire whether Birnbaum was sufficiently critical of Israel before letting the booking stand. If not, the reservation would be cancelled.

This wasn't a litmus test to which all prospective renters of the property were being routinely subjected. The owner acknowledged that only because he had noticed that Birnbaum was Jewish was he demanding to know his views on Israel.

Birnbaum replied, in part: "No doubt, you wrote your email to me out of some kind of twisted sense of virtue. But it seems clear to me that what lies at the heart of your demand for me to declare my views on the conflict in the Middle East, is that to you, before anything else, I am a Jew. Therefore, at the very least, you feel you have to test me and family. . . .

"In other words, you wished to subject me to a purity test. Am I one of the 'good Jews' or one of the 'bad Jews'?"

Not the worst thing that can happen to somebody. But it has something in common with the very worst that can happen.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.