TURDUCKIN
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Temple Sholom - Vancouver BC
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American Thanksgiving is next Thursday, a turkey dinner happens to be my favorite meal. Another reason moving to Canada was a blessing, I get TWO Thanksgivings!

I shared this with a friend recently, about my love of a turkey dinner and they said, “oh have you tried TurDuck-in?”

I asked, “is that some kind of vegan tofu tempi thing?”

They said, “no, far from it, a Turduckin is a duck stuffed inside a turkey!”

It sounds absolutely horrible, for the Turkey, the Duck and honestly for those eating it. The very thought is offensive to the natural order of things and just hard to wrap my mind around.

This week I have felt very much like a TurDuckin. Assaulted and assailed from all sides From Kanye, to Kyrie, Chappelle and then Wednesday when for 7 hours I was subjected to the most hateful antisemitic and anti-Israel diatribes, grievance and inherent bias during the debate over the IHRA definition at City Hall.

I feel like a TurDuckin, people shoving things down my throat that don’t belong.

Antisemites have been living rent free in my head for over a month, it’s time to evict them. It time to clear the air on this whole antisemitism thing.

Let's start with a history lesson, antisemitism though currently rising in fad and fashion is of course nothing new.

The Basic Facts:
Jews are the people of the Hebrew Bible who lived millenia ago in a land now known as Israel. They believe that there is only one God, or at least since many Jews are not religious it might be more accurate to say that Jews believe that, IF God exists, there is only one God.

Christianity emerged from Judaism. Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew who preached a singular religious message.

The first Christians were Jews who prayed in Hebrew and observed the customs and religious rituals of Judaism. The Last Supper was a Jewish religious meal, probably a Passover seder.

Anyhow, Jesus was put to death at the hands of Roman authorities under Pontius Pilate in Judea, **but, and here is where it all begins**, the gospel accounts were interpreted as blaming all Jews for the crucifixion.

To his followers, Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. His death, sacrificial atonement. So accusing Jews of his murder was to effectively brand us as murdering God and it put a target on our backs.

Soon after the crucifixion, Roman armies destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem. Jews were exiled and scattered—to live as a dispersed minority spreading out from the Middle East to Europe and beyond. BUT, some Jews remained in the land, settling in a southern coastal city called Yavne, it's there that they wrote the Mishnah.

By the 5th century, Christianity had become the dominant religion in the Roman Empire.

The early Christian church portrayed Jews as unwilling to accept the word of God; illustrations showed Satan binding the eyes of the Jews. Some church leaders intensified the charge—condemning Jews as agents of the devil and murderers of God.

The accusation was not renounced until the 1960s when the Second Vatican Council officially repudiated the ancient charge that Jews had murdered Christ.

For centuries, state and Church laws restricted Jews, preventing them from owning land and holding public office. It happened right here in BC, in West Vancouver, in the British Properties. Guilds excluded Jews from most occupations, forcing them into pursuits like money-lending, trade, commerce.

Excluded from Christian society, Jews maintained their religious and social customs, in part because they were not welcomed or embraced by their neighbors.

In 1095, Pope Urban II called for the liberation of Jerusalem from the Muslim Turks who had taken it from the Romans 400 years prior in the year 638 CE, shortly after the founding of Islam in the city of Mecca in modern day Saudi Arabia.

The Jews who remained in the land after the Muslim occupation of Jerusalem settled throughout the holy land. Some are cities that still exist in Israel today and include Jerusalem, Tiberias, Ramleh, Ashkelon, Caesarea, all were Jewish communities.

Christian crusaders set off to free the Holy Land from the Muslims. Many of these communities fell in the path of the Crusader forces who slaughtered thousands of Jews on their mission to capture the Holy Land.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians persecuted Jews. Portrayed as alien, Jews were regarded as usurers. It was said Jews poisoned the wells of Europe, causing the Black Plague. Illustrations depicted Jews as the devil, with horns and cloven feet, and showed them using the blood of Christian children in ritual sacrifices. These lies and conspiracies came to be taken as truth.

But when and where they were needed, Jews were tolerated. When they were allowed to participate in the larger society, Jews thrived.

In many places, secular and religious states forced Jews into segregated districts later called ghettos. England, France, Spain, Portugal, and many German states expelled masses of Jews—most of whom migrated eastward into the pale of Russia taking with them their religious convictions and traditions.

In 1517, Martin Luther attacked the Pope and corruption within his own Roman Catholic Church, beginning the Protestant Reformation. The young Luther hoped that tolerance would persuade Jews to convert. But when Jews adhered to their own religious beliefs and refused to join his new reformed church, Luther's disappointment turned to hatred.

He proclaimed, "What then shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? . . .Their synagogues . . .should be set on fire, and what does not burn must be covered over with earth so that no man will ever see stone or cinder of them again. . . .Their houses also should be razed and destroyed. . . . All their prayer books. . .should be taken from them."

The Protestant Reformation brought no end to the anti-Jewish tradition of Christianity, if anything it just renewed it for another season.

With the 18th century Enlightenment's emphasis on reason, the domination of the Church diminished. Some Enlightenment thinkers called for full rights for Jews, but only on the condition that they discard their religious customs. Others blamed Judaism as the source of irrational religious faith. Proclaiming there is only one God, and having a

textual tradition that questions what God commands and demands of us is heretical thinking in a Christian society, then and in parts of North America today.

Even though many Jews assimilated socially and culturally, prejudice did not disappear.

In France in 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the only Jewish member of the French Army's general staff, was convicted of passing military secrets to Germany. Later, proof of forgery confirmed his innocence, but Dreyfus remained the victim of a cover up to divert attention from army corruption. A century after the French Revolution proclaimed Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, giving Jews their freedom, frenzied mobs in the streets of Paris chanted Death to the Jews.

A young Theodore Hertzl and Henrieta Szold witnessed this and convened the first zionist congress 125 years ago this past summer. They dreamed of the return of diaspora Jews to the land of Israel, the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people.

Religious discrimination had gradually changed into a thriving secular, political, and social hatred of the Jews.

Nevertheless, freed from some restrictions, many Jews entered the Christian World and became prominent citizens.

Then, around 1900, a new lie was promoted: that Jews conspired to dominate the world using their money and intelligence to manipulate trusting Christians. Russian secret police forged a document to support the story of a take-over plot supposedly authored by a conference of Jewish leaders. A proven forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion was nevertheless translated into every major language and distributed worldwide. It is circulated even today despite indisputable proof that it is a fake.

To divert popular discontent at appalling living conditions and autocratic control, Russian authorities encouraged violence against the Jews. Jews were blamed for the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. Pogroms, murderous rampages against Jews, erupted in Russia many times during the next three decades.

The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of yet another kind of Jew Hatred. At its core was the theory that Jews were not merely a religious group but a separate "race"—Semites—set apart because of genetically inherited characteristics.

It was then in the mid-1800s that the term antisemitism was created to describe this latest form of Jew Hatred based on our genetic characteristics.

Antisemites believed racial characteristics could not be overcome by assimilation or even conversion. Jews were said to be dangerous and threatening because of their “Jewish blood.” Antisemitic racism united pseudoscientific theories with centuries old anti-Jewish stereotypes. These ideas gained wide acceptance.

The devastation of World War I, the demeaning peace of Versailles, the hyperinflation of the 1920s, and the depression of 1929 fueled mass discontent.

The presence of Jews in German cultural, economic, and political life made them convenient scapegoats for Germany’s misfortunes.

Enter: Adolf Hitler. Hitler viewed world history as a racial struggle for survival of the fittest. He saw Jews as the source of all evil: disease, social injustice, cultural decline, capitalism and all forms of Marxism, especially Communism.

Antisemitism would become the predominant ideology of the Third Reich.

After the Nazi takeover of power, anti-Jewish measures were put into effect one after another: Jewish businesses were boycotted, then seized. Jews were defined, separated from non-Jews. Jews were excluded from professions and studies. Jewish children were barred from schools. Jews were subjected to public humiliation.

The Nazis took antisemitism to an unprecedented level of violence. Genocide: the systematic murder of millions of people deemed inferior. Six million Jews.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, some Christian churches, including the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, re-examined their teachings on the Jews and Judaism. The world felt guilty, what was left of the Jewish population of Europe joined the remnant of Jews that had remained in biblical Israel, then called Palestine. A word derived from the Greek word, Philistia, which dates to Ancient Greek writers' descriptions of the region in the 12th century B.C.

Miraculously, against all odds, in fulfillment of a dream, a hope of 2,000 years, the Jews returned to their ancestral land and established the State of Israel so that never again would Jews be without a home and protection. With the birth of the State of Israel came the latest mutation of this last acceptable hatred, antisemitism in the guise of anti-zionism.

As much as I am about dialogue, I'll tell you why after the IHRA vote I turned down invitations to appear on CBC and other news media to debate with those who opposed the definition. It's not a good faith conversation. When a 15 year old girl posts "Shabbat shalom" on TikTok and is flooded with trolls who are like hashtag "free Palestine now B I T C H", there is nothing in that exchange that has anything to do with an actual place called Israel and I won't pretend that it does, its antisemitism plain and simple.

Or to put it a different way - claiming you aren't anti-semitic, just anti-Zionist is like a duck stuffed inside of a turkey, once you've done that they are inseparable.

That's the history. Kanye, Chappelle and all the others are just the latest in a millennia long list of those that see Jews as other, suspicious, dangerous or far worse.

But we must not see ourselves that way, we must not look at ourselves with antisemitic eyes. We must not allow the haters to define us.

As Bari Weiss claims in her book, if someone calls you a pig, you do not march outside claiming "I am not a pig." Weiss claims the way to react to antisemitism is not to grovel, but to live as proud self-identifying Jews.

We need to live our Jewish lives in a very public way. And we should proclaim not simply our love of Judaism, but our love of Zionism and Israel. Zionism does not mean that we agree with all the policies of the Israeli government. Many Israelis disagree with the policies of their government during any given administration, and in a democracy, just like in Canada or the US when enough people disagree with that government they vote them out. Zionism means the belief that the Jewish people, like the Canadian people, deserve a state of their own. And all say this, so do the Palestinians, and if they stopped claiming the existence of theirs requires the destruction of ours they would have had one decades ago when the UN offered partition or in my lifetime when peace talks were held.

So here is my answer to antisemitism.

When the antisemites stand on the street corner, freeway overpasses or the steps of city hall and hold up signs that say, "It's the Jews!" My answer is, "Damn right it's the Jews, and the world is better because of our contributions, our very existence!"

We cannot build an identity based on worrying about the attitudes of others towards us. We must focus on what we stand for and shape a positive, hopeful, joyful, authentic Jewish identity from that place of social conscience and moral responsibility.

I am proud of our people, proud of how in spite of our meager numbers we have made meaningful, transformative, life- and world saving contributions to society. I'm proud of our tradition, proud of our theology, ideology, customs, practices, and culture.

I am proud of Israel; how it made the desert bloom, how it's a functioning democracy, maybe more functional than most with its 5 elections in the last four years. Sometimes I am embarrassed by Israel, sometimes I am infuriated or ashamed by its policies or actions, but I am not responsible for them and as I told the City Council on Wednesday I have no more influence over what happens in Israel than I do in Great Britain; but its right to exist is not up for debate.

The rabbi of a local congregation asks an elderly congregant if she saw a certain article in a Jewish magazine. "Oh, I don't subscribe to it anymore," she replies.

"Which magazine do you read, then?" asks the rabbi.

"I read the Klansman," answers the elderly woman.

"The Klansman!" blurts out the rabbi. "That hate-filled, vile, no-good rag? How can you bear to have that filthy thing in your home?"

"You should understand, rabbi," says the lady. "I'm old and pain keeps me up at night. When I read our Jewish magazines, they tell me that anti-Semitism is on the rise, that arguments about who is a Jew are tearing our people apart, that intermarriage is destroying the fabric of our people and that the loss of our younger generation is accomplishing the decimation that Hitler, *yemach shmo*, wanted. Oy, I stay awake all night with worry. But, when I pick up a copy of the Klansman and read that the Jews control all the media, that their power grows every year, and that banks and international finance are in their hands, I sleep like a baby."

Friends, sleep well tonight, as Taylor Swift sang when Kanye disrupted her MTV Music Award acceptance speech back in 2009, "Haters gonna hate, so shake it off, shake it off."