

The White and Blue

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“Go back to Poland”: Responding to the Claim That Jews Should Return “Home” to Europe

Dylan Ifrah
Staff Writer



Art by: Zach Gross

Pro Palestinian activists often claim that since Israeli Jews are allegedly colonizers, they must have a country for them to go back to. In their collective imagination, these countries are almost always someplace in Europe. We often hear that Jews are really just Polish, Russian, Romanian, German, or Hungarian. But are these claims true? Can Israelis really pack their bags and go back “home”?

Before addressing these claims, it is important to note that today, the majority of Israelis are Mizrahi or Sephardic, meaning that their ancestors were mostly part of diaspora communities in North Africa and the Levant. The ancestors of these Jews lived in Arab countries such as Morocco, Egypt, and Iraq for thousands of years, and the vast majority never stepped foot in Europe. Today, these Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews make up 55% of Israel’s Jewish population, while Ashkenazim

(European) Jews make up around 45% of the Jewish population, with a large and growing portion of the population being of mixed ancestry.

These demographic and historical facts greatly diminish the claim that Jews are European. Regardless, it may still be worthwhile to investigate these claims.

Of course, one has to start with the Holocaust, the Nazi genocide of Europe’s Jews, in which six million of Europe’s nine million Jews were killed. However, the Holocaust was not an isolated event. Europe has a long history of Jewish presence - and antisemitism.

Before the Holocaust, most of Eastern Europe’s Jews lived in *shtetls* (isolated Jewish towns or settlements), where they spoke Yiddish and were completely removed from the non-Jewish societies of the places they lived in.

From 1791 to 1917, the Jews of Tsarist Russia were only allowed to live in a

specific region of the empire called the *Pale of Settlement* (comprised of Bulgaria, Moldova, and parts of Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland, and Latvia). Life in the Pale was hard and most Jews struggled to earn a living, working hard jobs where they earned meager pay. Most importantly, Jews were almost completely separated from their neighbors.

Jews were seen by their neighbors as foreigners and others, not as Europeans or locals. In Ukraine, during the 17th century Cossack Uprising, Jews were seen as allies of the Polish rulers, and were attacked and murdered on numerous occasions, suffering at least 10,000 deaths. In Poland, where 87% of Jews spoke Yiddish (not Polish) as their mother tongue in 1931, they were unsurprisingly not seen as Polish by ethnic Poles, but as Jewish. In Russia, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were published in the Russian newspaper *Znamia* in 1903. This text is the retelling of an invented set of 24 meetings, in which the authors imagine the Jews conspiring to create a global government in which all gentiles were to be enslaved.

Texts such as these were immensely popular in Russia and reinforced the notion of the Jew as a homeless, rootless traveler, whose only goal was to cause harm wherever he went. The trope of the Wandering Jew remained popular throughout the early twentieth century up to the rise of Nazi Germany, where the identification of the Jews as “other” reached its apex.

The 1935 Nuremberg Laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship, banned them from practicing professions such as law and medicine, classified those who were of mixed Jewish and German origin as *Mischlinge* (half-breeds), and forbade Jews from marrying Germans for fear they would poison the “pure” German

bloodline.

Indeed, the *Nuremberg Laws* made no reference to Judaism as a religion, and emphasized that Jews were **ethnically separate**. As a result, secular Jews, atheists, and Jews who had converted (or whose parents had converted) to Christianity were murdered in the Holocaust for being Jews. These laws represent hundreds of years of attitudes across Europe that saw Jews as a foreign people, whose presence in the lands they were visiting was not meant to, and would not last.

Ultimately, the answer lies in the name. The word “Jew” has nothing to do with the religious observances of the people who follow Judaism. It refers to *Judea*, the homeland of Judah, the most important tribe of ancient Israel, and the location of its most important city (Jerusalem) and site (the Holy Temple).

People who claim that Jews should go back home may be right. However, that home is not in Poland or Russia. The home of the Jews is the land they have continuously inhabited for over 3500 years, yearned for while in exile for 2000 years, and where their state exists today: Israel.

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Solidarity in Times of Division

Raihaana Adira

Director of Outreach and Allyship

In a moment where campuses across the world have become battlegrounds for political and ideological divides, on November 14th, a group of students from diverse religious backgrounds came together to create a space for dialogue, understanding, and solidarity at Concordia University. A Jew, a Christian, a Muslim, a Jain, and a Hindu walked into a bar—not to tell a joke, but to share their personal experiences on a campus grappling with division.

On this particular evening, which was organized by Drew Silver, a political science student at Concordia University in partnership with Allied Voices for Israel, students from different walks of life gathered in the spirit of unity, determined to bridge the gaps that

have widened over time. The discussion was framed by the events of October 7th, a pivotal moment that transcended religious boundaries, marking a turning point for many students regardless of their faith. The shockwaves of that day reverberated throughout campus, and while each student's perspective was shaped by their own background, the collective realization was that the need for unity was more urgent than ever.

The atmosphere in the room was filled with an infectious sense of hope, as voices from various faiths found common ground. There was a collective recognition that, despite their differences, these students were part of something bigger than themselves. They were united by a shared desire for a more harmoni-

ous, inclusive community at Montreal Universities — where all students feel safe, respected, and heard.

At the heart of the conversation was a call for action— suggestions ranged from creating a symbol or a color that could represent solidarity to championing systemic change on campus. The idea was not just to address surface-level issues, but to create a lasting impact through individual and collective action. By fostering dialogue, listening to one another, and understanding the experiences of others, the participants believed that they could begin to effect the changes needed for a more united community.

The consensus was clear: solidarity begins with each of us. The panelists stressed that true change comes from being the difference we wish to see in the world. It's not just about top-down reforms, but about fostering an environment where empathy and understanding can thrive—where systemic issues are tackled not only by policy



changes but through personal commitment and action.

The evening closed with a sense of optimism, and talks of doing it again soon. The hope is that this initial conversation will spark a larger movement, one that transcends differences and cultivates an atmosphere of support, respect, and shared humanity. By coming together in solidarity, these students exemplified the power of dialogue and the importance of building bridges in times of division.

Campuses everywhere can benefit from these kinds of conversations, where people from all backgrounds come together not just to debate but to listen, learn, and grow. This dialogue marks a turning point, a reminder that even in the midst of uncertainty, there is always hope for a better, more unified future.

Dvar Torah

Emmanuel Sorek

Dvar Torah Editor

We often view Chanukah as the holiday of lights, wherein the oil found in the Temple, which should have lit the Menorah for just one day, lasted for eight. We may even focus on the triumphant military victory the Maccabees had over the Greeks, despite being heavily outnumbered in manpower and artillery. However, the battle often overlooked is the war before the physical one on the battlefield—the spiritual battle that the Jewish people had to endure. Under Greek rule, Jews were forbidden to practice three key *mitzvot* (commandments): Shabbat, circumcision, and the calculation of the new moon (which determines the Jewish calendar and when we celebrate holidays).

The Greeks could have chosen to ban any *mitzvot*, as they had complete control over what was permitted or prohibited.

So why did they choose these three out of all 613? To answer this, let's delve into the specific importance and Jewish values behind each of these mitzvot.

Firstly, by prohibiting the observance of Shabbat, the Greeks sought to disrupt the Jewish people's ability to sanctify time. Every week, Shabbat offers us the opportunity to take the day God gave us and sanctify it through Kiddush, prayer, Torah reading, and abstaining from work.

**“Everyone get excited—
Chanukah is almost here!”**

The Greeks, who valued physical beauty and materialism, could not understand this. Shabbat transforms the material (like wine and bread) into something sacred through blessings and gratitude to God. This Jewish value directly contradicted Greek ideals, which likely intensified their desire to ban Shabbat. Secondly, why did the Greeks prohibit circumcision?

Circumcision represents the covenant between God and the Jewish people, beginning with Avraham, the first Jew. By banning it, the Greeks sought to erase this symbol of Jewish identity and force Jews to conform to Greek norms.

The Greeks prized bodily perfection, and circumcision was seen as an alteration of the naturally perfect human body. But the deeper meaning lies in the fact that circumcision is not merely a physical act; it's a spiritual declaration that Jews live under a covenant, one that emphasizes humility, self-discipline, and a connection to God—values that transcended the Greek focus on physical beauty.

Lastly, the Greeks prohibited the sanctification of the new moon and the calculation of the Jewish calendar, aiming to disrupt the Jewish cycle of holidays and communal gatherings. This mitzvah contrasts with the Greek view of time as cyclical and unchanging, while Judaism sees time as linear and filled with divine purpose.

As mentioned, we often speak of two main miracles of Chanukah: the miracle of the oil and the victory in battle. However, perhaps a third miracle is the fact that so many Jews remained faithful, even when threatened with death. Today, many Jews face challenges in maintaining their faith and belief in God and Judaism.

Thankfully, we do not experience it to the degree that Jews did during the time of Chanukah, but it remains a significant challenge. One thing we know for sure is that we will emerge stronger from this dark period, and we can already see the beginnings of that strength coming to light.

Whether it was after our slavery in Egypt, the Holocaust, or now after October 7th, we have always followed hardship with triumph, sadness with joy, and darkness with eternal light.

Chanukah Sameach!



Why did I make Aliyah?

Sara Hamaoui

In-the-Aretz Correspondent

Since moving to Israel, the thing that people want to know most about me is, simply put, why did I do it? Why did I leave my family, my home, and everything I've ever known in order to move across the world? It seems crazy to most people, especially Israelis. To them, living here has always been the norm, and they could never imagine leaving their homes, so I am an enigma to them. "Where are you from?" they ask me, expecting me to say something similar to everyone around me- Petach Tikva, Tel Aviv, Herzliya, Efrat, etc. So when I say Canada, jaws drop. No matter what I say, they cannot seem to understand what pushed me here.

When talking to other olot (people who made aliyah), the reactions are much different. When I tell them I made aliyah they just smile and nod. They congratulate and welcome me. Some even ask what took me so long. There seems to be an underlying understanding amongst the community of olot that we don't need to know each other's reasons because we already know them. We all have the same ones.

Honestly, when I think about it, it gets pretty hard to actually narrow down my move to one specific reason. For those of you reading this who are considering aliyah, this is important: you do not need to "have a reason" to have a reason. What I mean by this is that we are constantly pumped with inspirational videos and articles about people who made aliyah because of one pivotal moment in their life, or some longing that has been buried in them since their childhood, or something like that. But if that is not your reason, if you want to move simply because it is what you want, that's okay too.

That's where I fall. Throughout my entire childhood, I always resented Zionism. I thought it would take away everyone that I love because one of us

would move away. I thought I was being forced to believe in a country that had nothing to do with me. The last thing I wanted was to ever live in Israel. My dream was to go to university in America and get a fancy degree and live whatever life that entailed. Of course, things have changed since then, but I don't know if I could say exactly why.

There are a million reasons, and at the same time there are none. The most bare honest truth is that as soon as I stepped off the plane to go to seminary, I felt my soul ground itself. I had an overwhelming sensation of belonging and a satisfaction that I had never felt before in my life. Throughout the entire year, I felt as though I was sitting down and catching my breath for the first time. It was as if I had found exactly what I was looking for, without even knowing that I had been searching for something.

"The last thing I wanted was to ever live in Israel."

It took me a very long time to confront this and decide that I actually wanted to make the move. Making aliyah is a dream for many people, but I had decided to make it a reality. What made me different from everyone else? Nothing. I was just as unsure, and just as scared. But for me, it was and still is a no-brainer. How could I live with myself, after studying in the land of my ancestors for a year and learning about our history there, and

not stay? For 2,000 years, every single person in my ancestral line cried and yearned and begged to return to Israel, and I owed it to them to fulfill that wish. There was nothing that I could do about it. I knew in the deepest part of myself that that sense of relief and comfort I was feeling was the long line of people coming before me finally finding their place. I couldn't leave.

I wound up going back to Canada for two years to do cegep and in that time, my decision wavered. I love to tell people that going back only strengthened my resolve, but that's not true. My biggest fear was becoming a reality, and I was becoming comfortable in my life outside of Israel. Knowing that this was a fear of mine, I had to keep reminding myself every day that this was not permanent, and that I'd be leaving right after cegep. But every day I grew closer to my new friends and became more and more used to my life there.

I constantly had to imagine that I was in Israel, feeling that unadulterated joy that coated everything I did while in seminary in order to remember why I even wanted to move there in the first place. Looking back, it was clear that I didn't belong there.

I stopped praying and learning almost immediately, and wavered in a lot of other things that I had been very certain about up until that point. Chutz La'aretz (being outside of Israel) was not serving me well, but it's hard to see that in the moment.

And then, the war started. I won't get into it, everyone knows and understands the repercussions of that, both in and out of Israel. Essentially, I lost connections with many of my friends and faith in our secular communities. My hope for connections and life-building in Canada was dwindling more and more by the day. Every pro-Palestinian rally, every hate comment, every side glance, every threat, I couldn't handle it anymore. Many of my friends became incredibly powerful advocates during this hard time, but I knew that this level of hate was simply not something that I was prepared to confront every day.

I grew certain in my decision again. I was reminded of all my reasons for wanting to make aliyah in the first place. The comfort I was feeling turned into disdain and fear. I walked the streets with my shoulders slouched and my head down. I self-isolated at school because all my friends hated me. It was time. This was my dream, my plan, and I let it slip through my fingers. It was time to get back on the path to living the life I know I was meant to live.

And the rest is history.



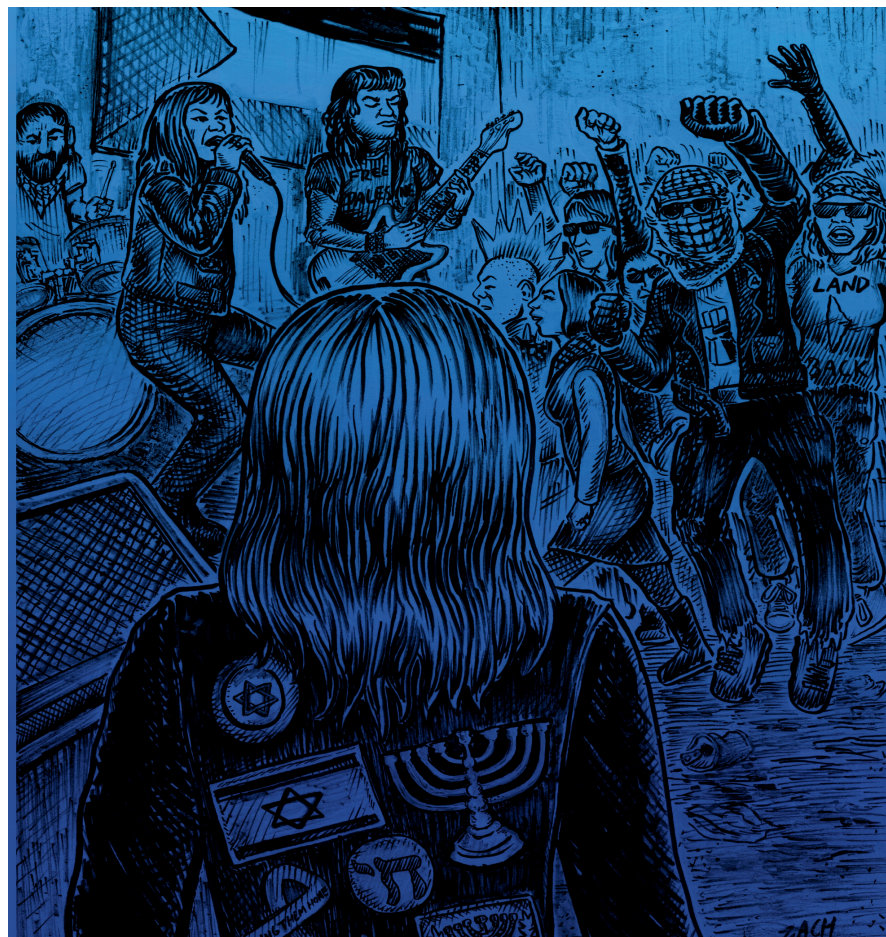
My punk community shut me out for being a Zionist

Eden Kojdan
Contributor

Since the tragic events of October 7th, there has been a noticeable increase in antisemitism around the world. Jewish people have been physically assaulted, verbally abused, and cyberbullied. Speaking out in support of Israel has led to online threats and harassment, making it a normal occurrence for many Jewish individuals who are vocal about the conflict between Hamas and Israel. This surge of hatred is fueled by misinformation and propaganda spread on social media. As a result, many in the Jewish community, myself included, feel vulnerable and diminished. By sharing my experience, I hope to shed light on the challenges we face in 2024 and emphasize the importance of standing up against hate to uphold the values of justice, humanity, and equality.

On October 7th, Hamas, a terroristic organization, infiltrated Israel and led a brutal attack against its civilians, killing over 1200 innocent civilians and taking over 250 hostages. The following days after the attack, for the first time in my life, Instagram was filled with people posting stories in support of Israel, but this was

too good to be true, or at least too good to last. As soon as Israel retaliated, the support was over. Israel was once again being called the perpetrator of terror. It truly felt like everybody closed the-



ir eyes to what happened to the civilians in Israel and ignored the fact that Israel was attacked first, simply because they are a land people claim does not deserve to exist. Young people my age also claim that Hamas's attack upon Israel was an act of resistance against the constant humiliation that Israel has brought upon Pales-

tinians- as if killing innocent people, raping women, and kidnapping civilians could be an act of resistance; this is terrorism in its truest form. Israelis must be the only people in

the world who, when attacked, get no empathy from the rest of the world, no empathy for the poor lost souls or the kidnapped innocents. This rise of anti Israel and pro Hamas movements has left a lot of us Jews feeling endangered. People walk around the streets of Montreal, my hometown, screaming that

the intifada resolution is the only solution. They openly support Hamas without even understanding the meaning behind their protests and endorsement. By supporting Hamas, they are calling for our destruction: the destruction of the Jewish people. Hamas's objective is to destroy the Jewish state of Israel and to kill Jewish people all around the world. Students who openly march in pro Palestinian protests like to say, "we like Jews, we just don't like Zionists". However, being a Zionist is simply believing that Jewish people have the right to exist in the land of Israel. They seem to be blind to the repercussions these protests have and the terror they bring with them. I have never felt more unsafe as a Jew in Canada, and it is absolutely absurd that going back to Israel seems like the safest option for me, knowing that there is war there right now. I'm constantly debating what's better: living in a country that gets bombed but still being able to openly be a Jew, or walking around a country that is supposed to be safe from war while constantly frightened to

express my Judaism. Antisemitism has become the new trend.

I am an Israeli-Jewish woman, and I am proud to be, even if it took me a long time to get here. Like any other Jewish person, my life completely changed after the events of October 7th. The rise of antisemitism has made fighting for my rights inevitable. In the past, I was never vocal about my Judaism because I grew up in a mentality of hiding. My family grew up in the Communist USSR, and hiding their religion was necessary because of the constant antisemitism present there. My dad once told me a story of when he was sent to the Russian army, the moment they heard his name they said, "wow, so sad, so young and already Jewish". I understand why hiding is something that my parents projected upon me, because they grew up that way. All to say that after October 7th I couldn't live with that mentality anymore, I felt the need to speak up, not only for my Jewish heritage but also for the fact that I was born and raised in Israel. October 7th truly was a call for action, a call for justice. When that horrible day happened, I was in shock. I have family in Netivot and Beersheva, and I couldn't even begin to tell you how scared I was for them.

Unfortunately, at the time, I still didn't know enough about the conflict to be able to defend myself properly, so I decided to go on a common ground trip, organized by Allied Voices for Israel, which is a group that unites Jewish students all over Canada against anti Jewish hatred.

This trip taught me a lot about the current conflict happening right now and has permitted me to see things from both sides. We met with both Palestinian and Israeli speakers. Visiting the Nova festival site was one of the most emotional moments of the trip for me, and after seeing so many people in tears, I started crying too. It felt like I was carrying this pain on my shoulders for way too long, and seeing people I know being personally affected by the attacks was too difficult to handle.

"I am an Israeli-Jewish woman, and I am proud to be, even if it took me a long time to get here."

In Canada, I was very present in the LGBTQ+ and punk community because they've always made me feel safe and supported. They always seemed to be fighting for what was right. When I was in Israel, I started posting stories about my trip, and those same people who I thought would protect me if anything happened started to insult me, calling me names like "dirty Zionist", and saying things like "you don't deserve to exist, all Israelis should die, shame on you, you guys are terrorists" etc. The more I started speaking about it, the

more people started shutting me out. I've lost more than 150 followers on Instagram, which I don't care about, but I do care about the fact that coming back, I've lost all my friends, besides my best friend who is also Jewish. It is crazy to me that the community I thought would be the safest completely shut me out. I can't even go to any punk events anymore because I am scared of what might happen.

The Queer community of Montreal marching and chanting for my death is very triggering: Singing "globalize the intifada" without knowing what it means, and screaming for gay rights in Gaza not knowing what would happen to them if they stepped foot there. Ever since I started using my voice to speak out for myself, for all Jews, and defending my right to exist, I constantly get hateful comments thrown at me. People who once used to be my friends (and some even more than that) reposted me on their stories, calling me names, laughing at me, saying that I'm complicit in "genocide" and trying to bully me into silence. Fortunately, I will never stop. I will stand my ground and stand up for what I believe in. I've spent too many years in silence, and I've spent too many years being afraid of what will happen if I do speak out. Through my struggle I found a place of belonging within the Jewish commun-

ity, and it is the most beautiful thing that could've happened to me. All these friends I used to have never truly appreciated me for who I was. It saddened me for a little while, but I've learned to understand the power of my truth.

I am writing this to let other Jewish students know that you are not alone, and that other people are going through the same struggles as you. I know how hard it is to fight every day for your right to exist, but as Jewish people we've always been persecuted, and we've always come out of it stronger. We are stronger together and as a community. This is a grave issue, and we should be standing together to combat it. Sending you all my love and don't hesitate to reach out to me, I am open to meeting all of you. Am Yisrael Chai.

"Through my struggle I found a place of belonging within the Jewish community, and it is the most beautiful thing that could've happened to me."

The History of Hanukkah

Samuel Levkovsky

Op-ed Editor



Art by: Zach Gross

The story of Hanukkah is a concrete and clear example of Jewish resistance against occupying forces. In today's day and age, words like colonizer, occupiers, and settlers are pervasive, denigrating their very accuracy. The story of Hanukkah recontextualizes these words with far greater precision and respect to those who have actually been subject to colonization.

In roughly 300 BCE, Alexander the Great invaded Judea (the Judean kingdom of Israel at the time) and began ruling over the population. Unlike some conquerors of the past, Alexander was known for allowing a certain degree of cultural autonomy to the regions under his rule. However, his conquests marked the beginning of widespread Hellenistic influence in Judea. Later, after his death, his vast empire fractured, and Judea became part of the Seleucid Empire, ruled by one of Alexander's generals' successors. For a time, the Seleucids governed relatively peacefully, allowing the Jewish population to practice their religion without interference. This initial peace, however, would soon be shattered.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, ascending to the throne of the Seleucid Empire in 175 BCE, took a markedly different approach. Unlike his predecessors, Antiochus aggressively promoted Hellenism, a cultural movement emphasizing Greek language, religion, and customs. He sought to homogenize his empire under Greek culture, seeing it as a unifying force. However, this policy led to significant tension in Judea where many Jews deeply valued their traditional practices and rejected Hellenistic assimilation. Antiochus pressured Jews to adopt Greek religious practices, prohibited fundamental Jewish customs such as circumcision and Sabbath observance, and erected altars to Greek gods.

To consolidate his control, Antiochus also sought to divide the Jewish population by supporting the Hellenistic Jews—those who had embraced Greek culture—against traditionalists who resisted it. This division reached its peak when Antiochus began expelling advocates for traditional Judaism, labelling them as rebels, and driving them into Syrian territories. In 167 BCE, his

actions escalated further when he desecrated the Second Temple in Jerusalem, installing a massive statue of Zeus within its sacred walls. This act of sacrilege was compounded by his looting of the temple's treasures, many of which were of immense spiritual significance to the Jewish people. Some of these items are famously depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome, which commemorates later Roman victories over the Jewish people.

To further insult Jewish traditions, Antiochus ordered the slaughter of pigs on the altar—a blatant affront to Jewish dietary laws, which prohibit the consumption or use of pigs as unclean animals. This defilement of the holiest place in Judaism was not only a religious attack but also a symbolic act of domination meant to demoralize the Jewish population. Yet, rather than breaking their spirit, it sparked a fierce and unprecedented resistance.

Mattathias, one of the Jewish high priests, refused to comply with Antiochus's decrees. When a royal official demanded that he participate in Hellenistic sacrifices, Mattathias not only refused but also killed the official, sparking the beginning of the rebellion. Along with his five sons, he fled into the mountains, where they began organizing a resistance movement. This marked the start of what would become known as the Maccabean Revolt.

After Mattathias's death, leadership of the revolt passed to his son Judah Maccabee. Judah, a brilliant strategist and charismatic leader, unified a disparate group of fighters into a formidable force. Known as the Maccabees, this group defied the odds. Despite being vastly outnumbered, out-resourced, and poorly equipped compared to the Seleucid armies, they employed guerrilla warfare tactics with remarkable effectiveness. Fighting in the rugged terrain of the Judean hills, the Maccabees successfully launched surprise attacks on the Seleucid forces, gradually wearing them down.

In 164 BCE, the Maccabees achieved a turning point: the miraculous recapture of Jerusalem. They reclaimed the Second Temple, which had been desecrated and defiled by Antiochus. This victory was seen as nothing short of divine intervention, given the overwhelming odds they faced. The rededication of the temple was a deeply symbolic act of resilience and renewal. The Maccabees set about purifying the temple, rebuilding the altar, and removing the remnants of Hellenistic sacrilege.

It was during this rededication that the second miracle of Hanukkah occurred. Amid the ruins, the Maccabees discovered a single jar of consecrated olive oil, still sealed and pure according to Jewish law. This jar contained enough oil to light the temple's menorah for only one night. Yet, miraculously, the oil burned for eight days—long enough for new oil to be prepared. This event became the spiritual heart of Hanukkah, symbolizing faith, perseverance, and the enduring light of Jewish tradition.

The word "Hanukkah," meaning dedication, reflects this profound commitment to faith and identity. Hanukkah's story directly challenges modern narratives that distort Jewish history, particularly accusations of Jewish colonialism. The Maccabees' fight was not an act of conquest, but rather a defense of their ancestral homeland, traditions, and identity. Their resistance was born from centuries of unbroken connection to the land and a refusal to let that connection be severed.

Today, the story of Hanukkah resonates deeply. Jewish people continue to face existential threats on multiple fronts—from Iran to Gaza, from Yemen to global propaganda. Yet, as in antiquity, they remain steadfast, dedicated to preserving their culture, traditions, and homeland. Resistance to colonial rule can only be authentic when it arises from true indigeneity and oppression. The story of Hanukkah is yet another empirical piece of evidence affirming that the Jewish people are indigenous to the land of Israel. For over two thousand years, their resilience and dedication have remained unwavering, serving as both a historical truth and an enduring inspiration.

Antisemitism at Dawson College: A Call for Change

Tyler Frankel
Contributor

The rise of antisemitism on college campuses is alarming and must be addressed immediately. As a Jewish student myself, I have personally encountered this disturbing trend, but today I want to shed light on the experiences of my close friend Maria, a Jewish student with an Israeli background, who has been targeted at Dawson College. Her story is a chilling reminder of the dangerous hostility Jewish students face, and why Dawson College needs to act now.

Since October 7th, Maria has been repeatedly attacked for her religion and heritage. These attacks haven't just come from fellow students but from teachers and even the Dawson Student Union, revealing a deep-rooted problem on campus. In classrooms, where politics and religion should have no bearing on academic discussions, Maria has been singled out and harassed. Students have accused Israel of committing genocide, referred to Israel as a police state, and callously told Maria to "stop complaining about Israel being attacked because they have bomb shelters." These insensitive and discriminatory remarks not only generalize and target Maria based on her Jewish identity, but also minimize the trauma and fear experienced by many Israelis, including her own family.

The hostility doesn't end with students. Some teachers at Dawson College have told Maria they attend pro Palestinian rallies, and even claimed that "there is no antisemitism on campus." Denying the existence of antisemitism while Jewish students like Maria face daily harassment is both hypocritical and dangerous. This is not just about differing political opinions—it's about a systemic issue of discrimin-

ation that is being swept under the rug.

Outside the classroom, Maria has also been targeted on social media. A student who serves as the president of the Pro Palestine club on campus sent Maria aggressive messages accusing her of spreading "propaganda" simply for raising awareness about the hostages currently held by Hamas in Gaza. She was called Islamophobic for supporting Israel, and her pro-Israel stance was repeatedly attacked. This type of harassment on social platforms, aimed at silencing Jewish voices, is yet another form of antisemitism that cannot be tolerated.

Perhaps the most shocking example of antisemitism on campus is the threat of a first warning from the Dawson Student Union to the Dawson Jewish Student Association because of its Pro Israel stance. This is not only discriminatory but deeply hypocritical, especially when Pro Palestinian groups like "Teachers for Palestine" are allowed to openly display Palestinian flags and posters across campus without any repercussions. A 2024 study from Pew Research Center found that 77% of Jewish people support Israel in its fight against Hamas and for its sovereignty. To threaten the existence of a Jewish Student Association based on this widespread belief is a blatant violation of freedom of expression and a clear act of antisemitism.

What Maria has endured at Dawson College is not an isolated incident—it reflects a larger problem of growing antisemitism on campuses across North America. Jewish students are being marginalized, their voices suppressed, and their safety jeopardized.

Dawson College, like all educational institutions, has a responsibility to create an inclusive and safe environment for all students. It is unacceptable that Jewish students like Maria feel threatened simply for expressing their views or practicing their religion.

The leadership at Dawson College—including Director General Diane Gauvin, Academic Dean Leanne Bennett, and faculty members—must take immediate action. Jewish students deserve to feel safe on campus, and the college has a moral obligation to protect them from harassment and discrimination.

Dawson College prides itself on being a place of acceptance, and it's time they live up to that standard by addressing the antisemitism that has been allowed to fester.

It's time to make a change. Jewish students like Maria and I should not have to live in fear of being attacked for who we are or what we believe. Antisemitism has no place in our society, and certainly no place in our academic institutions. Dawson College must act now to stand against hate, and ensure that all students, regardless of their background, are treated with dignity and respect.



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