

Elon Musk: I'm not antisemitic, I'm 'aspirationally Jewish'

He also claimed, despite evidence to the contrary, that antisemitism has dropped on Twitter since he bought it

By Lauren Markoe

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Elon Musk, accused by Jewish organizations and rabbis of trafficking in antisemitism on his social media platform, called himself “aspirationally Jewish” in a live chat Thursday on X, formerly known as Twitter.

While numerous organizations have charted a rise in antisemitic posts on X since Musk bought it in October 2022, he said the number has actually dropped — but did not give specifics.

Musk also critiqued antisemitism on the left and discussed his conversations with Kanye West — the rapper he welcomed back to the platform despite his spate of antisemitic rants. And when asked to join a trip to Auschwitz with Rabbi Menachem Margolin of the European Jewish Association, Musk waffled, saying that he had seen pictures of concentration camps and was well informed about the Holocaust. He later seemed to change his mind, and said “consider it a tentative yes,” mentioning that he was headed to the region anyway.

Right-wing pundit Ben Shapiro, who hosted the two-hour conversation for his *Daily Wire* podcast, introduced Musk as the victim of an unfair campaign that blames X as a “supposed source of rising hate speech.” He and several other well-known Jewish men, including Natan Sharansky, Alan Dershowitz and former Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, took turns lobbing friendly questions at Musk, who tried to establish his affinity for Jews at the outset. He said he had gone to a Jewish pre-school, that “Elon” is an Israeli name and that he had been to Israel twice. And Musk said he surrounds himself with Jews.

“I’m aware of that old sort of trope of like, you know, ‘I have a Jewish friend,’” Musk said. “I don’t have a Jewish friend. I think probably, I have twice as many Jewish friends as non-Jewish friends. That’s why I think I like to think I’m Jewish basically.”

Jews without kids

Musk also said that a number of his Jewish friends have no children, and that he wishes they would procreate.

“These are people who are incredibly smart and talented,” he said. “They have a great heart that you want more of them in the world.” He added, in a light-hearted tone, “Just do it for humanity, man.” Population decline is a frequent topic discussed by Musk, who has 10 children, and he claims it is a bigger problem than climate change.

He also called people who don’t approve of having large families “an ingrown toenail of the environmental movement.”

Others on the call, which attracted more than 245,000 listeners, included Rabbi Ari Lamm, an Orthodox scholar and podcaster, and Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, the author and onetime Republican congressional candidate.

When the conversation was first advertised, some critics asked why there was so little diversity in the speakers’ viewpoints, and no women on the chat. Others asked why Anti-Defamation League chief Jonathan Greenblatt, who has called out X and Musk for tolerating and spreading antisemitism, was not included in the discussion. Musk threatened to sue the ADL earlier this month, blaming it for scaring away advertisers and a \$4 billion loss in revenue at X.

The Kanye West issue

Musk also spoke of the “many” conversations he has had with rapper Kanye West, who has changed his legal name to Ye and who has been widely condemned for his antisemitic outbursts and social media posts. Musk said he couldn’t figure out where West’s anger was coming from, and that he tried to appeal to his Christianity.

He said he told West that if he believed in Christian values, that he should act according to them. He added, “Can we turn an antisemite into someone who is at least neutral if not pro?”

Musk met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week in another attempt to show that he is not antisemitic.

Denying antisemitism

Musk has insisted that he is “pro free speech, but against anti-Semitism of any kind.” Jews outside the ADL are also trying to call attention to antisemitism on X.

More than 100 Jewish activists on Tuesday released a letter asking major advertisers to end their relationship with X, calling it “a breeding ground for antisemitism” that “represents one of the largest dangers to Jews in years.”

The signatories, who now number about 150, also called on Apple and Google to remove the platform from their app stores, which would effectively make X’s app inaccessible to the vast majority of mobile users. Shortly before Shapiro’s conversation, one of the organizer’s of the letter, progressive activist Elad Nehorai, said that although no companies had yet agreed to their call to action, he was pleased with the publicity the letter was getting, with coverage in, among other outlets, the *Daily Beast*, CBS News and the Jewish press.

“We have watched in horror as a new stage in antisemitic discourse has spread like wildfire on one of America’s largest social media networks,” the letter reads. “All of this has been facilitated and enabled by its owner: Elon Musk.”

Mira Fox and JTA contributed to this report.

Correction: An earlier version of this article misidentified the name and position of Rabbi Ari Lamm. His first name is Ari, not Avi, and he is currently a rabbi, not formerly one.

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