

American Jews' Paradoxical Allegiance to the Democratic Party

by **Norman Berdichevsky** (September 2010)

Time and time again, I read in websites and blogs around the internet the question and puzzling paradox posed by Gentiles who strongly support Israel, how can it be that so many Jews continue to blindly vote for ultra-liberal causes that are inherently ultra-critical of Israel and even subliminally of Jews.

One of my favorite songs taken from the Hollywood musical South Pacific has the hero sing the haunting refrain "Some Enchanted Evening" and plaintively pose the question...."Who can explain it; Who can tell me why? Fools give you answers; Wise men never try!" At the risk of playing the fool, I shall try to explain it and tell you why. The reason I dare to, is that among those who voted for Senator McCain and opposed Obama from the very start are Jews, like myself, who grew up in families and amidst environments where Jewish espousal of liberal and Left Wing causes was inherited. We have, however, demonstrated by now that, although Jewish Liberalism is an inherited disease, it is not incurable. Former White House Secretary Ari Fleischer likes to tell the story that when his parents became aware of his involvement in Republican activities in college, they commiserated with their neighbors and friends by exclaiming that "at least he is not a drug-addict."

The American Liberal Jews, whose identity has been stamped three generations ago by their grandparents under FDR continue to picture themselves as enlightened and the true inheritors of the mantle of Jewish concerns for "social justice," followed the Pied Piper of Chicago wherever he led, oblivious to all the evidence amassed and catalogued and shouted from the roof tops in 2008. He sat in Reverend Wright's church

for 20 years and couldn't hear what anybody could determine from a few minutes listening to the same old antisemitic rhetoric used by the country's most well known antisemite, Louis Farrakhan.

Some prominent American Jews, particularly among those who cannot escape the narcotic-like trance they have inherited as "progressives" and are essentially secular and ultra-critical of capitalism and American society with its underlying Christian values, have developed a new kind of psychological self-hatred to exhibit a disassociation from the State of Israel and their religious heritage. They are upset over the close Israeli-American friendship and wish to be absolved from the heinous charge that they once may have actually subscribed to a sense of Jewish solidarity when that meant only solidarity with victimhood – the Jews as eternal martyrs.

Now, that Jewish solidarity is politically incorrect and Israel is so resented as a successful and prosperous society by so many among the world's poor and "oppressed," they must seek compensation and expiation from their fellow "progressives" by identifying with the prevailing winds of antisemitism disguised as anti-Zionism. What has changed over the past 40 years is that many prosperous and decadent Europeans and Americans feel embarrassed by the Israelis' gallant defense of their homeland against great odds.

The Diaspora Jewish critics of Israel easily see its many flaws (both real and imagined) among which, the worst is that Israel, like America is a "privileged" society, enjoying wealth amidst a world of misery. Why should American Liberal Jews renounce their previous worship of the Hollywood Celebrity Cult of "cool", proclaimed in dozens of Woody Allen movies? This fitting idol of the Jewish Cultural Left (there is a statue in his honor in the Spanish city of Oviedo) granted an interview to the Spanish newspaper, Vanguardia, on May 17 in which he stated *"I am pleased with Obama. I think he's brilliant" The Republican Party should get out of his way and stop trying to hurt him. It would be good....if he could be a dictator for a few years because he could do a lot of good things quickly.*" This from the man who is a major critic of Israel which he has

never visited, made a career out of ridiculing Jewish tradition, mocked his parents and changed his name, and married his former wife's adopted daughter.

Some Jews in the Diaspora whose parents and grandparents rejoiced at the rebirth of Israel in 1948 and regarded it mystically as partial compensation for the Holocaust, have been psychologically intimidated by the constant anti-Israel line of the media and of the torrent of bloody confrontations picturing enraged Muslim mobs ready for constant mayhem to avenge what they regard as the worst injustice in human history (i.e. the creation of the Jewish State rather than the failure to establish an Arab Palestinian state).

A considerable number of American Jews who opposed the Vietnam War became alienated from America's role in the world. Many of them and their children grew estranged from the Israel their grandparents had hoped for in the sentimental image of old radicals transplanted from Europe who were delighted with the impoverished Jewish society in Palestine based on the egalitarian kibbutz and socialism but the powerful, prosperous, dynamic and successful capitalistic Israeli society, a world leader in sophisticated advanced technologies and a close ally of the United States embodied a double disappointment for them.

J-Street and Z-Street

The anti-Israel mantra they hear on all sides from the political Left and their fellow "progressives" has become a substitute for historical truth. They are the organizers and members of the newly founded J-Street, describing itself as*"Mainstream American Jews and other supporters of Israel who, informed by their progressive and Jewish values, believe that a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential to Israel's survival as the national home of the Jewish people and as a vibrant democracy."*

It accepts hook, line and sinker the Obama Party Line that people like the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, whose Ph.D. dissertation essentially denies the Holocaust and refuses to acknowledge that Israel can define itself as a Jewish State is a "partner," and calls on the Treasury department to investigate any Jewish or Christian charity that in any way aids Jews who live in any part of "Palestine" across the Green Line Cease Fire Lines of 1949. Its two-faced approach is all the more grotesque given its concerns and hand-wringing over the lack of progress towards the creation of a 23rd independent Arab state while pooh-poohing an existential threat to Israel from Iran, its thug-ocracy and repeated vows to wipe the country off the face of the map. It has sparked the formation of Z-Street by those Jews who realize that J-Street are bagmen for the Democratic Party and that Obama has been a colossal fraud with the Jewish vote in his pocket.

The Jewish martyr complex of J-Street is drawn primarily from the deeply felt need to imitate both Christ and the ultra-Orthodox in their search for perfection and as proof of their superior role as a "Light unto the Gentiles." It is the reverse of the Muslim one that seeks death as a vindication of beliefs that Islam must subdue and dominate all non-Muslims. This is what leads the inane Jewish Mayor, Michael Bloomberg of New York, to support the building of a Muslim "community center/mosque" near ground zero of the Twin Towers in Manhattan or Job Cohen, Amsterdam's Jewish mayor, (his first name could not be more apt), to dismiss a need for Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands to learn Dutch and make serious efforts to integrate into the host society.

Their views have become grotesque and only invite utter contempt from the enemies of Western civilization as well as sworn anti-Semites. J-Street's leading figures delight in proclaiming the very large Jewish majority that voted for Obama but are deluded with the sad facts of American politics that support for Obama is strongest among so called "intellectuals" (particularly among Ivy League graduates including many Jews, Hollywood celebrities, so called journalists, young single women, Hispanics, Muslims, Blacks and the impoverished welfare dependent poor), all of which reinforces their allegiance to the liberal "cause" while

ignoring the other side of the coin that this support rules out just about everyone else.

The Democratic Party was widely regarded for the first 150 years of its existence on the national scene as the party of slavery and segregation. Most American Jews including new immigrants looked askance on the mistreatment of blacks and segregation that was so much an ingrained aspect of life in the South, and many parts of the rural Mid-West, identified in the minds of Catholics and Jews as the White Anglo-Saxon and Protestant heartland. The lynching victims included a Jew, Leo Frank, in one-party Democratic Georgia in 1916, sending shock waves through the community. President Wilson, who had originally attracted considerable Jewish support for his idealism, was later revealed as a racist, entirely sympathetic to the Ku Klux Klan (see the film "Birth of a Nation"). His wholesale violation of the civil rights of any opponents to American entry into World War I in April, 1917 as an ally of Russia was offensive to many Jews. It is no wonder that in the 1920 elections to Congress, ten Jews were elected on the Republican ticket, one from the Socialist Party while the only two veteran Jewish Democratic Congressmen were both defeated.

Nevertheless, the Democratic Party machines in the big cities, especially New York (Tammany Hall), Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia among others were successful in providing services, jobs and patronage to new immigrants establishing their upward social mobility. They successfully posed as the protectors of immigrants from a Republican Party, demonized as the bastion of nativist sentiment, ultra-conservative social mores such as Prohibition and Sunday Blue Laws that discriminated against Jewish merchants. The Democrats also ridiculed the Republicans as supporters of an "elitist" Anglophile foreign policy, historically identified with the upper class. The last charge helped cement Irish Catholic loyalty for the Democrats both before and especially during the early years of World War I prior to American entry into the conflict.

Foreign policy added enormously to the reasons most Jews eventually came to support the Democrats overwhelmingly since the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who quickly became identified with an activist line to

help support Great Britain and express opposition to the Nazi plans for German expansionism. Following *Krystallnacht on November 10, 1938*, the President's strong criticism of German conduct (our ambassador to Germany was recalled) towards its Jewish population made his support among Jews unshakeable although the following should be remembered....

1. In the 1932 election against Herbert Hoover, foreign policy played no significant role for Jewish voters. The Nazis had not yet seized power in Germany. In 1936, the Republican candidate Alf Landon, selected by the isolationist wing of the Republican Party was an outspoken supporter of NO European entanglements and "America First" making it seem that he would not be as outspoken as FDR regarding German anti-Semitism.

2. Neither Roosevelt nor his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, had expressed any official policy criticizing Germany's internal affairs until *Krystallnacht* and expressed no opinion whatsoever on a proposed boycott of the 1936 Olympic Games held in Munich.

3. In 1940, Jewish votes were also captured by FDR even though the Republican candidate, Wendell Wilkie, represented the most internationalist and activist wing of the party, who shared much the same sentiment as FDR regarding the need to aid Britain and eventually have to come to terms with confronting Nazi Germany and Japan.

It deeply discomforts many Jews today that once again, as in the period just before the Holocaust, "they" (The Israelis and by implication, all "the Jews") are in the world's headlines and constantly viewed by "world opinion" as a source of aggravation stemming from the deep seated grievances of the Palestinians (and by extension, all the Arabs and to all the Muslims and by further extension to all the "colored peoples" of the "Third World") that spills over what should have been a squabble over Middle Eastern borders to a world-wide confrontation between civilizations, one in which many Jews are profoundly disturbed by being cast in the image (no matter how unrealistic and false) of the "white oppressor" (the canard of the Reverend Wright, and Louis Farrakhan).

What makes this all the more absurd is that American Jews and especially

Jewish Liberals are probably 97% of Ashkenazi (East European) descent and are apparently unaware or unmoved by the fact that a majority of Israel's Jewish population are of Afro-Asian-Sephardi descent and in many cases, as dark-skinned as Obama. Nevertheless, many Liberal Jews argue that their understanding of Judaism (or what they perceive as their ethical heritage) requires a commitment to "social justice" and are fond of the expression "*Tikkun Olam*" (Repairing the World), that has become the byword and title of the Jewish Far Left and their journal of the same name.

As argued cogently by biblical scholars not in the thrall of apologizing for the Democratic Party and author Hillel Halkin in his article "How Not to Repair the World" (Commentary, July-August, 2008), the expression "*Tikkun Olam*" is not the automatic Liberal agenda on social and economic policy so fondly embraced by a majority of the Jewish electorate – including abortion, feminism, pacifism, opposition to gun rights, affirmative action, environmental conservation, etc. On almost all these issues, observant Jews are fundamentally at odds with the Secular/Liberal Jewish majority. Basically, the thrust of *Tikkun Olam* is in the opposite direction... "For the Sake of the Public Interest", rather than "Repairing the World." It was this concept that was cited by many rabbis in the Middle Ages when they ruled that Jewish communities should not rescue Jewish captives taken by pirates if it meant paying an excessive ransom. To do so would actually encourage more attempts at kidnapping and put the entire community at greater risk.

Indeed, several varying concepts are embraced under the terms "*Tikkun Olam*" but the predominant one that emerged from the two great failed revolts of Judea against Roman rule in 70 and 135 A.D. that ended Jewish independence for almost two thousand years, was the fundamental need NOT for prophetic utopian visions but the necessity for laws, authority, routines, and organization to prevent future wild and unrealistic messianic fervor. It is also this dichotomy that exists in the two visions that captured Jewish imagination in the 19th century before mass immigration to America – Socialism and Zionism; the former being an end of days vision of a utopian universalist future to lead the rest of the

world by example and the latter, a realistic attempt to live as much as possible a normal existence as a free people charged with the full responsibility of achieving an autonomous community responsible for its own order and progress.