

Being a Diaspora Jew on Oct 7, 2024



by Roger L. Simon

I am a diaspora Jew, meaning a Jew who lives outside Israel, for those who may not know what that is.

It is the afternoon of Oct 7, 2024, exactly a year since Hamas terrorists (or “militants” if you prefer the rhetoric of the Associated Press and others) stormed across the border to murder and rape/murder 1,206 Israelis and others of various nationalities (some dual). They didn’t stop to examine passports.

The terrorists took 251 hostages into the Gaza Strip of whom 97 are still held captive, an unknown number still alive.

The mastermind of this cosmic insanity that has resulted in Israel mired in a seven on one war for its survival—Yahya Sinwar—is alternatively dead or alive, depending on whom you want to believe. Recently, the Daily Mail tells us he is alive because he constantly surrounds himself with twenty hostages and twenty-five pounds of TNT.

I am typing this from my comfortable home in Nashville, TN, waiting to attend a memorial event in this city tonight. Similar events are occurring or have already occurred in Israel and elsewhere.

It has become increasingly clear of late that the previously heavily divided Israeli public is becoming more united than it has been in years, understanding that they are now as a people together in that battle for survival, essentially alone except for very intermittent support from the USA.

That support is likely to become more unreliable if the Harris/Walz team is elected. In that instance, it's easy to imagine it withering away altogether.

That has left me with a rather uncomfortable feeling. I'm not feeling personally vulnerable. As a commenter on the Substack pointed out, I am 80—what can they do to me now?

But I am more than a little bit uncomfortable for coming generations of American Jews, for all diaspora Jews, not just here. Ones in Europe are not having a great time of it lately.

I have read the polls of the younger generation in our country, almost completely illiterate about the history of the region and thoroughly propagandized by a heavily-biased educational system. The history of the Jewish people throughout time, even the recent history, is either unknown or irrelevant to them.

Nevertheless, the temptation to live an ostrich-like existence is obvious and has been so in America for a long time. Although at about the age of seven (circa 1950) my doctor father showed me the number tattoos from Auschwitz on the arms of the nurses in his New York office, I spent most of my life far from the line of racial and ethnic fire, sometimes making an effort to improve civil rights for black people but never thinking it could happen to me or mine.

I am reminded now of my naivete.

Many years ago, on my first trip to Israel (early 1980s) I speculated about making *Aliyah* (literally "ascent"), emigrating to Israel. It was idle speculation then. My ambitions were in America and the comparative austerity of Israeli life then seemed daunting. Maybe I was coddled.

Today, I feel somewhat differently, but I am working through it in a novel I am writing. Philip Roth must have had similar issues when he wrote "[The Counterlife](#)" (1987) about the

doppelganger of his hero novelist Nathan Zuckerman who lived in a tiny desert settlement in the West Bank, not that I would choose that particular fate.

Still, I feel as if I now have two reasons to vote for Donald Trump in this election, one as a loyal American citizen to help save its foundational principles and one for the survival of my faith in which I have recently found greater interest and solace.

These two could be considered as one because America is a Judeo-Christian country at that foundation. Its Jewish and Christian citizens exist on a continuum, although not all of them realize it.

This doesn't exclude other faiths from our country—and shouldn't. But those faiths, though sometimes related, do not emerge out of the same principles. Those Judeo-Christian principles are where the Bill of Rights, so in jeopardy at this moment, really sprung from. They are what made America America.

All forms of totalitarianism, these days mainly communist/oligarchic or Islamist, both of which seem to be allied at the moment, are inimical to the founding of both the giant constitutional republic that is the USA and Israel's smaller parliamentary democracy. We are in so many ways joined at the hip with Israel being the reluctant, unfortunately chosen (to use that word), tip of the spear defending Western Civilization.

One would hope on this anniversary of Oct 7 some would wake up to that, including especially the too many Jews who still vote against the more obvious than ever interests of their own people. That Trump is the overwhelming favorite in Israel seems of little interest to them or even a reason to reject that one small Jewish nation in the world. To say that this is short-sighted thinking is an understatement.

It is starting to become more dangerous for a Jew to live in the diaspora than it is in Israel, despite the missiles and the bomb shelters .

This may not yet be the time for all American Jews to make *Aliyah*, but it's more than a little bit good to know that it's there.

OF INTEREST

President Trump spent Oct. 7 at a location many of us—I think we can safely include Argentina's President Milei in this—consider arguably the [holiest place](#) in American Judaism. Visible in the photo at top, it is the Ohel, the burial place of the Chabad Rebbe Mendel Schneerson and those are prayers/wishes thrown into his grave much as they are placed between cracks in the Kotel/Western Wall in Jerusalem.

NOT A GREAT TIME FOR SELF-PROMOTION BUT ...

You might find of interest this [podcast interview with me](#) from the estimable [Ed Clay Show](#) just live today. It's also, I understand, available at all the usual other podcast popsicle stands.