

The Political Dilemma for Jews Today

Repelled by the GOP, they are attacked in the Democratic Party.

By Joseph Epstein, June 29, 2026



President Trump speaks in Washington, 9-19-2024

No small blessing that Donald Trump isn't Jewish, as many New York real estate moguls have been. A Jewish President Trump could have increased and intensified the antisemitism now rampant in the U.S. and Europe. I wouldn't be keen to have had Mr. Trump among my coreligionists.

Mr. Trump has been accused of everything from fascism and monarchism to simple wretched taste. The one thing one can't justly accuse him of is antisemitism. A saying has it that one isn't really Jewish unless one's grandchildren are Jewish. Mr. Trump has Jewish grandchildren, through his daughter Ivanka's conversion and marriage to Jared Kushner. Mr. Trump has done more than any other American president to benefit the Jews, from his locating the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem to standing by Benjamin Netanyahu throughout the recent conflict in the Middle East.

Politicians never seem more phony than when they invoke religion to disguise their lust for power. A candidate who claims he seeks to do God's work is appalling. Proclaiming one's own deep religiosity is the ultimate virtue signal.

Mr. Trump has never sunk so low, though when he does strike the religious note—at the National Prayer Breakfast, or when dealing with clergy—he is less than convincing. The one thing he really believes in, one senses, is himself.

What Stalin and Hitler, and current-day extremists of left and right, have in common is antisemitism. Without the Jews, so goes their supposition, the world would be a better place. Why should this be so? That the Jews have combined the learning of both the West and the Orient, that Jews have survived millennia of persecution, that they have provided some of the greatest intellectual and artistic figures the world has known—all this, for the antisemites, counts for nothing. Instead, the more Jews succeed, the more they seem to be despised. That old rigged coin has long come into play against them: heads they lose, tails they also lose.

If Mr. Trump were Jewish, would many Jews leave the Democratic Party, where they have long found a political home, to vote for him? It seems doubtful. This isn't only because of his vanity, his crudity and his immodesty, but because the Jews have a problem with Republicans generally. They bear the party a historical grudge. Years ago, when quotas were set to keep Jews out of Ivy League and other elite colleges, Republicans set those quotas. When Jews couldn't be hired by large corporations, those corporations were run by Republicans. When Jews were restricted from large neighborhoods, those neighborhoods were lived in by Republicans. Growing up in a Jewish neighborhood in Chicago, I never met a Jewish Republican until I went to university.

Meanwhile the Democratic Party, in its leftward swing, a strong plank of which is its anti-Israel position, has itself become less hospitable to the Jews. Repelled by the Republican Party, attacked within the current-day Democratic Party, the Jews, with nowhere to turn, find themselves politically homeless. Theirs is a true dilemma, off whose horns no easy exit is apparent.

Mr. Epstein is author, most recently, of "Never Say You've Had a Lucky Life."

Why I'm a Jewish Republican

FDR kept the gates of America closed to Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

Wall Street Journal – Letter to the Editor, by Stuart Creque, Moraga, Calif., July 2, 2026

Regarding Joseph Epstein's "[The Political Dilemma for Jews Today](#)" (June 29): I'm a Jewish Republican who left the Democratic Party in the early 1990s when it became apparent that the Democrats opposed the defense of Kuwait against a brutal invader.

I realized then that if Israel ever came under a similar threat, the Democrats would leave her to die. Since then, I've felt at home in the Republican Party, and my prediction about the Democrats has come to pass.

Mr. Epstein remembers Republicans setting college quotas and restricting neighborhoods and clubs, but he forgets that Democrats were hardly any better: Franklin D. Roosevelt kept the gates of America closed to Jews fleeing the Holocaust, and the Democratic Party remained the home of Jim Crow and the Ku Klux Klan well into the 1960s. Mr. Epstein should realize the Republican Party of the 1940s and 1950s is dead and consider joining the Republican Party of 2026.