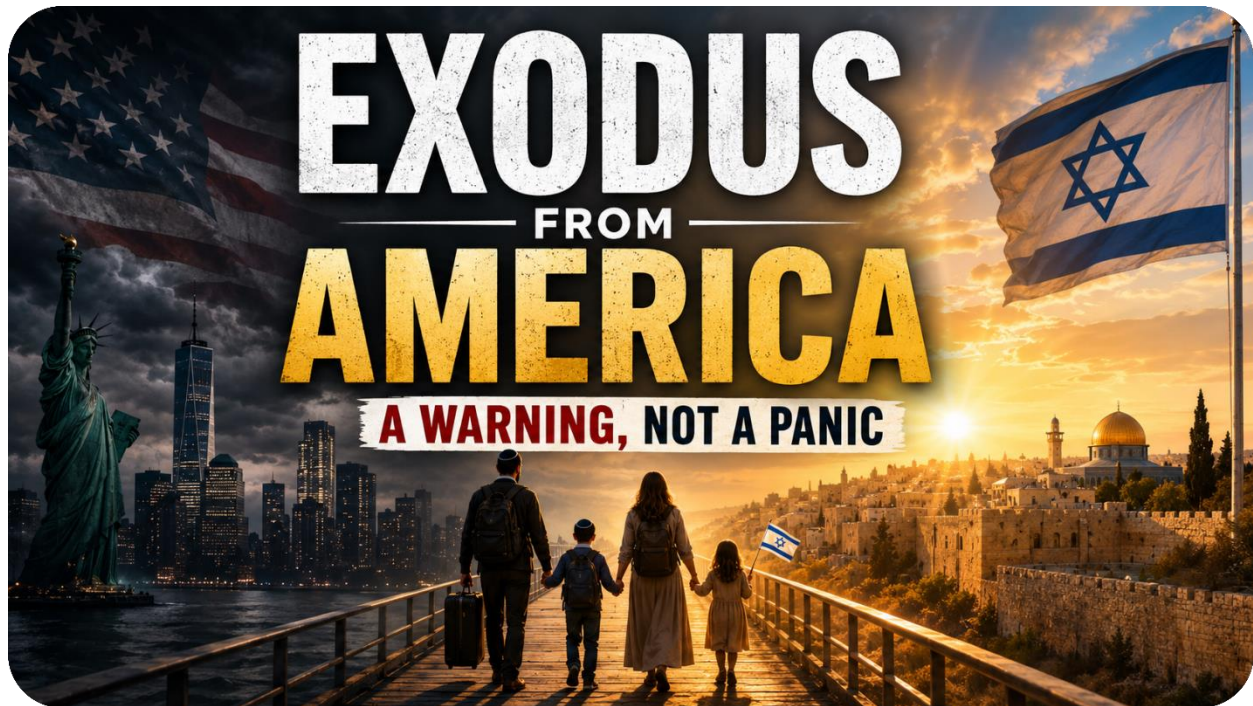




EXODUS FROM AMERICA

When Integration Is No Longer Protection

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Uncompressed Thinking

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Prelude — Not Panic, Memory

This essay is not a prophecy, and it is not a call to panic. Panic is what happens when people wait too long, when they refuse to read signs while the signs are still readable, when they confuse comfort with permanence until the door is no longer merely narrowing but already locked. I am writing in the opposite spirit. I am writing before panic, against panic, and with the hope that Jewish action may still be orderly, dignified, intelligent, and free.

But I am also not writing politely, at least not in the modern sanitized sense, where every hard historical comparison must be softened until it no longer says anything. My worry is brutal and I want to state it brutally. The situation for Jews in the United States is becoming alarmingly similar to the early psychological condition of Jews in Germany before the

catastrophe. I do not mean that America is Nazi Germany, and I do not mean that the American government is building concentration camps. That kind of crude comparison would be both false and unnecessary. What I mean is more precise and, in its own way, more frightening: American Jews are beginning to occupy the same dangerous mental position that many German Jews occupied before history turned on them.

They felt integrated. They felt rooted. They contributed powerfully to German political, cultural, scientific, professional, and economic life. Many thought of themselves as Germans first, with Jewishness pushed deep into the background, so deep that in ordinary life it almost disappeared. It may have remained as family memory, holidays, names, fragments of tradition, perhaps some pride, perhaps some embarrassment, perhaps no daily consciousness at all. And then, in one of the most terrible lessons in human history, their Jewishness was returned to them from the outside, first by law and humiliation, then by mobs and exclusion, then by deportations, concentration camps, and gas chambers.

I do not use those words for effect. I use them because avoiding them would be the real obscenity. Jewish history is full of polite moments before impolite events. Again and again, Jews have been told that things are not so bad, that civilized society will correct itself, that the extremists are marginal, that universities are not the street, that the street is not the government, that rhetoric is not violence, that violence is still isolated, that “this country is different.” And sometimes, for a while, the country really is different. That is precisely what makes the danger harder to see.

The Old Pattern — Doors That Close

The Jewish people have lived in exile for so long that exile can begin to feel like a normal address rather than a temporary condition. We build homes, businesses, schools, synagogues, friendships, professions, memories. We become useful to the societies around us, and very often those societies benefit immensely from our presence. We become doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, financiers, writers, scientists, musicians, builders, administrators, reformers, patriots. We help make countries stronger. We fight in their wars. We speak their language better than our own. We absorb their habits, humor, sports, anxieties, ambitions, and moral vocabulary. In time, the country becomes not merely where we live but who we are.

And then the old Jewish question returns, usually in a new costume. It does not return because Jews have failed to integrate. It often returns after they have integrated too well. The surrounding society looks at the Jew and suddenly decides that the very integration it once accepted is proof of hidden influence. Success becomes control. Visibility becomes conspiracy. Distinctness becomes disloyalty. Attachment to Israel becomes dual loyalty. Jewish confidence becomes arrogance. Jewish vulnerability becomes manipulation. Jewish fear becomes strategy. Whatever the Jew does is translated into accusation.

This is the pattern I cannot ignore. In Egypt there was a benevolent Pharaoh before there was a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph. In Spain there were centuries of brilliance before expulsion. In Germany there was integration before annihilation. In Russia and Eastern

Europe there were seasons of usefulness, tolerance, patronage, contribution, and cultural flowering before the familiar collapse into suspicion, pogrom, exclusion, or flight. The forms differ, the speed differs, the theology and politics differ, but the pattern is old enough that Jews have no moral right to pretend they have never seen it before.

My father's lesson, and the lesson carried by many Jewish families from harsher places, was not hysteria. It was discipline. Wherever you are in the world, except Israel, be prepared to flee. Not because every neighbor hates you, not because every government is about to turn, not because gratitude is foolish, but because Jewish survival has never depended on gratitude alone. It has depended on memory, timing, mobility, resources, and the ability to recognize when a door that was once open is beginning to close.

America — The Second Jerusalem and the Great Self-Deception

For American Jews, this is especially painful because America was not just another stop in exile. America was the great exception, or at least we believed it was. It was the place where Jews could become fully public, fully professional, fully patriotic, and still remain Jewish if they wished. It was not Europe with better weather. It was a constitutional civilization with deep protections for religion, speech, property, association, and minority life. America allowed Jews to breathe, build, argue, rise, donate, create institutions, and participate in national life at a level almost unimaginable in earlier exiles.

For that, American Jews owe America gratitude. I do not want to write as if America did nothing for us. It did more than almost any Diaspora society in Jewish history. It allowed Jewish life to flourish not only privately but publicly. It allowed synagogues, schools, charities, newspapers, federations, political organizations, university careers, business empires, intellectual influence, and cultural leadership. It allowed Jews to feel at home.

But gratitude is not blindness, and gratitude is not a security strategy. The very greatness of the American Jewish experience has created a dangerous emotional dependency. Many American Jews no longer feel that they live in exile. They feel that America is home in the same absolute sense that Israel is supposed to be home. They may support Israel, visit Israel, donate to Israel, worry about Israel, or criticize Israel, but their life center, their imagination, their children's future, their professional identity, and their deepest assumptions remain American. They think Jewish continuity can be secured inside America indefinitely, as long as they maintain good institutions, good schools, good donors, good lawyers, good public relations, and good relations with political power.

This is exactly where the danger begins. The German Jew did not wake up one morning believing that Germany was a temporary lodging. He believed Germany was his civilization. He loved its language, music, scholarship, discipline, institutions, and national achievement. He did not imagine that a society to which Jews had contributed so much could decide that Jews were not merely different, but poisonous. That was the trap. Integration made warning signs look vulgar. Assimilation made danger feel impossible. The better the Jews knew Germany, the harder it was for many to believe that Germany no longer knew them.

American Jews are now in danger of repeating that mental error. They look at their own success and call it safety. They look at their own influence and call it permanence. They look at the Constitution and assume that culture cannot rot beneath law. They look at Jewish presence in universities, media, finance, medicine, law, technology, philanthropy, and politics, and they assume that a people so woven into America cannot be unwoven. But history has never promised that contribution will purchase protection. Sometimes contribution merely gives antisemites a more elaborate target.

The New Antisemitism — From Exclusion to Legitimacy Reversal

The antisemitism rising now is not identical to the country-club antisemitism of earlier America, though that older form never fully disappeared. It is not merely polite exclusion, social dislike, or whispered resentment. It is becoming something more ideological, more public, and more morally inverted. The Jew is not only disliked as alien; the Jew is increasingly recast as powerful, colonial, oppressive, manipulative, privileged, and morally suspect. The old accusation that Jews are too different has merged with the new accusation that Jews are too successful, too white, too Western, too Zionist, too influential, too unwilling to disappear into someone else's political morality.

This is why the university matters so much. Universities are not only campuses. They are production facilities for the next moral vocabulary. What begins there as theory eventually becomes journalism, law, activism, corporate training, school curriculum, philanthropy, bureaucratic policy, and political instinct. When Jewish students learn that open Jewish identification or visible support for Israel can make them socially radioactive, the future is already speaking. When anti-Zionism becomes a respectable mask for denying Jewish collective existence, the question is no longer whether criticism of Israel is allowed. Of course it is allowed. The question is whether Jewish sovereignty itself is being turned into a moral crime.

And the danger does not come only from the left. That would be too simple and too comforting for those who want their enemies neatly arranged. On the right, the old machinery of conspiracy has also returned with new confidence. Whenever events become complicated, some people begin searching for the hidden lever, the secret network, the invisible hand behind wars, financial shocks, cultural change, and foreign policy. Sooner or later, the explanation becomes familiar: the Jews are responsible. Today the target may be Chabad, Israel, "neocons," donors, bankers, media figures, or some imagined synagogue of global influence. The names change. The structure does not.

This is why I reject partisan comfort. Antisemitism is not a left-wing problem or a right-wing problem. It is a civilizational infection that adapts to its host. On the left it speaks the language of justice, liberation, anti-colonialism, equity, and the oppressed. On the right it speaks the language of nationalism, anti-globalism, betrayal, hidden elites, and foreign entanglement. In both forms the Jew becomes a symbolic operator inside someone else's rage. The Jew becomes the explanation. That is when the atmosphere changes.

A society does not need a majority of antisemites to become dangerous for Jews. It needs a committed minority, a confused majority, weak institutions, cowardly elites, selective enforcement, and a moral vocabulary that explains away Jewish fear. It needs enough people who do not hate Jews personally but are willing to tolerate the hatred if it serves their politics. It needs enough leaders who condemn antisemitism abstractly while contextualizing it concretely. It needs enough decent people who grow tired of Jewish complaints and begin to wonder whether the Jews are making things difficult again.

Israel as the Offense

At the center of this new alignment stands Israel, not because Israel is flawless, but because Israel is the most visible refusal of Jewish disappearance. Israel is the Jew who cannot be assimilated. Israel is the Jew with borders, soldiers, language, memory, intelligence services, technology, grief, anger, and power. Israel is the end of the old Jewish helplessness, and for that reason it provokes a special hatred.

The moral issue is often disguised as policy. Settlements, borders, war conduct, governments, coalitions, ministers, military decisions — all of these can and should be debated. Israelis debate them with a ferocity that outsiders often cannot understand. But beneath many attacks on Israel lies something deeper than policy criticism. There is a refusal to accept Jewish sovereignty as legitimate at all. Israel is treated not as a state that may make mistakes, but as a state whose very existence is the mistake. Once that happens, the conversation is no longer about a government. It is about whether Jews are permitted to remain a people in their own land.

That is the civilizational test. Israel is not demanding that Iran become Jewish, or that Gaza become Jewish, or that Lebanon become Jewish, or that the Muslim world submit to Judaism. Israel's basic demand is much smaller and more morally elementary: accept that a Jewish state exists and stop trying to erase it. The opposing demand, in its most radical form, is equally clear: your existence is the offense. Your remaining is unacceptable.

American Jews who think they can separate themselves from Israel permanently are living in another illusion. They may believe that if they criticize Israel loudly enough, distance themselves from Zionism carefully enough, or translate Jewishness into ethics, food, memory, or social justice gently enough, the storm will pass over them. It may, for a time. But the antisemite has never needed Jewish consent to define Jewishness. If Israel is turned into the symbol of evil, every Jew will eventually be asked to answer for Israel, even the Jew who has spent a lifetime trying to avoid the question.

The Dangerous Illusion of Quiet Jewishness

There is another temptation, especially among educated and assimilated Jews, to respond to rising antisemitism by becoming quieter. Do not provoke. Do not look too Jewish. Do not speak too much about Israel. Do not display pride too loudly. Do not give enemies ammunition. There is wisdom in restraint, and I believe in that wisdom. I do not think Jews need to shout superiority from rooftops or announce themselves as saviors of Western

civilization. That kind of pride can become reckless, especially in a hostile environment where every statement of Jewish distinctiveness may be twisted into proof of Jewish arrogance.

But restraint is not disappearance. Humility is not self-erasure. Prudence is not cowardice. The lesson of Germany is not that Jews were too visible; many were trying very hard to be ordinary Germans. The lesson is that Jewishness cannot be made safe by burying it so deeply that it practically disappears from consciousness. You may bury Jewishness inside private memory, but enemies know how to excavate it. You may forget that you are a Jew, but history may remember for you, and it does not always remind gently.

This is why movements like Chabad become so interesting in our time. Chabad refuses to let Jewish life retreat into embarrassed privacy. It makes Jewishness visible, active, confident, and public. That visibility attracts suspicion, and suspicion attracts conspiracy. A quiet synagogue in a suburb may be ignored; a global Jewish movement with emissaries, schools, public menorahs, and a messianic vocabulary becomes a perfect screen for hostile imagination. But the accusation tells us more about the accuser than about the Jew. It tells us that Jewish vitality itself has become suspicious.

The answer cannot be to vanish. If Jews are hated when weak and suspected when strong, hated when poor and resented when successful, hated when religious and distrusted when assimilated, hated when stateless and condemned when sovereign, then the problem is not Jewish behavior. The problem is the recurring inability of surrounding societies to allow Jews to remain Jews without turning them into symbols of something else.

The Safe Window — Not a Date, but a Set of Signs

I do not want to assign a date to the American Jewish future. Dates create false precision, and false precision weakens serious warning. The question is not whether American Jews have five years, ten years, twenty years, or a generation. The question is what signs tell us that the safe window is narrowing.

The window is still open while Jews can educate their children openly as Jews, wear Jewish symbols without calculating the neighborhood, defend Israel publicly without professional ruin, build synagogues and schools without turning them into fortresses, move assets legally and freely, obtain passports, buy property in Israel, transfer skills, learn Hebrew, and make Aliyah by choice rather than desperation. The window is still open while the decision can be made in dignity, with planning, family discussion, financial intelligence, and spiritual seriousness.

The window narrows when Jewish parents quietly tell their children not to wear a Star of David on campus. It narrows when students hide their Zionism to preserve friendships. It narrows when synagogues require armed protection as a normal feature of religious life. It narrows when political leaders condemn antisemitism only after first explaining the pain of those who shout it. It narrows when Jewish professionals begin to wonder which opinions

may cost them their careers. It narrows when Jewish institutions spend more energy managing public risk than building Jewish confidence. It narrows when families begin making private contingency plans while publicly insisting that everything is fine.

By that test, the American window has not closed, but it is no longer wide. This is the point I want to make without panic and without anesthesia. The danger is not tomorrow morning's cattle cars. The danger is the slow formation of conditions under which Jewish life becomes conditional, guarded, apologetic, and psychologically cornered. The question is not when the final door closes. The question is why any serious Jew would wait to hear the lock.

What Exodus Means Before Panic

Exodus from America does not have to mean a stampede to the airport. It should not mean selling everything tomorrow, terrifying children, abandoning elderly parents, or treating every non-Jewish neighbor as an enemy. That would be panic, and panic is not strategy. A serious Exodus begins as a transfer of center of gravity. It begins with the recognition that America may remain a good country in many ways and still no longer be the permanent center of Jewish destiny.

That transfer can take many forms before it becomes physical relocation. It means treating Israeli citizenship, property, language, education, professional connections, and family infrastructure not as romantic extras but as survival architecture. It means giving children a living relationship with Israel rather than a symbolic one. It means understanding Aliyah not as failure in America but as continuity of Jewish history. It means creating financial and legal flexibility. It means strengthening Jewish education while there is still freedom to do so. It means refusing to let Jewish identity depend on approval from universities, media, political movements, or fashionable moral language.

For some families, Exodus may eventually mean full relocation. For others, it may mean partial relocation, dual residence, investment, citizenship planning, sending children to study in Israel, building business ties, or preparing options that can be activated if the atmosphere worsens. The practical path will differ. The principle should not. Jews should not wait until leaving becomes a refugee act. The whole point is to act while action can still be chosen.

This is where dignity enters. The next Jewish movement toward Israel should not be framed only as escape. Escape may be part of it, but it should not be the whole story. Jews should go not merely because America is becoming less safe, but because Israel is the only door that belongs to the Jewish people. Every other door depends on someone else's civilization, someone else's law, someone else's mood, someone else's ruler, someone else's moral fashion. Israel is difficult, dangerous, expensive, argumentative, imperfect, and often exhausting. But it is ours. That distinction is not sentimental. It is structural.

Redemption Through Agency

There is also a theological dimension, though I do not want to turn this essay into a sermon. For generations Jews imagined that the Messiah would gather the exiles and bring them home. Perhaps that sequence is wrong, or perhaps it was never meant to be passive. Perhaps the gathering itself is part of the work that prepares redemption. Perhaps Jews are not supposed to wait in comfort until history becomes miraculous. Perhaps the Jewish people must move first, with all the confusion, fear, disagreement, logistics, and courage that real movement requires.

This is not a rejection of faith. It is a rejection of passivity disguised as faith. Redemption in Jewish life has rarely meant sitting still while history rearranges itself gently. The Exodus from Egypt required walking. The return to Zion required building. Survival required memory, law, stubbornness, argument, and action. If the Diaspora is approaching its final phase, it may not end because a voice from heaven announces the schedule. It may end because Jews finally understand that exile has again become too conditional to trust.

American Jews, especially successful and comfortable ones, may resist this conclusion longer than others. They have more to lose, more to explain, more to unwind, and more emotional attachment to defend. That is human. It is also dangerous. The people who have built the most in exile are often the last to believe exile can expire.

Conclusion — The Assumption of Permanence Is Over

I do not hate America. I do not dismiss what America has given the Jews. I do not deny that millions of decent Americans still reject antisemitism and would be horrified by the thought that Jews should leave. But Jewish history is not governed by the kindness of decent people alone. It is governed also by institutions, crowds, ideologies, fears, resentments, demagogues, fashions, and the speed with which a society can change its mind about a minority it once celebrated.

The American Jewish golden age may not end tomorrow, and perhaps parts of it will continue for many years. But the assumption that it is permanent is already over. That is the real rupture. Once Jews must ask whether their children can be openly Jewish in elite spaces, whether Zionism will be treated as a moral stain, whether synagogues must be guarded like military installations, whether political movements will protect Jews only when convenient, and whether public Jewish confidence itself will be recast as provocation, then the old innocence is gone.

This is the moment to think clearly, not hysterically; to prepare practically, not theatrically; to speak brutally, not cruelly; and to remember that the Jewish future cannot rest on the hope that America will remain forever unlike every other exile. It may remain better for longer. It may correct itself in part. It may still protect many Jews for many years. But “better” is not the same as permanent, and “longer” is not the same as forever.

The Exodus from America, if it comes, should not come as a panicked flight through a closing gate. It should come as a conscious reorientation of Jewish life toward the only place where Jewish existence does not depend on the permission of others. Not as refugees, but as builders. Not as frightened remnants, but as sovereign participants in Jewish destiny. Not because we despise America, but because we have finally remembered the difference between a beloved residence and a homeland.

The period of safe Jewish residence in America may not be fully over, but the period of unquestioned Jewish permanence in America is over. That is enough to require action. That is enough to require honesty. That is enough to begin turning toward Israel before the door teaches us, once again, what Jews should have known from memory.