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Ideas

‘Politically homeless’ is the new mantra for American Jews. Will it change their vote?

Heard in essays, sermons and on the campaign trail, the phrase captures a growing sense of estrangement among Jewish Democrats.

Andrew Silow-Carroll November 1, 2026



(Carol Yepes/Getty Images)

Florida Democratic Rep. Jared Moscowitz told Fox Business last month that Jews are feeling “politically homeless”: repelled by today’s Republican Party but anxious about rising antisemitism fueled by anti-Zionism on the left.

Rabbi Avi Killip agreed in a recent essay in eJewishPhilanthropy. “Many American Jews feel politically homeless these days,” she wrote. Seeing antisemitism on the left and right, “it isn’t surprising that many of us are feeling abandoned and alone.”

In July, Ashley Inbar, a 38-year-old Jewish Democratic voter in Maine, described her predicament in a first-person essay for the Times of Israel. “I’m a Democrat. I still am,” she

wrote. “But lately, I’ve begun to feel oddly homeless. Not because my values have shifted, but because [of] the conversation around me.”

Ahead of the 2026 midterms, “politically homeless” has become the Jewish label of the moment. The phrase has also surfaced on the campaign trail, in sermons and on podcasts about the future of Jewish political identity.

There’s no doubt the language of Jewish political homelessness captures a real sense of estrangement. But it can also obscure a less dramatic reality: Poll after poll shows that most Jewish voters remain Democrats, suggesting that feeling unwelcome in a political party and being prepared to vote for the competition are two very different things.

“I do think that for a substantial number of people there is a sense of anxiety, and it is not as easy or automatic to be Democratic as it used to be,” Kenneth D. Wald, distinguished professor emeritus of political science at the University of Florida, said in an interview.

“But at the end of the day, for the majority of the Jewish electorate, excluding the Orthodox, the evidence I’ve seen suggests that Jews will likely vote as they have voted over the last 15 or 20 years – between three-fifths and two-thirds Democratic.”

That evidence includes a September survey by the Jewish Electorate Institute, conducted by the Democratic-aligned Mellman Group. It found that Jewish voters favored Democratic congressional candidates over Republicans by 71% to 23%. The Democratic advantage was virtually unchanged from their similar survey in March. Among Jewish Democrats, 97% said they would vote Democratic.

At the same time, the survey found real unease within the party. More than a third of Jewish Democrats said the rise of anti-Israel candidates had made it harder for them personally to identify as Democrats. A majority of Jewish voters said antisemitism was increasing within the Democratic Party, and a similar share said it was increasing within the Republican Party.

The pollster’s takeaway was that Jewish voters were still “overwhelmingly voting Democratic” even as their identification with the party was becoming more complicated.

A separate national poll released in September by the Jewish Voters Resource Center found that 67% of Jewish voters planned to vote for Democrats in November’s congressional elections, compared with 26% for Republicans. The group reported the same Democratic share in a May survey. It also found that affordability and the future of democracy ranked ahead of antisemitism and Israel among voters’ top concerns.

(Neither poll singled out the Orthodox vote, but a 2025 Jewish Voters Resource Center analysis found that 72% of Orthodox respondents favored the Republicans in a generic

2026 congressional ballot question — in keeping with a trend seen over the past two decades.)

And yet for some Jews, the feelings of estrangement are unmistakable and destabilizing, especially in states where progressives have won Democratic nominations. In a July report on the Senate race between Republican Susan Collins and Democrat Troy Jackson in Maine, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency quoted Chris Myers Asch, a history teacher at Colby College, saying, "I, and many Jews in Maine, certainly feel politically homeless at this point."

Asch said some Jewish voters were uneasy about Jackson's rhetoric on Israel, including describing the war in Gaza as a genocide and calling for an end to U.S. military aid to Israel. At the same time, they know that control of the Senate may hinge on the Maine race.



Abdul El-Sayed, Michigan Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, addresses the state's Jewish Democratic caucus at its annual "Summer Simcha" event amid broader Jewish communal concerns about his campaign, Birmingham, Mich., Aug. 30, 2026. (Andrew Lapin/JTA)

In Michigan, Jewish Democrats appear torn between wanting to help their party defeat the GOP and their deep misgivings about Democratic Senate nominee Abdul El-Sayed, whose comments linking the March 2026 Temple Israel synagogue attack to Israel's war in Lebanon, opposition to U.S. aid to Israel and reluctance to affirm Israel as a Jewish state and American ally have prompted some leaders to threaten to withhold their votes or support Republican Mike Rogers.

Rabbi Aaron Starr, the president of the Michigan Board of Rabbis, is one of the leaders of the Nonnegotiable Michigan petition, which is asking both candidates to pledge to protect Jewish safety and accept Israel's right to exist.

He counts himself among those feeling politically homeless at the moment, citing "a real sense of abandonment of the Jewish community and our priorities, our core values on the left."

And yet while he predicts many Michigan Jews will choose "principles over partisanship" in the Senate race by staying home or voting for Rogers, he does not expect Jews to abandon the Democratic Party en masse — not yet, anyway. Given a choice between abandoning the party or sitting out this or other elections, he hopes Jews will instead decide to fight for what they believe in.

"For a couple of generations, if not longer, political parties have asked minority communities to compromise their own values in order to support the candidate," he said in an interview. "Nonnegotiable Michigan is rooted in the idea that votes need to be earned, and we're not going to give our vote to any single political party."

Over many of these races hangs not just the specter of diminishing support for Israel but deep aversion to a historically unpopular president. Regina Hayut, cantor emerita of Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor, Michigan, describes herself as a third-generation Democrat. But she is deeply frustrated with the El-Sayed campaign, telling JTA in an interview that his rhetoric on Israel has made her feel "like a stranger in my own party."

At the same time, she said, "I could not vote for Republicans in today's environment. What they stand for is completely opposite everything that I care about and I stand for."

As a result, her political enthusiasm going into the midterms has been dampened. Hayut, who signed the Nonnegotiable petition, has refrained from the kind of activities — knocking on doors, writing postcards — she would normally have engaged in for other Democratic candidates. Also, like a lot of her peers, she is still unsure what she will do on Election Day.

"I really do need to weigh where I feel the dangers are greatest and where I feel my loyalties are most important," she said. "I am concerned about the makeup of the Senate, and yet I've never felt unseen and unheard until this election, and that is what is keeping me sitting on the fence."

Herbert Weisberg, a political scientist at The Ohio State University and author of 2019's "The Politics of American Jews," does not expect young, non-Orthodox Jews to embrace the Republicans, in part because trends show many of these voters "distancing themselves from Israel for several decades," and have a higher tolerance for progressives' anti-Israel

rhetoric. Older non-Orthodox Jews are upset by increased antisemitism on the left, he wrote in an email, but find the Republican alternatives “distasteful.”

“One possibility is increased nonvoting by Jews who feel they can’t vote Democratic anymore but also don’t feel comfortable voting for the Republicans on the ballot,” Weisberg wrote.

Republicans are confident, however, that the long-predicted Jewish shift to their side of the fence is imminent, and point to Jewish disaffection in local races featuring candidates like El-Sayed and New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, another fierce critic of Israel.

Groups like the Republican Jewish Coalition point to evidence that heavily Jewish communities in several battleground states saw significant shifts toward Republicans in 2024.The RJC cites an AP/Fox News exit poll showing Trump won 38% of the Jewish vote in Arizona and 42% in Nevada in 2024, up from 30% and 22%, respectively, in 2020.



Senate candidate Troy Jackson speaks before Maine Democratic delegates as they gather for their party’s nominating convention in Bangor, Maine, July 25, 2026. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

Some major Jewish donors, mainstays of the Democratic Party, have also been contributing to the Republican candidate in Michigan and elsewhere.

What many Jewish voters share is disappointment with the trends in both parties. In a July AP-NORC survey of 1,022 Jewish adults, just 15% said the Democratic Party supported Jewish people extremely or very well. Only 16% said the same of Republicans. Half viewed the Democratic Party unfavorably; 71% viewed the Republican Party unfavorably.

But Jews, especially in the Democratic majority, don't just vote on "Jewish" issues. Domestic issues like the economy, the environment and healthcare regularly poll higher than Israel or antisemitism when these Jews are asked to rank their priorities.

Wald, author of "The Foundations of American Jewish Liberalism," suggests that may explain why many "homeless" Jews will grit their teeth and vote Democrat on Tuesday. "The vast majority of American Jews, when asked why they're voting as they're voting, do not talk about Israel," he said. "That isn't to say that they are not committed to it, but it is being American that is the stronger influence on them than some of the other factors."

And not everyone who uses the "homeless" term sees it as a problem to be solved.

Yehuda Kurtzer, president of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, argued in an April essay, "Embrace the Reality of Political Homelessness," that some distance from partisan identity may be healthy. The danger, he suggested, lies in allowing political affiliation to become a substitute for independent moral judgment.

Killip, the executive vice president of the Hadar Institute, reached a similar conclusion. Rather than searching for a party that will satisfy every expectation, she wrote, she is turning to Torah and mitzvot for guidance. She no longer feels compelled to sign every petition or adopt the language of a political movement. Her Jewish commitments, she argues, offer a moral framework that transcends the shifting demands of American politics.

"I still read the news with sadness and anger, but with clearer eyes," she wrote. "I ask critical questions regardless of which journalist is speaking in which outlet. I don't feel required to sign anyone's petition or open letter. I get to choose my own language."

"I am not lonely — I am liberated," she wrote.