

A Question of Morality



by Phyllis Chesler

(Author's Note: I wrote this before the news broke about the brilliant, determined, heroic IDF having eliminated Yahya Sinwar—something that would never have happened had Israel listened to Biden and stayed out of Rafah. This war that Iran has funded and is far from over. And where are our hostages? Are they still alive?)

These days, almost all subjects are toxic and invariably lead to a serious falling out between friends, colleagues and relatives.

I cannot remember a time in which Americans, including American Jews, were so polarized, each believing that they are "right," and that the fate of the country—of the very world depends on everyone agreeing with them. Tolerating

intellectual and political differences is verboten, too threatening, not when everyone's fate seems to be hanging in the balance.

In the last year, I tried very hard to maintain a dialogue with one honorable feminist. No matter what article I sent her way, what true facts I marshalled, she immediately sent me mirror opposite, left-wing falsehoods, politically correct "narratives." She was convinced that Israel was committing a genocide on innocent Gazan civilians, and, given my stature, she could not understand or accept my having been taken over by such dark, patriarchal forces.

Well, so much for the feminism that I once pioneered. Not only do my former people keep signing petitions to outlaw Jews, Israelis, Americans, and all of Western history—on Columbus/Indigenous People's Day, some high-profile 2nd, 3rd, and 4th wave feminist "artistes" got themselves arrested for having demonstrated for Gaza at the New York Stock Exchange. The fact that so many were unmasked, naked-faced young Jewish women, suggests that they wanted credit for their virtuous performance art—and that they were willing to be identifiable as the "good Jews," i.e., as martyrs for Hamas.

It doesn't stop there.

The liberals, the die-hard Democrats, are also unhappy with the truth. A neighbor stopped talking to me altogether because I was writing about antisemitism so much that she decided that I must be a Trump supporter. Like her, I was supposed to suffer from Trump Derangement Syndrome and devote my work to spreading that particular Gospel.

A few months back, a sophisticated, rather lovely, liberal male friend of mine pegged me as a Republican and invited me to be on a panel to represent the "Republican point of view" about the upcoming election. I declined. Electoral politics are not my forte. I have, in the past voted for Susan B.

Anthony and Winston Churchill. I would much prefer voting on issues not on one of two parties, one of two politicians. I do better writing about opera, psychoanalysis, the erasure of womankind—and well, yes, also about antisemitism, Israel, and Islamic gender and religious apartheid.

This year I might actually vote on one of the two candidates. We'll see.

But suddenly and unexpectedly, this same friend, who reads everything I write, launched a day-long attempt to “convert” me to his liberal, Democrat point of view—and to shame me for what he believed were my politically incorrect thoughts.

He insisted that I was wrong, that Biden and Harris were the strongest supporters that Israel has ever had. In his view, Biden-Harris have been providing “real military support” to Israel only Harris does not support the “stupid policies of Netanyahu’s government.”

He boasted that he had recently sat next to Thomas Friedman at a prestigious dinner.

Said I: “I was also invited by the honoree to that same event and declined to attend. I would not go anywhere where Friedman would be holding forth.”

As we exchanged emails, I realized that this truly “good” Jewish man derived a sense of importance, from whom he knew; his very identity, and perhaps his sense of safety, was based on having met, dined with, even hosted countless members of the glitterati, the political establishment, including the heads of Jewish and Israeli organizations. He trusted bureaucratic procedures and White House statements. He rarely stood out, or stood alone. Except sometimes, privately, quietly.

Ah, no self-hatred here, only self-interest, caution, fearfulness. He cleaved to the belief that Palestinians are

essentially innocent, are not going anywhere, and that Israel needs to accept this and move on. (Move on where? To the moon?) He also knows that "Trump is intent on destroying America's alliances," admires "Putin and North Korea," and is unstable, and dangerous.

Despite what I said about Thomas Friedman, he still urged me to read Friedman's piece in the New York Times titled "How America Can Stop a Mideast Missile War That Everyone Will Lose."

"There are some very creative ideas there. You might like them."

Oh dear. Friedman lives in his own diabolical dreamworld. He believes that C.I.A. director, Bill Burns can effect "coercive diplomacy" by explaining to Iran that their terrorist imperialism will soon bring them down; that America will find ways to make this happen, and if Burns simply lays it all out in words, that Iran will "define its western border and declare that everything beyond it is for the Lebanese, Syrians, Yemenis, Iraqis," etc.

But to Friedman, Iran and Israel are the same, are morally and demographically equal.

Thus, according to Friedman, Burns must also demand that Israel "withdraw from southern Lebanon and Gaza" and, dreaming aloud, Friedman recommends that "the Lebanese Army and a credible, lethal, international force will replace Hezbollah, and an Arab peacekeeping force will replace Hamas." Assuming that Israel withdraws entirely. Burns will also "encourage Israel to limit any retaliatory strikes against (Iran)."

While Friedman does not tell Iran what it must do in its own sovereign country, he holds forth on sovereign Israel's internal affairs. "We must not be in the business of making Israel safe so that a radical messianic government can annex the West Bank...Bibi needs to purge the settler lunatics" and

“open talks with credible leaders...on a two state solution.” If Israel does not do as Friedman orders, America will not keep “resupplying Israel with missiles and missile systems.”

Has Friedman and my good friend completely forgotten the history of all the British and Israeli offers to Arabs for a second Palestinian state? (Jordon is the first one). Forgotten that Arabs rejected all these offers? Forgotten that Iran and its terrorist proxies want to genocidally exterminate the Jewish state? That international police keeping forces have been totally ineffective, corrupt, violent, indifferent, anti-Zionist, and invariably fail their missions?

Has Friedman not noted that even more menacing messianic maniacs than the West Bank “settlers” rule Iran, mullahs who exile, torture, and execute dissidents, women, homosexuals, and refugees without the UN censuring or stopping them, without America calling them to account?

Finally, nowhere in this piece does Friedman mention 10/7, nor does he call for the release of the American or Israeli hostages who still remain in terror tunnels in Gaza.

These are not “creative” ideas. They are the kind of ideas that endanger Jewish survival.