

February 7, 2014

To: Rabbi Roly Matalon
Rabbi Felicia Sol
cc: Rabbi Marcelo Bronstein
Jeannie Blaustein

Dear Roly and Felicia,

The undersigned members of B'nai Jeshurun are writing this letter in reaction to your decision to sign the January 29, 2014 open letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio. In that letter you state, "AIPAC speaks for Israel's hard-line government and its right-wing supporters, and for them alone; it does not speak for us." Your letter makes a point to say that your concerns are not aligned with those of AIPAC. However, we note that at least one of your co-signatories is a leader of the boycott divestment and sanctions movement against Israel.

Please understand that your words, besides being factually incorrect, are offensive to many of your congregants. As our rabbis, your public comments reflect on our synagogue and on us. We are proud supporters of AIPAC, and we object to the way you mischaracterize the work that AIPAC does and the diverse political affiliation of its many members. Your letter is divisive and contains false and unsubstantiated statements. By attempting to paint AIPAC into an ideological corner, you have injured AIPAC's ability to continue its bipartisan efforts, and in so doing have hurt the State of Israel as well.

Instead of signing the letter to the Mayor, you should have stood by Israel and urged its authors not to send it because it ran counter to the truth and to the tenets of tolerance that you have often preached.

Specifically:

1. AIPAC's mission is to strengthen, protect and promote the U.S.-Israel relationship in ways that enhance the security of Israel and the U.S. As such, AIPAC works with Congress and leaders in the Executive branch to support the government of Israel, whether left-of-center or right-of-center, whether headed by Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Ehud Barak, Ehud Olmert or Bibi Netanyahu.
2. As believers in democracy and because the government of Israel is democratically elected by the citizens of Israel, we support its duly elected government.
3. AIPAC urges all members of Congress to promote a negotiated two-state solution.
4. The current Israeli government is a coalition of center and right-of-center parties. Calling this government "hard line" is overly simplistic and a misrepresentation. Further, your grievance can be construed not only as a criticism of AIPAC, but also of the people of Israel who elected this government and of your own members who choose to express their love and concern for Israel by supporting AIPAC.
5. Contrary to your assertion, AIPAC's membership is in fact comprised of more Democrats than Republicans.

Just over a year ago, you sent out a letter praising the General Assembly vote that accorded Palestine non-Member Observer State status in the U.N., which instigated divisiveness in our community. Whether intentional or not, your reckless signing of the Mayor's letter has, once again, deeply offended many of your members, and provoked turmoil within our congregation.

Respectfully,
Emily Benedek
Meredith Berkman
Eve Birnbaum
Laurie Blitzer
Bertie Bregman
Rachel Bregman
Lisa Bucksbaum
Jacob Bucksbaum
Jonathan Busksbaum
Joshua Bucksbaum
Jerome Chanes
Adam Chanes
Rodney Cohen
Marvin Davis
Jen Daniels
Rubin Daniels
Arthur Eshaghpour
Jeff Feig
Michelle Feig
Eva Fogelman
Valerie Gerstein
Mark Gerstein
Lawrence Goldberg
Sheryl Green
Nathan Kornfeld
Patricia Kornfeld
James Levin
Sam Levine
Mark Pearlman
Jennifer Pearlman
Allan Ripp
Sarah Ripp
Sheila R. Salama
Samuel Schnapp
Alan Scholnick
Mylene Scholnick
Sarah Sternklar
Marc Suvall
Harriet Suvall
Rivka Tenenbaum-Precel
Nahum Tenenbaum
Bart Teush
Daniel Yairi

