

## **Unreasonable voices; Anti-Israel protesters disregard contributions of Beth Israel**

Sunday, January 14, 2007

BY ROBERT DOBRUSIN

In November, Beth Israel Congregation celebrated its 90th anniversary. For nine decades, our congregation has been an active part of the spiritual and communal life of Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County. We are proud of our contributions to the general community as well as to Jewish life in our area, and we look forward to the future with hopes to build on the foundation of our past.

For more than three years, while Beth Israel Congregation has continued to serve the needs of our members, educate our children and participate in many charitable activities both within Washtenaw County and elsewhere, it seems that our name has been mentioned in the community most frequently in connection with the anti-Israel protests that take place on the street outside of our synagogue during services on the Sabbath morning.

We have not addressed the issue in detail on these pages because we believe that any attention focused on these protests will only encourage the participants in this misguided venture to continue, and would further deflect attention and energy from the important work we do as a synagogue. However, after seeing many more letters in recent weeks, I feel that I must express publicly, on behalf of the board of the synagogue, our position.

No matter how nicely they are dressed or how polite they may be, those who protest outside the synagogue are participating in an action that is disrespectful, intrusive, insensitive and counter-productive to any true dialogue on this subject in this community. Those who attend services, whether Beth Israel members or guests, must walk past a group of individuals holding signs which are antagonistic and hateful. The members of this group deny the legitimacy of the State of Israel and apparently attribute all responsibility for the current crisis to Israel's existence. Their signs contain false and hateful statements crafted to be provocative and offensive.

That there have been very few alleged confrontations is largely a tribute to our congregants, who have taken to heart our repeated requests that they disregard the protesters and refrain from any confrontation. We will continue to counsel that approach.

We have been informed that these protests are within the law and certainly we do not want to interfere with the right to freedom of speech. But just because an act is legal does not mean it is appropriate. We continue to deplore the decision to protest at a house of worship and we call on all members of the community to reject this or any similar action. We are pleased at the great support that the congregation has received from the Ann Arbor City Council, The Ann Arbor News, from many organizations and many area clergy. We are grateful to so many whose voices have been raised to oppose these protests and thank you for your continued support.

Our primary purpose as a synagogue is to serve the spiritual needs of our congregants. As a part of Judaism's Conservative movement, we seek ways to balance the commitment of Jewish tradition with the needs of our time and to help our community see the meaning in the richness of Jewish tradition. Of course, we - as do the vast majority of faith congregations - address issues which impact our world. And certainly the situation in the Middle East is very much on our agenda as an issue which needs to be raised and openly discussed.

Our congregants, as do the significant majority of Jews, feel a deep emotional connection with the State of Israel and its people. While our congregants' political opinions and philosophical perspectives are all over the map, there is one general statement which I can make on behalf of the congregation - Beth Israel Congregation affirms without any hesitation or equivocation the legitimacy of the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state, and affirms the right of Israel to defend itself from enemies who seek its destruction. We express a love for the State of Israel, a deep respect for the contributions its citizens have made to our people and the world, and acknowledge the sacrifices that our brothers and sisters have made on Israel's behalf. No matter how long the protests continue, this will never change.

That being said, the majority of our members, as could be said about the larger Jewish community as well, support the creation of a Palestinian state which would live alongside Israel in mutual recognition and respect. While each of us might have his or her own nuanced view of exactly how that should be accomplished, the details of the eventual formation of a Palestinian state are up to the principal parties to determine. We stand united in our hopes for peace and we see the two-state solution as the just and fair way in which to achieve such peace.

As are so many, we are deeply concerned about the tragic situation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This is a complicated situation with many root causes and while we may approach the issue in different ways and focus on different aspects of the situation, all of us know that the status quo is intolerable for Palestinians and Israelis alike and must change.

Those who have heard me speak about Israel or read my sermons and articles in their entirety, some of which are available on our synagogue Web site at [www.bethisrael-aa.org](http://www.bethisrael-aa.org), know that I have clearly stated that Israel must constantly evaluate its policies from a moral and ethical perspective. We have brought speakers to the congregation who bring these issues into focus from different points of view and have had many discussions on these issues at Beth Israel, and those discussions will continue.

However, our discussion is always predicated on the legitimacy of the State of Israel and our concern for the security and well being of all Israelis and Palestinians alike.

As we look ahead to the future of Beth Israel Congregation, we look forward to addressing the issues of faith, spirituality, commitment to tradition, ethical living and concern for our fellow Jews and all people throughout the world. These are the values on which our Conservative movement is based. We will continue to fill our synagogue with the sound of prayer, of learning, of hope. We will continue to discuss the issues of the day with those of all faiths who respect our deepest principles of commitment.

We will continue to reject confrontational, intrusive acts which reflect negativity, hatred and divisiveness and which show callous disregard and disrespect for the right to worship in peace. We call on all who feel likewise to join in support of us as we face this ongoing situation, and we pray for a year of peace and civility in our community and throughout the world.

#1131 words

Lies

1. We are labeled “unreasonable”; this is the issue that we must be allowed to refute; it is the core of the rabbi’s attempts. Rob might not have written this.
2. Creation of a Palestinian “Bantustan”, not “state”
3. mentions “Tragic situation” as if it occurred without cause... the car in which he was driving, ran off the road.
4. “ Their signs contain false and hateful statements crafted to be provocative and offensive. “
  - a. what sign is false?
  - b. what sign is hateful to a reasonable person?
  - c. What sign is antagonistic?
5. “Hateful” is used twice; again, what is his support for this claim? It is false.

Original Complaint - Court		1st Court	2nd Court/Temporary Process	3rd Court/Temporary Process	Defendant
STATE OF MICHIGAN 15th JUDICIAL DISTRICT		COMPLAINT MISDEMEANOR		TOW: CASE NO. <i>De-1136</i>	
CR No. <i>150052</i>	Court Office 1011 S. Main St., PO Box 9850, 48107-0950	Case Number(s) 67942 (04-27-02)			
THE PEOPLE OF The State of Michigan v J. City of Ann Arbor	Defendant name and address Apostrophe Religion 6307 Parkway South Easton, OH 44121	State or jurisdiction Michigan A better <i>Michigan</i> <i>Michigan</i> <i>Michigan</i>	County Washtenaw	City Ann Arbor	Defendant title A better <i>Michigan</i> <i>Michigan</i> <i>Michigan</i>
Arresting Agency CITY OF ANN ARBOR	County or Range Washtenaw	Arrested On 5-18-08	Arrested At Ann Arbor	Arrested By 10-20-08	Arrested Date 10-20-08
Arrestment on 96-10011	Class A & B	Arrestment \$100 for 90 days			
Witness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Officer <input type="checkbox"/> CIA	Vehicle Type	Remarks			

STATE OF MICHIGAN, COUNTY OF WASHTENAW.  
The complaining witness says that on the above date and at 2008 West Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, the above defendant, contrary to law

The above defendant did then and there commit an assault or an assault and battery upon  
contrary to Section 9-62(1), Chapter 108, Title IX of the Ann Arbor City Code.

The complaining witness asks that defendant be apprehended and held until according to law.  
*(Please do not check unless you are sure that the statements above are true to the best of your knowledge, and belief.)*

Witness authorized on *5-22-08* by  
*Robert H. Stone*  
Prosecuting Attorney

Subscribed and sworn to before me on *5-22-08*  
*Ann Arbor*  
Court Clerk/Magistrate

96-208 (2007) COMPLAINT, MISDEMEANOR

6. “Alleged confrontations” is a lie.
  - a. A “complaint misdemeanor” has been issued. An Arrest Warrant
  - b. From the “City of Ann Arbor”
  - c. Requests his “apprehension” for “assault and battery”