

To President-Elect Trump:

Although I am a rabbi, I do not purport to speak for the entire American Jewish community. While there is a great deal that links us together, we Jews have always honored the value of respectful discourse and disagreement. The Talmud faithfully records minority along with majority opinions and recognizes that “both reflect the words of the living God” (see Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b).

Which brings me to my first bit of advice. As President, and even now, as President-Elect, you have the power to raise the level of civil discourse in our country, to soften the harsh rhetoric and name-calling which characterized the recent campaign. You have the power to influence the manner in which we address our disagreements as we move forward to heal and find common ground as a nation (see Proverbs 18:21).

You might begin this process by repudiating those of your supporters (e.g., members of the KKK and other white supremacist organizations) who have promoted racism and anti-Semitism and fomented hate against Muslims, LGBT folks, immigrants and others. They gained greater visibility during your campaign and have celebrated your election. Now that you have won, you would do well to emphasize that you intend to be President of *all* the people, including those most vulnerable to prejudice (see Leviticus 19:17).

You once co-authored a bestseller, called *The Art of the Deal*. While some of the insights of that book may come in handy when you become President, might I suggest that you now consider exploring the art of *listening*? Just as governing is quite different from campaigning, debate is quite different from dialogue. Engaging in dialogue requires an openness to learning, to considering a variety of viewpoints and competing narratives (see above, Eruvin 13b).

Which is a good thing to remember when you deal with complicated foreign policy issues. For instance - and you knew I would bring this up! - Israel and the Palestinians. Do you imagine that this is a simple situation? Do you think that all Jews in the United States agree about how to handle it? We are as deeply divided about how to achieve security for Israel and justice for the Palestinians as the Israelis themselves. Cultivating humility may seem an odd piece of advice to give a world leader, but I am doing just that (see Numbers 12:3). Listen, move ahead thoughtfully and consider possible unintended consequences of your words and actions.

Oh, there is so much more I'd like to share with you! For instance, although we Jews care deeply about Israel, we are not - the vast majority of us - single-issue voters. We are concerned about a myriad of social justice issues (see Mishnah Avot 2:5). We care about the poor (see Deuteronomy 15). Our tradition impels us to include and care for those who are marginalized and at-risk in our society, not least because we are all created in God's image (see Genesis 1:26).

And it isn't just our sacred texts which impel us to take action; it is also our history. We Jews know what it's like to be the targets of hate and oppression. That's one of the reasons we have made common cause with others who face prejudice. We will continue to do so (see Leviticus 19:16).

Most of us vigorously support the right of a woman to make decisions about her own health and her own body. You may not realize that Jewish law differentiates between the life of a mother and the life of a fetus. The former takes priority over the latter (see Exodus 21:22-23 and commentaries). Regardless, we don't think our religious view should prevail in our legal system. Oh, and by the way, we Jews are also pretty adamant about maintaining the separation of church and state. We think that's a good thing, especially given the growing religious diversity in our country.

Finally, I want to raise an issue which, sadly, was never raised during any of the three Presidential debates, but which is so very urgent: climate change. The Bible commands us to be stewards of God's Creation (see Genesis), which means we have the responsibility to care for the earth. There is near unanimity in the scientific community about the real dangers of climate change and the human contribution to it. As a father and grandfather, you will understand that we cannot wait to take action; I implore you to take science seriously and not to jeopardize our children's and grandchildren's future!

Mr. Trump, I could go on and on, but I will leave it here for now. You have a heavy task ahead of you. May God grant you wisdom and strength.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Debra Cantor