Dear Israel Horizons readers,

Below is an article I recently published in *Ha’aretz*, which is now, for better and worse, serves partly a house organ for the Israeli left. Very few articles written in English are translated and published in Hebrew so, ironically, the people who don’t see this and other articles originating in English are Israelis themselves, even though it’s an Israeli newspaper.

I wanted to republish it here in IH because it brings up several issues that those who identify with what I call the “moderate American Jewish left” need to ponder. Of course any distinction between the “far” and moderate” wings is fairly arbitrary; by making the distinction I don’t mean to erect a wall between “us” and “them” or to imply they’re beyond some sort of pale. However, with the growth of a larger and more energetic pro-BDS and non- (or even anti-) Zionist minority faction in the Democratic party, and the continued practice of the Jewish right wing in conflating us with them, we must make clear where we stand on various issues.

One of the most important of these issues is our work with mainstream parties (especially Meretz, of course) and NGO’s who are heavily invested in moving Israel in a more progressive direction—and this is where Partners’ unique position stands out. We are a peace and anti-occupation organization, but by no means only that. We actively support the work of innumerable Israeli NGO’s and, through our Kolot: Voices of Hope program, we introduce them to the American public. Thus, as our name itself makes clear, we partner with Israeli organizations and serve as a bridge to Americans—particularly, but not only Jews—who believe in a progressive Israel.

It is not that we refuse to pressure Israel. The issue of “conditioning” or restricting aid will be argued over in the coming year. We oppose BDS—but also oppose penalizing people or organizations who choose not to do business with Israel, which is a violation of their right to free speech. While recognizing the danger of growing anti-semitism, we strongly oppose automatically equating anti-Zionism with it. We support Israel as a Jewish state and the two-state solution to strengthen it, but many of us in recent years have come to support confederation as the fairest and most feasible means of achieving a workable 2SS. We strongly oppose any annexation schemes, whether of parts of the West Bank, or in miniature, such as by evicting longtime Arab residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem through use of unjust and discriminatory laws.

I welcome your thought on this agenda, whether positive, negative or mixed. Below each IH article there is a comment section, which we hope will become a lively forum for active discussion of the issues we raise.
Paul Scham
President, Partners for Progressive Israel