We are writing be sure you are aware of some very recent and welcome changes in the leadership of the American Zionist Movement (AZM) and to update and clarify some points in Arno Rosenfeld’s otherwise comprehensive article, *Is J Street Unwelcome in the American Zionist Movement*, published in the Forward last week. The article outlines many of the obstacles that progressive Zionist groups faced during the recent protracted and needlessly complicated campaign for the admission of the J Street Education Fund (JSEF) as an Associate Member of the AZM.

After that article was published, on June 22 the American Zionist Movement (AZM) elected a new slate of officers, one that better reflects the American Zionist community in this country, spanning the religious and political spectrum. We are hopeful that this new leadership can heal some of the rifts that have been unnecessarily created over the last few years. In light of these changes, we’d like to emphasize some further elements of the backstory leading to this point.

For almost a year, Ameinu and Partners for Progressive Israel, leaders in the Hatikvah Slate during last year’s World Zionist Congress elections that concluded in March 2020, worked closely with Mercaz and ARZA (affiliated with the Conservative and Reform movements, respectively), as well with several other organizations within the AZM, in building support for JSEF’s candidacy. Despite the JSEF application’s approval by the AZM’s Leadership Cabinet, elements within the AZM dragged out the process with procedural maneuvers until it was certain that it had a majority of the votes to defeat JSEF’s candidacy. Clearly seeing the writing on the wall, J Street withdrew its application before it could be voted down.

And as documented in the Forward article, Mort Klein and the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) continue to spew hatred for progressive Zionist organizations – against established members of the AZM – while blocking newer Zionist organizations like the JSEF from joining. At the AZM Biennial held on Tuesday, the ZOA and its allies ran candidates against two of the more
liberal candidates on the Nominating Committee’s diverse, consensus slate of officers in a failed attempt to tilt the leadership to the extreme right.

At a time when the Zionist movement should be expanding its efforts to engage with younger, progressive Jews, elements within the AZM, including the ZOA, have worked in the opposite direction. We in Ameinu and Partners for Progressive Israel are multi-generation Zionists who have worked for decades to create a stronger, more socially just and democratic Israel. We pledge to work with the incoming AZM administration to develop strategies to broaden Zionism’s message to better reach critical new audiences.

Thank you for your support.

Ken Bob                               Paul Scham
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