



P.O. Box 1989
Fort Lee, NJ 07024 USA
ph: 201.242.9460
fx: 201.363.9241
ws: www.shalomtv.com

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RABBIS REVEAL CONTENT OF HIGH-LEVEL CLOSED-DOOR WHITE HOUSE MEETINGS IN INTERVIEW WITH MARK S. GOLUB

*Say administration did not apologize for previous US/Israel messaging
Relay that the search for international support delayed Iran sanctions
Report that Obama feels Israel "in his bones"*

May 25, 2010 (Fort Lee, NJ) -- Two of the fifteen rabbis invited to the White House by Rahm Emanuel for a pair of closed-door meetings on the administration's relationship with Israel and the American Jewish community speak with Mark S. Golub, president of Shalom TV, about the details of these discussions--including news that no apologies were given for administration dealings with Israel, that new Iran sanctions were awaiting Russian and Chinese support, and that President Obama is committed to Israel "in his bones."



Both Rabbi Jack Moline of Virginia, who was asked by chief of staff Emanuel to select the group of rabbis for the meeting, and Rabbi Efreim Goldberg of Florida characterize the purpose of the meetings as an opportunity to "get some facts on the ground straight, to understand what the [US Middle East] policies have been and what direction they're going in, and to open channels of communication."

And while both men counter published reports that apologies were offered by the administration for its current relationship with Israel and US Jewry, with Rabbi Goldberg revealing that "it was less a question of an apology than it was a clarification and a renewed effort to improve on the messaging," Rabbi Moline acknowledges that "this was an extraordinary and unprecedented set of meetings that is an indication that the White House understood that some outreach to the Jewish community was necessary.

"What got us into this situation to begin with is people taking a look at isolated events in the relationship between the White House and the Jewish community, the White House and the State of Israel, and extrapolating based on a narrative they would like to hear [of] what's going on. That is what has gotten us into all of this lather that is driving a wedge in the American Jewish community on the question of Israel that is not healthy for the State of Israel.

"I credit Rahm with picking up on the tension that existed in the community and attempting to alleviate it."

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On Middle East policy, specifically the delay in announcing new sanctions on Iran, Rabbi Jack Moline relays the administration's concern that if they went ahead without "international cooperation, including with Russia and China, [then] the rest of the world is going to throw up their hands and say, 'The United States is handling it and we don't have to worry about Iran at all.'

"The president wants an international coalition in the United Nations to validate sanctions before the United States takes unilateral action. That's the policy approach."

For Rabbi Efreim Goldberg of Boca Raton Synagogue, a Modern Orthodox congregation, insight into American foreign policy was wholly separate from discovering the administration's feeling about Israel.

"There's an acknowledgment that what they conceive as their commitment to Israel is not being filtered down to the regular pro-Israel community," he tells Golub. "I went in with anxieties and with concerns and I left with anxieties and concerns, but I gained a tremendous respect for the administration's genuine commitment to Israel, and left with a commitment to continue to debate the policies and the issues, but not to challenge the authenticity of their commitment to Israel and its security."

Rabbi Moline of Conservative congregation Agudas Achim in Alexandria recalls a question as to whether President Obama felt Israel in his *kishkas*, or whether it was an intellectual commitment.

"I don't remember whether it was Rahm or Dan [Shapiro] or Dennis [Ross] who said 'You're looking at three guys who had to answer that question before they signed on, and if the answer hadn't been, 'Yes, he feels it in his bones,' none of the three of us would be here.'

"That was the most important thing that came out," says Rabbi Moline.

"We're going to have differences on policy," he concludes. "But as long as we understand that these are differences among people who are committed to the same thing--which is a safe, secure, and Jewish State of Israel--then those arguments are for the sake of Heaven and not on a matter of the fundamental orientation of United States foreign policy."

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