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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE  
*Reform Judaism* is the official voice of the Union for Reform Judaism, linking the institutions and affiliates of Reform Judaism with every Reform Jew. *RJ* covers developments within our Movement while interpreting world events and Jewish tradition from a Reform perspective. Shared by 305,000 member households, *RJ* conveys the creativity, diversity, and dynamism of Reform Judaism.

## DEAR READER

# The Time for Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

The time has come to engage in dialogue with our Muslim neighbors and to educate ourselves about Islam.

Dialogue is especially critical now. We live in a world in which religion is manipulated to justify the most horrific acts and where Islamic extremists constitute a profound threat. When fanatics kill in the name of God, sensible religious people have an obligation to do something about it.

What is our task? To find the voices of moderation and to reclaim from the fanatics the true essence of religious belief. To do this, we must know what Islam truly stands for and engage in dialogue with our Muslim neighbors.

To this end, the Union has begun working together with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), an umbrella body of more than 300 mosques that brings 30,000 people together at its annual convention. We chose ISNA as our partner in dialogue because the society has issued a strong, unequivocal condemnation of terror, including a specific denunciation of Hezbollah and Hamas violence against Jews and Israelis. ISNA has also recognized Israel as a Jewish state and supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Last September I was the first major Jewish leader ever to address the ISNA convention, and three months later ISNA President Dr. Ingrid Mattson addressed our Biennial convention.

Today ISNA and the Union for Reform Judaism have prepared an adult education curriculum on Islam. I urge every synagogue to consider offering a course on Islam as part of its adult education program.

In search of fruitful dialogue, the Union and ISNA have also created a five-session dialogue program (manual and video) to be used by Reform synagogues and ISNA mosques. Nowhere in this dialogue will we feed each other pabulum. Instead, we will assert our convictions with passion, even as we remain respectful of our disagreements, and we will not avoid the subject of Israel.

We enter into this dialogue with our eyes wide open. We know that ISNA—a large, unwieldy coalition—contains some anti-Zionist elements that cause us discomfort. We also know that while we have had extraordinary success with dialogue in Great Neck, St. Louis, and Omaha, so too we have had our share of failures. Nevertheless, we must not desist from this task. America is one of the very few places in the world where the promise of true pluralism is not too wild a hope. And in this great country, we are stronger and safer when we transcend our fears and work together.

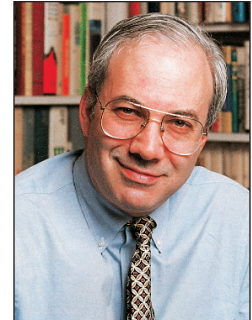


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