

February 20, 2017

Dear Shaarey Tikvah Congregant,

As a synagogue, we are not in the habit of entering the fray when it comes to major public debates. My role as President, and one I take very seriously, is helping to set the agenda and decide what comes to the Board for discussion and possible action. When Peter Shulman, CST Board Secretary, approached me about a resolution that would address the Executive Order of Friday, January 27, 2017 entitled "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States" as it related to our own synagogue history and Jewish values, I reflected and spoke with Rabbi Roland and other lay leaders. We decided it warranted a special meeting.

On February 7, the CST Board had a robust discussion related to the Executive Order. As one would expect, there was some diversity of opinion. The outcome was that the Board authorized the Executive Committee to incorporate the important feedback given, and revise the initially proposed "Resolution" transforming it into a "Statement." The clear consensus was to express serious reservations about the Executive Order, but to be very circumspect in how the statement was phrased. Specifically, the Board was clear that it was speaking only for itself and not by any means suggesting the statement represented a unanimous view of the entire congregation.

The degree to which members of your Board took their responsibility seriously was impressive. It reflected the words of our opening prayer for Board meetings: "...listen to each other carefully, treating one another with respect, and assuring that our honest differences do not overshadow our unity of purpose - to carry out the important work that this congregation has entrusted to us."

The "Statement", as revised and included herein, represents the consensus of the Board. Rabbi Roland and I encourage you to read it and invite your thoughtful comments.



Eric Kodish  
CST Board President



Scott Roland  
Rabbi

**The Board of Congregation Shaarey Tikvah's Statement to express opposition  
to the Executive Order of Friday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 entitled  
"Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States"**

Our Torah teaches the Jewish people that "You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deut. 10:19)." Over the last two thousand years, Jews have been strangers in many lands, sometimes comfortably, too often subject to discrimination, persecution, expulsion, and, during the Holocaust, wholesale extermination. We are a people who have been set apart, stereotyped, and demonized.

Congregation Shaarey Tikvah ("Gates of Hope") was founded in 1940 by Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi terror. Sixteen years earlier, the United States had imposed an immigration law that severely restricted the flow of immigrants from countries in which Jews were most likely to reside. The law did not mention Jews, but it did not have to. This law, and others like it, sought to preserve the ethnic, racial, and religious makeup of this country for Americans threatened by the arrival of Eastern and Southern Europeans, especially Jews, as well as migrants from China and Japan. The founders of Shaarey Tikvah were among the few Jews of this era who managed to reach the United States. Tens of thousands of others—if not more—might have been saved from suffering or perishing in the Holocaust had immigration restrictions not been in place.

Shaarey Tikvah's history as a congregation of refugees reverberates to the present day. Our congregation has developed the "Face to Face" program, which has taught over 40,000 students since 1994 about the Holocaust, prejudice, and the value of tolerance. We have continued to welcome immigrant members from at least four continents.

In greater Cleveland, the founders of Shaarey Tikvah joined a region home to over a hundred different immigrant communities. Today, our East Side Cleveland suburbs contain friends and neighbors from around the world, including the seven Muslim-majority countries singled out in the president's Executive Order restricting immigration.

Throughout American history, people of different faiths, ethnicities, and national origins have not only become Americans but strengthened the fabric of our society. The words of George Washington to the Jews of Newport, Rhode Island are no less true today than they were in 1790: "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights," Washington wrote, "for, happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support."

From our congregation's history and the values of our faith, the Board of Shaarey Tikvah expresses its opposition to the Executive Order of Friday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 entitled "Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States" and any future measures curtailing the entry or immigration to America of Muslims or people of any faith, and affirms America's foundation as a pluralistic and welcoming society.