

To Bubbe, from Rachael Lefkovic (and her Dad), Northern New Jersey

My name is Rachael Lefkovic. I am 22 months old and I support Barack Obama.

I know that I might be a little young to have an opinion about Presidential politics, but my father is very vocal about his political opinions and if there is anything that I have learned about government and politics from him since I was born it's that young people have to take responsibility for their own futures, because far too many voters are too concerned with the present. A perfect example of this is the national debt that is going to be passed down to my generation, because the generations that came before did not have enough foresight to manage their finances better.

But to be honest with you, there is something that I care about much more than a \$10 trillion debt, and that is the long-term prosperity and survival of the State of Israel. I know that you care deeply about this as well and because you do, you might be concerned, primarily as a result of receiving e-mails forwarded to you by friends and relatives that originated from very questionable sources, about Barack Obama and his commitment and dedication to the State of Israel.

First and foremost, I need to tell you that these e-mails that you have received are bunk. They have been discredited by every major media outlet and nonpartisan Jewish organization in the country. Barack Obama has a 100% pro-Israel voting record as a U.S. Senator and every public statement that he has ever made about Israel has been wholeheartedly positive.

But even if he didn't have such a strong record of public statements and votes, there is no reason to believe that his policies with regards to Israel during the four-to-eight years of his Presidency would be dramatically different than John McCain's. Historically, support for Israel has been neither a liberal or conservative or Democratic or Republican position, but instead one that has been shared by most elected officials.

The primary reason for this is the fact that for most of your adult life, Jews like yourself have been actively engaged advocates for Israel, both as voters as well as members of the organized Jewish community, and there is no reason to believe that the strength of the organized community and its commitment and dedication to the prosperity and survival of the Jewish community is going to wane in the least during the next four-to-eight years.

There are numerous issues that you should be considering before you cast your vote and I am not going to be one of those people who say that Israel should not be first and foremost on that list. If Israel's long-term prosperity and survival is the most important issue to you, as it is to me, then please consider what I have to say when I ask you to vote for Barack Obama.

My reason for asking this is because I am more concerned about the long-term prosperity and survival of the State of Israel half a century from now than what either Barack Obama or John McCain might do during the next four-to-eight years while President. There is no doubt in my mind that either will do the right thing for Israel if Israel faces an existential threat from Iran or any of its adversaries while he is President.

But what I fear most is that Israel's greatest existential threats are going to come twenty, thirty, or forty-to-eighty years from now when the organized Jewish community is not likely to be as strong as it is today (unless something changes dramatically to convince today's young Jews to be significantly more engaged and involved than they are right now) and the non-Jewish world as a whole is not going to be nearly as pro-Israel as it is today.

Why is the non-Jewish world as a whole not going to be nearly as pro-Israel twenty or more years from now as they are today?

Because for the last eight years, as a result of extreme rhetoric from people like Cindy Sheehan on the far left and John Hagee on the far right, which links opposition to or support for the war in Iraq with opposition to or support for Israel, the environment on college campuses has become increasingly hostile to the point that even liberal Jews cannot speak on behalf of Israel without having to face vocal or even violent protests.

This is a problem because many of the young people who have been attending college during this time and forming their points of view in these toxic environments will be the next generation of opinion leaders and in a position to influence everything from media coverage to policymaking twenty, thirty, and forty or more years from now.

Four-to-eight years of a John McCain presidency is only going to make this problem worse, not better. Only a President Barack Obama will be able to visit a college campus and talk to the next generation of opinion leaders positively about Israel and have his words resonate in a way that will allow them to seriously consider, for once, what you and I have always known about Israel.

Israel is without a doubt the most modern and progressive country in the region with one of the most dynamic democracies in the world, which for better or worse, enables every perspective throughout the political spectrum to have a voice. Israel considers all of these voices from extremely liberal and secular to extremely conservative and religious when building a consensus. But the minds of the opinion leaders of tomorrow are being closed to this and everything else that makes Israel such a wonderful place, because of the anti-Israel environment in which many of their perspectives are becoming crystallized.

As a Jewish grandparent, you may be one of the Jewish swing voters who is currently leaning towards voting for John McCain. I know that the most important people in your life are your grandchildren, and I know that you want them to be able to have an Israel that prospers and survives for them to experience and share with their children and grandchildren. For this to happen, the status quo must change.

On behalf of Jewish grandchildren everywhere, I implore you to ignore the lies and smears that are in your e-mail inbox, seriously consider what I (OK, it was my father, but he shares my feelings on these issues) have written above, and vote for Barack Obama.