

*On Second Thought Congresswoman Omar's Latest Anti-Semitic  
Comments Are **NOT** Surprising*

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I was initially surprised to hear that Congresswoman Omar remarked about “political influence in this country” and “allegiance to foreign countries.” These statements clearly play off the anti-Semitic trope that American Jews cannot be trusted because of dual loyalty. I was surprised to hear this offensive language, because in February Omar retracted and apologized for tweeting “It’s all about the Benjamins” and then explaining she was referring to AIPAC’s influence over U.S. foreign policy. However, after rereading her apology for her statement about “the Benjamins,” it’s not surprising that she followed it up with an assertion of dual loyalty.

Omar’s apology for her statement about “the Benjamins” was limited to regret about “the way my words make people feel.” Feeling *charatah* (regret) for an *aveirah* (sin) is one of the steps of *teshuvah* (repentance), but Omar’s apology was only a limited form of regret. She only stated that she regrets the way “her words make people feel.” Omar never stated that she regrets the substance of the remarks. On the contrary, she defended them, claiming that she is being condemned for “speaking the truth about, you know, the kind of influences that exist, that determine, you know, our foreign and

domestic policies and for that I think, you know, my tweet kind of spoke to it.” In other words, while Omar apologized for the way her tweet made people feel, she stood by the substance of her remarks.

Omar claims that she is being painted as anti-Semitic because she is a Muslim, stating that “a lot of our Jewish colleagues, a lot of our constituents, a lot of our allies, go to thinking that everything we say about Israel to be anti-Semitic because we are Muslim.” Mika Brzezinski on *Morning Joe* said that the issue of Omar’s statements was complicated. Mika’s husband, Joe Scarborough, responded to his wife’s assertion that the situation was complicated with a one word answer, “no.” Scarborough, a former congressman, then explained there was nothing complicated about the issue; it was a simple case of anti-Semitism that needs to be repudiated, as many on both sides of the aisle have done. Scarborough is correct. Omar is not critiquing Israeli policy, which is her prerogative; rather she is demonizing American Jews by invoking anti-Semitic stereotypes.

This disturbing episode reminds us of three things:

**First:** Differing views regarding policy are legitimate. However, targeting groups for demonization in order to convince the public that your view is correct is not legitimate; it’s hate mongering.

**Second:** If the U.S.-Israel relationship turns into a partisan issue, both countries lose. A strong relationship between these two democracies is vital for the security of both. Those involved in the newly formed *Democratic Majority for Israel* should be praised for

their efforts to counter the voices of Omar and her likeminded colleagues who are intent on weakening the Democratic party's traditional pro-Israel stance.

**Third:** When you profess to be repentant, you must actually mean it. Clearly, Omar's statements following her pronouncements of regret undermined her apology. They make one wonder whether she regretted her statements at all or was just claiming to be remorseful for the purpose of political expediency. *Ta'anit* 16 teaches that whoever confesses but does not repent is like one who goes into the *mikveh* (ritual bath for purposes of spiritual purification) while holding a *sheretz* (insect) which is inherently impure. The purifying waters will not purify such a person. True *teshuvah* must be genuine.

We are still waiting for Congresswoman Omar to perform *teshuvah*.