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## **Holding Leaders Accountable: Framing Moral Imperatives**

### **AIPAC 2016 & U.S. Presidential Campaign**

Some of the rhetoric surrounding the 2016 Presidential election campaign has challenged us as Reform Jews and as Americans. We are particularly pained by the inflammatory language Donald Trump has used regarding immigrants, Muslims, women, and people with disabilities as well as his refusal to repudiate violence at his rallies and from his supporters. On Monday night, Mr. Trump will address the AIPAC Policy Conference, adding to the views he has expressed during the campaign so far.

Whether you chose to remain in the arena or quietly and respectfully leave before the candidate speaks, whether in your synagogue or in your home, whether in the days to come or the months of the campaign season ahead, our texts and tradition guide our understanding of what we expect from our leaders when it comes to appropriate standards of ethical discourse and policies that reflect our core values.

#### **Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 19b**

Come and learn: Human dignity is so important that it overrides even a biblical prohibition.

**תא שמע: גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה [את] לא תעשה שבתורה**

- Why do the sages elevate dignity over biblical prohibitions?
- What happens to the entire community when a leader diminishes the dignity of some of its members?
- What are the underlying values of this text and how would you apply them to what you have heard from the candidate(s)?

#### **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel**

A Jew is a person whose integrity decays when unmoved by the knowledge of a wrong done to other people.

- What is our responsibility as Jews to hold those who seek public office accountable to our cherished values?
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