

31 October 2023

Dear SBL Members:

At a time when both silence and words are subject to multiple interpretations, often contradictory ones, we regret the pain and indignation our successive statements have caused to many of our members. Council does not wish to issue further statements about the tragic events in Israel and in Gaza. Rather, **Council wishes to clarify that both of its recent statements stand side by side.**

The first statement (on 16 October 2023) condemned unequivocally the horrific attacks conducted by Hamas against Israel on 7 October, firmly rejecting any excuses for such actions. The statement further supported the people of Israel, and especially members of our Society who were directly affected by this terrorist attack. The second statement (on 20 October 2023) addressed the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Israel and in Gaza, with attention to the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza, uninvolved in perpetrating those terrorist atrocities. This concern in no way displaced the solidarity for the ongoing sufferings of SBL members and their loved ones, then missing or taken hostage to Gaza.

We do not claim moral equivalencies. The second statement was meant to supplement the first statement, and we apologize if it was understood as a replacement or modification of the first. The two statements represent the mind of Council, and they should be read together.

We as council have agonized over the crisis in Israel and in Gaza for weeks. In good faith, we issued two statements. We have committed to **stay in the room** and work through the pain so many of us and our members are feeling. We urge all members of SBL to stay in the room with us and work towards a scholarly and intellectual means of working towards realization of the goals of our Society.

The members of Council are aware of the rise of anti-Jewish, anti-Israel, anti-Muslim, and anti-Palestinian sentiments, as well as verbal and even physical attacks, especially on Jews, on college campuses in the United States. **The Society will make every effort to provide adequate security for those attending the Annual Meeting in San Antonio. We are committed to having an inclusive environment in the Annual Meeting.**

Council expresses sympathy with all members of the Society who continue to be deeply affected by the lack of clarity in our statement making. Even if we have not gotten our wording right in every instance, be sure that **we remain committed to our values of inclusivity, transparency, equity, accountability, diversity, critical inquiry, scholarly integrity, and openness to change.** We are a plural society, and a single statement will never capture all facets of our diversity. In these extremely difficult times, a learned society must maintain its mission and core values to think about how our varied scholarly pursuits can contribute to the world at large.

Sincerely,

SBL Council