

## OPINION

# A 2028 letter to losing Brad Lander

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Brad Lander is riding high. New York City's former comptroller is all but assured of winning a congressional seat this November after beating incumbent Dan Goldman to represent the heavily liberal Brooklyn/Manhattan 10th District.

But one thing his progressive credentials can't shed is his Jewishness — and with a Democratic Socialists of America increasingly colored by antisemitism, that may make him useful, until he isn't.

Here's my imagined letter to him, dated two years from now, the morning after the 2028 primary, when Lander discovers exactly when "useful" runs out:

Dear Brad,

I'm sorry to hear of your loss in this week's congressional primary to a DSA candidate, closing out your leadership of the 10th District after just one term.

You made a deal with the devil in 2026 — knocking out Dan Goldman, a mensch who stood by his principles even as the political ground shifted beneath him.

I remember 2026 like it was yesterday. How you called Israel's war against those seeking its destruction a "genocide" — and pointed to your own Jewishness as the credential to say so.

How you refused AIPAC's money as a badge of honor and stood silently as Mayor Mamdani called AIPAC "monsters" trafficking in "dark money" — one of the oldest and ugliest antisemitic tropes.

How you stood at your victory party flanked by the mayor and his coalition who have made hatred of the Jewish state their platform.

And then there was the smaller indignity that should have told you everything. Primary day, 2026: the mayor's wife posted her support for other candidates and said nothing about you. Not a word. You told yourself it was an oversight. It wasn't. It was a preview.

We asked you to stem the hemorrhaging of Israel support inside your own party, to name the line between anti-Zionism and antisemitism — you stayed quiet on both.

We asked you to go to Israel as the district's elected voice — you never went. And to stay in relationship with the Jewish state, even while objecting to her government — no different than the 70% of Israelis who share your views on Bibi Netanyahu. We asked you to be a bridge. You were a tool of convenience. Because then the DSA fielded one of its own against you and pronounced you a Zionist puppet. You, who built a campaign premised that there was no such thing as too far left on Israel, discovered there is always someone further out on the ledge.

They told you it was never about being a Jew — only about being a Zionist — as if the two could be peeled apart, as if your Jewishness had nothing to do with the nation they demanded you disown.

There's an old teaching about the man who thinks he can ride the tiger and dismount whenever he likes. You didn't tame the coalition you joined. You were, for one term, useful — until the moment it decided to disown you. You could

renounce the policy, the lobby, even Zionism, but you could not renounce being a Jew.

And when your new friends went silent as you were ripped apart by someone even purer than you, you finally understood what abandonment feels like.

Our rabbinic sages teach that the penitent stand in a place the wholly righteous cannot reach — not despite having strayed, but because of it. Jews don't turn our backs on other Jews. Despite your miscalculation, despite the term you've spent believing the DSA's love was stronger than your people's — we will not turn our backs on you.

The door is open, Brad. Welcome back.

*Cosgrove is rabbi of Park Avenue Synagogue.*