

# The Day of Reckoning Has Arrived

**I**n last week's Congressional primaries, the more progressive wing of the Democratic Party once again showed its effectiveness as a political force to be reckoned with. What are the implications of this for our community?

The implications are clear, and there are potential repercussions. I refer to the fact that our community did not come out to vote.

For those in our community who adamantly oppose registering as a Democrat, I cannot overstate how foolhardy that is, regardless of what political ideology you subscribe to.

There are those who, upon reading this, will, without doubt, not mince words in their criticism of what I have said and will say. But before you let your blood boil, allow me to explain. The Orthodox Jewish community in New York City has established an unrivaled communal infrastructure, enjoys vibrant growth, and will, *im yirtzeh Hashem*, continue to grow, hence requiring us to play an important role in civic life — which includes voting in Democratic primaries, and indeed in all elections.

There are those who justify their criticisms of communal leaders — *askanim* — as sellouts and people who have accomplished nothing, concluding that we, therefore, have nothing to gain by maintaining our footprint in the Democratic Party.

Allow me to elaborate: It is quite easy simply to make blanket accusations, to which all elected officials and others in public life are vulnerable. Yes, there may be challenges in maintaining our way of life and creating a beneficial working relationship with members of government who identify themselves as progressive; however, by cutting off and unilaterally disengaging from the political process we achieve nothing. We only hurt ourselves.

Our community should find ways, and hopefully will find ways, to establish communication and collaboration in areas that we can utilize to further our interests and foster tangible results. Our political connections have accomplished this in the past, and continue to provide resources for organizations and related services that so many in our community take for granted, ignorant of how we accomplished this.

Yes, there are public pronouncements from the progressive camp that would, on the surface, seem to create an unbridgeable divide, but creating and fostering better understanding is only achievable when: (a) you make a determined effort, and, (b) you find agreeable ways to disagree.

What I discovered is that when you actually sit down across the table from those whose political beliefs are different from

your own, you realize that there are potential areas where we can find common ground with everyone, including the progressive wing.

Our vote is our political ammunition, because **a community that votes is a community that is heard, and a community that is heard is a community that is taken seriously.**

As it stands, our community has abdicated any form of civic participation. We have politically disarmed ourselves, in the name of boycotting the Democratic Party, essentially committing political suicide. I understand that it is a result of frustration and anger at actions that have been detrimental to our community, but how does disengaging from the political process help our community in a practical way?

Screaming is good after *davening* outside shul, but it cannot and will not advance our political agenda even one iota. At the end of the day, our community is situated in liberal, progressive New York City and New York state, and unless someone can wave a magic wand and have us find ourselves in Utah, we have to work with what we have.

For those who register as Republican, I have this message for you: Perhaps readers need to be reminded that one can still vote for the Republican nominee in the General Election, even as a registered Democrat. In other words: you can have your cake and eat it too. Another point to emphasize: There are usually no Republican primaries, or those that are held are minimally contested; hence, it serves no practical purpose to register as a Republican other than for ideological purposes, which defeats the purpose of having the community determine who will actually hold office.

While it is fashionable to point fingers at the heads of *mosdos*, asking how helping these institutions has affected “my wallet” or “my pocketbook,” it is crucial to understand that, indeed, when *mosdos* are helped financially, it does assist you, because the cost of tuition for parents is never really as high as the expenditures taken on by our schools. It is also crucial to understand that often, the progress made by *askanim* and *mosdos* in our community is only facilitated through direct engagement with the powers-that-be.

Accusing *askanim* of compromising our communal morals is not only based in falsehood but is dangerous, as it manifests distrust towards the various communal structures that are vital in the production of Jewish families, the foundations of our community, and key to its existence in the future.

The opinions expressed on this page are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Hamodia.



The political maneuvering of our *askanim*, even working with those whose policies our community disagrees with, provides the basis for the resources and programs you, your family and your friends enjoy. In other words, there are public forms of identification that you may find distasteful, but that you benefit from.

Our elected officials need to engage and vote a certain way that you may dislike, but that have the potential to benefit you and your family in a real and credible way, even if understanding the nuances behind every decision in which they engage is anathema to you. Keep in mind that if you undermine the *askanim* or *mosdos* you are causing irrevocable damage to our community. While you may be dismissive of my words, I want you to understand that, while no one is perfect, you are doing nothing to advance our community's agenda.

Only when we have a seat at the table can we even begin to accomplish anything. A seat at the table means voting in primaries and elections. That means being registered as Democrats, because the vast majority of Democratic primaries in New York City decide the later election and essentially determine who will hold office. The survival of our community in the form and with the freedoms we have now depends on it.

Years ago, the Orthodox Jewish community was known for voting in greater numbers compared to other communities in New York City. However, today, while other communities are registering and coming out to vote, we are doing nothing. Who are we helping? Certainly not ourselves! All in the name of political purity. Politics is not religion — it requires compromise in order to get anything from it.

For all those who want me to prove my point, consider the following: By not registering to vote in a Democratic primary, you are only empowering others, who may have a different perspective than that of our community. How can that further our community's interests? It is in the interest of those with whom we truly disagree that we register Republican and avoid the Democratic primary. That would mean our viewpoints would go completely unheeded.

If the Orthodox Jewish community of New York City voted together as Democrats, we would have the power to impact the outcome of elections; our needs would need to be heard. And if our elected officials did not listen to us, they would lose their next election, but only if we are all registered Democrats.

The Jewish communities of New York City are thriving beyond what anyone could have fathomed years ago. By giving up our political leverage, I fear the truth of that statement will not endure the next decade. ■

# READY FOR THE L'CHAIM?

*So are we!*



## LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS

- Magnificent in-stock selection
- Minimum of 40% More Affordable
- Bracelets & Loose Diamonds

THE PREMIER SOURCE FOR  
LAB GROWN DIAMONDS AND  
DIAMOND JEWELRY



MONDERER

# PERLOW

NEW YORK

Consultations by Appointment

APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE IN LAKEWOOD

212-764-8833

E sales@mondererperlow.com W www.mondererperlow.com  
A 1575 50th Street, Suite 410 Brooklyn, NY 11219