

Heavy Turnout Among New York Orthodox Jews

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One woman, who asked to remain anonymous, voted for McCain.

"I voted at 9:15 a.m. on 14th Ave and 43rd street. I was number 83 and didn't have to wait more than a couple of minutes for my turn. People were coming in and out but it wasn't crowded."

For those who had to wait on long lines to vote: fear not. Mayor Michael Bloomberg waited about 45 minutes at an Upper East Side school.

Shmaya Morgan, a graphic artist living in Boro Park, said that he voted at 6:00 a.m., and that the area was pretty crowded.

"It took the guys some time to set up the voting machine and some of the volunteers looked like they had no idea what to do," said Morgan.

Esther Levy, a bookkeeper from Boro Park, voted at noon, but still came upon an empty place.

"I forgot to check my number," she said, "but at 12:15 p.m. the public school at 14th avenue and 42nd street was empty. [There were] more workers than voters. I was quite surprised."

Heshy Ehrenreich had a similar story.

"I had no line to wait — I was shocked! I asked the election worker what kind of turnout she considers this; she answered me that it was a much bigger turnout (so far) than the 2004 election. She said there were a very large amount of young voters, like never before, and a lot of new voters," said Ehrenreich.

He added: "Hashem should help us, whoever wins, it should be for the good!"

Eli Cohen, a native Canadian, voted Republican straight down the ballot.

"It doesn't bother me to tell you that I voted for McCain and everything else Republican," he said.

There were a few reports of voter intimidation involving election workers.

Helen Applebaum told *Hamodia* that there were election workers who were dressed strangely, giving her an eerie feeling.

"One thing that made me very uncomfortable was the four new workers socializing in the middle of the gym. ... They were wearing black t-shirts with 'Election Protection: You Have The Right To Vote' across the front, and an 800 number on the back. The presence of these people made me so uncomfortable. Election protection for whom? Would they make a big fuss if someone's right to vote was challenged? I suspected that they would."

At one Boro Park voting station, election workers reported a relatively heavy turnout. At about 8:20 there were lines of about six to twenty voters per



HESHY RUBINSTEIN

Orthodox Jews at a voting station in Boro Park yesterday.

booth.

When asked who they voted for and why, most of these voters said they voted for McCain.

"I don't want all my money redistributed," one elderly man explained. Several stressed the moral issues. But some said they voted for Obama anyway.

"I don't need Rush Limbaugh dictating to me who is an anti-Semite," one thirty-year old man insisted. "I always vote Democratic, and I think that Obama is a better choice for our community."

Rochel Binik voted early for McCain.

"I voted at 6:45 a.m. for John McCain," said Binik. "I didn't get a number and there was no one ahead of me for my district. There were about 10 other people in the building that came to vote. Nothing out of the ordinary."

Yisroel Werdyger even got his kids to vote for McCain, probably said tongue-in-cheek.

"I voted at 4:45 for McCain at the polling station on Avenue C and East Third," said Werdyger. "I realized that a lot of yiddishe mammas were voting, more than I have ever seen, and I noticed that many mothers took along their children for the trip."

"My kids were involved as well. All my kids said they voted McCain. As I was leaving many, many people were coming home from work and the lines were becoming longer and longer."

Other young children also involved themselves in the election.

First graders in Yeshiva Chasan Sofer of Boro Park were all predicting a McCain victory yesterday. Only one boy, Ari, a seven-year-old, said that Obama would win. All his friends started shouting that it won't happen and he should retract.

Ari said resignedly, as only a seven-year-old can, "Okay, whoever will win should win!"

Mrs. R. Deitsch voted for McCain in Crown Heights, a place that has seen more than its share of black-Jewish tension over the past decades. She couldn't understand how blacks could

vote so monolithically for the black candidate without any other consideration.

"I have been voting at the same location on Eastern Parkway and Schenectady Avenue for the past 30 years. I usually run in and out within five minutes. For the first time, this morning, there was a line around the block. It seems all the black people are showing up to get their guy in. I don't get it. If a red-haired candidate runs, will all the jinjis go and vote for him, too? What does color have to do with being a good president?"

Deitsch also worried that the rumors circulating about Obama's friendship with known terrorists have a grain of truth to them.

"Obama is friends with terrorists," she claimed. "He does not even like the U.S.! He wants to befriend Ahmadinejad! For heaven's sake he is *dangerous*, I read it in *Hamodia*! Why are people of any color voting him in? Don't they want to live? Don't they want their children and grandchildren to grow up in a safe world?"

The biggest surprise of the night, however, was *Hamodia* columnist Avi Klar — a staunch defender of Obama in numerous opinion columns — who acknowledged that he in fact ended up, albeit very reluctantly, voting for Senator McCain on the Conservative Party line.

"I still feel that there is no absolutely reason to fear a President Obama, but Obama's views on moral issues prevented me from voting for him."

Klar's last minute change of heart notwithstanding, Obama won the election — including New York.

Klar said that he was actually leaning towards voting for Libertarian party candidate Bob Barr, but was convinced — in the voting booth — to vote for McCain.

"My nine year old son joined me in the booth, and as I reached out to turn the lever, he begged me to vote for McCain. I just couldn't turn him down."

On the Scene at Obama Headquarters

Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group, was at the massive election night rally for President-elect Barack Obama outside Grant Park in Chicago South Side. *Hamodia* asked him several questions.

What's the mood like there?

It's really an incredible atmosphere. They say that there are close to a million people. Entire blocks of people streaming toward the entrance of the park. Everyone is either wearing or selling memorabilia. Mostly comprised of young people — teens to just under 40.

You assisted the Obama campaign. What was your role?

We were not working for the Obama campaign in any capacity but we were contacted by the Obama campaign to gauge the mood of the Jewish community, how to convey the positions of the campaign, how to allay concerns and fears that were and probably still are rampant and prevalent in the community. Our role was strictly voluntary and we felt it would benefit both the community and the campaign.

You mentioned concerns and fears. Is there legitimate reason to be concerned about an Obama presidency?

Overall, I think there's unwarranted mass hysteria. There are certain issues that were raised during the campaign that were definitely legitimate issues and when viewed in the proper context, I think Jews in the United States have nothing what to fear, except, to paraphrase FDR, for fear itself.

How did you find the approach of the Obama staff? If the Jews, especially Orthodox Jews, did vote for McCain, do you think there will be a backlash?

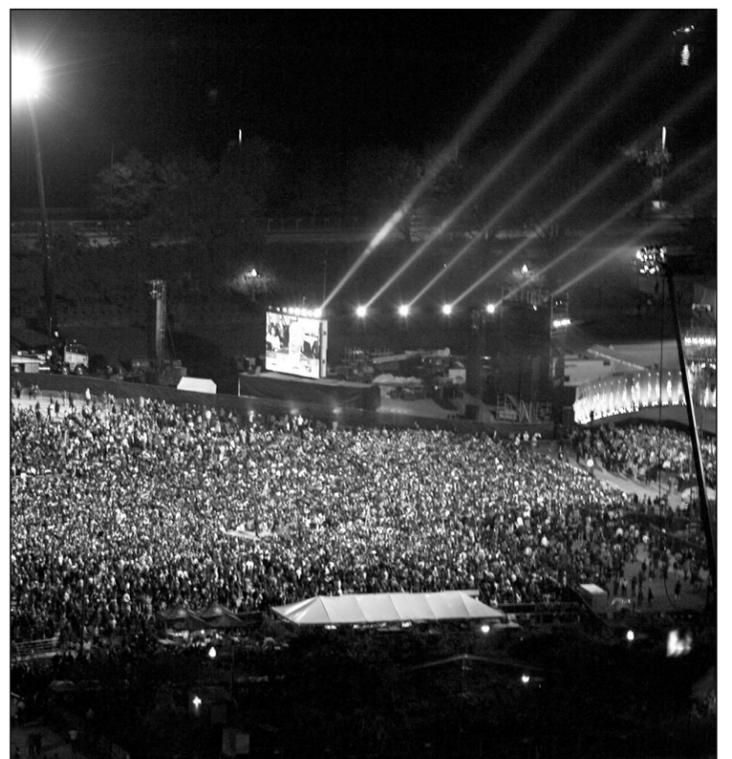
No, I think the campaign was very earnest and sincere in reaching out to the Orthodox community knowing full well that the orthodox vote is not important because we're concentrated in states like New York and New Jersey, which were never in question. That's where the bulk of the Orthodox vote is. Yet they reached out to every segment of the Orthodox community because they felt that they're trying to appeal to the entire spectrum of every group and every region. It wouldn't resonate with their message not to reach out to any group.

So you feel comfortable with an Obama presidency?

I feel very comfortable. I don't buy into any of the hysteria that's going on.

More on the atmosphere at the election rally...

You have to really see it to believe it. It can't be conveyed through the media. It's a testament to the dynamic personality of Obama. And yet, it's a little bit scary when you think about how people can be so quickly motivated, but I think it's being channeled correctly.



TASOS KATOPODIS/GETTY IMAGES

The rally in Grant Park to hear president-elect Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) yesterday in Chicago, Illinois. Rally attendance was expected to be over a million people.