

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR CROWN HEIGHTS

AVROHOM HAKOHN WASSERMAN TELLS US ABOUT HIS UPCOMING RUN FOR CITY COUNCILMAN, AND THE ADVANTAGES HIS VICTORY WOULD BRING TO THE SH'CHUNA OF CROWN HEIGHTS IN GENERAL AND TO THE REBBE'S GOALS IN PARTICULAR.

INTERVIEW BY RABBI ZUSHE KOHN

Mr. Wasserman, can you tell us a bit about the role of the City Council?

The office of City Council is very powerful and influential in the city of New York. It controls the city's 35 billion dollar budget, which, by the way, is the 5th largest budget in the United States. That means that it's larger than the budgets of almost every state in the US, and larger, in fact, than the budget of the entire country of Spain.

The councilmen are entrusted with the responsibility of deciding where the money goes. They are empowered to fund worthwhile projects for the City of New York in general and for their own districts in particular. They also decide on land use (i.e., the best use for land, housing, etc.) and zoning issues. They also make the particular laws affecting New York City, as well as monitor city agencies to ensure that they function and spend their money in an appropriate manner. The City Council touches every facet of city life, from education to city services (such as sanitation and police), the environment, affordable housing, job opportunities, etc. In short – it addresses the concerns of the citizens.

What motivated you to run for this post?

Due to the current political

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situation in New York City, we now have an unprecedented opportunity to elect a member of *Anash*. This would very much benefit *Anash*, because as a member of *Anash* I relate to their needs and concerns, as well as to the needs of the entire district.

The reason for this unprecedented opportunity is as follows: Eight years ago a law was passed limiting New York City government positions to two terms, i.e., 8 years. That's why many elected government officials such as Mayor Giuliani, for example, cannot



Avrohom Wasserman

run again. In the City Council, over 30 of the 51 members cannot run again. As far as our community is concerned, the Hon. Mary Pinkett, who served as our councilwoman with distinction for the past 27 years, can no longer run. This means that anyone running for her position does not face a strong incumbent. Many candidates are vying for this open seat, thereby splitting the vote. This gives us the strongest base.

Parentetically, when a certain member of *Anash* ran for public office a number of years ago, the Rebbe said that an announcement should be made in 770 asking everybody to go out and vote for him. Later on, the Rebbe wanted to know why he didn't hear the sound of a loudspeaker going around Crown Heights. The Rebbe also told Rabbi Mentlik that *bachurim* should go out and vote.

How do your African-American rivals relate to your run for City Council?

Generally, in a very respectful, open-minded manner. They respect and admire the fact that our community has put up a candidate. Clearly I must meet their expectations.

What are some of the specific advantages that our *sh'chuna* would derive?

There are many worthwhile projects our community would benefit from that need funding; like individual job opportunities, affordable housing, easing of certain unnecessary sanitation restrictions, school vouchers (which would benefit our schools tremendously),

etc.

What are some practical ways in which *Anash* can help this election campaign?

The main thing is to go out and vote on September 11. Anyone who is not yet registered should register immediately. (Registering as a Democrat entitles you to vote in this election.) It is important to influence friends, family members, and so on to register and vote. Bear in mind that everyone will be watching us to see our voter turnout.

Also, every ten-dollar

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Avrohom Wasserman with our State Senator Marty Markewitz

contribution helps my voting campaign tremendously, because the government matches every ten dollars with four times the amount. In other words, if someone contributes ten dollars, the government will contribute 40; if someone contributes 20, the government will give 80, and so on.

Most importantly, in what way do you see this as "preparing the world to greet Moshiach?"

A councilman has the opportunity to make a real *kiddush Hashem* and to open the minds of the City of New York to our message of Redemption, the 7 Noahide Laws, moment of silence – which the Rebbe said is the last hope for society and education – and so on. I've already spoken to several candidates for City Council about these important things, and was very satisfied with the responses.

