

# Editorial

RABBI YITZCHOK FRANKFURTER

## New Obligations, New Opportunities

**T**he premise of this editorial, which I believe to be vital for the future of the Jewish community, originated with a person I feel honored to call a friend: Mr. Stephen Savitsky, the former chairman and president of the Orthodox Union. While Mr. Savitsky would have been happy to have his idea appear as an op-ed, I believed the “Savitsky Doctrine” too important to be relegated to the periphery.

“If present trends continue over the next 20 years,” Mr. Savitsky recently shared with me, “Orthodox Jews will become the largest segment of the Jewish population in the United States. In fact, according to demographers, the number of *frum* Jews could actually double. This is obviously great news, but with it comes a new set of responsibilities, particularly in regard to our obligations towards our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

“As unaffiliated Jews lose interest in the Jewish State and sometimes even champion the cause of our enemies, the time has come for us to step in as the lobbying voice to help Israel remain secure. Israel is wholly dependent upon America to maintain its military and technological superiority over its neighbors—think F-16s—in a hostile environment. Without US financial support, the Iron Dome, which saved thousands of lives during the Gaza war, could not have been built. Everyone needs to stand by the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael and intercede on behalf of its security regardless of whether or not one considers oneself a Zionist. When it comes to saving Jewish lives, these types of thing are hardly relevant.

“Given that the intermarriage rate of American Jews is 70 percent, and Orthodox Jews are going to be the last ones standing in only a few years, who is going to speak out when BDS sanctions are approved by the European communities if not us? Who else is going to write editorials and letters to the media in support of the truth? When Israel is accused of ridiculous war crimes in the international courts, who will rise in its defense if not the *shomrei Torah u’mitzvos*?

“Today’s anti-Semitism is camouflaged as anti-Zionism. While these days organizations like AIPAC, B’nai B’rith, AJC and the

Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations represent us in many of these battles, can we count on them to be there in the future? Will they still be Jewish, in light of the fact that statistically, by the third generation, the descendants of intermarried couples are estranged from their Jewish roots?

“When rallies in support of Israel are called for we must be represented. We can insist on separate areas for men and women, but we cannot ignore the cries of our brethren when Iran has nuclear warheads and continues to be the largest sponsor of terrorism in the world. We must be vocal with our elected officials; we cannot be myopic and concern ourselves with only local needs. We have to think globally and strategically.”

Mr. Savitsky has held many leadership positions in the Jewish community and is thus intimately familiar with these issues. However, that is beside the point. It has never been a matter of dispute that it is the obligation of each and every Jew to support the Jewish community and lobby on its behalf. As the Tosfos Yom Tov in his commentary on *Avos* (2:3) states, “It is a *mitzvah rabbah* to intercede with the ruling powers on behalf of the Jewish community, as [the lobbying activities of] Mordechai and Rabbeinu Hakadosh [Yehudah Hanasi] demonstrate.”

*Halachah*, too, recognizes the imperative of lobbying, permit-

ting a Jew who is involved with government officials for the sake of *shtadlanus* to wear non-Jewish style garments in order to blend in so that his voice can be heard (see Rambam *Avodah Zarah* 11:3, and discussion of the *Beis Yosef* in *Tur Yoreh Dei’ah* 178).

Of course, how to implement the Savitsky Doctrine on a practical level is something for which we must seek guidance from the *gedolim*, but that discussion needs to begin sooner rather than later.

And there is an added benefit. By recognizing our responsibility vis-à-vis the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael, they in turn will recognize their dependence upon the Orthodox community abroad. This will enable us to help ensure that the values of the *chareidi* community in Israel are never again threatened. G-d has always looked to the Jewish people to participate in securing both physical and spiritual wellbeing in their march to destiny. ●



Mr. Stephen Savitsky