

Religious Observance Is Not Optional

A Sabbath-observant New Jersey doctor, who received a nomination letter for the degree of Fellow from a prestigious professional medical association, sent in her response form and payment, which was received on time. In addition, she included a letter of explanation that, because of her religious obligations, she would be unable to attend the ceremony, which fell on Shabbos.

Unfortunately, the doctor then received a subsequent letter from the association stating that the designation of Fellow could not be granted to any nominee without their physical attendance at the ceremony. The doctor attempted to explain the situation to the association's Executive Director, but it was no use. She was given the option to attend the following year's ceremony, or the ceremony the year after that, but assured that the degree must be imparted in person, or not at all. Further, it was made clear that each year's awards ceremony only took place on a Friday night. The organization would not budge.

So the doctor contacted Assemblyman Dov Hikind. Assemblyman Hikind contacted the association and explained that Sabbath observance is not optional for an observant, Orthodox Jew. With the exception of life or death matters, Hikind explained, the doctor was strictly forbidden to travel or attend ceremonies on any Sabbath or major holiday according to her religious beliefs.

"Considering that your organization regarded the doctor worthy of this honor, it hardly seems correct to penalize her for religious beliefs and prohibit her inclusion as a Fellow. Such an action from such an admirable organization as yours would certainly send the wrong message. As such, I am reaching out to you personally in the hope that you can set the matter straight for all those involved."

It wasn't long before the medical association saw the error of their ways and granted the doctor her Fellowship honor.

"One would think that in 2014, these types of issues wouldn't even arise," said Assemblyman Hikind. "Why should this doctor even need to contact my office? Subtle forms of discrimination—regardless of whether or not they are intentional—cannot be tolerated. It's truly unfortunate that people still have to still fight these types of battles in New York and New Jersey. Of course, at the end of the day, I'm happy that this organization did the right thing."

Councilman Chaim Deutsch and Senator Simcha Felder Announce Assistance for Tire Slash Victims

As a follow-up to last week's spate of tire slashings in Flatbush, Councilman Chaim Deutsch and Senator Simcha Felder announce assistance for victims through the New York State Office of Victim Services.

In order to be eligible for this reimbursement, the owner of the vehicle must be age 18 or below, age 60 or above, or disabled. The applicant must include a copy of the police report, proof of age, insurance card, receipt for the tires, and proof of disability, if applicable.

"This weekend's mass tire slashing caused thousands of dollars in damages to vehicle owners," said Councilman Deutsch. "I urge all those who are eligible for reimbursement to contact my office to begin the process."

Senator Felder also encouraged all who were affected to seek assistance, "People are still very upset about what happened and the least Councilman Deutsch and I can do is help the victims recoup their losses."

Councilman Deutsch and Senator Felder encourage victims of this weekend's mass tire-slashing to call their offices to apply – call Councilman Deutsch's office at 718-368-9176 or Senator Felder's office at 518-455-2754.



Flatbush Community Members Celebrate Chanukah at The White House

THE FRIEDLANDER GROUP

In what has become a White House tradition since the administration of President George H.W. Bush back in the 90's, a ceremony is held to honor the Jewish community by inviting leading Jewish communal leaders, and individuals who interact with the administration on various levels helping and impacting the community.

Over the years the magnitude of the reception at The White House has evolved into a Glatt Kosher affair with dedicated times for Mincha and Maariv that has greatly enhanced the experience for the observant participant.

The arrival of Chanukah this year was no exception as President Obama hosted 2 separate receptions to accommodate the multitudes of invites extended to a diverse Jewish community. Having two individual receptions was instituted by the Obama Administration and featured personalities ranging from Ambassador Stu Eizenstat, Secretary of the Treasury Jack Lew, Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer and numerous Jewish congressional members.

"Needless to say, the announcement by President Obama at the onset of his remarks regarding the release of Alan Gross caused great joy for everyone at the White House Chanukah reception and the personal acknowledgment by the President regarding the great importance of "pidyon shivui" underscores the sensitivity to a central tenant of our faith by a dignitary no less than the President of the United States. "It was a testament to the level of acceptance the community has risen to-only in America" said Joseph B. Stamm, CEO of MedReview.



Joseph B. Stamm, President Barak Obama



Joseph B. Stamm as "shaliach tzibbur" davening Mincha in the Red Room

L-R: Chaskel Bennett, Maryland Governor O'Malley Howard Tzvi Friedman

Agudath Israel Trustee Chaskel Bennett remarked, "It is always an honor to be invited to the White House and in particular to be one of the representatives of the Orthodox Jewish community at the invitation of the President. The United States has historically proven to be a Medinah shel Chessed (a benevolent country) and out of the Holocaust the broader Orthodox community thanks Hashem for allowing us to flourish on these welcoming shores. It is also incumbent to say thank you to our highest government officials on behalf of a deeply grateful community. Chanukah at the Whitehouse is one such opportunity."

Representatives of othernumerous Jewish organization attended and in particular representatives from a myriad of Orthodox Jewish groups, who work closely with the Administration, including Agudath Israel of America, the Orthodox Union, Young Israel, Chabad and many others attended.



Moshe Visel, Chaplain Jacob Goldstein, Joseph B. Stamm, Rear Admiral Herman Shelanski, Ezra Friedlander