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JULY 18, 2014

Standing With Israel's Troops



David Landau (second from right) of Standing Together on one of his daily trips to the Gaza border with supplies and snacks for the soldiers awaiting orders. A benefit event for Standing Together is scheduled to take place in the 5 Towns on Tuesday, July 22. **See Ad on Page 10**

FROM THE EDITOR

BY LARRY GORDON

Wanted: Fatalities

So Iron Dome is a great technological miracle. Now we have to figure out a way to stop apologizing for it. The Arabs, the president of Turkey, and an assortment of others were not embarrassed last weekend to ask whether Israel

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The Mitzvos Of Ground Forces

Halachic Musings

BY RABBI YAIR HOFFMAN

The full length and breadth of Israel is subject to the rockets being launched by Hamas in Gaza, and it is understood by almost everyone that right now, there is a huge mitzvah to defend the people of Israel. But what

is the mitzvah, or mitzvos, exactly? In this short essay, we will try to explore a few of them.

One basic mitzvah is that of saving lives. What is the source of this mitzvah? The verse in parashas Ki Teitzei (Devarim 22:2) discusses the mitzvah of hashavas

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HEARD IN THE BAGEL STORE

BY LARRY GORDON

The Whole Nine Days

Okay, I agree—I have to write about something other than war in Israel, military strategy, and international diplomatic maneuvering. And I have to do that not only for the reader but for my own middle-of-the-summer sanity as well.

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OUT OF FRANCE, INTO THE FIRE

BY SAM SOKOL

Four hundred and thirty. That is the number of new immigrants from France who arrived in Israel on Wednesday evening. Four hundred and thirty, and many of them are heading to Ashdod, Ashkelon, and other cities currently bearing the brunt of Hamas's rage.

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SILVER SPEAKS OUT FOR KAMINSKY

BY DR. ASHER MANSDORF

New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver will be visiting the Five Towns on Tuesday, July 22, and speaking with members of the community at the Lawrence Country Club from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at an event sponsored by the

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Senator Kirsten Gillibrand at last week's congressional tribute event in memory of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. See Page 38



ROOFING GUTTERS LEADERS

SIDING



Where Is Raoul Wallenberg?

Machberes: Inside The Chassidish And Yeshivish World

BY RABBI GERSHON TANNENBAUM

This question has baffled and tormented the Wallenberg family, diplomats, colleagues, friends, and concerned citizens throughout the world. In a January 16, 1945 note to the Swedish ambassador in Moscow, the Soviet deputy foreign minister advised that the Russian military authorities in Budapest had taken measures to protect Raoul Wallenberg, a member of the Swedish legation, and his belongings.

Born in Sweden in 1912, Raoul Wallenberg was a scion of the richest and most influential family in Sweden. The Wallenbergs are renowned as bankers, industrialists, politicians, diplomats, and philanthropists. The family fully controls one-third of the Swedish GNP (Gross National Product). Today, the Wallenbergs continue to own Europe's largest family-controlled business empire.

The most notable of the Wallenbergs was Raoul Wallenberg. Educated as an architect and having acquired banking and business experience, he posed as a mid-level Swedish diplomat in Budapest during World War II to rescue Jews from the Holocaust. Between July and December 1944, he issued counterfeit protective passports, housed Jews, and physically saved more than 100,000 Jewish lives. When the Nazis and Hungary's notorious Iron Cross murderers

were shooting Jews and dumping them into the Danube River, which separates Buda from Pest, Wallenberg and his assistants jumped into water downriver, beyond the view of the murderers, to extract surviving Jews. When gun-pointing murderers demanded that those hiding in his safe houses be deported, he interposed himself and declared that he would have to be shot before he would yield a single soul. When he climbed atop and into railway cars loaded with Jews being deported, he dodged threats to his life as well as rifle fire to distribute protective papers to Jews aboard, thus saving them from being transported to death camps.

The full story of Wallenberg has never really been told. Relatively few people today know anything of him. Last month, President Obama visited Sweden, the very first time a United States president visited there. The most emotional and meaningful event of the visit took place at the Great Synagogue in Stockholm honoring Raoul Wallenberg. There, he gave tribute to Nina Lagergren, Wallenberg's last living sibling.

Throughout all of history, no one achieved the wholesale saving of Jewish lives as did Raoul Wallenberg. Wallenberg is officially recorded by the Guinness Book of World Records as the

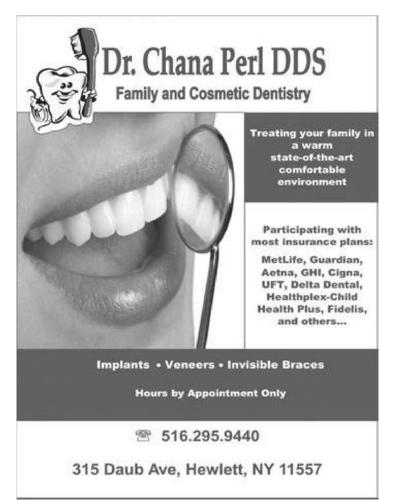


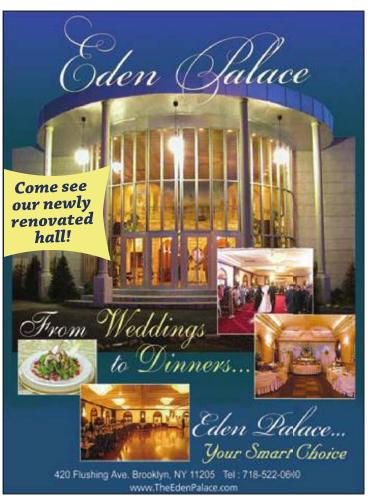
At the Wallenberg Gold Medal Presentation: Seated: Nina Lagergren, Annette Lantos. Standing: Rabbi Gershon Tannenbaum, Peter Rebenwurzel, Rabbi Elie Abadie, Ezra Friedlander, and Dr. Joseph Frager.

single greatest hero in history, having saved the greatest number of people from extinction. In 1981, U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos (1928-2008) sponsored the bill making Wallenberg an honorary citizen of the United States. Lantos and his wife were both saved by Wallenberg. That legislation was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1981. After being elected to Congress in 1980, and with the participation of the Wallenberg family, this was Lantos's first legislation.

On Wednesday, July 9, 2014, Raoul Wallenberg was posthumously

awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor, for being history's most important and courageous humanitarian. The Gold Medal is the achievement of efforts by Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group, and Peter Rebenwurzel, chairman of the Centennial Celebration Commission, who together spearheaded the campaign to have Congress recognize the unheralded heroism of Wallenberg. Friedlander created the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Commission in honor of the centennial of Wallenberg's birth.





Ezra Friedlander is the son of Rabbi Zvi Hersh Friedlander, Liska Rebbe; son of Rabbi Yoizef Friedlander, zt'l, (1918-1971), late Liska Rebbe, who was saved by Wallenberg. Peter Rebenwurzel's father, too, was amongst those saved by Wallenberg. On May 9, 2013, the United States Mint unveiled the design of the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Gold Medal in the presence of their Majesties, King Carl XVI and Queen Silvia of Sweden. That event was hosted by the Honorable Jacob L. Lew, Secretary of the United States Treasury.

The Gold Medal was ceremoniously presented in Congress by House Speaker John Boehner to Raoul Wallenberg's now 93-year-old sister, Nina Lagergren, who has been a leading force in the efforts to ascertain Wallenberg's fate. In one of Congress's most meaningful ceremonies, guests were assembled in the Rotunda and were addressed by House Speaker Boehner, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Senate Majority Leader Reid, Republican Leader McConnell, Democratic Whip Hoyer, as well as by other important dignitaries. Also participating were Larry Gordon, editor of the 5TJT, and Joseph Frager, MD, respected gastroenterologist and professor of medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Dr. Frager is world renowned as the organizer of the annual Israel Day Parade Concert in Central Park and as chairman of the Raoul Wallenberg Heritage Foundation.

One of the speakers was Congressman Gregory Meeks, representing New York's 5th Congressional district, which includes Jamaica and the Rockaways in Queens. The district has a good number of synagogues and sizeable Jewish population with many Holocaust survivors. Taking great pride in being a lead sponsor of the legislation authorizing the award of the Wallenberg Gold Medal, Congressman Meeks said that he "did not learn of the heroism of Raoul Wallenberg, history's greatest unheralded hero, in elementary school, nor in middle school, nor in high school, nor in college, and not in law school."

In accepting the Gold Medal, Nina Lagergren, accompanied by her daughters and grandchildren, called the event a magic moment. She described her brother's role as "immense," and speculated on how many are alive today because of Raoul's heroism. She asked "what can we do" for Raoul, who saved so many lives. She described those present as being "so important" with "so much might." "After all the years of imprisonment and detention in the Soviet Union," she said, "we want to know the truth," as to what happened to Raoul.

Wallenberg Arrested By The Russians

As the Russian army entered Budapest, the Gestapo withdrew. The Gestapo units were commanded to liquidate the entire Jewish population of Budapest before leaving. However, through the heroic manipulations of Raoul Wallenberg, the Gestapo left without carrying out their last orders. At that moment, Wallenberg controlled the largest supply of Budapest's

food and medicine. He also carried the responsibility of more than 25,000 men, women, and children housed in the 32 Swedish safe houses.

On January 17, 1945, Raoul Wallenberg voluntarily and eagerly met with Russian military officials outside of Budapest. He wanted to share his stockpile of foods, medicines, and resources, and to present his detailed plan of rehabilitation and reorganization of postwar Budapest and Hungary. His careful plans included the rehabilitation and reintegration of Jewish survivors, those that he saved as well as those returning from hiding and from labor and death camps.

In a January 16, 1945 note to the Swedish ambassador in Moscow, the Soviet deputy foreign minister advised that the Russian military authorities in Budapest had taken measures to protect Raoul Wallenberg and his belongings. No official response whatsoever was forthcoming for the next 12 heartbreaking years. Raoul's mother, Maj, had personally gone to Moscow unsuccessfully beseeching for her son's release.

Sweden did not formally ask for Mr. Wallenberg's return, even though the Soviet Union had seized the diplomat in violation of international law. Current and former Swedish foreign ministry officials maintain that amid post-WWII worsening East-West relations, neutral Sweden feared petitioning the emerging superpower on behalf of a diplomat financed by the U.S. Sweden was afraid of interfering with the work on behalf of many other Swedish pris-

oners that were being slowly released.

On February 6, 1957, the Soviet government released a document dated July 17, 1947, which stated that the prisoner Wallenberg died suddenly in his cell at night, probably as a result of a heart attack or heart failure. Pursuant to instructions, the body was cremated without autopsy. The document was signed by the then-head of the notorious Lubyanka prison infirmary.

Presumably, Wallenberg was suspected by the Russians of being a double or triple spy. The Russians knew he was working directly for and with the United States and Allied powers. Having been in constant negotiations with German authorities saving Jews, at times bribing them with money and counterfeit passports, he was suspected of collaborating with them. Further, Wallenberg was a member of Europe's leading banking family, something Russian communists could not tolerate. Swiss banks processed Germany's financial transactions during the war. The Wallenberg family business empire supplied Germany with steel during the war. That steel was used to build armaments that killed millions of Russians.

More than 45 years after Raoul Wallenberg disappeared into the Soviet prison system, the Soviet authorities gave his family some of his personal belongings: a blue Swedish diplomatic passport embossed with the royal crown, some money, several notebooks, and a cigarette case. A number

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Machberes

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of Russian government files pertinent to Wallenberg were turned over to the chief rabbi of Russia by the Russian government in September 2007. The items were to be housed at the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow which opened in 2012.

Many credible sightings of Wallenberg were reported up to and through the 1980s. Every report was thoroughly investigated and compiled into the equivalent of an encyclopedia. In spite of all the work invested in searching for Raoul Wallenberg, his fate is still considered a heartbreaking mystery. In 2009, reporter Joshua Prager wrote an article in the Wall Street Journal profiling the long-term toll that Raoul Wallenberg's disappearance had on his family. His mother Maj and his stepfather Fredrik von Dardel spent the rest of their lives searching for their son. They both committed suicide by overdosing on pills two days apart in 1979. The family attributes their suicide to their despair over never finding their son.

With the Gold Medal in hand, together with growing attention to the heroic achievements of Raoul Wallenberg, Russia will be persuaded to release all their information on Wallenberg and, hopefully, Nina's quest to learn the truth of Raoul's fate will now be achieved. •

Rabbi Gershon Tannenbaum is the rav of B'nai Israel of Linden Heights in Boro Park and director of the Rabbinical Alliance of America. He can be contacted at yeshiva613@aol.com.

Decades Of Perseverance For Wallenberg Culminate At Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony

BY NORA GUTEKANST

July 9 marked the 70-year anniversary, to the day, of Raoul Wallenberg's arrival in Budapest in 1944 to begin a rescue mission that would result in his saving 100,000 Jewish lives.

It was exactly on that day, as the Congressional Gold Medal was presented to Wallenberg, that the final chapter was culminated of a three-year-long effort to honor and commemorate his memory. With the presence of the U.S. Congress, Wallenberg family members and Swedish government officials gathered to honor the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation in the presence of descendants of people who had been saved by Wallenberg. His sister, Nina Lagregen, accepted the medal on his behalf.

In January 1944, the U.S. Treasury Department, with the financial support of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), established the War Refugees Board which sent Wallenberg on his mission to save the remnants of Hungarian Jewry in Nazi-occupied Budapest. Among other heroic actions, Wallenberg became famous for distributing to thousands of Hungarian Jews a Swedish 'Schutz-Pass' which conferred upon them official Swedish protection, thus preventing the Germans from deporting them to concentration camps.

Out of the 120,000 Hungarian Jewish lives that were saved, Wallenberg is credited with saving around 100,000. Trag-

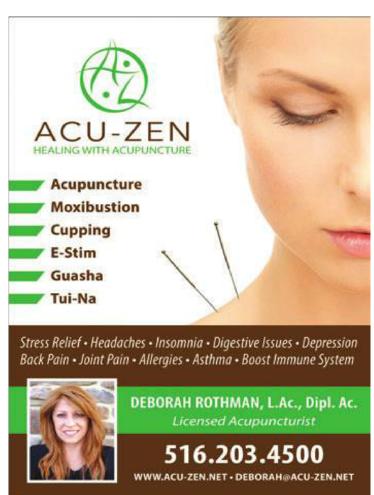


Congressman Gregory Meeks speaking at the Congressional Luncheon prior to the Gold Medal Ceremony

ically, the fate of Raoul Wallenberg is a mystery. In early 1945, he had tried to contact the Soviet Union in an attempt to obtain food for the Jews he was still protecting in Hungary. Wallenberg left for a meeting with Marshal Malinovsky, a Russian commander, accompanied by his driver, but never returned. There have been unclear accounts of his possible fate over the decades but none have ever been confirmed.

The commemoration of Wallenberg began in 2011 with the creation of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission (RWCCC) by Ezra Friedlander under the chairmanship of Peter Rebenwurzel in collaborative partnership with the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, which spearheaded the effort to honor Raoul Wallenberg with a Congressional Gold Medal in honor of his centennial. The legislation was introduced by Representatives Gregory Meeks and Nan Heyworth and by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Mark Kirk, and unanimously passed in 2012—the year of his centennial.

Prior to the actual ceremony, a luncheon was held to honor Eduardo Eurnekian, the chairman of the Inter-







Peter Rebenwurzel presenting a painting that was drawn by Mossad agent Peter Malkin over a map of Hungary to Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, with Baruch Tenembaum, Eduardo Eurnekian, and Ezra Friedlander.

national Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF) and its founder Baruch Tenembaum. The IRWF's mission is to preserve and spread awareness regarding the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg through research, commemoration activities, and educational programs.

Both Mr. Eurnekian and Mr. Tenembaum are highly dedicated to promoting human rights and learning from and exemplifying heroes, such as Raoul Wallenberg. They are also committed to discovering the whereabouts and fate of Raoul Wallenberg, and have offered an award of half a million U.S. dollars to anyone with valid and confirmable informa-

The luncheon honoring Mr. Eurnekian featured the participation of Senators Cruz, Gillibrand, Kirk, Cardin, Graham, Levin, Isakson, Franken, Blumenthal, and Representatives Meeks, Schneider, Paulsen, Van Hollen, McDermott, Hultgren, Goodlatte, McGovern, Pittenger, Harper, Schakowsky, as well as U.S. Treasurer Rios who all acknowledged Nina Lagergren and members of the Wallenberg family who flew in from Sweden along with Speaker of the Swedish Parliament Per Weterburg and Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt who all paid tribute to Wallenberg's heroism and highlighted the memory of the late Guy von Vardel, Wallenberg's half-brother, who spent much of his life trying to discover Wallenberg's fate.

The luncheon turned out to be the perfect beginning to set the tone for a day of remembrance in honoring Raoul Wallenberg's legacy. The ceremony in the afternoon included the participation of



(L-R): Congressman Chaka Fattah, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Stanley Treitel, Rabbi Yitzchok Fleisher, Dr. David Moskovits, Peter Rebenwurzel, NYS Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Ezra Friedlander, Leon Goldenberg, Joseph B. Stamm, Rabbi Elie Abadie, Willam Nussen, Ben Hoffman, and NYS Assemblymember Phil Goldfeder.

Speaker John Boehner, Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Senate Majority Leader Reid, Republican Leader McConnell, and Democratic Whip Hoyer.

Directly following the ceremony, there was a brief reception to close out the events with a special presentation by NY State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver to honor Peter Rebenwurzel who was the chairman of the RWCCC and whose father-in-law, Alexander Herman, was actually saved by Raoul Wallenberg. Rep. Chaka Fattah and Rep. Paul Gosar made remarks along with members of the Wallenberg family and Annette Lantos, the wife of the late Rep. Tom Lantos, who was also saved by Wallenberg.

"Having Wallenberg receive the Congressional Gold Medal 70 years to the day that he arrived in Budapest was a kiddush Hashem and an opportunity for the world to see survivors who were saved by Wallenberg as well as descendants of those he saved gather in Washington for no other purpose than to say thank you in the presence of Wallenberg's sister Nina," said Peter Rebenwurzel who chairs the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission established by Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group which advocated for the bill's pas-

The long day of events was an emotional and momentous occasion, but also an opportunity for many groups of people all connected and inspired by Wallenberg to come together and honor an incredible hero. ❖



