

Wallenberg Gold Medal Legislation Honors Hero

Legislation to recognize World War II hero Raoul Wallenberg with the country's highest civilian honor was passed unanimously on July 11, 2012 by the U.S. Senate, clearing the way for the law to be signed by President Obama.

"Raoul Wallenberg's heroic rescue of Hungarian Jews during one of the darkest hours of human history exemplifies his outstanding spirit, his dedication to humanity and the responsibility for us all to speak out against atrocities," Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D – NY) declared.

Wallenberg was a Swedish diplomat recruited by the US War Refugee Board to save Hungarian Jews from deportation in 1944, and was given a diplomatic passport, a large sum of money and instructions to save as many lives as possible, using any means at his disposal. He is credited with saving more than

100,000 Hungarian Jews over a period of six months. Wallenberg was arrested by Russian soldiers in January of 1945 and his fate remains unknown.

Among those who were saved by Wallenberg was the Liska Rebbe, Rabbi Yoizef Friedlander z.s.l., whose grandson, Ezra Friedlander, is CEO of The Friedlander Group, which founded the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission. This national campaign was established in order to commemorate and publicize Wallenberg's historic and heroic actions in honor of what would be the centennial of his birth on August 4.

The legislative milestone was celebrated with a gala luncheon held Capitol Hill, attended by Senators Johnny Isakson, Kirsten Gillibrand, Frank Lautenberg, Orrin Hatch, and Ron Wyden, and Representatives Nadler, Long and Waxman.

Honorees included: Andrew Stevens, a Holocaust survivor who forged documents used by Wallenberg in his rescue efforts; Emil Fish, Founder and President of the Bardejov Jewish Preservation Committee, which works to preserve and create a memorial to the survivors of the Holocaust in the Jewish Suburbia in Bardejov, Slovakia; Dr. David Moskovits, President of the Endowment for Democracy in Eastern Europe, who established the first American and Jewish school in post-Soviet era Hungary.

Community Women Celebrate Yom Hoda'ah: A Day of Thanks

The power of Tehillim and gratitude to Gd were the themes of this year's annual gathering of the students of Mrs. Violet Chkouri, who pray and learn together by conference call each weekday morning. The gathering on July 11th featured an elegant Seudat Hoda'ah – a meal expressing thanks to Gd, featuring personal accounts of siyata d'Shmaya (divine assistance) and open miracles from Hashem, inspiring everyone in attendance to continue their daily Tehillim program.

Every weekday morning, Mrs. Chkouri guides a group of women by way of a conference call through Birchot HaShahar (the morning blessings) at 8:00am, and then Tehillim starting at 10am. The program is run as a source of merit on behalf of all ill patients in the community and among the entire Jewish nation. Participants have testified how this program, which focuses on sensitivity to others and cultivating a personal relationship with Gd, enhances their faith in Gd and their love for fellow Jews.

The afternoon began with the recitation of Tehillim by Hazan Levy of Ahi Ezer Congregation, which was followed by personal accounts of divine assistance. One of the inspirational accounts presented was by a woman who was diagnosed with a serious illness. She described how she strengthened her faith and belief in Hashem through her daily Tehillim recitation, which enabled her to feel that everything that Hashem does is for the best. As she was prepared for the operation and anesthetized, she knew there were people all around her praying. After the surgery, she continued with her Tehillim. A well-known rabbi who visited her remarked, "I came to comfort you, but I see that I should be asking you for a beracha."

The women, most of whom came from Syria themselves, also gave thanks for being able to leave Syria and practice Judaism without fear, especially in light of the current events in the region. Mrs. Chkouri expressed her gratitude to Rabbi Shaul Maslaton and Mr. Elliot Harary for opening Ahi Ezer Congregation to the women, and to Yafit Pharmacy for donating the wonderful meal in honor of David HaMelech. –Pnina Souid



Honoree Andrew E. Stevens pictured with Abe Biderman, Ben Hoffman, Honorable Charles Freeman, Jonathan Zalisky, Ken Abramowitz, Leon Goldenberg, Stanley Treitel, Sidney Greenberger, Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, Senator Orrin Hatch, Peter Rebenwurzel, Ezra Friedlander, David Moskovits, Andrew Friedman, Esq., historian Michael Birenbaum, Honorable Emil Fish, Claims Conference Treasurer Roman Kent, and Claims Conference Chairman Julius Berman.



L-R: Board Members with Senator Michael Bennet at a private meeting in the Senator's office William Nussen, Heshy Klein, Sidney Greenberger, Stanley Treitel, Emil Fish, Leon Goldenberg, Peter Rebenwurzel, Senator Michael Bennet