

## Skulener Rebbe and Harav Salomon Call *Asifah* on Challenges of Technology

BY NOCHUM MANDEL

On Wednesday afternoon, 22 Elul, hundreds of *Roshei Yeshivos* and *kehillah* Rabbanim from the greater New York area will gather at the main conference hall of the Ramada Newark International Airport.

The purpose of the *asifah* is to raise awareness in a public forum regarding the true proportions of the havoc and destruction that modern technology is wreaking on our *kehillos*. The driving forces behind the *asifah* are the Skulener Rebbe, *shlita*, and Harav Mattisyahu Salomon, *shlita*. In

their joint *Kol Korei* to Rabbanim urging their attendance at the gathering, the Rebbe and the *Mashgiach* bemoan the tragic pitfalls that the various technological devices and media have wrought on families and individuals of all age groups.

In addition to the breakdown in the barriers of *kedushah* and modesty, the unrestricted and spontaneous lure of electronic media has unwittingly swept up so many of our finest *bachurim* and *avreichim* into whiling away precious hours on futile nonsense, which often involves *lashon hara*, *leitzanus* and the *zilzul* in Torah values

More importantly, the objective of the gathering is to develop an effective and realistic approach to harnessing technology in a manner that satisfies the demands of today's business environment, while protecting and securing the integrity of *Kedushas Yisrael*.

The Rebbe and the *Mashgiach* stress in their letter the crucial importance of *achdus* in facing today's *nisyonos* and have reached out to the *manhigim* of literally the entire spectrum of *chareidi* Jewry to join them in calling for this historic *asifah*. Every one of them has wholeheartedly joined the call.

Indeed, the invitations mailed to the Rabbanim feature an unprecedented united call by over 35 of *Klal Yisrael's* venerated *Admorim* and *Roshei Yeshivos*. The *Gedolim* speak of their firsthand encounters with the terrible consequences brought about by the destructive forces of technology. They underscore the importance of the attendance of all Rabbanim and *Roshei Yeshivos*, pointing out that the key to successfully implementing any type of widely accepted guidelines is first and foremost to sensitize the public to the dangers inherent in the unrestricted and wholehearted embrace of mod-

ern digital technology.

The organizers note that due to difficulties with mail service, numerous Rabbanim and *Roshei Yeshivos* have reported that they have not yet received their invitation. An effort is being made to reach out by phone or in person to all *Roshei Yeshivos* and communal Rabbanim. As stated above, all *kehillah* Rabbanim and *Roshei Yeshivos* in the greater New York area are invited and urged to attend.

For further questions and information, please call the office of Ichud Hakehillos L'Tohar Hamachaneh at 646-578-6859.

## Capitol Hill Wallenberg Luncheon to Announce Congressional Gold Medal Bill

On September 21, the Congress of the United States plans to announce the introduction of legislation to award a Congressional Gold Medal to legendary Holocaust humanitarian Raoul Wallenberg in honor of the centennial of his birth.

The announcement is set to be made at a luncheon in the historic LBJ Room, right off the floor of the U.S. Senate Chamber. Among other Members of Congress, it will feature the personal participation of Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin and Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Senator Ben Cardin.

Raoul Wallenberg is widely celebrated for his successful efforts to rescue thousands of Jews in Nazi-occupied Hungary from the Holocaust, during the later stages of World War II. While serving as Sweden's special envoy in Budapest between July and December 1944, Wallenberg issued protective passports and sheltered Jews in buildings designated as Swedish territory, saving tens of thousands of lives while putting his own life in grave danger.

On January 17, 1945, during the Siege of Budapest by the Red Army, Wallenberg was detained by Soviet authorities on suspicion of espionage and subsequently disappeared. It is believed he was executed or made to disappear in the gulags.

As the world gears up for Wallenberg's centennial in 2012, the world will remember and honor the fact that today there are hundreds of thousands of American Jews who are the direct descendants of those he saved, proud American citizens who appreciate the freedom America stands for.

The Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration

(RWCCC), a project of the Friedlander Group, is launching a national campaign to highlight the incredible heroism exhibited by this individual. Its goals include the ceremonial naming of public streets in major U.S. municipalities and the creation of educational materials for public dissemination.

The Wallenberg Commission is comprised of a powerful Board of Governors that will oversee its activities throughout the centennial year, including: Rabbi Elie Abadie, the Hon. Emil Fish, the Hon. Yitzchok (Jules) Fleischer, Leon Goldenberg, Ben Hofman, Rabbi Asher Lopatin, Lyon Roth, and David Storobin.

Mr. Goldenberg, the son of Holocaust survivors, stated that "... it is our responsibility to recognize individuals who risked their lives, went the extra step and saved so many people. Had there been more Wallenbergs, perhaps my brother, four sisters, and many more family members would be alive today. Along with their deaths, their hopes and dreams for the future died."

A Congressional Bill will be introduced by Representatives Gregory Meeks and Nan Hayworth of New York in the coming days and will be followed by a Senate version later in the month.

"It's all about building momentum," said Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group and spokesman for the Commission. "As Jews, we have the most to be grateful for in regard to the heroism of Raoul Wallenberg and his life-saving actions.

"... it's important that the Jewish people come together to remind the world that we will never forget what Raoul Wallenberg did for us in Budapest back in 1944."

## Dirshu's *Daf HaYomi B'Halachah*: Learning and Understanding *Halachah*

Anyone who has learned *hilchos Shabbos* — even superficially — knows that there are few areas of daily living with a more complex set of laws. The Chofetz Chaim himself wrote in the preface to *Mishnah Berurah chelek gimmel*: "It is impossible to avoid *chillul Shabbos* if one does not learn *hilchos Shabbos* thoroughly." There are, literally, thousands of common questions that arise on Shabbos that can lead one to unwittingly be *mechalel Shabbos, chas v'shalom*.

Food preparation on Shabbos is one of the main sources of common questions. Although people are naturally attuned to be on the lookout for issues that may arise with hot food, there are many less obvious questions to be aware of with regard to the preparation of simple cold dishes such as salads and fish. For example, may one salt vegetables on Shabbos? How small may one cut vegetables on Shabbos? May one add mayonnaise to tuna fish or salad on Shabbos or mix mayonnaise together with horseradish?

While all Torah Jews naturally wish to know the laws of Shabbos in order to observe Shabbos in the most perfect way possible, many individuals who master these *halachos* find that proficiency in this area also leads to a greater appreciation for and sensitivity to the meaning of Shabbos.

The *Daf HaYomi B'Halachah* Program was founded at the urging of *Gedolim* in Eretz Yisrael, including the late Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, *zt"l*, in response to a very real need. The *Gedolim* recognized that despite the proliferation of yeshivos and *lomdei Torah* in the past several decades, there has been a marked decline in proficiency in *halachah*. With the emphasis on in-depth learning of *Gemara*, many people do not have a practical way to help them gain a

mastery of *halachah*.

The concept of Dirshu's program is very simple. For five days each week, participants learn an *amud* of *Mishnah Berurah*; two days are devoted to *chazarah*. They can either attend one of the many *shiurim* that are given on this topic, dial in to Kol Haloshon or do it on their own. Voluntary tests are given monthly, with monetary stipends distributed to award those who do well.

Currently, there are well over one hundred *shiurim* in the *Daf HaYomi B'Halachah* Program worldwide, with thousands of participants. The following new *shiurim* have just started:

In Edison, New Jersey, Harav Reuven Drucker, Rav of Agudas

Yisroel of Edison-Highland Park, is giving a *shiur* in Agudas Yisroel of Edison-Highland Park. It will be held from Sunday to Thursday, 9:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m., preceded by *Maariv* at 9:15 p.m.

In Savannah, Georgia, Rabbi Yoni Maccabee will be giving a *shiur* starting Rosh Chodesh Elul in the chapel of Congregation Bnai Brith Jacob, located at 5444 Abercorn Street. It will be held from Sunday to Thursday, 8:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

The *shiurim* are open to everyone. Participants who wish to commit to taking the monthly tests can earn a stipend. To find a *shiur* near you, please contact Dirshu at 888-5-DIRSHU (888-534-7748).