

# Hurricane Sandy Brings Destruction...

But Also *Chessed*, *Kiddush Hashem* and *Kaddish*

By A. Y. Yosefson

Hurricane Sandy certainly caused a lot of damage a few weeks ago and left in its wake incredible financial and emotional stress for countless people, including many of *Acheinu Bnei Yisroel*.

Canarsie, a residential neighborhood in Brooklyn, was home to many *frum Yidden* years ago, and there were tens of *shuls* spread over a small area. In recent years, the *frum* population has dwindled to a very few. Canarsie residents, especially those in the Paerdegat section, suffered immensely during Hurricane Sandy. Buildings were flooded with four feet of water on the street level and with six or seven feet of water in basements.

Congregation Bais Avrohom Yitzchock, the *shul* of Rav Josef Portowicz *zt"l*, is located on Paerdegat 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Unfortunately, it was flooded along with all the neighboring buildings. The *shul* had not been active since Rabbi Portowicz was *niftar* almost thirty years ago, so there were no *Sifrei Torah* in the *shul*. However, there were *seforim*, *tefillin*, *talleisim* and other *tashmishei kedushah* that were ruined. And that's where the *chessed*, *kiddush Hashem* and *Kaddish* come in...

A group of 25 boys from the seventh and eighth grades of the Hebrew Academy of Long Beach set out from *yeshiva* after *Shacharis* on Tuesday, 20 *Kislev*/December 4, to clean up and repair the damaged *shul* and basement, removing all the garbage and packing away the *shaimos* for appropriate burial. Dressed in their "clean up clothes" and protected by gloves and breathing masks, they entered the *shul* and got busy. Amazingly, after a few hours of everyone working together, the job was done. The remarkable *chessed* shown by those hardworking young men was truly an astounding *kiddush Hashem*.

But that wasn't all.

Ever since the sudden *petirah* of Rav Portowicz, there was no *minyán* at Congregation Bais Avrohom Yitzchock. Rebbetzin Gitel Portowicz *a"h*, who passed away just six months ago, moved to Flatbush soon after the *rov's* passing, and the *shul* was left to remain

as it was on that fateful day.

Now, almost thirty years later, a group of fine young *yeshiva bochurim*, after cleaning up and putting things somewhat back in order, gathered in the *shul* to once again bring a *kol Torah* and a *kol tefillah* back to that *mikdosh me'at*. They heard *divrei chizuk* from Rabbi Chaim Portowicz and were led in *tefillas Minchah* by Rabbi Avrumi Portowicz, two (of the four) children of Rav and Rebbetzin Portowicz. It was a very moving, poignant and emotional moment when the *Kaddish Yasom* was said at the end of *davening*, a *Kaddish* in memory of the *rov* and *rebbetzin*, and the first *Kaddish* in Congregation Bais Avrohom Yitzchock in almost thirty years.

A memorial book is being published in honor of the thirtieth *yahrtzeit* of Rav Portowicz and the first *yahrtzeit* of Rebbetzin Portowicz. Over the years that they were *marbitz Torah* in America, they touched and inspired many people and many families. Submission of writings would be welcomed and greatly appreciated by the Portowicz family. If anyone wishes to submit a short essay about their interaction or relationship with, or reminiscence of, the *rov* and/or the *rebbetzin*, email [rabbijosefportmemorialbook@gmail.com](mailto:rabbijosefportmemorialbook@gmail.com) or call 718.915.1567 for more information.

Rabbi Avrumi Portowicz is the seventh grade *rebbe* at the Hebrew Academy of Long Beach and is presently the general studies principal at Yeshiva Ohavei Torah High School of Riverdale. He has accepted the position of principal at Yeshiva Orchos Chaim, the Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim affiliate opening in the Five Towns, Long Island, for the 5774/13-14 school year.

As we celebrate the *Yom Tov of Chanukah*, may the rededication of this *mikdosh me'at*, through the phenomenal *achdus* and *chessed* which we see proliferating among *Klal Yisroel*, bring about the rededication of the third and final *Bais Hamikdosh* with the coming of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*, *bimeheirah beyomeinu*.

# Torah Connections Offers 45-Hour Program to Help Master Gemara

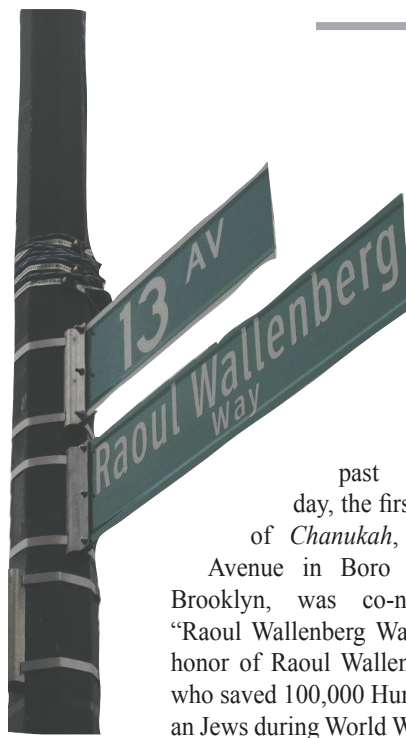
Torah Connections, a Flatbush-based organization dedicated to inspiring *Yidden* to gain a greater love for learning Torah, will again be sponsoring a unique 45-hour *Gemara* Methodology Seminar taught by Rabbi Eliezer Nevies, a *kollel* member of Yeshivas Torah Ore in Yerushalayim.

The seminar for men will be held in Flatbush from Sunday, December 23, to Tuesday, December 25, and the following week, from Sunday, December 30, to Tuesday, January 1, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The goal is to provide participants with a chance to get a handle on their Torah learning using the on-the-*daf* system that provides one with tools to enhance one's ability to grasp patterns of thinking in the *Gemora*, retain what one has learned as a springboard for further progress, rapidly increase one's vocabulary, and develop one's thinking ability and creativity.

For more details about this seminar, call 718.998.5822 or 718.336.0136.

# War Hero Raoul Wallenberg Honored With Street Naming In Boro Park



This past Sunday, the first day of *Chanukah*, 13th Avenue in Boro Park, Brooklyn, was co-named "Raoul Wallenberg Way" in honor of Raoul Wallenberg, who saved 100,000 Hungarian Jews during World War II.

The New York City Council approved the legislation co-naming 13th Avenue between 36th Street and 60th Street which was introduced by Councilman David Greenfield and Councilman Brad Lander.

The co-naming is the centerpiece of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission's efforts throughout the year to commemorate Wallenberg's 100th birthday.

Wallenberg was a Swedish diplomat who put his life on hold in 1944 and embarked on a mission that led to the saving of as many as 100,000 Hungarian Jews bound for death in Nazi concentration camps. Serving as first secretary at the Swedish Legation in Budapest, Wallenberg devised a plan to issue Swedish "protective passports" and establish safe houses in buildings throughout Budapest.

Borough Park is home to the largest population of Holocaust survivors in the United States, and many local families trace their lineage to individuals saved by Wallenberg.



Cleaning the basement.



Cleaning the *shul*.



In *shul* after *Minchah*.



The *shul* before being cleaned.

