

Congress Honors Memory Of Rabbi Zvi Kestenbaum

Two weeks ago, prominent elected officials joined with civic, religious, and communal leaders as they commemorated the 30th anniversary of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

The mandate of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad is to preserve and protect monuments, cemeteries, synagogues, and churches in Central and Eastern Europe. (The Commission's current chair is Lesley Weiss.)

The theme echoed throughout the program was the tenacity of Rabbi Zvi Kestenbaum and his ability to communicate so effectively with powerful officials and ultimately establish an official U.S. agency.

"Rabbi Zvi Kestenbaum was not only a visionary leader but an intelligent and wise person. He knew he had to actually do something not just speak about it, he knew how to organize the Commission and most importantly he knew how to be a voice for the people," said Rep. Ed Royce.

Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group, in conjunction with Project Legacy coordinated the planning of the event. He shared a personal mem-



(L-R) Lesley Weiss, Warren Miller, Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, Michael Lewan, Louis Kestenbaum, Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, Ezra Friedlander.

ory of the effect Michael Lewan of the Commission and Rabbi Zvi Kestenbaum played in preserving the cemetery in Liska, Hungary, a site of grave reverence for Hungarian Jewry.

And Lewan himself shared details of how Rabbi Kestenbaum convinced Senator Ted Kennedy to support the creation of the Commission. "I remember as if it were this morning – Rep. Solarz with Rabbi Kestenbaum and I walking over from the House side to this very building to meet with Senator Kennedy to convince him."

"I guess I could say that Kennedy was interested but not convinced," said Lewan.

Rabbi Kestenbaum addressed Senator Kennedy directly: "Just yesterday I visited Arlington cemetery and saw the magnificent graves to your brothers who are great American heroes and deserve the honor. Don't all G-d's children deserve the same honor?"

Those words moved Kennedy. He ultimately agreed to sponsor the bill which President Reagan signed into law, and later appointed Rabbi Kestenbaum as deputy chairman of the Commission.

Rabbi Kestenbaum's son, Louis Kestenbaum (chairman of Fortis Property Group, which controls a portfolio of assets valued at approximately \$3 billion), served as chairman of the tribute. At the event, he announced the restoration and preservation of the Jewish cemetery in Slubice, Czech Republic, as well as the restoration of over 200 graves in Ostroh, Ukraine. The initiative was warmly praised by Ambassador Gandalovic of the Czech Republic and Yaroslav Brisiuck, charge d'affaires of the Embassy of Ukraine.

Louis Kestenbaum shared his father's determination with the audience: "My father did not understand the meaning of the word no. He convinced local officials to cooperate. He built relationships with police to make sure that the graves would be watched." He also remembered his father's time in the Holocaust, recalling how his father knew that "G-d kept him alive to fulfill a purpose – and that has become very apparent to all of us."

South Florida

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IT'S MY OPINION

Something Fishy

Many bizarre schemes have passed through the gates of Miami International Airport's customs' department. The amazing varieties of ruses and ploys are a testimony to the creativity of the human spirit. One can only imagine what the outcome would be if the same relentless efforts were used for the betterment of mankind.

Agents have found contraband shoved into every bodily orifice of smugglers and hidden in and among a plethora of packages, containers, and vessels. Food seems to be another favorite item to use as a place to hide black-market objects.

A passenger recently arriving from Jamaica was carrying a bundle of fried fish in his luggage. Agents saw certain irregularities among the fish. Further examination confirmed the suspicions. X-rays found over two pounds of cocaine hidden inside some of the fish bellies. The cocaine would have brought a big payoff in the illicit drug market.

The smuggler's life has been changed forever. He is faced with a major criminal charge. He will probably be sent to prison.

When I read of this incident in our local newspaper, I was reminded of another story about a fortune found in a fish.

The Gemara (*Shabbat* 119, 71) tells a poignant tale of a poor man named Joseph, who so revered the Sabbath that he habitually borrowed money in order to honor and observe the day in a proper manner. His moniker became "Joseph Respects *Shabbat*" and he lived the name.

The narrative continues with a divine twist: a rich (gentile) neighbor of Joseph was told a prophecy. Joseph would somehow become the recipient of all the man's wealth. In desperation the neighbor sold everything he owned and used his entire fortune to purchase a diamond. From then on, he wore the diamond on a turban on his head.

One day the man's hat fell into the sea and was eaten by a fish that was caught on a Friday and brought to the market. It was already quite late and close to the Sabbath and the fish would be hard to sell. The fishmonger approached the one man he realized would be receptive. Joseph bought the fish, *l'kavod Shabbat*, with the last coins he held and hurried home to quickly cook his Sabbath meal.

When Joseph cut the fish open, his life was changed forever. He was able to live in comfort and honor the Sabbath with grandeur.

There are many hidden treasures and many fishy stories in life. Some will be used for the good. Some will be used for bad. Sometimes we really have to look hard to find them. Sometimes they are right under our nose. One thing is always true: it is up to the individual to use or misuse it all.

Orlando Jewish Outreach Center Holds *Siyum*

The Orlando Jewish Outreach Center, J.O.IN Orlando, an affiliate of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, held a *siyum* on Sunday, June 14, marking the completion of *Mesechta Beitzah*. Community members joined in the joyous celebration with delectable barbecue held at the Orlando Torah Center.

J.O.IN Orlando's Rabbi Menachem Zev Kramer, who led the Sunday morning Mishnah group, spoke about the importance of Torah and Hashem in our everyday lives.

Orlando was once a place where people came only to visit and vacation. Now it is home to a burgeoning Torah community, a place Jewish families can be proud to call home. To that end, in August 2014 three families – Rabbi and Mrs. Gabi and Sarah Gittleston, Rabbi and Mrs. Menachem Zev and Shoshana Kramer, and Rabbi and Mrs. Michael and Elisheva Rennert from Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Queens, New York – moved to Orlando. They had one simple goal – to establish an outreach destina-

tion where every Jew, regardless of background or affiliation, could begin to appreciate their heritage.

The pioneers established a community Jewish center, Jewish Outreach Initiative or J.O.IN Orlando. They aimed to strengthen the existing Orlando Jewish community through a variety of programming, educational discussions, socio-religious events, and by creating lasting friendships.

J.O.IN Orlando is nearing the end of its first year in Orlando. The organization is very excited about the future of a Jewish Orlando. Many programs and projects have been started. They include Young Jewish professional dinners, Jewish day camp, Jewish-mom trips to Israel, communal Jewish holiday events, lunch-n-learns, and a *chavrusa* program.

To find out more about the Orlando Jewish community, contact the J.O.IN Office at 407-734-0190/Office@JOINOrlando.org or Rabbi Dovid Yachnes of the Orlando Torah Center at 407-538-1254.

Calendar Of Events

WHAT: Special engagement showing of "KINDERBLOCK 66: Return to Buchenwald. (On April 11, 1945, Buchenwald was liberated; sixty-five years later, several surviving boys returned.) Q & A after screening with Holocaust survivor Alex Moskovic, who is featured in the film.

WHERE: Carmike Cinemas Port St. Lucie 14 – 1900 NW Courtyard Circle, Port St. Lucie, Florida

WHEN: July 14, 7 p.m.

CONTACT: Buy your tickets at www.diginext-films.com/kinderblock66

COST: \$12

WHAT: Meet the JWorks Miami Team. Learn about this unique program and pick up valuable job search tips and advice. Schedule an in-person meeting with a career counselor. Register at www.jworksmiami.org.

WHERE: 4200 Biscayne Blvd, Miami

WHEN: July 7, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

CONTACT: 305-604-6554 or jobs@worksmiami.org

COST: FREE

In his closing remarks, he added, "There was nothing he could do to bring back the millions of lives that had been lost during the war, but their legacy, the cemeteries and holy places that had been destroyed this could be recovered, restored and pre-

served. He felt that it was his moral duty as a Jew to see that this was done. I thank Chair Weiss and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad for its efforts to continue my father's legacy."