

Rothwell Figg Helps Secure Return of Chabad's Sacred Text, a Milestone in Decades-Long Litigation between Chabad and the Russian Federation

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On October 24, 2017, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia held an emergency hearing and ruled in favor of Agudas Chasidei Chabad of United States, as part of Chabad's long-running legal claims against Russia to recover the Schneerson archive and library which was seized by the Nazis and held illegally by Russia. The Court's ruling on October 24 enabled Chabad to secure the return of one of its sacred volumes today.

The emergency hearing was held after Chabad learned that one of its stolen volumes (a volume of the Babylonian Talmud used by the Fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shmuel Schneerson) was to be sold on October 31, 2017, at the Kedem Auction House in Jerusalem. Rothwell Figg filed an Emergency Motion for Issuance of a Letter of Request for International Judicial Assistance directed to the auction house.

The Court set a hearing for the morning of October 24, 2017, at which Steven Lieberman and Nathan Lewin argued on behalf of Chabad. Senior U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth granted Chabad's request at the conclusion of Steven's argument, noting that he hoped "the authorities in Israel will cooperate with this Court's request and that the plaintiff are able to obtain prompt information that will lead us to further development this week."

Following the hearing, Chabad informed the auction house of the Court's ruling and demanded that the auction house remove Chabad's volume from its auction. Late on Thursday, October 26, 2017, the auction house agreed.

Subsequently, on October 30, 2017, in accordance with the Court's ruling in this case, the volume was transferred to the United States Embassy in Israel, where U.S. Ambassador David Friedman met with Chabad's Rabbi Yosef Aharonov and attorney Nat Lewin and inspected the book. Official arrangements are now being made for the book to be transferred to the United States, where -- after more

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than a century of separation -- it will rejoin the Agudas Chasidei Chabad Library in Brooklyn, New York.

The Court stated that "in light of the action of the unanimous Senate and the Russian ambassador's response" -- referring to a February 2017 letter signed by all 100 US Senators to President Putin demanding the return of Chabad's texts -- the United States "needs to reassess" its position and provide the Court with a statement on "their current views" on "how to best get the Court's order[s] satisfied."

Steven was "very pleased with the decision and the prompt action by the Court. Most importantly, the Court's action led to a significant breakthrough that allowed Chabad to secure the return of a stolen volume in this case."

Chabad is represented by Steven Lieberman, Robert Parker, and Jennifer Nock, of Rothwell, Figg, Ernst & Manbeck, P.C., and Nathan Lewin and Alyza Lewin of Lewin & Lewin, LLP. The case is Agudas Chasidei Chabad of United States v. Russian Federation, et al., No. 05-cv-1548.