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Award for Hannah Lessing’s Work Building Bridges to Holocaust Survivors

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Hannah M. Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism and of the General Settlement Fund will be awarded the “Shofar of Freedom Award” on 22 September 2007 in honor of her work for survivors of Nazi persecution.

The award, which the synagogue “Temple of Israel” in Albany, New York, has been conferring since 1990, is bestowed upon people who have done exceptional work to make a difference to other people. The award is in recognition of Hannah Lessing’s many years at the helm of the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism, her personal involvement in building bridges to people who were forced out of Austria during the Nazi era and her promotion of educational and remembrance work on the Holocaust.

There were also four other recipients of the award, among them Philip Bialowitz, a resident of New York and one of the few survivors of the Sobibor extermination camp, and Andrée Geulen-Herscovici, a Belgian woman who hid Jewish children under false names in Christian homes and abbeys during the German occupation of Belgium.
“Temple Israel” bestows the honor of the “Shofar of Freedom Award” to Jews and non-Jews alike. Early recipients were the “Righteous” and resistance fighters who put their lives at risk to save Jews from extermination in the Holocaust. Others who count among the group of people to receive this honor are those who continue to demonstrate civil courage by standing up for other people. These include firemen and women who were on duty after the attacks of 11 September 2001. Other honorees to date include the journalist Beate Klarsfeld, who hunted down Nazi criminals; the guard Christoph Meili, who helped kick off the debate surrounding the dormant accounts in Switzerland; and the author Sibylle Niemeoller-von Sell, whose family was connected to the resistance cell surrounding the would-be Hitler assassin Stauffenberg and helped hide fleeing Jews.

The awards were presented on 22 September 2007, the Jewish holiday Yom Kippur at the “Temple Israel”, in Albany, New York, by the Congressman Michael R. McNulty. On the day before the award ceremony, on 21 September, a press conference attended by the 2007 recipients of the award will take place at the “Temple Israel” at 11 a.m. local time.