

2021-J2140

Senate Resolution No. 2140

BY: Senator BIAGGI

MOURNING the death of Rabbi Simcha Krauss,
renowned religious leader, distinguished citizen and
devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to bring full
recognition and just tribute to those men and women of religious
commitment who accept the responsibility of moral leadership and render
the wisdom of human understanding; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this
Legislative Body records the passing of Rabbi Simcha Krauss, noting the
significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Simcha Krauss, a leading figure of Modern Orthodox
Judaism who was a forceful advocate for women's rights within Orthodoxy,
died on Thursday, January 20, 2022, at the age of 84; and

WHEREAS, A descendant of a line of rabbis going back more than 10
generations, Simcha Krauss was born on June 29, 1937, in Czernowitz, in
what is now Ukraine, and grew up in the Romanian city of Sibiu; his
father, Abraham Krauss, was the city's chief rabbi, and his mother,
Pearl Ginzberg, was a traditional homemaker; and

WHEREAS, Simcha Krauss' family survived the Holocaust, but with
Communists taking over Romania, they fled to the United States in 1948,

during which time the elder Rabbi Krauss was appointed leader of a congregation in Upper Manhattan; and

WHEREAS, After studying at Yeshiva Chasam Sofer in Brooklyn, New York, Simcha Krauss received both a bachelor's degree and master's degree in political science from City College of New York and the New School in Manhattan, respectively; he went on to teach political science at St. Louis University and Utica College of Syracuse University; and

WHEREAS, Simcha Krauss studied at Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn, where he received his rabbinical ordination from Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner in 1963, and later studied with the Modern Orthodox luminary Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Simcha Krauss served as a congregational rabbi for decades, first in Utica, New York, and later in St. Louis and in the Hillcrest neighborhood of Queens, where he led the Young Israel of Hillcrest for 25 years; and

WHEREAS, During his years in Queens, Rabbi Simcha Krauss taught Talmud at Yeshiva University and began to get more involved in issues related to the role of women in Orthodoxy; in the 1990s, he began supporting the practice of women's prayer groups, in which women gathered to worship together without men and often to read from the Torah together, a ritual traditionally only performed by men in Orthodox communities; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, Rabbi Simcha Krauss' wife, Esther, became the founding principal of Maayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls, one of the first Modern Orthodox high schools to teach Talmud to women; in 2005, the couple moved to Israel, where Simcha Krauss began teaching at Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi; and

WHEREAS, In his later years, Rabbi Simcha Krauss took a courageous step by attempting to solve one of the most challenging Jewish legal problems facing the Orthodox community today: that of agunot, or women whose husbands refuse to grant them a religious divorce, leaving them unable to remarry; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, Rabbi Simcha Krauss returned to New York to found the International Beit Din, a rabbinical court, to work on agunot cases; despite the criticisms leveled at him and his colleagues and the fissures opened up in the Orthodox community, this brave man was undeterred and continued to advocate for his project; and

WHEREAS, A truly brilliant man, Rabbi Simcha Krauss will be remembered as a gentle, sweet and humble soul who was not a fighter by nature but was also not afraid to stand alone; this distinguished man of God always gave guidance and wisdom to the many entrusted to his care and administered abundantly and unstintingly to the spiritual and corporal needs of all; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his wife, Rabbi Simcha Krauss is survived by a son, Rabbi Binyamin Krauss; two daughters, Dr. Rebecca Harcsztark and Dr. Aviva C. Krauss; and 12 grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Simcha Krauss' infinite selflessness and benevolence will shine on through his family's vivid and happy memories; his insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love, light and hope to the countless lives he touched; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Rabbi Simcha Krauss leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all who were privileged to have known and loved such an amazing man; he will

be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this
Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to
mourn the death of Rabbi Simcha Krauss, and to express its deepest
condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be
transmitted to the family of Rabbi Simcha Krauss.