

# Former Yeshiva Principal Sought on Abuse Charges

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A former Brooklyn yeshiva principal and three of his sons sexually abused four of the principal's other children, molesting one of the victims over 15 years, the authorities said Friday.

The police are still looking for the man, Rabbi Gershon Kranczer, 58, and one of his sons, Asher Kranczer, 21, who they believe fled to Israel earlier this week. Another son, Yechezkel Kranczer, 24, turned himself in to the police on Thursday and has been charged with 70 counts of sexual abuse and 2 counts of endangering the welfare of a child.

The third son, a 15-year-old whose name was withheld by the authorities, was brought in for questioning on Wednesday, made statements implicating himself in the abuse and was arrested, said Paul J. Browne, the Police Department's chief spokesman.

The authorities believe the abuse occurred in a three-story house in Midwood, Brooklyn, that Rabbi Kranczer shared with his wife and 12 of his 14 children. Neighbors said the family had lived in the house for more than 20 years. A law enforcement official said the house had a large kitchen and several bunk beds.

Mr. Browne said the situation came to light after one of the children, who works as a teacher's aide at a yeshiva, told a colleague about the abuse on Monday. The colleague contacted the authorities, Mr. Browne said.

He said that Rabbi Kranczer and his son Asher flew from Kennedy International Airport to Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv on Monday, possibly because they had learned the authorities were investigating. Law enforcement officials said that Rabbi Kranczer and Asher, who is legally blind, were driven to the airport by Rabbi Kranczer's wife, whom the police did not identify by name.

Yechezkel Kranczer married recently and had moved out of the home, the authorities said.

The authorities said no one in the family had prior criminal records.

On Friday afternoon, a teenage child emerged from the house carrying a duffel bag, walked past crates of household items on the porch and disappeared down the street without commenting.

Neighbors painted a picture of a family struggling financially, and said two of the children had learning disabilities. But they said that they were shocked at the accusations and that the children seemed outwardly happy. "Impossible," said one, Sol Borger, 60, who lives across the street. "I don't believe it."

Mr. Borger said he and Rabbi Kranczer attended the same synagogue and had gone to each other's weddings. "The kindest, most helpful people you'd ever want to meet," he said. "I'd sooner believe Mayor Bloomberg did it." Mr. Borger said "children's services" visited the house years ago, but he believed nothing came of any accusations.

A spokeswoman for the Administration for Children's Services would not comment on any visits to the home because of the investigation. She said the agency was in the process of taking some of the children from the house and was "working to ensure the safety of all the children."

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There were conflicting accounts of the school that Rabbi Kranczer ran until three months ago, when the police say he resigned from his post for unknown reasons. State records indicate he was the principal of a school with a few dozen students called the Mesorah School. The records give the address as the rabbi's house. But neighbors said the school, for disabled children, was called Yeshiva Tehila L'Dovid and was a few blocks away from the house. On the porch of the Kranczer home, a mailed copy of the Flatbush Jewish Journal was addressed to Yeshiva Tehila L'Dovid.

The police said they were not aware of any victims outside the family.

*Noah Rosenberg contributed reporting.*

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