

Rabbi Stanley Z. Levitt gets 10 years of probation for abusing three boys

By Wesley LoweryGlobe Correspondent August 03, 2012

Despite tearful pleas from victims, a judge sentenced a one-time religious instructor for a prominent Brookline school to 10 years probation Thursday for sexually abusing three of his students in Boston during the 1975-1976 school year.

The sentence for Rabbi Stanley Z. Levitt, who pleaded guilty Wednesday to four counts of indecent assault and battery on a child, stunned and angered the victims, who gathered in the Suffolk Superior courtroom to face their abuser and witness the sentencing. Levitt was also ordered to stay away from children, register as a sex offender, and wear a GPS monitor.

“He should have served jail time,” said Michael Brecher, who along with the two other former students at the Maimonides School, an Orthodox Jewish school, said that Levitt touched him sexually when he was a sixth-grader.

Delivering a victim-impact statement before the sentencing, Brecher said Levitt groped him while Brecher was recovering at Boston Children’s Hospital after part of his finger was sliced off in a classroom door.

“As I lay helpless in a hospital bed, traumatized already by the events of that day, he affected my spiritual, psychological and, I believe, physical life and growth profoundly,” said Brecher, who added that he has suffered from severe depression since the encounter nearly 40 years ago.

According to Suffolk prosecutors, the other assaults took place at Levitt’s home in Brighton.

Prosecutors had asked Judge Geraldine Hines to imprison Levitt for 2½ years, but she adhered to a plea agreement reached last fall between prosecutors and Levitt’s lawyer, Scott Curtis, that recommended probation.

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Levitt had agreed to plead guilty last December, then reversed course at the last minute, angering the three victims who had traveled to Boston for the hearing.

The rabbi changed his plea again this week to guilty, a move prosecutors said was due to their strong case against him. However, this time they asked for a prison sentence, rather than probation.

The request for a harsher sentence was sought in part because of comments the rabbi made to the Globe after entering his not-guilty plea last year, said Jake Wark, spokesman for the Suffolk district attorney’s office. As Levitt exited the courtroom last December, he said, “The only victim here is me.”

“We’re absolutely disappointed,” Wark said. “We had recommended what we thought was a reasonable sentence of incarceration.”

Levitt, 66, remained silent throughout the hearing. He occasionally scribbled a note to his lawyer and shook his head in disagreement as two of the victims told of their abuse.

“It is my silence that angers me most today,” a second victim told the court in his impact statement on Thursday. The Globe does not identify sexual assault victims without their consent, and the second victim asked that his name not be printed.

“Perhaps, if I had said something sooner, this man may have had to face a punishment years ago, and possibly others may have been protected,” he added.

The Globe has reported that after leaving Massachusetts in 1980, Levitt was charged with molesting three boys in Philadelphia. In the first of those cases, Levitt was found not guilty. In the second case, he pleaded no contest to accusations that he had showered with a young boy and received five years’ probation. The third allegation was withdrawn.

“This could just be the tip of the iceberg,” said Mitchell Garabedian, a Boston lawyer who has repeatedly sued the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston over cases of sexual abuse by priests and who is representing two of Levitt’s victims. “There is no telling how many children out there have been sexually molested by him,” he said.

Garabedian said Thursday that he will pursue a civil suit against Levitt and the Maimonides School, which he said must institute more thorough screenings of teachers and headmasters to avoid similar crimes being committed by school employees. The Maimonides School did not return calls seeking comment.

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