



# Santa Monica Rabbi Arrested For Child Sexual Abuse

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by Kiana Schmitt - October 1, 2015

SANTA MONICA—Eight months after a survivor spoke publicly about her years of sexual abuse from her Rabbi, on Wednesday, September 30, Santa Monica Police Department arrested and booked Rabbi Sholom Dovber Levitansky on felony charges for sexual abuse of a child.

Levitansky, 38, was charged by the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office with five counts of oral copulation of a person under 18 years of age, five counts of sexual penetration by a foreign object, and one count of lewd act upon a child.

On February 28 of this year, Jewish Community Watch (JCW), added Levitansky to their Wall of Shame. “Multiple victims came forward and revealed to JCW that they had been abused by Levitansky,” The online posting reads. “After an investigation by JCW’s investigative team that spanned 18 months and following a review by JCW’s board, it was determined that public exposure was warranted and necessary.”

JCW is a grassroots organization that supports victims of sexual abuse and conducts comprehensive investigations aimed at “combatting child sexual abuse (CSA) in the Jewish Community.” Since 2011, they have conducted dozens of investigations and been sought out by hundreds of victims, leading to many arrests. In 2012, Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes awarded the organization for “tireless service and dedication to the community.”

Levitansky, a Sherman Oaks resident, allegedly met his victims, who were 15 and 16 years old at the time, while working at the Living Torah Center/Chabad in Santa Monica, states a press release from the Santa Monica PD Chief of Police Jacqueline Seabrooks.

The center, which has been operating since 1992, is currently one of 2,500 branches of today’s largest international organizations involved with Jewish education and outreach. According to their website, the organization aims “to serve the spiritual and physical needs of each Jew regardless of affiliation, wherever he or she may be, with understanding and with love”; they operate under a mission statement of “Ahavat Yisrael,” meaning “love for a fellow Jew.”

According to JCW, Levitansky previously served as director of Jewish Hospitality/Congregation Bais Avraham. Levitansky is also the son of Rabbi Avrohom Levitansky, founder of the Chabad in S. Monica. This



*The original posting from Jewish Community Watch’s website.*



*The Living Torah Center/Chabad is located at 1130 Wilshire Blvd in Santa Monica.*

Levitansky family Chabad is reportedly the site where many of the abuses occurred.

On March 22 of this year, JCW hosted a CSA advocacy and awareness event at Congregation Shaarei Tefila on Beverly Boulevard. Sima Yarmush, now 27, spoke in front of 350 members of the Jewish community about the two and a half years of sexual abuse she endured, allegedly perpetrated by Levitansky.

She suffered in silence; Levitansky would threaten her. “He would tell me, he would scare me, by telling me that if I told anybody what he does to me, he would take his gun to his head and kill himself,” said Yarmush “And I knew he had a gun.”

At age 18, Yarmush finally gained the courage to speak up. After telling her parents and a social worker, four Los Angeles Rabbis were assigned to her case for a *beit din*, a rabbinical court hearing. Yarmush says that she did not immediately press charges for many of the same reasons that survivors of sexual assault do not seek help from the police.

“I was 18, unmarried, and terrified of the public finding out I was sexually abused,” said Yarmush. “The idea of fighting a legal battle with a man who repulsed me was terrifying.”

After listening to her relay her experience in detail for four hours, the Rabbis told Yarmush they would “take care of everything.”

However, Yarmush does not believe they fulfilled their promise.

“My family got absolutely no backing or support from the Rabbis to show our community that the allegations were true,” asserted Yarmush. “An esteemed Chabadic Rabbi said to my parents that they had absolutely no moral, legal, ethical or halachic reason to say anything about the abuse to anybody.” Levitansky was then quietly sent to therapy, resigned from his position and went on to practice in a different Jewish community.



The Santa Monica PD has urged anyone with additional information about Levitansky or his victims to contact Detective Roy Brown at 310-458-8960, Sgt. William Heric at 310-458-8453, or the Watch Commander at 310-458-8427.



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