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by Eitan Arom

Posted on Oct. 27, 2016 at 2:49 pm

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Rabbi Sholom Doyber Levitansky. Photo courtesy of Santa Monica Police Department.

Rabbi Sholom D. Levitansky has agreed to one year of counseling and residential treatment at Beit T'Shuvah, an addiction treatment center near Culver City, after pleading no contest to two counts of sexual penetration by a foreign object of a minor.

At the Oct. 27 hearing at the Airport Courthouse on La Cienega Boulevard, his lawyer, Vicki Podberesky, told Judge Yvette Verastegui he had checked into Beit T'Shuvah the day before.

Levitansky won't be officially sentenced until he completes the treatment program. Once he's sentenced a year from now, he won't face jail time but will have to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life, according to Los Angeles County District Attorney spokesperson Ricardo Santiago.

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time at Beit T'Shuva instead of a prison sentence.

Levitansky was arrested in the fall of 2015 on felony charges relating to the sexual abuse of two teenage female victims, between 1998 and 2002. Back then, Levitansky was in his mid-20s and working at the Living Torah Center, a Chabad center in Santa Monica, where he met his alleged victims.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney charged Levitansky with five counts of oral copulation with a minor, five counts of sexual penetration by a foreign object of a minor and one count of a lewd act upon a child. Originally, he pled not guilty to all 11 charges, but entered his two no contest pleas Sept. 26.

Sima Yarmush, one of the victims who has since publicly told the story of her abuse, indicated to the Journal on Oct. 27 that she was pleased with the outcome.

"I feel that I have done everything that I can do to seek justice," she said.

Yarmush was 14 when she alleges the abuse began, and said it went on for more than two years.



Speaking with the Journal, she said she was the only victim who was willing to go through the court process, which likely resulted in a lighter sentence for Levitansky.

"It was literally me versus him," she said. "There was zero, zero community support, aside from JCW [Jewish Community Watch] holding my hand and, of course, my family," she said.

JCW is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Jewish victims of child sex abuse. In February 2015, more than half a year before his arrest, JCW posted a photo of Levitansky's face on its online "Wall of Shame," which lists accused sex abusers in the Jewish community.

Beyond JCW, Yarmush says she received help and support from her parents but few others. Years after the abuse took place, when she spoke about it with her parents, who ran the Chabad center, they

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remediation, they ignored her, she said.

Levitansky arrived at court Oct. 27 flanked by a group of bearded men and a woman wearing a wig and holding a prayer book. Approached outside the courtroom, he declined through his lawyer to speak with the Journal.

He is scheduled to be back in court on Dec. 6 for a status review.



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Kids are safest when child predators are kept behind bars, Let's hope that anyone who may have knowledge or may have been harmed by Rabbi Sholom D. Levitansky will find the courage to come forward and contact law enforcement no matter how long ago it happened. Silence only hurts, and by speaking up there is a chance for healing, exposing the truth, and therefore protecting others

Judy Jones, 636-433-2511. SNAPjudy@gmail.com
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