Let's Talk תכלית

בס"ד

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General Studies Department

Our Interview with Rabbi Kakon

Behind every story of success in learning, there are many long years of struggle. Every Talmid Chacham *has, by definition, walked a long, tough road. For Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Kakon, deaf from birth, the challenge was greater than for most. When he was a teenager, success in learning seemed beyond his reach – until a couple of unexpected, dramatic events changed everything. Our Grade 8 students, listening very carefully and intently, had a chance to interview the Rosh Yeshiva of Toronto's own Nefesh Dovid, the world's only dedicated yeshiva for young men with hearing loss.*

Transcribed by Eliyahu Kakon, Grade 8

Where was the Rosh Yeshiva born?

I was born in New York. I lived in Lakewood for three years. Then we moved to Los Angeles, where my father was a *rebbe* in Rav Simcha Wasserman's yeshiva.

What can the Rosh Yeshiva tell us about his parents?

My father was born in Morocco and was very young when his father was *niftar.* When he was about 10 or 11, he went to London with his two brothers, one older and one younger, to learn in Rav Moshe Schneider's yeshiva. There were many boys who came from Morocco to learn in his yeshiva. Many times there was not enough food to eat, and Rebbetzin Szemiatacki used to take my father into her home and give him extra food when she could. She had a soft spot for my father. Years later, Hagaon Rav Aharon Kotler came to visit the yeshiva, and that year he took one *talmid*, my father, to Lakewood. That's how he came to America. His two brothers, my uncles, are still sitting and learning in *Yerushalayim*. They went from England back to Israel, but my father is the only one who went to America.



Photo by R' A. Dworetsky

My mother is an *einekel* of the Baal Shem Tov, through her father. My grandfather's father, who was known as the Brownsville Rebbe, was one of the earliest *rebbes* in America, and the son of the Yampoli Rebbe, Rav Eliezer Chaim Rabinowitz. My own grandfather was Rav Dovid Eliezer, so I got the other name, Chaim, from my great-great-great-grandfather, the Yampoli Rebbe. My second name, Tzvi, I got from the other side, through my grandfather's maternal grandfather, my great-grandfather, Rav Naftali Tzvi Horowitz, an *einekel* of the Ropshitzer Rebbe. Rav Naftali Tzvi is buried right here in Toronto on Roselawn; there is a small *ohel* by the entrance to the Bais Hachaim. My mother grew up with deaf parents. Her father, when he was growing up, was the only one in his family who did not hear. He was the youngest child and very much loved by his father, the Brownsville Rebbe, who taught him at home.

Was the Rosh Yeshiva born with hearing loss? Or was it the result of something that happened later?

Yes, I was born with a hearing loss. My older brother also does not hear. He lives in Flatbush. I was born with a twin sister who hears, *B"H*.

What were the Rosh Yeshiva's experiences socially as a child? Was he lonely?

Sometimes I felt lonely. It had to be expected due to the fact that I could not hear. I could not, or was not allowed, to be part of groups. But, *Baruch Hashem*, I had the *zechus* to know my grandfather. He lived near us wherever we went, so he was a very important role model. I also grew up with a brother who does not hear, so we had each other growing up, and you could say that was my support system. Another very important thing is that my parents always accepted me for who I was, and that was very crucial in giving me self esteem as a child. I just never gave much thought to the fact that it was supposed to be a negative thing to not hear!

Learning is often difficult even for those who have perfect hearing. What were the extra challenges for the Rosh Yeshiva, and how did he overcome them?

That is a good question. When I grew up I did not go to yeshiva. I went to public school, because, at that time, many *yeshivos* were not equipped to take in children who did not hear or who had special needs. I went to public school until I was about sixteen.
Then it happened that I went to Toronto for a *Shabbaton* where there was a group of deaf kids. My grandfather went to help them, so I went along, with my brother, to be part of the experience. Over *Shabbos* I had the opportunity to meet with *bochurim* from Ner Yisroel, and we really hit it off. When I came home I realized that I could not stay in public school. I told my parents, "I need to go to yeshiva." They supported the idea, but they said that since I had one more year at high school, I should finish. Then I could go to yeshiva, maybe in Israel, to help me learn. But I was not happy. Somehow, something told me, "No. It needs to be now – not in six months or a year, but right now." So I wrote a letter to my new friend, Reb Yossi Bienenstock from Toronto, who now lives in Israel, and I told him how I felt. One week later, I got a letter back, "Come to our yeshiva. We will help you." So my father called and spoke with the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Friedler

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From the Many, One

By Rabbi Mendel Bornstein
Principal, General Studies

The atmosphere is festive. The band churns out melody after melody of *leibidige chassidishe niggunim*. The centre floor is a nonstop arena of lively, high-stepping dancers. The *mechutan* and the *chosson* are regally attired in satin and velvet. It is truly a sight to behold, a real *rebbishe* wedding.

Hey! Who is that "clown" jumping into the middle of the circle? Does he think the onlookers are interested in watching him? Surely he must realize that he's out of place at this affair! He's not even dressed properly for such a *chassidishe* wedding. He's from a completely different clan, poles apart from all the other guests. Oh, look how courteously the *mechutan* is handling him, the attention he is giving him, how warmly he is dancing with him! But doesn't the guy realize that he doesn't belong here? Well, certainly not in the centre, and definitely not for so long! Some people, I guess, just don't seem to get it.

Years go by, tragedy strikes, and our noble *mechutan* is now sitting shiva. I enter the house for *nichum aveilim* and there he is again; my nemesis, the intruder at the wedding. Here again, he takes centre stage, dominating the conversation. Once again, I mentally praise the *aveil* for the patience he displays while engaging the same *nudge* in conversation.

And then, only then, in a moment of epiphany, it hits me, and I realize.

I am once again a young *bochur* in yeshiva, and my *rebbe*, Hagaon Rav Gifter zt"l, is explaining the dichotomy of *Tisha B'av*. On the one hand, it is a day of mourning, on the other, a *yom tov*.

"There are two occasions when family comes together, at times of sorrow and at times of celebration," he elucidates. "Although the dispositions are diametrically opposed, the fact is that when families unite, the harmony brings with it an element of *yom tov*."

So that's it! He is neither a clown nor a *nudge*. ***He is family.***

In the past few weeks we witnessed a harmony that encompassed the two extremities of the spectrum. On the one hand, a conflagration snuffed out the lives of a mother and three precious children, a tragedy of such immense proportions that the pen shirks from recounting it. But there was ***the family***, our nation, to share in the grief, to console, and to lend a helping hand. It was the solace that only family can offer. On the other hand, a short while later, a Jewish man incarcerated for a disproportionately long sentence was released. Legal experts, both Jewish and not, insisted that the sentence was a travesty of justice, and that more than a touch of anti-Semitism was exhibited. His liberation exploded in a spontaneous outpouring of revelry and celebration. People who neither knew nor ever saw the man danced exuberantly in the streets. It was rejoicing with ***family***. It was just as my rebbe declared: "There are two occasions when family comes together, at times of sorrow and at times of celebration."

Chazal teach us that the lack of camaraderie wrought upon us the *churban* and our subsequent dispersion into exile. Consequently, its restoration, the spirit of family, will herald our redemption.

Yet sometimes we need a gentle reminder. The Kopishnitzer Rebbe zt"l once braved the frigid winter weather and travelled to midtown Manhattan to meet one of his wealthy chassidim. As he entered the office, the secretary immediately recognized the rebbe and swiftly notified her boss of his esteemed and unexpected visitor. Breathlessly, he burst into the antechamber.

"Rebbe!" He blurted out. "What happened? Why did the Rebbe come all the way from Brooklyn on such a freezing day?"

"I came for a very serious issue that could bear no delay. Someone is in dire need of assistance, and I believe you might be able to help."

"But for this the Rebbe needed to make a special trip to Manhattan? I see the Rebbe every day in his *bais medrash*! Why didn't the Rebbe just solicit the funds from me in Brooklyn? I would be willing to help in Brooklyn just as well."

"No, that would not suffice. It was important that you appreciate the gravity of the situation, and how close this man's plight is to my heart. I could only accomplish this by exerting myself physically to display how earnest I am about this issue, and how much I view it on a personal level. There was no other way!"

"Since the Rebbe needs a more significant donation, can I make out a cheque?"

"No problem. A cheque is fine. As long as I can deliver the funds immediately."

The philanthropist whipped out his cheque book. "To whom shall I make it out?" There was a split-second hesitation.

"Make it out to your brother."

Rav Gad'l Eisner zt"l, the famous *mashgiach*, stressed the importance of caring for family. To some this includes spouse and children. To others it consists of all close relatives. But to those greats like the Kopishnitzer Rebbe zt"l, family encompasses all of *Klal Yisroel*.

When we reach that lofty goal of feeling for each other as one large family, we will be that much closer to becoming one happy family. The events of the last few weeks are a giant step in that direction. May it hasten the arrival of the *Goel Tzedek,* speedily, in our times.



Artwork by Menachem Farkas, Grade 7



A photo of a painting of a photo of Aharon Leitman (foreground) and his brother fixing clocks. Archival research by Benzy Minzberg, Grade 8

The Story of Mr. Aharon Leitman

In each issue of Let's Talk Tachlis we try to interview a Holocaust survivor from our community. This time, our YYH students had the privilege of interviewing Mr. Aharon Leitman, a longtime Toronto resident who davens at the Agudah. Like the other survivors we have been zoche *to speak to, Mr. Leitman lived a frum life and busied himself after the war earning a parnassah and raising a family. Until you ask such a man, you might never know the story of how the Nazis tried, more than once, to send him to Auschwitz — and just how close he came.*

By Bentzy Balter, Grade 8

Mr. Aharon (Harry) Leitman was born in a little town called Makó, or Makóve, a city with a population of approximately 50,000 people, of which 5,000 were Jewish. This town was situated in southern Hungary, near the border of Yugoslavia and Romania.

When Mr. Leitman was eight – prior to the start of the war – as he came home from school each day, he would pass by a tavern on the side of the road. The children of the tavern-owner used to wait for him to come home and would chase after him on a little wagon along with a huge dog. This would go on day after day after day, until the day that WWII came to Hungary.

Though the Second World War started on the first of September, 1939, when the Germans invaded Poland, the occupation of Hungary only began in September of 1944, when the Hungarian fascists corroborated with the Nazis. When this happened, all the *Yidden* living in Hungary, including the entire Makóvian population, were rounded up.

Two or three months later, the Nazis started transporting the *Yidden* of Makó 30 or 40 kilometres to a neighbouring, but larger, town. This place had a brick factory which was built on a gigantic lot. The Nazis turned it into a housing ground for the soon-to-be-deported people, pitching dozens of tents on the lot and cramming people in.

People would wait in these tents until the first deportation call, which arrived one *Shabbos* morning, at around 10 a.m. The kapos came into the tents and called out names of people who were to be deported. The people named on the roll call would walk down a long road leading toward train tracks and the waiting cattle cars. Every few hundred metres, there were latrines, or bathroom-trenches, running along the side of the road. *Boruch Hashem* for those foul smelling trenches.

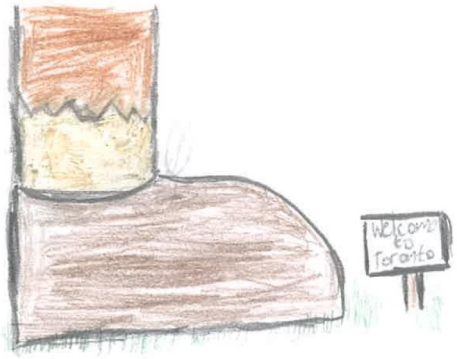
Mr. Leitman's mother, Frau Leitman as she was called in German, as well as Mr. Leitman and his three younger siblings, were five of the names mentioned on this list. As they were walking down the path, Frau Leitman told her children to go into the latrine trench and stay there until she came back. Because they were children, and also because no one stayed there for too long, they were able to remain for hours unchallenged until Mr. Leitman's mother returned and took them back to the tents. She realized that only the poorer people had been called. Those trains were to go to Auschwitz. "If my mother wouldn't have done that," Mr. Leitman said, "I don't think I would be here now."

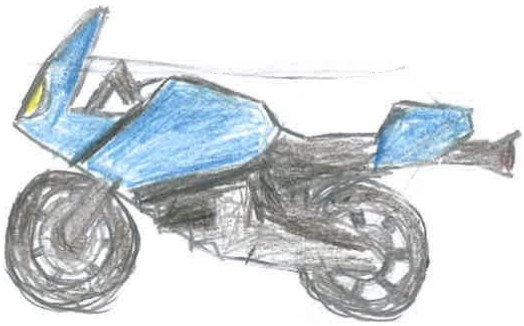
A couple of deportation calls later and the lot was almost entirely deserted. They realized that the train on the following Tuesday would be theirs. When Tuesday came, the entire remaining population of the lot was stuffed into the cattle cars, 92 people in each car. After five to six hours, the Nazis opened the doors and let people out – both the ones still alive and the ones who were not.

Suddenly, the train stopped. After an hour or two of non-movement, the train finally started moving again, but the people on it soon realized that it was not going forward. The prevalent theory on board was that the allies had bombed the tracks. The reality, Mr. Leitman's brother found out, was that there was a Jewish lawyer who had

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Our Third Annual

Pre-1A Survey

Around this time of year, we like to visit our Pre-1A students and collect their thoughts on a variety of important matters. Grade 5 English teacher Mr. Markovits brought his students to interview their younger counterparts. Here's what we found out.

What's the best thing in the world?
Hashem
Learning Torah
Home
A fire truck
My *Yetzer Tov*
Having a friend over
Strawberry yogurt

What's the worst thing in the world?
Mustard
Having to go to sleep
Aveira
Falling into cement
Fighting
My *Yetzer Hara*
When it's boring

Where do pickles come from?
Hashem
A pickle tree (most popular answer)
Cucumbers
Tap
Your fridge
A pickle jar
Hot lunch

Who discovered Toronto?
Avraham Avinu
My Tatty
A *tzaddik*
Justin Trudeau
Donald Trump
A giant

What happens when you go to the dentist?
You get a cavity.
He pulls your teeth.
You get scared.
You scream.
They fix your teeth; it doesn't hurt.
He gives you a filling.
They take an x-ray.
You get numb.
They help you.
You get better.

When is Moshiach coming?
75 years
When we do *mitzvos*
When Hashem blows the *shofar*
500 weeks
We don't know
When we're in *Eretz Yisroel*
When we *daven* really well
When we be good

Photos by Mrs. L. Feldman





When Hashem
wants him to
Very soon
In a few days
In two days
Tomorrow
Today
In three minutes
In two minutes
Right now!

If you could have anything you wanted, what would it be?
Chickens!
My own *siddur*
Handcuffs
A motorcycle
Noodles
A brother

How far is it from our school to Thornhill?
100 miles
41 blocks
Six hours
Seven days
10 meters
50,000 miles
A little bit close
This much

If you needed $100, how would you get it?
By selling wood
Make a store
From the market
If it's on sale
By working very hard
Clean-up work
Pretend I'm an old man
Look for it on the floor

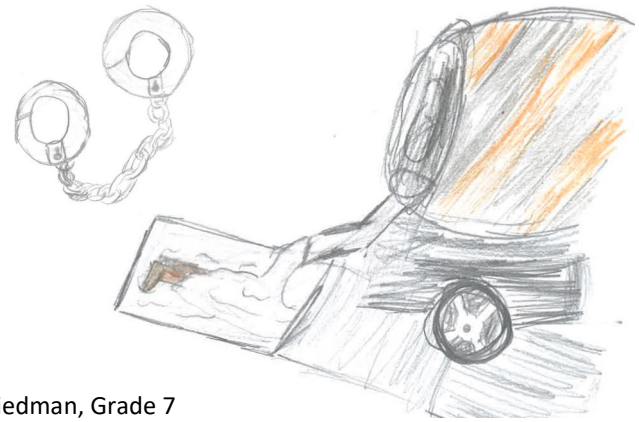
What's a chavrusah?
A *sefer*
Someone that comes for your Tatty to learn
We go to *shul*
A special thing
A kind of *shul* person
A watch (Tatties: do you ever look at your watch and say, "I have a *chavrusah*"?)

How much money will it cost to build the new school building?
$75
$100 (most common answer, by far)
$521
A thousand bucks!
A million dollars
$10,500,000
A billion
A hundred billion
Infinity

If you could be any age, what age would you be and why?
8, so I can go to the store myself
15, so I can reach anything
17, so I can cross the street by myself
25, so that I can get a phone
14, because I want to be a policeman
10, because I want to be like you







Illustrations by Aryeh Friedman, Grade 7







This and all bottom photos by Menachem Gottlieb, Grade 6

The Place to Fill up a

Teacher's Bag of Tricks

When you come to class, your rebbe or teacher is ready for you, with learning sheets, projects and crafts. The classroom is also ready, with colourful posters that help you learn. Where does all this come from? YYH Grade 6 student reporters took a fieldtrip to Lawrence Plaza to visit the Toronto Teachers' Centre of Torah Umesorah, a place where only rebbes, morahs and teachers are usually allowed to go. During this rare peek behind the curtain, they learned many secret tricks of the trade.

By Dovid Weingarden, Grade 6

Our Introduction

When we walked (or ran) into the Teachers' Centre, we were greeted by Rabbi Moshe Lebovits, a Grade 8 *rebbe* at Eitz Chaim who is also the coordinator for *rebbeim* at the Centre. He was our tour guide for the afternoon. "In 1944, R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz zt"l created an organization called Torah Umesorah," explained R' Lebovits. "In recent years, Torah Umesorah has launched a number of teachers' centres aimed at helping Jewish teachers become the best educators they can be. There are centres in Brooklyn, Lakewood, Montreal, LA, Chicago, St. Louis and here."

Why?

"The purpose of the Teachers' Centre is to provide teachers, *rebbeim* and *morahs* with the necessary equipment to make *your* learning experience much, much better, more fun and more meaningful," R' Lebovits said.

Who comes here?

Teachers come from dozens of different schools in Toronto. The great majority of the teachers are from *frum* schools, but sometimes teachers from non-*frum* schools also come to the Teachers' Centre. While they don't teach *Chumash* or *Gemara*, they do teach about the *Yomim Tovim*, and they know they can find very helpful materials here. "And sometimes," R' Lebovits continued, "we do some indirect *kiruv* that way, because when they come in and see our teachers and they see what we are teaching, I believe it makes an impact on them. And when they come here they are getting materials that are halachically correct."

Who else?

"There are also educators that come from different cities. For example, there's a principal in Rochester whose parents live here in Toronto, and she comes here in the summer. She walks out with arm-loads of materials to bring back with her to Rochester. There are many examples like that."

When did all this start happening?

The Toronto Teachers' Centre opened in 2010.

Who pays for it?

"There was a group of very generous people who got together and put down a huge sum of money to start the Teachers' Centre and to buy all the necessary equipment," Rabbi Lebovits said. "After that, they went to other people and asked them if they could help in maintaining the Teachers' Centre. Two people in particular have really taken on the responsibility and work very hard to keep this place going and they are Mrs. Chani Reichmann and Mrs. Judy Sigler."

When is the Centre open?

The Centre is generally open Sunday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Wednesday from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.







Photo by Yosef Chaim Dworetsky, Grade 6

The Room Where Grown-Ups Do Arts and Crafts

After our introduction in the meeting room, R' Lebovits showed us around the Teachers' Centre. The first room we went to was the crafts room, which provides teachers with the necessary equipment to create visually stimulating materials, both to hang on the walls and to give to the students. This helps visual and interactive learning take place, which is particularly important for some students who learn best that way. There are different machines that can cut out letters of the *aleph-bais* (and the alphabet). Also, there are machines that cut out pictures for crafts, decorations, work sheets and interactive activities.
In the corner of the room there was a machine for laminating posters – even huge ones – to keep them from getting ruined and to last many years.

Shopping for ideas

At the centre, there is a table with binders and boxes with labels like, "Maps for *Navi*." If a *rebbe* finds one that will help his class, the Teachers' Centre staff can make it into a poster. Or if a *morah* comes in the beginning of the year and she wants a "Welcome" sign to put on the door, she can look through the binder labeled "Welcome" to find one that she likes and she can even have pictures of all her students on it. Sometimes a *rebbe* or *morah* comes into the Teachers' Centre and they have an idea but they don't know how to create it. So he/she would go over to one of the staff, and they would try to help them create something unique to take back to school and hang it up in their classroom to make the room colourful and alive.

The Big Data

The next room R' Lebovits showed us was the computer lab. The room was lined with computers that have different programs that *rebbeim* and teachers would want to use, such as Word, Davka and graphics. These machines give teachers access to the huge Chinuch.org database, filled, without exaggeration, with tens of thousands of worksheets, tests and other learning materials. *Rebbes* from all over the world share these resources by posting them on the site after creating them.
"Many years ago I was teaching *Pirkei Avos*," R' Lebovits says as an example, "and I made worksheets on it and I submitted them to Chinuch.org. Those sheets have been downloaded almost 2,000 times. It's possible to see where they were downloaded. One time I was curious, so I checked. I was amazed. My sheets were looked at in France, Australia, Ireland, Korea..."
The computer lab also has printers which can print in color, on regular paper or cardstock.
In the corner of the computer lab there was a huge machine that can print giant posters. It prints on vinyl paper, which is a type of plastic thicker than regular poster board paper so it can last longer. The machine is very expensive. It also prints banners for events.

Hearing from the Experts

"Another thing we do at the Centre is to hold seminars and workshops," R' Lebovits said. "Let's say, we know that a Rosh Yeshiva or a *chinuch* professional is coming to Toronto and it will be an opportunity for *rebbeim* or teachers to hear from him, we make a seminar or a workshop and there will be a *drasha* or speech and they will hear *divrei chizuk* from that person and they could discuss some of the issues that they are dealing with in their class.
"Last year there was a Torah Umesorah program for *rebbeim* in New York. There were eight *rebbeim* in Toronto who participated from here. Almost every single Sunday they came to the Centre, and we connected on the computer. We heard lectures from some of the top people within the *frum* world on how to deal with different situations that can come up in a classroom. This ran for almost a full year for about three hours every Sunday. In this way *rebbeim* can gain from experts without those experts being in Toronto.
"There's also a microphone from our end. If one of the *rebbeim* here has a question he can raise his hand, and they can see and then they say, 'Hello, Toronto! What can we do to help you?' Then we'll have a discussion. This was, and is, a great program."

When Teachers Talk Shop

Another thing the Teachers' Centre has been doing is putting on a networking *melava Malka,* held at the Agudah. R' Lebovits explained that networking is when you bring professionals from a certain field together, and they have a chance to talk with each other. During a networking *melava Malka rebbeim* will gather. There is a *drasha* from one of the *rabbonim*, and afterwards *rebbeim* from similar grades get together and talk. One table, for example, would be *rebbeim* of grades 7 and 8. One of the *rebbeim* might ask something like, "How do we get our *talmidim* to *daven* more seriously?" And a different *rebbe* might say, "Well, I have such and such a program that might help." Then the first *rebbe* would say, "That sounds like a great idea. Could we keep in touch so you can map out all the details for me?" That's the point of the networking *melava Malka*: for *rebbeim* to trade information. "And the ones who benefit the most from all this are you," R' Lebovits said. "Like it says on the wall, *'Every student deserves the best teacher and every teacher deserves the best resources to make it happen.'"*







Everything you always wanted to know about Baruch Levine

At Chanukah time, when renowned singer-song writer Baruch Levine came to town to see his parents, he visited YYH for an interview with the Tachlis. Here is what we learned.

Transcribed by Yakov Polatsek and Yosef Baruch Wachsman, Grade 8, Yitzchak Kleinman, Yisroel Meir Sanders and Doniel Rechtshaffen, Grade 7, and Ephraim Sachs, Shua Appelrouth and Shua Rapoport, Grade 6

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Toronto, Canada.

Where did you learn?

I learned in Eitz Chaim, where my father is a fifth-grade *rebbe*. Later, I learned in Ner Yisroel Toronto. Then I learned in Yeshivas Toras Moshe in *Yerushalayim*, then Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim, then BMG in Lakewood, then Yeshivas Mir again.

How old were you when you wrote your first song? And do you remember it?

Let me see... we were living in our old house on Regina... I think I would have been 9 or 10 years old. I remember the first song. It wasn't a great song. It was called *Ana B'koach.* I was playing the keyboard and one of my parents came down and said, "I've never heard that song before." I said, "I didn't either." I didn't know you could make up your own song. I was just fiddling around. [Rabbi Levine managed to remember and sing some of *Ana B'koach*, but until the *Tachlis* is battery powered, you can't hear it!] I never recorded it. I didn't think it was good enough. [Could have fooled us!]

When you were younger did you plan to be a performer? And how did you end up becoming one?

I never planned to be a performer. I first started composing and my father recorded some of my songs. I went to a studio and made a demo, a half-way professional recording. Then I would send it out to producers and singers. So, for example, I would send it to Yochi Briskman, who bought a song for Yaakov Shwekey. Abie Rotenberg even bought a few of my songs. Zale Newman bought many of my songs back then.

Then, as my voice was maturing, some producers said, "Why are you giving away these songs? You should really sing them yourself. When a composer sings his own songs, they have more meaning." But I really did not consider it seriously until I was already settled and married with a family. It's a challenging world, and before performing I knew that stability is important. Once I was settled, I saw it as an opportunity. I only started ten years ago. So I was already married and learning for quite some time before I even considered it.

Can you tell us what your week has been like? And do you always travel that much?

I'm a *rebbe*, so I try to miss class as little as possible, and Hashem has helped that I really miss very little. This past week was exceptional. It looked like this: I had to be in *Eretz Yisroel* for *Shabbos.* I wanted to take the last flight that would get me safely there on time for *Shabbos.* I was able to teach Thursday and after *shiur* I left for Newark airport. From Waterbury, it's about a two-hour drive. I landed in *Eretz Yisrael erev Shabbos* at about 10 AM. I sang there *motzai Shabbos* at a *melaveh Malka* for Vhaarev Na. I left that same *motzai Shabbos.* The next night, I flew to Dallas, Texas, landing there very late at night. Monday, I participated in a dinner for a *kollel* in Dallas. Tuesday morning, I flew back to Waterbury again to make it on time to teach my class. I taught Tuesday and Wednesday. Wednesday night we started driving to Toronto, stopping overnight along the way. We got here Thursday afternoon, and here we are [*erev Shabbos*]. So that's the last week. That's not typical, though. Over the course of a year, I probably fly somewhere once or twice a month. Driving to New York is more frequent, but some seasons are busier than others.

Do you ever think about just doing music full time?

I never did think about that. I don't want to think about that, because I'd rather be very busy and try to find time for the things that I like to do and are meaningful – such as learning, teaching, and composing music. I also feel very fulfilled from being a *rebbe*. I feel like I've been *matzliach* at it. I have a good relationship with my *talmidim.* I'm afraid that if I quit that, as much as I could perhaps travel more and impact more people, it's not the same as being a *rebbe* and being grounded with that day-to-day relationship and connection with my *talmidim.*

How did you come to write the song *Vhaarev Na*, which has become so popular and is basically the anthem for the learning program of that name?

I consider myself still a person involved in learning, in yeshiva. I try to make as much time as possible for my *sedorim*. So I really identify with the struggles of a *yeshiva bochur.* It doesn't feel like so long ago that I was in high school and maybe struggling to learn or to get a *cheishek* in learning, which is what Vhaarev Na is about, through *chazarah.* When Rabbi Dovid Newman, the *magid shiur* in Monsey who is behind the movement, called me and asked me to write this special song, I was hesitant in the beginning because you get emails and phone calls several times a week for different projects. But when I saw what this was about, it really resonated with me and I felt like I could contribute on a wide level to helping *limud HaTorah,* which is very, very important to me. I see how it's a very challenging world, and if a *bochur* is not enjoying learning, he's going to want to enjoy other things. So I really took to it. We had *siyatah dishmaya* and the song became popular, and I am very happy to have even a tiny *cheilek* in what Vhaarev Na is doing.

Who are some of the musicians in the world of Jewish music that you enjoy working with?

I try to get along with everyone. Making music needs to be enjoyable. I enjoyed very much working with Yonatan Razel. I did a song with him for my last album. He's a big ben Torah and a very special person. And the *Project Relax* albums with Simcha Leiner. You know, sometimes when you have two singers, they may each want particular parts, but both of us are very relaxed – Ah! *Project Relax*. I didn't *chap* that. You *chapped* that before I did. So we enjoyed working with each other very much. And I love singing with Abie [Rotenberg] when I get a chance.

How do you ensure that your music doesn't become negatively influenced by the music of the outside world? And what, to you, are some of the lines that shouldn't be crossed by a Torah Jew who is a musical performer?

It's an important issue and a sensitive issue. There is a school of thought that says that Jewish musicians are progressively making music that's more and more modern because they feel that if young people don't have modern Jewish music they're going to go and listen to secular music. I don't know if that's true or not; that's up to bigger people to decide. What I can say is that even if it is true, there are enough singers who do that. I don't want to do that. It's not me. I don't listen to

non-Jewish music. Personally, I really want Jewish music to stay Jewish and have a Jewish feel. It doesn't mean that I will be the most popular singer. Maybe I will, maybe I won't; I don't need to worry about that, because Hashem decides those things.

In terms of a line to not cross... some of the more modern songs people make are very dependent on the beat or the music doing this or that. Without the music you can't really sing them. So, to me, a good litmus test is: can you sing it without music, and will it still be a nice song?

Have you ever been in situations where you were forced to turn down a job because it would have meant compromising your standards?

Yes, many times. I'll tell you a story. One time I was asked to sing at a Bar Mitzva, and I took for granted that there would be a *mechitza* for the dancing. The parents of the Bar Mitzva boy – they were very nice people who were in a different community, and this wasn't something they were going to do. The men and women were going to dance separately, but there wasn't going to be a *mechitza.* So I told them "I'm so sorry, and I should have mentioned this at first, but I can't do it if there is no *mechitza* for the dancing." And they were a little frustrated with me, because I didn't mention this at the beginning, and they were going to go and hire someone else, and I said, "You have every right to do that, but I do feel bad, so I want to offer that when the boy has a Bar Mitzva in school with his class I'll come and I won't charge anything." It was a very sincere offer. I got a very nice e-mail back that they appreciated that I was being a mentch, and they wanted to have me at the Bar Mitzva, and they would make sure that there would be a *mechitza.*

Another time I was asked to sing at a very high-profile wedding and the *kallah*'s request was for me to sing a *chuppah* song that wasn't a Jewish song. I sent a message back that there are many nice



Photo by Chaim Rand, Grade 8

chuppah songs and I didn't feel comfortable singing that one. They got back that they really wanted to have me do it, and asked if I was sure. I said, "Yes, I'm sure." In the end, they decided to hire me, and I sang *L'maancha,* a beautiful song by Eitan Katz. At the end of the wedding, right before I was going to leave, the *kallah* herself came running over. She said, "It was brave of you, since we could have gotten someone else. I want you to know that I have so much respect for you because you have your principles and you stick to them. You have taught us all something." So if a person does something *l'shem Shomayim* sometimes it works out in an unexpected way. On the other hand, not every story has that kind of happy ending. Sometimes I **have** lost the job. Once or twice I had to call Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky about singing somewhere and he said I shouldn't do it – not always for the same reason. It's not always about the performance. Sometimes there can be an organization that doesn't conduct itself *al pi Torah.* A person must ask *daas Torah* and go with it.

You are well known enough by now to get recognized out in the world. How do you deal with that element of "celebrity"?

It's a very good question. I try very much in my personal life to stay away from that. For one thing, I live in a relatively small, out-of-town community where I'm just like everyone else. It's very healthy and very normal. In Waterbury, I don't go to a store and have it become a whole scene – which sometimes it is if you live in an in-town place and you are seen somewhere, and people want pictures and all of that. It's a real thing today. My community knows me as a person. We *daven* together, we learn together. They know the music is part of what I do, but it's not who I am. This person makes his money in real estate, this one is a *kollel yungerman,* this one is a *rebbe*, this one is a businessman. So music is only part of what I do. And it's very healthy for me and my family.

There are occasions where the people who hire you to perform want the recognition. Pictures and autographs can be part of that, and you have to find a way to not disappoint those people. So you have to work on yourself and remind yourself to stay in reality and know that everything is from Hashem. But I'll tell you a funny story of a little reminder I was given on the importance of *anivus.* I was once performing a concert with Yaakov Shwekey, and this boy, at the end of the concert, comes backstage. I'm sitting in the dressing room, and I hear him in the hallway saying, "Where's Baruch Levine? Where's Baruch Levine?" So, I figure he wants a picture or an autograph. So, fine. They bring him in. He says, "Are you Baruch Levine?" I say, "Yeah." He says, "Good. Can you get me in to see Shwekey?"
So sometimes Hashem sends messages in a funny way. I said to the boy, "Sure. Come with me." And I took him to see Shwekey.

Do you have a lot of musical instruments in your house?
I have a guitar, a keyboard, a piano, and, believe it or not, an accordion. Do you know what that is? Before they had one-man-band machines, if you wanted to hire one person and make it *leibidig,* it was a guy with an accordion.

Are you working on a new album now?
I am, but I just, just started.

Did you ever have an embarrassing moment on stage?

I definitely have. Thankfully, nothing so embarrassing, *Boruch Hashem.* We use wireless mics now, so we don't trip over wires and stands like they used to. There are times where my voice isn't in the greatest shape. If that happens, I try to lower the key, or sometimes I just have to accept what it is. Acceptance is very important — realizing that this is the *matzav* Hashem wants right now and trying to be as calm as possible.

Rabbi Kakon (cont'd)

zt"l, whom he knew from his Lakewood days. Rabbi Friedler said to come for *Shabbos* and they would see.

I went to Toronto for *Shabbos* and it was very nice. I have to tell you that at that time I did not know how to learn *Gemara* yet. And it wasn't until many years later that I learned the story behind my acceptance to Ner Yisroel. When the Rosh Yeshiva was *niftar*, my parents went to pay a shiva call, and Rebbetzin Friedler told my parents that after I came for that *Shabbos* visit, the Rosh Yeshiva had a meeting with all the *Rebbeim* and the staff. He asked them what they thought we should do about this boy (me). The consensus was: "Well, he's a very nice boy, but he doesn't hear, so it doesn't make sense. We can't really help him, and it won't work." But it was the Rosh Yeshiva who banged on the desk and said, "No, we have to take him!" Later on, Rebbetzin Friedler told my wife that he pounded his fist on the table and said "I am not asking you, I am telling you!" It was because of him that I am sitting here and talking to you now.

I came to Toronto for two years. I was supposed to be in Grade 12, but I sat in a Grade 9 class right in the front and it was my first time learning how to read a *Gemara* and trying to follow the *rebbe*. Right after *Succos*, I moved up to Grade 11, and it was very hard to follow the *rebbe*, but B"H I had very good friends who would sign to me with the ABC. They tried to keep me involved for two years. Then I went to Ner Yisrael of Baltimore. I was connected with the Friedbergs from Toronto, because I became friendly with their sons, so it was because of them that I came to Baltimore. I remember that for the first few weeks there was no *shiur* – you were supposed to be sitting and learning with a *chavrusa* for three hours. The problem was that I did not have a *chavrusa*, so I was sitting in the *bais medrash* all by myself trying to learn. Not only that, but when we had the *shiur* I sat in the front of the *rebbe*, Rabbi Shraga Neuberger, who spoke very rapidly and also looked around a lot. So I was sitting but had no clue what was going on, and I could not even go to sleep because I was right in front of the *rebbe!* So for one hour every day for six weeks I was going through torture. Just when I was about to give up, *B"H,* help arrived in the form of a very special man, Dr. Leonard Siger, PhD, a professor from Gallaudet University, the only university for deaf people in the world, located right nearby in Washington, DC. He was retired, he knew sign language and he was simply brilliant, a real genius. At that time he was interpreting the weekly *shiur* for several people who did not hear from the Baltimore community, the famous Thursday night *parsha shiur* given by Rabbi Yissachar Frand. And that was my only time I would be able to benefit from a *shiur.* I used to be waiting for it all week. Finally someone said to me, "Ask him. Maybe he will come to the yeshiva to help you."

I asked, and he answered promptly, "Of course! I was waiting for you to ask." So he would walk every day almost two hours (he didn't drive) to give over the *shiur* and that is when things moved up for me. I was able to be part of the *shiur*. I had a *chavrusa* who would communicate with me in sign language. Slowly, that's how I started to learn. Dr. Siger was so brilliant and spoke many languages fluently. He had a way of giving over the *Gemara* with its full flavour and deep meaning thus enabling me to really appreciate the depth of the learning.

He passed away less than two years ago and I brought some of my *talmidim* to the *levaya* in Baltimore.

What did the Rosh Yeshiva want to be when he grew up?

When I grew up I wanted to be an activist to help deaf people. I wanted to be a lawyer who specialized in criminal law, and I was doing very well in high school and was always on the dean's list. But then I went to yeshiva. From there I realized I wanted to help people in a different way, so I became a social worker. Before I became a Rosh Yeshiva, I was a professional social worker and sat on the board of mental health for the State of Maryland for a while. I went to school in Maryland and I worked for a few years but I knew that my heart was in *chinuch*. I saw too many kids with hearing loss suffering too much and falling behind with no pride in themselves or enjoyment in Torah.

For those of us who don't know much about hearing loss, can the Rosh Yeshiva help us understand some of the different types of hearing loss and some of the different challenges a boy in the yeshiva might face?

The boys that come to the yeshiva have different types of hearing loss, ranging from very profound to so mild that one is unable to discern that there is a hearing loss! Now, with all the updated technology, with cochlear implants and powerful hearing aids, this brings hearing to a whole new level, which is a remarkable thing. At the same time, no matter what, when Hashem gives us the *koach* of *shmi'ah*, hearing, mankind, through technology cannot copy exactly that. In other words, when you hear, you are able to do many things with it. You can tune out sounds – so if you are in a place with fifty *bochurim* also learning and it is quite noisy, you have the ability to tune out all that noise and only hear your *chavrusa* clearly. However, with an implant you hear absolutely everything, so it is very hard to be able to distinguish and hone in on just the person next to you, and then it becomes very frustrating. Trying to hear conversations at a *chasunah* is another example. That *chasunah* is what it is like for us every day, so we can't learn in the *bais medrash* if we rely only on hearing. But in our yeshiva we use everything, our hearing as well as our eyes, too. In that way, we have more options, more skills and more tools with which to cope. That is one thing.

Another challenge is that when a *bochur* goes back home and he's not in the yeshiva and he is back in the community he can feel alone again at home or wherever he goes. So one *bochur* asked me like this: "It's very hard to keep *Shabbos* at home. Here, things are happening, but when I'm home, it's only my family, and outside there is no connection with friends who do not hear." So they can't keep busy on *Shabbos*, especially in the summer on very long days. It was an interesting question that he asked me yesterday while we were learning *hilchos Shabbos* and the importance of *Shabbos*. This is very hard - we deal with this every day. When we wake up in the morning, we put on our hearing aids or our implants. We don't hear anything at night. Then, we put them on and then we hear again. Sometimes our hearing aids break down or they need a new battery or something happens. Even now, recently, a *bochur* lost his cochlear implant at the swimming pool and he has to get a new one. A new cochlear implant is not cheap. And so on.

Speaking of which, what are cochlear implants and how much do they help?

It's a marvellous thing. A microchip is implanted and connected with a processor on the outside and the hearing is much deeper and clearer. Many people with an implant are able to speak on the phone. They can hear many more sounds and it helps with speaking better because they have more hearing to work with. They keep working on improving the implant. At the end of the day, it is not a substitute for regular hearing and when the implant or aid comes off, the person is back to being someone who does not hear.

When was Yeshivas Nefesh Dovid founded?

Nefesh Dovid was founded about 16 years ago. We had moved here to Toronto a year before that. Before coming to Toronto, we lived in Baltimore for 11 years, as I was learning in the *kollel* there for a few years and then went to school and worked in the mental health field.

Whence does the yeshiva take its name?

Right when we started the yeshiva we knew we needed a name which was taken from *Perek 56* in Tehilim, "*Ki hitzalta nafshi mimaves halo raglei midechi l'hishalech lifnei Elokim b'ohr hachayim* - You saved my soul from death, even my feet from stumbling to walk before Hashem in the light of life". This is what a person with hearing loss feels: when he is alone, he is isolated and he is not always a part of things. When a person does not feel a part of things, of the community, he does not feel alive. So through the yeshiva and the network that the yeshiva provides, he becomes alive, and he does not stumble like he used to — he is able to be part of the light of life.

How is the learning set up? What does *shiur* look like at the yeshiva?

We use speech and sign language. Everybody is sitting around in a circle, so everybody can see each other, too (if a *bo-*

chur asks a question one would not see him if he were sitting a few seats down in the same row). When we learn *Gemara* we use the projector to show the *Gemara* on the screen so the boys see the *daf* simultaneously and we can point through the *Gemara* so everybody knows where we are holding. This way, things go much more smoothly and we are all on the same page, so to speak.

People ask if it's a good thing to use sign language or if it is better not to. So I think everyone should use sign language, specifically for learning *Gemara*, because it becomes visual and you see the concepts like a *machlokes*, Abaye (here) and Rava (there), we put them in their places and the whole thing literally becomes alive. Sometimes I go to a *shiur* and I have an interpreter – I have a very good friend, a dentist, Dr. Mitchell Sutton, who is my personal interpreter, who tells me what the Rav is saying. And it's interesting that when we do this other people come to me thanking me for bringing the interpreter because they were able to follow the *shiur* better because they were looking at the interpreter, too, even though they could hear. They had a tremendous benefit from seeing the *shiur* come alive through gestures. They also are much more focused and thus absorb the information better.

Do all the *talmidim* at the yeshiva use sign language? And do they all use the same sign language?

When we are in the yeshiva together, we pretty much use the same language, which is the American version. In some cases, they had never used it before, or they came from Israel or France or South America where the language is very different. Here, when we say "father," we motion (make your hand five with thumb out and tap thumb against top of forehead) and "mother" (same as above just tap thumb against chin) but in Israel they say "abba" and "ima" which is moving the hand from cheek to cheek or forehead to chin, depending on which. They are different, but they're similar in a way, so it's not hard for a person who is already visual to pick up and learn the language and be part of the group.

We are a yeshiva for boys with hearing loss, but everyone has different levels and abilities and ways of communication so we are dealing with that.



Photo by Mrs. J. Bernstein for Nefesh Dovid

Has the Rosh Yeshiva invented any signs for *Gemara*, since we're guessing that American Sign Language doesn't have a word for, say, *yeush shelo medaas*?

Yes, we have to. Basically, it's really about explaining the concepts, so once we know what the concept is, we can then make a sign that visualizes this concept in the most concise way possible. Dr. Siger was the one who paved the way for this and made this possible.

Are there any advantages in learning for those who have hearing loss?

For sure. And even for those who hear, like I said before, they should learn sign language. Also, when *Klal Yisrael* was by *Har Sinai*, it says in the *pasuk, "V'chol ha'am roim es hakolos."* What does that mean that they saw the sounds? We could learn from this that it is not enough of an impact just to hear the sounds of the shofar; we actually need to be able to visualize the sounds and take them to heart.

How can we best interact with and be sensitive to people we meet who have hearing loss?

I would say: not to assume anything but to approach the person in a matter-of- fact manner and ask how he prefers to communicate or what is the best way to speak with him. Does he want to sign or for you to speak slower or just enunciate clearly? Sometimes a person thinks, "Oh, he can't hear me therefore I'm not going to use my voice when talking to him." And sometimes it can be more difficult or even embarrassing for a person to lip read if one talks without using his voice. The bottom line is to just be yourself and speak normally and see how things go.

Why is it important to make a yeshiva like Nefesh Dovid?

Nefesh Dovid is *mamash* the only yeshiva for hearing challenged *bochurim* in the whole world, so this is an opportunity for any boy who would not otherwise be able to learn or really keep up in yeshiva. There will always be a place for him right here at Nefesh Dovid. Today in *daf yomi, Gemara Makos, daf yud*, says that if a person goes to *galus* and if he needs his *rebbe*, his *rebbe* goes there with him. Even if there is a yeshiva there anyway, if this person needs his *rebbe*, the *rebbe* has to join him in *galus*.

This is the only yeshiva where a boy with hearing loss can connect with a *rebbe* who is also the same way. So now this boy does not have any excuses such as, "I don't hear, so that's why I don't get up in the morning." Or, "I am feeling very sorry for myself," or, "Nobody likes me." I say to the boys, "Look at me. You could do the same thing with your own *kochos*, in your own special way." Also, there are many boys that don't hear who have managed at a regular yeshiva, in terms of learning, but they want to come here to Nefesh Dovid anyway. Besides trying to keep up with everyone, they are also struggling with their own identity: "Do I have the status of a regular hearing person or not?" However, in our yeshiva we don't need to talk about it. We're a yeshiva that embraces the boys and completely accepts them for who they are and this results in the boys being able to cope and deal with everything.

The beauty of the yeshiva is that we are located on the premises of the Yeshiva Gedolah and have been made to feel welcome all these years by Rav Brodsky and the *hanhalah*. It gives our *bochurim* a real sense of being in a yeshiva atmosphere and, besides daily interactions throughout the day with the *bochurim* of the *mesivta*, there are several opportunities for them to learn together *b'chavrusa*. There is even a sign language session that enables the *bochurim* of the *mesivta* to pick up on sign language and become potential interpreters for *shiurim* in the community at large, a real need for those of us who would love to participate along with the others.

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Photo by Rabbi A. Ribacoff

negotiated a trade, in which the Americans agreed to give 10,000 military trucks to the Nazis, and in exchange Eichmann would spare a number of Hungarian Jews, which included this trainload of people who, they assumed, were supposed to be taken to Auschwitz.

Instead, this trainload of people was transported to Vienna, Austria and housed in an old school building.

Every morning during the summer that the Leitmans were in this facility, the Nazis would drive up in two trucks and take all able-bodied men and women between the ages of 15 and 55 off to a mountain nearby to chop wood, with a daily quota demanded. At this time, the Leitmans also lived through twice-daily bombing raids, at noon for an hour or two by the Americans, without warning, and by the Russians, who would send out flares an hour before their eight o'clock bombardment.

During these bombings, the inhabitants of the building would make their way down to the cellar, which had a long hallway with closet-like compartments lining the sides, which were given to the *besere mentchen* (fancy people), while the *hamon am* stayed in the hallway.

One day, during February of 1945, the bombardment was so strong that the *goyishe Lagerführer* or SS guard said *Shema Yisrael* with them. On another occasion, the people in the cellar thought that the bombs were falling next door. Dust suddenly started filling the room [when our Yesodei recess bell rang, Mr. Leitman had flashbacks to the bombing sirens] and people from the neighbouring wing came, streaming in. After the bombs ceased falling, the people emerged from the basement and saw that the adjacent wing of the building was completely and utterly destroyed.

With the buildings bombed out, the Nazis were forced to again transfer all these people to a new town, this one called Terezín, which was home to the Theresienstadt "camp-ghetto" – not quite a camp, not quite a ghetto. It was a cover-city, a front to show the Red Cross and the world that the Nazis were treating the Jews humanely.

The Nazis put 40,000 *Yidden* in this place, and let them lead somewhat normal lives. When Pesach came, the Nazis even gave the *Yidden* in Theresienstadt matzos. And they could get away with this facade, since there was no media to disprove them. While in this city, Mr. Leitman's mother used to have to go to work every day, so she put Mr. Leitman and his siblings into an orphanage, which housed kids from all over Europe. The Nazi dental-scientists wanted to test their foot-pedal tooth drill on someone, and it was none other than Mr. Leitman who was selected to be their human guinea pig. Mr. Leitman still has those same fillings from almost 75 years ago.

On May the Ninth, 1945, the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto was liberated by the Russian army, and a few days later, the Danish queen sent buses to pick up all her Jewish subjects. Over the next couple of weeks, the inhabitants of the camp started to slowly trickle out. The people of the camp were eventually put on a train – this time, a proper one, not a cattle car – to begin the long journey home.

When they returned to their hometown, they were reunited with Mr. Leitman's father. The family was tremendously grateful to Hashem for bringing them back together. However, they now had to deal with the government of communist Hungary, which decided to close down all the *yeshivos*. In 1948, when Mr. Leitman was 14, he and his brother decided to escape the country and go to *Eretz Yisroel*. This journey would be worthy of an article of its own. This migration occurred over multiple fascinating happenings, beginning with the smuggling of their persons across the border and into the then-unified Czechoslovakia, from Czechoslovakia to Austria to Germany, and finally to Italy. From Italy they were to continue to their final destination, using the ship "Galila". Having no legitimate documents, they acquired false ones from the Bricha (the Jewish underground organization that helped survivors get into *Eretz Yisroel* in violation of the British White Paper of 1939), which had a stack of them left over from people who had initially wanted to go to Israel but had changed their minds and had instead gone to America or elsewhere. These papers had been given to Mr. Leitman and his brother, who had to study the details of their new identities. Mr. Leitman's brother was given documents originally belonging to someone by the name of Chaim Yochusmann, a person from Poland who was twenty years old. Mr. Leitman's brother was thirteen.

Mr. Leitman, however, was not issued papers. The Bricha told him to wait a little bit longer. Until then, Mr. Leitman essentially piggy-backed on his brother's papers, a tactic which worked until they got to Germany, at which point they did finally provide him with the necessary documentation, issued under the name of one Peter Sauerteig, a person that Mr. Leitman knew. This worked well in Germany, but it did not pass the test once they got to Italy. The reason was simple: Peter Sauerteig had already showed up. Confused as they were, they called out this person and compared the two parallel Peter Sauerteigs. There was a bit of a bump in the road for Mr. Leitman's claim; his competitor had a monogram on his shirt bearing the initials "P.S.", while Mr. Leitman had a *siddur* in his *tefillin* bag with the name "Deutsch" in it, this being the name of the person from whom he had bought the *siddur*. Eventually, after a bribe by the Israelis, he was let on as well.

Finally he arrived Israel, and, after living in tents for quite a while, went to a yeshiva. After that he got proper training in watch repair and, with the help of several *gemachim,* he bought tools, and opened up a repair stand in the *shuk*.

In 1957, Mr. Leitman's parents managed to escape communist Hungary and made their way to Toronto. Mr. Leitman and his brother decided to rejoin their parents, whom they had not seen for many years and see their two younger siblings who were born post-war. They sold their business to a *bochur* from the yeshiva, paid up the remainder of the *gemach* loans, and went to London, where they continued their business until they could get to Canada. Here they were reunited with their parents and restarted their business, which they upheld for a number of years. Over the years Mr. Leitman held a number of jobs — including one year as a *rebbe*. Mr. Leitman was just 20 years old when he worked as a *rebbe* at a little yeshiva called *Shlomei Emunei Yisroel*. That yeshiva later changed its name to Yeshiva Yesodei HaTorah.

Mr. Leitman went on to work as a watchmaker for many years, marrying in 1960 and raising a family here in Toronto.

Though Mr. Leitman occasionally hearkens back and wishes he would've been able to join the underground to fight the Nazis, the mere fact that he survived and has furthered the continuity of *Yiddishkeit* is far more than enough and much more than he expected.