

# DAAS TORAH - TORAH PRONOUNCEMENT

Our fellow-Jews cry out to us, giving us deep cause for concern:

The reports are about a certain Shlomo Helbrantz, born in Kibbutz Hulta, Israel, of non-religious Sefardic parents (his father's family is of Kurdish descent and his mother's of Greek descent).

Helbrantz became Torah observant on his own. In recent years, he has started conducting himself like a Chassidic Rebbe, establishing a congregation named "Lev Tahor" with about twenty people under his influence. For about ten years, he has been snatching souls from their parents' homes to become his followers (thereby also amassing considerable wealth). By various ruses, he has torn tens of young people away from their parents, and stopped all personal contact between them, even by phone. He then finds them marriage partners without their parents' knowing anything until after the wedding.

It is difficult to imagine, and even more to describe in words, the anguish and river of tears that these broken-hearted parents shed for their children snatched from them so heartlessly to satisfy this man's whims. He insists that his followers be under his sole influence and no other, even that of their own parents, who are denied their right to express any opinion about their children's marital future or even to participate in their wedding - something for which every parent prays for so many years.

Even after his followers get married, many have to separate again and again because their wives cannot endure the unbearable conditions set by Helbrantz. For example, the fact that the young husband is rarely at home, by day or night, during the first year of marriage, causes deep distress, while other details cannot even be mentioned here to avoid further Chillul Hashem.

Coming under his influence even temporarily often leads to marital dissension, broken homes, and even divorce. Fortunately, dozens of couples have opened their eyes just in time and refused to follow his orders to get divorced.

As a result of the continuing rumors and unbearable situation of tens of families in constant distress for the past ten years, weeping and making others weep for their children so heartlessly torn from them, several prominent Rabbis in Monsey, New York, have gathered to hear first-hand testimony from witnesses who have been in Helbrantz's group. Dozens of other potential witnesses, here and in Israel, have not yet had a chance to give their testimony.

Emerging from their testimony are the following facts:

1. Helbrantz tears children from their parents in the most heartless manner. Even when he does not manage to hold onto them, he brainwashes them with a deep, implacable hatred for their parents, prompting them to run away from home.

2. With great hypnotic power, he influences followers to become hardhearted towards their parents, showing no pity even when they see them weeping bitterly in deep distress, their hearts torn to

shreds. Helbrantz tells his followers that this is the greatest way to "mend" their souls, for which they will merit reward both in this world and the next, whereas if they transgress his words they will be banished from both worlds...

3. Unlike all other Jewish spiritual leaders, he imposes authority on his followers with great terror. They and their wives and children must be subordinated to him in every detail of their lives - like the cults...

4. In Helbrantz's group, falsehood reigns supreme. He lies and teaches his followers to lie, telling them that it is permitted, without any pangs of conscience, for the sake of their doctrines.

5. In order to "mend" his followers' souls, he gives strange directives, accompanied by insensitivity towards their wives that can often be even life-threatening. If a wife does not accept, he orders the husband to divorce her. He indoctrinates his followers to act heartlessly, even if it means imperiling the life of their parents or anyone else if it seems necessary for their group.

6. He arouses dissension and disturbs marital harmony, breaking many homes by divorce, and forcing many engagements to be broken.

7. For hours, often for whole nights until dawn, he speaks face to face with women on intimate subjects which - except in most rare cases - are utterly forbidden by the Torah as obscene talk.

8. To attain total control over his followers, he tells them that all other Rebbes and Rabbis of our time derive from forces of evil, and their followers will be banished from both worlds and not be privileged to greet Moshiach. Only he has the power to "mend" his followers' souls so that they may merit reward in both worlds.

9. Sometimes he accustoms his followers to act contrary to the Shulchan Oruch (code of Torah law), for example, not to wash "Negel Vasser" upon awaking in the morning, contempt for Torah scholars, violence and informing on other Jews, several couples living in the same apartment etc.

10. He often tells his followers to swear oaths by the Torah, holding a holy object, for minor matters such as agreeing not to repeat outside any strange things they have seen him do. On occasion he himself swears publicly, holding a Sefer Torah scroll.

11. He pretends to be the greatest saint of our generation, a self-mortifying ascetic denying himself all worldly pleasures (as his followers have publicized in their flyers), and demanding life-threatening self-mortifications from his followers, too, while in fact he is fully immersed in the pleasures of this world.

12. Raising millions of dollars all over the world, often virtually forcing Torah students and scholars to part with their meager resources, Helbrantz then uses the money for his own purposes. He acquires gold and silver ornaments more than the wealthiest

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**VAAD HOASKONIM**

Williamsburg, Boro-Park,  
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To:

millionaires, and real estate both in Israel and here. Only part of these funds are used for housing, feeding and clothing his followers ensnared from their parents' homes.

13. To accomplish his goals, he is not above informing on fellow Jews and publicly disgracing Torah scholars (thereby becoming a total heretic - Apikoros - as the Talmud states in Sanhedrin), even encouraging life-threatening violence towards others.

14. He heaps curses upon whoever opposes his path, especially those he suspects might reveal his secrets or have already done so. His "war" against Zionism is a veil to cover his whims and lowly deeds.

15. He purports to have visions of Eliyohu Hanovi, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk and other renowned saints.

16. He claims to be a victim, when in fact it is he who persecutes and heaps scorn on whoever disagrees with his false way. His piety is only in his words, but not in his private deeds. Nevertheless he purports to be the greatest saint of our time, hoping thereby to ensure his constant flow of funds.

17. Studies at his "Yeshiva" are unlike normal Yeshivos. Elsewhere, students' minds are developed by study of Gemara, Rashi and Tosfos, each at his level, together with less time spent on study of Shulchan Oruch and Mussar or Chassidus. At Congregation Lev Tahor, however, regardless of level, all study together in one room. The "in-depth" lesson - not every day - is in a simple Gemara text such as tractate Brochos, with a little time spent on Shulchan Oruch. The rest of the day is spent studying Reishis Chochma (a mystical Mussar text), Chabad texts such Tanya, Shaar Hayichud V'hoemuna and Likkutei Torah, Breslov texts etc. - even to young teenagers who understand nothing. The entire study schedule is very short, with the rest of the day spent working on various tasks needed at Helbrantz's home and, above all, on collecting money.

Experience shows that when younger and older boys, married young men and grown adults, all study together in the same group, serious study is impossible and it can even be harmful in various ways. But Helbrantz deliberately wants to avoid developing his followers' minds, so that they may never realize what a hell they live in...

18. The general training there also differs radically from our traditional Jewish way. He encourages his followers to rebel against their parents, treating them disrespectfully and even causing them anguish. He trains them to have mean character traits and abandon all norms of conduct in every area, whether in eating, sleeping, mode of dress, human relations, marital relations (including mistreatment of their wives), and respect for Torah scholars and for their own teachers and Rabbis (except for him). Beatings are encouraged as a form of mortification, and all Rebbes, Rabbonim, Dayanim, Roshei Yeshiva and Torah leaders are disparaged.

19. The source of the problem is that Helbrantz, even if he knows any Torah, has no Torah tradition behind him. His parents are anti-religious and his Torah studies have been meager.

20. Many young people who have been under his influence claim that previously they were not bothered much by wrong thoughts. Only after listening to his long talks on these subjects have their instincts been aroused to boiling point, and they find it most difficult to control.

21. Clearly he is not what he purports to be, as evidenced by the fact that whoever becomes close to him loses whatever he had: Diligent scholars stop learning and forget their Torah, sincerely religious people lose their fear of G-d, and those who had stable livelihood lose that, too.

22. Helbrantz demands of his followers - man, woman, boy or girl - total subordination of will, mind, body, time and money. They become like robots, doing whatever he wants without thought or self-determination, although they lose their Torah knowledge, fear of G-d and virtuous qualities, besides their money, livelihood, health, children's education, and their own and their wives' standards of modesty (he insists on being told all details of their marital relationships...). This is the classic path of the cults, and whoever comes under his influence for a while gets benumbed intellectually and emotionally or loses his mind altogether.

All the above has been substantiated by many witnesses who have experienced all this at first hand, and testified before the above prominent Rabbonim.

Our clear Torah ruling is that Helbrantz's group constitutes a great threat, spiritual and physical, to the Torah observant community in general, and to every individual in particular, and has no right to remain in existence.

Accordingly, it is forbidden by the Torah to associate with him or his congregation or to have any connection with any organization of his, or to hear or read any words of Torah or accept any guidance from him or his followers. Whoever is with him must leave him totally, going to study elsewhere where Torah and fear of G-d are taught properly in the traditional manner as transmitted by our ancestors generation after generation. Whoever is capable of influencing his followers to leave him has the duty to do so.

Even more so, parents should warn their children, and educators their students, not to step into Helbrantz's or his followers' buildings even for a short while, such as on Shabbos and Yom Tov, nor even to talk with his followers, for that is the way they entrap others in their net.

Whoever is G-d-fearing and concerned about the holiness of our Jewish people and our family life should keep everyone, male or female, young or old, away from there, for whoever falls into his trap may never return, G-d forbid.

It is necessary to tear away the man's mask of false holiness and asceticism, removing him from any connection with education and guidance so that he dare not be involved in this any more, for he is a great threat for truly holy education.

Of course, all this applies in general to all deviances from the traditional path of our ancestors.

Dear Jewish brethren! Take heed of this aberration of modesty and family sanctity and disgrace of human values. Whoever is capable of protesting or saving even one individual from Helbrantz's clutches has the sacred duty to try his hardest to do so and not stand by while his fellow Jew suffers such a fate. Whoever has the slightest fear of G-d and sensitivity for the exalted sanctity and purity of our people will surely do everything possible to rid our proud Jewish community of Monsey of this group.

We can no longer remain silent as we witness this negation of holiness. Therefore we hereby decide that it is severely prohibited to support Congregation Lev Tahor with the slightest contribution or support of any kind, for this helps him to ensnare more Jewish souls and ruin their lives and those of their parents. It is forbidden to have any contact with him or assist him in any way, and certainly to be under the same roof as him. Whoever is already there must escape and return to his parents' home.

All funds he has accumulated have been stolen under false pretenses from both rich and poor and must be returned to their rightful owners (head-checks given to him should be cancelled). Those who know in which real estate properties he has invested his vast ill-gotten gains should inform the Rabbonim so that they may return them to the poor Torah students and wealthy donors who innocently donated money for Pidyon Shvuyim - not for soul-snatching.

Rabbis and Torah leaders! You have the duty to battle for the honor of the Torah being besmirched by this hypocrite who has deceptively been ensnaring souls for ten years and cheating Jews of their money. Have pity on these wretched souls snatched from their parents. Demonstrate by decisive deeds that the eternal Jewish spirit of our tradition still stirs among our Torah observant community. Heed these sincere words written in blood and tears.

In the merit of our preservation of our sanctity, may we raise our children in the holy and pure ways of our Torah, to witness the redemption of the Jewish people and its rejoicing in the arrival of our righteous Moshiach, many it be speedily in our time, Amen!

We sign the above in pain and with a deeply broken heart, looking forward to good news and consolation, in Kislev, 5758.

***Vaad Hoaskonim - Williamburg, Boro-Park, Monsey and Queens***