



APPENDIX A:

Personal stories, Hachmey Lev 2017-2018

Yonatan is one of Hachmey Lev's 2017-2018 graduates. He comes from a family with some seven children. His parents are *baalei teshuva* who chose to join the Breslow Haredi community in Tel Aviv, and became one of its most prominent and involved families. His Breslow elementary-school education was extremely strict, and there was a sexual abuse scandal in his school. While the abuse that Yonatan suffered was relatively minor compared with other students, it impacted him very deeply. Additionally, Yonatan was always somewhat different from his siblings and parents in his religious outlook. The family sent him to Hachmey Lev due to his elementary-school trauma, wanting something completely different and a more positive Haredi experience, despite the fact that it wasn't easy for them to accept such an unconventional educational framework.

As can be well understood, Yonatan arrived at Hachmey Lev at the beginning of 9th grade with significant emotional difficulties. He was extremely introverted, had almost no self-confidence, and did not believe that he could accomplish anything successfully.

Yonatan received the intensive individual attention and academic support that all Hachmey Lev's students are given, if necessary. Due to this, he began progressing gradually – every time he had good test results, he was so surprised and proud of himself that he went around the school showing them to his friends and teachers. As time went on, Yonatan continued to progress remarkably in both his religious and secular studies, and socially. He often received 100% in his 12th-grade exams and, finally, obtained a very high-quality matriculation certificate. Socially, he became one of the leaders within his class, developing great self-confidence. At the same time, he slowly consolidated his own religious identity, which differs from his family's – he does not consider himself part of the Breslow community – but is securely grounded in his faith in his own way.

Yonatan will be going on to study electro-optics at the Machon Lev College, which combines technological studies with IDF service. He is in demand by the IDF's most elite units, and will be serving in one of them. And while it took his family some time to accept Hachmey Lev and Yonatan's differing view of the Breslow community, they can see his amazing transformation, both academically and personally, and are very pleased.

Avrumi comes from a family that is deeply ingrained Jerusalem's Belz Chassidic community. He and his twin brother are the oldest of eight children. At the time that the twins reached high-school age, the parents were going through some questioning about their place in the community, and decided to send the boys to yeshiva high schools – Avrumi came to Hachmey Lev, and his brother went to a different Haredi Yeshiva High School.

When Avrumi arrived at Hachmey Lev, at the beginning of 9th grade, he was extremely introverted, emotionally closed and anti-social, and unable to express himself. It was as if he was in his own bubble, not at all interested in his surroundings. He was also thought to have learning difficulties, perhaps even disabilities. However, it soon became clear that he was extremely intelligent, and learned differently from



others, going into great depth when thinking, and this slowed down his response time. Avrumi's homeroom teacher took special interest in him, supported him, and counseled him in an attempt to try to "bring him out of himself." The teacher encouraged him to write a journal to express his feelings, and this helped him immensely. While he wrote the journal, he gradually became more open and social, and by 11th grade was one of the most sociable boys in his class. As he excelled in technological subjects, his teacher arranged for him to give a lecture to his class about cellphones, which was received very well. Avrumi was amazed that he could speak before his class and hold their attention, and this greatly improved his self-confidence. At the same time, his academic performance improved significantly, and he ended up doing extremely well in his matriculation exams. Avrumi will be going on to study at the Machon Lev College, which combines higher technological education with IDF service.

After questioning their religious affiliation, Avrumi's parents eventually went back into their community, and struggled with their previous decision to send him to Hachmey Lev. They had difficulty with Avrumi's plans to go on to higher education and the IDF, neither of which are acceptable in their circles and come with a high social price, rather than continuing to *yeshiva gedola*. However, they see the extent to which Avrumi has grown and developed during high school, and how much he has transformed from the introverted, "disabled" child who first entered Hachmey Lev, and are able to accept and be grateful for their decision.