

613 Seconds

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With Rabbi Dovid Kapenstein Director of Development at Yeshivas Toras Simcha

Welcome to Baltimore. Tell us about yourself:

I was raised in the Potomac/Rockville areas. As a child, my wife lived in several areas including Dallas and Baltimore, where she attended Bais Yaakov. We met through

the help of Mrs. Ruthy Stein and we have four children and several grandchildren, bli ayan harah.

Is it true that you have roots in Baltimore?

I like to joke that we left Baltimore two cicada cycles ago. My wife Devorah and I were a young Ner Yisroel Kollel couple when we moved from Baltimore to Atlanta Georgia. Having just received my semicha and Masters in Talmudic Law, and together with our eight-month-old twin boys, we joined the wonderful Atlanta Jewish community.

Torah Day School of Atlanta (TDSA) had received a *p'sak* from the Ner Yisroel Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yaakov Weinberg z"l, that when the school added a sixth grade, the boys and girls needed to be separated. I was the school's first 6th grade rebbe. I count among my many wonderful *talmidim*, Rabbi Yaacov Cohen, executive director at Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim – Talmudical Academy (TA). Rabbi Cohen was in my first class.

I taught at TDSA for six years and then assumed the position of executive director for the following nineteen years. When I left TDSA in 2013, I formed Kollel Ner



Hamizrach, together with Harav Shmuel Khoshkerman and served as the president and executive director for seven years.

Therefore, coming to Baltimore is sort of like coming home for me.

It must have been difficult to leave Atlanta

after 32 years.

True, we have wonderful "extended family" in Atlanta. Our friendships are strong and it was indeed very difficult to leave. IY"YH we will maintain these friendships and chavrusos. One thing that COVID-19 taught us is that we can learn by phone and by zoom. I wish I could continue to give my Daf Yomi shiur to our chaburah but I felt that for them it was best to have an in-person rebbe. Some of the attendees were with me for three Daf Yomi cycles!

You also have family in Baltimore, correct?

Yes, our daughter and son in law Aron and Leah Yehuda, and their family live here and my mom lives in Potomac, about 50 minutes away. My wife's parents, Rabbi Menachem and Zelda Rosenthal z"l, also lived here for many years until they moved to Eretz Yisrael. My mother in law taught at both She'eres Haplata (TI) and at TA, where our grandson now goes to school.

We heard the exciting news that you were hired as director of development for Yeshivas Toras Simcha. Why are you excited to join the staff at Yeshivas To-

rah Simcha?

I am truly impressed by the professional and lay leadership of Yeshivas Toras Simcha (YTS). Rabbi Itzkowitz and his rebbeim do a wonderful job at connecting with every family and every boy. The rebbeim are innovative, full of energy, and totally devoted to the boys.

The lay leadership is an impressive group of multitalented community *askanim*. They give generously of their time, expertise and resources. These are truly the leaders of a community and not just a school. It is an honor to work with them.

What are your aspirations for yourself, your family and YTS

To some extent, those goals are still in formation. Nevertheless, personally, I hope to contribute to our community and its many wonderful institutions. I believe that YTS, like the other magnificent schools, plays a critical role in servicing the needs of a growing and sophisticated Jewish community. With Hashem's help I hope to act as a catalyst for the school's growth. I want to help the school gain even greater financial stability that will facilitate our continued expansion in both quantity and quality.

I know that my wife is also eager to get involved in community needs and, of course, after Covid 19, we look forward to hosting many guests for Shabbos meals and more.

How do you perceive the role that YTS plays in the community of schools?

I have watched from near and far how Baltimore has grown into a Makom Torah.

Clearly, Ner Yisroel has played a major role in this growth, but there are many people who have moved to Baltimore from other cities as well. Every person contributes to our city's diversity and talents. In a similar vein, YTS strives to meet this multiplicity of needs in a warm and personal manner with great emphasis on personalized instruction. YTS does not strive to be the biggest school but we may well be the closest family.

As the school's development officer, how do you envision fundraising during this challenging COVID-19 environment?

It is a well know axiom in real estate that you should purchase property because of its location, location, location. I am constantly on the lookout for partners in raising the next generation of bnei Torah. I am looking for investors in the future of Klal Yisroel. An investor is far more important than a donor. YTS will offer an enormous ROI and we are backed by the greatest and most secure guarantor. In institutional advancement, it is all about relationships, relationships, relationships. With Hashem's help, we will develop meaningful and deep relationships with our investors. Our precious children deserve nothing less.

Anything else you would like to share with our 10,000+ readers?

We are thrilled to be part of one of the most sincere and growing communities in the country. Over the last few months, we marveled at the unity among Baltimore's rabbinical leadership. We are excited to once again have easier access to our rebbeim and to benefit from their guidance.