An Innocent Young Couple Victimized by Yoel Yehoshua Heshel Blum

This eighteen-year-old couple, both of whom were born into Lev Tahor through no fault of their own, have a two-year-old child who, according to the parents, was taken from them by Yoel Yehoshua Heshel Blum approximately one year ago. Since then, they say they have not even been told where their child is, let alone been allowed to visit him or receive any meaningful update about his wellbeing — as though they were strangers to their own child.

I recently became closely familiar with this heartbreaking situation, and it has affected me deeply. As stated, this concerns a very young couple who were married off by Lev Tahor in the manner that was customary there, when they were only thirteen or fourteen years old. By now, it is widely understood that these young children did not have any real ability to object or make independent decisions. Their only "choice" was to obey exactly what the leadership demanded.

It must also be emphasized that this young couple, in their short lives, have not harmed anyone — not during their time in Lev Tahor, and not here in America after they arrived. Their only supposed "sin" is the circumstance into which they were born: Lev Tahor. And because of that, Yoel Yehoshua Heshel Blum allegedly intervened and removed their two-year-old child from them, using that child as leverage against the parents in order to pressure them to separate themselves from Lev Tahor.

Blum appears to be in no hurry. He seems perfectly willing to allow this painful situation to continue, while an innocent child remains separated from his father and mother. The cruelty of tearing a young child away from his parents should weigh heavily on any human heart.

This innocent husband and wife, who love each other deeply and have been attached to one another since a very young age, sit in their home and cry day and night over their little boy who was taken from them. The small bed prepared for their only beloved child stands empty between their beds. The little teddy bear and the other sweet belongings in the crib silently testify that a child is missing from that home.

The wife tries, as much as her emotions allow her, to continue taking care of the home. The husband goes out to work every morning. Baruch Hashem, they have the basic needs of a normal family: their own apartment, furniture, clothing, and even a dresser filled with beautiful new clothes for their child. Nothing is missing from that home except the one thing that matters most — their own sweet child, whom they say Yoel Yehoshua Heshel Blum took away from them.

It is impossible to fully grasp what this husband and wife must be feeling when a person who presents himself as an עסקן, a rescuer, and a savior, allegedly takes away their child for the sole reason that they have not yet renounced Lev Tahor.

We are not speaking here about older adults who, of their own free will, left their families many years ago and joined Lev Tahor, handing their children over to the control of the leadership, and who are now being confronted over choices made twenty or thirty years ago.

We are speaking about a truly innocent young couple. Both the husband and the wife still have parents in Lev Tahor. They are young, vulnerable, and emotionally bound to their families. In their situation, they were not yet able to go against their parents, in-laws, and the entire world in which they were raised in order to fully separate from Lev Tahor.

What do you want from them? They are not able to do it overnight. Not everyone has the strength to make such a break immediately. But does that justify taking away their only child because someone wants them to change?

This couple has already been living in America, in the heart of a heimishe community, for a considerable period of time. They are not running anywhere. They are healthy parents who want to raise their beloved child and watch him grow and flourish. Yet Yoel Yehoshua Heshel Blum allegedly took their child away from them.

Month after month passes, while this innocent couple — unable to renounce Lev Tahor instantly — is forced to live through unbearable pain, torn from both sides.

Klal Yisroel must stand with this broken young couple. What Yoel Yehoshua Heshel is allegedly doing to them is an act of extreme cruelty, and it must not be ignored. The pain and suffering caused to innocent people for more than a year, day after day, must come to an end.

The truth is that Yoel Yehoshua Heshel Blum already knows, or should know, that continuing to hold this child will not force these suffering parents to renounce Lev Tahor. Reality has shown that when this kind of pressure does not work within the first few months, it does not suddenly work after a year or two either.

So why is Yoel Yehoshua Heshel still keeping the child from them? The answer appears painfully simple: his own ego and personal pride have become more important than the wellbeing of the child and the suffering of the parents. Better, in his mind, for a child to be torn away from his father and mother until the child begins to forget them — so long as his own honor remains untouched.

And there is another important point: it may only be a matter of time before the court determines that there is no real legal reason not to return the child to his parents. A judge is unlikely to base such a decision merely on the parents' clothing or background. If the court sees that the parents have a normal place to live, income, stability, and the ability to care for their child, then there should be no valid reason to keep the child from them.

Yoel Yehoshua Heshel knows this. So why does he fight so aggressively at every court hearing to prevent the child from being returned? The answer is clear: he is fighting for his own ego.