



HINDA
INSTITUTE
Everybody Deserves a Second Chance

ב"ה

Passover 5785

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Rabbi Binyomin Scheiman, Director

📍 9401 Margail, Des Plaines, IL 60016

📞 (708) 374-7711

✉️ info@hindahelps.com

📠 Fax (847) 296-1823

🌐 www.hindahelps.com

INTERVIEW WITH SAMMY HOROWITZ
from Inmate to Movie Star

Hinda Institute: Welcome, Sammy, and Rabbi Scheiman. Sammy, I wanted to start by asking you how you met Rabbi Scheiman.

Sammy: I met Rabbi Scheiman in 2002 in Shawnee Correctional Center when I was 19 years old.

Hinda Institute: Are you open to telling us how you got into Shawnee Correctional Center?

Sammy: Sure. I got sentenced to 10 years when I was 18 for armed robbery, really stemming from addiction and drug issues. Rabbi Scheiman came to see me for the first time when I was in solitary confinement.

Hinda Institute: Rabbi Scheiman. What was your first impression of Sammy?

Rabbi Scheiman: Honestly, I don't have the exact memory of the first time I met Sammy. I do remember asking him a question that is still in my head till today. I asked him; "Tell me your Hebrew name." And he told me Zalman Chanan. That's a picture, I will see forever. I said to him: "Come on, Zalman. What's a nice boy like you doing here?" The rest is history. He didn't actually belong there. He now is his true self where he really belongs.

Hinda Institute: Sammy tell me a little bit about what you're doing in your life right now.

Sammy: Well, my life has changed dramatically since those times. I was a professional boxer after prison, but today I'm a film and television writer specializing in crime and drama. Prior to that, I worked primarily as a stuntman on television, movies, commercials and music videos.

I also do activism work both with prison reform and in the Jewish community. My writing partner Adam and I have a fellowship we started up in collaboration with I.D.O.C., Northwestern University, and the Writers' Guild teaching incarcerated writers how to develop and write television shows.

Additionally, I teach boxing to Jews of all observances and backgrounds free of charge every week, and have a program specifically for Yeshiva called the Bear Jew Boxing Club in Los Angeles.

Continued on the next page...

WISHING

YOU A

VERY

HAPPY

AND

HEALTHY

PASSOVER



Hinda Institute: I'm sure you bring lots of realism to your writing. Because you've had a lot of experience on the streets.

Sammy: A huge amount of my life experience goes into my work.

Hinda Institute: I want to understand how you did that pivot. How did you get from someone isolated in a correctional institute to get where you are today? What was your "Aha" moment?

Sammy: I believe G-d did it. I don't really have any other explanation. I had addiction problems with drugs and alcohol, and that was taking me down for many years. I was so miserable I didn't know what else I could possibly do. However, I can't rationally explain how that person that I was became the person I am today. I don't know how that happened. I believe that G-d has a mission for me. I believe that. Sometimes I feel foolish saying that because it's a strange thing to say nowadays, but I believe it. I don't know how else I could have done it. Sobriety enabled me to allow G-d into my life. And now I'm just trying to stay on the right path and "on the beam", so to speak. I am just trying to become better every day. It's been a gradual process. Rabbi Scheiman has always been a consistent part of it. I don't know what else to say. It's been a long, long, arduous journey that's still happening.

Hinda Institute: Rabbi Scheiman, do you have any insights into "Aha" moments?

Rabbi Scheiman: In addition to the pivot that Sam mentioned, I think October 7th and a visit to Israel was a second "Aha" moment for Zalman. He really has grown to a whole new level. So I would say that October 7, just like for many Jews became an "Aha" moment. He is taking the time and effort to help people defend themselves and make his life more meaningful; wearing a Yarmulke, keeping Shabbat... All types of different things have gone to a whole new level since October 7th. I definitely think that's been a not just for himself, he represents many, many thousands of Jews that have changed.

Sammy: Yeah, I agree with that. I was thinking back to what got me on just a path to doing good. Trying to become a good person and a law abiding person and to making changes in my life, but as far as being a Jew, and as far as really taking it to the next level, Rabbi Scheiman's 100% correct, October 7th changed me and Jews across the world in a different, just a whole new way, you know. I went to Israel October 17, 2023. When I got back, I knew I needed to figure out how I can do some actionable items here at home. I'm not perfect now, by any means. I don't think anybody is. I'm not fully observant. Yes, I wear a Yarmulke and I do my best to keep Shabbat. It's a journey.

Hinda Institute: It sounds like you've had a really long and unique spiritual journey, Sammy. You have pivoted multiple times, but you always felt you had a mission.

Sammy: There were a few pivots in my life. Just feeling like there's something bigger than me that I need to be a part of, and that I am a part of, and and I don't exactly know what. I don't exactly know what it is, but I know. I know when I'm on the beam. I definitely know when I am doing the wrong things. I know what I'm not doing. So that's how I can kind of describe it. When I showed up to services at Rosh Hashanah, and I saw the Rabbi I knew I was supposed to be there. You know... I can feel it.

Hinda Institute: Rabbi, what does second chances mean to you when you think about Sammy?

Rabbi Scheiman: Well again. I think it goes back to what I first said - asking people their Hebrew name is an opener. I know that might sound funny to some like, what's a Hebrew name have to do with anything. Yet it represents that pure, unadulterated inner child that's within each person no matter what they've been through. So second chances is about realizing that everybody has that pure "Zalman" which is part of them, and if we're just there to give a hand, sometimes people just need a hand - there's somebody to be there when they want to make that turn. If there's a hand reaching out, they take that second chance, and they could really go places, as we have a good case in point here.

Hinda Institute: Sammy Why do you believe in second chances?

Sammy: I mean, I've had a few of them. I suppose I'm an example of one. You know I could have easily been written off. And I could have easily never gotten out of prison. I've gone on to do some pretty good things, I think. And I know a lot of other people that have as well that were in similar situations. I think that's the proof.

Hinda Institute: Sammy, you are an inspiration. You are a Hinda hero to us. Because not everybody's able to pivot, find spirituality and mission. And Rabbi, you're also an inspiration. because you were there to give the helping hand. I want to thank both of you for your time today. We are hoping to hear more of your amazing story at the event.

Join us for our annual event.

**Everybody Deserves A
Second Chance**

Stay tuned for more details!

Professor Marc Buslik, Hinda Honoree of the Year a Decorated 39 Year Veteran of the Chicago Police Dept. and UIC Faculty Member of the Criminology Dept. **Guest Speaker Sam Horowitz**, Hinda Hero of the Year. Award winning actor, stuntman and screenwriter who prior spent 10 years in prison. And our **Holiday Volunteer Team**.

TIRELESS ADVOCACY FOR ISOLATED JEWS - IT TAKES A COMMUNITY AND MANY HELPING HANDS

- In September 2023, Rabbi Binyomin Scheiman, Director of the Hinda Institute, learned that Lake County Jail lacked Jewish chaplaincy services post-COVID, leaving Jewish inmates without support. Anticipating a one-month process to resume services, he aimed to provide Chanukah celebrations that same year. However, due to administrative and security procedures, the process extended to nearly a year, finally concluding in September 2024. One of the administrators joked to the Rabbi: "We were thinking of giving you the award for the most patient chaplain we ever met".

Upon approval, discussions included religious items like the Four Species for Sukkot, tefillin (Jewish prayer boxes), and Chanukah candles. While the Four Species were approved, tefillin and candles faced initial rejections over security concerns, despite federal legislation permitting such religious observances in correctional facilities. Advocacy efforts ensued, involving board member Mr. Les Blau LLP, retired Judge Wallace Dunn, Chief Judge Daniel Shanes, and U.S. Congressman Brad Schneider. Their collective efforts led to the approval of all religious items.

Since then, there have been many historic firsts at Lake County Jail. On December 30, 2024, Rabbi Scheiman conducted the first-ever Chanukah menorah lighting. The detainee *David (whose mental health improved and was now regulated) also put on tefillin for the first time in his life. A few months later, *David celebrated Purim with great joy. *David was overjoyed to celebrate the Jewish holidays and to find support, and faith in the darkness. The Hinda Institute now is preparing for upcoming Passover Seder and holidays at Lake County Jail, bringing light and spirituality to those in need. (**not real name*)

Gratitude is extended to Judge Dunn, Congressman Brad Schneider, and Mr. Les Blau for their unwavering advocacy, which has brought hope and joy to individuals in despair. Please support our Passover Campaign this year at www.hindahelps.com/sendasedar

- **Rabbi Raices** has been a Hinda volunteer for 20 plus years. He goes down 1 time / year to read the Megillah at Dixon. This year he called Rabbi Scheiman desperately on Purim because the prison was on lock down and he couldn't see the 4 Jews waiting for him. He decided he was not leaving until he read the megillah and parked himself in the prison parking lot. There by chance he sees a car by the reserved sign, Warden. He called the prison operator to speak to the warden. As expected, the warden did not pick up. Then the Purim miracle occurred, the operator calls Rabbi Raices back and tells him the Warden says you can come in but need to be escorted. This is unheard of. Rabbi Raices read the megillah 4 x and brought joy to many. Really a Purim miracle!

The tremendous difficulties of advocating within correctional bureaucracies can be hard to understand. Each human being is looked at as a number within a punitive system. But fortunately Jews do have religious rights in prisons. Religion is not only a way to humanize people under horrible conditions, it is a way to reach the Jewish soul and to provide hope and spirituality to people in dire conditions. The advocacy, passion and commitment of our chaplains is a commitment to the belief of the essential good in everyone, their right to G-d and joy, and the right to practice and live freely as a Jew.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS.

This year once again, we are visiting prisons across Illinois to ensure that every Jew can celebrate Passover. **Thank you to Mr. Miller who sponsored the transport vehicle.**

Thank you for sponsoring our big Passover Seder: **Maot Chitim, the Grinkers for Matzah, the Aleph Institute for Seder Plates, Rabbi Tennenbaum for salamis.**

Purim in our Community. Thank you to all our volunteers who packed Mishloach Manot and delivered to our Hinda Families: **Sandy, Jenny, Cheryl, Albert, Vicki, Barbara, Fran and Lucy, Ilya, David, Rustam, Susan, Warren, Lisa, Beth, Yeshua.** Thank you to **Leah & Shoshana** who helped with our Deli inspired Purim Seudah and to **Aryeh** for the great performance.

Check out the fun at www.hindahelps.com/purim

In the News

Upcoming Courses

- ★ Tell your Story with Prof. Miner
- ★ Crime and Consequences with Rahmiel Drizin, Esq.

Hinda delivered the first ever CEU on Post Incarceration Syndrome.

Thank you to Lauren and Dr. Kutzen for a job well done!

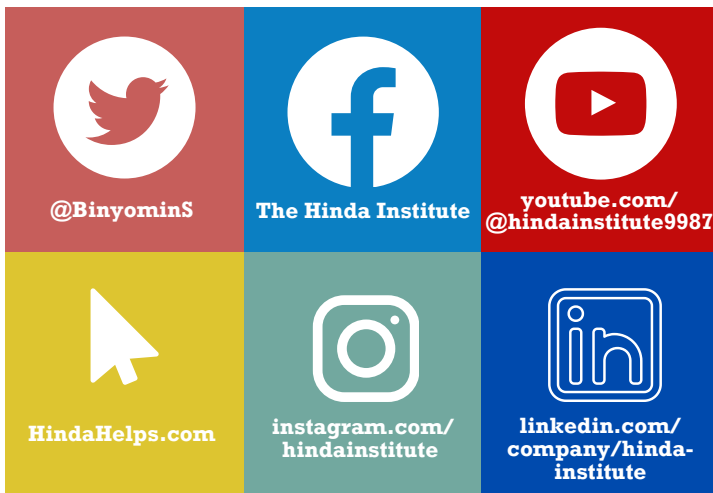


Consider sponsoring one of our upcoming courses in the name of a loved one.



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