

## **Eli L.'s Incredible Story of Losing 80 Pounds**

My name is Eli L. and I guess I was a typical Mesivta Yeshiva Bochur. I'd wake up early in the morning, wait for the bus to pick me up for Shacharis, and stay in Yeshiva until after Maariv. Needless to say, it's a long day, and the Yeshiva provided me with breakfast, lunch and supper.

The food was typical, and I'd become the expert in dashing to the lunchroom and making sure that I get my portion. Sometimes, if I was lucky and ate fast enough, there'd be enough for doubles! Of course, during recess, I'd play ball with my chavirim. The chevra would always choose me on their teams, because I was one of the big strong guys in my class. It's very intense, and nothing tastes better than an ice cold soda or energy drink during game play. After game play, I'd hit the snack machine. Many times the snacks were much tastier and fresher than lunch!

After this full and busy day, I'd come home at around 10pm. Being a growing boy, I'd always scrounge in the refrigerator and see what the leftovers were from the family dinner. Hey, I was hungry, and why should I miss out on the delicious food my Mom would prepare for the family. Just a quick push on to the plate, pop into the microwave, and ahhh mechaya, home cooked snack that left me pleasantly full and ready for bed.

Don't get me wrong, I've always known that I'm a big, strong guy. Also, with my heavy bones, I was sure that people would never realize how heavy the scale told me I was. My parents would cheppa me to stop eating so much, but hey, I learn hard, play hard, and like I always say, I'm a strong growing boy.

One day, my world was turned upside down dramatically. No, I didn't meet Eliyohu Hanavi, and no, I didn't look in the mirror and get sick. It was all because of two little boys from the first grade. I noticed them looking at me and giggling, and thought nothing of it. A few minutes later, the boys came back to me with very guilty looks on their faces.

"Our Rebbi told us to come back to you and ask you Mechila", they said. I laughed and thought, what could these little boys have done to need my Mechila? I good naturedly responded by saying with a smile, "Sure, no problem, Why do I have to be Moichel you? What did you do wrong to me?" Their answer blew me away! "We were giggling together and saying, there goes the fattest boy in Yeshiva!" Time seemed to stand still while I digested what they said. I, the big, strong 10<sup>th</sup> grader that everyone chose first in sports, was the fattest kid in Yeshiva?! I swallowed hard and mumbled, "Uh, no problem, I'm Moichel you B'Mechila Gemura."

I came home that night and told my parents what happened. I summed it up by saying, "These two little kids meant it seriously. They're not old enough to try to be hurtful. They were just stating a fact, as they saw it. It must be true!" It felt like I was living in a new world. Suddenly, when I looked in the mirror, I didn't see the powerful, muscular

Athlete and Yeshiva bochur staring at me, but rather a seriously overweight kid who liked to run around. I decided then and there that things must change.

From that day on, I ate only small portions in Yeshiva of breakfast, lunch and supper. I brought from home an apple for a snack, and on the days when we had “junk food”, which was more often than I realized, I would bring a tuna sandwich from home. Out was the soda and energy drinks, and in was water, and lots of it. It was a battle, but I ignored the snack machine. Every night when I got home, I would do some push-ups and sit ups, just a couple at first, and then more and more.

Boruch Hashem, I've graduated now from Mesivta and am entering Beis Medrash. It's been a long road, and I've lost a total of 80 pounds! All my clothes have been donated to gemachs, and I'm focused on my learning and of course sports. I'm no longer the “big” kid in my shiur, and I have to thank with all my heart, those two little boys who opened my eyes and let me see who I really was and made me change into who I am.