

## Gala Dazzles and Enlightens

It was a spectacular evening as more than 225 friends and supporters participated in Jews for Judaism's annual Gala. Great entertainment and food set the mood for a special tribute to 24 of our past and present board members for their loyal and dedicated commitment to advancing our mission to empower our youth and keep Jews Jewish.

In addition to the awards presentation our guests were captivated by our keynote speaker, nationally syndicated talk show host Michael Medved.

Michael spoke about the importance of critical thinking and how impressed he

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Rabbis Zalman And Bentzion Kravitz present syndicated talk show host Michael Medved with the Jews for Judaism Leadership Award

## The Encounter that Changed a Life

By Rabbi Yosef Madvig

I never wanted to go to Hebrew school, and High Holiday services were boring. By the time I got to high school I had lost all interest in Judaism. However, I believed in God and wanted to express it somehow... so, I decided to read the Bible. Since I couldn't find one in our house I borrowed one from my Christian girlfriend.

The more I read the Bible the more I was amazed by the Christian "proof texts" and I started attending church with my girlfriend just to check it out. As I read the Christian translation and interpretation of the Bible, I kept thinking, "How could the Jews be so blind to the truth?"

I became more involved in the church and eventually, through online chats and message boards, accepted Christianity. I did my best to keep all of this hidden from my parents. When I attended the University of California a couple of

years later, I discovered that one of my roommates belonged to a Christian campus organization. I joined him and started attending meetings and social events.

Eventually, I told my parents about my transformation. After a serious bout of crying, my mother told me that she loves me and that I am still her son. While that made me very happy to hear, I was still on a path that they disagreed with. They asked me if I would speak to their Conservative rabbi. I figured, "If this will get them off my back, why not?" The rabbi told me that he was not so familiar with this issue and suggested I should talk with someone he knew who had more expertise.

I finally met with Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz of Jews for Judaism, and we talked for more than 5 hours straight. He showed a personal interest in me and welcomed me into his home with warmth and friendship.

At one point in the conversation he asked me, "So, what makes you want to be Christian?" I was shocked by the question. Everything just seemed to fit so perfectly and make perfect sense. I pointed out some of the classic proof texts (Isaiah 53, 7:14, Ezekiel 4, etc.) and thought it should convince him too.

We patiently studied these passages from a Jewish perspective. It was truly eye-opening to see that there were actually Jewish commentaries on these passages and an authentic translation of the Hebrew original.

At one point, when we were about to discuss Isaiah chapter 53 he told me, "In 20 minutes, you're going to ask me, 'How could I have ever thought that it was talking about Jesus?'" We tackled the text with some very fundamental questions concerning the context, translation and

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# Have Cults Gone the way of the Dodo Bird?

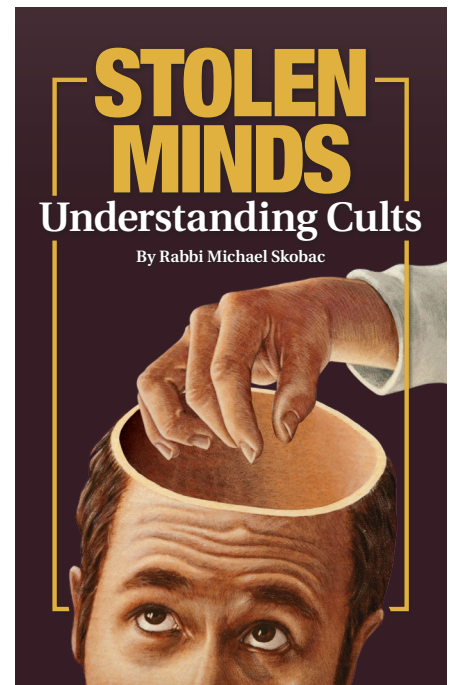
It may be difficult to believe but according to recent estimates there are more than 5,000 cults in North America. They are less visible because many have undergone effective makeovers and fly under our radar.

For example, members of the Unification Church, also known as the Moonies, don't stand on street corners now that they own the Washington Times, considered one of America's most powerful 21st century conservative news outlets.

Jews are still attracted to a variety of groups that have been labeled as cults. Recently the Call of the Shofar self-help group started attracting Orthodox Jews, and Jews for Judaism was asked to counsel former participants. Our research convinced us that this group should be avoided because of its lack of professional supervision and cult-like manipulation.

In Canada, an anti-Zionist ultra-orthodox cult called Lev Tahor was recently featured in a TV documentary. This group is considered extreme even within the ultra-orthodox community. Jewish women wear black Burka-like clothing that covers almost their entire body, and members of the cult have been accused of abuse and neglect of their children.

Because the common perception of the cult phenomenon is rife with misconceptions, Jews for Judaism has produced "Stolen Minds," a concise



guide to understanding cults, written by Rabbi Michael Skobac. The book is full of vital information and practical guidance that will empower you and your family and is available for free download at our redesigned website, [www.JewsForJudaism.com](http://www.JewsForJudaism.com).

In addition, Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz's popular presentation, "The Power of Persuasion – What do Cults, Terrorists and Telemarketers have in Common?" is available on-line, and a speaking engagement can be arranged for college campuses, synagogues and youth groups. ■

## The Mitzvah of Giving

Please support Jews for Judaism's international efforts by contributing financially because your support enables us to save Jewish lives.

We also accept in-kind donations, including property and stocks, and you can help us in perpetuity by remembering us in your Will or Living Trust.

By supporting Jews for Judaism, you not only preform a wonderful mitzvah but you also benefit from a tax-deductible contribution. Every size gift is appreciated, and tribute cards can be sent on your behalf.

**Donate Online at:**  
[la.JewsForJudaism.org/Donate](http://la.JewsForJudaism.org/Donate)

## What's On Your Mind?

"You get an A+++ for your most professional and helpful consultation. Thank you for helping me to cope with the painful situation in my family."

*Donna L.*

"I appreciate the assistance you gave me to reevaluate my decision to leave Judaism for another religion. I respect how you responded to my often challenging questions in a non-judgmental way. I am now comfortable and growing in my Jewish faith."

*Robert C.*

"It was so meaningful that you opened your home to me and my boyfriend when I was visiting Los Angeles from Mexico. It is good to know that the rabbis at Jews for Judaism are willing to provide a warm Shabbos experience that feels like a home away from home."

*Ruth K.*



# Gala Dazzles and Enlightens

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is with Jews for Judaism for tackling this issue with its new and innovative Smart Choices Project that provides practical critical thinking tools to vulnerable high school and college students.

Michael also mentioned that he likes the word “for” in our name Jews for Judaism. “This is a positive message that emphasizes how Jews for Judaism isn’t against something, but exists to provide information and guidance to Jews as well as non-Jews.”

The Gala and accompanying auction raised funds to sustain and further our educational and counseling services that reach tens-of-thousands of individuals each year. ■



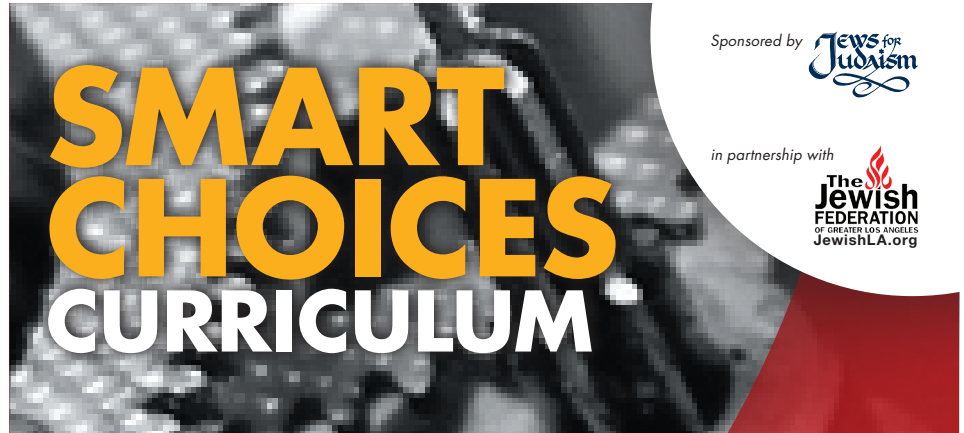
# Tackling Real Life Issues

Jews for Judaism has completed the SMART CHOICES curriculum to provide Jewish high school students with the tools to successfully apply critical thinking skills to a broad spectrum of Jewish, social and community issues.

The 8-unit curriculum was developed by educational specialists Cassie Weinstock and Dvora Kravitz under the supervision of Rabbi Zalman Kravitz and has also been submitted to the Apple iTunes store to be presented as a downloadable app for educators to use as a tool in their classrooms.

Supported by a user-friendly website - SmartChoicesProject.com - the curriculum will be launched in several local schools in the coming school year, and once piloted it will be offered to schools nationwide.

To date, more than 1,500 students in over 20 schools and youth groups have experienced some form of the Smart Choices program, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. After presenting to local B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO) chapters, Rabbi Zalman was invited to be the keynote



speaker at a Regional convention with 300 participants.

BBYO Regional Director, Melissa Hertwig said, "Our group really enjoyed the presentation. The teens and I felt the approach was different, engaging, and very relevant. We are thrilled to be working with Jews for Judaism."

SMART CHOICES is tackling real issues that confront our youth today and providing them with tools for life. According to board member David Rifkind, "In the ten years that I have been Chair

of Jews for Judaism, the Smart Choices program is the most exciting venture we have taken on."

Additionally, our first SMARTalks TED-style event for college students will be held later this year on a local college campus. A live-streaming broadcast will enable thousands of students worldwide to also participate in the exciting event.

We would like to thank the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles and the individual supporters whose generosity made these projects a successful reality. ■

## The Encounter...

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historical perspectives. These are things that I had never even thought about.

I was surprised that Judaism actually has something to say for itself. We spoke again numerous times for a period of several weeks. We explored things from a traditional, Jewish perspective, and I challenged everything. After a lot of thinking and of course praying, I realized I couldn't make this decision on my own. One day, before church had started, I got down on my knees (literally) and asked G-d to give me a sign so I should know what to do. When I sat up in my seat, the woman behind me, in CHURCH, said to her friend, "I went to a lovely Jewish SHABBAT service yesterday." I couldn't believe my ears.

I started coming up with all sorts of excuses. "Maybe it's just a coincidence," I told myself. I asked for another sign: to meet someone with my Hebrew name by the end of winter quarter. And that's what

happened. On the last day of the quarter, I met a guy online with my Hebrew name Yosef. We talked on the phone for almost 2 hours. After that night, I could no longer justify a belief in the Christian faith.

Then there's the rest of the story. I broke up with my non-Jewish girlfriend and when I graduated from college, decided to go to Yeshiva to learn more about the Judaism I really knew nothing about. For 5 years I studied Bible, Jewish law and Chassidic philosophy. I developed a personal relationship to God, and after receiving my rabbinic ordination, I joined the ranks of thousands around the world who help give Jews a fresh new look at their heritage. My wife and I opened a Chabad House for the Jewish students, faculty and community members in a small town in upstate NY.

Thanks to Jews for Judaism, we are working hard and keeping other Jews Jewish. ■

## Missionaries Exploit Pew Study

Jews for Jesus missionaries are exploiting the recent Pew study to assert that 34% of Jews believe in Jesus.

This is a result of the Pew Study mistakenly wording its survey question in an ambiguous way. Instead of asking "can you be Jewish and believe Jesus is the messiah?" it should have asked, "can you be Jewish and believe Jesus is God"?

It is irresponsible to ignore that Jews for Jesus not only considers Jesus to be the messiah but also believe he is God and part of a Trinity. Far less than 34% would have responded "yes" if the question had been worded to reflect this Christian doctrine.

This is why Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism are united on the fundamental principle that a Jew who worships someone as God cannot call themselves a Jew until they denounce this idolatrous belief. ■