

Thinking of going off the derech

Posted by To Yosef Hatzaddik - 05 Jan 2025 01:45

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I've been in a Baal teshuva yeshiva for a while now and I've been very successful. From rising up the shiurim that the yeshiva offers in Gemara pretty quickly with a couple of more shiurim to go up in. Frum people are generally impressed with what I've been able to accomplish in the time that I have been in the frum world.

What they don't know is my inner struggle to fit into a whole new world which I wasn't born into, and to feel normal and to be like everyone else. My family has goyim in it and I look significantly different from most ashkenazi jews because of that. I don't exactly look sephardi either, although I do get mistaken for being a certain type of sephardic jew on occasion, by sephardic jews of that type.

?In short, I know like I'm a level beneath everyone because of my background, not only because of the genetics but also because my parents have been divorced and remarried and I have traumatic episodes from that I need to take care of from that. They rebbeim in yeshiva asked about my background after they were berating me for problems that I had with other bochurim in the yeshiva, saying things like the bochurim that I had problems with are really harmless while I have a history of having problems with bochurim in the yeshiva. They have even said that I have OCD and am antisocial from my work ethic. I've noticed now that any time that I now try to take care of an issue with a bochur, and was not successful, so I go to rebbiem, the fingers are always pointed to me without even hearing me out.

I don't speak with the rebbeim in yeshiva anymore and instead other bochurim that I'm friendly with. They understand me much better, and unlike the rebbiem they don't always point fingers at me although they do say the time to time that the things that spark issues are petty and could be easily solved if I don't hold a grudge and go speak with the other bochurim. Time to time they agree with me and say the behavior is completely wrong, but that it would be better to let it go.

?I'm currently undergoing therapy with a private frum therapist, which I have to work for in between my sedarim in yeshiva which takes away from my learning but that's currently what I have to do in order to support this. He told me that saying that I have OCD and am antisocial was a complete joke.

Before this, I was in one of the top public high schools in America, second top in NYC, and on my way to an Ivy League college which I gave up to come to yeshiva instead. Before yeshiva, I

was never labeled as being problematic, and actually looked up to. I've been told by numerous people that I would be the next big CEO and older kids in the school would come to me asking for me for advice thinking that I was in their same grade. In stark contrast to the reality that I live in here. Granted, what they cared about is financial success and not my character, but it makes me feel funny inside.

?Here, and in every single other type of jewish community, and in any somewhat traditional not jewish community, people from outside that community will never be the same no matter what you do, if you look different you can learn all you can, make as much money as can, and no amount would be sufficient to make you normal. Outsiders are strange and not familiar. The books that I've read about on the subject say that converts to judaism are to be treated exactly like other Jews, but I don't see that, they are looked down upon like interesting specimens, and will never be the same as other Jews unless they can somewhat hide their background and simultaneously look like a born jew. And really it should be that way, there are social classes in judaism, and we saw what happened to Korach when he challenged it. It's just a big shame that Judaism is advertised that way to converts after trying to push them away. Maybe the fact that they will be second class citizens if they look different would be enough to push most away. It may very well be that what they advertise is the ideal, but it is not kept and not reality.

I'm looking now to go to a different Ivy League college. I've been in the intellectual world already and I know it well, they are crooked people and also advertise themselves as accepting and treating everyone equally, and I know very well that they are fakers as well, but I felt much better among them than here. I didn't know what I signed up for when I did, but now is too late to go back, so I think going forward I'll have to keep the mitzvos at a private capacity and make sure no one can discern that I'm a jew from the outside, or at least that the goyim will think I'm not one of them and that any Jew will also think I am not one of them.

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Re: Thinking of going off the derech  
Posted by BenHashemBH - 05 Jan 2025 03:30

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Shalom Brother,

I'm so sorry for the way you were treated and the pain it's caused you. I don't know anything about where you were, but you are not a 2nd class citizen. Unfortunately, the world is not ideal - that's not a Jewish problem, it a human problem.

There are a lot of baalei teshuva and some converts near me, and they are treated no different than any other Jew.

I hope you have a more positive experience in the future, as what you wrote sounds atypical to me for an outreach organization.

All the best

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Re: Thinking of going off the derech  
Posted by vehkam - 05 Jan 2025 04:03

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I am sorry for the difficulties you are going through. I recommend that you listen to rabbi Daniel kalish's podcasts. I always get chizzuk from his acceptance.

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Re: Thinking of going off the derech  
Posted by simchastorah - 05 Jan 2025 06:26

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The feelings of not being accepted and being an interesting specimen are common feelings for baalei tshuva and geirim, especially when their appearance instantly marks them as different. It's a very painful thing, I'm sorry. There are many different worlds within the Jewish world, some where you well feel much more comfortable than others. The yeshiva world in general is pretty discriminating, of course there are always wonderful yechidim, but there's a certain toughness which combines with a suspicion of outsiders (for good reason) to make things pretty uncomfortable for someone in your situation.

Please don't go off the derech! If for all other reasons, you will be cheating yourself of the opportunity to tap in to the awesome treasure of Torah, which only gets better and better and deeper and more beautiful. Your current situation may not be the best for you, but that doesn't mean you can't find one more fitting. It is so worth it to try, stay strong!

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Re: Thinking of going off the derech  
Posted by soulwork - 05 Jan 2025 07:03

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I went off the derech it wasn't fun and didn't help very much (the going off the derech part) what did help is that when I did I was able to start again pick things up when I was ready and really be my own person it also helped me to be in the place I chose to be in to help my own person and to be able to be in a healthy day to day where I felt comfortable and happy witch I didn't need to go off the derech for but ended up happening because I need those things you can try it I'm telling you here I tried and what you need to do is reconsider what your doing and why are you doing too much it's not a rush but also reconsider your day to day and make sure your in an environment you feel your a part of and growing.

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