

## OVED BEN AHARON, EX-JEW, USA (PART 3 OF 4)

**Rating:** 4.0

**Description:** 25 years of reflection, evaluation of the Jewish community and their Tradition, and in-depth studies within the Yeshivas of Jerusalem, finally leads Oved to Islam. Part 3: Leaving exile and returning to God.

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**By:** Oved ben Aharon

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Achieving material success while maintaining cultural participation is the Holy Grail of the truly pious Jew in frumkeit Judaism. The more extreme on both sides (more cultural participation, more financial success), the better. For example, being Sabbath Observant is great but being Sabbath Observant AND a successful professional who puts business aside to observe the Sabbath is especially noteworthy. Being unemployed and Sabbath observant isn't recognized as piety although this person's humility and unshaking loyalty to God despite the lack of material wellbeing is probably the hallmark of piety as exemplified by the prophet Iyov (Job). Being a Sabbath-observant professional is the goal. There are even books to guide a person to this goal, for example "The Meister Plan: A doctor's prescription for financial security and success in learning" available from Artsroll.com. Take notice of the book's description which makes zero reference to God (the Divine Presence that disappeared 2,500 plus years ago), only a description of the author's method to balancing Torah literacy and financial security. The only capstone remaining for the successful Sabbath Observant professional is to promptly move to Israel! Most American Jews have a successful friend or relative who has moved or retired to Israel, who then take it upon themselves to demand that we all likewise make Aliyah (elevate) ourselves by moving to the homeland. However, because of too many idealistic Jews (i.e. not so financially secure) who have moved to Israel, Israel's GDP (and hence our chosen status) is taking a hit. Thankfully we now have a solution to this problem, the new book from Feldheim, "A Financial Guide to Aliyah and Life in Israel."

Unfortunately these books are not sufficient to protect our status as an accomplished and financially secure people, as one of my friends seeking to join the tribe has been held at the gate and denied entry simply because she lacks the aura of a potentially affluent member. She is the one exception I spoke about above, who truly feels a connection to the God of Israel, trusts in Him, and wants to join herself to what she believes to be His people. She has been devoted for seven years, but can't pay for a Rabbi to return her call. When she was redirected from Rabbi one to Rabbi two, she was informed that if she wanted to continue with her "conversion," a learning fee in excess of \$1,000 would be required. She is now working with Rabbi three and hasn't

given up yet. In contrast, the gates into the tribe swing fast and wide for the affluent or soon to be affluent, i.e. Donald Trump's daughter and an individual I'll identify as Ms. Ploni. Ms. Ploni had sporadic Synagogue attendance, made no effort to be Sabbath observant or Jewish knowledgeable, but she was fast-tracked and converted in 6 months. The difference between Ms. Ploni and my friend is that Ms. Ploni was in the health care industry and engaged to a Jewish doctor—she was already successful and so fit the cast of the ideal Abrahamic descendant that we have to portray in order to maintain our status as a chosen nation (since we can't point to the Divine Presence anymore).

The Jewish "observant life" has been recognized as problematic by Orthodox Union president, Rabbi Richard Joel, who in an introduction to Jewish Action Magazine a few years ago stated that today only 10% of the Orthodox can afford to be/remain observant. He unfortunately misses the point, as he identifies the problem as the need to make observance more affordable and therefore more accessible to non-affluent Jews. Rabbi Joel fails to recognize that Jewish observance today emphasizes the external and is largely dependent on financial affluence. Affordability shouldn't be in the equation at all. When the Temple stood, all paid the same amount for maintenance (the half shekel), and those who were poor were not excluded from sacrifice as their offerings were birds and on Festivals they received meat from others' offerings. Is the community today helping the less affluent to live within an Eruv so they can participate more (if at all) on Shabbat? Are Jewish children excluded from day school or Hebrew school if their parents cannot afford the tuition? Are anonymous donors to Jewish Federations treated as more meritorious (as Halachah deems them to be) than those who want their names seen as "pillars" etc.? These community problems go deeper than trying to keep up with the Cohens.

After 25 years of reflection, evaluation of the Jewish community and our Tradition, and even in-depth studies within the Yeshivas of Jerusalem, I have reached several conclusions. One of those conclusions sets a course that I would never have imagined I would ever take. Part of that conclusion is that the third Temple has already been built. Specifically, the porcelain walls of the Haram al Sharif (the Noble Mountain, the Dome of the Rock) with walls that came out of fire are what the Talmud (in tractate Berachos) refers to as walls of Fire. As I have indicated to my friends before, the Jewish community is today in its longest exile in history. For numerous reasons, I have concluded that this exile will never end as God has made very clear to us with His Mosque on the mountain of fire, which He has no intention of removing. The word fire can be read as literal, or as implied or derived. Based on the length of our exile, and for reasons I will be happy to discuss if not related below, I am confident that the porcelain walls of the existing Dome, derived from fire and among the only materials in the world able to withstand fire, are truly walls of fire that we should embrace and not seek to tear down. This is my formal announcement that I went to Jerusalem, to Yeshiva, to become a Rabbi but instead had experiences and insights that lead me today to declare that I am Muslim. I firmly declare that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is His prophet.

I will never forget the day I went with some friends to daven neitz at the Western Wall, morning prayers at literally sunrise, and during prayers I was interrupted by a fellow Jew who asked for Tzedakah (Charity money). I gave him the coins I had in my pocket that I had intended to give out later. He gave them back to me and asked for "bills." Not only did he interrupt at the improper time (during Shemoneh Esrei and not the preceding psalms when money is set aside for charity), he rejected my charity and asked for more. When I left the old city to walk to a pizza place on my way home, I saw in the near distance a Muslim woman sitting with her hand out, not interrupting anyone, not speaking to anyone, just sitting. I watched countless fellow Jews walk past her without even acknowledging her existence. I refused to do the same and gave her the coins that I still had. She cried and said thank you in Arabic. The same day, literally the same day, I went into an Arabic store to buy some juice since the Jewish stores were closed in preparation for the Sabbath. I accidentally left some money bills on the store counter—the only reason I know is because the owner's son chased me down for several blocks to return them to me. That Shabbat I thought long and hard about the behavior of my fellow Jews, and the other descendants of Abraham, my Ishmaelite cousins who were grateful and honest.

That one day in Jerusalem has turned into several days of the same observations of behavior, both in Israel and in the United States. It should make every Jew ask himself/herself, "why is it that Arabs are known for their hospitality, and Jews for their cunning?"

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