

Orthodox Judaism holds lessons for the Benedict Option—but not necessarily the ones Rod Dreher thinks it does

# The City of Mensch

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Jonathan Bronitsky

They represent a growing force in the conservative intellectual movement. You could even say they constitute a new literary genre. A slew of books have recently been published by Christians concerned about the future of their religious communities in America, a country increasingly hostile to all people of faith. (How hostile? See, for instance, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, President Obama's Executive Order 13672, and corporate America's crusade against Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act.) To name but a few books in the genre: *Strangers in a Strange Land: Living the Catholic Faith in a Post-Christian World* by Charles J. Chaput, archbishop of Philadelphia; *The Marian Option: God's Solution to a Civilization in Crisis* by Carrie Gress, professor at Pontifex University; and *Out of the Ashes: Rebuilding American Culture* by Anthony Esolen, professor at Thomas More College of Liberal Arts.

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The main column of this cloudburst, however, has been *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* by *American Conservative* senior editor Rod Dreher. It was a *New York Times* bestseller and hailed by David Brooks as the “most important religious book of the decade.” Dreher’s forecast is unapologetically gloomy. “There are people alive today,” he asserts, “who may live to see the effective death of Christianity within our civilization.”

Radical times demand radical responses. *The Benedict Option* offers a thorough strategy for those seeking to divorce themselves from mainstream American culture. From the creation of faith-based schools to the overhaul of liturgy to the establishment of new professional networks for believers, Dreher presents the indispensable components for communities to “outwit, outlast, and eventually overcome the occupation” of the mainstream by secular liberalism and to provide traditional Christians the space to live virtuous lives consonant with the gospel. As a foundation to these “Benedict Option communities,” he proffers *The Rule of St. Benedict*, a book of precepts composed by the sixth-century father of Western monasticism, Benedict of Nursia, in response to the collapse of Roman civilization.

While Dreher focuses on laying the groundwork for Christian Benedict Option communities, he notes that American Judaism—or rather, a particular form of American Judaism—serves as an inspiring, real-life model for what might be achieved. “Benedict Option Christians have a lot to learn from our Orthodox Jewish elder brothers in the faith,” he declares. He stressed this point in an interview for an article in *The Atlantic*. “We Christians have a lot to learn from Modern Orthodox Jews,” he reiterated. “They have had to live in a way that’s powerfully counter-cultural in American life and rooted in thick community and ancient traditions. And yet, they manage to do it.”

A number of Jews, who also happen to be politically conservative, have given support to Dreher’s proposition. “I believe Judaism can offer Christians an example as they seek to replicate its success as a minority group,” writes Seth D. Kaplan in the *American Conservative*, responding approvingly to *The Benedict Option*. Bethany Mandel, commenting upon *The Benedict Option* in *First Things*, corroborates the tremendous “overlap between what Dreher proposes and what already exists within the Orthodox Jewish community, in North America and across the world.” She further writes that “the Orthodox Jewish experience provides an exact blueprint for what Dreher is proposing American Christians undertake.”

Yet curiously, Orthodox Judaism (which represents about 10 percent of the five to six million Jews in America) receives only fleeting mention in *The Benedict Option* itself. The readiness of both traditional Christians and politically conservative (and observant) Jewish Americans to herald the Judeo-Christian bond is understandable. There’s an authentic desire within these two groups, which have only recently started a dialogue, to bolster mutual goodwill and build bridges to advance overlapping political and moral agendas. But because these two groups have historically enjoyed little interaction, an avowal of crosscurrents begs a more thorough investigation.

Is there a reason why Dreher looks to Modern Orthodox Judaism as opposed to ultra-Orthodox Judaism, otherwise known as Haredi Judaism? To what extent does Orthodoxy apply to Christians seeking to withdraw from public life? And does the Orthodox Jewish experience provide, as Mandel avers, “an exact blueprint” for Benedict Option communities in America?

A closer look reveals that while aspects of Orthodoxy might be useful to Christians, they would be so only to a limited extent, owing to the theological, cultural, and his-



*Do Orthodox Jews offer a paradigm of community living that many Christians are seeking in an increasingly secular age?*

torical differences between the faiths. Given what's at stake—the best interests of both Christians and Jews—a candid and more comprehensive inquiry is needed.

It makes sense to start by asking why Dreher would consider Orthodoxy as a model for traditional Christians. He provides an answer: Jews “have faced horrifying attempts over millennia to destroy their families and communities,” yet they have endured. As Kaplan puts it, “Who can argue with success?” Indeed, the Jewish people, a tiny religious minority, has survived for nearly 3,000 years, 1,800 of which were spent outside of Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. More though than having merely survived an interminable array of oppression and deprivation, the Jewish people have thrived. Great empires—Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman—waxed and waned, seemingly acceding to the immutable forces of nature. Yet the Jews endured and, without intending to do so, illuminated the path from the past to the present and future, contributing mightily to human civilization.

Surely what's also captivating about Orthodoxy is that it has rather successfully

managed, and in many cases spurned, the latest threats to tribal continuity: the centrifugal forces of contemporary American life. Orthodox Judaism's seminal concept of *yeridat ha-dorot* (“decline of the generations”) holds that humanity is becoming less enlightened and less righteous due to the ever-expanding void between the present and the revelation of Torah at Mount Sinai. Today the synagogues and temples affiliated, respectively, with Conservative Judaism and Reform Judaism (currently the largest “mainstream” denomination), which tout “progress,” are hemorrhaging followers and may soon be turning off their sanctuaries' lights for good. “The non-Orthodox are in sharp decline,” remarks sociologist Steven M. Cohen—while the Orthodox population is “exploding.” At last count, Orthodox Jews represented 61 percent of Jewish children in the New York City metro area. In America as a whole, the number of Orthodox Jews has at least doubled since 1990.

What's more, *ba'alei teshuvah* (“those who return,” meaning individuals who go back to Orthodoxy or become Orthodox for the first time) make up a third of Orthodox Jewry in

America. The tragic irony is that mainstream Judaism is exacerbating its own destruction. As it seeks to remain relevant, it increasingly universalizes the religion, adopting more and more aspects of popular culture—especially progressive political causes—leaving “Judaism” little more than a hollow body festooned with progressive catchphrases (e.g., *tikkun olam*, “repairing the world,” or aiding “the widow, the orphan, and the stranger”). Traditional Christians—both Protestant and Catholic—will empathize, for they feel that their houses of worship too have been corrupted, catering to fashion with the aim of staying pertinent and providing comfort at all costs.

Another reason Orthodoxy might serve as a model: it’s far from monolithic in terms of observance, thus presenting myriad possibilities for traditional Christians. For those looking to build a community approximating a fortress, they could study the Haredi enclaves of, for example, Borough Park in Brooklyn, where the Jewish population rose by 71 percent in ten years between 2002 and 2012; Kiryas Joel in Orange County, New York, with by far the youngest median-age population of any municipality in the U.S.; or Lakewood in New Jersey, home to the 6,500-student Beth Medrash Govoha, known as the Harvard of American yeshivas. For those endeavoring to build a community that would remain more connected to American life, they could examine the Modern Orthodox locales of, for example, the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Teaneck in New Jersey, or Pico-Robertson in Los Angeles.

**I**n practical terms, though, what aspects of Orthodoxy might traditional Christians wish to emulate? Seth D. Kaplan, drawing upon personal experience, identifies “four religious Jewish practices,” which, by and large, correspond with practices that Dreher endorses throughout *The Benedict Option*: (1) controlling “all aspects of education in

the community” and emphasizing learning “as a core part of the culture”; (2) sustaining “culture, values, rituals, and identity”; (3) creating “a dense network of social institutions to support individual communities as well as the broader diaspora”; and (4) setting aside “one day a week to bond, learn together, and celebrate one’s uniqueness.”

The fourth practice is without controversy. No committed Orthodox Jew would argue against the necessity of a “Sabbath”—that is, a regular, fixed period to unplug from electronic devices and rekindle genuine human relationships—because Orthodox Jews believe that strictly honoring the Sabbath is commanded by God. However, upon inspection, the other points of practice, upon closer inspection, offer traditional Christians less room for imitation.

Many traditional Christians agree with Kaplan that education is key to building and maintaining Benedict Option communities. The pillar of that education, as traditional Christians stress, is the canon of Western civilization. “Classical Christian education,” notes Dreher, “proceeds from the conviction that God is still [preparing souls for the coming of Christ] through the art, literature, and philosophy of the past, both Greco-Roman and Christian.” Archbishop Chaput similarly writes, “A liberal education—a balanced experience of the humanities, art, music, mathematics, and the natural sciences—is designed to form a mature ‘liberal’ adult; liberal in the original sense, meaning free as opposed to slave.”

Yet not all learning is beneficial, Dreher concedes: “from the Christian point of view, Enlightenment liberalism contained the seeds of Christianity’s undoing.” Friedrich Nietzsche went one step further by announcing that the Enlightenment itself was a child of Christianity. And so arise certain questions: How to ensure that the wheat is separated from the chaff? Is it possible to detach an education in Western civi-

lization from Enlightenment liberalism and its inspirations? Is the democratic age that begot “the naked public square”—and that flattened hierarchies and blurred all differences of class, morals, family, and gender—ultimately a product of Reformed (Calvinist) theology? And wasn’t it Christianity that took Judaism’s elevation of the individual to a whole new level?

These questions are raised not to provoke further inquiry here, but simply to make the point that they do not pose much of a predicament for Modern Orthodoxy, and even less of one for Haredi Judaism, which remains relatively disengaged from America’s day-to-day affairs. For purposes of thinking about Jewish models for the Benedict Option, Haredi Judaism is more useful than Modern Orthodoxy. It constitutes the greater portion of Orthodoxy in America and the fastest-growing part of Judaism in the U.S. and Israel. It also more closely resembles the way Judaism has been practiced for most of its existence.

Education within Haredi Judaism is almost entirely religious. The backbone of study, at least for boys and men, is ceremonial and civil law contained within the *Talmud* (“learning”); the sixty-three shelf-warping tractates of the Mishnah, the oral Torah transmitted from God to Moses on Sinai in addition to the Pentateuch and set down by Yehudah HaNasi around 200 CE; and the Gemara, centuries of rabbinic elucidations of the Mishnah. Beyond government-mandated courses, secular topics—such as art, literature, history, and mathematics—figure minimally, a fact that is a continual source of controversy because of the tax-exempt status of Haredi educational institutions. The irreverent retort from a yeshiva student to Robert Eisenberg, author of the 1995 travelogue *Boychiks in the Hood*, is instructive: “Sure we know the difference between Washington and Lincoln. Lincoln had a beard, Washington didn’t.”

“Philosophy,” understood as the search for Truth that yields refinement of character, is widely deemed forbidden in Haredi Judaism, for God is perfect, he gave man the Torah—which is accordingly perfect—and therefore everything that could be and needs to be known in this world is already readily at man’s fingertips. Even the most famous work of “Jewish philosophy,” Maimonides’s *Moreh Nevukhim* (*The Guide for the Perplexed*), is rarely taught among Haredim, and then only to those deemed masters of Torah, out of fear that the intricate dance between Jewish faith and Aristotelian reason will lead to a distancing from God.

An education so myopic will inevitably strike a lot of traditional Christians as exceedingly insular and detrimental to the development of the soul. Nonetheless, as far as a practical end—dedication to God’s path—it ought to be taken seriously because, after all, “Who can argue with success?”

Mark Twain published a laudatory short essay in *Harper’s* in 1898 titled “Concerning the Jews.” “All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains,” he observed. He then concluded by asking, as if the answer were beyond the grasp of human reason, “What is the secret of his immortality?” To observant Jews, the answer has always been straightforward. As the Midrash on the Song of Songs teaches, the Jews were able to maintain their identity during the 210-year sojourn in Egypt because they kept their Hebrew names, they continued speaking the Hebrew language, and they did not intermarry. Robert Eisenberg points out that Orthodox Jews have the Yiddish saying *Toireh iz de besteh sroire*, which essentially means, “Study Torah, follow its precepts, and continuity will take care of itself.”

An Orthodox Jew recites dozens of prayers each day. One is said after going to the bathroom, before taking a sip of a drink, prior

to biting into a piece of food, etc. Haredi Jews and many Modern Orthodox Jews pray in a quorum of ten adults three times every day, in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Strict rules guide nearly every action, from which arm should be dressed first (the right) to the order in which nails must be clipped (left ring, left index, left pinky, left middle, left thumb, right index, right ring, right thumb, right middle, right pinky). Moreover, customs known as “fences” have been built around Torah commandments to help ensure they are fulfilled and not broken. For instance, the Book of Exodus forbids “boiling a kid *goat* in its mother’s milk” (emphasis mine). Yet rabbinic ruling dictates that no mixture of meat and milk whatsoever may be cooked or consumed. *Marais ayin* (avoiding “the appearance of sin”) is another guide to practice. For instance, umbrellas are forbidden on the Sabbath because the very opening of an umbrella is considered “building,” one of thirty-nine creative activities banned on the day of rest. So what if the umbrella is opened prior to the Sabbath? *Marais ayin* declares it still unusable. Why? Onlookers might not know the umbrella was opened prior to the Sabbath and, in turn, be led to believe that the use of an umbrella on the Sabbath is permitted, when in fact it is not.

This is all to say that life as an observant Jew is marked by a dense web of laws and customs woven over generations and generations. Skeptics and detractors often claim that these laws and customs have outlived their usefulness. (“The prohibition against the mixing of milk and meat was instituted in ancient times before refrigeration to prevent spoilage and contamination.”) Observant Jews reply by shrugging their shoulders. Whether or not there is a spiritual reward in the world to come for keeping the commandments, doing so has inherent pragmatic value: it diminishes selfish and individualistic impulses, thereby guaranteeing the community’s permanence. Veneration for the past inculcates an under-

standing that slight alterations can result in irreparable losses.

“Faith” in the Christian sense takes a backseat to the law in Judaism. Just before his *bar mitzvah*, a young Daniel Bell confessed to his rabbi, “I found the truth. I don’t believe in God. I’ll put on *tefillin* once in memory of my dead father, but that’s all.” The rabbi replied, “*Yingle*, you don’t believe in God. Tell me, you think God cares?” One of Bell’s fellow New York intellectuals, Irving Kristol, espoused the same logic, having concluded in his later years that the “habit” of ritual (e.g., saying prayers and lighting Friday-night candles) is the “secure locus for ‘virtue.’” “Similarly with ‘natural law’ as a basis for ethics,” he wrote to a friend, the sociologist Earl Raab. “One can make a good philosophical argument for it but try explaining it to your children!” What mattered was not the intellectual truth but the tradition itself.

The centrality of law and custom in Judaism is one reason why traditional Christians, especially Protestants, will find the Orthodox example to be of limited use. The Jewish people’s destiny has revolved around survival and preservation more than redemption. Its practices have reflected as much. In Christianity, liturgy isn’t sufficient. It is sufficient in Judaism, because it has the dual value of binding one generation firmly with the next and offering spiritual reward.

Dreher, sensing a pitfall, cautions that “a Christianity that reduces life in Christ to a moral and ethical code may be in one respect better than nothing—but it is not the Christian faith.” Christ, through the sacrifice of his flesh, redacted nearly all of the 613 commandments, along with the Oral Torah, because their legalism undercut belief. So what, without steering Christians away from faith into a dogmatic adherence to the letter of the law, could serve as the center, a Talmud, in a Christian Benedict Option community? According to Dreher,

it would be something akin to *The Rule of St. Benedict*. But who or what institution would interpret the rules and decide the manner of their enforcement? The possibility of bitter disputes is obvious. Even more fundamentally, whereas Jewish law excludes in order to protect the tribe, Christ's gospel rejects tribes, which raises a question about the viability of the Benedict Option.

Traditional Christians have in fact laid the main challenge to the Benedict Option: namely, that if carried out too strenuously, it would be un-Christian. While Dreher notes it is "prudent" for Benedict Option communities "to draw reasonable boundaries," he warns that they must not become like "the unfaithful servant in the Parable of the Talents" who turns away from those who need love. Yet what are the "boundaries"?

Dreher leaves them by and large undefined, which worries others. Archbishop Chaput's book, *Strangers in a Strange Land*, released about three weeks before *The Benedict Option*, contains a number of thinly veiled criticisms. "If we want to follow Jesus," he writes at one point, "we must love the world too and remain in it, as he did, to work for its salvation." He is more trenchant elsewhere: "The idea that we can retire to the safety of some modern version of a cave in the hills isn't practical. Our task as Christians is to be healthy cells in society." Seeming to cast off any doubt about his target, he flatly declares that "we can't simply withdraw from public affairs. Saint Benedict could retreat to the Italian countryside, but Augustine was a bishop intimately tied to his people and their society." In other words, aspire to be angels we might, but because of our fallen nature, all of our political arrangements are destined to fall back to earth, settling in the City of Man.

Here, as far as Benedict Option communities are concerned, Jews have another advantage. They have less of a theological

obligation to be attached to their surroundings. The notion of "the fate" of America and Western civilization is foreign to observant Judaism. (That nonobservant Judaism is fixated upon saving the entire "world" is a result of having exchanged faith in an all-powerful God for conviction that human reason is almighty, and thus capable of bringing about heaven on earth.) The overwhelming majority of Haredi Jews I've encountered across the country bless America for the freedom, security, and opportunity it provides. "Saving" the country, on the other hand, is just not their fight. Judaism is eschatological, but—in contrast to Christianity—it is exclusionary, and the advent of the messianic era is not dependent upon proselytization, conversion, and the inauguration of a universal dominion. Christianity, writes Matthew J. Franck, professor emeritus of political science at Radford University, "was the first truly global religion to appeal beyond the bounds of tribe, soil, and heritage, inviting all men and women into a redemptive relationship with the Creator."

Traditional Christians should also note that an unstinting devotion to the Bible might pull communities so far away from politics that they cede the platform required to wage an effective fight for limited government, the prerequisite for Benedict Option communities. As far as I know, there aren't any unequivocal theological prohibitions in Christianity against holding public office. Jesus's instruction to love not "the things in the world" does not rule out that civic duty; it rules out that civic duty only when performed for power and influence. In Judaism, there is a long-standing and fiercely explicit stigma against public office. In the Talmudic tractate *Avot* ("Fathers"), Shmaya, a leader of the Pharisees, advocated that future generations "despise positions of power; and do not become overly familiar with the government." Also in *Avot*, Nechunia ben Hakanah cautioned that "whoever casts off the yoke of

the Torah will have placed on him the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities.” Maimonides bluntly added, “Most who follow our religion lose their fear of Heaven upon attaining government office.”

(It’s true that in New York City, Hasidim—a branch of Haredi Judaism—deliver electorally powerful bloc votes. But the average Haredi Jew is disconnected from politics. To the extent that Orthodox Jews are involved in the public square, it’s through a few institutions and a select number of members of the community who lobby to carve out the space needed to lead Torah-observant lives.)

So why does Dreher opt for Modern Orthodoxy as opposed to Haredi Judaism, as the model for emulation? One can only guess that he feels it’s a better fit for America. It is still part of the country, in look, feel, and substance. Education in Modern Orthodoxy almost always contains the classical secular subjects, and its adherents can be readily found listening to popular music, going to the movies, and attending yoga classes—participating in almost all the activities that characterize contemporary American life. I suspect that Haredi Jews, while their dedication to faith elicits admiration from other citizens, are not viewed as ideal participants in the American experiment, which, for the sake of toleration, involves a division between private and public life. This raises a host of additional questions.

“A delicate balance exists between personal liberty and our duty to others,” writes Archbishop Chaput, “and democracy depends on it.” But can faith and America both be kept? And what exactly is “America”? Is it our country’s constitutional framework? If that’s America, then Dreher’s proposal is not so radical. And what if America is “thicker” and involves a shared culture? If that’s the case, then those envisioning their futures in a Benedict Option community should be prepared to give up a great deal of what they’ve

come to associate with America, including what they have come to love about it. Take baseball, “the national pastime.” Most Haredi Jews won’t attend a game because of the social setting it entails. The conversations in the stands are known to turn vulgar. Also, in pleasant weather Haredi men, to avoid sinful thoughts and yearnings, would prefer to avoid throngs of women in halter tops and mini shorts. An entire set of laws involving dress and behavior are gathered under the category of *tzniut* (“modesty” or “privacy”).

Speaking of which, Vice President Pence was relentlessly mocked as some sort of Victorian prude by liberals for his personal rule of never eating alone with a woman other than his wife. (Ironically, liberals now fuel the #MeToo movement that warns against hypersexual and aggressive male behavior.) Orthodox Jews who happened to hear about this would have been confused by the controversy. Haredi men generally insist that one-on-one meetings with women take place either with an open door or in a room, perhaps with a glass wall, that allows passersby to see inside.

Dreher does grasp the tension. “Part of the change we have to make is accepting that in the years to come, faithful Christians may have to choose between being a good American and being a good Christian.” Still, what are we to make of his suggestion that “adults should not be expected to keep their movie and TV watching to the level of children”? On what, exactly, would adults be missing out? Given our limited time and energy, isn’t the pressing challenge that of differentiating between what’s essential to our faith and what’s peripheral and contrary to it? When surgeons excise a cancer, they remove a buffer area to increase the odds they’ve captured all of the malignant cells. Haredi Jews, writes Robert Eisenberg, “have no need for the appurtenances of the modern world unless it advances their cause of getting closer to God.”

They are unsparing when it comes to one of the defining features of modern life. On May 20, 2012, Haredi men held a mass rally in New York City to denounce the Internet, replete with fiery screeds as well as tear-filled lamentations of the technology's effects on *Am HaTorah* ("the nation of Torah"), the soul, and the family. More than forty thousand men in traditional garb—black hats, black suits, and white shirts—packed Citi Field Stadium in Queens, home of the Mets, while an overflow crowd of around twenty thousand gathered in nearby Arthur Ashe Stadium to watch the event via large screen. There's now an organization that operates forty offices in sixteen countries and territories and that "provides free community service for computers, smartphones, laptops, tablets and many other digital devices, to have them filtered in order to prevent access to inappropriate material."

By leaving the door ajar to mainstream American culture, Modern Orthodoxy might be preparing the grounds for its own erosion and eventual disappearance. Reform Judaism, which arrived in America in the nineteenth century with German-Jewish immigration, and Conservative Judaism, which materialized in the mid-twentieth century in America, were both dedicated to forging an "American Judaism." They built impressive physical monuments to their faith and convened brotherhoods and sisterhoods of awe-inspiring size. Alas, their sanctuaries are rapidly emptying, and rabbis, squeezed by overhead costs, are turning to the Internet to offer religious services, such as a *bar mitzvah* or wedding, à la carte. If history is any indication, Modern Orthodoxy will experience an expansion before a contraction.

Of course, Haredi Judaism isn't without its own problems. Widespread welfare abuse and tax evasion, particularly among the Hasidim, are blots on the observant Jewish community as a whole. It's not evident that

Haredi Jews, who "now feel that they are the future," as David Brooks once wrote, could really be the future of more than just the Jewish community in America. Even though they do treasure the freedom, security, and opportunity America provides, and their community is mushrooming in size, it's hard to see how they will become more involved in the political arena.

On a deeper level, the very character of Haredi Judaism has already changed, marking a substantive break from the past. Historically, most men worked while only the most intellectually gifted devoted their lives to study of the sacred texts. Now, in spite of the Talmud directing a balance between work and study, an increasingly insular and devout Haredi community has witnessed a growing percentage of men attending *kollel*, an institute for full-time, advanced study of Torah. This is applying pressure on the smaller and smaller percentage of those with jobs who subsidize the system. And with fewer and fewer Haredi Jews pursuing secular higher education and attending graduate school, it is unclear to whom the members of their community will be able to turn for legal and medical services, given their general distrust of the "outside world."

No doubt there are general yet valuable lessons that traditional Christians can derive from Orthodoxy for holding a community together. Geographical proximity is one. Developing an institutional ecosystem is another. Benedictines of the Middle Ages, like Jews, understood that life had to be structured around regular prayer. The question that will finally have to be decided is whether the Benedict Option really adds up to a viable project consonant with Christianity and with the American spirit.

"We are," acknowledges Dreher, "going to have to change our lives, and our approach to life, in radical ways. In short, *we are going to have to be the church*, without compromise, no matter what it costs." Traditional

Christians in search of internal and civilizational renewal are, in many respects, their own form of *ba'alei teshuvah*. It's not known what portion of Jews who were raised secular and attempt to return to strict observance of their faith fall short. From personal observa-

tion, those unable to complete the journey often endure a distressing commotion of identity. Nevertheless, faith is the highest calling, so nothing could be more worthwhile than the effort to recover it. †

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