

# Sex Offender Becomes ‘Kabbalah Coach’

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Published May 07, 2004, issue of [May 07, 2004](#).

A convicted sex offender in Los Angeles has used an assumed name to market himself as a rabbi and Kabbalah instructor.

Michael Ozair, who pleaded no contest to oral copulation of a 14-year-old girl in 2002, had until earlier this week been advertising himself as Rabbi Michael Ezra, the “Kabbalah Coach.”

The KabbalahCoach.com Web site, registered to Ozair, describes a kabbalah coach as, “a spiritual guide and life coach combined. A person who has the metaphysical tools to see what lies beyond the physical in your soul’s journey while having the expertise to help you identify, map out and accomplish your life’s mission.”

The site contains numerous quotations endorsing Ozair’s work from a diverse list of individuals, including actress Tatum O’Neal and Pir Zia Inayat Khan, president of the Sufi Order International.

Ozair’s 2002 sentence, according to the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office, was for 5 years of felony probation, with 1 year in county jail. In addition, he was required to register as a sex offender and receive treatment. The D.A.’s office was unable to provide information confirming Ozair’s registration as a sex offender. The office did tell the Forward that advertising under an assumed name would not represent a violation of Ozair’s probation.

In a phone interview with the Forward, Ozair said that he has not been instructing minors as part of his Kabbalah coaching. Asked if he intended to do so, Ozair replied: “Absolutely not.”

Ozair said that he sees no problem with his providing kabbalah services to adults. “If there’s adults,” he said, “there’s no problem.”

Shortly after Ozair’s interview with the Forward, the KabbalahCoach Web site was changed, with the instructor now being identified as Rabbi Michael Ezra Ozair.

Ozair was initially charged two years ago with “three counts of lewd acts on a child and one count of oral copulation of a child under 16,” according to the D.A.’s press release at that time. The press release noted that the Ozair was, “suspected of sexually assaulting the victim in 1997,” and that Ozair had taught at two area schools and acted as a rabbi in several area synagogues.

Marvin Komorsky, executive director of the Beth Jacob Congregation, which describes itself as “Centrist Orthodox,” said that Ozair had led one of the synagogue’s prayer services in 2002, but had been asked to leave before his arrest. According to Komorsky, Ozair “was not paid by the synagogue” and “his leaving the synagogue had nothing to do with his arrest,” but was simply a matter of dissatisfaction with the kabbalistic focus of his teaching.

Ozair’s use of an assumed name was discovered by Internet users who saw his Kabbalah Coach photo and thought that they noticed a similarity to a picture of Ezra posted on TheAwarenessCenter.org, a Web site that maintains profiles of abusive rabbis.

Ozair said that all of the endorsements on his Web site from celebrities and religious figures “are all old quotes” from before his arrest and subsequent decision to refer to himself as Michael Ezra. Asked if those endorsees were familiar with his arrest or knew of his Kabbalah coaching activities, he said, “I’m not in touch with anybody now.”

Ozair's credentials have come under question in the past. When he was arrested, the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles reported that his Web site stated that "his rabbinical training was at Kol Yaacov Torah Center in Monsey, N.Y." The Jewish Journal reported that administrators at Kol Yaacov said that "he applied to the school and visited it in August 1997, but never enrolled." An administrator at Kol Yaacov confirmed this version of events for the Forward through a secretary.

The Kabbalah Coach Web site claims that Ezra received ordination from "R' Yehoshua Reich, a member of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel," but the Israeli-based rabbi could not be reached .

The University of Judaism, a Los Angeles-based institution that offers Jewish studies courses, confirmed that it had awarded Ozair a masters degree in education and a bachelor's degree in religious studies from the University of Judaism.

Read more: <http://forward.com/articles/5609/sex-offender-becomes-ekabbalah-coache/#ixzz3RTcta15k>