

# How Many More 'Pious' Sex Abusers Are There?

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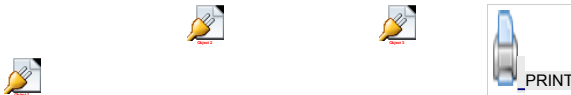
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## Rabbi Yakov Yitzchak Roth



It seems we have an epidemic on hand. Sex abuse seems to be more prevalent

today than at any time in history. Or is it...?

My guess is that it is as prevalent today as it was in the past. It has always been an epidemic. The difference today is that we know about it. The media is all over it and the internet spreads the word widely and quickly. Everyone knows about it instantly. And thank God for that.

I say 'Thank God' even though it makes the Torah world look bad by being no different than other communities that have these problems. But 'knowledge is power'. Now that we know more we can do more to prevent it and to help survivors better deal with it.

Although we have a long way to go, things have been slowly changing for the better as some survivors have come forward to expose their abusers and testify against them in court. And major Orthodox religious organizations like the RCA and the OU have publicly supported reporting abuse to the police immediately. Even Agudah and Lakewood support it in theory as long as you consult with a rabbi first. (That this is woefully inadequate is beyond the scope of this post.) The only religious groups who outright forbid it are major Chasidic enclaves like Satmar, Ger, and Toldos Aharon.

As recently as the late 1970s, it was widely believed that sex abuse in our world was extremely rare. To the extent that it existed at all, it was thought to be the rarest of aberrations. People like serial sex abuser Avreim Mondrowitz were thought to be the exception

that proved the rule. We believed that our religious values and simple fear of Heaven would prevent all of us (with rare exception) from doing this.

But as we now see, there is a new story of sex abuse almost every day. And it doesn't matter a bit how religious the abuser acts. It doesn't matter if he is Jewish or not. I believe that the percentage of abusers per every type of population base is the same. I further believe that there is a lot more sexual abuse than is being reported. Who knows how many untold stories there are?! Sex abuse is under reported for many reasons – even though it would mean putting an abuser behind bars. It takes a lot of courage for a survivor to come forward.

You would think that the religious values of abusers would prevent religious people from doing it. But that is clearly not the case. If an individual has an aberrant sexual appetite and lacks the ability to control his impulses, he will seek to satisfy his lust clandestinely all the time, even as he might feel guilty about it. He thus become a predator. It doesn't matter how pious he is. Nor does it matter what Hashkafa he has. Or what denomination he belongs to. Or even what his religion is. Or what stature he has in his community.

Which brings me to **Rabbi Yakov Yitzchak Roth**. I believe this is the first religious leader to have served a 16 year sentence for 'raping, sodomizing and sexually assaulting a child relative...

Who is Rabbi Yitzchak Roth? He is the Chasidic Rebbe of Shomrei Emunim. Shomrei Emunim was founded by Rabbi Roth's father Rav Chaim Roth, son of Toldos Aharon founder Rav Aharon Roth. Rabbi Yitzchok Yakov Roth is R' Chaim Roth's son and one of the current Rebbes of Shomrei Emunim. They are primarily located in Meah Shearaim and Bnei Brak.

His conviction of sexual abuse has now come to light because Rabbi Roth has applied for a visa to come to New York. He lied on his visa application swearing that he had never been arrested or convicted of a sex crime. He was arrested by the New York police Special Victims Squad.

How does a man like this retain any respect in his community? Even after spending 16 years in prison. I guess the answer to that his followers do not believe it. They think he was convicted of a crime he didn't commit in a court which they do not recognize as valid.

And I'm sure they view those who reported him and testified against him Mosrim (informants). Which they consider to be a capital offense. They do not believe that a man

who they see as holy; a man that is exemplary in his public behavior; a man that they see as an icon the son of an icon and grandson of an icon to be holy.

I'm sure that his every public act and his every publicly uttered word is pure Torah. I'm sure he exudes extreme piety. I'm sure that he advises people on how to live holier lives via Tznius and other religious practices that go beyond the letter of the law. I'm sure that he is as Machmir on Shabbos and Kashrus as possible. I'm sure that Chalav Akum or Chalav Stam has never touched his lips. I'm sure he lives in modest dwellings and lives a modest lifestyle. And never speaks a word of Lashon Hara.

With such an image constantly displayed, how is it possible that he sodomized anyone?! The mere thought is sacrilegious! But he was convicted of that in a court of law. It is highly unlikely that he was innocent – even though I'll bet he still denies it. As we all know they all deny it.

The list seems endless and as I said crosses all lines. From Catholic priests, to evangelical preachers. Rabbis of all Jewish denominations including Orthodox Rabbis, Poskim and Dayanim. It includes all Hashkafos: From Modern Orthodox Kiruv workers to Chasidic Rebbes; from Religious Zionist Mechanchim, to Chabad; from Satmar to Ger; from principals and teachers in Modern Orthodox schools to principals and teachers in Charedi schools. It doesn't matter what station in life they had. And it doesn't matter how exemplary their reputations were or how charismatic they were.

I too used to think that people like this were incapable of sexually abusing anyone. Their piety spoke volumes to me. But unfortunately that image has been shattered to me so many times that it no longer surprises me when I hear about it. Although I admit that there is a part of me that still finds such stories incredible.

How many more people in prominent religious positions are there out there, that are yet to be exposed? And how many victims are there who have still not come forward? How many are suffering in silence in all of these communities? How many more are yet to be abused by these predators?

I can't even imagine the pain of suffering in silence. And I'm afraid to think about just how big the numbers might be. And to make matters worse – is it any wonder that a typical survivor goes OTD when trusted religious icons end up sexually abusing them? It would not surprise me that the vast majority of young people who have gone OTD have done so

because they were sexually abused. And frankly, I don't think we are doing enough about it. We need to do more. But what?

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About the Author: Harry Maryles runs the blog "Emes Ve-Emunah" which focuses on current events and issues that effect the Jewish world in general and Orthodoxy in particular. It discusses Hashkafa and news events of the day - from a Centrist perspective and a philosophy of Torah U'Mada. He can be reached at [hmaryles@yahoo.com](mailto:hmaryles@yahoo.com).

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