

# Ex-LA Kabbalah Centre exec to pay woman he assaulted

Yehuda Berg, son of group's founder, to pay \$135,000 to former follower Jena Scaccetti; center to pay additional \$42,500

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**A** woman who accused the former co-director of the Kabbalah Centre in Los Angeles of sexual misconduct was awarded \$177,500 in damages.

A Los Angeles County Superior Court jury on Tuesday found Yehuda Berg, 43, the son of the center's founder, guilty of inflicting emotional distress on former follower Jena Scaccetti, Reuters reported.

Berg was accused of pushing alcohol and drugs on Scaccetti before groping her. She sought tens of millions of dollars in damages in the civil lawsuit from Berg and the Kabbalah Centre, whose celebrity adherents include Madonna, Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher.

The jury awarded Scaccetti \$135,000 in compensatory and punitive damages from Berg, and another \$42,500 from the Kabbalah Centre.

Berg acknowledged during the trial that he offered alcohol and the painkiller Vicodin to Scaccetti, and touched her leg, but insisted he left her alone when she rebuffed him. Scaccetti testified that Berg pressed alcohol and pills on her as soon as they were alone, and that while touching her legs, he tried to overpower her "and wouldn't let me go."

Rabbi Philip Berg founded the trendy spiritual group in 1965. The nonprofit Kabbalah Centre, which has been the target of numerous lawsuits over the years — most by non-Jews — has 50 branches worldwide. Critics in the Jewish world have accused the center of distorting and misrepresenting Jewish traditions.

