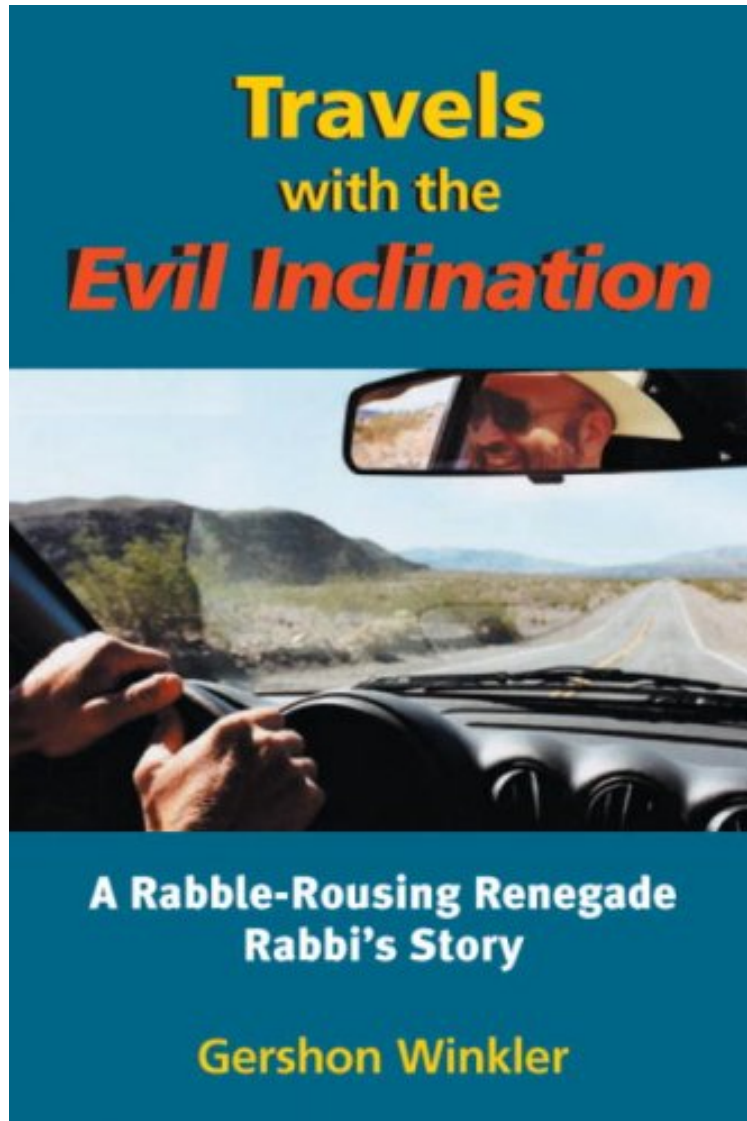


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Travels with the Evil Inclination: A Rabble-Rousing Renegade Rabbi's Story

Gershon Winkler

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Gershon Winkler : Travels with the Evil Inclination: A Rabble-Rousing Renegade Rabbi's Story before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Travels with the Evil Inclination: A Rabble-Rousing Renegade Rabbi's Story:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. funny and a crazy journeyBy L. L.funny and a crazy journey.in honesty, while a respect winkler for his individualism, this book did make me remove him from the pedestal which he

has been on before. It makes him Human again.. which i love. As all humans are humans, and none of them should be thought of as holier than the holy...0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy claire fitchGreat personal story of spiritual eveolution6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A 23 year old virgin's road tripBy Smilin SamThis book -- a graphic, early to mid-life autobiographical account of the author's turbulent, internal struggles -- is, admittedly, filled with difficulties. Why do I say that? Because it's an honest, warts-and-all account of the difficulties Gershon Winkler encountered at a most significant crossroad in his life. As a result, it's easy to find fault with some of the decisions the author made while wandering about blind, in his feeble, yet honest attempt to discover something he had up until that point been unable to find -- his innermost self and calling, as well as a higher level of closeness to, and and awareness of, the presence of the Creator. But it's those very difficulties that give "Travels with the Evil Inclination" its undeniable authenticity and relevance. In fact, despite the value and impact and popularity of his earlier, more conventional, mainstream Orthodox works, this book is arguably R' Gershon's greatest achievement; it's certainly his most personal. And in fact, the motivation for some of those earlier works was primarily financial; the motivation for this one appears to be much more spiritual. Additionally, the author's unbridled sense of humor and story telling abilities are abundantly clear and evident throughout this book, along with his knowledge and mastery of ancient texts that are inaccessible to all but the most knowledgeable and learned scholars. Still, all of that notwithstanding, it's his ability to be honest with himself and his readers that gives this book its power and its charm, at least as far as this reader is concerned. I must admit that even before I read it, I was angry at the hurt I imagined he'd caused his wife and three young daughters. After all, it's one thing to be single and go off in search of oneself; it's quite another matter to cast the lives of precious individuals who've done nothing to deserve being abandoned by said search into utter chaos. But after having read the book, and despite the fact that he did, in fact, cause them much hurt and anguish, not to mention inconvenience, the five of them have reached a level of healing and understanding that goes well beyond any outsider's limited, distorted judgment(s). Does that mean that this book is for everyone? Probably not. It's certainly not for people who cling zealously to their own dogmatic paradigm/belief system, as evidenced by at least one reviewer who shall remain nameless. (Let's just call him Leonard Moskowitz, the same name as one of the reviewers who posted earlier on this very board.) In the words of the sages quoted in the book itself: "In a way a person wishes to go they are led". (Meaning...if you're incapable of seeing any way other than your own as valid, then everything you read that supports your way will be viewed as good, and anything that runs contrary to the way you zealously cling to will be viewed as bad.) So obviously, anyone still clinging fervently to the very path R' Gershon chose to abandon will view this book as nothing short of madness and heresy. However, for anyone whose life has been enriched/blessed/cursed by a gnawing feeling that "there's just GOT to be something more out there; something I'm missing in the comfort and security of my current circumstances/paradigm", then this book is for you. It inspires and instructs by way of demonstrating that even though/when life SEEMS to be doling out punishments, sometimes it's those very events that are to serve as our guideposts and angels, even when we're pushed right to the edge. Each person must judge for him/herself whether or not this book is an inspiration or an abomination. To use a phrase that is rather common in R' Gershon's former paradigm -- it all depends upon where a person is "holding". It reminds me of an old Chasidic tale. Two men traveling to seek advice from a great Rebbe/Master meet at a crossroad. They are each going to the Rebbe in the hope of finding wisdom and guidance that will lead them to a higher degree of spiritual enlightenment. A few months later, they meet again at the same crossroad. In his own way, each one is ecstatic and praises the Rebbe for his incomparable wisdom. However, one looks very robust and healthy, while the other one looks like if he's been hit by a train. They begin to discuss the advice that the Rebbe had given each one. As it turns out, the advice was identical -- the Rebbe advised each one to go home, place peas in his shoes, and then walk around that way for a few months, then return with an update. The man who looked so healthy explained that he followed the Rebbe's advice, went home, soaked the peas in water, mashed them down and placed this mushy mess in his shoes, and everywhere he went he felt so good, all he could do was sing the praises of the Creator. The second man also put the peas in his shoes, but didn't bother to soak them first. Everywhere he went, he fell down, broke one bone after another, but eventually came to a similar awareness of the greatness of the Creator. What a wise Rebbe, indeed. What a wonderful Creator, indeed. All roads lead home. Different stokes, for different folks. (So which man in the story is R' Gershon, and which one is Leonard Moskowitz? You decide.) Peace.

According to Jewish theology, the "Evil Inclination," or yetzer ha-ra, is the small inner voice that tempts us into doing wrong. In a tone at once witty and heartfelt, Rabbi Gershon Winkler, a.k.a. the "stand-up theologian," tells stories of his own struggles with that voice as he passes from yeshiva boy with a strong libido, to earnest infantryman, to Orthodox rabbi, to redneck ranch hand, to the respected "rabbinic trickster" and scholar he is today. *Travels with the Evil Inclination* offers a tongue-in-cheek account of a most unusual life journey, a humorous and sometimes exaggerated tale of personal spiritual dissolution and re-emergence. This moving story of his transition from orthodoxy to what the author calls "flexodoxy" will inspire, entertain, and provoke as Winkler explores roads not only less traveled but virtually unmapped.

"Combines the wit of actor Robbin Williams with the wisdom of the Ba'al Shem Tov."—The Jerusalem Post "Travels an unusual path and ruffles feathers."—The Washington Post About the Author Rabbi Gershon Winkler, initiated in Jerusalem by the late Kabbalist Rabbi Eliezer Benseon, has devoted his energy over the past decade to revive and make accessible the aboriginal elements of Judaism. A frequent lecturer and workshop facilitator across the United States and Israel, Winkler is both a student and practitioner of this lesser-studied dimension of ancient Jewish mystery tradition. He is the author of eleven books Jewish mysticism, philosophy, and folklore. He lives with his family in the remote wilderness of San Miguel, New Mexico, where he runs the Walking Stick Foundation and Retreat Center.