



Rabbi Darby Jared Leigh, '08: Video Transcript

I think I've always just engaged at some level in this quest for truth and meaning in life. ...the idea of being of a Rabbi had been bouncing around in my head probably throughout college, before grad school, when I was touring with the National Theatre Of The Deaf, it was intimidating to think, as a Rabbi, you have to know Hebrew, you have to be able to navigate all these books.

It took 16 years of speech and listening therapy and training for me to be able to do what I do with English which—according to the medical profession—is not supposed to be possible given the degree of my deafness, which is profoundly deaf.

Learning Hebrews means I need to be able to speak it in the classroom with other people and my ability to understand what people say to me IN ENGLISH is miraculous to a certain extent, So the idea of doing that with another language...ugh, that's never going to happen.

There was a lot of excitement, I felt, around having the first male deaf Rabbinical student at any of the major seminaries in the United States or Israel. We were blazing a new path, so to speak.

They told me, "we want you here, we have no idea what that means, in terms of what we're going to need to do to provide accommodations, so on and so forth." The fact of the matter is that they've really been a more than willing partner the whole step of the way, and honestly this goes way beyond issues of inclusivity, and disability and deafness.

That's kind of what my Rabbinic mission is—what turns me on is pushing boundaries, pushing envelopes, pushing limits, challenging people to think about the Judaism that we've gotten and where it came from, and if that really represents the totality of what Judaism has to offer.

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