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..MODERN PROBLEMS ..ANCIENT SOLUTIONS

Thought Tools

Bringing Down the House

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[Forward to a Friend](#)

What do Danny Kaye, Barbra Streisand, Jerry Seinfeld, Goldie Hawn, Kirk Douglas, and Bette Midler all share? Along with a disproportionately large number of other entertainers, they are of Jewish background.

There is something else which most Jewish comedians, actors and singers share: they are rarely religious. They have little connection with God or with His Torah. Could there be something spiritual about the desire to entertain which lingers even after the nurturing springs of Jewish faith have largely dried up?

One of the roles entertainment plays is distracting us from silent contemplation. This can occasionally be painful but it nearly always stimulates growth. Like alcohol and cocaine, the plug-in-drug of entertainment helps take our mind off serious thoughts.

But this fails to explain why people possessing remnants of special spiritual sensitivity are drawn more to entertainment than, say, agriculture. It isn't enough to say acting pays better than farming or that it offers more applause and adulation. Most of today's big names endured many grueling years of rejection and poor pay yet stuck at their craft. What lies at the core of their commitment to their work?

Ancient Jewish wisdom offers a clue in the life of a great Jewish judge—Samson. But, in common with so many personalities today, his life deteriorated in the wake of some really bad decisions. He ended his life as an entertainer.

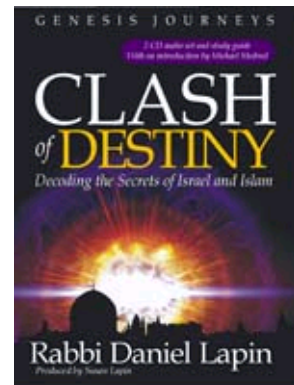
*When their hearts became merry, they said,
'Call Samson and let him entertain us'...*

(Judges 16:25)

Recognizing that death was near, Samson prayed for one more chance to attack the Philistines:

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My Lord, remember me and strengthen me just this time,

Oh God, and I will be avenged a revenge from the Philistines for one of my two eyes.

(Judges 16:28)

“For one of my two eyes?” Huh?

Very few English translations get it right. Most say, “... that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.” But though I understand and sympathize with why the translators made that change, they are plain wrong.

Here is what the Hebrew looks like.

וְאֶנְקָמָה נִקְם-אֶחָת מִשְׁתֵּי עֵינַי מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים:

Reading the six words one-by-one (right to left) we have [and I will be avenged]; [a revenge of]; [one]; [from the two of]; [my eyes]; [from the Philistines.]

Notice that beneath the third word, meaning one, (yes, still from the right) you see a curved line with a dot inside it. These curves and dots add meaning to the verse. By facing towards the next word, the curve reveals the unmistakable intent to join the two Hebrew words: ‘one’ and ‘from the two of’.

The strange language in the Hebrew verse above expresses Samson’s intent. He is acknowledging the aptness of being punished through the loss of those eyes since it is through those eyes that he previously emphasized body over soul and yielded to inappropriate women. Nevertheless, he pleads that he might have gained enough merit from enduring the Philistine torture when they put out his eyes, to have his strength restored one more time.

However, his language shows that he now places his soul above his body. Rather than using up the cosmic credit from both lost eyes, he prays to be able to retain credit from one eye for the World to Come.

Samson knew the Blueprint, strayed from it, and ends his life after returning to it.

We all possess a deep although sometimes subconscious desire for a blueprint that makes utter sense of the reality in which we live. It is enormously satisfying both to gain such a worldview and to share it. This is why parents enjoy teaching their children.

Entertainment is satisfying because provides people with an encompassing picture of life, even though it is overwhelmingly false. Often, it is the opposite of a true and comprehensive matrix of reality. For an in-depth look into life-affirming versus soul-killing laughter, see my audio CD set, [Clash of Destiny: Decoding the Secrets of Israel and Islam](#). It also delves into another alternative view of reality – that of Islam. It is a great avenue to understanding how the world REALLY works and is available online this week for \$5 off the regular price.

Susan's Musings

This week's musing - [Brownies, Anyone?](#)

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Ask the Rabbi



Rabbi Lapin,

My church is divided over whether to use 'Chairman' (for both genders), or the more generic and PC version of 'Chair' or 'Chairperson' as the title for the head of a committee.

What are your insights on this subject? How do we resolve this issue?

Pari J.

See Rabbi Lapin's Answer

Ask a Question

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Sundays 1-4 PST

You are welcome to

I am definitely more oriented towards paper and pen than to electronics. Which is why it was rather disturbing when twice recently I turned to an Internet search engine for help. Faced with a new cut of meat and an unfamiliar vegetable, a quick search brought up enough information and recipes to start cooking with confidence.

I am pretty sure the necessary data is somewhere on my shelves of cookbooks...

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