



Barney Glazer's 'HOLLYWOOD HOTLINE'

In the Philadelphia Jewish Times, Dr. Dan Ben-Amos, a Solomonian professor at the U. of Pennsylvania, invoked considerable acumen to discuss Jewish jokes with that paper's reporter. Were they to retaliate from the professional world of comedy, the likes of Billy Glason, Jan Murray, Myron Cohen, Don Rickles, Jack Carter and Jack E. Leonard undoubtedly would disagree with the professor.

Dr. Ben-Amos theorized that many Jewish jokes, including Myron's standard nightclub tale about a rabbi and a priest in an auto accident, flagrantly cast Jews in a bad, avaricious light.

Glason, Murry, Cohen, et al wouldn't buy the Dr.'s philosophy. They have argued frequently with others under similar circumstances that Jews poke fun at Jews and if we don't laugh at ourselves we have lost our sense of humor. What Dr. Ben-Amos unshackled proceeds well beyond their conclusion. In rebuttal, he would claim that they had failed to recognize his checkmates.

For years, one particularly dilettante and disoriented Anglo-Jewish newspaper editor has refused to modify his Jewish jokes. There are some who have tried to rationalize with him, stressing that such tales bear stereotype connotations, reflecting the repulsiveness of

early joke books. These display the Jew as hook-nosed, rabbinically-bearded and derby-covered, all caricatured severely, with malice aforethought.

In these jokes, the editor regularly uses surnames, such as Shapiro, Epstein, Cohen and Ginsberg; and given-names, such as Becky, Minnie, Abie and Hymie. Thereby, any peeking Christian reader should assume that all Jews bear these basic names. As for Jewish readers, they certainly must have wondered by this time why their own names had never been utilized to make the editor's point.

Some of my best friends - there, I said it -- who identify with Shapiro, Epstein, Becky and Hymie, reflect justly the pride of their names. However, there are hundreds of other Jewish names, all equally distinctive, which if used, would vary the subject and avoid the stereotype of the deliberate or unintentional bigot.

Recently, the same editor used a story that would have crumbled Dr. Ben-Amos into desert dust. Had it detonated in the midst of a tight little Jewish listening group, it would have been followed undoubtedly by em-

barrassed silence. In an Anglo-Jewish newspaper, with its ability to grab a larger audience, the story cultivated even more distaste and harm.

It related about an Egyptian tank and an Israeli tank colliding in the Sinai Desert. The Egyptian jumped out hurriedly, shouting, "I surrender, I surrender." The Israeli emerged painfully, his hand on the back of his neck, screaming, "Whiplash! Whiplash!"

This throws back to the turn-of-the-century Joe Miller book, with its chapter on "Jew Jokes." It acts, as it did then, as the bellows for the flames that sear Jewish traditions by inducing Christians to believe that we are fraudulently indoctrinated by virtue of lineage.

Compared to all other faiths, we have no more, no less larceny in our souls, Jokes that intend to soften this conviction just don't accelerate.

Meanwhile, the publisher pays no mind. His editorial policy has adopted the stereotype joke as cute, camp, mod and reformed Jewish.

The tank story would have proved just as funny had the Israeli shouted, "Do you surrender?" and the Egyptian had responded by tumbling out and yelling, "Whiplash! Whiplash!"

Thus, would the loser have justified his loss. Instead, the winner leaned on the whiplash claim to establish fraud, deceit and an inborn need to press a lawsuit for extraordinary gain. Unfor-

tunately, he had been identified prominently as a Jew.

But then, by switching the story to an Egyptian claimant, there are some who might accuse us of insinuating that all Egyptians are double-dealing, right?

The newspaper editor should have chartered his only unprejudiced course by not using the joke at all. That is, unless he could have related it specifically to a

proved knave, some individual recognized for his bleached personal reputation and his court history suing for whiplash even when the summer breezes had caressed his car gently into a bank of smog lying just ahead.

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