

The Schmooze Stories with a Yiddish Twist

“DI SHTROF” FIT THE CRIME?

Note: The Yiddish words “di shtrof” means “the punishment.”
“Shtrofn” means “to punish,” and “dos farbrekhn” means “the crime.”
“Bafaln” means “to assault.”

by
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Syosset, New York

Q. How do you punish Bill Cosby for admitting that he drugged a woman into a state of semi-consciousness and assaulted her as well? Just look at the cover of New York magazine (July 27-Aug. 9, 2015). Thirty-five women have come forward to speak out against Cosby.

Q. How do you punish the Minnesota cosmetic “tsondokter” (dentist), Walter Palmer, for killing Cecil, a beloved 17-year-old much-loved lion (“leyb”) in Zimbabwe? The dentist is a noted killer of big game and was convicted of a felony in 2008 for his involvement in the poaching of a black bear in Wisconsin. After the word of the recent kill went viral, Palmer apologized, and now is in hiding.

Compare Palmer to Dr. Jay Grossman, also a dentist. He gives his business card to homeless people and participates in a program named “Homeless Not Toothless.” Grossman offers FREE dental care to the needy in the hope that his patients may be able to obtain a job...or re-enter society. Homeless Not Toothless has treated tens of thousands of patients. Two million dollars of the work was provided by Grossman alone. This is his “tikkun olam.”

Julian Sinclair (“Let’s Schmooze”) writes, “In recent decades, tikkun olam has come to refer to any religiously motivated action towards social justice, whether environmental activism, working for third world development, or rights for the disabled. In this way, the sphere of Jewish responsibility is broadened to encompass aspiring to fix the toughest socio-economic problems.”

Q. What’s the appropriate punishment for Yishai Schlissel, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish man who attacked revelers taking part in Jerusalem’s annual gay pride parade on 7/30/15. He stabbed and injured six people. It was the worst attack on Israel’s gay community since 2009, when a gunman killed two people and injured 11 others at a center for gay and lesbian youth in Tel Aviv. Schlissel carried out a similar attack on a gay pride parade in 2005, and was released from “turme” (jail) three weeks ago.

Q. How do you punish a “gonif” like Madoff, or convicted spy, Jonathan Pollard? The U. S. Parole Commission announced that Pollard, one of the country’s most notorious spies, will walk out of prison on Nov. 20, 2015.

And what was the punishment for those two Penn. State students who [in 2014] spray-painted swastikas on a Jewish fraternity, Beta Sigma Beta? Eric Hyland and Hayden Grom were charged with ethnic intimidation, criminal (“farbrekher”) mischief (“shtiferay”), and disorderly conduct, which they eventually pleaded guilty (“shuldik”) to. Hyland received two years of probation and 200 hours of community service. Grom was sentenced to two years of probation and 300 hours of community service. Both students will have to pay more than \$6,000 in restitution to the victims.

George Washington University also had a swastika problem. In 2007, a Jewish student, Sarah Marshak, reported that her dorm-room door had been defaced with swastikas, and complained that the university was doing too little to investigate (“oysforshn”). Actually, the university had consulted with the FBI and hidden surveillance cameras recorded the vandalism.

In 2008, four students from a suburban St. Louis middle school faced punishment for allegedly hitting classmates during what they called, “Hit a Jew Day.” District officials said they believe that fewer than 10 children of the district’s 35 Jewish students were struck.

During unofficial “Spirit Week,” 6th graders started harmlessly with a

“Hug a Friend Day.” They there was “High Five Day,” “Hit a Tall Person Day,” and finally, “Hit a Jew Day.”

Those who actually struck classmates could face suspension and required counseling. Others who weren't directly involved but taunted Jewish students or egged on classmates, could face lesser penalties.

Karen Aroesty, St. Louis regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, said this was MORE THAN A CASE OF BULLYING.

On a less serious note, businessman/CEO of J. Crew, Millard (“Mickey”) S. Drexler wrote that he went to Yiddish school for a few years, but then was kicked out for misbehaving. He misbehaved because he always had trouble with authority, especially with people who weren't nice to him.

When he was punished in Yiddish school, his teacher, Mr. Schneid, said, “Mordecai, you will go home and write ‘I will be good in shul. Ikh vel zayngut in shul.’” He wrote it 25 times, 50 times. He got angrier (“broygez”). He couldn't stand these stupid (“narish”) punishments. He sat in the apartment (“di dire”) of his aunt Frances and with her encouragement he wrote ‘Ikh vel zayn gut in shul’ x 1000.

He handed it in, and that was that. He was out.
(Source: “Just Kids from the Bronx,” by Arlene Alda)

Henry Eilbirt (“What is a Jewish Joke?”) writes,

A Jewish mother comes to school to find out how her little boy is doing. The teacher tells her that he is very bright, a report that leaves Mama beaming. But, the teacher adds, he has a tendency to be unduly talkative and unrestrained in class.

“Oh, my Julius is a nice boy,” Mama informs her. “If he gets a little too energetic, just slap the kid next to him. Julius will shape up.”

And then there's the touching story of the third grade student--a nine-Year-old boy--who was sitting at his desk. All of a sudden, there is a puddle between his feet and the front of his pants are wet (“nas”). He thinks his heart is going to stop because he cannot possibly imagine how this happened. It has never happened before and he knows that when the boys find out, he will never hear the end of it. When the girls find out,

they'll never speak to him again as long as he lives. And he wonders if the teacher will punish him.

The boy believes his heart is going to stop; he puts his head down and prays: Dear God, this is an emergency ("noytfal")! I need your help now. Five minutes from now I'm dead meat.

He looks up from his prayer ("tfile") and here comes the teacher with a look in her eyes that says he has been discovered. As the teacher is walking toward him, a classmate named Susie is carrying a goldfish bowl that is filled with water. Susie trips in front of the teacher and inexplicably dumps the bowl of water in the boy's lap.

The boy pretends to be angry ("broygez"), but all the while is saying to himself, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord!"

Now all of a sudden, instead of being the object of ridicule ("khoyzek"), the boy is the object of sympathy ("mitgefil"). The teacher rushes him downstairs ("untn") and gives him gym shorts to put on while his pants dry out. All the other children are on their hands and knees cleaning up around his desk. The sympathy is wonderful. But as life would have it, the ridicule that should have been his has been transferred to someone else - Susie.

She tries to help, but they tell her to get out. "You've done enough, you klutz!"

Finally, at the end of the day, as they were waiting for the bus, the boy walks over to Susie and whispers, "You did that on purpose, didn't you?" Susie whispers back, "I wet my pants once too."

And, finally, the last punishment story. A little girl came home from school and said to her mother, "Mommy, today in school I was punished for something I didn't do." The mother exclaimed, "But that's terrible! I'm going to have a talk with your teacher about this...by the way, what was it that you didn't do?"

The little girl replied, "My homework."

Marjorie Wolfe recalls Jewish students who heard the term "Halt arois di hant" (hold out your hand). They were smacked by their teacher when they misbehaved.

Her favorite quote: "I think the best punishment for a misbehaving child is to strap them to a chair and make them listen to Lady Gaga. Actually, perhaps that's too cruel, too close to torture."

(Source: Jarod Kintz, "This Book is Not FOR SALE")

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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