

Esther the Shrink

[Center Stage] Two chairs, a stand and a telephone. Large sign that reads "ESTHER HAMALKA BIBLICAL THERAPIST. EMENDATIONS MADE." [Stage Right] AHASHVEROSH sitting bent over a coffee table with an empty chess board on it.

The play begins as ESTHER goes to the "door" to admit ADAM, her first patient. Just then the phone rings and ESTHER excuses herself. In an imaginary conversation she learns that Marduk, her son, is being sent home from school due to a sudden illness. Making apologies to ADAM, she then calls AHASHVEROSH whom she catches in the midst of inventing the game of chess. There ensues an argument over who should take care of the child. After hanging up in anger ESTHER sings:

Oh what a terrible morning
It will be one stressful day
It's just the normal beginning
Of a two-career family day.

My husband's an excellent daddy
An involved and affectionate daddy
But when Marduk's sick
Why is it up to me
Always to cope with the e-mer-gen-cy?

Oh what a terrible morning
It will be one stressful day
Why do they think that I'm sinning
And making my family pay?

My husband's all thumbs in the kitchen
He claims it's the province of women
I learned a profession
So why can't he
Learn to cook dinner o-cca-sion-ally?

Oh what a terrible morning
It will be one stressful day
I'm just a woman beginning
To find her self-actualized way.

Ahasheurosh avows he will "help me"
Ahasuerosh is proud that he helps me
I don't need his help
I need him to be
A full equal partner in all things with me!

Oh what a terrible morning
It will be one stressful day
I'll be damned if they keep me from winning --
Career women are here to stay!

[Order of subsequent appearances:]

- 2) DINA
- 3) EZEKIEL
- 4) SCAPEGOAT
- 5) HIGH PRIEST
- 6) SAMSON
- 7) MOSES
- 8) NOAH
- 9) SARAH
- 10) ISAAC
- 11) Whole cast returns to "Tell Me Dear Esther" [Officer Krupkie]
- 12) AHASUEROSH announces creation of a shelter for biblical characters
- 13) ISHTAR
- 14) FINALE: We're In the Bible

A: Well, we do share a rib. But, she's so much a part of me -- or am I a part of her -- I have this feeling I'm making love to myself. Am I a man or a woman? It's not that I don't like myself, but this is taking Narcissism too far!!

To the tune of "I am the Captain of the Pinafore"

A: I'm quite well known as Adam HaRishon (never been an Adam HaSheni). I'm very, very old, if need it be retold, as old as anyone can be.

All: He's very, very old, on that I'm fully sold, but what concerns him psychically?

A: When first I saw the light, my urges gave me fright, so strong my libido seemed,
But with only beasts around, I kept my appetites in bound,
Never even indulged when I dreamed.

E: What, never?! A: No, never!

E: What, never?! A: Well, hardly ever!

E: Hardly ever indulged when he dreamed! Then,

All: Shed three tears and one tear more for the repression of our progenitor
Then, shed three tears and one tear more, for -- the pain of our progenitor.

A: I sublimated quite successfully, though without use of the talking cure. At times I went through hell, 'cause there was noone else to tell, but I kept my actions clean and pure.

All: Your story starts to smell, 'cause from signals we can tell, that your mind ran like an open sewer!

A: To prevent miscegenation and encourage procreation, God turned my rib into my mate
But now am I a neurotic, or just plain auto-erotic, if I always with ME copulate!

E: What, always?! A: Yes, always!

E: What, always?! A: (snarl) Yes, always!

E: Always with himself he copulates! Then,

All: Spare three leers and one leer more for the lonely man who'd never sinned before.

Then, spare three leers and one leer more, for -- the man who never sinned before.

E: Well, your problem is a bit unusual. Do you feel this has any impact on the rest of your life, outside of bed, I mean?

A: I'm not sure. I know that there is tension, especially between my sons; the older has been acting aggressively, while the younger boy may be picking up on my anxieties.

E: Then I hope he'll be Abel (long pause) to join you and your wife for family therapy. Our time is up, now.

Esther: Come in. Sit down. Uh, you can stay standing if you like. Tell me, what's your problem.

Dinah: It's my brothers. They're so overprotective. They're always on top of me.

Esther: On top of you?

Dinah: In a metaphorical sense. (Sings)

Dinah Dinah Dinah Dinah Dinah Dinah Dinah

All Day long I hear it from my brothers

Brothers brothers brothers brothers brothers brother s brothers

It's like having twelve Jewish mothers

Dinah Dinah don't be so flirtacious
These local philistines are really very cretinacious
Dinah Dinah don't hang out with gentiles
They have too much on their genitiles

Dinah! Dinah!
Don't you be a floozy
If you do we'll come and get you with our uzi
Dinah! Dinah!
Don't act like a zonah
You should go out with someone like Harbonah

Bonah bonah bonah bonah
Binga bonga boonga
That means "hello baby" in Chaldee
Bonah bonah bonah bonah binga bonga boonga
That's what Hamor said to me

Bonah bonah binga bonga boonga
Then he pulled his hot rod up and we went for a ride
Bonah bonah binga bonga boonga
Now he wants me for his bride!

So what am I gonna do?

Listen to your brothers.

Esther: In this case, take my advice. ¹ Forget about Hamor.
So he took you out for a spin in his hot rod. Big deal.
It's no skin off his nose.

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Ezekiel sketch, opening dialogue

Esther: Have a seat.

Ezekiel: Thank you, madame.

Esther: Now what can I do for you?

Ezekiel: I have a problem in getting people to take me seriously.
An incredible credibility problem.

Esther: What makes you think that?

Ezekiel: Whenever I speak, people nearly choke on their laughter,
and I often hear comments such as, "That guy's a nut,"
"Put him away," and "The man's bonkers." They frequently
accompany such comments with a gesture (GESTURES) in
which they move an index finger in a circular motion
opposite the right temple.

Esther: I see. Do you have any idea why people react in this way?

Ezekiel: I eat parchment, lie on the ground motionless for months
at a time, and describe to my audience a vision of God,
which I have seen. God speaks to me.

Esther: Uh huh. I see. Do you drink, Mr., Mr., uh, I'm sorry, I
forgot to ask your name.

Ezekiel: Oh, yes. I am called, Ezekiel ben Buzi.

Esther: Boozy, eh? So you do drink.

Ezekiel: No. Buzi was my father's name.

Esther: Then did your father drink?

Ezekiel: No.

Esther: What about your mother?

Ezekiel: No, he never drank my mother. She died naturally.

Esther: Naturally. Well, you say you've seen God. Tell me more
about that.

Ezekiel: Yes, just one moment, while I assemble my back-up group.

Ezekiel's Song (to the tune of "Monster Mash")
--female back-up group underlined

I was walking by the Habur Canal one night
When my eyes beheld an eerie sight
Four creatures from the sky were gliding down
And when they reached me, they sang in Dolby Sound

O biri bim
They were four cherubim
O biri bim
They each had four panim
O biri bim
An ox, an eagle, a lion, and a man
O biri bim
They were four cherubim Wa-oo

Their wings stuck together and they flapped to a beat Wa-oo
They could only drive forward, they had circular feet Wa-oo
When they touched down, I saw them move into park Wa-ooop
But I had always thought that they belonged on the ark

O biri bim etc.

Above them I spied a throne shoo-be-shoop wa-oo
The color of fabulous stones shoo-be-shoop wa-oo
And on the throne there sat the Lord wa-ooop
I have to confess I was awed! (pause) wa-oo

I fell on my face, but God said I was to stand
He said, "I've a job for you to do, Son of Man.
Tell my people to repent, sound the alarm.
But be careful they don't put you on the funny farm!"

O biri bim etc.

Feb. 28 1985

SCAPEGOAT SCENE FOR PURIMSPIEL

E: Come in!

(Goat enters, despondent, plops down on couch.)

E: (Inquisitively) Yes, Mr. Se'ir?

G: Meh

E: Oh, so you think they're after you?

G: Meh ...

E: You know they are after you!

G: Meh ...

E: They want to stone you?

G: Meh ...

E: They want to kill you?

G: Meh ...

E: You think you're some kind of scapegoat, don't you?

G: Meh ...

E: You know you are a scapegoat?

G: Meh ...

SONG

I didn't do nothin, it's nothin I did;
You shouldn't abuse me, I'm only a kid. Meh, Meh ...

You rob and you curse and you cheat and you lie;
Comes time for your judgment - it's me that must die! Meh....

Is it any wonder I'm nervous and pale?
Go take your religion and go lazazel! Meh, meh

(Goat exits while singing last chorus.)

Feb. 28, 1985

HIGH PRIEST SCENE FOR PURIMSPIEL

(Mr. C. knocks, hears "Come in!" Ester is on the phone with the king. Mr. C. enters nervously, making motions of washing hands.)

E: (After a conversation on sundry matters) Well, it's about time for you to make some sacrifices.

C: (Talking to himself) What, what?! Sacrifices?!
(He unpacks a container of water and a towel, and washes his hands as Ester continues talking with her husband. As Cohen starts to remove his shoes to wash his feet, she hangs up and firmly intervenes.)

E: Now, Mr. Cohen: I told you I do not believe in excessive acting out. You have come here to talk about your problem!

(As Cohen starts to come to himself and clear his throat to begin speaking, the phone rings again, and Ester's conversation with Ahash. resumes.)

E: (After a brief exchange) I am really burnt up! I am totally burnt up!

C: (Talking to himself) Burnt up? Burnt up sacrifice! I've got to wash.
(He starts washing.)

E: (Slamming down the phone) Now look here, Mr. Cohen, what's going on? What are you doing all this for?

C: Because - because - I have to make all the sacrifices!

E: You think you are being called upon to make too many sacrifices?

C: I don't think so, I know so!

E: And who is asking you to make all these sacrifices?

C: My brother Mo!

E: I see. And how long has this been going on?

C: Don't ask. When I was a baby I made all the sacrifices. My parents sent him to live in a palace; I had to live in a shack. Now he's grown up, he says I have to make all the sacrifices. Twice a day, three times a day, sometimes five times a day. Comes Shabbas I'm exhausted. And it's worse on Shabbas!

SONG: Yis ma hands must always be so clean
Rub 'em, scrub 'em, soften 'em with vaseline, specially on Shabbas...

Ahm a peaceful man: why must they make me feel like Jack the Ripper?
Slice the flesh, dice the flesh, specially on Yontuf & Yom Kippur.

Ahm not a fashion plate, I never was cut out to be a dandy;
Tell me why I can't go to shul without 5 linen suits to change in hand.

(After the first few words of the chorus:) Excuse me, I gotta change my shirt. Another sacrifice is coming up. (Exit)

(SAMSON COMES IN FROM STAGE LEFT SINGING. HE IS ATTIRED IN A LEOPARDSKIN TUNIC WITH A BIG S FOR SAMPSON ON HIS CHEST AND BULGING MUSCLES TIED WITH BIG BOWS TO HIS FOREARMS)

I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls
With fluted columns Ionic
And then, fists clenched like wrecking balls,
I smashed them with strength bionic.

CHORUS: Shave and a haircut, 5 zuzim

They blinded me and bound me tight
To columns tall and Doric
They thought they'd drained me of all fight
What came next was, well: historic.

CHORUS: Shave and a haircut, 5 zuzim

The Philistines booked me at the Palace
Just for laughs...like Mighty Mouse
With aforethought and malice
I promptly brought down the house.

CHORUS: Shave and a haircut, 5 zuzim

So I've got this problem, don't blame me
It bothers me much more than sex
It started in my mother's womb
A down-with-the-Edifice Complex.

CHORUS: Shave and a haircut, 5 zuzim

SAMSON: Your Royal Shrinkness. Your Royal Shrinkness. I've got to see you. I need therapy. (FLEXES MUSCLES) Powerful bad.

ESTHER: Sorry, Sam. The first opening I've got is for the Fast of Esther. I can see you...hmm...right after lunch.

SAMPSON: (PICKS UP PREVIOUSLY DOCTORED TELEPHONE BOOK FROM HER DESK AND TEARS IT IN HALF) You want I should do that to you?

ESTHER: (NERVOUSLY) Oops, I just had a cancellation. Here, lie down on the royal couch, Sam. But watch yourself -- it got Haman in a lot of trouble. (PAUSE) Say, Big Boy, you look familiar. (SNAPS FINGERS) I've got it: Onan the Barbarian!

S: (SADLY) That's my problem. My name's Samson. But everybody thinks I'm Arnold Schwarzenegger. I guess I was born 2000 years BM.

E: BM?

S: Before Movies. Also BCE.

eisenberg/

E: Before the Common Era?

S: No. Before Corporate Endorsements. Can you imagine what Nike would have paid me to endorse their running sandals? And what about Preparation H? Have you any idea how much I strained pushing down all those Philistine temples?

E: With a good agent, they might have renamed it...Preparation S.

S: I deserved fame and fortune. What did I get? Hemmorhoids.

E: So you feel life has been unfair to you?

S: Very. Even the scribes were out to get me.

E: The scribes were out to get you?

S: Sure. They put me in Judges. Who reads Judges? Even Leviticus would have been better than that.

E: Tell me, Sam. When did you first start feeling persecuted?

S: (SHRUGS) As soon as my mother told me I was Jewish. But it really hit me when the men of Judah...my own brethren...turned me over to the Philistines. So there I was...my hands tied behind my back...with a regiment of Philistine infantry in front of me...a battalion of Philistine cavalry behind me...Philistine chariots to the right of me...and the Philistine royal elite guard to the left of me.

E: Gosh, what did you do?

S: What could I do? I became a Philistine.

E: And then what happened?

S: Then, I snapped my bonds. I picked up the jawbone of an ass. And smote them all dead.

E: You're kidding.

S: (SADLY) That's what they all say. No one believes me. Not even my father, Manoach. "Samele," he says, "how many times do I have to tell you not to make up all these meshugena bubameises? And just to get attention. You're only making the jawbone of an ass out of yourself."

E: Hmm...do you have any other troubles with your father?

S: Only that he's the stingiest man alive. Can you show me one other father who, not once in 40 years, ever gave his son money for a haircut?

E: Case closed. Your diagnosis is simple, Samson. (TRIUMPHANTLY, AS THOUGH ANNOUNCING A GREAT NEW MEDICAL FINDING) You have a

(8) NOAH

ESTHER: Yes Mr. Noah, what can I do for you?

NOAH: Bloating bodies. Millions of bloating bodies. All I could see was the water and the bodies.

ESTHER: When did this happen?

NOAH: For 40 nights and 40 days the rain came down. We heard but we did not believe. And then it was too late.

ESTHER: Can you describe what happened?

NOAH: Words cannot express. Only one who has seen it can ever know. I was watching. My wife was watching from inside the ark. The chickens were watching. The cows were watching...

ESTHER (interrupts): So what did you do?

NOAH: What did I do? What could I do? I was silent. My wife was silent. The bloating bodies were silent. Yes, and even God, I am ashamed to say, was silent.

ESTHER: I think I understand.

NOAH: Understand? How can you begin to understand? How can you imagine that you begin to understand? How can you imagine that you imagine that you begin to understand what no one has ever seen before?

Never think you might have anything to say
That could elucidate the meaning of that day
Just give thanks silently because I undertook
To express your suffering in my next book.

It's not a book about an ordinary flood
But of a kingdom not of day nor night but mud
And of the terror that came with the earth and silt
Far worse than drowning and destruction -- it was guilt.

This guilt is burnt into my conscience like a brand
There's none who's wracked with holy suff'ring like I am
And could there be someone more qualified than me
To bear witness with such grace and modesty?

Yes, my silence is a legend in its time
It ranks in popularity with sex and crime
A modesty so awesome no one has yet dared
To suggest my sacred suffering could be shared.

Esther: Mrs. Sarah Sarai, I hear that you have been experiencing a great deal of difficulty lately--adjusting to your new situation in life. I understand that you just had a child.

Sarah: Can we talk? Can we talk?

Esther: Please.

Sarah: It's like this. I've spent a very very very large part of my life not being a mother. Mind you, I never thought that I wouldn't be a mother, but still, at my age, it's quite a shock. There's a great deal to get used to. For instance, now I shlep this stupid bag around wherever I go. And I can't do anything anymore. No more hopping down to the casbah for a nightcap. It's very difficult adjusting.

Besides, people look at me weird. I signed up for natural childbirth classes and the guy said to me, 'Lady, in your circumstance, the only way you can have a natural childbirth is if you give birth to a fifty year old man!'

I have a friend, her name is Heidi Myhusbandowitz. When she was pregnant she also signed up for natural childbirth classes. I said, 'Heidi, you?' She said, 'Sure. Generally, I don't mind a couple of good unnatural acts. But not in front of children.'

Esther: Tell me more about your situation.

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Esther: Tell me more about your situation.

To the tune of Pop Goes the Weasel

Refrain:

Do you think it's ecstasy having a kid
When you're a hundred and three
Do you think it's ecstasy having a kid
Why don't you listen to me

These guys came to visit they said I'd conceive
To me the whole thing sounded funny
But a couple months later I laughed not at all
When I heard that I killed the bunny (Bunny)

As I grew rather gravid the people all thought
That I walked around so elated
But believe me it's no fun to have hemarrhoids (Prep H)
When you're already so constipated (Enema)

As I went into labor about to give birth
My mind skidded off in delirience
Though I'm not a spring chicken and I've been around
It was quite an eye-opening experience (Refrain)

Now he needs to be picked up he needs to be held
He cries out with so much alarm
However the little guy don't understand
I can't even lift up my arm (Arthritis)

They tell you it's prudent to save for old age
Or else you must pay the pipers
So when you've at last got a bit stashed away
Why should you spend it on diapers? (Diaper)

And now every day I do all his ablutions (Wipes)
And then powder up his tuchas (Talc)
But how many years do you think I can wait (Calendar)
Before I shep some nachas?
(Refrain)

But out of each challenge that causes you strife
There come things especially good
In this case it happens that both he and I
We eat the same kind of food (Baby food,
false teeth)

To the tune of Pop Goes the Weasel

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(10) ISAAC

ISAAC: Oy, have I got troubles!

ESTHER: What are your troubles?

ISAAC: In a word -- my father, Avraham!

ESTHER: What has he done?

ISAAC: First of all, he made me marry a 3-year-old girl who fell off a camel. I'd never even met her before! I guess she's OK, though. But I still tremble thinking of that morning.

ESTHER: Which morning was that?

ISAAC: The morning my father told me we had to go up a mountain to do a korban.

ESTHER: What was so scary about that?

ISAAC: Don't you see? I knew that he really wanted to kill me! I wasn't born yesterday, you know.

ESTHER: Well then, why did you go?

ISAAC (sings):

I'm just a boy who can't say No
I'm in a terrible fix.
I always say come on let's go
Just when I ought to say Nix.

When my father woke me up at dawn
I had a thrill of Trembling and Fear
I know I should have said to him
Dear old father, stick it in your ear.

I'm so repressed where dad's concerned,
I'm so depressed that I'm sad,
It makes me so blinking mad
Why can't I dare to be bad?
I can't say no.

How I wish I could be more outspoken
Less of a token
Patriarch.
I'd like to be more like Samson or Korach
Or even like Noach,*
I'd make my mark!
But when my dad says Hashem decrees
That I may have to die, [?] the Lord
What can I do?
Spit in his eye?

Of course I know it's all God's plan,
And so I'll stick to his course,
But someday I'd love to be boss
I'd be just as tough as the Force.
I'd just say NO!

[Finale]

To the tune of "Officer Krupke"

Help us Doctor Esther, your patients are mixed up,
Our consciences they fester, we've got a drey in kup,
No one believes my story, my sex life's gone to pot,
Golly, Moses, can't you change the plot?

So tell us, Queen Esther, what are we to do?
Is there no salvation for a Biblical Jew?
Help us, Queen Esther, haven't you heard
We're psychologically disturbed!
We're disturbed, we're disturbed, we are quite disturbed
We are most fundamentally disturbed!

My father tried to kill me, the Jews are after me
My visions overwhelm me, my guilt's too much you see
I cannot cope with Isaac, my brothers are too much
Golly, Esther, no wonder we're ****ed up.

So tell us, Queen Esther, what are we to do?
Is there no salvation for a Biblical Jew?
Help us, Queen Esther, haven't you heard
We're psychologically disturbed!
We're disturbed, we're disturbed, we are quite disturbed
We are most fundamentally disturbed!

WE'RE IN THE BIBLE
(to the tune of "We're in the Money")

We're in the Bible
Let's have a highball
They're gonna read of us in a hundred thousand years.

We're in the Bible
It feels so tribal
We're gonna have a place in Jewish affairs

We're part of Torah
Just like Gomorrah
Some day there's gonna be a Rashi on us
We're part of Torah

Sure and begorrah
We're [even] gonna be translated by Unkelos

We're in the Bible
Like "eyeball for eyeball" *or all things*
And in the end (everything's turned) out ^{a-}okay

We're in the Bible
We've got survival
And our depression has just faded away

We're in K'tuvim
Near Shir ha-Shirim
We're gonna have a place in Jewish affairs
We're in K'tuvim
And every Purim

They're gonna read of us for a hundred thousand years.