



Congregation Ner Tamid

on the Greenspun Campus for Jewish Life, Learning, and Spiritual Renewal

Laughter in the Time of Corona

From the bedroom next door to my home office, I heard my wife Joni laugh a nice big belly laugh. To be honest it had been a while since we had a good laugh. Yet another of her relatives is very ill which will make three during this time of Corona. So, when there is a moment filled with humor, we seize them.

Granted, its not always easy. This *Time of Corona* is now approaching a year, and so it is hard sometimes to just be sane and feel “normal”. Small things sometimes get magnified. What would have been something we used to shrug off now takes on an oversize importance in our lives. For some it is the isolation, and the loneliness that comes with it. For others, it is letting the news get to them. Others, it is wondering whether the vaccine is the light at the end of the tunnel or just a stronger tug into the darkness before we can actually see the light.

So, laughter must always be welcome. An old Yiddish proverb taught, “*Laughter is the best medicine.*”

What is so funny you ask? I dunno. People are funny. Pets are funny. Old TV shows are funny. Tik Tok seems to be all the rage when it comes to laughter. And what about a good old-fashioned joke or pun?

Sometimes we find what we are looking for. We look for sadness, and we find it. We look for laughter, and it may just find us as well.

Tradition reminds us that laughter also has a role in our pursuit of learning and leading a holy life. The Talmud teaches about scholars who would begin a lesson with a humorous story to relax students before a difficult lesson. The Torah reminds us that while Abraham, the first Jew, was blessed to have heard the call of the Almighty. It was the next generation, his son Isaac, who was blessed with the gift of laughter. Despite the many obstacles that we have faced, we are reminded over and over again that ours is meant to be a religion of joy.

It was the comedian Charlie Chaplain though who reminded us “*The most wasted day in life is the day in which we have not laughed...*”

Hurry, find that smile. Don’t be afraid to laugh. With gusto. And with fullness of heart. There isn’t a moment to lose.

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad