

“MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM”

Two Trigger Scripts on Homosexuality

Description: These two separate scripts are created to trigger discussion about Jewish views on homosexuality, with suggested questions included.

The place of the declared homosexual within the organized Jewish community is a matter which has begun to concern more and more of our Sisterhoods and congregations. It is less a question of an individual’s sexual preference (although that still is a question) than it is of whether a person should be identified primarily or solely on the basis of sexual preference and, if so, what the community’s response to that identification should be, cognizant, as it must be, of Judaism’s *halakhic* position on this subject.

Each of these scripts highlights a different aspect of homosexuality. We suggest that you present one or the other, not both, in triggering your discussion and that, if possible, perhaps your rabbi or other Jewish professional could be on hand, either to moderate discussion or to serve as a resource. We welcome any comments or questions you may have.

THE FACTS OF LIFE

By

Diane Bernstein

Beth Shalom Sisterhood

Clearwater, Florida

CAST:

Barbara Cohen – a middle-aged Jewish woman; mother of two college students, active Sisterhood member

Judy Greenberg – a middle-aged Jewish woman; mother of one college student, active Sisterhood member

Lisa – Judy’s daughter; a college senior

Tracy – Lisa’s roommate; a college senior

SCENE: The Greenberg home, just as winter break begins:

THE FACTS OF LIFE

(THE PHONE RINGS.)

Judy: Hello?

Barbara: (MAY BE AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE OR MAY SPEAK OVER A MIKE, HEARD, BUT NOT SEEN)
Hi Judy. It's Barbara. I'm calling to remind you about the Welcome Home *Shabbat* the Sisterhood is sponsoring next Friday night in honor of our college students. Is Lisa home vacation yet?

Judy: Not yet, but I expect her to walk through the door any minute now. She and her roommate are driving here together. Are your kids home?

Barbara: They sure are! Jennifer came home with her roommate too! Only her roommate is a boy. I have to tell you, Judy, I was so upset I went to bed in tears. Imagine my daughter living with a boy! In my day we called it "shacking up". And she had the nerve to bring him home and insist that they stay together in her room! She said if I don't like it, they'll go to a motel. Well of course, I couldn't let her do that so I left them stay. I never thought I'd have to make a decision like this. Judy, what would you do if Lisa brought home a male roommate?

Judy: I think I would accept Lisa and her boyfriend. You know I try to be very open in my thinking and we can't lose our children. If we push too hard for them to accept our thinking we run the risk of alienating them so much that we lose them forever. Tell me about this boy. Is he Jewish? Do they plan to get married?

Barbara: They don't say the "M" word. Jennifer says that they like each other a lot and if it leads to marriage it will, and if not that's okay too. She says that it's better than when I was young and we "did it in the back seat of the car." I let her know that I never did it in the back seat of the car. I was a virgin when I got married. Dave is the only man I've ever been intimate with in my whole life!

But, as to your question, yes, he is Jewish . They plan to attend the Welcome Home *Shabbat*. Jennifer especially wants her old girlfriends to meet her new boyfriend. I just hope they don't tell Rabbi that they're living together.

Judy: Why Barbara Cohen – I think you are more upset by what other people might think than by what you really think. And you know your daughter is right – maybe your first experience wasn't in a car; but it was for plenty of us. Wake up – these days young people are very open about their sexual involvement. It's a fact of life!

But I see this conversation is getting tense, so let's change the subject. Tell me about Scott. Does he get any vacation from law school?

Barbara: Yes, he'll be home tomorrow. And he told me that he is hoping that Lisa will be home too. When they dated in high school I always thought something would come of it, but they drifted apart when Lisa started college. Maybe they will get back together now.

I'd better hang up – I've got a lot more calls to make. See you Friday night.
Bye.

Judy: Bye.

(JUDY SITS DOWN TO READ WHEN TWO COLLEGE AGE GIRLS COME BURSTING IN THE DOOR, TALKING AND LAUGHING.)

Judy: (RUSHING UP TO HUG ONE OF THE GIRLS, AND TALKING NON STOP) Lisa, my darling daughter I'm so glad to see you. How was your trip home? This must be your roommate Tracy. I'm Lisa's mom. I'm happy to meet you. Lisa's friends are always welcome here. Sit down. What can I get you to eat?

Lisa: (INTERRUPTING) Take it easy, Mom. We're fine. We're not hungry, just tired and thirsty. I'll get some drinks and we'll sit down and talk.

Tracy: It's nice to meet you Mrs. Greenberg. Lisa talks about you all the time. She said that being an only child and with Mr. Greenberg traveling so much, you and she were very close.

Judy: Yes, we always were. We have a great relationship. Lisa knows she can tell me anything. But don't be so formal with this Mrs. Greenberg thing. Call me Judy.

Oh before I forget, save Friday night. The Sisterhood is sponsoring a Welcome Home *Shabbat* for college students. I hope you two will go.

Lisa: Of course we'll go, Mom. We go to *Shabbat* services every week.

Tracy: And we keep a kosher kitchen at the apartment, too. You know Mrs. Greenberg – I'm sorry, Judy – I came from a non-observant Jewish background. I always knew I was Jewish, but my family wasn't even affiliated with a synagogue. I've learned a lot about Judaism and my heritage from Lisa. I'm even taking Hebrew classes.

Judy: How wonderful! I'm so glad to hear that you didn't abandon everything you grew up with, Lisa. And good for you, Tracy. The doors of the synagogue are always open to anyone who cares about living Jewishly. So we'll all go Friday

night. Barbara Cohen told me that Scott will be there. You know, Lisa, we always thought you two made such a good couple. And I know there will be a lot of other young men who will want to meet Tracy.

Lisa: (SPEAKING CAUTIOUSLY)
Uh, Mom, I'd like to see Scott again because we were such good friends, but I'm not interested in dating him. As a matter of fact, Mom, I'm already seeing someone. Sit down, Mom, I have something to tell you. You see, Tracy and I are close – I mean really close.

Judy: What do you mean? I don't understand.
(SUDDENLY JUDY'S EXPRESSION CHANGES; SHE IS VISIBLY SHAKEN) Oh no, Lisa! You mean you and Tracy are ... I can't say it; I can't even think about it!! I'll never even have grandchildren!!

Lisa: Yes, Mom, we love each other very much. I consider Tracy to be my life's partner and she feels the same. (LISA PAUSES AND LOOKS TOWARD TRACY WHO RESPONDS WITH A NOD AND A SMILE.) Please stop worrying about grandchildren and just look at me! I'm still the same person that I was 30 seconds ago. Can't you love me just the same? What happened to my ultra liberal mother who always believed in so many causes, even though they may have been unpopular?

I'm still your daughter. I love you – please love me!

Well, Mom? I'm waiting for you to say something.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you react to your son or daughter giving you this news?
2. Would you tell your friends?
3. What would you tell other family members, such as your own parents or siblings?
4. Would you tell your rabbi?
5. Would you accept your child's companion as part of your family?
6. If you learned that someone you know and respect is a homosexual, would that fact change your opinion of the individual? Would it change your behavior towards him or her?

7. In your opinion, is a homosexual an unsuitable role model for our youth?
8. How would you react to a homosexual couple asking to join the synagogue as a family?
9. What would you think of homosexuals celebrating life-cycle events in the synagogue?
10. Is “pushing hard” by parents to convey and uphold a position with which their adult children may not agree, such as opposition to overt homosexual behavior, ever the proper thing to do – even if it may “alienate” the children?

My Son, GAY???

By

Lillian Pack Leibowitz

Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel, Riverdale, NY

CAST:

Max, a middle-aged Congregation member

Molly, his wife

SCENE: The couple’s living room

My Son, GAY???

(MAX IS GETTING READY TO GO OUT, PUTTING ON HIS JACKET)

MOLLY: Where are you going, Max?

MAX: I thought I’d pick up the paper and some frozen yogurt. Why – do you need something from the store?

MOLLY: No, not particularly. But I really want to talk to you about something, something of concern, I think, to us both.

MAX: (KIDDINGLY AND TEASINGLY) Molly, don’t tell me you’re going through a mid-life crisis! You want to leave me because you need your own space – (LAUGHING) a younger man, maybe?

MOLLY: Max, sit down a minutes, I don’t feel in such a laughing mood.

MAX: (CONCERNED IMMEDIATELY) Molly, what is it? You don’t feel well? I saw you taking your blood pressure this morning. Did it go up again?

MOLLY: I'm O.K. My blood pressure is pressuring – sometimes up, sometimes down.

MAX: So, if it's not your blood pressure, what is it?

MOLLY: It's Joey, Max.

MAX: Joey? What could be wrong with him? He looked fine with he left yesterday after Spring break. Did he complain about something to you?

MOLLY: No, it's nothing that he said to me.

MAX: So? What are you, a psychic like they show on television late a night?

MOLLY: (SIGHING) I'm scared, Max, scared for Joey.

MAX: (BEWILDERED) Scared? Joey scares you?

MOLLY: (REALLY TALKING TO HERSELF) The whole week he was here, did he once call any of his old friends, the ones he was so friendly with in the Youth Group? And when Sarah and Jack called him, he said he was busy.

MAX: Sure, he preferred to spend his time with us. We're darned lucky we have such a devoted son. And look, it's only natural that when youngsters go off to college, they lose interest in their childhood buddies. Our son is a wonderful young man – everything we could ask for. He's handsome, smart, athletic, an all-around great guy. (SMILING) I can just imagine how the girls are running after him.

MOLLY: That's the problem – I wonder if he's running after the girls.

MAX: (LOOKING AT HER QUIZZICALLY) And what is that supposed to mean?

MOLLY: (MISERABLY) I don't know. I don't know.

MAX: (A LITTLE TESTINGLY) Now, hold on, Molly. If you're insinuating what I think you are, you ought to be ashamed of yourself – to even allow a nasty thought like that to cross your mind.

(CHANGING HIS TONE) You know, Molly, you really do watch too many soap operas and those weird out-of-left-field talk shows. Why don't you get more involved with the Sisterhood? I'm sure they'd be delighted to have someone like you help them in the Gift Shop, the clothing drive -

MOLLY: (NOT REALLY LISTENING TO HIM) Joey has always been so sensitive, so caring, so sympathetic, so ...

MAX: Does that make him a queer? There, I said the word. That's what all this is about, isn't it? Well, isn't it? I don't know what's gotten into you, what's putting these crazy ideas into your head. My son, my flesh and blood? How great he's always been, batting a ball, getting the basketball into the basket, that killer serve he has with the tennis racquet. A true Yankee fan, just like me.

MOLLY: Everything you say, Max, is true and yet, in some ways, he could be different from you.

MAX: (VEHEMENTLY) No, not my Joey.

MOLLY: Listen to me, Max. Remember how all of a sudden Joey decided to leave earlier than he planned?

MAX: Sure. He said he really had a lot of research to do on the paper he's working on. That's Joey for you, a very conscientious guy.

MOLLY: He lied, Max, he lied. In the afternoon, I wanted to make a call. I picked up the phone. I didn't know Joey was on the line. I heard another man's voice – he was saying, "I miss you terribly, chum. Hurry back, please." That evening Joey told us he was leaving early the next morning.

MAX: (PUTTING HIS HANDS OVER HIS EARS) Enough, Molly, enough. I don't want to listen to you any more. Who knows what you heard. You've been complaining about your hearing lately. You say that you don't always hear the words people say. Make an appointment with an ear doctor.

MOLLY: Max, please don't be so angry with me. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe we should go up to the college and see Joey, talk to him. Maybe we should ask the rabbi for advice. Let's do something.

MAX: (ANGER MOUNTING TO A FURY) No, Molly, we'll do nothing. This is all in your imagination. Not my son, no! And let me tell you something, Molly. If, God forbid, by some fluke, Joey did turn out to be one of those dirty, disgusting, depraved bums, he'd be no more a son of mine. I'd throw him out of this house. Better he should be dead! (BUTTONS HIS JACKET) I need some fresh air. (SLAMS THE DOOR BEHIND HIM)

MOLLY: (HEAD IN HANDS) Oh, dear Lord, tell me what to do. Please, help me. Help Joey. Help Max.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is Molly jumping to conclusions? How would you advise her?
2. What is your opinion of Max's expressed feelings?
3. Where should Molly's loyalties lie – with herself, her husband, her son?
4. Should love for a child supersede all other considerations – one's own principles, that child's behavior, even Jewish law?
5. Just as laws and customs have changed in recent years pertaining to the role of women in the Conservative Movement, would you favor the *halakhab* embracing a greater tolerance and acceptance of gays?
6. How can one reconcile abhorrence and condemnation of particular life style with the respect and tolerance for all people which should characterize a pluralistic society?