

## An Idea for an SNL Shtick

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I haven't checked to see if tonight's broadcast of *Saturday Night Live* is a rerun or a new show. But if it is a new one, I have a great idea for a shtick they can use tonight. (As some of you may know, my true fantasy is to be "discovered" and offered a spot on the cast of *Saturday Night Live* –or if I can't do that, then at least to guest host. I used to write and perform comedy and do impersonations before becoming a rabbi, a career which unfortunately does not offer me any opportunities to be on a stage, to be in front of an audience, or to say anything funny anymore.)

The idea I would pitch to my fellow writers would have to do with the documents that have just come out this week, coinciding with the one year anniversary of the killing of Osama bin Laden. You may recall the interesting early revelations that the Navy seals who broke into his compound and killed him discovered a stash of pornography, among other things. The latest treasure trove of memos and documents to be released reveals his obsessive focus on killing Americans, and of plots to carry out his war against America with schemes to assassinate General Petraeus and President Obama.

Buried in the material is the concern he expressed that the group's brand had been tarnished by attacks against Muslims. He complained about the incompetence of members of branches in Yemen and Iraq and expresses his exasperation with clumsy operations as he tries to maintain control over a sprawling terrorist network. He even suggests they might want to consider changing the name of the organization.

You can imagine the scene, and I can just picture how it would be played out.

The guy who plays Bin Laden would be sitting around in his corporate office with a board of directors, in a cave, shouting out orders and expressing frustration with the nincompoops working for him. He would rail against the incompetent underlings and wonder why it is so hard for them to find good help. One of his lieutenants will pipe up, "Maybe we need to pay more. " Another suggests, "It might help to get better recruits if we start paying cash, hard currency or Visa gift cards instead of paying them in goats and goat milk."

Next, bin Laden would talk about quality control and the problem with franchisees not following the standard operating procedures as outlined in their handbook. He would wonder if McDonald's has the same problem, and how it is that they can hire good people who manage to follow their manual. Worried about how things are not going too well and the lack of a big hit in a number of years, he would call in his marketing people to discuss the need to do something big, to try to see if they can make a big splash – like killing someone or getting one of their guys to win "American Idol", or "Survivor" or even better yet – "Bachelor". Another possibility to consider to boost and to improve their profile is thrown out. "Maybe we need to change our name. Let's explore the possibility of "Re-branding" Al Qaeda," he suggests. His advisers warn him to be careful, because after all, Al Qaeda has such high name recognition. Look what happened to "new Coke" one of his advisers cautions. Another might add, look at how tough it has been for Jews in America. "Ever since they changed their name from UJA to JFNA, the Jewish Federations of North America, people are really confused and their name recognition is down."

You get the gist. Check it out tonight to see if they have a shtick like this on the air.

I thought about the idea because one of the news articles I read said that in addition to worrying about tactics and strategy, bin Laden was also worried about his legacy and how he will be remembered. I hope he appreciated the irony of a mass murderer who embodied evil, writing to one of his lieutenants,

"He who does not make known his own history," runs the risk that "some in the media and among historians will construct a history for him, using whatever information they have, regardless of whether their information is accurate or not."

The truth is that in the final analysis, whether it is a master terrorist who dispatches suicide bombers, political leaders, business executives, or just ordinary men and women, I think all of us are concerned about legacy, about how we will be remembered and if we did during our lifetime what we could to make a difference in a positive way, or at least, to live a good life.

Some of us seek in quiet and subtle ways to live by the words of Torah, "you shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy". Some of us distort that teaching, as did bin Laden, when he claimed to murder and destroy in the name of God, and some of us just ignore the teaching altogether. The Torah teaches us that the important thing is to live a life of compassion for others, of caring for others, of doing the right thing. All of this is more important than the attention we get or in the case of bin Laden, of making a big splash in the ocean, for example, (splash in the ocean -- get it?)

What ultimately, is the measure of a person, and what truly counts? It is about much more than being well-known.

Kathleen Parker, a columnist with the Washington Post wrote a column this week after she attended last Saturday night's annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner in downtown Washington, the event which she described as, "the annual Prom on the Potomac where 2,000 or so media members and movie stars gather to honor the president and admire one another."

In attendance among the political pundits and writers were such important thinkers and opinion makers as Diane Keaton, Sophia Vergara, Goldie Hawn, George Clooney, Kim Kardashian, and Lindsay Lohan, among others. Needless to say, the celebrities, the "beautiful people" are the ones who garner the most attention, and are the ones everyone wants to be photographed with.

Parker happened to be seated with a bunch of people who were not very famous, including a decorated military officer who modestly introduced himself as Bill. Unbeknownst to most in attendance, he was Admiral Bill McRaven. I must confess, if I were sitting at a table with guy in uniform named , William McRaven I would not know who he was. He was the leader of the Joint Special Operations Command that oversaw the raid to kill Osama bin Laden.

Contrasting the obsession we have with celebrities, as opposed to those who quietly go about their jobs, those who truly make a difference in the world, those who display courage and who are steadfast in the face of inconceivable challenges, Parker wrote, "As the crowd followed Kardashian down the hall and others grabbed Clooney for one more photo, McRaven slipped out of the room and down a hallway into the night....unnoticed, unrecognized, uncelebrated."

So on this week when the latest bin Laden diary entries were released, we are reminded that we all worry about the meaning of our lives, and how we will be remembered. And when once again, we celebrate vacuous fame, Parker reminds us, we should pause and realize that what is really important in life is not being famous, but doing the right thing, choosing not to be on the side of evil, of doing our job quietly, without fanfare. That is what we should celebrate and honor.

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