

Making a Megillah Out of Purim (Purim - March 2008)

Jack Lynes, Trustee of RAPHAEL JEWISH COUNSELLING SERVICE

Sure, one can relate the work of Raphael, the Angel who heals, and whose name adorns the Jewish Counselling Service, to our Rosh Hashanah referring to new beginnings and the opportunity to choose life. And then at Pesach we can relate to the son who 'does not know how to ask'. But Purim? Haman ? Esther? Mordechai? Lots to drink? And then it came to me. The Megillah. And people being someone else. Grown up, mature adults, as well as children, choosing to wear costumes of characters in a story recited twice on this Festival, which is frequently celebrated without regard to its implications. It would indeed be unwise to neglect the fun to be had by even the most unlikely characters who somehow manage to put on a smile, which would make a welcome change were they to practise the art more often.

But it is the Megillah itself that can so easily be associated with what Raphael Jewish Counselling Service is all about. Like our clients, who often come to us at a dark time in their lives, and later, seeing the light of day continue their 'contract', so we are commanded to read the Megillah at first when night falls and it is dark, and then the next day. Perhaps even more important than reading it, we must hear it, and according to the commandment, each word must be heard. And when our clients speak, their every word must be heard. The art of listening is a very important part of every counsellor's training. True, counsellors do not interrupt their listening with booing and hissing, but they may help the client be rid of at least some of the demons which afflict them.

The word 'Megillah', like so many words which have been extrapolated from our traditions, is often spoken of somewhat negatively. It may describe a reaction to someone making quite a short story extend far too far ('making a whole Megillah out of it') or over gesticulating about a somewhat minor matter and not knowing when to stop. But there is another Megillah aspect that deserves our attention as we celebrate Purim. Problems, worries, lack of confidence, unhappiness, mental injury, loss, despair, relationship difficulties, and many other personal situations, although for many, quickly sorted, for others, they become a 'Whole Megillah'. And such 'Whole Megillot' left unattended, can grow and grow, both in depth and time.

It could be you. Or a relation. Or a friend or a friend of a friend. Or even a 'couple'. May I invite you to bring any such 'Whole Megillot' to us at Raphael? In the very best sense of the words, perhaps you will remember us as the 'Big Megillah Shooters' Wouldn't it be wonderful if the only Megillah around when we next celebrate Purim is the one that is read at this time and the one of which we should hear every word.

Raphael Jewish Counselling Service is a registered charity and serves all sections of the Jewish Community here in Pinner and in most parts of Greater London and the surrounding areas. You may phone 0800 234 6236 in complete confidence and be assured of a professional approach from start to finish.

Making a Megillah out of Purim is to be encouraged. But a Megillah out of life's problems? Surely there are better ways of living life to the full.