

LAUGHING THROUGH THE PAIN

Holding onto humor in moments of crisis



"Like a warm summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you."

-Langston Hughes

Since October 7th, 2023, we have been engulfed by a cocktail of emotions. These emotions have been storming in our bodies, swirling around us, changing direction, ripping through grief, pride, pain, awe, admiration, anger, frustration, fear and sadness.

How do we gain relief in moments of such intensity? How can we find ways to help us move through this emotional time and moment?



The Talmud tells a story of two brothers who came to the marketplace and were asked by Elijah the prophet and the rabbis about their occupation. They responded that they are jesters who cheer up the depressed or, when two people fight, they strive to make peace. And for that, these brothers merit a good place in this world and the world to come.

The ability to bring about humor and joy in the grimmest of circumstances is not only a survival tool, but a supreme act of creativity and hope. Humor can be cathartic; laughter can be medicinal.

On October 27, 2023 the Israeli satirical show *Eretz Nehederet*, the Israeli version of *Saturday Night Live*, broadcasted a special featuring a sketch about the BBC's reporting of a rocket attack on a Gaza hospital. The show itself is rather irreverent, mocking the BBC reporters through exaggerated biased reporting while toying the line of humor and cringe. The act of daring to create this commentary, however, was a true act of faith that allowed people a moment of relief.



Source: [variety.com](https://www.variety.com) and *Eretz Nehederet*



ACTIVITY



Read [this excerpt](#) from an interview in *Variety* with *Eretz Nehederet* showrunner Muli Segev about the skit and what it's like to produce a comedy sketch show in the middle of a war.

Why did you decide to run the BBC sketch?

Like most Israelis, we're very disappointed with the one-sided way this war is covered by the international media, and the BBC have always been the most extreme case of that attitude. So when we decided to go on the air with a special show about this current situation it was clear that we should deal with that, and the hospital bombing incident was good example of the way even established media groups like the NYT or BBC rush to conclusions when Israel is on the line.

What has the response to the sketch been like?

The show that aired on Wednesday was the first non-news broadcast on TV since October 7th. The ratings were the highest we had in years: 28.6% of the nation's households [watched the show].

What is it like working on a comedy show while the country is not only preparing for war but still reeling from the terrorist attacks that killed 2,000 people and saw more than 200 taken hostage?

During our 20 years running we were on the air during traumatic events, even during the COVID pandemic. We never missed a show because we truly believe that humor is the best cure for fear and anxiety. It's the old Jewish secret: laughing in the face of death. But I admit this time it's harder than ever. Everyone is still in mourning, each and every one of us has lost someone, or knows someone who has. It has been the most horrific event in this nation's history, and we have been through a lot along the years as you know. But still, people need some kind of relief.

- ◆ Recall a time in your life when humor help you through a difficult time?
- ◆ What were the circumstances around it and how did it feel to laugh?



SPARKS OF HUMOR

- ◆ Use the boxes below to consider some of the places where humor can reside and try to recall any moments of levity that you want to hold onto to help you in this moment.

ABSURD IMAGES

IRONIC MOMENTS

JOKES OR WORDS

KIDS, FRIENDS OR LOVED ONES

PETS OR OTHER ANIMALS

RIDICULOUS MISTAKES YOU MADE/SAW

FUNNY MOVIES OR TV SHOWS

As you recall these moments, tap into the short, continuous, rhythmic breaths and moments of relief that come from that smile.

As we continue navigating our way through this emotional cocktail, *"May our mouths also be filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs and joy."*

-Psalms 126:2

