

Gal Gadot: Super Woman or Super Jew?

Gal Gadot has become a role model to women, particularly young woman, throughout the world. Who can argue with the prowess and importance of a super woman? While there have been many women in history with super-influence, few have had the physical strength and endurance of the comic book character made into a larger-than-life figure by the Israeli model turned actress.

The question is whether Gal Gadot is a role model for Jewish values, as well as Jewish womanhood?

We have had many Jewish role models in modern America, and few of my generation will forget the indomitable left handed pitcher Sandy Koufax, who refused to play in the World Series on Yom Kippur. He was not the first. Hank Greenberg was also said to have refused to participate in a game on the Jewish High Holy Days. While neither athlete was particularly religious, those in the observant community immediately adopted Greenberg and Koufax as Jewish super heroes.

Women super heroes have had a long history in our faith. The Talmud says that Sarah, who was a greater prophet than her husband, Abraham, as was Miriam, the sister of Moses. The Jewish people, say our Rabbis, were saved at the Red Sea because of the virtue of the women.

Deborah was said to be a “fiery woman” who left her job as a judge to lead the nation in its fight against the Canaanite invaders. The song of Deborah, celebrating her military exploits, specifically points out that it took a woman to save the Jewish people from an enemy that threatened the very existence of the people of the Book.

Gal Gadot, while no doubt a worthy human being speaking out for important feminist values, has not yet proven herself to be a Sarah, Deborah, or like any of the other female prophets described in the Bible. She has a star; everyone knows who she is. The question is, would the Jewish hero kiss another woman on the lips on *Saturday Night Live* in order to show her acceptance of the gay lifestyle? Would the Jewish super hero honor commitments where she is clearly promoting her own economic value on the Sabbath? Would a Jewish super hero live and speak in a way which encourages observance of a Jewish way of life or would she simply embrace the shallow values of financial self-aggrandizement? There is no intent here to criticize Gal Gadot, who, in

Israel, is known as a down-to-earth, decent, Friday night candle-lighting beloved mother and wife. She certainly is, in many ways, that woman of value mentioned in Proverbs.

Christians typically read a “woman of virtue” at a wife or mother’s funeral. Jewish men are supposed to read the “woman of accomplishment” from Proverbs every Friday night. The initiation of the Sabbath Friday night is equated with the Shekhinah, the name of G-d which is feminine and specifically relates to the spirit of the Lord. Many people do not realize it, but according to Proverbs the woman of accomplishment was a description of the ideal woman given by a female Jewish leader, probably a queen, to her son. She was saying; “Listen here, sonny boy, this is the kind of woman you should find...” Historians study the Proverb because it tells us a lot about the rights of Jewish women anywhere from 2200 to 2500 years ago. This woman of virtue (better translation is indeed accomplishment) whose worth was far beyond rubies, owned property and ran her own business. She was an independent wage earner, and clearly was deeply involved in the ways of her community and family. She was a super woman! Is Gal Gadot that woman of accomplishment described by Proverbs? All one has to do in order to answer the question is read a good translation of the Proverb.

The woman of valor was not so because she was publicly accepted for her strength, endurance or beauty. She was, without question, a leader. She was a woman who bought property and ran her own business. She also looked after the ways of her religion and family. She inculcated within her children Torah Chesed. Her ways were ways of pleasantness and she was careful to provide for others, less fortunately than herself. In other words, the woman of Proverbs was a partial Gal Gadot but she also attended to her family, society and her religious values. She assured that the next generation of Jews would be Torah observing, respectful women and men.

The book is still to be written on whether Gal Gadot will merely be a famous Jewess, like Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson, or whether these truly magnificent, brilliant and accomplished women will also teach society something about Jewish values. Those values include not only the concept of free-will and respect for the individual, but also the importance of teaching our children and our fellow co-religionists with the knowledge and observance which will guarantee a worthwhile future. We have been the teachers and sages to the world; it is now time for our highly successful and celebrated movie stars and athletes to play those roles in a way that will assure Jewish continuity and a good example for future generations.

We have had our very bad public examples, as does every other religion and philosophy. There is a great opportunity for the Gal Gadots of the world to parlay their success and public persona into a greater utility for accomplishing long-lasting, lofty goals.

While it is not fair to heap too much responsibility on a movie star or any individual for the well-being of an entire people, we learn in the Talmud that with great success also goes great responsibility. We hope that Gal Gadot will rise to the occasion and prove herself to be truly a woman of accomplishment.

*Clifford A. Rieders, Esquire
Rieders, Travis, Humphrey,
Waters & Dohrmann
161 West Third Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 323-8711 (telephone)
(570) 323-4192 (facsimile)*

Cliff Rieders is a Board Certified Trial Advocate in Williamsport, is Past President of the Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association and a past member of the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority. None of the opinions expressed necessarily represent the views of these organizations.