
All the Jeffrey Millers

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I wasn't even ten years old. The phone rang early one morning, perhaps 7.00 am. My friend Jack Frishberg was on the other end, telling me that he just heard on the radio that a guy named Jeffrey Miller died.

I made sure to see *my name* in the newspaper that morning. There was no missing it and I thought it was really cool. It was the lead story throughout America. National Guardsman shot four students at Kent State, an Ohio college. One of the dead boys had my name.

I was far too young to understand the importance of the story of National Guardsmen clashing with rioting students, but I do remember feeling somewhat alarmed that there was another Jeffrey Miller in the world, or at least there was another one until a few hours earlier. I told my mother about my uneasy feeling. She *assured* me that there were many other Jeffrey Millers in the world, but she also *reassured* me that there was only one me. From that day onward, I began using my middle initial as well.

Ever since then, I have encountered many Jeffrey Millers through my travels. Last winter while in Vermont, the ski rental agency confused me with another customer by the same name and they gave me his American Express receipt instead of my own. This summer while in Florida I learned that there is a Jeffrey Miller who writes a sports column for the Palm Beach newspaper. My son, who is now ten himself, thought it was really cool.

When I make appointments at doctors' offices, or to service the car when it isn't being stolen, I always get the same sequence of questions: 'Which Jeffrey Miller are you?', the receptionist asks. 'The Handsome one', I reply on cue. Then she asks me for my address.

When I had surgery a few years ago, I begged the O.R. nurse to make sure that there were no other Jeffrey Millers scheduled for surgery that day. Whatever he had, I wanted no part of it. And had he known what I was in for, I'm sure he would have felt the same.

There is a Jeffrey Miller in Brooklyn where I happen to have been born and spent thirteen years who does not like to pay his bills on time. His delinquencies are sometimes reported to my credit agency. A guy named Jeffrey Miller recently wrote a book, *Awakening of the Buddha Within*. It's the true story of a young Jewish boy from Long Island who converts to Buddhism, moves to Tibet, and befriends the Dalai Lama. It's Jeffrey Miller all right, but it's not me.

A few weeks ago a colleague of mine sent me an article about a guy named Jeffrey Miller, the lobster man. He has a nice business and got a beautiful write-up in a small New England newspaper. I routinely get e-mails from some one searching for a Jeffrey Miller. In fact, I searched Internet and found forty-eight Jeffrey Millers in the New York area alone. I'm seriously thinking of inviting them all over for a Jeffrey Miller party.

My wife never had the experience of sharing her full name with somebody else. There was only one of her when she was growing up. In fact, she was happy to get rid of her maiden name even though it left the world bereft of Enid Anismans. To the best of her knowledge, she is also the only Enid Miller now as well. My mother, of course, was right. There are many people who share my name, but there is only one me. I am unique and distinct, one and only.

I started to think about all the Jeffrey Millers again a few months ago when I read about Dolly, the cloned sheep. For the first time, the possibility existed, at least in the fertile minds of our imagination, that there could one day soon be two of us! Not just two people who coincidentally share the same letters in a name. No; two people who share the same genes and chromosomes, two people who have the same building blocks of life.

Newsweek Magazine ran a cover in March with a picture of identical looking infants emerging from test tubes, with the question posed on the cover: 'Can We Clone Humans'. The cover didn't ask, 'Should we?', but 'Can we?', arrogantly suggesting that the hurdles are merely scientific, not moral. The implication is that if we can overcome the technological difficulties, then we should go ahead and clone people, as if scientific discoveries are above moral and ethical considerations and devoid of religious implications!

Of course, the media hype only distorted the reality of Dolly and conjured up instead images out of contemporary fiction. Do you remember the *Boys from Brazil*? The thought of dozens of little Hitlers running around was somewhat frightening to the moviegoer but it didn't really bother Sir Lawrence Olivier. His character understood that humans are far more than genetic material. Our souls are nurtured by our life's experiences. Our essence is divine. That was the *moral message* of the 70s' film but it was lost on most of the public.

After all, twins also share identical genes, just like Dolly I and Dolly II, but they are unique and distinct people. They look alike only until you know them; then it's easy to tell twins apart. Once their character is evident, their external similarities melt away and two distinct people are immediately apparent.

Sci-fi shows deal with alternate 'us'es and parallel universes, and unauthorized clones. Sometimes, these

man-made creatures are soul-less, and are harvested for their body parts. Sometimes, they fight for equality against their creators. Futuristic and scientific plot utilize cloning, but there is usually a contemporary, even religious message: *How do we confront the other voices within ourselves?*

Our ancient Rabbis did the same thing. They used the topic of man-made life nearly 2,000 years ago just as Isaac Asimov and Gene Rodenberry did in their recent fiction. Our great Talmudic sages raised the possibility that man could indeed create man!

The Talmud (*Sanhedrin 65b*) records the story of the sage Rabba who fashioned a man out of dust. The man was sent to another sage, R. Zera, who declared: 'You are a creature of magicians. Return to your dust'. The story goes on to say that a pair of Rabbis, 'R. Hanina and R. Oshaia spent Friday afternoon studying the [mystical books] by which means they conjured up a grown calf . . .' The calf was then slaughtered and eaten on Shabbos. I guess it was cheaper than shopping at the butcher shop.

What perplexed the sages was the same thing that drove scientists in Scotland – and reporters the world over – to contemplate the possibility of a life created by man rather than by God. Ethicists are just beginning to grapple with the ramifications of a human being produced entirely by human hands rather than by conception. Long ago our Rabbis speculated that it was possible, but they put the issue on the table in order to address something far more important than genetic cloning. They delved into cosmic issues of holiness, and uniqueness, and man's role in the creative universe. It is the part of the equation that will surely be missed by modern biologists and philosophers, not to mention tabloid journalists.

When I thought about Dolly, I thought about all the Jeffrey Millers in the world. We share a name, sometimes a doctor, a car dealership, tangled financial data in a computer. Nothing really significant. But the Dolly dilemma challenged me to think about the Jeffrey Millers *within me*. Jeffrey Miller the congregational Rabbi. The law student. Jeffrey Miller the husband. Jeffrey Miller the father. Jeffrey Miller the son. The brother. The sometimes aspiring pilot and author. The neighbour. Unlike Dolly I and Dolly II, these Jeffrey Millers must coexist in a single body.

To some extent, these Jeffrey Millers are united and distinct at the same time. Sometimes they get tangled; oftentimes there aren't enough hours in the day to be a daddy and a rabbi, a student and a husband. Some days I have to choose one Jeffrey Miller at the expense of another. But over the long haul, these different Jeffrey Millers have found a way to work it out so that there's time for each one to emerge and do his own thing.

Then I began to worry about the *other* Jeffrey Millers. The more important ones. Not the different *tasks* or *roles*

that I assume on any given day, but the different *traits* struggling within me: There is a Jeffrey Miller who does good things every so often. He helps people. He inspires and challenges others to grow. I like that Jeffrey Miller.

But there is also a Jeffrey Miller within me who embarrasses me more often than I care to admit. He says stupid things. He forgets meetings. He hurts people's feelings. I could do without him. There is a Jeffrey Miller one who can be kind and compassionate. And there is that Jeffrey Miller two who can be, well, less than kind, and sometimes sarcastic.

The problem with scientific cloning is *not* that we can do it, but that it's an all or nothing venture. We take *all* the chromosomes and duplicate them. Dolly two is no different than Dolly one.

I would very much like to be cloned, but I would prefer to leave out some of the Jeffrey Millers that I find troublesome and annoying. That's a trick that science isn't quite up to. Religious teachings instruct us that we are all given the opportunity to replicate ourselves. I get to peek into the innermost thoughts and feeling of my soul, and I get to decide: Which Jeffrey Miller will stay, and which will go? Which attribute will be cloned and which will be discarded? Will my *Yetzer Hatov* (my divinely granted good inclination) outlast my *Yetzer Hara* (my desires toward things less than good) in the everlasting struggle for my soul? It is a struggle that all of us face.

We believe in cloning. We are being cloned when our children watch us, learn from us, emulate us, and take into their being our values. We are being cloned when we pass on knowledge, love, and caring. We are cloned when we touch another soul, or when others benefit from our handiwork. Cloning is real when we bequeath to our children and grandchildren stories about their heritage.

I often get questions about names from pregnant mothers, fathers-to-be, and grandparents-in-waiting. People call upon me for help in picking a Jewish name. In some cultures, children are named after their living parents, so as to say: 'This is my little self, my new potential. I will mould my child in my spirit and image.' That is spiritual cloning.

Our culture is no different, we merely prefer names of the deceased. We name our children after grandparents, uncles, aunts, and loved ones who have already fulfilled their days on earth. We tell our new-borns: 'Be like your namesake. Share their name, and their attributes.' Our way is harder, because the namesake is not around to inspire the child.

One of my favourite projects is to ask the students in the Religious School to tell me about their namesakes. Very often, they only know the simple fact that they are named after Bubbie. I encourage them to go home and ask their parents what was special about Bubbie? I want them

to find out what was she good at? I encourage parents to pass on into their children the character, for after all, a name is as much an adjective as it is a noun.

Sometimes, especially when we don't foster an active devotion to Judaism within ourselves, we fail to clone it, to pass it along, to inculcate our children with an appreciation for our rich heritage. As a result, the next generation receives a weakened form of it from us. And we know that a copy of a copy of a copy is barely usable.

We have an option that Dolly didn't have. Dolly is a sheep. She has no *Neshama*. She is the sum total of what her genes tell her she is. Nothing more, except perhaps a good lamb chop in the end.

In scientific terms, the next generation is exactly the same as the previous one. It can't be better. In faith, the next generation must be better.

By the way, the man-made man of the Talmud was not a man for he could not speak. He could neither pray nor think. He could not perform acts of loving kindness. He was a drone, a body, without a soul. He could not, then, be part of the *mitzvan*, the collective body of Israel.

There is still, for the time being, only one Jeffrey Miller. But this year I hope that he will be fine tuned. I hope that I have the strength to discard the lazy Jeffrey Miller and to invigorate the kind one. I hope that the kind Jeffrey Miller will shine, and the weak Jeffrey Miller will be improved.

This year, I hope to clone myself into a better rabbi, a better husband, a better friend, a better father, and a better son. I do not know how much I will succeed this year, but I will spend the year trying.

Advocacy at John 16:8-11

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The popular Paraclete trails problems of vocabulary and ideas. The meanings of *paraklētōs*, *elegchei*, *peri*, and *hoi* in 16:8-11 are still at large, and v. 10 contains a *non sequitur*, despite commentators' consensus and translators' vigilance (REB improves on NEB). An idea of John's,¹ synoptic-inspired (so Ashton), coheres with earlier and later verses.² One agrees that the Paraclete acts forensically,³ but Susanna's histrionic Daniel has not been recognized as his prototype (for *Sus* 45-59 see Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, I, 650-651). The conjunction of 'justice and judgment' was noticed about 1600, misleading even Grotius; and Possinus added confusion.⁴ But one was alerted to Gen 18:19 and Ps 89:15(14), ignored nowadays.

¹ R. Bultmann, *Johannes* (17th edn., Göttingen, 1962), 432, n. 5. E. Hammel, 'Jesus und der Paraklet in Johannes 16' in B. Lindars & S. S. Smalley, eds., *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1973, 199-217), at pp. 201, 211, 213. But could vv. 9-11 have been independent of v. 8, or Christianity set aside (p. 216)? An 'exotic' passage: B. Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel* (Lund, 1974, 259-272), at p. 267.

² G. Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (London, 1970). In 12:31; 13:1; 15:26-27; 16:16, 28, 33; 17:11.

³ So A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, (1st edn. London, 1910), 339-340; J. Behm, *TWNT V* (1954), 802,809. 'Champion' or 'second'. C. H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1968), 414. The Hebrew loan-word *p'raq'li* (Mishna, Ab. 1V,11; cf. 2 Clem 6:9) is used so. Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, 80-118; H. Riesenfeld, 'A probable background to the Johannine Paraclete' in C. J. Bleeker *et al.*, eds., *Ex Orbe Religionum (FS Geo Widengren, Numen Suppl. 21, Lelden, 1972)*, I, 266-274; B. Lindars, *John* (Grand Rapids/London, 1972), 501; A. E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial* (London, 1976), 108-112 (an acute treatment); R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel acc. to St John* (London and Tunbridge Wells, 1982), III, 128-132.

⁴ H. Grotius, *Annotationes in libros Evangeliorum* (Amsterdam, 1641), 994. Valentinus Schindler, *Lexicon Pentaglotton* (Frankfurt, 1612), v. *š'dāqāh*, col. 1321C (at Gen 18:19 *mišpāt* is condemnation, *š'dāqāh* defence). Petrus Possinus, *Spicilegium evangelicum* §44 in J. A. Fabricius, *Observationes selectae in varia loca Novi Testamenti* (Hamburg, 1712), 98-107 (the Paraclete argues on obstinacy, irreligion, and murder [Jn 8:44]); M. Polus, *Synopsis Criticorum* (London, 1669), IV, 1339. C. Schoettgenius, *Horae hebraicae et talmudicae* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1733), 395. J. Lightfoot and Strack & Billerbeck ignore this material (rightly).