

“You’re Right, Too”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

The realization that we are contradictory creatures was expressed by the great Samuel Johnson. He taught that “inconsistencies cannot both be right, but imputed to man, they may both be true.” Oscar Wilde went even further, stating that a deep truth is something the opposite of which is also a deep truth. Single-mindedness is a certain path to error.

If Johnson accepts contradiction in the human heart, and Wilde in the world, Judaism affirms that it is integral to God’s design. In *The Open Canon* Israeli philosopher, Avi Sagi, quotes Hasidic Master Zadok ha-Cohen of Lublin: “A sage, however, clings to God’s wisdom...which not only accepts that two opposites can be together simultaneously but actually compels this, because God made the whole of Creation one thing and its opposite.”

We yearn for simplicity, but God has handed us complexity. As the old joke has it, the Rabbi listens to one man make his case, and declares “you are right!” When the second man makes *his* case, the Rabbi ponders, and affirms “You are right!” When his wife protests “they can’t *both* be right” the Rabbi, undaunted, says, “You’re right too!”