

rushed to tell his brothers.

The founder of the Chassidic movement, the Baal Shem Tov, taught that other people are like mirrors to us. In other words, if another person appears "dirty," it is merely a reflection of your own state.

However, there can be another purpose to recognizing shortcomings in another person. We must take note of how we react:

If we see another's "nakedness" and focus on the flaw more than is necessary to help the person, we can be certain that in our perception is a message from Above that we share the same flaw.

Rest assured, however, that if we take action to remedy the situation and help the other person, this is certainly the reason that the Creator put us in the position to notice the other person's flaw.

It's a delicate balancing act: to see without seeing. To be sensitive enough to see the faults and deficiencies of other people, but without focusing on the faults, focusing only on what needs to be done to help them.

## Live & Laugh

A professor of clinical psychology at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, included a lecture on crowd psychology in his annual course. To illustrate mass hysteria, he regularly showed TV news footage of teenage crowds greeting the Beatles at the local airport in the 1960's.

One year, when he ran the footage, he heard squeals and bursts of laughter from his students. When the film ended he asked what had caused the hilarity. Replied one student, "We recognized some of our mothers!"

## Calendar

Welcome to Rabbi Shmuli Kagan

- ◆ Shacharis 8:30 am; Shtibl 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ **Sushi & Black Label Farbrengen.**
- ◆ Mincha: 5:40 pm
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 6:50 pm
- ◆ Mincha from Sunday 6:00 pm

## Dis-Chem - Reach for a Dream Golf Day

Wednesday 22 November  
Killarney Country Club  
Facilitated by Sydenham Shul  
Book Your Four-Ball  
and/or Sponsor a Hole now!

**SYDENHAM SHUL'S SHABBOS PROJECT**  
KEEPING IT TOGETHER AT SYDENHAM SHUL  
**Friday & Shabbos 27/28 October**

**FRIDAY NIGHT FEVER STREET BROCHA**

**LADIES SHABBOS SHMOOZ**  
with Rebbetzin Estee Stern | Elk Hall | 10am.  
Rabbi's Droshos & Mussaf | Big Shul & Shtibl | 10:30am

**SAUSAGES STIX SMIRNOFF**

**KOOLKIDZ ICE CREAM PARTY & SYDTEENS BILTONG BROCHA** with Ari, Tali & the Maddies

**THE BIG SHABBOS BROCHA** followed by:  
*What Now...? by Dr Kiki Marx - Anaesthetist and Inspirational Adventurer*  
Elk Hall | Men & Women

**FAMILY SHALOSH SEUDOS** (Men, Women & Children)  
Guest Speaker: Rabbi Naftoli Lifschitz | Hull Hebrew Congregation (UK)

**MUSICAL HAVDALAH** with Chazan Yudi & friends

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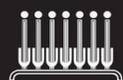


- ◆ The **Scottish Leader Signature** whiskey at Shul is sponsored by **Distell** & available for purchase at **Norman Goodfellows**.
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# Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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## My Kind of Hero by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

The world loves a hero. Every season, Hollywood must invent new heroes and superheroes to fill the box office coffers. Today we even have a Jewish girl as the latest pop star superhero. And it works. Why? Well, that's for another sermon. Today, I choose to talk about who is a hero and, more specifically, who is my kind of hero.

Superheroes are fantastic. But you've got to admit, they're over the top, rather otherworldly and, realistically speaking, out of touch and out of reach. We can fantasize about flying through the skies in our capes, climbing skyscrapers with our webs, saving the world, or rescuing damsels in distress; but at the end of the day, it is nothing more than wistful daydreaming. What bearing does it have on me and my life, me and my problems? The answer is, not much.

That's why Noah always appealed to me. He comes across as a real live hero, real in the sense of being human rather than superhuman and, therefore, realistically possible to emulate.

Rashi describes Noah as a man of small faith who had doubts whether the flood would actually happen. In fact, according to the great commentator's understanding, he didn't enter the Ark until the rains started and the floodwaters pushed him in. That explains why many people look down on Noah, especially when they compare him to other Biblical superheroes, people of the stature of Abraham or Moses.

Personally, this is precisely what makes Noah my kind of hero. He's real. He's human. He has doubts, just like you and me. I know we are supposed to say, "When will my actions match those of the great patriarchs of old?" but I confess, for me that is a very tall order. Noah, on the other hand, is a regular guy. He is plagued by doubts and struggles with his faith. Which is precisely what makes him a hero. Because the fact is that, at the end of the day, his personal uncertainties notwithstanding, Noah does the job. He has faults and foibles but he builds the Ark, *shleps* in all the animals, saves civilisation and goes on to rebuild a shattered world. Doubts, *shmouts*, he did what had to be done.

There is an old Yiddish proverb that *fun a kasha shtarbt men nit. Nobody died from a question.* It's not the end of the world if you didn't get an answer to all your questions. We can live with unanswered questions. The main thing is not to allow ourselves to become paralyzed by our doubts. We can still do what has to be done, despite our doubts.

Of course, I'd love to be able to answer every question every single one of my congregants ever has. But the chances are that I will not be able to solve every single person's doubts or dilemmas. And, frankly speaking, I am less concerned about their doubts than about their deeds. From a question nobody ever died. It's how we behave that matters most.

Noah, the ordinary hero, could easily be the guy next door. He is one of us. His greatness is, therefore, achievable. It's not 'pie in the sky.' His heroism can be emulated. If Abraham and Moses seem the superhero types too far fetched for us ordinary

mortals to see as practical role models, then Noah resonates with realism. After all, he had his doubts too, just like you and me.

So Noah, the reluctant hero, reminds us that you don't have to be fearless to get involved. You don't have to be a *tzaddik* to do a *mitzvah*. You don't have to be holy to keep kosher, nor do you have to be a professor to come to a *shiur*.

His faith may have been shaky. Perhaps he was a bit wobbly in the knees. But the bottom line is, he got the job done. My hero.

## Parsha Pointers

*Noach: Artscroll Chumash pg 30;  
Living Torah pg 27*

The story of one righteous man in an evil generation. The Almighty commands Noah to build the ark on a hill far from the water. He built it over a period of 120 years. People deride Noah and ask him, "Why are you building a boat on a hill?" Noah explains that there will be a flood if people do not correct their ways. We see from this the patience of the Almighty for people to correct their ways and the genius of arousing people's curiosity so that they will ask a question and, hopefully, hear the answer.

The generation does not do *Teshuva*, returning from their evil ways to the righteous path, and God brings a flood for 40 days. They leave the ark 365 days later when the earth has once again become habitable. The Almighty makes a covenant and makes the rainbow the sign of the covenant that He will never destroy all of life again by water (hence, James Baldwin's book, *The Fire Next Time*). When one sees a rainbow it is an omen to do *Teshuva* -- to recognize the mistakes you are making in life, regret them, correct them/make restitution, and ask for forgiveness from anyone you have wronged and then to ask forgiveness from the Almighty.

**Noah** plants a vineyard, gets drunk and then occurs the mysterious incident in the tent after which Noah curses his grandson Canaan. The Torah portion concludes with the story of the Tower of Babel and then a genealogy from Noah's son, Shem, to Abram (Abraham).

## The Positive Negative

*By Rabbi Yanki Tauber*

This week's Torah reading open with a description of the hero of the *parshah*:

"...Noah, a righteous man, perfect was he in his generations; Noah walked with G-d"

The sages of the Talmud wonder about the phrase "in his generations." What is the Torah telling us by adding these seemingly superfluous words? Rashi, in his commentary on the verse, sums up their discussion as follows:

Among the sages, there are those who interpret this as praise of Noah: If he was righteous in his generation, certainly he would have been even more righteous had he lived in a generation of righteous people.

Others interpret it negatively: In relation to his wicked generation he was righteous, but had he been in Abraham's generation he would not have amounted to anything.

But it is the sages of the Talmud who instruct us to "judge every man to the side of merit," and go so far as to declare that "the Torah is loath to speak negatively even of a non-kosher animal." If the clause "in his generations" can be understood both ways, why propose a negative interpretation? Because there are two important lessons which this interpretation imparts to us. On the one hand, it teaches us that Noah's achievements are not just for the perfectly righteous. Also a flawed individual can successfully resist a negative environment, and even build the entire world anew--as did Noah.

On the other hand, it also teaches us how Noah should *not* be emulated. Perhaps Noah should not be faulted for failing to save his generation, or for the other shortcomings apparent in the Torah's account, limited as he was by the circumstances of "his generations"; but should this be our attitude when we are constrained by *our* circumstances? This is the lesson of the Sages' "negative interpretation" of Noah: that we should never satisfy our-

selves with the excuse that "this is world in which we live," but persist in our efforts to redeem it.

So in the final analysis, it is the negative interpretation that is the true credit to Noah. Had we only been presented with the positive perspective on Noah, leading us to suffice with his kind of righteousness, this would actually amplify his failings. But when the Torah's criticism of Noah becomes a source of positive instruction to us, Noah's failings are redeemed as a source of virtue.

## To See and Not to See

*By Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer*

A rabbi and a friend of his are discussing theology, and the friend says to the rabbi, "You're always talking about the greatness of the Talmud. You even point to recent news articles about Korean schools that are teaching Talmud because it sharpens the mind. Will you teach me some Talmud?"

The rabbi says, "Look, Talmud study isn't easy. I'm not sure you're ready for it."

"Oh, come on. Give me a chance!" says the fellow. "Ok, fine. Here's an example of Talmudic logic; let's see how you do:

"Two men fall down a chimney. One comes out dirty, the other is clean. Who washes?"

"Easy," the friend declares. "The dirty one washes, and the clean one doesn't!"

"Wrong!" retorts the rabbi. "The clean one looks at the dirty one and thinks that he is also dirty, and therefore washes. However, the dirty one looks at the clean one, and thinking that he is also clean, doesn't wash!"

"Give me another chance!" pleads the man.

"Okay, fine. Two men fall down a chimney. One comes out dirty, the other is clean. Who washes?"

"Same question? That's easy! The clean one looks at the dirty one and thinks that he is also dirty, and therefore washes. However, the dirty one looks at the clean one, and thinking that he is also clean, doesn't wash!"

"Wrong. I told you that you might not be ready for Talmudic logic. The clean one looks in the mirror, sees that he is clean, and doesn't wash. The dirty one looks in the mirror, and then goes to wash up."

"Not fair! You didn't tell me there was a mirror!"

"Look, in Talmudic study, you have to take all possibilities into account."

"Ask me another question, please," requests the friend.

"For the last time: Two men fall down a chimney. One comes out dirty, the other is clean. Who washes?"

"This time I definitely have the correct answer!" the man declared triumphantly. "If there is no mirror, then the clean one will look at the dirty one, assume that he is also dirty, and will wash, and vice versa. However, if there is a mirror, then the clean one will look in the mirror, and see no need to wash, and vice versa!"

"Wrong again!" says the rabbi. "Tell me: How is it possible for two men to fall down a chimney, and one comes out dirty while the other remains clean?"

In this week's Torah portion, we read of the Flood of Noah. In chapter 9, there is an account of how Noah planted a vineyard when he came out of the ark post-Flood. Then he drank wine, became intoxicated and shamefully uncovered himself inside his tent.

The Torah recounts:

[Noah's son] Cham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness, and told it to his two brothers outside. Shem and Japheth took a garment and placed it on their shoulders. They then walked into the tent backwards and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned backwards, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

The Torah is extremely precise. If the verse already told us that Noah's sons Shem and Japheth walked backwards, then why does it *also* state that they did not see their father's nakedness? Isn't that obvious? If they walked backwards, of course they didn't see him!

The answer is that not only did they not physically see Noah's nakedness, but they did not focus on his shameful conduct. Rather, they took steps to help him and correct the situation. Cham, however, "saw his father's nakedness." Not only did he not do anything to help, but he reveled in Noah's shortcoming and

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