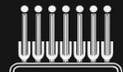




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# Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!



13 Oct 2018 Parshas Noach 4 Mar Cheshvan 5779

## The Problem With Preaching

by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Do sermons really work? Can the words of any one individual really have an effect on the way people live their lives? Is anyone out there actually listening? (Reading?)

Rabbis are probably unrealistic when they anticipate dramatic results from their sermons. But it's not as bad as the cynics would have us believe, either.

The late Rabbi Sydney Katz of Pretoria once compared the chances of a sermon succeeding to the odds of a man standing on top of the Empire State Building and throwing down an aspirin which would be caught by a man on the street below who just happened to have a headache at the time!

But we still try.

The Prophet Isaiah called the great flood of this week's parsha, "Waters of Noah." According to commentary, this is because Noah bore a degree of responsibility for the devastating deluge. But why was it his fault? Wasn't he the righteous man of his time? Apparently, because Noah may not have tried hard enough to turn around the corrupt lifestyle of his generation, the waters are named after him. Yes, he built his Ark, but did he reach out to those who never saw his ark? Did he shout out to his contemporaries that Doomsday was really coming?

Ever since Noah, this is the mission of anyone charged with the task of spiritual leader.

What is a Rabbi? An "official" to preside over our rites of passage? Sure, that is a very important part of the job, but is that all it is?

A functionary? The essence of a rabbi is to be a teacher, a guide for life, a moral barometer and the conscience of the community. The word Rabbi - or in Hebrew *Rabi* - means "my teacher," to teach Torah and to teach right from wrong based on the G-dly value system enshrined in the Torah.

So occasionally it becomes necessary for rabbi to play preacher and point out the error of a community's ways. No, it's not the most popular thing a rabbi can do but to quote late Chief Rabbi LI Rabinowitz, "I am not prepared to sacrifice my principles on the altar of popularity."

That's why the Talmud states "When you see a Rabbi who is beloved by the *entire* community it is not because he is so good but rather because he does not rebuke them in matters of faith," *Kesubos 105*. Speaking for myself, I am not a loner. I'm not anti-social. I like people and would love to be loved by everyone without exception. But there are times when one cannot shirk the moral responsibility to say what is right - and, sometimes, what is wrong.

Which brings us back to Noah. Commentary is divided on the extent of Noah's righteousness. Yes, the Bible calls him a *Tzaddik*, a righteous man. But the title is qualified when it adds the word "in his generations." Was he objectively righteous or only in comparison to his evil generation? How would he have rated when compared to a really saintly man like Abraham?

As always, both these perspectives are Torah and therefore true. The full picture can only be ascertained when we look at a thing with both eyes.

But if we teach our children that they are moral beings that can go beyond their genetic programming, then we raise them to know that life is about doing what is right rather than what feels right, what is good rather than what feels good. We are not just apes with intelligence, but ethical beings with a belly button.

### Live & Laugh

A Jew converts and becomes a preiest. He gives his first Mass in front of a number of high ranking priests who came for the occasion. At the end of the new priest's sermon a cardinal goes to congratulate him. "Pastor Lewis," he said, "That was very well done, you were perfect. But next time, please don't start your sermon with, "Fellow goyim..."

**Mazel Tov to the Ladies of Rabbi Goldman's Tuesday Shiur on their upcoming Siyum of Pirkei Avot.**  
New students welcome.  
New format going forward.

### Calendar

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ Ladies **Shmooze** with *Rebbetzin Estee Stern* 10-10:30 am in the Community Centre. Coffee, tea & refreshments.
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ **Smorgasbord of Shiurim.**
- ◆ Mincha: 5:35 pm
- ◆ Shabbos Ends: 6:45 pm
- ◆ Mincha next week: 6:00 pm

- ◆ **BerryBright B&B Shabbos Project.** Stay at BerryBright B&B and be part of Sydenham Shul for a stress-free Shabbos. Contact Barry 082-450-1800.
- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of Ideal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
- ◆ **Vehicles wanted.** Any make, any condition. Best prices. Phone **ARNOLD ORKIN 082 823 7826**
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- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.

were hungry, each with its own diet, feeding time and messy quarters to clean. The ark was also claustrophobic and damp. "Deliver me from prison," Noah prayed, "for my soul is tired of the smell of lions, bears and panthers."

But this time Noah had no choice — the world was in his ark and he, as captain, had to take care of it. He fed the animals, he cared for them and he cleaned their stalls. Our Sages say that he gave of himself until he was coughing blood. He gave of himself until there was nothing left to give.

Sometimes all faith means is the realization that G-d wants us to give of ourselves to others, for the world is built on kindness. Thanks to Noah's kindness, there was a spirit of goodness in the ark, where, after a long day, the lion did, in fact, lie down next to the lamb.

The ark taught Noah faith — the faith that we're all in this, the same boat, together.

## Why Don't My Kids Respect Me?

By Rabbi Aron Moss

### Question:

Can you explain my children to me? I have dedicated my life to looking after their every need. But if I ask one of them to get me a glass of water they moan and groan. Why is it that one parent can care for three children but three children can't seem to care for one parent?

### Answer:

We are all descendants of Adam and Eve, the first human beings. We have inherited from them the basic ingredients of human nature. They didn't have parents. They were created, not born. They had no umbilical cords. They probably didn't even have belly buttons. So any normal human being has an innate desire to look after their children. But looking after our parents (and our belly buttons) is a skill that doesn't always come naturally.

The genes we pass on to our children are not enough. We must pass on to them a moral code too. If they are raised to think of themselves as mere intelligent animals, then they will follow their instincts, which program them to care for themselves and their young, not their parents.

Are we products of our environment? Is it impossible to resist societal pressures? If so, then any good we manage to do is an incredible achievement and deserving of praise. Or, do we have the power to triumph over any and every obstacle in our paths? Look at Abraham who came from a pagan family, discovered G-d, and changed the world. Judged by that standard, anything less than greatness is a failure. Which perspective will it be?

I am not unmindful of the wonderful growth in our community and, indeed, in our congregation. Who knows better than me of the inspiring new commitments made by so many, especially over Yom Tov. Hundreds of good resolutions for Mitzvahs – Shul Attendance, Tefillin, Mezuzahs, Shabbos, Kashrut, Torah Study, Tzedakah, Chesed-Kindness and more. In a world gone mad, we are doing fantastic.

But from time to time we need to look from the other perspective as well. How are we doing compared to Abraham? Compared to what we *could* be?

The philosopher Herman Cohen was once asked why his lectures were so deep and over the heads of most of his audience. He answered, "I aim where their heads *should* be." Well, I aim where your *hearts* should be, where your *souls* should be. I fully appreciate where my people are at, but I refuse to lose sight of where they should be going. That is my purpose, my sacred responsibility and my dream. I dream about the Neshama, the G-dly soul within each of you.

You say, "Rabbi, we are ordinary guys." I say no Jew is ordinary. Every Jew is special. I know what you are doing, and I am proud of you for it. But I also know what you are capable of, so don't sell yourself short.

Please, don't shatter my dream. If we stop dreaming, we stop hoping and we stop liv-

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

E-mail: [sydshul@sydshul.co.za](mailto:sydshul@sydshul.co.za)

Website: [www.sydshul.co.za](http://www.sydshul.co.za)

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ing. I love you all. You are all wonderful, good Jews. But for me the definition of a good Jew has always been, "One who is trying to be a better Jew." As good as we may be, let us try to be better still. G-d bless you.

## 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).

## Internationalists or Isolationists

*By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum*

I recently met an old school friend from my days at Melbourne's Yeshiva College. We fell into conversation about the time we spent there from age three till graduating at eighteen.

He has nothing but good memories from the

time he spent in Yeshivah. His family was not particularly religious, but he never felt excluded from the group, nor did he suffer from any associated stigma. Until today he retains friendships from all ends of the spectrum and, though he does not regularly pray or study Torah, is still proud of the skills and knowledge he gained while at school. He'd love to send his kids to yeshivah too.

His wife, however, doesn't believe in the concept of Jewish schooling. From her perspective, an exclusive school, attended by children of one faith, is discriminatory and snobbish. She wants to send their kids to public schools where they'll rub shoulders with children of all colours and backgrounds and they'll learn to get along with everyone.

Personally, I disagree. It is a utopian fantasy to believe that just by hanging out together inter-necine conflict and differences of opinion will simply disappear. Assimilation didn't save the Jews of Germany.

However, doesn't she have a point? Is it the ideal position for a Jew to be locked off from the world, isolated in a self-imposed ghetto? We were tasked with being "a light unto the nations" and we can't do our job if we stay home and hibernate.

On the other hand, many will argue that it's not healthy to send one's child to a school where not all the student body are similarly inclined. Is not allowing our precious children to mix with friends who hail from non-religious (or non-Jewish) homes an unacceptable risk?

So who's right, the internationalists or the isolationists? Should we stay home and play with our own ball or accept the risks of playing in the game out there on the street?

I believe that the story of Noah and the Flood provides the answer to this question.

The Baal Shem Tov interpreted G-d's command to Noah to "go into the ark" as an instruction for all ages. We should be prepared to turn our back on the world by retreating into an ark of Judaism. There is nothing to be ashamed of hanging out with your own tribe and protecting oneself from the flood of con-

temporary culture.

However the Lubavitcher Rebbe once pointed out that this was not the final instruction that Noah received. There comes a time when you have to be ready to "leave the ark." You've laid down reserves of knowledge and skill, you've spent your childhood years studying G-dliness, now is the time to head off into the great wide world and share your gifts with others.

We have nothing to be ashamed of for wanting to protect ourselves behind walls of faith, but neither do we have a right to turn our back on those who come to learn. There is no excuse for ignoring or avoiding the world, but it is recommended that first you spend some time protecting yourself by acquiring knowledge.

Send your kids to a Jewish school. All Jews are made to feel welcome there and the sum of the parts make up a glorious whole. Let them stay there during their formative years, and you can be sure that when the time comes for them to head out and conquer the world they'll be all the better for the experience.

## What the Ark Taught Noah

*By Rabbi Boruch Cohen*

When the rains first fall at the beginning of the flood story, Noah is described as "a man of little faith," waiting for the waters to reach his knees or so before finally entering the ark.

Being that Noah had, at G-d's behest, dropped everything and spent the last 120 years building an enormous ark, to call him a man of little faith seems a bit extreme.

Similarly, the flood is referred to as "the waters of Noah," as though he — the only one worthy of being saved — were actually to blame for it. This is odd.

But the truth is that Noah *is* criticized in the flood story. He was surrounded by wicked people who needed a righteous leader to teach them and inspire them to goodness. Noah was righteous, but he wasn't a leader. He didn't give enough of himself to the generation.

So Noah entered the ark, a 450-foot floating sealed zoo. The lion roared, the bear growled, the dog barked and the duck quacked. The animals — everything from insects to elephants —