



## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

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GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

# It's Okay to Just Be Righteous

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Reuvein walked into a store to buy a certain product priced at 100 shekalim. The salesman knew that the owner would be announcing a sale the next week, and that product would be on sale for only 50 shekalim.

**Q** May the salesman inform Reuvein about the upcoming sale?

— CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE —>

...[No'ach] was a *tzaddik*—a righteous man; he was perfect in his generations. (6:9)

Jewish people—accusations of negligence, nepotism, and worse!

Being righteous isn't the same as being perfect. As Rabbi Moshe Feinstein sees it, the term "righteous" applies to someone who has been accused of wrongdoing, then acquitted. "Perfect," on the other hand, means just that—unblemished by even a hint of scandal.

People are aware of this, and many of them decide not to put themselves, their families, and their collective reputations at risk. They keep to themselves, and they pass up on opportunities to exert a positive influence on others.

That being the case, why does the Torah use both words to describe No'ach? If anything, calling him righteous diminishes him!

However, that's not what Hashem wants of us. When we are alone, we must try to be as perfect as humanly possible. But if we can help other people grow in Torah and the service of Hashem, we *must* help them—even though that sometimes requires us to bend over backward to preserve both our actual perfection and our good names as righteous people.\*

R' Moshe answers (in *Sefer Darash Moshe*) that righteousness and perfection each have a place. A person should strive for perfection, of course. But, he argues, sometimes it's better to follow No'ach's example and just be righteous.

No'ach was in such a position for many years. Hashem charged him with demonstrating to the entire world that its sins would be punished and that repentance was its only hope.

It's impossible to be an influencer or a public figure without coming under scrutiny. Often the result is cynicism and allegations on the part of the community, and one can only hope to emerge with a clean reputation. Sometimes innocent people are denied justice, and they're forever after seen in a bad light. Look at what even Moshe, the greatest servant of Hashem, had to endure while he led the

In this week's Torah portion, Hashem Himself testifies that No'ach discharged his duties faithfully. He was both perfect in fact and righteous in character. What praise could be better than that?

\* Rabbi Avigdor Miller used to make a similar point. The Talmud (*Shabbos* 52b) says that four people died without sin, including Yishai, the father of King David. In contrast, King David faced many tests and endured multiple allegations of impropriety—some of which are still, wrongly, held against him. Yet who is forever enshrined among our heroes? King David, of course! Rabbi Miller explained that it's relatively easy to remain pure if one simply avoids challenges. However, the only way to achieve true greatness is to put oneself on the line and take chances, even if that entails the risk of either making mistakes or appearing to make them.

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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

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**A** The salesman may not inform the buyer of the impending sale, thereby causing the owner to lose out, because we may reason that he has no right to do a favor for the buyer over the owner. However, if the buyer is a *Talmid Chacham*, a Torah scholar, then presumably the salesman should inform him, because everyone is obligated to honor and support him (see *Kesubos* 106a and *Bava Basra* 22a).

A story once occurred with a dentist who worked in a private practice in the afternoons, and in the mornings he would treat children in different schools at no charge for them, through a government subsidized program.

One afternoon, a man walked into the dentist's office with his young son to receive a dental treatment. The man was apparently unaware of his right to receive free treatment for his son in the mornings. We instructed the dentist to inform the father of his right, even though it will cause a loss to the private practice.

This, however, is different than our scenario, because in the dentist's case, the father has a privilege of receiving free dental care from the government, and he's just unaware, so the dentist must inform him of the privilege the government offers.

In our story, however, the buyer has no privilege to buy the merchandise a week later for less. Rather, the owner on his own accord decided to lower the price. Therefore, the salesman may not disclose the information to the buyer. 🥂



*Connecting  
over Torah*

## GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

IT WAS A ROUTINE, MINDLESS DRIVE DOWN THE turnpike for Malka. She noticed her gas tank was getting low and pulled into the gas station at the next exit. As the gas station attendant approached her car, Malka did a double-take. The attendant was a midget. Malka tried to be sensitive and not stare, but she noticed the man was staring . . . at the picture in her car. She rolled down her window, and the attendant asked, "I know that man. Why is his picture in your car?" Malka was taken aback. "That man is my father. Unfortunately,

he passed away several months ago; how did you know him?" Hearing Malka's words, the man was visibly distressed. "Your father was my friend. People never say anything to me when they stop, but your father would always get out of his car to talk to me. He gave me such strength. He would tell me I was an inspiration to him. It's so hard to hear that he's gone." Mindlessness was definitely left miles behind that day, as Malka gained new insight into the great man her father was. 🥂

## TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

In the year 1921, Cincinnati Samuel Frieder and his two sons, Alex and Phillip, arrived in the Philippines. Their objective was to find a new supplier for the cigar distribution company owned by Samuel's brother. Almost twenty years later, however, their presence in the Philippines would become a lifeline to over a thousand Jews from Germany. Alex and Phillip soon began to manufacture cigars from scratch and started their own cigar brand. Alex, Phillip, and two other brothers, Herbert and Morris, took turns living for two years at a time in the Philippine capital Manila to run their business. The brothers made friends with the high society of Manila, enjoying regular poker games with the likes of Manuel Quezon, President of the American Commonwealth of the Philippines, Paul McNutt, American High Commissioner, and Dwight Eisenhower, then an aide to Gen. Douglas MacArthur. When news of Nazi persecution reached the Philippines, the Frieder brothers used their poker games with these officials as planning sessions for getting Jews out of Germany. In all, they rescued 1200 Jews from Germany. The 1941 Japanese invasion of the Philippines halted the brothers' project. In an ironic twist, these German refugees received better treatment than refugees from other nations because Japan was allied with Germany, although the refugees were by no means spared the brutalities of war. 🥂

SOURCE: Ephraim, Frank. *Escape to Manila: From Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror*, University of Illinois Press, 2010.

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