

Noach was a righteous man, perfect in his generations. (6:9) For it is you that I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation. (7:1)

The *Ksav Sofer* notes the description of Noach, *tzaddik tamim*, righteous and perfect – which is found in the opening *pasuk* of the *parsha*, as opposed to the later reference to him only as a *tzaddik* – as he and his family are summoned to enter the *Teivah*, Ark. What changed from the earlier Noach to the later Noach? He explains that the transformation came as a result of his fathering three sons, one of whom was a morally reprehensible, pernicious individual, who refused to bow to authority. Apparently, a flaw had resided in the *tzaddik tamim* if he had produced such a son. Now, Noach was considered to be only a *tzaddik sans tamim*.

In his commentary to *Parashas Bereishis*, *Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl*, explains that children learn how to act from their parents, who are their first and primary mentors. (*Rebbeim* and *moros* can augment, and, at times, are compelled to “steer” their young charges toward better and more refined character traits and social/ethical demeanor, but primary education begins at home.) This does not mean that Cham’s reprehensible behavior was due to Noach; it only stands to reason, however, that after producing such a son, on some spiritually elevated plane there was some form of minute flaw in Noach – enough to remove his “*tamim*” status.

Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, was not only a Torah giant in his vast erudition, but also an extraordinary *mechanech*, Torah educator. He cautioned parents concerning the extreme care they should take with regard to leaving a negative imprint on the minds of their children: “A child is like an immigrant who comes to a new country. He makes observations and adopts the customs of his new home. If one’s parents are happy, smile often and help and cooperate with one another, the child learns that, in that particular country, this is the way people act. So, he also becomes like this.” When children get along, the older ones caring for their younger brothers and sisters, helping each one in whatever area that he/she is deficient, it shows that the parents live in harmony. If parents are contentious with one another, if their home is one of bickering and open animosity and fighting, their children will develop their parents’ mindset and apply it in their own lives.

Rav Simcha and his *Rebbetzin* never had biological children of their own. A *talmid* once asked him how it was that he had become such a particular outstanding authority on child-rearing. After all, an expert is one who usually develops in a field of his expertise. *Rav Simcha* replied, “I do have personal experience. I have the experience of how my parents raised me.”

Rav Simcha would say, “In life, we have our functions and, when we live up to them, it brings us happiness. One of the greatest of our functions is that of raising children, of raising generations. The most important concept to remember is that we have in our hands something which Hashem gave us to develop, to make into a worthy human being. The Torah does not want us to raise institutions. It wants us to raise people. The secret of raising people – not institutions – is

selflessness.”

Parents who do not care how they act, especially in front of their children – whose demeanor in public and private leaves much to be desired – are extremely selfish. They care only about themselves, their own self-gratification, while ignoring the needs of and the negative impact on their children. These are the same obtuse individuals who, later on in life when their children have emulated their offensive, callous behavior, wonder, “Where did we go wrong?”

We teach by the way we act. A parent’s actions speak much louder and stronger than anything he or she says. Our child defines who we are by how we are. Someone once came to the *Steipler Gaon, zl*, complaining about his son, “I do not know what to do any more. I try to discipline him, but it does not work. I keep on beating him, and I am unable to make him change his ways.” The *Steipler* responded to this (poor excuse of a father), “What I can guarantee you is that your son will grow up to be a beater!” When a parent maintains self-control, the child learns the importance of self-control. When a child sees an angry, intractable, violent parent, he/she does not stop to think and ask, “why?” (What is bothering my parent? What is provoking him/her to act so contemptibly?) Rather, they (after seeing such behavior too many times) begin to think that this manner of behavior is acceptable. In turn, they will follow suit. They have adopted to the “customs and lifestyle” of their “host country”: their parents.