

## HOW TO SURVIVE A STORM

Before one invests in a business, it is necessary to first conduct a comprehensive evaluation which will help to ascertain the true status of the fundamentals and the performance of the company.

As human beings it is certainly a very healthy habit to evaluate one's character traits and productivity periodically. Self evaluation is both necessary and highly effective in allowing us to recognise both our strengths and our weaknesses and also serves as an impetus to improve ourselves for the future.

The problem however, is that we as human beings are highly complex creatures and our defences kick into gear at any attempt to really self evaluate because we are afraid at what the mirror may reflect back to us.

In an attempt to deal with this challenge, the verse in this week's Torah portion provides a profound and beautiful metaphor, as it compares human beings to a tree. Trees have many components and features; however we will focus on perhaps the most important one of them.

One can divide the tree into two general parts: the part which can be seen from above the ground and the roots which lie beneath the surface. To most observers it is the mighty trunk, the multitude of branches and the rich and tasty fruit that are the main components that are necessary to look at when evaluating the quality and value of the tree. However, to the discerning few, it is precisely the part of the tree that cannot be easily observed, the part that lies below the radar that is in fact the most important component of the entire tree. It is the roots that burrow their way deep into the soil of the earth that ultimately determine the well being of the tree by providing it with sustenance and also tell us about its long term survival.

This timeless and timely metaphor is relevant today more than ever as we navigate a world that is bombarded with external and image pressures. When attempting to attribute value to evaluate our own value and performance, we must not do so based on our external appearance and achievements which can often distract us from developing our internal worlds. But rather, we must focus on the quality and strength of our roots which serve as the anchor to all that is real and eternal in our lives. The mystics compare these roots to our faith and conviction in G-d and his eternal people.

Whilst it is important to perform at an external level and make necessary contributions to society, it must not be at the expense of strengthening and invigorating our roots, which anchor us during those moments in time when severe "storms" pound us in all forms and from all directions. It is therefore important to expend energy, time and resources on strengthening our souls, for it is not the trunk, branches or fruit that will be protect us from strong winds, but rather the depth and quality of our roots that will enable us to withstand all the challenges that may come our way.

*By Yosef Vogel*

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Fri 29<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Shoftim

Shabbat Begins: 7.39pm

Shabbat Ends: 8.41pm