

TO INFLUENCE OR TO BE INFLUENCED

By: Rabbi Yosef Vogel

NOACH

Cheshvan 03, 5773

Human beings by nature are social animals. So writes the great Jewish scholar Maimonides.

As we walk down the street, ride the subway, watch television or browse the internet, our senses are observing and processing an abundant amount of information which is then assimilated into our internal systems, ultimately moulding our minds and hearts.

Although this process is highly complex it occurs on a continuous basis on both a conscious and subconscious level.

The above leaves us with a very daunting challenge. How do we protect ourselves and our children from the sometimes negative and hostile influences that exist in our modern secular societies?

At the dawn of history, after generations of paganism and moral decadence, a righteous man emerges. His story is unique and astonishing, in that notwithstanding his living in a society of utter lawlessness and corruption, he nevertheless maintained a moral and ethical way of life.

What is the secret behind maintaining one's core values and beliefs in a world that is an antithesis to all for which one stands.

Let us use a simple metaphor. Just as a car has many gears which allows us to guide the vehicle in many directions and at varying speeds, so too do we human beings have various modes of living and interacting with the world around us.

On a most basic level we can choose to operate on one of two modes: "to be influenced by the world around us" or "to act to influence others".

Noah chose to change the course of history by standing up to very powerful and destructive forces that were highly pervasive in his day. Although he might not have achieved much success in convincing others to join him, he does however succeed in setting into motion a tipping point which serves to give momentum to all future generations in their ability not to be influenced by the negative forces that sometimes pervade society.

19th October

Sedra: **Noach**

Shabbat Begins: 17.44pm

Shabbat Ends: 18.44pm

So if we want to preserve our values and beliefs for ourselves and our children, we must remember that in life there are only two dynamic modes of existence; either we are influencing others, or we are being influenced by others. There is no static mode. The choice is ours.

19th October

Sedra: **Noach**

Shabbat Begins: 17.44pm

Shabbat Ends: 18.44pm