



From Rabbi Weber

When I was invited to spend two days on an aircraft carrier at sea, I knew it would be an adventure; what I didn't realize was how much it would teach me about raising children.

The adventure itself was awesome, although "awesome" doesn't suffice to describe it. If you've ever seen "Top Gun" you might think you know what to expect, but you would be wrong. Landing on an aircraft carrier (no, I was not the pilot!) was the most violent flying I had ever done... until the catapult shot us off into the air the next day. And being on the flight deck while fighter jets were taking off and landing was hot, loud and a little nerve-wracking, as everything happens in very close quarters. Even trying to get some sleep was an experience, as my bunk was located directly beneath the catapult and flight ops went on until 2 a.m. My bunkmate and I laughed every time a jet was launched right above our heads, and we wondered how anyone could cope with that noise that every night. The answer we got was, "When you get tired enough you'll sleep through anything." I'll take their word for it, because I didn't sleep.

The USS Eisenhower is a floating city, with 5,000 residents. The average age is 24, which made me feel really, really old. But I was inspired by the maturity they displayed: 18- and 19-year olds responsible for multi-million dollar jets and a multi-billion dollar carrier.

"If I don't get the flight plans printed, the planes don't fly," the printer said proudly. "If the food isn't prepared properly, people get sick and the planes don't fly," explained the mess hall workers. "These kids can't bring their problems with them onto the flight line, or someone will get hurt," the chaplain said. The ship's motto is, "One ship, one mission," and they do an extraordinary job of helping every one of the thousands of sailors understand that their job is critical to the whole job.

I asked the Commanding Officer how he was able to nurture such maturity in teenagers; believe me, I've known some in my time – and even raised a few – and seldom have I seen such responsible, focused young men and women. The CO's answer was simple and direct: "We give them responsibility, hold them responsible and don't allow them to make excuses when they screw up."

I've thought about that sentence a lot since I returned to dry land, and I think he is on to something we should all consider. In our roles as parents and grandparents, as teachers (formal and informal), coaches and role models for growing children, we

would serve young people better by "giving them responsibility, holding them responsible and not allowing them to make excuses when they screw up," than we do by looking for someone else to blame when a child doesn't perform as we expect or as we want.

The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that we make it harder for our children to grow up – to mature, not just to get older – when we make excuses for their mistakes and their failures. Making mistakes – "screwing up," in the CO's words – is not just a part of life; it is an important part. We learn more from our mistakes than from our successes, because the lessons we learn from them are more powerful. But if those around us keep telling us "it's not your fault" each time we make a mistake, we won't be able to own the mistakes, to correct them, to learn from them... and to grow.

I wish you could have seen the self-confidence displayed by the sailors on "The Ike." I also wish you could have seen the pride on the face of their Commanding Officer when he said, "If you want to see the best that America's next generation has to offer, come see the men and women of the Ike." His was no false pride, no rose-colored glasses; it was based on seeing young people rise to the responsibilities he gives them, and seeing them step up and admit it when they screw up.

When the Ike deploys to combat this winter, my prayers will go with the men and women, only recently boys and girls, of her crew. And I hope that what I learned from them will inspire me as a teacher and as a parent.

Comments? Sign on to the rabbi's blog at www.rabbi.trt.org.



From the Desk of Rabbi Stern:

A rabbi once asked his students how one knows when night has ended and the day has come. One student said, "Is it when you can tell a palm tree from a fig tree?" No, said the rabbi. Another mused, "Could it be when

you can tell a sheep from a goat?" No, replied the rabbi. A third student said, "It's when you can tell a rabbit from a dog." No, said the rabbi. The students were confused and demanded an answer. So the rabbi said: "It is daylight when you can look into the face of another human being and recognize that he or she is your brother or sister. Until then," he said, "it is night."

How do we teach our kids the difference between night and day? How do we get them to stop the

moment before they make fun of a friend, or isolate a new student, or mistreat a sibling? How do we teach them maturity when they are still so young?

Family values. Jewish values. Derech Eretz – the way to behave. Last year, we focused our Religious School around monthly middot like forgiveness, repentance, compassion and gratitude. We made some beautiful love notes for February, compassionate PowerPoint presentations in May and suitably earnest letters of contrition in September. Our students from K-7 managed, with the help of their teachers, to grasp the simple meaning of each value. But did we push hard enough for them to go beyond understanding the lesson; did we help them to integrate the learning into their own daily routines? Time will tell.

So this year we will try to go deeper, encouraging our children to wrestle with each new concept until they have figured out for themselves how to bring about positive change into the world in their own small way. The middot I have chosen for this year require more than a pat answer or a simple completion of an assignment. How we do show that we have a generous heart, or that we understand what it means to do loving deeds of justice? How can we repair the world, or show that we love God, or are loved ourselves? (Yes, this IS on the test.) I offer you the complete list so that you can explore these ideas with your student when you're driving carpool, waiting to check out groceries or watching the puppies in the window at the mall. These nine Jewish values are best learned as family traditions: "This is how we do things, even if it's not the way everyone else does them." Take your time with each one, and if you come up with a wonderful way to express the middah of the month, let us know. We'll compile a booklet at the end of the year with everyone's input. If you are willing to push your own envelope, your children will follow your example... and know the difference between night and day.

- September:** *Yirah – Awe*
- October:** *Ohev et haMakom – Loving God*
- November:** *Lev tov – A Generous Heart*
- December:** *Sameach b'Chelko – Being Happy with What You Have*
- January:** *Letaken et HaOlam – Repairing the World*
- February:** *Ohev et haBriyot – Loving All Creatures*
- March:** *Ahuv – Being Loved*
- April:** *Binat haLev – An Understanding Heart*
- May:** *Ohev Tzedakah – Loving Deeds of Justice*

SEPTEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

TRT's first Rock Shabbat

a new, musical Shabbat service with our own enlarged Ruach Band and guest singer/songwriter, and band director,

Eric Komar

September 9, 2011, 8:00PM

Sponsored by Anita and Jerry Bronfeld in honor of the marriage of Kenny and Joni Bronfeld



Special Onegs after Services

**September 2, 2011, 8:00PM,
CLUB 35**

Anyone in Grades 3, 4, 5

**September 16, 2011, 8:00PM,
CLUB 67 and the Teen Zone**

Grades 6/7 and Grades 8-12

High Holiday Tickets are available for pick-up:

September 11, 2011, 10:00AM–12:00PM

September 13, 2011, 6:00PM–8:00PM

September 15, 2011, 6:00PM–8:00PM

**From September 16, 2011 through
September 27, tickets will be available
for pick-up in the temple office,
10:00AM–3:00PM**

**The office will be closed
September 28 through September 30**



TRT Junior Choir will be starting up September 15

Friday, May 6, 2011 at 6:30PM

Do you love to sing?

Do you have friends who love to sing?

Come learn special melodies and perform for your family and classmates!

We will be singing music for holidays, some Friday Night Services, Religious School Assemblies, and most of all for FUN.

**We will meet for rehearsals every Thursday
before Religious School starts, 4:30-4:55 pm
starting September 15.**

**RSVP to Cantor Joanna Alexander
732-308-2311 or
Cantor.Alexander.TRT@gmail.com**

