



Reprinted from Moment Magazine, November/December 2010, "Ask the Rabbis" column

Who is your favorite Biblical character?

Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

Biblical characters are routinely flawed and fallible, which is what makes them approachable. It is also what makes them collectively favored over cartoon-like superheroes who are only two dimensional.

For me, no one Biblical character stands out above the rest but I do have great admiration for anyone of them who displays the trait of courage.

I extol Abraham's bravery and fortitude for taking on God over Sodom and Gomorrah and the injustice of the planned slaying of good people along with the bad.

Likewise, I have great praise for Moses when he dared to temper God's anger and plead for compassion when God was about to slay the people for making and worshipping a golden calf.

I admire Esther who earns our respect for standing up to Ahaseurus on behalf of her people and who stands for all the strong and brave women of the Bible who went unnamed.

And, as my son reminded me, I have enormous respect for Nahshon who, according to the midrash, was the first to jump into the Red Sea and set in motion its parting.

This last deed may be the most admirable of all. Nahshon's act was not a case of stepping up to authority but stepping out into the utter unknown. Rather than allow events to take hold of him, he chose, instead, to be the master of his own destiny.