

FROM THE PULPIT

Excerpts from messages being presented at area places of worship this weekend.

Rabbi Mordechai Levin, Beth El Synagogue

When Great Britain's singing sensation, Susan Boyle, took the stage at a



Levin

TV talent show several weeks ago, she was greeted with prejudice and giggles from a skeptical audience and judges. However, her powerful performance surprised judges and captivated millions of people worldwide. The audience and the judges clearly had judged her based on their own misguided stereotypes. How many of us do the same in our daily lives?

Sometimes we misjudge others by

reaching hasty conclusions based on stereotypes and appearance. We are critical of others who have different points of view or because they do not live up to our preconceived notions. We misjudge people based on our very limited knowledge of them and their circumstances.

We tend to respond positively toward those whom we like. Those whom we dislike tend to be judged less kindly. Their actions may be the same, but our attitude toward each individual makes the difference. Sometimes our judgment of others says more about ourselves than the subject of our criticism.

Judaism constantly teaches us about this. For instance, we read in the Mishnah: "Do not look at the jar but at its contents"; "Do not judge your fellow human being till you stand in his situation"; and "Judge every person favorably." Everyone makes judgments of one kind or another. The Hebrew Bible's commandment (Leviticus 19:15) "with justice you shall judge your neighbor," is directed to each of us. Whenever we judge others, we should do it

righteously.

Barry L. Vennard, senior minister, Unity Church of Omaha

"The Transformative Nature of Service" is the title of the 10:30 a.m. service at the Unity Church of Omaha this Sunday. Spiritually based service is a core human value. When it is divinely guided, it has the potential to help transform human hearts and minds into a conscious state of oneness with God, with each other and with all creation.

The conscious state of compassionate oneness is what Jesus described as the coming Kingdom of Heaven. That kingdom is the salvation of each of us individually and all of us together and is something that is meant for this world.

In these rapidly changing times and with the emergence of current and potential global crisis, the need for human beings to awaken to their interconnectedness — their oneness — with God, each other and the natural world is becoming ever more critical.