

## When Noach awoke from his wine, he learned what his youngest son did to him. And he said, “Cursed be Canaan.” (9:24,25)

Three sons – two acted appropriately – one did not. Noach acted in a manner unbecoming an individual of his sublime stature. It was a temporary lapse, an error in judgment, after having observed the destruction of the entire world. He did not commit an outrageous sin, but he should have acted in a more exalted manner. *Vayachel Noach*, “Noach debased himself” (Ibid 9:20). We see that even great people can lose control of themselves and act foolishly. The reaction of Noach’s sons defines their characters. Crisis brings out a person’s true essence. Some children are wonderful, as long as everything acquiesces with their comfort zone. If a parent acts in a manner that leaves children wondering, how/ why? their reaction will reflect their true character and also show the way in which they were raised. Parents are people, and people are not perfect. Children are not here to judge their parents; but rather, to give support and comfort.

In his commentary to the *Chumash*, **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, teaches us how children should act. Indeed, he posits that the way children act towards their parents will be reciprocated in the manner in which their own children will deal with them. The younger generation must stand reverently at the grave of their predecessors. They must take a garment (as did Shem and Yafes) and cover the ‘nakedness’, the weakness of their forebears, while simultaneously emulating all that was noble, great and true. They should adopt these good qualities as a precious heritage upon which to build their own lives and a future legacy to be imparted to the next generation.

If, however, the new generation is like Cham, who gloated over his father’s nakedness, and broadcasted his father’s shame, he will have the same end as Cham – a son like Canaan to follow in his nefarious footsteps. Those descendants who exult in the shortcomings of their ancestors– often as a reason to justify their own miscreant behavior, or as license to deride their spiritual traditions– will be repaid in kind. When the future generation scorns the past, and contemptuously break their bond with it, then their future plans will be but a dream, or a nightmare. As they jeered at the memory of their forebears, so, too, will their descendants mock them.

*Rav Hirsch* had strong reason to take umbrage with the attitude of members of his generation. It was during his tenure as *Rav* that the miscreant secular movements reared their ugly heads to break with the past, to usurp the holy Torah which had been our undisputed cannon of Jewish Law and blueprint for life for thousands of years. He was a wise man who saw the tragic consequences of their actions. They broke with the past which they labeled as archaic, out of touch, restrictive and undermining the future assimilation of the Jewish people with the rest of the world community. Ashamed of their past, their descendants severed their relationship with completely Judaism by marrying out of the faith, thus ensuring that their own biological children would not be considered Jewish. Cham was Canaan’s father, and his moral turpitude seems to have been guiding the “Canaans” of future generations – until this very day.