

And Cham saw...his father's nakedness and told his two brothers. And Shem and Yafes took a garment...and covered the nakedness of their father and their faces were backward. (9:22,23)

We have here before us a distinction between the two reactions among Noach's sons, the reaction of Cham as opposed to that of his brothers, Shem and Yafes. Cham observes an indiscretion on the part of his father, and he immediately exploits it. Not only does Cham jest about his father's failing, but he also goes out of his way to publicize it. He shows no filial respect whatsoever. His two brothers, on the other hand, throw the mantle of love over their father's weakness; they turn their heads away, so even they would not view their father's shame.

We can derive an important lesson from this narrative. Children cannot help but detect fault in their parents. It may be something in their physical appearance, their demeanor, or in some cases, religious orientation. The *Torah* teaches us the attitude one must display towards a parent's shortcomings. One must never mock or belittle a parent! Moreover, one should turn his head and ignore what might be apparent to others. Shem and Yafes walked backwards. They refused to take note of their father's inebriated state. They did not want to be cognizant of his present circumstances. Their act defines filial love.

Not all homes are perfect, and not all parents are paragons of virtue, social graces and culture. Some parents speak with an accent; others have a difficult time earning their daily bread, perhaps even being employed in positions that might prove "embarrassing" to their children. It is regrettable that many individuals in today's society thrive upon disdaining those who are not on the same social plateau as they. This writer once witnessed a somewhat heated conversation between a mother and her son. The mother, a recent ?migr? to the United States, was preparing to go to Parent's Night at the local Day School. Due to his parent's conscientiousness and hard work, the young boy had acclimated very quickly to the new culture. He actually spoke and dressed the part of a young American *Yeshiva* Day School student. Prior to his mother's departure for the meeting, the child expressed concern about his mother's lack of "American" style clothing. He told her, "Try also not to speak too much because of your accent. I do not want you to embarrass me." When the mother heard this unintended insult from her child, she responded with tears streaming down her face, "I am your mother regardless of what I wear and how I speak. I came to this country to provide for you a better life than I had. Remember that whatever you have, it is because I have lovingly provided it for you, sometimes at great personal and financial expense. Do not ever be ashamed of your mother!" Perhaps this is an admonition we should all heed.