

## And Cham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his brothers outside. (9:22)

"The apple does not fall far from the tree" is a well-known maxim. Let us attempt to cultivate a picture of Cham and Canaan, his son, to better understand the flawed character manifest by Cham, which was transmitted to his son, Canaan. Canaan, whose moral degeneracy ultimately exceeded even that of his father and mentor. The Canaanite nation was a most despicable people, having sunk to such an abyss that the land/*Eretz Yisrael* which they had inhabited could no longer tolerate their residence. Mitzrayim, Egypt, was a cousin and paralleled Canaan in moral bankruptcy. Two apples from the Cham tree. If Noach had a flaw, a weakness in his character, Cham inherited and magnified it. Canaan outdid his father. The lesson for us is obvious and invaluable: children pick up on every flaw, and, in the course of its development, evolution, augment it, as we see with Canaan.

Let us analyze Cham's actions vis-à-vis his father. Noach debased himself, but he did so in his tent. It was not a public spectacle. For whatever reason, Noach revealed a side of himself that following the Flood and all of its accompanying tension, emerged in a negative behavioral display. It could have, however, been kept respectfully quiet, concealed within the confines of the tent. Cham did not think so. Already a father himself, he was aware of the effect his denigration of Noach would have on his son, Canaan, Cham related the incident in gory detail to his brother, thoroughly enjoying his father's shame, not realizing that, with his actions, he was destroying three lives: his father, himself, his son.

*Klal Yisrael* is later warned concerning the two nations that descended from Cham. *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, posits that Egypt's social degeneracy and Canaan's moral turpitude both were the "apples" that sprouted from Cham's tree. It all began with Cham's reprehensible behavior towards his father. The entire world of humanity is predicated on the relationship of children towards their parents. *Rav Hirsch* expands on this idea. Parents are present for their children (indeed, their children should be the focus of their lives): the mother is the condition for their existence; the father's life should be devoted to the well-being of his children. Both, however, are predicated on the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud Av v'Eim*, Honoring one's father and mother. This *mitzvah* retains critical importance and stands as the keystone of the first Tablet (*mitzvah* five) of the Ten Commandments. The significance and functionality of this *mitzvah* relies on the children's ability to view their parents as the repository of Hashem's mission and to look up to them because of the spiritual being within them. If the spiritual faction is absent from the child's mind, if parents are no more than physical beings who begot them, if reverence for the parents is missing (or, at best, infrequent), then the stem connecting the child to the parents, the stem through which the future nurturing should nourish, has been severed. Without *kavod*, we can have no future.

Two words in Hebrew apply to inheritance: *yerushah*; and *nachalah*. *Rav Hirsch* explains that the distinction between the two is that the *yoresh* supplants his predecessor. Being younger, stronger and more vigorous, the second/younger generation usurps the place of the older generation and

steps into its shoes. *Yorash* is to dispossess someone (related to *gorash*, drive out, banish). Our intergenerational relationship is one of *nachalah*, a stream, a flow, in which the older, previous generation transfers its strength and powers, its spiritual and material treasures, to the younger, next generation. Thus, the older generation remains reverently within the picture.

We have before us what can be considered to be the root of the family crisis that emerges more often than we would like to reveal: a lack of honor for parents. We are presented with two options that are dependent upon how one raises his/her children. When parents have demands, expectations, and accountability, all expressed in a rational, loving manner, the children will respect and give honor to parents. When children are able to recognize the spiritual lessons of the past, it allows for the transition from parents to children to flow smoothly as a *nachalah*, stream. The other alternative, *yerushah*, is when the younger generation ignores its predecessor and ultimately seizes its bounty from the older, weaker generation. This, unfortunately, is the accepted way of life commonplace for a *ben* Noach.