

Noah: The Dishonored Parent

✖ In the second weekly reading of the Torah, *Noach* (Noah), we meet a man of God building an ark at his Master's direction. This ark, built in a dry desert must have seemed so strange to the neighbors. "Hey, look at that nut, Noah; his god told him to build a huge boat, far from water, and he is doing just that. How odd, they must have thought. But Noah persisted because he was "righteous, wholehearted and walked with God."

Yet, as godly as this man was, one of his sons didn't inherit much of that spirit. In fact, Ham, one of three sons, was cursed through his son, Canaan. What would cause a godly man like Noah to curse the descendents of one of his own sons, his actual grandchildren? Did he have a bad temper? Was he given to fits of anger? Was he just hung over from his drinking bout the night before? All this might be possible, but there's a greater meaning to this curse.

The three sons of Noah were called to repopulate the earth after the Flood. What an awesome responsibility. They just literally saw humanity wiped out. Their lives were spared. And now they are asked to bring humanity back in to existence, per instructions from Above. But something went wrong.

Noah, after harvesting his grapes, got drunk, the Torah says. These grapes must have had time to ferment, so this was probably some time after the rainbow, the sign of God's promise to never destroy humanity again by flood. There must have been time for Noah to teach his sons the ways of the God with whom he walked, so there was no excuse for what happened.

Noah was apparently so drunk that he "lay uncovered in his tent." When Ham saw this, he went to get his brothers, obviously making fun of dear old dad. This demonstrated lack

of respect for his father, whereas, the two other brothers covered their father by “walking backward, so they did not see their father lying there shamefully exposed.”

As a consequence of Ham's actions, Noah, knowing what had happened, placed a horrendous curse, not on Ham, but on Ham's descendent, Canaan. Why was this so serious that generations into the future would bear this curse? It's sort of like what happened to Ananias and Sapphira.

These two new believers (Acts 5:1-11) said they had sold property to contribute to the welfare of their Messianic community, but they held back some of the money for themselves, thus lying to the Holy Spirit. Their little “white lie” was met with a very serious response. They both died!

Just as God was warning his first Messianic community (aka the “church) to be as pure as possible as they rebuilt Israel, spiritually, so too was God making a statement to the people who were going to rebuild humanity. What was that statement? Essentially, it was the Fifth Commandment: “Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land which ADONAI your God is giving to you.”

In order to begin this new humanity in a way that would lead it away from the sin of the Tower of Babel and other debauchery, through this judgment upon Noah's son, Canann, God was once also establishing his structure for success-parents are to be honored by their children.

Ham was dishonoring his dad by looking at his nakedness. In a way, when Ham did this he was diminishing Noah's position, like when a kid makes fun of his teacher. God wanted his people to show proper respect to parents, in this case, fathers. The New Testament expands upon this to say that wives are to show their husbands respect, too. Once this becomes upside down, society doesn't know which way is up or down. If we watch TV for only one night, we'll see many instances where

men are put down by their wives, but especially their children. This has led to the destruction of many families.

When wives don't show respect to their husbands (or husbands don't love their wives), this teaches children that this is the behavior to emulate. Then, children who need direction from their dads don't have a healthy enough relationship with them to learn from them. This is why Noah was so hard on Ham. He was concerned for the new humanity and wanted to set an example through Ham.

"To whom much is given, much is required." Ham, one of the three sons of Noah, called to repopulate the earth, had a huge responsibility, and he blew it. He had an opportunity to lovingly cover his father's transgressions, but instead, he exposed them. Unless Noah acted firmly, this could lead to chaos in families, which it often still does. Although Moses hadn't yet written the Fifth Commandment, it existed innately. Children showing respect to parents is a right thing, something even seen in societies that don't really follow God.

Ham (and his descendents), because of his sin, didn't inherit the blessing of living long in the beautiful Land, Israel. Israel ultimately wiped them out of the Land, fulfilling God's promise that those who don't honor their parents will NOT live long on the earth.