



הרב הראשי הרב מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, ת"ת דרך המלך,
שיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad MORDECHAI MALKA, Israel Founder & President Institutions "Or Hamelech"



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Parashat Noach

Man is Led Along the Path that He Wishes to Tread

The *parashah* states (9:20), "Noach, the man of the earth, debased [*va'yichal*] himself and planted a vineyard: (21) And he drank from the wine and became drunk, and he became uncovered inside his tent."

Our Sages Comments on the Words "Man of the Earth"

The *Targum Yonatan ben Uziel* writes that Noach began to work the land, and he found a vine that had been carried there by the river from Gan Eden. He went and planted it. That day, it sprouted and produced fruit. The fruits ripened, and he removed the grapes. He pressed them and made wine, drank them, and became drunk. This is also brought in the Midrash. The Midrash Rabbah (36:3) furthermore expounds on the words, "*vayichal Noach*, And Noach debased himself." They expound that *vayichal* alludes to the fact that he made himself *chullin*, mundane, because he should have planted something else before planting a vine. The *pasuk* refers to Noach as an "*ish ha'adamah*, a man of the earth," on which the Sages expound that Moshe was more beloved than Noach. For Noach is first referred to as an "*ish tzaddik*, a righteous man" and then called a "man of the earth." However, Moshe was first referred to as an "*ish Mitzri*, an Egyptian," and later is called an "*Ish Elokim*, a man of G-d." It is clearly stated in the Midrash and cited by Rashi, that this action of planting a vine lowered Noach to the extent that he is called an a "man of the earth" instead of a "man of G-d," and that by becoming drunk he debased himself.

Questions:

- 1- Why did this act render Noach a man of the earth as opposed to a man of G-d?
- 2- Furthermore, why was it necessary for Hashem to make such a miracle, i.e., that on the very day Noach planted the vine it produced fruit from which he pressed wine and became drunk? Perhaps if this had occurred at a natural pace, he would not have become drunk?

Man is Obligated to Contemplate and Awaken Himself

However, our Sages are teaching us a fundamental principal regarding Hashem's relationship to man. Man is required to contemplate the events in the world, using his wisdom and knowledge to understand from all that transpires what Hashem wants from us. He should not turn a blind eye to what is going on in the world. However, the nature of man is that even after he sees revolutions, decrees, and supernatural powers in the world, he nevertheless, does not arouse himself to think about what Hashem wants from him. He does not feel that the events in the world have any connection to him. He therefore remains complacent thinking that the world is simply running naturally. Hashem gives man free choice, and he is led upon whichever path he chooses to tread. He therefore can remain complacent if he chooses to. I remember the Gulf-War, when Scud missiles were being fired at Israel. We saw individuals who had witnessed how a Scud missile had leveled an entire building around them, yet they remained alive, and in total health. Something like this should have immediately aroused an individual to do a thorough soul searching and mend his ways. However, people returned to their daily routine as if nothing had happened.

Story About the Chafetz Chayim

A Jewish merchant from faraway China who, due to business matters, travelled around the world, met the Chafetz Chayim. The Chafetz Chayim asked him what was happening in China. The merchant answered that all was well and things were as they usually were. But the Chafetz Chayim asked him if there had not recently been a tragedy in China. He responded that there indeed had been. In China, he said, there is a large dam that was built in order to prevent water from spreading. Afterwards, they dried that portion of land, built houses, and settled the area. However, years later, the dam burst and decimated the entire area, destroying the houses and killing tens of thousands. The Chafetz Chayim was shocked and began to cry over the very terrible tragedy. The merchant asked the Chafetz Chayim why he was so upset: the people who suffered from this tragedy were gentiles – what difference did it make if a tragedy befell them? The Chafetz Chayim responded with a question, asking the merchant if he had ever been in the market in Warsaw. The merchant responded that he had been.



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He then asked what would happen if he stood on chair in the market and started to speak words of *mussar* – would people listen to him? The merchant replied that practically everybody in the market were gentiles and they would therefore not understand what he was saying. Only if a Jew would pass by, would his words have a chance of being heeded. The Chafetz Chayim then told him, "Listen to what you are saying. If you speak *mussar* in the market, the gentiles would not understand; only if a Jew would pass by would there be someone to talk to. So too, when Hashem brings a tragedy to the world, is He speaking to the gentiles who do not believe? They will certainly not listen. If so, to whom is Hashem speaking? There is no doubt that He is speaking to the Jewish Nation. However, in order to avoid punishing the Jews, He shows us that He controls the world. It happens to the Nation of the World so that the Jews should see, hear, and accept reproach. This is the obligation of every man – to contemplate how Hashem directs the world and to examine his ways."

The Claim Against Noach

Noach witnessed an indescribable event, one that had never been seen since the time of the creation of the world. Prior to entering the ark he saw the world as it had been – laden with houses, fields, orchards, and the like. However, when he exited the ark, he stood stunned, seeing how everything had been wiped out. Nothing was left except for the ground, bare of grass, trees, people, and buildings. These moments must have certainly shaken him up and they required him to arouse himself and examine how he would thank Hashem for saving him. This was meant to spur him to ascend to greater heights than he had been on until now. However, he started to work the land, and the first thing he planted was a vine, so that he could make wine. Why was wine so alluring? Even if his intention was to possess wine for *kiddush* and *havdalah*, there was still a claim why he had to drink so much of it?

This shows us that Noach descended from his level, and from previously being a lofty individual, he became an "ish adamah, a man of the earth." Despite the fact that a miracle was performed and the vineyard was planted and grown that same day, it was due to the following reason: Hashem leads a person along the path that he wishes to go. The moment that he chooses a particular path, Hashem presents it to him. This is the power of man's free choice. Given the world's purified state following the flood, it was fitting for miracles to be performed, to the extent that the fruit sprouted and was made into wine on the very same day.

An Allusion to the Way of the Yetzer Hara

Our Sages also relate that Satan came and requested to be Noah's partner. He agreed and slaughtered a lamb, lion, and pig on the vine. This hints to the fact that when man drinks the first cup of wine, he is still comparable to a gentle lamb. If he drinks more, he thinks of himself like a lion and speaks like a mighty individual. When he drinks another cup, however, he loses control of his intellect and acts like a pig, sullyng himself, vomiting, etc. He therefore slaughtered a lamb, lion, and pig [טלה אריה חזיר] the *roshei teivot* of which spell *cheit* [חטא], sin.

Story About the Drunkard

It is similarly stated in a Midrash (cited in *Yalkut Sippurim* 10) that there was a particular righteous man whose father was constantly drunk. He would lie in the streets and people would laugh at him, causing him and his family much disgrace. His sons constantly urged him to stop doing this and instead of drinking in a tavern, to at least drink in his house and then go to sleep. The son always explained to his father how much embarrassment this caused them when he would fall and spread himself out on the floor and children and young men would mock him. One time, the righteous son went to pray, and on his way, he saw a drunk man lying on the floor in a puddle of water. Children were laughing at him and throwing rocks and mud, etc. at him. The son decided that this was a golden opportunity to show his father how people were treating him when he was drunk, and maybe it would cause him to improve his ways. He went home, brought his father, and told him to look at the drunkard. The father bent over and asked the drunkard, "Where did you get such good wine that can make you so drunk?" The son exclaimed to the father, "Is this why I brought you here? Instead of learning a lesson, you are compounding your sin!"

In a different place (*Yalkut Sippurim* 12) a continuation of the story is brought:



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The children of the drunkard suffered terribly from him, and they could not find a cure for their father. Therefore, when he was drunk one time, they brought him to a cemetery and placed him in a cave there. Perhaps this would inspire him to mend his ways. However, when he was in the cave, merchants on donkeys passed by. They were carrying barrels of wine to bring into the city in order to sell. However, they heard commotion in the city, and they were unsure if it was worthwhile for them to bring in their wine to sell. They therefore decided to put their barrels down so that they would not get damaged. Afterwards, they would check what was taking place in the city and would know if it was worthwhile to bring in their merchandise. They placed the wine in the exact cave where the drunkard was lying. Since it was dark, however, they did not see him, and they placed the barrel directly beside his mouth. When the drunkard awoke, he found a barrel of wine beside his mouth with the spout pointing directly at his mouth. He opened it and began to drink until he became drunk again and once again fell asleep with the wine constantly pouring out. After three days, his sons decided to go see what was happening with their father. They went and found him sleeping with a barrel beside his mouth; the spout was opened and the wine was flowing. They therefore said, "If Hashem made you a miracle to such an extent, we will not prevent you from drinking." From here we see how Hashem gives an individual the ability to go in the way that he chooses. Sometimes he sees this and thinks that he is on the proper path; but actually Hashem wishes to test him so that he should overpower his *yetzer hara*. This is similar to what we find in *Parashat Bo* with Pharaoh. Hashem said to Moshe, "For I am hardening his heart." Our Sages teach that initially, Hashem gave Pharaoh free choice. However, after he acted stubbornly, the path to proper behavior was closed before him, since this was the path that he desired for himself [see *Lekach Tov Shemot* pg. 55.]

Words of Mussar

From here we see that one must learn that there is a requirement for every individual to contemplate the events that take place in the world and to learn a lesson from them. He must exert even more of an effort in his Divine service. When he puts forth more of an effort in *avodat Hashem*, Hashem will assist him and free him from disturbances that prevent him from learning. On the other hand, if an individual does not contemplate the world's events and views them as mere happenstance, he does not increase his efforts. He finds an excuse to push off attending a Torah *shiur*, performing a mitzvah, praying with a *minyan*, and the like. For Hashem opens the gate to this path as well, and he will always find reasons that appear to him as valid. Experience attests to the fact that when an individual studies Torah, he is freed from the yoke of earning a livelihood. Yet when *bein hazmanin* arrives and Torah study decreases, there are an endless amounts of distractions that prevent him from learning. See the words of the Rambam (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 6:5) that sometimes Hashem does not allow an individual to perform *teshuvah*. This can be understood according to what we have stated, that Hashem leads an individual along the path that he wishes to follow. This was the claim against Noach, why after witnessing such a phenomenal event like the flood that destroyed the world, that he first thought to plant a vineyard so that he would have wine to drink. Should have planted something else instead. Since he had already chosen this path and planted a vineyard, the gate was opened for him, and the grapes grew that day, from which he made wine.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka