

Parshat Noach- Vineyard Vignette

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

What was the essence of Noach? Was he the "righteous man" or "a man of the earth," as he is called after the flood? He was named Noach (meaning rest) because according to Rashi, he was destined to invent farming tools to ease the curse of Adam's sin. So then why is the term "man of the earth" viewed so pejoratively later? Why does the *Torah* say Noach debased himself (*vayochel*) by planting a vineyard? How did it transform his essence?

There are two definitions of *vayochel*, debased and began, and they are intertwined in the verse. Planting a vineyard is not a negative action. After all, wine was used for the sacrifices and is used to sanctify the Shabbat. In fact, says the Netivot Chayim, Noach's motivation may have been positive. Perhaps precisely because Noach was a man of the earth now, after having spent so much time in the ark in the presence of Hashem, that he may now have felt a spiritual emptiness, a *choli*. As the *Yalkut Lekach Tov* explains, perhaps Noach planted the vineyard to get the wine, to be joyful and regain his earlier spiritual level.

But in the process Noach made several errors. First, wine only gladdens on a spiritual level when it is shared. Noach drank alone, points out the Chayei Moshe, and thus fell prey to the distortions of truth wine can cause. Further, if one has such lofty spiritual goals, one must be very careful that they aren't

tainted with any element of physicality. The fact that planting the vineyard was Noach's first act and the end result was drunkenness, bear witness that his motives were not purely spiritual, explains the Seforno.

The Siach Yitzchak explains the duality within Noach, the righteous man who walked with God versus the man of the earth. As we all do, he had both a *yetzer tov* and a *yetzer ra*. These are in constant conflict, each wanting to dominate. Our deeds decide which will prevail. Noach was a man of the earth, all his life, but before the flood and while in the ark, he kept his physical side in check and was a *Tzadik* who walked with God. After having survived the deluge, he loosened the reins and let his *yetzer hara* prevail, becoming the *Ish Adamah*. It was Noach himself who defined who he was. As Rabbi Frand points out, we define ourselves by how we perceive ourselves and by our priorities. Do we see ourselves as a Jew first and a professional second? Noach reinvented himself by his job, a builder of the earth, rather than still a servant of God whose job now became rebuilding the earth.

Rabbi Frand points out an interesting contrast between Noach and Moshe Rabbenu. Noach went from an *Ish Tzadik* to an *Ish Adamah*, while Moshe was transformed from an *Ish Mitzri*, an Egyptian, to the greatest Eved Hashem, servant of God. What accounted for these differing directions? The *Areshet Sefoteynu* points out that one must not become complacent at any level of spiritually,

but rather use it as a springboard for further growth. Noach felt he had already achieved his highest level of spirituality and was ready to relax with a glass of wine. But nothing remains static in this world; if you are not moving upward, you will surely move downward. Moshe, on the other hand was called a *Mitzri*, a lowly Egyptian. He remained humble throughout his life. Always searching for a greater connection to God.

Noach started (*vayochel*) rebuilding the earth with something that should have been secondary. Rav Pam notes that these times after such complete destruction are invested with great power and blessings. Here, the vine was planted and wine was produced in one day. Noach, as the master builder of the world, should have turned this potential for blessing to more important things than wine. Therefore, he was denigrated and now called simply, "a man of the earth."

The Shaarei Derech points out that new beginnings are always invested with tremendous potential. When we wake up in the morning, we must not squander the energy. Say your prayers and continue with a *mitzvah*. When *Yom Kippur* ends, begin building the sukkah. The year is still new; put some refreshed energy into some new learning. Make this a new meaning to the Mechilta's phrase, "*Kol hatchalot kashot*. Make the beginning strong and firm.

Sorah's Laughter Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Hashem promises Avraham that he will have a child with Sarah and that he will call him Yitzchak. Avraham reacts with laughter and Hashem makes a point of emphasizing that the laughter was positive. And in fact, He commands Avraham to call his son Yitzchak so that it becomes his identity and essence. When the angels come to the house of Avraham they ask, "Where is Sarah your wife?" Avraham answers, "She's in the tent." They tell him that in a year Sarah will have a

child. When Sarah hears the angel's words she laughs in her heart. The response of both Avraham and Sarah seem identical. Yet the reaction of Hashem to Avraham was positive while Sarah's laughter is viewed as negative. Why? What was the difference between them?

Rashi says *Itzchok* can have two meanings, laughter or mockery. The Ramban says Avraham heard from the angels that he would have a child. He saw them and knew they

were messengers of Hashem. There was no question that their tidings were true and therefore his only reaction was laughter. However, Sarah was in her tent. She didn't know that these men were in fact angels. Therefore, she reacted with laughter, as if a person had simply given her a blessing. Sarah is criticized for this. What did it matter if she was young or old? Can't Hashem do anything regardless of the circumstances? On her level, Hashem expected that she would believe it

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could happen.

Seforno gives us a deeper understanding. When Sarah heard the angel's promise, she thought they were prophets and were just giving her a blessing. She didn't know they were sent directly by Hashem. Giving birth when one's body is old is like the revival of the dead and she didn't believe it could happen with just a blessing. Women after childbearing age don't go to *tzadikim* to ask for a blessing. A blessing alone cannot do it. But if there is a prophecy given directly to the person or there is a prayer that finds kindness in the eyes of Hashem, it can create a miracle. Although she thought it was just a blessing of a prophet, she should have still believed it could happen. Let's compare the reaction of Avraham and Sarah in terms of language. The *Torah* says about Avraham, "Avraham fell on his face and he laughed in his heart and he said..." About Sarah it is written, "Sarah laughed in her heart

saying, I became young..." When her body became young again and she saw it, she laughed and said, "After I was old already, Hashem made me young." The *Ohr Hachaim* says her laughter, just like Avraham, was that of happiness. Both of them expressed bewilderment and joy for the miracle Hashem would perform. The very fact that Sarah laughed was not negative. What is criticized is that she only did so after she saw her bodily changes, and not immediately when she heard the words of Hashem. According to her high level, this was considered a flaw.

If we read further in the *Torah* it becomes more bewildering. Hashem speaks to Avraham after the reaction of Sarah. He says, "How is it that Sarah laughed and said, 'Will I give birth, I am old?'" Avraham then confronts Sarah and asks her, "Did you laugh?" Sarah becomes afraid and denies it. The Seforno explains that she was afraid and therefore in her heart she had

already done teshuva. The *Ohr Hachaim* adds that this whole episode teaches us the greatness of Sarah. Regarding Avraham it's written, "He said," and by Sarah it says, "*L'aimar*," to say. *L'aimar* implies, an idea that is expressed. She said something that we can learn that in fact she didn't laugh. A servant who is loyal and in awe of his master is unable to admit his momentary weakness. The realization that he did something inappropriate makes him feel fear. He knew His master's greatness and he still went against His will. He denies what he did out of the awesome trepidation of his master. And by doing so, he is in fact saying, "I can't understand how I did something like this to my master who is so great." Therefore it says, *l'aimar*- she was saying I didn't mean to laugh, this was something beyond what I should have ever done. Hashem rebukes Sarah for it. However, we must know that her reaction was not a lie but a way of doing *teshuva*.

Muktza, Part 6: Muktza Machmat Gufo Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The Gemara in *Shabbat* rules that both a human and animal corpse are *muktza machmat gufo* as they have no purpose. For *kovod hameit* (to protect the dignity of a dead person), one could place a loaf of bread on the bed where the corpse is lying, which would allow it to be moved on *Shabbat*.

Tosfot discusses the status of a live animal. Rabbeinu Yosef rules that it is not *muktza* as a live baby chick is fit for quieting down a crying baby and thus has a purpose. Tosfot disagrees. It brings proof from a Gemara that states that if a bird steps on an upside-down vessel, the vessel becomes *muktza*. If the bird wasn't *muktza*, it couldn't have made the vessels *muktza*. Therefore, Tosfot assumes animals are *muktza*. This is also reflected in the Hagaos Hashri. The Rosh argues with the position of Rabbeinu Yosef. If one would permit anything that makes a baby happy,

then perhaps one would could take branches or stones and shake it in front of a baby. However, we don't find anywhere that it is permitted. The fundamental reason is that *muktza machmat gufo* is prohibited is because it doesn't have the status of a *keli* (vessel). An animal has no inherent use or status as a vessel and is therefore *muktza machmat gufo* according to most Rishonim. The *chiddush* (interpretation) of Rabbeinu Yosef is that inherent in a chick is the latent status of a rattle which gives it a purpose. However, most Rishonim disagree.

The Shulchan Aruch writes that one may not move animals as they have no purpose at all. One can take a vessel and turn it upside down to help a chick hop down. While the animal is standing on the vessel one may not move it. Household pets are *muktza*. According to the minority view of Rabbeinu Yosef, a pet could

be considered a member of one's household and somewhat like a plaything, like a *keli*, for the kids. But the normative view is to be stringent. Rav Bodner quotes the Tosfot writing in the name of the *Minchat Shabbat* that since people enjoy a parakeet's voice, it's considered a toy and has a non *muktza* status. Similarly, he quotes the *Halachot Ketanot* that a pet is considered a *keli*. However, most *poskim* don't follow this lenient view and prohibit playing with or handling animals.

Shemiras Shabbos K'Hilchoso rules that an animal that acts as a *keli* such as a seeing eye dog is not *muktza*. According to the *Shulchan Aruch*, in a situation where an animal is in pain or is suffering, the prohibition of *muktza d'rabbanan* would be lifted and one could treat the animal.