

BUT I DID NOT DO ANYTHING. I ONLY SAID...

PARSHAS NOACH

Three women were waiting in line to speak with their daughters' teacher on Parent-Teacher Night. One of them, Miriam, had recently headed a successful fundraising event for the school—the first time she had taken on the job—that had been very successful, in spite of frustrations along the way. Yet in her opinion, she had not been very effective. She was thinking that next year she'd ask someone else to take the reins. "Miriam, the event was amazing!" said one of the women. "It was so well thought-out and so much fun! And you got a huge crowd!" The third woman had also enjoyed the event and admired the way Miriam had produced it. But she didn't say so. Meanwhile, Miriam was basking in the momentary glow, thinking "Maybe I will do it again next year, now that I have some experience." **Often, positive thoughts run through our minds, but for some reason, we don't feel the need to verbalize them. If only we realized how much those words might be worth, we'd speak up loud and clear every time. We never know what insecurities our words might soothe. We never know what positive power they might unleash.**

Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer was a new bachur at the Volozhin Yeshivah. He felt lost and homesick and was ready to return home. One day, the Rosh Yeshivah, the Netziv, asked a question, and Rav Isser Zalman offered an answer that pleased him. During lunch an older bachur, Zelig Bengis, later to become the great and famous Rav Bengis of Yerushalayim, came to Rav Isser Zalman and asked him, "Are you the one whose chiddush the Netziv is talking about with so much admiration?" Decades later, when Rav Isser Zalman came to Yerushalayim, his first stop was at the home of Rav Zelig Bengis. "I owe you my life!" he told him. He then recounted how Rav Bengis's encouraging words had restored his confidence so that he remained in Volozhin. **The value of positive words is their power to make another person feel, "I have value."** And that is the foundation of everything good that a person accomplishes in life. (from the Shabbos Newsletter of the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation)

"Cham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father and told it to his brothers [who were] outside."
(Bereishis 9:22)

The world had been destroyed by a flood. Only Noach and his family survived, in the ark that Noah had built. When Noach exited the ark, he planted a vineyard (Bereishis 9:20).

Where did he get the vines for the vineyard? **Rashi** says that Noach had brought them with him into the ark. **Targum Yonasan ben Uziel** says that Noach found the vine which the waters had carried from Gan Eden. Noach planted it and the grapes grew immediately. Noach pressed the grapes and drank some wine. He became drunk from the wine. The **Sfas Emes** (quoted in Iturei Torah by Aaron Yaakov Greenberg) explains that Noach drank the same amount of wine that he had been used to drinking before the flood. However, man's constitution had been weakened from the flood and that same amount of wine, now, made him drunk. In his drunkenness, Noach was lying, uncovered, in his tent. The **B'chor Shor** says that it was actually Canaan who had uncovered Noach. The **Tur** says

that it was Cham who had done so. The Torah says that Cham looked and saw Noach's nakedness. Then he derided Noach to his other brothers. The **Da'as Zekanim**, as well as the **Targum Onkelos** and **Lekach Tov**, say that Cham did not tell his brothers the news quietly. Rather, he stated it publicly, for all to hear. He spoke scornfully and derisively about his father. When Cham's son, Canaan, heard his father's words, he went ahead and sinned terribly against Noah (see **Rashi** 9:22). When Noach became sober and became aware of what his grandchild, Canaan, had done, he cursed him saying that he would become slaves to Noach's other two sons.

The Torah (9:22) says, "Cham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told it to his brothers [who were] outside." The **Da'as Zekanim** says that we already know who Cham was. Why did

the Torah feel that it was necessary now to specifically identify Cham as the father of Canaan? The **Da'as Zekanim** answers that Cham is called the father of the one who sinned (Canaan) because Cham ridiculed Noach! **HaRav Henach Leibowitz** zt"l asked, Cham did not do any negative ACTION. All Cham did, was to say WORDS disparaging Noach. Canaan was the one who did the terrible action. Why is the action being attributed to Cham? Why is he called the father of the sinner? **HaRav Leibowitz** zt"l says that we see that it was Cham's words that CAUSED the terrible sin. Cham's words lowered Noach's esteem in the eyes of his son Canaan. Despite the wickedness of Canaan, he still had respect for his grandfather, Noach. Cham's derisive words stripped away that respect. At that point, Canaan sinned so terribly.

We see two important and fundamental things from this. We see the power of speech.

Mere words said thoughtlessly can cause terrible sins.

Cham's words caused what happened to Noach.

We also see one's responsibility for the words that he says.

We are held accountable for everything that results from our words.

Negative comments are divisive. The divisiveness is why our Beis HaMikdash has not yet been rebuilt. Keeping in mind what is currently happening to Klal Yisroel,

let us be especially careful to say words that unite and not words that divide.

Our positive words can transform a frown into a smile.

(Dvar Torah based in part on Chidushei Lev by Rabbi Binyomin Luban)

Sponsored In Memory of: Mindel Adina bat Natan Zvi; Shmuel ben Eliezer Lipa; Shirley Shaindel Yaffa bat Yehuda Shmuel; Hadassah bas Yaakov; Faiga bat Pinchas; Yaakov ben Yeshayahu; Gershon ben Hillel; Gita bat Gershon; Rav Chaim Dov Weissmandl ben Rav Yoseph; Shraga Fayvel Leif ben Shmuel Abraham; Moshe ben Yitzchok; Sarah Vital bas Avrohom Yitzchok; R' Yisroel ben R' Yaakov, Zichronam Livracha.