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בִּשְׁחִיבְתִּיכָא



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
NOACH

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

BUILD A CHILD, BUILD A CITY

After the destruction of the Flood, Noach and his family left the *Teivah*, ready to rebuild civilization. And indeed they did, spreading out and populating the world. To illustrate this, the Torah lists the genealogy of the descendants of Noach, parent to child, showing how these few survivors became the forefathers of nations. However, in the middle of this list of children, the Torah makes two points that simply don't seem to belong here. The Torah says that Nimrod was a mighty man, and the Torah also says that Ashur left the general populace, and started his own colony, a city that eventually grew into the mighty Nineveh.

Why are these points of information important, and how are they relevant to the discussion at hand? The Chofetz Chaim¹ (R' Yisroel Meir HaKohen Kagan, 1838–1933) explains, based on Rashi,² the relationship between Nimrod and Ashur.

Under the leadership of Nimrod, the peoples of the earth banded together to execute a prodigious undertaking. They decided to build a city and a tower, with which to wage war against the Creator of the universe! Nimrod's might was not only physical — he was an excellent orator gifted with the power of persuasion. With his guidance and guile, the masses were influenced to rebel.

Ashur, says Rashi, saw what was happening to his children; they were caught in the web of deceit promulgated by Nimrod. Nimrod's persuasive arguments were eroding the moral fiber of Ashur's children, and with no other defense, Ashur took a drastic step. He moved himself and his family to an uninhabited area, and separated himself from the doomed rebellion. With this knowledge, we can understand why this story is placed here in the discussion of Noach's descendants.

For the preservation of one's progeny, it is not sufficient to provide their physical needs. One must be on the lookout for their spiritual needs as well. And if the circumstances require it, one must be willing to even sacrifice their very home to ensure that their children are raised properly. And, of course, if this is true for one's children, one must certainly be on the lookout for oneself as well.

¹ Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah on Bereishis 10:9

² Rashi on 10:9, s.v. גבר ציד, and Bereishis 10:11, s.v. מן הארץ

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They were caught in the web of deceit promulgated by Nimrod.

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

We all want the best spiritual growth for ourselves and our children. However, when it comes down to it, it can sometimes be very difficult to make the choices and even sacrifices necessary to achieve these goals. What can one do to bolster oneself when making these decisions?

The more we value something, the more time and effort we put into it. As well, the more we value something, the more willing we are to give up other things for that thing of value.

Therefore, if we take the time to focus and understand — *the purpose of having children is to bring them close to Hashem*,¹ we will be better equipped to make these decisions with the gravity and proper weight necessary.

Just knowing this idea is not enough, it needs to be repeated until it becomes part of our being. Once we truly feel that our job is to raise our children in the best way possible for them to come close to Hashem, we will be able to use this value system to make the proper decisions.

¹ Tefillas HaShelah

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Though Mussar can be very inspirational, those who understand the ways of Mussar are careful not to accept upon themselves more than they can reasonably do. - R' Shlomo Wolbe, ztz"l, Alei Shur Vol. I, Chap. 12

THE RIGHT FIT

“And that’s pretty much where we stand,” Rabbi Tzvi Fisher* said. “And we’re just not sure what to do.”

There was silence on the phone as Rabbi Fisher’s father, Rabbi Dovid Fisher, or Reb Dovid as he was known, listened on the other end of the phone line. Finally he spoke, “Deciding to send your son away to *yeshiva* is not a simple thing. And I can understand your angst. It is indeed a good question.”

“Tatty — I’m curious, didn’t you send me away to *yeshiva*?” Reb Tzvi’s question held a lot of history. As a young teenager, Tzvi Fisher went away for *yeshiva*, and couldn’t stand it. His first year away from home was torturous, and the second wasn’t much better. It took a few years until Tzvi was able to acclimate himself, but he always wondered why his parents sent him away, especially in light of the fact that his younger brother went to a local *yeshiva*, a few minutes walk from home.

“Yes, we did. But I can tell you, your mother and I spent hours discussing the *sheilah*, just like you are discussing it now. We spoke with each other, with your *rebbeim*, with my *rebbeim*, and so on. And we made the best decision that we could. There was no local *yeshiva* that was suitable for you, with your personality and strengths. It just would not have been a good fit. If you’re wondering about your brother, well, you are not him, and the local *yeshiva* was a good fit for him.”

Later that evening, Rabbi Tzvi Fisher lay in bed, thinking of his own children, and the words his father had said. Yes, it did indeed take years for him to feel comfortable in the *yeshiva* he was in. But looking back, his father was one hundred percent correct. Had he gone to the local place, he never would have grown the way he did. He never would have become a *rav*, that was certain. And, he laughed to himself, he never would have moved out of town to teach Torah — and thus face the same question of where to send his own children.

Sending a child away was not a decision to be made lightly, but after the conversation with his father, Reb Tzvi felt much more at ease. He was sad, as he knew he would miss his son, but he told himself that true love isn’t doing what is right for you, but doing what is right for the other person.

“There was no local *yeshiva* that was suitable for you, with your personality and strengths...”

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Because their founder was a *tzaddik*, Nineveh merited to have a Jewish *navi*, Yonah, persuade them to do *teshuvah*.¹
- The job of *chinuch* never ends, and even when one grows old, they should engage in *chinuch*.²

1 Chizkuni on Bereishis 10:12, s.v. ואת רסן

2 Chochmah U’Mussar, 1:2

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Ohr Yisrael is a global initiative seeking to energize, enlighten, and empower Klal Yisrael to make lasting personal change, using the profound systems and guidance that have been crystallized and in the classic Sifrei Mussar, presented in the language of today.