

Commentaries on Noah – Genesis 9:20-22, 25

Genesis 9:20

Noah, the tiller of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard.

Bereshit Rabbah 36:3

He was degraded נִתְחַלֵּל and debased חוּלֵיין (a play on נִתְחַלֵּל *was the first*). Why? Because [*He*] *planted a vineyard*. Should he have not planted something of use, such as a young fig-shoot or a young [olive-]shoot?

Rashi (R. Shlomo Yitzhaki 1040-1105 France) - חלל -

ויחלל [*And Noah*] *was the first* - (The word may be connected also with a root meaning “profane.”) He profaned himself, for he should have occupied himself first with planting something different.

Radak (R. David Kimhi 1160-1235 France) - חלי -

ויחלל נח איש האדמה - Just as we have written regarding the previous portion [in which we read *And he named him Noah, saying This one will provide us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands, out of the very soil which God placed under a curse* (Gn. 5:29)], that Noah occupied himself in working the land and became quite skilled at it, and now after the flood he displays his skill again by planting many vines together and making wine from the grapes, for until this time, no one drank wine. Rather, they ate grapes just like all other fruit, and Noah was the first to plant a vineyard.

She'arit Menachem (R. Menachem of Vichyvov d.1941)

“And Noah remained (not “started out”) a righteous man and planted a vineyard” (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan). The Rabbi of Kotsk explained this difficult Targum passage: “And Noah remained a righteous man.” Noah started out as a righteous human being, righteous among people, intervening among the creatures, righteous within the cities - “and he planted a vineyard” - He got drunk, his head became dizzy, and he revealed his nakedness.

Genesis 9:21

He drank of the wine and became drunk, and he uncovered himself within his tent.

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 70a

God said to Noah, “You should have been warned by the example of Adam whose perdition came about through the eating of the fruit of the vine.” It is taught that the tree from which the original Adam ate was the vine, for there is nothing which brings man as much misery as wine.

Sefas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger 1847-1905)

Of the wine is very informative. This was the same wine and in the same measure that they had been accustomed to drinking, in large quantities, and they returned to the same cup that they had drunk from before the flood. And since before the flood the generations were weaker (נחלשו), he was not able to absorb (take in) as much as he could before.

Noah's mistake was that he behaved, thought, and acted just as he had before the flood. He forgot that in the meantime, something had happened to the world. The flood occurred and changed all of the suitable measures that had existed before. Great changes had started and what was normal for him before was harmful after the flood.

Rashi

אֶהְיֶה - *his tent* - אהלה is written and not אלהו (as one would expect). This is an allusion to the ten tribes who were spoken of as Samaria which was called אהלה (*ohala*), and who were exiled because of their indulgence in wine, as it is said, *They drink wine in bowls* (Amos 6:6).

Genesis 9:22

Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside.

Rashi

Some of our Rabbis say that Canaan saw it and told his father about it, and on that account he is mentioned in connection with this matter and was cursed.

Genesis 9:25

[Noah] said, "Cursed be Canaan; the lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers."

Rabbi Moshe Amiel (1883-1946)

Cursed be Canaan - Canaan's sin was telling that his father was drunk, and for that he was punished. And why was Noah himself not punished over this matter? It appears that *lashon hara*, evil talk, is more severe than one who does an evil thing, and more grave than the act itself.