

# HOME ALONE

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Noach just does not quite make it. In spite of the fact that he almost single-handedly saved the world, fed it, and cultivated a new lease on life for an otherwise obliterated planet, he hardly gets the fame and recognition that his antecedents, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob receive. In fact, Noach's biography is summed up in this week's reading, "And He blotted out the entire species from the earth, and Noach remained -- alone." (Genesis 7:23) Noach leads the lonely existence of the sole survivor, and his place in history, especially in Jewish history, is hardly monumental. What is the flaw that limits Noach to stature that is much less than patriarchal? Why isn't the sole savior of humanity counted with the great acclamation that is bestowed upon our forefathers. Why isn't Noach considered the first, if not foremost, of our forefathers?

Despite overt differences between Abraham and Noach there is one small incident that would seemingly link the two leaders -- they both planted. In Genesis 9:21 the Torah tells us, "And Noach the man of the earth planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk." Abraham also planted. In Genesis 21:33 the Torah relates, "And Abraham planted an eshel in Beer-sheba." Rashi comments that there are conflicting views as to the exact interpretation of eshel. Some explain that Abraham planted an orchard intending to feed hungry wayfarers. Others explain that an eshel is an inn. Abraham built an lodge for travelers to rest.

No matter which interpretation appeals to you, the stark contrast between Noach and Abraham is obvious. Abraham plants for others, Noach for himself. Abraham's goal in life was to educate, nurture, and teach other people about Hashem. Noach, on the other hand, was predicting doom as he built an ark for more than a century, yet he was not able to recruit a single passenger. He leaves the ark and gets drunk -- lost in his own world.

***One of America's largest kosher confectioners was a major supporter of Beth Medrash Govoah, the Yeshiva and Kollel founded by the late Rabbi Aaron Kotler and led for twenty years by his late son Rabbi Shneur Kotler. At one major national function this industrialist had the occasion to introduce Reb Shneur. He did so in a most unique manner.***

"Actually," he proclaimed, "both Reb Shneur and I have much in common. We both went to cheder in Europe, survived the war, and now we both run major institutions. We provide the public with an excellent product, one that is both sweet and enjoyable. Many people stand in line to speak to me, and many wait in line to speak to the Rabbi. We both are well known and try hard to help others.

"However there is one major difference between us." The magnate paused and smiled. "I make lollipops and Rabbi Kotler makes men."

We all produce. The question that we all must ask ourselves is "who are we producing for?" Are we generating fruit that will be used to benefit mankind, or are we providing ourselves with fruit for self-indulgence?

Noach had the opportunity to save many more lives. He could have been the father of mankind and perhaps, as a man who had direct contact with the Creator, could have replaced Abraham as the founder of Judaism.

Despite his personal greatness, and an ability to overcome the terrible tide of corruption and immorality that condemned his generation, Noach still did not take advantage of a momentous opportunity. He was not able to nurture and save his generation. "And Noach remained alone." He became drunk. Abraham planted an orchard of generosity. He flourished. Abraham made men; Noach made wine.

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