

"Noach walked (served) with Hashem." (6:9)

Regarding Avraham Avinu, the *Torah* states, "*Walk before me.*" *Rashi* distinguishes between Noach's and Avraham's spiritual plateaus. Avraham was strong enough to walk alone, whereas Noach needed the support of the Almighty. The *Midrash* presents a parable from which we can gain a better insight into understanding Noach's spiritual essence. A father who walks with his little child, while the youngster is still unsteady and learning to walk, must lend his total support to prevent his son from falling. As the child grows older, he is weaned from his father's support.

Noach, ostensibly, did not have the spiritual stamina to become an Avraham Avinu. He could not battle the immorality of his times. He did, however, reprove, warn and attempt to reach out to the people during the 120 years in which he built the Ark. He suffered ridicule, cynicism, and even threats of physical violence as a result of his loyalty and conviction. Nonetheless, he remained in his insular environment. He feared to tread beyond a certain point at which he might come under the harmful influence of his corrupt contemporaries. He refrained from fathering children until he was 500-years-old because he feared that he could not raise his children in a pristine, wholesome environment. He was a *tzaddik*, a righteous man, but he needed the support of the Almighty to maintain his status.

Horav Ze'ev Weinberger, Shlita, draws a parallel between Noach's *frumkeit*, religious observance, and observant Jews who feel they can only make their home in an environment which has all the necessary observant amenities such as *shul*, school, *mikveh*, kosher food and -- of course -- other observant Jews. This is not to say that we must all escape the large *Torah* communities and move into the spiritual wasteland. It only decries those who feel they cannot "make it" unless they are rooted firmly in a *frum* environment. We must truly be ever grateful to those "Avrahams" who years ago had the spiritual fortitude to move away from the mainstream *Torah* centers to build *Torah* communities for other Jews.

In 1929, during the *Knesiah Gedolah* held in Vienna, *Horav Meir Shapiro, z.l.*, arose before all those assembled and denounced those who refused to empathize with the pitiful spiritual state of many Jews of that time. He criticized those who were turning away with folded hands, sympathizing but doing nothing to reach out to the alienated Jew. He supported his words with the *pasuk* in our *parsha* "*And Noach was left alone*" (7:23).

"Let us examine the difference between Noach and Avraham," said *Horav Shapiro*. "Avraham lived in a generation that was corrupt. The people were ideologically enslaved to idol worship. Yet, he did not rest complacently. He did not isolate himself in his four cubits of *halacha* and ignore the raging fires of heresy that were consuming mankind. He went out and proclaimed the Name of Hashem. He taught the concept of monotheism to a pagan society. He defied the priest and risked his life to fight relentlessly for the sake of truth. He suffered agonizing pain and underwent tremendous hardship, fought against his own father, was sentenced to death by Nimrod, and was alienated from a whole world of infidels. He did all this in order to sanctify the Name of Hashem.

For his dedication, for his supreme conviction, Avraham merited a son such as Yitzchak who was prepared to be sacrificed. Yitzchak inspired the characteristic of *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, into the heart and soul of all Jews, his descendants.

"Noach, on the other hand, was a *tzaddik* who walked with Hashem. His virtue was expressed specifically in his relationship with the Almighty. He witnessed the moral decline of his generation. He rebuked and admonished -- all from the shelter of his own home. When he was told the people would be destroyed and he would be saved, he acquiesced, secure that he and his family would be spared to rebuild the world community." *Chazal* seem to imply that Noach should have done more, perhaps spoken out on behalf of the condemned. "We see this from the *pasuk*," continued *Horav* Shapiro, "*And Noach was left alone*. In the beginning the *Torah* lauds him as a *tzaddik tamim*, a righteous and perfect man. Two appellations enhanced the name of "Noach." Now, however, after the world had become deluged and everyone had perished, he no longer carried the titles of *tzaddik* and *tamim*.

"In our own generation," summed up *Horav* Shapiro, "one cannot be a *tzaddik* and *tamim* when he just sits complacently watching Jews become alienated from their own heritage. We are responsible for our brethren! If we do not fight the winds of heresy, then we will have to answer for the destruction they bring upon *Klal Yisrael!*" These powerful words, which set the tone for that august gathering then, still speak commandingly to us today.