

# OzTORAH

## No'ach's Sons

Like No'ach, his three sons are each regarded as the founder of a human type.

Shem (“name”) is an intellectual who can define and identify things, Cham (“warmth”) is emotional and passionate, and Yefet (“beauty”) represents artistic creativity.

Though we customarily list them in that order, Shem, Cham and Yefet, the wording of B'reishit 10:21 suggests that the oldest son is Yefet, so why do we normally put Shem first?

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 108b) calls Shem “the great one”. It was he who took the initiative of covering his father who was inebriated and naked, making him the most morally sensitive of the brothers. The sages say that Shem thus typifies the Jewish people whose tradition is that every moral and ethical problem should be responded to with speed, energy and conscience.

The rabbis had a poor opinion of Cham whom they regarded as symbolic of the callousness and unconcern which were the hallmarks of his son Canaan and his later descendants.

Rabbi Apple served for 32 years as the chief minister of the Great Synagogue, Sydney - Australia's oldest and most prestigious congregation. He was Australia's highest profile rabbi and held many public roles. Retired, he now lives in Jerusalem. Rabbi Apple is president of the RCA Israel Region. He blogs at [www.oztorah.com](http://www.oztorah.com)