

Determining our Fate

THE BOOK OF ESTHER paints a vivid picture of life in the Persian royal court in the 5th century BCE. We read of huge celebrations and palace intrigue in an empire that stretched 127 provinces from modern day India to Ethiopia. While many different nations existed within this empire, only one was singled out for elimination—the Jewish people. And so, the lots were cast, a date was chosen and the Jewish people were to be destroyed.

According to Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Haman chose to cast lots rather than simply selecting a date because the method of casting lots is one of complete chance rather than reason. His hope was to move his plan past the limitations of human endeavor and elevate it to the plane of inescapable fate.

Sadly, we see similar themes to the Purim story employed



Ahasuerus and Haman at the Feast of Esther
Painting by Rembrandt van Rijn

in our times. Instead of the Jewish people, it is the Jewish state that is singled out. The global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign focuses on only one nation as deserving of censure. And, just as Haman cast the lots to lend an air of inevitability to his efforts, the BDS campaign is counting on a growing number of small, radical groups that promote its agenda to give the appearance of momentum and impact.

Like the Jewish people during the time of Mordechai and Esther, we must be prepared to proclaim the injustice of singling out the Jewish nation. Whether by proactively touting Israel's accomplishments, writing responses to biased newspaper articles or lobbying our

members of Congress to ensure that our government supports Israel at the United Nations, each of us has a role to play to make sure that when the lots are cast, Israel's future will not be in doubt.

The Three Corners of BDS

THE STORY OF PURIM RECALLS HAMAN'S ATTEMPT to destroy the Jewish people and his failure to do so as a result of Mordechai and Esther's heroism. Just as we remember Haman by his three cornered hat, the three-pronged approach of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is a reminder that there are those who seek to destroy the Jewish state.

Rather than peacefully resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, these actions are

part of a broader effort to undermine the Jewish people's right to self-determination in the state of Israel. Attempts to single out, demonize and isolate Israel are also counterproductive to the goal of peace and inhibit freedom of speech.

For example, many supporters of the BDS movement advocate for an unconditional Palestinian right of return that would, in effect, cease Israel's existence as a Jewish state. Such a condition makes compromise and reconciliation impossible, and promotes continued conflict.

Moreover, by claiming that Israeli cultural and academic institutions are an attempt to whitewash Israel's image, BDS advocates support squashing the free exchange of ideas, art and music. BDS seeks to turn every positive element of Israeli society into a negative; planting forests becomes greenwashing and supporting gay rights becomes pinkwashing. Undoubtedly, Israel's support for a two-state solution is some sort of statewashing.

These efforts to delegitimize the state of Israel are



short-sighted, biased and fail to acknowledge the facts. Peace is built on compromise, making extremist movements like BDS as ridiculous as Haman's hat.



Making Strides Where it Matters

In the last several months, the BDS movement has gained attention in the news. Many people are confusing this newfound hype with actual traction, believing that the BDS movement is making any kind of real difference for the Palestinians. In reality, BDS is a fringe, radical movement that does little service to the Palestinians, and treats Israel as a pariah among the nations. Where it really matters, Israel is creating new partnerships and building stronger relationships with nations and organizations that are working to make the world a better place.

DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS

In May 2010, Israel was admitted to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an international organization of 34 democratic countries who work with each other, as well as more than 70 non-member economies to promote economic growth, prosperity and sustainable development. Israel's admittance into the group was a statement of the significance of Israel's ability to contribute to world economic and social issues. It also served as a reminder that the attempts to politicize and derail Israel's membership in organizations of this stature will not be tolerated by important organizations seeking to make a difference in the world.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría attend a cabinet meeting in Jerusalem.

As a member of the OECD, Israel is able to become a full partner in the establishment of new international

standards regarding education, living standards, community building and economics. OECD status means that

◀ The core of the world's largest superconducting solenoid magnet (CMS) at CERN's headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. More than 2,000 scientists from 36 countries have worked to develop the CMS particle detector.

Israel can also attract more foreign investors who rely on the standards of the OECD's "quality stamp." Ranked as second in the world for venture capital funds behind only the United States, Israel has many business opportunities to share and capitalize on by working with other nations, made possible through OECD membership.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond the OECD Israel is cultivating new partnerships. For example, Israel recently became the first non-European country to join one of the world's leading atomic research institutes, the Center of European Nuclear Research (CERN). Based in Switzerland, CERN is the largest center in the world for the study of atomic particles and attracts leading physicists, engineers



Aharon Leshno Yaar, Ambassador of the Permanent Representative Mission of Israel to Geneva, listens to a vote at a Human Rights Council session at the United Nations.

and technicians to its laboratories. Acceptance into CERN gives Israel greater access to the most advanced and unique research labs and facilities, giving Israeli scientists increased knowledge, and also allowing the organization to benefit from the exceptional knowledge the Israelis have to offer.

Israel is hopeful that its inclusion in such an elite European organization will help assuage political tensions and strengthen ties with Europe through scientific endeavors. Professor Eilam

Gross, a member of Israel's CERN team, said of the new partnership, "Science ought to cross borders, and I think it's very important that the scientific community not repudiate us, because the road to peace goes through science."

RIGHTING WRONGS

Similarly, Israel was also recently admitted to the Western European and Others Groups (WEOG) at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva—after decades of discrimination during which Israel was the only member of the U.N. denied membership in a regional group. As a result of this exclusion, Israel could not sit on any U.N. body where membership in a regional group was required and could not be elected to leadership positions on the vast majority of bodies in the U.N. system. Israel's exclusion was a clear violation of the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the U.N. Charter.

In May 2000 this discrimination against the Jewish state began to change when Israel became a temporary member of the WEOG in New York. Thirteen years later, Israel was admitted to WEOG Geneva, an important move that allows Israel to join WEOG meetings in the Swiss city and exert some influence on the Human Rights Council. Israel's U.N. Mission said that "after decades of discrimination, a historical wrong has been corrected. Israel's voice will finally be heard loud and clear in WEOG in Geneva."

Altogether, Israel's inclusion in international fora speaks volumes about the value of the Jewish state as a partner and friend to other democracies. The tiny Jewish state strives on a daily basis to achieve the highest standards in science, energy independence, business, human rights and more. These priorities make it clear that the state of Israel is a strong partner and valued addition to the world in which we live.



Disguised Impact

In December 2013, the American Studies Association (ASA) voted for a national academic boycott of Israel. The decision by this small, fringe group to punish Israel for perceived human rights violations was shocking to many observers, especially when no action was taken against academic institutions in any other country—such as Israel's neighbor Syria where more than 125,000 people have been killed in the past three years. When asked why the ASA was singling out Israel, the organization's president, Curtis Marez, said that "one has to start somewhere."

Omar Barghouti, a Palestinian who is one of the BDS movement's founders, declared that the ASA resolution represented "perhaps the strongest indicator yet that the BDS movement is reaching a tipping point, even in the U.S." The narrative that the BDS community is a growing, successful movement is one its leaders hope to spread. Yet, as The New York Times noted, "With its recent vote to boycott Israel's higher-education institutions...the American Studies Association has itself become the target of widespread criticism and ostracism." In fact, more than 210 colleges and universities have rejected the ASA boycott, and at least six—Bard College, Brandeis University, Indiana University, Kenyon College, Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg and the University of Texas at Dallas—have withdrawn from the ASA entirely.

A CARNIVAL OF Knowledge



Purim carnivals shouldn't get to have all the fun! Take a whirl through these fun trivia questions* to test your knowledge!

*Answers on the bottom

1

Which American state is closest in size to Israel?

- a. New Jersey
- b. Texas
- c. Hawaii
- d. Vermont



5

Of the more than 7.9 million people who live in Israel, how many of them live within range of Hamas' rocket arsenal?

- a. 4.5 million
- b. 10,000
- c. 7 million
- d. 2,000

2

Israel has more companies listed on the NASDAQ than any other country in the world, outside of the United States and China. How many companies are listed?

- a. 25
- b. 150
- c. 70
- d. 3



6

America's support of Israel via foreign aid is crucial to the continued strength of the Jewish state. What percentage of the United States' budget is comprised of foreign aid?

- a. 50%
- b. 10%
- c. 25%
- d. 1%

3

AIPAC's Policy Conference is the largest gathering of members of Congress outside of the State of the Union address. In 2013, how many members of Congress met with AIPAC delegates to learn and understand the issues most important to the partnership between the U.S. and Israel?

- a. 500
- b. 535—every member
- c. 350
- d. 400



7

In 2013, what percentage of freshmen members of Congress traveled to Israel with the American Israel Education Foundation (AIEF), the charitable organization affiliated with AIPAC?

- a. 1%
- b. 25%
- c. 62%
- d. 95%

4

Israel has the third highest ratio of tech start-ups per capita in the world. Which one of these countries has more?

- a. China
- b. Russia
- c. The U.K.
- d. Canada



8

Israel is a liberal democracy in the Middle East. How many other Middle Eastern countries are liberal democracies?

- a. 10
- b. 0
- c. 25
- d. 3