

OCTOBER 19, 2009

Parashat Noach

Stand by Your Word

Ki mal'ah ha'aretz chamas – “for the earth is filled with violence” (Genesis 6:13)

We are all familiar with a *mi sheberach*, “‘He who blessed’ Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, should also bless...” However, there is also an anti-*mi sheberach*, called a *mi shepara*: “He who exacted payment.” The Mishnah, in Baba Metzia (Chapter 4, Mishnah 1), explains that one who committed to a sale by accepting money but did not complete a legal transaction technically has the right to renege on the deal. “But [the rabbis] said: ‘He who exacted payment from the generation of the flood...He will exact payment from the person who does not stand by his word.’” Therefore, the Mishnah reminds us that part of the generation of the flood’s corruption was their failure to stand by their word and keep their commitments.

Like the generation of the flood, who failed to honor its commitments, recent events demonstrate that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has failed to live up to its commitments. In falling short of its mandate to prevent Hizballah from rearming in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL is allowing the terrorist army to threaten Israel.

On the evening of October 12, 2009 an arms cache exploded inside the house of a senior Hizballah member in Tayr Filsay, a village which is located south of the Litani River. In the aftermath of the explosion, Hizballah operatives sealed off the area and used trucks to remove evidence from the scene to a nearby village. This weapons cache demonstrates that Hizballah has been illegally storing weapons south of the Litani River in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the Second Lebanon War in 2006. Moreover, this incident is further evidence of Hizballah’s practice of placing its military weapons and facilities within civilian villages and houses. Although U.N. forces in Lebanon are specifically authorized to “take all necessary action...to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind,” UNIFIL has done little to prevent Hizballah from rearming and rebuilding its command-and-control infrastructure. For more on Hizballah, click [here](#).

While the UNIFIL contingent should be fulfilling its commitment to peace by preventing Hizballah from stockpiling large quantities of weapons, it has failed to stand by its word. UNIFIL must change its behavior and live in to its mandate. If they do not, their failure to stand by their word – like in Noah’s generation – will only lead to calamity. ■

Historic Climate Change

Vekor vachom vekayitz vachoref – “and cold and heat, and summer and winter” (Genesis 8:22)

Noah’s offering of thankfulness for his salvation was a prelude to the promise to never again destroy the world by flood, and also introduced a new weather pattern to the world. “While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:22) Why did God connect the promise to stability in the climate? S’forno (on 6:13) explains that the climate was changed in order to shorten the life span of mankind. While Noah lived well over nine hundred years, the life span of his descendents was shortened substantially. “Immediately after the Flood, the years of humanity are diminished, because the climate and fruits

weren't up to their original wholeness." Thus, even hundreds of years ago commentators understood that subtle changes to the earth's climate had drastic affects on the entire world.

Manifesting S'forno's appreciation for the dramatic effects of climate change, a multinational group of Jews and Arabs will gather at the Dead Sea to mark global Climate Change Action Day on October 24th.

Friends of the Middle East, an organization that brings together Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli environmentalists, will join thousands of communities around the globe to call upon their leaders to stop global warming and to demand effective, science-based emissions targets. Due to the fact that global warming will cause water shortages, desertification and loss of agricultural land in the Middle East, activists will gather at the Dead Sea – which is shrinking from lack of incoming water. The decline of the Dead Sea reflects unsustainable water consumption in the region due to climate change and reduced precipitation, and is a warning for what other lakes in semi-arid regions can expect as result of the climate crisis. Aerial photographs will show three gatherings of people around the Dead Sea, creating an image of the numbers "350," which represent the 350 parts per million which climate scientists have identified as the safe upper limit for CO2 in our atmosphere. Organizers hope that these images will bring attention to the negative effects of climate change – even to a proposed World Heritage site such as the Dead Sea.

Like the climate change that followed the flood, modern climate change portends dramatic effects on the world's delicate ecosystem. Hopefully, the work of environmentalists in Israel will help the earth avoid the dramatic effects of the climate change that drastically altered humankind in Noah's days. ■

Turning Weapons Around

Et kashti natati b'anan – "I have set My bow in the cloud" (Genesis 9:13)

According to the Torah, after destroying the world through the flood God promised to never again use rain to annihilate mankind and showed Noah a rainbow as a sign of the pledge. Why did God use a rainbow as a symbol of goodwill toward mankind? Rabbi Chizkiya bar Manoach, in his Chizkuni commentary, explains that "normally, when one wishes to shoot with a bow (and arrow), the opening faces the shooter and the crest of the curve faces the enemy. In this bow the opening faces downward." The greatest symbol of peace and trust is offering a weapon backwards. Today, rainbows represent peace because God took a symbol of war and turned it around, extending it towards mankind in an expression of harmony and trust.

Today, Iran has the opportunity to make a similar turn around by opening its uranium enrichment facilities to the world in a transparent and peaceful manner.

While Iran insists that its nuclear research and uranium enrichment are for peaceful purposes only, a confidential International Atomic Energy Agency analysis reported by the New York Times states that Iran has sought to develop a "nuclear payload to be delivered using the Shahab 3 missile system," Iran's medium-range missile capable of striking the Middle East and parts of Europe. The report also indicates that Iran has worked to adapt the Shahab-3 warhead to fit the core of a nuclear bomb and has worked on triggering mechanisms to detonate the bomb.

President Barack Obama recently said that Iran must allow international inspectors "unfettered access" to their illicit nuclear facilities. In addition, American diplomats have said that Iran has agreed in principle to send most of the low-enriched uranium it has produced at the Natanz enrichment facility to Russia and France for processing, however Iranian officials denied that a deal had been reached. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

For far too long Iran has been quietly building its own "bow," capable of destruction equal to that of the flood in Noah's time. Like the rainbow which was extended to mankind in peace, Iran must immediately cease to threaten the world by opening its nuclear facilities to inspection and allowing uninhibited access to its enrichment facilities. ■