

OCTOBER 4, 2010

Parashat Noach

The Blindness of Bias

Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14)

עשה לך תבת עצי גופר (בראשית ו:יד)

Why didn't Noah ever try to convince the people of his generation to repent and avoid the destruction of the flood? Rashi teaches us that Noah did indeed attempt to convince the people to repent, not through his words, but through his actions. God commanded Noah to spend 120 years building the ark, "So that the people of the generation of the flood would see him immersed [in the ark] over the course of 120 years and ask him, 'Why are you doing this?' and he would tell them, 'Soon God will bring a flood upon the earth.'" Ramban (on 6:14) argues that while God commanded Noah to build the ark out of compassion, to warn the world of the coming flood, "It was clear and revealed to God that they would never repent." They had already become too corrupted to see the truth. Despite Noah's valiant efforts, the people of the world could not objectively evaluate Noah's actions. Rather, their scorn and ridicule ultimately brought their own downfall.

The people of the generation of the flood had become so tainted by their corrupt behavior that they could not honestly evaluate Noah's actions as a warning for them to repent. Similarly, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has become so biased against Israel that it cannot objectively evaluate true violations of human rights.

The UNHRC recently released a report criticizing Israel and Hamas for failing to properly investigate allegations, which were itemized in the Goldstone Report. According to *Ha'aretz*, "Israel called for an end to UNHRC investigations into its actions in the 2008-09 Gaza conflict, insisting that the body was 'obsessively biased' against it." Israel's military action in late 2008 came in response to years of terrorist, rocket and mortar attacks aimed at Israeli civilians. Israel's ambassador Aharon Leshno Yaar called the UNHRC, "continually...one-sided and obsessively biased," as it refused to take into account the attacks that prompted Cast Lead and Israel's efforts to minimize civilian casualties. "Given these processes, and Israel's significant efforts, it is time to bring activities from this hall to a conclusion," the ambassador said. He concluded by suggesting that the UNHRC should spend more time investigating "real" human rights violations.

According to Ramban, the people of Noah's generation had become so depraved that they could no longer see the truth staring them in the face. Members of the United Nations Human Rights Council have become so consumed by their anti-Israel bias that they too can no longer recognize true violations of human rights, preferring instead to use the venue as a tool against the Jewish State. ■

For the Good of Humanity

Go forth from the ark (Genesis 8:16)

צא מן התבה (בראשית ח:טז)

After a spending a year with the animals cooped up on the ark, why would God need to command Noah to leave the ark? According to the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 34:6), "Said Noah: [if] I leave, I should be fruitful and multiply [to bring about] another curse?" Noah feared that after repopulating the world, mankind would sin and deserve destruction once again, so he refused to leave the ark on his own. Realizing Noah's reluctance, God promised to never

again destroy the world through a flood again, and also commanded Noah to reenter the world and work to ensure human survival.

According to the Midrash, God commanded Noah to use his abilities to promote the growth and prosperity of humanity. In this same vein, Israeli researchers have developed a new treatment that destroys HIV-infected human cells, offering incredible possibilities for people the world over.

With an estimated 33.4 million worldwide carriers of HIV and more than one million people living with HIV in the U.S. alone, HIV infection is a major threat to world health. Fortunately, researchers at Hebrew University of Jerusalem may have made a major step forward in the race against AIDS by developing a cutting-edge new therapy, the website [Israel21c](#) reported. The treatment, described in a recent article in the scientific journal *AIDS Research and Therapy*, destroys cells infected with HIV without damaging adjacent healthy cells. To date, no therapy has succeeded in completely destroying HIV-infected cells. This new treatment, though, successfully fights HIV by causing infected cells to self-destruct by interfering with the HIV virus's replication of its genetic material, transmitting a massive number of replications of the genetic material into the infected cell, triggering its self-destruction.

God commanded Noah to leave the ark in order to ensure the well-being of humanity. Today, Israeli researchers are emulating God's commandment by providing promising new therapies to promote health around the globe. ■

Preventing Destructive Construction

Let us descend and confound their language (Genesis 11:4) (הבה נרדה ונבלה שם שפתם (בראשית י"א:ד))

According to the torah God saw the citizens of the world attempt to build a tower (of Babel) in order to “make a name” (11:4) for themselves, and as a punishment mixed up their language and spread them across the world. Why did God thwart their plans to build the tower? Kli Yakkar (in his commentary beginning on 1:1) explains that because the builders aimed to elevate themselves, and because they did not act for the sake of heaven, their cohesion would only bring destruction to the world. For this reason God prevented them from communicating with each other, which halted their construction of the tower, naturally resulting in their dispersion across the world.

According to Kli Yakkar, God stopped the construction of the Tower of Babel to prevent the builders' desire for self-aggrandizement from turning destructive. The international community has taken steps to do the same by imposing sanctions on firms doing business with Iran, in the aims of preventing Iran from engaging in its own destructive behavior—but in order for these sanctions to be effective they must be strongly implemented and enforced.

This past July, Congress passed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA), which represents the toughest Iran sanctions legislation to date. Combined with sanctions approved by the U.N., EU and other countries, the international economic pressure is starting to have an impact on Iran. However, Iran continues to advance its nuclear program. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak recently warned that “Iran could reach nuclear capabilities within a year and half or two years,” [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. “Iran continues to deceive the world community and continues to move forward with its military nuclear program despite sanctions,” said Barak. “There is no doubt that the sanctions are hurting Iran, but Iran continues to play for time.”

Congress must be vigilant in ensuring the administration fully implements the law, including actions like sanctioning Iran's Central Bank or designating Chinese companies continuing to do business in Iran. To that end, members of the House of Representatives have introduced legislation that requires companies to publicly declare investments in Iran in their quarterly and annual reports to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

By preventing the people in Babel from communicating with each-other, God successfully dispersed them and prevented them from establishing a potentially destructive force in the world. The international community too must take strong action to ensure that the sanctions prove sufficient to prevent a nuclear Iran, ensuring a safer world. ■