

OCTOBER 15, 2012

Parashat Noach

Heeding the Warning

Make for yourself an ark... (Genesis 6:14)

עשה לך תבת... (בראשית ו:יז)

While Noah was informed of the coming calamity of the flood and given time to prepare and avoid catastrophe, why was the rest of humanity not given the opportunity to change its ways, or at least take measures to protect itself from the flood? Rashi (on 6:14) explains that in fact, Noah himself served as a warning for the masses. “Why did God trouble [Noah] with the building [of the ark]? So that the men of the generation of the flood, when they saw him engaged [in the construction] for 120 years and would ask him, ‘What is that?’ and he would tell them, ‘In the future the Holy One will bring a flood to the world.’”

As Noah built the ark he gave humanity an opportunity to avoid the impending disaster. World leaders today are issuing similar warnings about the grave threat that Iran’s nuclear weapons program poses to the safety of the world.

While crippling economic sanctions are having a significant impact on Iran’s now ailing economy, the Islamic republic continues to press forward with its nuclear weapons research, and is rapidly progressing towards its goal of achieving a nuclear weapons capability. The [Associated Press](#) reported, according to the Institute for Science and International Security, a respected U.S. think tank, Iran could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for a warhead within three or four weeks, which, according to [Israel Hayom](#), “suggested a narrowing window as Iran positions itself to increase enrichment.” This would leave the international community little time for sanctions to coerce the Iranian regime to halt its program. President Obama recently signed an executive order which sets up a framework for implementing new sanctions that Congress passed in August. When fully implemented, the totality of U.S. sanctions on Iran will represent the strongest set of sanctions to isolate any country in the world during peacetime. The United States must both fully implement the biting sanctions passed by Congress, and continue to work with the international community to ensure that Iran feels the full, crippling effect of United Nations sanctions as well. For a video on the impact sanctions are having on Iran’s economy, click [here](#).

Noah built the ark to warn the people of the world to take action and avert calamity. Similarly, we must continue our efforts in order to avoid a dangerous world in which Iran possesses nuclear weapons. ■

Protecting the Fish

And he blotted out every living substance (Genesis 7:23)

וימח את כל היקום (בראשית ז:כג)

According to Torah, the flood killed, “whatever was on dry land” (7:22), however as Rashi notes this did not include, “the fish in the sea.” Radak (on 7:22) suggests that Noah’s ark could only protect animals that come from dry land; had the flood killed the fish then “the entire species would have been lost from the world.” Since there was no way to ensure the continuity of the fish on board the ark, God specifically destroyed the world in a manner that preserved and protected the fish from harm. Even during the flood, the divine plan ensured the continuity of nature and the protection of all living species.

Radak explained that the world was destroyed using special measures to protect the fish from extinction. Now, a recent Israeli technology is also protecting fish populations while providing a valuable food source to the world.

Based on Israel's high-tech methods that allow farmers to generate a larger amount of fish, Poland recently opened the largest tilapia farm in Europe. And, since tilapia tend to eat weeds, algae, and other underwater plants, growing them can also help keep rivers, lakes and even municipal water supplies clean. The Polish fish farm was opened by the Israeli company AquaMaof Aquaculture Technologies, which has developed a system that breeds fish under controlled temperature conditions in any weather or climate environment. [The Times of Israel](#) also reported that the governments of Kenya, Germany and Israel signed a trilateral cooperation agreement to use Israeli hi-tech methods to improve tilapia farming. In Kenya's Lake Victoria, fish stocks are being depleted even as the demand for fish continues to increase. The new program will help Kenya "industrialize" its tilapia output, enabling the country to significantly provide better nutrition for residents at lower prices, and to turn Kenya into a tilapia exporter. For more on Israeli innovations, click [here](#).

Just as the method of the flood demonstrated that the survival of the fish was critical to the world's future development, Israeli companies are supplying food to the world while improving the environment and protecting depleted natural resources. ■

The Rule of Law

He who spills the blood of man... (Genesis 9:6)

שפך דם האדם... (בראשית ט:ו)

Following the lawlessness that preceded and necessitated the flood that destroyed humanity, when Noah emerged from the ark God renewed the divine covenant with mankind by reaffirming the Seven Noahide Laws binding on all people (see Talmud Sanhedrin 56a). Maimonides writes (Laws of Kings 9:1) that these seven commandments included, "[the prohibitions against] idolatry, cursing God's name, murder, sexual immorality, theft; and the commandment to institute a court system..." These commandments ensured moral behavior and societal structure, without which humanity could not have survived and reestablished itself following the destruction of the flood. Interestingly, while six of these laws are negative prohibitions, only one—the imperative to establish a court system—is a positive commandment, indicating the critical role of the rule of law in the building of civil society.

The covenant established with Noah included the commandment to establish courts and a system of laws which formed the bedrock of civil society. While many countries today are devoted to the rule of law, not all modern day societies enjoy this basic openness.

Both Americans and Israelis are blessed to live in countries that respect, cherish and uphold the rule of law. This value is so intrinsic to free, democratic societies; however, many nations—including many of Israel's neighbors—flout this basic human principle. Rights groups and activists have long accused Hamas of various rights violations. In Gaza, the Hamas regime has engaged in "extensive" rights violations, including torture, warrantless and arbitrary arrests, and unfair trials, [Agence France Presse](#) reported. "After five years of Hamas rule in Gaza, its criminal justice system reeks of injustice, routinely violates detainees' rights, and grants impunity to abusive security services," Human Rights Watch's deputy Middle East director Joe Stork said. According to [The New York Times](#), under the Iranian regime, authorities in the Islamic Republic have embarked on a "severe clampdown" on journalists and human rights advocates, the United Nations human rights office said. A spokesman for Navi Pillay, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, expressed concern about a nine-year jail term that Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, a prominent human rights lawyer, began serving. The spokesman also cited a number of threats to freedom of expression that took place last month. For more on Israel's neighboring countries in the Middle East, click [here](#).

Noah was commanded to build courts and impose the rule of law; perhaps if nations throughout the Middle East and the world could live by this example and uphold the rule of law humanity could move closer to a peaceful society. ■

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