

SEPTEMBER 30, 2013

Parashat Noah

A Corrupt Society

And the earth was corrupt (Genesis 6:11)

ותשחת הארץ... (בראשית ו:יא)

The Torah describes the corruption that encompassed society before the flood. The text relates that “the earth was corrupt before God” (6:11). Abarbanel explains that the people of Noah’s generation had lost their sense of conscience and morality and were unable to perceive the depravity of their behavior. In fact, they considered themselves just and righteous. For this reason, the Torah notes that while they considered their acts of theft and depravity normal, in the eyes of God their actions were indeed immoral and merited retribution.

Society before the flood had become so corrupted that the people considered their immoral behavior to be normal. Sadly, too many Palestinian leaders suffer from the same malady, as they laud terrorism and murder.

Over the Sukkot holiday two Israeli soldiers were brutally murdered in two separate incidents. Staff Sergeant Gal Kobi was [killed by a Palestinian sniper](#) while serving in Hebron. A day earlier, IDF soldier Tomer Hazan was lured by an Arab coworker to a West Bank village where he was [kidnapped and killed](#) in an attempt to trade his body for the release of the terrorist brother of the murderer from jail. In response, “Israel complained to the U.S....saying that the Palestinian Authority had failed to stop violence and incitement against it and its citizens,” [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. While P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas did eventually condemn “all killings” in response to a question at a meeting with Jewish leaders in New York, Fatah central committee member Abbas Zaki [claimed](#) that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and “his extremist government” was the cause of the soldier’s death. Too many within the Palestinian Authority fail to see the immorality inherent in these kidnappings and murders, condemning it only when pressed to do so in public, while promoting violence and terrorism in the media and in the education of their children. In August, when Israel initiated the release of 26 terrorists—many who murdered Israelis—from its prisons in hopes of furthering the peace process, Abbas [mandated](#) that his ambassadors refer to the prisoners as “freedom fighters”—a title that encourages Palestinians to revere them as heroes or role models. Rather than glorifying those who have inflicted pain or make excuses for violence caused by its citizens, the Palestinian leadership must be held accountable and encourage an environment for peace with Israel.

Society in Noah’s time had lost its moral compass. Peace in modern times will only be possible when Palestinian leaders readjust their moral compass, and instead of praising murderers, condemn and vilify them. ■

Devoting a Lifetime

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

עשה לך תבת... (בראשית ו:יד)

Why was Noah commanded to undertake the grueling 120 year task of building an ark—a timeframe that we consider to be a lifetime? Rashi (on 6:14) answers that Noah was commanded to build the ark to serve as an example for the people of his time. “Men of the generation of the flood would see him immersed in [the construction] for 120 years; when they would ask him ‘what is this?’ he would tell them that God will in the future bring a flood to [destroy] the world. [Seeing Noah’s work], perhaps they would repent.”

Noah devoted many years to building the ark that could help save the people of his time from future harm. Today, Israelis devote their lives to helping other countries protect and defend their citizens from harm.

For more than six decades, the reality of life in the Jewish state has forced Israelis to defend themselves against constant terrorist threats. As a result, the Jewish state has become a leader in designing techniques and technologies in the arenas of homeland security and counter-terrorism. While the United States often utilizes Israeli expertise in dealing with terrorist threats, Israel helps other countries when the need arises. When a group of radical extremists stormed the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, killing dozens and wounding hundreds and the situation devolved into a hostage crisis, Kenyan officials turned to Israel for assistance. According to the British newspaper [The Guardian](#), “Israel has taken the leading role among foreign countries in aiding and advising Kenyan forces after al-Shabaab Islamist extremists attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, according to security and intelligence sources.” While numerous countries offered assistance, counter-terrorist officials pointed to Israel as the country that has built up extremely close security co-operation as well as commercial ties with Kenya for over more than a decade. For more on Israel around the world, click [here](#).

Just as Noah spent years building the ark and living as an example for the people around him, Israel has spent years serving as an example for millions of people worldwide. Whether it’s assistance in the form of disaster relief or expertise on fighting terrorism, Israel stands ready and willing to share its knowledge. ■

Actions, Not Words

And the flood was forty days... (Genesis 7:17)

ויהי המבול ארבעים יום... (בראשית ז:יז)

Rabbi Moshe Grilik suggests that Noah’s actions on the ark justified his salvation from the terrible flood. The flood was sent to destroy the world because mankind’s theft and corruption had tainted humanity. The Midrash (Midrash Tanhuma Noah 9) explains that “The entire twelve months that Noah spent on the ark, neither he nor his sons slept.” Rather, the Midrash explains, they spent the entire time caring for the animals on the ark. Rabbi Grilek writes, “the only one saved was obligated to prove himself worthy of salvation—specifically through actions, and not merely with words. For only tangible action proves the essence of a person.”

To justify his salvation from the flood, Noah had to prove his righteousness through concrete action. As the Iranian regime looks to save itself from economic sanctions, it too will have to back up its words with tangible action.

In his first speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani expressed an eagerness to engage diplomatically with the international community over Iran’s illicit nuclear program. However he did not present any new proposals for softening previous Iranian positions. Rouhani sought to portray a new moderate Iran stating that “Iran poses absolutely no threat to the world” and claiming that “my country has been a harbinger of just peace and comprehensive security.” However, Israeli leaders have publicly criticized Rouhani as no different from others in the Iranian government. The international community should only consider sanctions relief if Iran complies with resolutions that require suspending its nuclear activities. If Iran is serious about resolving the conflict through negotiations, it must demonstrate seriousness in talks by taking concrete actions to suspend and roll back its nuclear program. These actions must include: Compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions that demand it suspend all enrichment and heavy water activity; halting the installation of additional centrifuges; ceasing production of uranium enriched to the 20-percent level; sending previously enriched material to a third country; ceasing development of the heavy water reactor under construction in Arak; and allowing international inspectors to access the Parchin military facility where nuclear explosive testing is believed to have been carried out. Pleasant rhetoric will not suffice, tangible results are required. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

Noah recognized that his precarious situation required him to act in order to escape the suffering of his generation. If Iran wishes to avoid the continued sting of international sanctions, words are not enough. Before the international community lifts any sanctions, Iran must take specific actions to halt its illegal nuclear weapons program. ■