

OCTOBER 20, 2014

Parashat Noah

Immoral and Destructive Behavior

For the earth is filled with violence (Genesis 6:13)

כי מלאה הארץ חמס (בראשית ו:יג)

In Noah's time humanity engaged in various forms of immoral and sinful behavior, the sin which "broke the camel's back" and warranted the eradication of humanity was "violence" (*hamas*). Rashi (verse 13), based on the Sages in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 108a) explains that *hamas* refers to "theft." Ramban, accepting Rashi's interpretation that the term "violence" refers to "robbery and oppression," explains that these sins sealed the world's fate because, "violence is a rational commandment...an evil committed against both heaven and mankind."

In Noah's time, humanity morally degraded the world by violating the rational, inherently intuitive prohibitions against theft, extortion and oppression. Today, ISIS has risen to power amassing its wealth in a similar manner.

While ISIS has gained world-wide recognition through its viral murder videos and social media prowess, its true power stems from its strong financial position. According to U.S. intelligence reports, Islamic State radicals are now, "wealthier than any other terror group in history," and have achieved this wealth using a variety of illegal and immoral tactics. While ISIS gains nearly \$3 million per day from its primary revenue source of smuggling oil produced by the eleven oil fields it has seized (stolen) in Syria and Iraq, [Reuters reported](#) that it, "also raises many millions more through thuggish, criminal tactics, including illegally exporting antiquities out of Iraq to Turkey, human trafficking of women and children as sex slaves, extortion payments and ransom from kidnapped hostages, and many types of theft from the areas taken by IS [ISIS]. 'Its cash-raising activities resemble those of a mafia-like organization,' [a] U.S. intelligence official said...They are well-organized, systematic and enforced through intimidation and violence."

In Noah's time, widespread oppression, extortion and theft warranted the destruction of humanity. Today, ISIS' similar practices have enriched the terrorist group as it spreads destruction, death and terror across the Middle East. ■

No More Stalling

For seven more days (Genesis 7:4)

כי לימים עוד שבעה (בראשית ז:ד)

Why wasn't Noah given more than seven days to warn society to repent and avoid the calamitous flood? Rashi, noting that the seven-day warning was "additional," explains that this week-long warning was, "additional time after the 120 years" that Noah spent building the ark. The Sages explain that the 120 years Noah was instructed to spend building the ark served as a warning to civilization of the coming deluge (see Rashi on 6:14). After ignoring Noah's repeated warnings for 120 years, seven additional days were more than enough. The time had finally come for humanity to suffer the consequences of its stubborn refusal to abandon its sinful ways.

Humanity in era of the deluge refused for decades to listen to Noah's warnings and repent. Iran has similarly stalled over many years to abandon its relentless drive for nuclear weapons. Iran's stalling tactics must come to an end.

Earlier this year, bipartisan coalitions in both the House and the Senate sent letters to President Obama stressing Congress' critical role in the ongoing negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. In the Senate letter, signed by 83 Senators, the legislators [wrote](#) that, "Iran must clearly understand the consequences of failing to reach an acceptable final agreement. We must signal unequivocally to Iran that rejecting negotiations and continuing its nuclear weapon program will lead to much more dramatic sanctions, including further limitations on Iran's exports of crude oil and petroleum products." Yet, as the November 24th deadline to reach a nuclear deal with Iran quickly approaches, Iran has demonstrated little willingness to address the core issue of its nuclear enrichment program, and instead has long insisted that it would never agree to curb its nuclear ambitions. In his [recent U.N. address](#) which suggested that a nuclear settlement is "certain," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani also noted that, "what's important is that the nuclear issue is irreversible," and suggested that among the "fine details to be worked out... [is] if the time will be extended..."

In a recent editorial, the [Chicago Tribune wrote](#): "Here's the deal to make that stick: The West shouldn't seek or grant any more extensions. The talks end November 24th. The repercussions for failure, including a stiffer banking and trade embargo to cripple Iran's economy, begin November 24th. You want to keep talking? Sure. But the sanctions get tougher." Should Iran stall yet again, the U.S. must rapidly and dramatically expand sanctions, sending the message that Iran's years of delay must finally come to an end.

After 120 years of ignoring Noah's warnings, the flood could no longer be delayed. While Iran hasn't stalled for quite that much time, it has thwarted the West for far too long. Iran's stalling tactics must come to an end, once and for all. ■

A Different Voice

They have all one language (Genesis 11:6)

ושפה אחת לכלם (בראשית יא:ו)

What was so dangerous about the fact that the builders of the Tower of Babel "are one people, and they have all one language" (verse 6)? Why did God see the need to "confound their language" (verse 7) and "scatter them...upon the face of all the earth" (verse 8)? S'forno (on verse 6) explains that because they all shared the same destructive ideology and worshipped the same idolatry, "nothing would prevent them from fulfilling their intention...and not one of them would be freed to know the Creator and understand that God is the Universal Creator." The people of Babel were thus scatted lest their unified stance prevent a dissenting voice from spreading light and truth to the world.

Babel was scattered because its unified worldview threatened to prevent the light of truth from benefiting humanity. Similarly, the iron rule of Hamas in Gaza will hamper the efforts critical to rebuilding the lives of Gaza's citizens.

Last week, donor countries from around the world pledged \$5.4 billion towards the reconstruction of the battered region following the war this past summer. While the pledges have been made, actually getting the money promised will be an ordeal of its own. Additionally, while there is an obvious need for physical reconstruction, the citizens of Gaza deserve a leadership divested of the terrorist leadership that endangered its civilian population and brought destruction to the region through its terrorist tactics. Accompanying the establishment of a verification system to ensure that Hamas does not simply seize reconstruction materials to rebuild its terror infrastructure, Gaza's various ministries, government bureaucracies, and public security forces need to be shifted from the nominally dissolved Hamas government to the Palestinian Authority. This shift must occur not only because most international donors cannot legally work with a designated terrorist group such as Hamas, but also because Hamas cannot be seen as the provider of this aid. The world cannot reward oppression and war with billions of dollars in international assistance, nor can it aid a radical Islamic terror group which continues to deny Israel's right to exist.

Because of its ultimately destructive goal of idolatry, the unified voice of the people of Babel presented a danger that warranted their dissolution. Should it continue to rule the Gaza Strip alone, Hamas will serve as a destructive force that will ultimately undermine the world's efforts to rebuild the lives of Gaza's innocent civilians. ■

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