

Migdal Bavel - מגדל בבל

The Tower of Babel

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In this study I would like to explore the incident at Migdal Bavel, the tower[[1]](#footnote-1) at Babel.[[2]](#footnote-2) In that incident, the people decided to make it impossible for themselves to be scattered. In the end, HaShem scattered them for their sin. It was mida-kneged-mida, measure-for-measure. HaShem commanded Noach and his family to “fill the earth” after the flood. This generation decided that they did not wish to fill the earth, but rather to concentrate themselves in one place. Thus, in nine verses, the *Dor* Haflagah*[[3]](#footnote-3)* went from being unified to being dis-unified.

In the year 1656 A.M., the rain began to fall in order to destroy the earth with the goal of re-creating it. Noach and his family began rebuilding the world.

340 years after the end of the flood, a wicked generation decided to fight God by building a tower and a city. The incident of the tower of bavel began a mere 340 years after the flood, in 1996 A.M.!



EU Parlement building in Strasbourg.

Designed after the incomplete tower of Babel.

Here is the Torah’s account of the Tower of Bavel:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:1-9*** *And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.* ***2****And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.* ***3****And they said one to another: 'Come, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.* ***4****And they said: 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'* ***5****And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.* ***6****And the LORD said: 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do.* ***7****Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.'* ***8****So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city.* ***9****Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.****{P}***

The traveling from the east[[4]](#footnote-4) (‘m’kedem - מִקֶּדֶם), in the story of the tower of Babel, is understood as a movement away from something, as opposed to being a move towards something. They were traveling away from the “kedem”. Kedem is related to the word Kadmon and means ancient. The travel of the people was specifically their distancing themselves from God, and their attempt to remove themselves from Divinely ordained natural order. Their intent was to create an environment immune from natural law, and all its destructive powers, the likes of which was recently seen by the flood.

The tower of Bavel saga is also told in Sefer HaYashar:

*And Nimrod, the king, reigned securely, and he was the sole ruler of ‎all the earth. And all the earth was of one speech and one language, and all the princes of ‎Nimrod, as also Phut, and Mizraim, and Cush, and Canaan, and all their families together ‎consulted at that time, and they said one unto the other: Come and let us build a large city, ‎and within it a strong fortification and a tower, the top of which shall touch the heavens, so ‎that we procure a great name among the nations, and that our enemies can never prevail ‎against us. And we will be the sole rulers of all the earth, and we shall govern all the nations ‎with a strong arm, so that none of their battles can ever be successful to disperse us over the ‎face of the whole earth. And they came all into the presence of the king, and they made ‎known unto him all their deliberations, and the king agreed with them in all they concluded to ‎do. And after the king had consented, the princes and leaders gathered together all their ‎people and their families, numbering about six hundred thousand men, and all of them went ‎forth in search of a spacious land whereon to build the city and the tower.*

*And they did search ‎all over the earth, and they found only one suitable place in a certain valley to the east of the ‎land of Shinar, a space of two days’ journey. And all the people went thither and they dwelt ‎therein. And they began making bricks, and they did burn them thoroughly, to build the city ‎and the tower, which they have resolved upon to erect. But the building of the city and tower ‎lead them to sins and transgressions, even when they commenced to build it. And while they ‎were engaged in building they rebelled against the Lord the God of heaven, and they thought ‎in their hearts to go up into heaven, and wage war against the Lord. And all these men, and ‎their families, divided themselves into three parties. And one party said, we will go up into ‎heaven and wage war against the Lord; and the second party said, we will go up into heaven ‎and there set up our own gods and worship them; and the third party said we will go up into ‎heaven and slay the Lord with spears, and with arrows. And the Lord knew all their actions and ‎all their evil thoughts, and he saw the city and tower which they were building.‎*

*And they have been engaged in building for a very long time, so that they had already built the ‎city, and the tower therein reached an enormous height. And by reason of the very great ‎height it took a full year to carry upwards the stones and the bricks, to reach the builders. And ‎thus it was done all the time, some going up and others coming down, and so difficult was the ‎ascension and descension that when a brick would happen to fall down and break, all would ‎lament and weep over the great loss. But when a man would fall down and be killed, no one ‎would take the least notice of his death. And the Lord knew all their wicked thoughts. And ‎they shot arrows towards heaven, and all the arrows fell down upon them full of blood, and ‎seeing that all rejoiced, saying: We have killed all those that were in heaven. For it was the will ‎of God to mislead them, and to wipe them out from the face of the earth.*

*And they continued ‎building the city and tower, and they acted so wickedly every day, until many days and years ‎had passed. And the Lord said to the seventy angels that stand first and nearest unto the ‎throne, saying: Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not ‎understand one another's speech. And the Lord did unto them accordingly. And they forgot at ‎once each other's speech, and they could no more speak nor understand the same language. ‎And when the builder would receive from the hands of the carrier the wrong bricks, or ‎something else he was not ordered to bring, the builder in his anger would fling it away, and ‎cast it upon someone and kill him. And this disorder continued for many days, and a great ‎number were killed in that way. And the three parties were punished by the Lord according to ‎what they have said and done. Those that said: We will go up into heaven and there enthrone ‎our gods and worship them, turned into apes and into elephants. Those that said: We will go ‎up and kill all those that are in heaven, with our spears and arrows, the Lord caused to perish ‎every man by the hand of his neighbor. And the third party that said: We will go up into ‎heaven and wage war against the Lord, the Lord dispersed through all the earth. And those ‎that belonged to neither of the parties remained there. But they soon came to know and ‎understand the evil which hath come over them and they abandoned the building, and of their ‎own accord dispersed themselves over the face of the whole earth. So it came that the sons of ‎man ceased to build the city and tower. Therefore the name of that place is called Babel; ‎because the Lord confounded there, the language of all the earth. And the place was to the ‎east of the land of Shinar. And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up one third of the ‎tower, and fire came down from heaven and consumed another third thereof, and one-third ‎remains unto this day, hanging in the air of the heaven; and its length is the distance of three ‎day's journey. And so many of the sons of man died in the work of that building, that they ‎could not be even numbered.*

After the Flood Noach’s descendents multiplied greatly and they were all one people, one heart, and one language. They despised the pleasant land [i.e. Eretz Israel] and journeyed east, and settled in Shinar.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Hmmm…. Maybe not.

In the story of the Tower of Bavel, the Torah says that “*The entire earth had* ***one language and a common speech***.” This however seems to contradict a previous passuk[[6]](#footnote-6) that states "*From these, the islands of the nations separated in their lands,* ***each one to his language****, according to their families, in their nations.*" So which passuk is correct? How can the Torah state that at the time of Bavel the entire world spoke one language when immediately following the story of the flood the Torah tells us that they had already developed unique languages?[[7]](#footnote-7)

Perhaps we can suggest that both are true. The world spoke many languages but the mission of Bavel mandated that we all speak the same language. Speaking one language represents the suppression of individuality. This then is the perversion of unity. True unity finds harmony in opposites. The perverse version of unity cannot tolerate difference. We must all speak the same language regardless of who we are. Those that built the Tower of Bavel did so because they were fighting God. A Godless world demands conformity. A Godly world recognizes that each of us represent various pieces of a singular puzzle. Like the many paintings of a master artist, each is a unique expression of the artist and yet all are connected to the artist themselves. When Hashem babbled (the origin of the word Babylon) their language he was restoring the world to the way it had previously been with each nation speaking their own unique language. By reinstating difference God once again gave us the opportunity to create true harmony.

When they migrated from the east they arrived at Shinar. The Shinar valley was west of Mount Ararat (some say that it was south of Ararat), in which case everyone can see that the migration to Shinar was from west to east. Why then did the Torah have to mention that they migrated *from the east*? Chazal therefore comment that they were getting themselves away "from Him who preceded the world". They said, "We want neither Him nor His Divinity".[[8]](#footnote-8)

Inhabiting the Ararat Mountains, where they could see what remained of the Ark that had saved Noach and the animals, reminded them constantly of God's awesome deeds, and more or less put a damper on their ambitions. The Torah thus hints that finding a valley large enough to contain them all was not their sole motive for leaving Mount Ararat. They also longed to cast off the yoke of Heaven, to forget the miracle performed for their ancestors and for themselves. And as for the possibility that God might annul His covenant with Noach and bring another Flood, they had contingency plans for this, too; in fact they didn't need God's covenant or kindness any more: "We want neither Him nor His Divinity".[[9]](#footnote-9)

Another perspective…

It appears that the people who built the Tower of Bavel had to travel from the region around Jerusalem. It appears this way because Noach built his altar in the same place Adam built his altar, which was the same place Solomon built his altar – in Jeusalem! Rambam gives us some insight into this:

Rambam said[[10]](#footnote-10) that “It is a well known tradition that the place that David and Solomon built the altar in Goren Arnona, was the same place that Abraham built the altar upon which he sacrificed Isaac, and it was the same place which **Noach built an altar when he left the ark**,[[11]](#footnote-11) and that was the altar which Cain and Abel sacrificed upon, and **Adam brought a sacrifice there when he was created**…and he was created there. The Rabbis say man was created from the place of his ‘kapara’, his atonement.[[12]](#footnote-12) This suggests that Noach’s altar was in Jerusalem, just as Adam’s altar and Solomon’s altar were.

Bereshit (Genesis) 8:20 tells us that Noach built an altar when he came out of the Ark, for burnt-offerings of some of the “pure” animals and birds. The Midrash[[13]](#footnote-13) quotes R. Elazar b. Ya’akov that this was on the great altar in Jerusalem, where Adam offered his sacrifices.

The Midrash[[14]](#footnote-14) also picks up on the fact that the Torah says that Avraham built “*the* altar,” before the Akedah, which the Midrash takes as a reference to a pre-existing altar, where Noach offered sacrifices, and where Kayin and Hevel did.

In Bereshit (Genesis) 11:2 we see that the people traveled “*from the east*” to arrive at Shinar. However, Meam Loez tells us something remarkable:

*Because of their disrespect for both God and Abraham, these people became separated from God. They said that they could not believe in God's omnipotence, and would not obey His commandments. They also did not believe in divine reward and punishment, nor in judgment after death.*

*The Torah therefore says that "they migrated from the east." This cannot be speaking of a geographical migration, since the tower was built in Babylon, which is in the east. [Actually, the word the Torah uses here for "east" is Kedem* (קדם)*, and not the more usual Mizrach* (מזרח)*. The word Kedem also means "ancient times"; the word therefore alludes to God.] This phrase indicates that these people ‘migrated’ away from God.’[[15]](#footnote-15)*

*Those who go east are going away from HaShem* (See [EAST](east.html)).[[16]](#footnote-16) Thus we see that their motivation is not good despite the seemingly innocent words.

# One Language

***Bereshit Genesis) 11:1*** *Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words.[[17]](#footnote-17)*

The Torah tells us that from the time of creation until the incident at Bavel, that the whole earth had one language and one speech.

Why are we told one language AND one speech. Aren’t these the same thing? Clearly HaShem is trying to tell us that two facets of communication were not the same. Chazal,[[18]](#footnote-18) based on these two words, teach us that not only did everyone speak Hebrew, but when they spoke they actually communicated! The ideas in the speaker’s mind were exactly the same ideas that were understood by the listener. There was no mis-communication. There was no misunderstanding.

However, because of the sin at Bavel, HaShem confused the language and the speech. Suddenly, each of the seventy nations began speaking a language that was unique to that nation. Thus, we now have Mandarin, Cantonese, English, Hindi, etc. In addition, those who spoke Cantonese, for example, spoke to each other in an understandable language, yet, what the speaker meant is NOT what was understood by the one hearing the message. This was the effect of the confusion of the language ***and the speech***.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:6-9*** *And HaShem said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Come, let us go down, and there* ***confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech****. 8 So HaShem scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because HaShem did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did HaShem scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

When HaShem confused the language, we no longer spoke Hebrew only, which was the original language. The Targum gives us some insight in this matter:

***Targum Pseudo Jonathan for: B’ resheet (Genesis) 11:1-32 XI.*** *And all the earth was (of) one language, and one speech, and one counsel. In the holy language they spoke, that by which the world had been created at the beginning. And it was while they were journeying from the east that they found a plain in the land of Bavel, and dwelt there.*

*[JERUSALEM. And all the inhabitants of the earth were (of) one language, and of one speech, and one counsel: for they spoke the holy language by which the world was created at the beginning: while their hearts erred afterwards from the Word of Him who spoke, and the world was, at the beginning; and they found a plain in the land of Pontos and dwelt there.]*

Rashi tells us that the one language was Hebrew: **One language** - [That language was] the holy language [Hebrew].

***Targum Pseudo Jonathan for: Bereshit (Genesis) 11:1-32*** *And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and the language of all of them one: and this they have thought to do: and now they will not be restrained from doing whatever they imagine. And the Lord said to the seventy angels which stand before Him, Come, we will descend and will there commingle their language, that a man shall not understand the speech of his neighbor. And the Word of the Lord was revealed against the city, and with Him seventy angels, having reference to seventy nations, each having its own language, and thence the writing of its own hand: and He dispersed them from thence upon the face of all the earth into seventy languages. And one knew not what his neighbor would say: but one slew the other; and they ceased from building the city. Therefore He called the name of it Babel, because there did the Lord commingle the speech of all the inhabitants of the earth, and from thence did the Lord disperse them upon the faces of all the earth.*

***Targum Onkelos on Bereshit (Genesis) 11:1-4*** *And all the earth was of one language and one speech. And it was in their migrations at the beginning, that they found a plain in the land of Babel, and dwelt there. And they said, a man to his companion, Come, let us cast bricks and bake them in the fire. And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. And they said, Come, let us build a city, and a tower, the bead of it coming to the pinnacle of the heavens. And we will make to us a name, lest we be dispersed upon the face of all the earth. And the Lord was revealed to punish the work of the city and the tower which the sons of men had builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one and the language one with all of them: and this is what they begin to do. And now nothing will be restrained from them of what they imagine to do. Come, We will be manifest, and will confuse their language there, that a man shall not bear the language of his companion. And the Lord dispersed them from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they were restrained from building the city. Therefore the name of it is called Confusion, because the Lord there confused the tongue of all the earth, and from thence the Lord dispersed them upon the face of all the earth.*

We still had Hebrew, however. Avraham and those of his family (Shem, Eber, Noach, etc.) continued to speak Hebrew.[[19]](#footnote-19) Never-the-less, even though Shem’s family spoke to each other in Hebrew, yet, what the speaker meant is NOT what was understood by the one hearing the message. This was the effect of the confusion of the language ***and the speech***. How often have we said, “I did not understand that that is what you meant?”

***Avodah Zarah 19a*** *R. Simeon b. Pazi expounded [that verse as follows]: ‘Happy is the man that hath not walked’ — i.e., to theatres and circuses of idolaters ‘nor stood in the way of sinners’ — that is he who does not attend contests of wild beasts; ‘nor sat in the seat of the scornful’ — that is he who does not participate in [evil] plannings. And lest one say, ‘Since I do not go to theatres or circuses nor attend contests of wild animals, I will go and indulge in sleep.’ Scripture therefore continues, ‘And in His Law doth He meditate day and night.’ Said R. Samuel b. Nahmani in the name of R. Jonathan: Happy is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked — that is our father Abraham who did not follow the counsel of the men of the Generation of the Division[[20]](#footnote-20) who were wicked, as it is said, Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven,’ nor stood in the way of sinners — for he did not take up the stand of the Sodomites, who were sinful, as it is said, Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinful against the Lord exceedingly; nor sat in the seat of the scornful — for he did not sit in the company of the Philistines, because they were scoffers; as it is said, And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said: Call for Samson that he may make us sport.[[21]](#footnote-21)*

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, in his commentary on the Torah, points out that the word ba-lahl - בלל, normally translated as “confused”, really means “to mix two elements together as one through the introduction of a third element”, such as in the mixing of dry particles of flour together through the introduction of water or oil, thereby making the flour particles into one dough. In other words, what is being implied in the word ba-lahl in the verse is that all HaShem did was to introduce something new into the formation of their speech, and this new element must by itself have brought about that people no longer understood each other. What then was this new element that was the ultimate cause of the breakdown of the world’s universal language with the resultant formation of all the other languages?

It seems to be indicated, in the words of our Prophets, that the evolution of many different languages after the dispersion was detrimental to the ultimate perfection and unity that mankind strives for, and that only when the Messiah comes, and all peoples of the earth will once again speak in the Holy Tongue, will we achieve that perfection and unity. The prophet Zephania speaks of the future Messianic Era when he writes,

***Zephania 3:9*** *For then I will change the nations [to speak] a pure language, so that they all will proclaim the Name of HaShem, to worship Him with a united resolve.*

What is so special about language, and the Hebrew language in particular, that the dispersion and downfall of mankind, as well as his ultimate perfection, all depends on it?

There is a major, qualitative difference between (Biblical) Hebrew (Loshon Hakodesh) and all the other languages out there. According to tradition, all the other languages are the product of human beings, while Hebrew was made up by HaShem Himself. In fact, we are taught that Hebrew pre-existed the world itself! And the Sages tell us that when HaShem created the world, He created it by means of Loshon Hakodesh [the Holy Tongue]. Evidence is cited from the Hebrew words ish (man) and isha (woman). The Torah informs us that woman was so named:

***Bereshit (Genesis 2:3)*** *because she was taken from man.*

A reasoning which would only make sense if man and woman were created by means of Loshon Hakodesh in which ish and isha are nearly identical.

But the difference between Hebrew and all other languages is much, much deeper. As Rabbi Akiva Tatz explains in his book Worldmask: *In the Hebrew language with which the Torah was written, words express essence, and close study of the words is rewarded by an understanding of the nature of the ideas that those words describe. In other languages of the secular world, words are also revealing: the language of the culture reveals its heart. How a particular culture express ideas through language gives insight into the values of that culture. In Torah, words express essence because* ***words are in fact the basis for the existence*** *of those things which they describe. HaShem created objects in this world by saying the words for those objects. When He said, “Let there be ohr (light)” - light automatically came into being. The* *words are the medium of Creation, and a correct grasp of the words is a correct grasp of the essence of the objects those words represent.*

Rabbi Hirsch explains that the sin of the builders of the Tower of Babel was that they wanted to unify themselves and achieve a so-called “perfect society” without HaShem’s being in the picture. They wanted to “make a name for themselves”, as the Torah says, and not to submit to HaShem’s will and plan. Whereas HaShem had given human beings the ability to unite in their understanding of the world and its purpose, as reflected in their common, God-given Hebrew language, which would in turn enable them to express HaShem’s will in this world and to bring it to perfection, the inhabitants of the world instead united against HaShem. They felt that as a united entity, nothing could stop them from their desired goals, and that this could be accomplished without HaShem’s help. And when human beings band together to “perfect” humanity without HaShem in the picture - *nothing can be more dangerous than that*.

So HaShem set out to destroy the unity of the world’s inhabitants. And He did so by injecting (ba’lahl - בלל) subjectivity into their minds and ideas, which, of course, was reflected in their language. This automatically caused them not to understand each other. No longer would they all speak Hebrew, thus understanding the objective essence of all things in creation. Now, each person would name things and speak a language that suited his or her human, subjective, and distorted understanding of all that exists.

Of course, as soon as all the nations stopped speaking Hebrew, they lost the chance to be HaShem’s “chosen people” who would bring perfection to mankind by expressing HaShem’s will in this world. And it was left to one man and his descendants, Avraham and the Jewish people, to inherit the sole ownership of the Holy Tongue, thereby understanding the true essence of all that HaShem created, and expressing that Divine Will in this world, leading all of mankind to its ultimate perfection.

Those who spoke Hebrew were not excluded from this confusion. Part of this confusion was the diversity of words that were not always known by everyone. Thus, even those who spoke the same language did not all have the same vocabulary. This problem persists into our day.

In addition to having the languages become confused, HaShem also confused their speech. This confusion resulted in the great communication difficulties that we all experience today. One has to work very hard to communicate one’s thoughts. Somehow when we package our thoughts into words, the words no longer re-create our thoughts when they are heard by the listener. This confusion affected even Hebrew.

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (NeTZiV), powerfully embedded a vision in his comments to the Tower of Babel story. The Torah text opens with a description of the Bavel society as “of one language, and uniform words”. NeTZiV understands this to mean “of uniform values”, and argues that such a situation could come about only in a totalitarian society that rejected or executed anyone who disagreed with its values. He builds on a Rabbinic tradition that Abraham was thrown into a furnace for maintaining monotheism in despite of the culture’s mandated idolatry. NeTZiV argues that God intervenes by fragmenting the society because He rejects coerced uniformity.

## English

The year is 5783. The main language of trade is English. All pilots who fly internationally are required to speak English as required by ICAO[[22]](#footnote-22) standards. Using English as the global aviation language helps provide clear communication between pilots and air traffic controllers to prevent accidents and incidents.

English is the official language of navigators the world over. Those who navigate on the high sea must have a way to communcate with other ships. Because England and the United States used to dominate the sea, English was chosen as the language of navigators.

English is the official language of 67 different countries and 27 non-sovereign entities around the world. But apart from that, English is also spoken in many countries where it’s not an official language.

English is now the global language of business. More and more multinational companies are mandating English as the common corporate language: Airbus, Daimler-Chrysler, Fast Retailing, Nokia, Renault, Samsung, SAP, Technicolor, and Microsoft in Beijing, to name a few, in an attempt to facilitate communication and performance across geographically diverse functions and business endeavors.

The fastest-spreading language in human history, English is spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide, that’s one in every four of us. No other language is spoken by so many people, not even Mandarin. There are close to 385 million native speakers in countries like the U.S. and Australia, about a billion fluent speakers in formerly colonized nations such as India and Nigeria, and millions of people around the world who’ve studied it as a second language. An estimated 565 million people use it on the internet.

Given the popularity of English, one has to wonder if English will end up as the one language of the whole world. The Propher Zecharia comes to tell us that in the end, we will not speak English, but rather we will all speak Hebrew:

***Zephaniah 3:9*** *For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of HaShem, to serve Him with one consent.*

We might have guessed that Hebrew would be the final language just as it was the original language because King Solomon wrote:

***Kohelet (Ecclisiastes) 1:9*** *That which hath been is that which shall be, and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun.*

# Unity[[23]](#footnote-23)

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:4*** *And they said: 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'*

Apparently, these people were striving for unity; they were attempting to prevent dispersion or exile of disparate, separate groups of peoples through the centralization of a single governmental power. But, almost inexplicably, this program is not pleasing in the eyes of God. "The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it He called it Bavel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth."[[24]](#footnote-24)

What is the Lord so upset with them about? Is our God against unity, against centralized and uniform activity? Is He in favor of divisions and dispersions? What about our clarion call of faith, our ringing declaration of unity, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one"?! What about the messianic promise of the prophet Zephaniah, "For then I shall change the nations to speak a pure language,[[25]](#footnote-25) for all of them to proclaim in the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with a united resolve".[[26]](#footnote-26) Is this not a call for unity of all the nations, which the God of the the prophet Zephaniah identifies with the ultimate redemption?

In order to understand the deep chasm which divides Babel from Zephaniah, we must analyze the purpose behind each type of unity. After all, unity is a mighty force; just as unity used for a positive purpose can re-create the world in the Kingship of God, so unity with a negative resolve can destroy the world.

Zephaniah desired unity so that all nations will "proclaim the Name of the Lord," which is Love and Compassion, Loving-kindness and Truth.[[27]](#footnote-27) He desired a united resolve of all nations to serve the Lord of the Universe, by performing acts of compassionate righteousness and moral justice.[[28]](#footnote-28) Babel, on the other hand, desired unity in order "to make for ourselves a name," in order to invest with supreme power an oligarchy of bureaucratic despots interested in gigantic buildings for their own self-aggrandizement,[[29]](#footnote-29) devoid of concern for the common welfare or for the triumph of good over evil, right over might.

Indeed, the rabbis of the Midrash masterfully read between the lines of the Bible. They suggest that the people of Babel planned that the top of the tower would reach the heavens in order to "murder" the God of love, morality and peace, and that the builders would hardly notice if a human being fell to the ground, but they would mourn if a brick fell to the ground.[[30]](#footnote-30) Babel is Communist, totalitarian materialism.

The other major distinction between Babel and our Bible lies in uniformity versus unity. Our Biblical tradition is profoundly supportive of unity in terms of ethical conduct, even insisting upon universal ethical absolution regarding the Seven Noahide Laws of Morality and the universal acceptance of a God of Peace;[[31]](#footnote-31) however, Micah[[32]](#footnote-32) proclaims the possibility of religious pluralism; "Let everyone walk in the Name of his God, and we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God forever", and our Mishna glories in the fact that God has created different people of widely different physiognomies and ethnic appearances as well as of different outlooks and philosophies.[[33]](#footnote-33)

As long as everyone is on the same page in terms of a commitment to a God of peace and morality, the Messiah will not be far behind.[[34]](#footnote-34)

# Make a Name for Ourselves

What does the Torah mean when it tells us the *Dor* *Haflagah[[35]](#footnote-35)* wanted to make a name for themselves?

The Midrash gives us an insight into the answer to this question from the drash perspective:

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XXXVIII:8*** *AND LET US MAKE A NAME (SHEM). The School of R. Ishmael taught: SHEM (A NAME) means nought else but an idol.*

Another insight into an answer to our question can fe found by noting the frequent usage of the first person plural in the description of the events at Shinar:

***Bereshit Genesis) 11:1-4*** *Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words. And as they traveled from the east,[[36]](#footnote-36) they came upon a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another: Come,* ***let us*** *make bricks and burn them hard... And they said, Come* ***let us*** *build* ***us*** *a city and a tower[[37]](#footnote-37) with its top in the sky,* ***and we will make a name for ourselves*** *lest* ***we*** *shall be scattered all over the world. Then God came down to see...*

The tower builders said, "What right does He have to choose heaven for Himself and leave us the earth?".[[38]](#footnote-38) And if He did not wish to descend, they thought, "we shall wage war with Him".[[39]](#footnote-39) If they could not vanquish Him, then "let us make a name for ourselves",[[40]](#footnote-40) a word which symbolizes idolatry. They planned to place an idol at the top of the tower, "and attach a sword to it to create the appearance that it was warring against God".[[41]](#footnote-41)

***Bereshit Rabbah 38:6*** *… ‘He has no right to choose the celestial spheres for Himself and assign us the terrestrial world! But come, let us build a tower at the top of which we will* ***set an idol holding a sword*** *in its hand, which will thus appear to wage war against Him.’*

***Midrash Tanchuma, Noach 18:7*** *They separated into three groups. One said: “Let us go and dwell there”; the second insisted: “Let us go up and wage war against Him”; and the third shouted: “Let us go and serve idols there.” Those who said “Let us go and dwell there” were scattered abroad by the Holy One, blessed be He; those who insisted “Let us go and wage war against Him” were transformed into apes, spirits, and demons; and those who said “Let us go and serve idols there” were punished, as specified in the verse Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongue.[[42]](#footnote-42) Thus it is said: And the Lord dispersed them from there.[[43]](#footnote-43)*

One key phrase in the Torah’s depiction of the tower’s purpose reflects the egocentric nature of this generation:

***Bereshit Genesis) 11:4******we*** *shall make a* ***name*** *for* ***ourselves****.*

Rather than devoting themselves to the **Name of HaShem**, this generation removes Him from the picture altogether. The builders of the tower united for the unholy purpose of glorifying man’s dominion and power.

The commentators explain[[44]](#footnote-44) the intent and sin that took place at the Tower of Bavel in the following manner: There was a desire on the part of many that the entire world’s population live in one place. They therefore desired to build a city and tower that would unite the world’s population in one locale.

This, however, was at odds with HaShem’s desire of “filling the world, and conquering it”,[[45]](#footnote-45) that HaShem’s request of “settling [all of] creation”[[46]](#footnote-46) be achieved throughout the entire world, not only in one location.

This is also why HaShem commanded Noach to “Leave the Ark ... and *fill* the earth”.[[47]](#footnote-47) In the Ark, all men and animals were confined to one narrow space. HaShem’s intent, however, is for the entire world to be “filled,” so that the whole world is transformed into a dwelling place for HaShem. And this, of course, is what *Zayin* MarCheshvan is all about.

In the end, ***none*** of the people in Shinar are identified by name, in the Torah, because they wanted to make a name for themselves. In contrast, Avraham who called upon the Name of HaShem,[[48]](#footnote-48) was himself also called by name and given a new name.[[49]](#footnote-49) At Shinar, Avraham rejected the plan of the people.

The Gemara describes the idolatrous nature of the people of Shinar:

***Sanhedrin 109a*** *THE GENERATION OF THE DISPERSION HAVE NO PORTION IN THE WORLD TO COME etc. What did they do? — The scholars of R. Shila taught: They said, ‘Let us build a tower, ascend to heaven, and cleave it with axes, that its waters might gush forth.’ In the West [sc. Palestine academies] they laughed at this: If so, they should have built it on a mountain!*

*R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: They split up into three parties. One said, ‘Let us ascend and dwell there;’ the second, ‘Let us ascend and serve idols;’ and the third said, ‘Let us ascend and wage war [with God].’ The party which proposed, ‘Let us ascend, and dwell there’ — the Lord scattered them: the one that said, ‘Let us ascend and wage war’ were turned to apes, spirits, devils, and night-demons; whilst as for the party which said, ‘Let us ascend and serve idols’ — ‘for there the Lord did confound the language of all the earth.’[[50]](#footnote-50)*

*It has been taught. R. Nathan said: They were all bent on idolatry. [For] here it is written, let us make us a name;[[51]](#footnote-51) whilst elsewhere it is written, and make no mention of the name of other gods:[[52]](#footnote-52) just as there idolatry is meant, so here too. R. Jonathan said: A third of the tower was burnt, a third sunk [into the earth], and a third is still standing.[[53]](#footnote-53) Rab said: The atmosphere of the tower causes forgetfulness. R. Joseph said: Babylon and Borsif[[54]](#footnote-54) are evil omens for the Torah.[[55]](#footnote-55) What is the meaning of Borsif? — R. Assi said: An empty [shafi] pit [bor].[[56]](#footnote-56)*

In contrast to the men of Shinar, Abraham did NOT participate in the tower program. Abram was 48 years old at the time of the Tower of Babel;[[57]](#footnote-57) and Abram did not participate in the sin of Babel as we can see from the following gemara:

***Avodah Zarah 19a*** *R. Simeon b. Pazi expounded [that verse as follows]: ‘Happy is the man that hath not walked’ — i.e., to theatres and circuses of idolaters ‘nor stood in the way of sinners’ — that is he who does not attend contests of wild beasts;[[58]](#footnote-58) ‘nor sat in the seat of the scornful’ — that is he who does not participate in [evil] plannings. And lest one say, ‘Since I do not go to theatres or circuses nor attend contests of wild animals, I will go and indulge in sleep.’ Scripture therefore continues, ‘And in His Law doth He meditate day and night.’ Said R.* Samuel *b. Nahmani in the name of R. Jonathan: Happy is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked — that is our father Abraham who did not follow the counsel of the men of the Generation of the Division[[59]](#footnote-59) who were wicked, as it is said, Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven,’[[60]](#footnote-60) nor stood in the way of sinners — for he did not take up the stand of the Sodomites, who were sinful, as it is said, Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinful against the Lord exceedingly;[[61]](#footnote-61) nor sat in the seat of the scornful — for he did not sit in the company of the Philistines, because they were scoffers; as it is said, And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said: Call for Samson that he may make us sport.[[62]](#footnote-62)*

The suggested thematic connection between Migdal Bavel and the choosing of Avraham Avinu is supported by the Midrash that states that Avraham was forty-eight (48) years old when he recognized HaShem for the first time. Avraham Avinu reached age forty-eight in the same year that Peleg died[[63]](#footnote-63) which, according to Chazal, corresponds to the precise year of Migdal Bavel, 1996 from the creation of the world. Recall that Avraham was born in year 1948 AM!

Rashi gives us some insights on Bereshit 1:25 where he speaks about Peleg and the dispersion.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 10:25*** *And to Eber were born two sons: one was named Peleg, because in his days the earth was divided, and the name of his brother was Joktan.*

***RASHI: was divided:*** *The tongues became confused, and they were scattered from the valley and were dispersed throughout the entire world. We learn that Eber was a prophet, since he named his son for a future event [i.e.*פֶּלֶג *resembles the word* נִפְלְגָה *meaning “dispersed.”]. And we learned in Seder Olam (ch. 1) that at the end of his [Peleg’s] days, they were dispersed. For if you say that [they were dispersed] at the beginning of his days, behold his brother Joktan was his junior, and he begot many families before that, as it is said (verse 26): “And Joktan begot, etc.,” and [only] afterwards, [is it written]:[[64]](#footnote-64) ”And the whole earth was one language.” Now if you say [that they were dispersed] in the middle of his [Peleg’s] days, [this is not so, because] Scripture does not come to make things obscure but to explain. Hence, you learn that in the year of Peleg’s death, they were dispersed.*

# Bricks

Bereshit (Genesis) 11:3 describes the invention of the brick: Originally, the survivors of the Flood inhabited mountainous regions, and quarried stone as a building material; but then they settled in the valley of Shinar (later Babylon), where they desired to build “a city, and a tower whose head reached to the heavens.” Where would they find a material strong enough for such a massive structure? Someone had an idea:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:3*** *They said one to the other, ‘Let us brick* (נִלְבְּנָה) *bricks* (לְבֵנִים)*, and bake them with fire.’ And the brick served them as stone, and clay served them as mortar”.*

It is well known that the first usage of a word in the Torah represents the place where that thing, that word, was created. So bricks were created for the building of a building that was used to rebel against HaShem, eeeekkk!

Bricks represent the side of impurity.[[65]](#footnote-65)

In the language of Kabbala and Chassidus, stone represents an ‘arousal from Above’ (a higher power) while bricks represent an ‘arousal from below’ (personal inspiration that comes from down here).[[66]](#footnote-66)

The bricks represent the materials HaShem gives us to build our lives, such as our talents and positive character traits. These “bricks” help us conquer the challenges of life and keep the mitzvot, thereby building our lives for the better.

Bricks represent people.[[67]](#footnote-67)

Just as it is with towers, so is it with words.[[68]](#footnote-68) There are stone words and brick words. There are G‑dly words and words of human convention. Words of Torah and prayer are stone words;[[69]](#footnote-69) words of mundane affairs, of human conventions, are bricks.

Jewish mystics say that the generation of Jews that suffered in Egypt was a reincarnation of the tower generation, and with their suffering they atoned for the sin of tower building.[[70]](#footnote-70)

I would like to explore a very interesting idea that was raised by Rabbi Daniel Lapin. Rabbi Lapin said that bricks are the building blocks for the tower of Babel and the implements of slavery in Egypt. This suggests that bricks have something inherent in them, which is *undesirable*.

What are the difference between stones and bricks? Stones are created by HaShem and allude to a high level of holiness.

Stones are all different.

Stones are made by HaShem.

Bricks, by contrast, refer to activities which are *reshut,[[71]](#footnote-71)* neither commanded nor forbidden,[[72]](#footnote-72) but whose outcome, whether holiness or the opposite, depends on man’s intention.

Bricks are all alike.

Bricks are made by man.

Why bricks? Nothing is incidental in God’s world, particularly in the history of His people. If the seventy nations were forged as nations at the brick kilns of Shinar, then the brick is significant to their mission in life.

Let’s start by looking at the first use of the word *brick* - לבנה in the Torah. In this pasuk we see that the making of brick come before the desire to make something of the bricks. At the tower of Babel the goal was to make bricks, not to make a tower. Notice that bricks come first followed by what was to be done with the bricks:

***Bereshit Genesis) 11:3*** *And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.*

Bricks were the goal! That is why the people were FIRST encouraged to make bricks, AND THEN to build a city and a tower. Bricks are made by man and are all identical. Stones are made by HaShem and each is unique. The goal of Bavel was to make all individuals the same, to destroy their uniqueness, to make bricks. One of the reasons that HaShem confused the languages at Babel was to make it very difficult to all be alike.

In the days of Moshe in Egypt, bricks were also the goal:

***Shemot (Exodus) 1:14*** *And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in morter, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.*

In the above pasuk it never tells us what they were making EXCEPT BRICKS! Brick making appears to have been a labor specialization that was normative for slaves in ancient Egypt. The Israelites were primarily, if not exclusively, brick makers as opposed to builders. This perfectly mirrors the events at Shinar where they started with the goal of making bricks.

The Torah records that bricks were used only in two regards: The Migdal Bavel and the building of Egypt by the Israelites. As the Israelites were enslaved, so too were the people of Bavel. As the people at Bavel received no pay for their service, so too were the Israelites deprived of their pay.

The following table lists some of the verbal connections between the Tower of Bavel and Paro’s enslavement of the Bne Israel.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Babel**(Bereshit) | **Egypt** (Shemot) |
|  |  |
| Come let us (הָבָה). 11:3 | Come let us (הָבָה). 1:10 |
| Build us a city. (נִבְנֶה-לָּנוּ) 11:4 | Built cities. (וַיִּבֶן) 1:11 |
| Scattered abroad. (פֶּן-נָפוּץ) 11:4 | Burst forth. (פֶּן-נָפוּץ) 1:12 |
| brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. (לְאָבֶן, וְהַחֵמָר, הָיָה לָהֶם לַחֹמֶר) 11:3 | Bricks and mortar. (בְּחֹמֶר וּבִלְבֵנִים) 1:14 |

In the following pesukim we see that HaShem want us to use un-tooled stone and does not want brick used on His altar.

***Shemot (Exodus) 20:25*** *And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.*

***Isaiah 65:1-5*** *I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. 2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; 3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; 4 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; 5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.*

The Netziv explains that the sentence about makingbricks rather than using stone is a hint to this midrash; they needed a great furnace to produce the bricks.

***Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XXXVIII:8*** *AND THEY SAID ONE TO ANOTHER (XI, 3) Who said to whom? Said R. Berekiah: Mizraim said to Cush. COME, LET US MAKE BRICKS, AND BURN THEM (WE - NISREFAH) THOROUGHLY: This is written we- nissorfah (and we will be burnt): this people is destined to be burnt out of the world. AND THEY HAD BRICK FOR STONE, etc. R. Huna said: Their work prospered: a man came to lay one [stone] and he laid two; he came to plaster one [row] and plastered two.*

The Dor Haflaga intentionally attempted to inhibit the growth and development of society, and, as the Rashbam points out, were thus disregarding the commandment from HaShem to have children and populate the land. Making bricks is a hint to this rebellion. HaShem did not want His people to be uniform like bricks. He wanted them to be unique, like rocks. To encourage this uniqueness, HaShem confused their language and speech so that they could not be controlled by their government. Once free of this control they were free to be individuals. Hence, the confusion of languages and the dispersal of the people was not a punishment so much as a part of a correction. Diverse languages and areas make reunification almost impossible, thus ensuring variation among people and the development of different cultures.

Our Rabbis read between the lines of the Bavel story to show how the problem with the Tower of Bavel was that it made people devalue human life.

According to a classical midrash, the Tower was of such great height that it took a person a year to climb from the base up to the top. Every brick that was baked on the ground and brought to the top of the Tower was, therefore, considered extremely valuable, it represented a huge investment in energy and time. As the Tower grew taller, according to the midrash, its builders began to see bricks as more precious than people. "If a person fell and died they paid no attention, but if a brick fell they sat and wept, saying, 'Woe upon us! Where will we get another to replace it?'"[[73]](#footnote-73)

The sin of the builders of the Tower of Bavel was not that they wanted to climb up to heaven. They may have begun their project with good intentions, but, in doing so, they turned human beings into mere commodities of limited value. That was their sin. They lost touch with the truth that human life is UNIQUE and invaluable, that we are each created in the image of God.

Throughout the Tanakh,[[74]](#footnote-74) bricks are always viewed negatively. They speak about uniformity, not diversity. Bricks are mentioned four times in the Tanakh. In connection with the tower at Bavel, the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt, by the prophet Isaiah,[[75]](#footnote-75) and by the prophet Ezekiel.[[76]](#footnote-76)

The reason for the emphasis on the brick being used as a building material is succinctly captured by the Ibn Ezra who comments on the verse “and the brick served them as stone”, saying that they used bricks instead of stone.[[77]](#footnote-77) Their preference for bricks reflected their perception that they were living in a world which they themselves created. They deluded themselves into believing that HaShem no longer exercised His authority over this world.

We read, in Shemot (Exodus) 24:9-10, “Moshe, Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Yisrael ascended [Har Sinai]. They saw the God of Israel, and under His feet was the likeness of **sapphire brickwork**, and it was like the essence of the heaven in purity.” Rashi explains that the “sapphire brickwork” was a building brick that HaShem had, so-to-speak, placed at His feet during Bne Israel’s long exile to “remind” Himself of their suffering.

Curiously, all of the songs in the Tanach are written in brickwork style. They look like a brick wall, as in the example from the song at the sea:[[78]](#footnote-78) [[79]](#footnote-79)



The people of Bavel build their city and tower using “brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar”. The next time that Scripture mentions “brick” and “mortar” together is in Exodus’ description of the Hebrews’ slavery; the Egyptians “made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field”.[[80]](#footnote-80) In this way, the biblical writer shows us that **Egypt is a new Babel, and just as we were slaves in Egypt so also were we slaves in Shinar**.

The mention of “brick” (לבנה; levenah) and “mortar” (חמר; chomer) in Egypt tells the reader that, as with Abraham, HaShem is about to choose one man (Moses) and one nation (Israel), just as HaShem did after Bavel, as the divine means to bless and regather the whole world.

All these issues seem to teach us that in the end of days “bricks”[[81]](#footnote-81) will play an important role leading up to the time when HaShem will again chose one man, the Mashiach, as the divine means to bless and regather the whole world.

# Exile

The very first exile began in Bavel.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:6-9*** *And HaShem said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. 8 So HaShem scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because HaShem did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did HaShem scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

From the time that Noach and his family left the ark, until the dispersion at Bavel, there had never been an exile for the whole world. We saw Cain get exiled as an individual, but at Bavel we saw an exile that affected everybody.

***Megilah 29a*** *It has been taught: R. Simon b. Yohai said: Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of God, in that to every place to which they were exiled the Shechinah went with them. They were exiled to Egypt and the Shechinah was with them, as it says, Did I reveal myself unto the house of thy father when they were in Egypt.[[82]](#footnote-82) They were exiled to Babylon, and the Shechinah was with them, as it says, for your sake I was sent to Babylon.[[83]](#footnote-83) And when they will be redeemed in the future, the Shechinah will be with them, as it says, Then the Lord thy God will return [with] thy captivity.[[84]](#footnote-84) It does not say here we-heshib [and he shall bring back] but we-shab [and he shall return]. This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, will return with them from the places of exile.*

# Temple Replacement

A close look at the words of the Torah reveals that at Bavel they sought to build a “city and a tower”. Since ‘The City’ is Jerusalem, and ‘The Tower’ is the Temple, we discern that theuy were building a temple to be in place of HaShem’s Temple in Jerusalem.

***Mishle (Proverbs) 18:10*** *The name of the LORD is a strong tower (migdal[[85]](#footnote-85)): the righteous runneth into it, and is set up on high.*

***Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 31:37*** *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananel unto the gate of the corner.*

Nimrod[[86]](#footnote-86) was building a temple to disconnect from HaShem and connect to ‘the dark side’. He was going into the center of creation to disconnect from God in the same way that Adam disconnected from God. They were going to use the tools that God gave man to connect to Him; and they were going to use those very same tools to disconnect from Him.

The Tower of Babel was not a temple to God. It was a temple to man.

## In Messianic Times

The famous messianic prophecy of Yeshayahu (chapter 2) not only reflects this same theme, but also creates an intriguing parallel to the Migdal Bavel narrative:

*“In the days to come, the MOUNTAIN of BET HASHEM (the Temple Mount) will stand high above the mountains… and ALL THE NATIONS shall gaze on it with joy. Then MANY PEOPLES shall go and say: Come let us go up to the House of God, that He may instruct us in His ways and we may walk in His paths – for TORAH shall come forth from Tzion, and the word of God from Yerushalayim… ” (2:1-4)*

Note the contrasting parallel between this ‘hope’ and the events at Migdal Bavel. In both events all mankind unites for a joint purpose. However, in Yeshayahu they gather to a MOUNTAIN top (man looking up) rather than in a VALLEY (man looking down); and to the CITY of Yerushalayim and its TOWER – the Bet HaMikdash, rather than their own city and tower. Mankind has now united to hear the word of God, as transmitted and taught by His people.

In diametric opposition to Migdal Bavel, the Mikdash becomes the symbol of the goals of a theocentric society, the ultimate goal of mankind. *WE shall make a NAME for OURSELVES” (see 11:4* / See also Sanhedrin 109a

The following table reviews this contrasting parallel:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Migdal Bavel** | **Beit Hamikdash** |
| Unity for man | Unity for God |
| Valley | Mountain |
| a city | the city of Jerusalem |
| a tower | the Temple |
| Man’s prominence | God’s prominence(“shem Hashem”) |

Another parallel to the Migdal Bavel narrative appears in the prophecies of Tzefania, in his depiction of the messianic era:

*“For then I will make the peoples pure of speech – SAFA BRURA – so that they will all call out b’SHEM HASHEM, and worship Him with one accord.” (3:9)*

Once again, the prophet depicts the unification of mankind for the purpose of calling out in God’s Name. An additional parallel to the Migdal Bavel incident is suggested by the use of the word “safa” (=language).

There is a stark contrast between Bavel and Jerusalem. In Bavel they wanted to make a name for themselves. In Jerusalem, Solomon wanted to make a name for HaShem.

*“If a foreigner comes from a distant land for the SAKE OF YOUR NAME, for they shall hear about YOUR GREAT NAME… when he comes to pray at this House… grant him what he asks. Thus ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH will KNOW YOUR NAME and revere You, as do Bnei Yisrael, and they will recognize that YOUR NAME is attached to this House which I have built.” (Melachim I 8:43 /see also Shmuel II 7:22‑27)*

# One World Government

It appears that there is a correlation between the tower of Bavel and the current push for a one world government. In order to see these connections lets first look at the specific actions of the tower builders.

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:1*** *The whole earth was of one language and of common purpose.*

***2*** *And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.*

***3*** *And they said one to another: 'Come, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.*

***4*** *And they said: 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Traits of the** **tower builders:** | **Traits of the** **UN / WEF builders:** |
| One language. |  |
| One purpose. |  |
| One people. |  |
| Moved away from God (to the east). |  |
| Moved to Babylon from Jerusalem. |  |
| Made bricks (primary purpose). |  |
| Burned the bricks. |  |
| Used hydrocarbons for mortar. |  |
| Wanted to build a city. |  |
| Wanted to build a tower to heaven to fight against God. |  |
| Wanted to make a name for themselves. |  |
| Did not want to fulfill the command to multiply and fill the earth. |  |

“We need world leaders to take action at COP 27!” Wilson tweeted, referencing the United Nations’ climate conference that kicked off in Egypt earlier this week. “The Arctic is melting at Millions of Liters per second, yet this problem can’t seem to make a name for itself, so we’ll make a name for it.”[[87]](#footnote-87)

***Tehillim (Psalms) 2:2*** *The kings of the earth stand up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord.*

# A Deeper Look

The Generation of the Dispersion, after the flood, sought to gain physical beneficence from on High, though they were undeserving. They wished to receive sustenance from the name יהוה - *Havayah*; however, they did not want to submit themselves and nullify their egos to the Divine will and thus deserved no better than sustenance received from the back of *Elohim*. They did not wish to follow the rules as they exist in the world of *Tikkun*. They desired to reach beyond the world of *Tikkun* to the world of **Akudim** whence they could derive sublime sustenance without curbing their egos and desires and submitting to the rules of *Tikkun*, the world of structure.

This they would achieve through unity, the secret of ***Akudim***.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Hence the verses read as follows:

**“Let us make for us a name…”[[89]](#footnote-89)** i.e., let us draw from name of *Havayah*.

**“…lest we become dispersed”[[90]](#footnote-90)** i.e., lest we receive from the lower level, the back of *Elohim*.

They wished to build a tower whose peak would reach the heavens as a sign of unity between them. They were shepherds; this one went this way and his fellow in the other direction. The tower would be a place that they could all see and come to regroup and reunite, as explained by Ibn Ezra.

HaShem therefore could not allow it since through unity they indeed would be able to elicit the lofty light. Then, HaShem forbid, they would channel the waters that flow from the House of HaShem to the “house of the seat.”[[91]](#footnote-91)

What the men of Shinar were after was the following: They knew the [mystical] names of God and employed them for practical use. They were familiar with all the various angels and their positions in the celestial hierarchy and were able to [control a specific angel by using a divine name to] adjure the angel that controlled it.

This is what is meant by the technique of adjuration via the use of holy names. We know how to use them to adjure a lower angel in the name of the higher angel that influences and controls it. If [the lower angel] attempts to do other than what we have adjured it to do, it will not work at all. [The Generation of the Dispersion] knew all this. With the knowledge that they used to manipulate the divine names; they caused divine beneficence to descend to idols…

Thus, it is written, "Then it was begun to call in the name of God".[[92]](#footnote-92) For in the times of Enoch, they knew how to manipulate God's names. The explanation given to this verse by Onkelos, that [in this era] mankind began to serve idols [accords with this explanation]. For it means that with the knowledge that they used to manipulate the divine names, they caused divine beneficence to descend to idols. Thus, both explanations mean the same thing.

Now, this technique would not have worked had they not known how to combine the letters and names in Hebrew, for it is impossible to manipulate these names in any other language. Thus, it is written, "The whole earth was of one language and united words." The numerical value of the words for "one language" [in Hebrew, "safah achat", plus the kolel[[93]](#footnote-93)] is the same as that of the words "the holy tongue" [in Hebrew, "lashon hakodesh"].

This is similar to when HaShem did not want Adam to eat of the Tree of Life and live forever after he had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. Because he had internalized knowledge of evil, he would be eternalizing it by eating of the Tree of Life.[[94]](#footnote-94) He therefore mixed up their languages and disrupted their unity, since disunity among the wicked is good for them and good for the world, while unity among the righteous is good for them and good for the world.

This is the meaning of, "Behold, they are one people with the same language", meaning that had they not known Hebrew, they would not be able to manipulate God's names. But "this they have begun to do", meaning that the sole reason they were able to begin this was because they spoke Hebrew. Therefore, "they will not be withheld", for by using the divine names and their power to adjure [angels], they would be able to do whatever they wanted.

The parable for this is that once there was a king who once gave the keys to his storerooms to a number of people, who then could enter his storehouses whenever they wanted. In order to prevent [such abuse], the king changed the locks, and these people could no longer open them.

God did the same here. He changed His names, as it is written, "Come, let us descend and confound their speech".[[95]](#footnote-95) Furthermore, he confounded their language, so they could no longer speak the Holy language, and even if they would try to adjure the angels in other languages, this would be totally ineffective. He therefore made them forget Hebrew, and thus they no longer knew how to do anything [like this].

Confusing their languages and scattering them involved erasing their memories and implanting new memories and new histories. Thus, God made some of the people into chinese and sent them to China with a new identity after wiping their old identity. They now had a new history, a new language, and a new culture. This is what God did for every group of people except Avraham and his descendants. (It is also apparent that his living ancestors shared Avraham’s language and culture.)

# Serious Technology[[96]](#footnote-96)

You might be surprised to know just how advanced-thinking our Sages were centuries ago. The older Kabbalists concealed in their words so many profound secrets that many in modern times still do not understand what was written centuries ago.

Although the majority of modern Kabbalists are merely philosophers who only know how to read books, there are still a few who practice the more ancient traditions and thus learn how to unlock the secret codes that most modern mystical philosophers do not even know exist.

With regards to the Tower and Babel we have to pay careful attention to the words used to describe the incident in the Torah text. We must pay equal attention to the words used in the ancient Kabbalistic commentaries. When we pay attention to the details we are able to unlock many shocking secrets.

In the Torah the pasuk states,

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:2*** *And it came to pass when they traveled from the east, that they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.*

“They traveled from the east” has a coded meaning, but so does the words, “they found a valley.”

It is almost impossible to recognize the secret codes and their messages without knowledge of the original Hebrew. The traveling *from the east* (‘m’kedem - מִקֶּדֶם) is understood as a movement *away* from something, as opposed to being a move towards something. They were traveling away from the “kedem”. Kedem is related to the word Kadmon and means ancient. The travel of the people was specifically their distancing themselves from God, and their attempt to remove themselves from Divinely ordained natural order. Their intent was to create an environment immune from natural law, and all its destructive powers, the likes of which was recently seen by the flood.

In order to enable them to accomplish this formidable task, they would need some type of power, or energy, that could create for them an artificial environment, and endow it with the power to withstand natural forces. Numerous Midrashic literature, including the Zohar, state that they discovered this ability secretly buried in the sands, concealed by members of the pre-flood generation for discovery later.

According to Rabbi Eliezer Ben David in his book, “Out Of The Iron Furnace”, they did not find a valley, a Bik’a (בִקְעָה); but rather they found a Bik’ia. This word Bik’ia means an *opening* or a *discovery*. The Zohar and others state that what they found was the ancient technology of the pre-flood generation.

The Hebrew word Bik’ia also means nuclear fission. Both the Torah text and our Sages commentaries seem to imply that the ancient technology hidden by the members of the generation of the flood, and later discovered by the builders of Babel, was nothing other than the secrets of nuclear technology. As wild as this might sound, when we look into the ancient literature and see how the Sages describe the builders of Babel, and their intentions, we discover that this might not be so wild, and unbelievable, as we might initially think.

Rabbi Yitzhak D’min Acco[[97]](#footnote-97) writes in his Mari’yat Ayin how the generation of Babel had expert knowledge of both natural law and what he refers to there, using the ancient term, the Shiur Komah.[[98]](#footnote-98) These “measurements” are symbolic numbers that were the first form used to house Kabbalistic secrets. The Shiur Komah school of Kabbalah is its oldest form with literature dating back to Temple times and including in it actual sections of Scripture itself.

The “measurements” were by no means the mystical philosophy of the later Kabbalah schools. Rather, the Shiur Komah often included in-depth details about natural law, as it pertains to the universe, and strange and bizarre information about supernatural realities, the meanings of which, while known to the Shiur Komah insiders, is still a baffling secret to all outsiders and later generations. Most of these teachings were not speculations, but rather outright revelations given over to an individual, from either one, or a number of angelic entities.

Rabbi Yitzhak discusses in detail how the generation of Babel had access to all this knowledge, and used it to build their city, and their tower “as a miniature in accordance to the supernal pattern”. Now, let us dismiss the mythology of such beliefs, and understand it for what it really means. The people of the generation of Babel were not “heavenly-minded” mystics. They were grounded, down-to-earth and by our definition, scientific. However, their science was far more advanced than our own.

Their intent to create an environment as a “miniature of the supernal pattern” meant that it was supposed to be complete and perfect, without any need of anything external, including power or spiritual connection to anything outside.

Essentially they were trying to create a shielded bubble, without any openings to the outside. Nothing was to be able to enter, nothing physical, and nothing spiritual. They were even generating their own “life-force” energy, and sought to be disconnected from the universal flow. They wanted to have the laws of natural physics dominate, and exclude any other power, especially spiritual or psychic powers, like those that they held to be responsible for the flood. Essentially the intent of the people of the Generation of Babel was to “tie God’s Hands behind his back”. They wanted to disable the power that caused the flood, and prevent it from every having the ability to again cause such destruction. This intent is what united them all.

It was considered to be the ultimate act of rebellion against Divine authority, and essentially, it was considered, in the words of Midrashic literature, a declaration of war on Heaven. This is the meaning of the verse that states,

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:4*** *Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make ourselves a name.*

As wild as this may sound, the generation of Babel had the ancient technology to have accomplished this task, and as the verse says,

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:6*** *nothing they plan to do will be unattainable for them!*

Creating an environment so insular and disconnected from all outside influences is one thing. This may indeed be interpreted as an act of rebellion against living under Divine Authority. However, the intent of the Generation of Babel did not end here. The Torah text makes it very clear that there was both a “tower” and a “city”. The mention of both implies a dual intent. Each was different and served its own purpose. The “city” was to be the place from insular defensive protection. But the “tower” had a more nefarious purpose to it.

According to Midrashic sources, including the Zohar, the Generation of Babel wanted to use the “tower” as their launching pad for a military retaliatory strike on Heaven. They were not just preparing defensively to protect themselves from future Divine wrath; they were also preparing to launch a major military offensive.

Again, to those who interpret Heaven as being just some ethereal, non-physical, spiritual “whatever” place somewhere “over the rainbow”, such intent would be considered the heights of primitive stupidity. But remember who we are dealing with.

We are not dealing with ancient primitives who believed fairy tales about spiritual realities in the same way as is done today. These people had a vastly different experience and knew all too well that the domain that we call Heaven is far from imaginary or just being a nonphysical spiritual domain.

They knew very well that the power that brought the flood emanated from the domain of a certain collective of angels. They knew that these same angels, as ethereal as they may be, still had a home in this universe. The generation of the flood knew where these angels came from. They recognized it as a planet somewhere out there in outer space.

According to Rabbi Eliezer Ben David in his, “Out Of The Iron Furnace”,[[99]](#footnote-99) quoting the authority of the great Sage Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz,[[100]](#footnote-100) the Tower had fire coming out of its bottom and was meant to be launched into space.

(Editors note: See **Chagigah 15b** … ‘Where is he that counted the towers?’ — *for they taught three hundred halachoth concerning a ‘tower which flies in the air’.* - Possible explanations: — (a) The upper stroke of the letter lamed, i.e., they taught three hundred traditions concerning so insignificant a matter. (b) The tower of Babel. (c) A tower suspended in mid-air by magic. Cf. Sanh. 68a (Sonc. ed., p. 462), concerning the planting of cucumbers by magic.)

According to this, the war that the Generation of Babel was planning was not merely spiritual, but physical. They had the ability and the plans to launch a nuclear powered spacecraft to fight an intergalactic war against a known and clear extraterrestrial threat. In their eyes, this war had already begun with the extraterrestrials (angels) taking the first “shot”. They blamed these intervening angels for creating the circumstances that brought on the flood. Now, it was payback time. And like the verse[[101]](#footnote-101) quoted above said, “nothing they plan to do will be unattainable for them”!

Their plan was formidable and their abilities powerful. Something had to be done to thwart their plans, without having to utterly destroy them. Thus the Torah continues to relate what happened next. Torah clearly states:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 11:7*** *Come, let us descend.*

The powers (in plural) came down to Earth clandestinely and invisibly and launched their own attack.

These powers are later identified in Daniel 4:14 as being the Watcher angels. Their chosen method of attack, as we have seen numerous times through Scripture is not to attack the body, or other physical forces, but rather to attack the individual mind.

These Watcher entities can telepathically and psychically either build or destroy the human mind. We see this clearly revealed in the Book of Daniel where it was ordained that a future King of this same Babel,[[102]](#footnote-102) Nebuchadnezzar, was to be punished “for his sins” not with a lighting strike from Heaven, but rather with a “strike” against his mind. Nebuchadnezzar developed a severe mental illness that literally overnight turned him from a clear headed wise ruler and into a psychotic lunatic.

This is how the Watchers do battle. They are the angels of the Lord. As they did centuries later to Nebuchadnezzar so too did they do now to the members of the Generation of Babel. They confused their minds by creating disharmony between them, referred to in the text as the “confusion of speech”.

As we all know, “united we stand and divided we fall”. By sowing dissention among the ranks, the Watchers effectively destroyed their united intent, and thus brought about an end to their plans. For the Watchers, it was “mission accomplished”. But there are still some loose ends that we need to follow.

United humanity was spread over the face of the Earth, to be divided into nations, each to face their future destiny; but what happened to the city, the tower and the ancient technologies used to build them?

Ancient legend teaches us that the Watchers destroyed part of the Tower, and left part of it intact to serve as a lesson to future generations. Some modern archaeologists believe that they have found the location of ancient Babel, and the remnant of the Tower. Some claim that they also have found evidence of some strange type of nuclear presence there that cannot be explained. As for the location of the ancient secret technology that enabled them to travel to the stars; the possibility of this surviving to modern days brings us into the midst of some of the more outrageous current conspiracy theories.

As society becomes more and more secular and scientific, UFO stories are growing more and more sophisticated. Yet, it is an unfortunate and sad fact that a good part of the UFO conspiracy crowd has over the last decade transformed to become yet another haven for insane anti-Semitic fairy tales and lies. New UFO myths state the ridiculous, slanderous lie that Jews are the descendants of reptilian extraterrestrials seeking to take over the world and who suck the blood out of innocent (Christian) Gentiles who discover their plans; (a modern rendition of age-old stupidities). However, aside from getting Jews falsely involved in the nefarious, conspiratorial thick of things, other new conspiracy theories have arisen to describe certain current events.

UFO conspirators claim that the reason why the United States invaded Iraq was not to depose Saddam Hussein or to grab Iraqi oil. These conspirators claim that the real reason was because Saddam Hussein had discovered the ancient Babel “star-gate” and that the Western Powers wanted it wrested from his hands before he learned how to use it, access extraterrestrial help and thus conquer the world as the expected anti-Christ.

Now, maybe you are like me and you get a good chuckle out of this type of nonsense. However, as nonsensical as modern UFO conspiracies may be, it does not mean that everything claimed has to be false simply because it is attached to things stupid and prejudice. Those who claim that Jews are blood sucking aliens are the same ones who believe that Jews put blood in Passover matzah and then claim the Holocaust never happened. What a great way to discredit anything real, however bizarre by attaching it to psychotic ideas, and racial prejudice.

According to our Torah traditions there very well is (or was) something buried in the Iraqi (Babylonian) desert which had tremendous power and if understood could bestow that power upon its discoverers. While Torah does suggest this possibility, nonetheless it does not give credence to the conspiracy theory that the Iraqi war was a cover-up for the exploration and exploitation of such a “star gate”. Granted, we may be quick to dismiss this as nonsense, but let us at the same time remember that as history documents, Adolph Hitler (yimah shmo) had a great interest in the occult and, as portrayed in many Hollywood films and documentaries, he did send out expeditions to find ancient, lost artifacts for their occultic powers.

So, while we rightfully should dismiss UFO conspirators as having any legitimacy, nonetheless, maybe not everything they say in completely false. As with anything else involved in a cover-up, the truth may never be known.

All that can be said for sure is that our modern society is radically changing. It is turning into the type of society that existed in ancient Babel. Modern technology is clearly a new Babel and a new tower. More and more society is turning away from the natural order of things and turning into something strange and bizarre. Indeed, science today has become the new religion. Science alone claims to hold the keys to all supreme truths. Science and technology are the gods of the modern religion of hedonist atheism.

We think that we are emancipating ourselves from the authority of Heaven by proclaiming our new found scientifically based atheism. This is exactly what the Builders of Babel did a long time ago. We know what happened to them. Yet, today we deny the reality of ancient Babel so that we may also deny the moral of that lesson. We say that what happened to them will not happen to us. And why? Because Babel is only a story. It never really happened. As such Babel is only a scare tactic and should not be considered or taken seriously. These are the conclusions of the modern secular atheist. If he is right, then so be it. But, if he is wrong, and both history and archaeology do suggest that he is dead wrong; then what?

Are we only fooling ourselves by trying to convince ourselves that Babel was a myth and that there is no lesson to be learned? If indeed Babel was real, then we become subject to the dire words of Albert Einstein. Einstein said that the definition of insanity is repeating the same events and expecting different outcomes. If we are repeating the mistakes of the Builders of Babel, will we not also arouse the interest of “those above” who will have to “descend” among us to observe and to judge.

Are we any different from the Builders of the Babel? Will we suffer their fate of division? In this regard, I think not, because there is no unity today to suffer from division. Maybe today we would be subject to the very fate that the Tower Builders themselves had feared. If there is any truth to modern conspiracy theories about a world-wide cover-up of involvement with entities that are known in the Biblical traditions as “the bad guys” we might be bringing down upon our own heads another intervention the likes of which we cannot possibly imagine. In light of what is happening in the world today, I do pause and wonder.

# Tower Trouble

Several towers, like the Migdal Bavel have been built which seem to predispose their owner’s to trouble.[[103]](#footnote-103) Man’s attempts to construct the world’s tallest buildings right through from Bavel to the Burj, have resulted in economic disaster.

**Burj Khalifa in Dubai:** As the tallest structure in the world was nearing completion, Dubai World was asking its creditors to restucture its debt. The threat of default caused jitters in world markets. Abu Dhabi gave Dubai World a 10 billion dollar lifeline. It remains to be seen whether the tower will survive.

**The Pan Am Building**: Located in New York City, this was the largest commercial office building in the world when it opened on March 7, 1963. Pan Am, as a company, collapsed on December 4, 1991. The building was subsequently sold to Met Life as one of the pioneering Airlines faded from the scene.

**The AT&T Building:** Built in 1984, this 647 foot high rise building was completed just as a court ordered divestiture of the Bell system was taking place. AT&T’s subsequent collapse to form the Baby Bells was the end of this monumental corporation. Though the name was subsequently reused by the baby Bells, but the company never regained its lustre. This tower was sold in 2002 to the Sony Corporation.



The world’s first skyscraper, the Equitable Life building in New York, was completed in 1873 and coincided with a five-year recession. It was demolished in 1912.

Enron is another example. Enron was halfway into construction on a $200 million, 40-story skyscraper, with an eight-story trading floor when the company collapsed into bankruptcy in 2002.

Willis Tower, best known by its previous moniker the Sears Tower, is the tallest in America and was the tallest in the world until Malaysia usurped them.[[104]](#footnote-104) Chicago’s giant was commissioned in 1969 by Sears, as a headquarters befitting a company that was the world’s biggest retailer at the time. By the time it was completed in 1974, the US was in recession and a fuel crisis, and Sears’ dominance was over. The tower stood half empty for a decade. The twin towers of the World Trade Center opened a year earlier and were similarly affected.

Before the Willis Tower, the noble art-deco masterpiece of the Empire State Building was the world’s tallest building, a record it held for an impressive 41 years. It was completed in 1931. Anyone remember what the economy was doing then? The Great Depression saw locals rename the building the Empty State Building, and it was 20 years before the owners turned a profit.

The following is from CNN,on August 6, 2013:



**Hong Kong (CNN)** -- If the Skyscraper Index maintains its track record, then China should steel itself for economic collapse. The infamous property index says construction booms that give rise to the world’s tallest buildings are the harbingers of economic busts.

On July 20, developers celebrated the groundbreaking of Sky City in the southern Chinese city of Changsha. It is set to be completed in 2014 and at 838 meters it would overshadow the Burj Khalifa in Dubai -- currently the world’s tallest building -- by 10 meters.

“The Skyscraper Index has a good 150-year correlation between the world’s tallest buildings and economic slowdowns and recessions,” says Andrew Lawrence, pioneer of the Skyscraper Index and head of Hong Kong and China property research at CIMB Group. “For China, there is no reason that correlation will change.”

According to the Skyscraper Index, the opening of every single “world’s tallest” building in the past century has coincided with an economic downturn in that country.

In the United States, builders installed the spire on New York’s Chrysler Building on October 23,1929 making it the tallest building in the world at 319 meters. Five days later, the Wall Street Crash wiped nearly 13% off the stock market and precipitated the country’s Great Depression.

In March 1996, Malaysia’s Petronas Towers were completed making it the world’s tallest building at 452 meters. Just sixteen months later, the Asian financial crisis hit the country and region. Malaysia’s stock market lost half of its value by the end of 1997.

And in Dubai, the 828-meter Burj Khalifa received its spire in October 2009. Two months later, a massive debt crisis slammed the Middle Eastern metropolis as the global financial crisis roiled world markets.

Similar economic storms have followed other imposing structures soon after their construction, including the Empire State Building and World Trade Center in New York and the Taipei 101 in Taiwan.

Does skyscraper boom herald economic doom?

Lawrence believes that both skyscrapers and economic busts are often closely associated with large expansions of credit.

“Like the one we saw in China post-2008,” he says.

In 2008, as the global financial crisis took hold, China launched a period of loose monetary policies to jump start its economy with liquidity and the hope of spurring investment.

Many analysts say those policies seeded a credit boom of easy money and a building boom of unneeded or ostentatious properties that are now coming back to haunt constructors and investors.

“China will be building over 40% of the world’s skyscrapers over the next four years so clearly there’s a building bubble,” says Lawrence.

Last week, the final beam was hoisted on the main structure of Shanghai Tower, which will soon become China’s tallest building.

At more than 600 meters, the building will be the second highest in the world, below the Burj Khalifa and ahead of Taiwan’s Taipei 101 building.

“They certainly were not bashful about wanting (one of) the tallest buildings ... here in Shanghai,” says Art Gensler, founder of the Gensler global design and architecture group. “They wanted something that was a symbol, and I believe this building will be the symbol of China.”

Meanwhile, anxiety is ramping up about what a collapse in China’s building boom might bring.

“The China story has taken a serious turn for the worse,” wrote Peking University finance professor and China expert Michael Pettis, in a July op-ed for CNN. “China, it now seems, is about to collapse, and along the way it may well bring the world economy down with it.”

If that were to happen, China’s Sky City -- with a nearly $1.5 billion price tag -- could be the country’s biggest landmark to its property largesse.

In July, official data showed the country’s economic growth slowed to 7.5% in the second quarter of this year -- its slowest pace in nine months, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Over the past three decades China had an average GDP growth rate of 10%.

Journalist Andrew Wood contributed to this report.

**Consider this: China has a 200-million-man army (Revelation 9:16) that has invaded the western world. They have conquered almost every stronghold. They now control nearly every lever of power because many lack integrity and do not fear HaShem. Wuhan flu, vaccines, and money are the keys to their control. Those that are under their influence are the force of evil in the world.**

# Chiasms / ATBaSH

The nine verses that compose the Torah’s account of the tower of Bavel ingeniously, through a chiastic / ATBaSH structure, form a tower.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **5** And the LORD came down to see  |  |
|  | 5 the **city and the tower** |  | 4 a **city, and a tower** |  |
|  | 5 which the children of men **builded**. |  | 4 Come, let us **build** |  |
|  | 7 Come, **let us** go down, and there confound.  |  | 3 Come, **let us** make |  |
|  | 7 that they **may not understand one another's speech.** |  | 3 And they **said** one to another |  |
|  | 8 So HaShem **scattered** them abroad |  | 2 and they **settled** there. |  |
| 9 HaShem confounded their **language**. |  | 1 And the whole earth was of one **language** |

Ascent and descent, language and architecture are hardwired into the story itself.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 6 they are one people, and they have all one **language** |  | 1 was of one **language** and of one speech. |
|  | 7 Come, **let us** go down, and there confound |  | 3 Come, **let us** make |
|  | 8 and they left off to **build the city**. |  | 4 let us **build us a city**, and a tower |
|  | **9** Therefore was the **name** of it called Babel; |  | 4 and let us make us a **name**; |
| 9 from thence did the LORD **scatter** them abroad upon the face of all the earth. |  | 4 lest we be **scattered** abroad upon the face of the whole earth. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 11:4 **let us** make us a **name**; lest we **be scattered** abroad upon the face of the **whole earth**.' 11:5 And HaShem came down to see the **city and the tower**, which the children of men (the Adam) builded. |  |
|  | 11:4 **And they** said: 'Come, let us build us a **city, and a tower**, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.' |  | 11:6 And HaShem said: 'Behold, they are one people, **and they** have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. |  |
|  | 11:3 And they said one to another: **'Come, let us** make brick, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. |  | 11:7 **Come, let us** go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' |  |
|  | 11:2  And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they **dwelt** there. |  | 11:8 So HaShem **scattered** them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. |  |
|  | 11:1 And the **whole earth** was of one language and of one speech. |  | 11:9 Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because HaShem did there confound the language of **all the earth**; and from thence did HaShem scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. |  |
| 10:31 These are the sons of **Shem (name)** |  | 11:10 These are the generations of **Shem (name)** |

God lashes out against conformity. But why is sameness so bad? Doesn’t the prophet Zaphania alluding to the story of Bavel, pray and hope for such a time in the future?

***Zephaniah 3:8-9*** *Therefore wait ye for Me, saith HaShem, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them Mine indignation, even all My fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.* ***9*** *For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language,* ***that they may all call upon the name of HaShem****, to serve Him with one consent.*

A 11:1 (unity of language)

 B 11:2 (unity of place)

 C 11:3a (intensive communication)

 D 11:3b (plans and inventions)

 E 11:4a (building)

 F 11:b (city and tower)

 X 11:5a (God’s intervention)

 F’ 11:5b (city and tower)

 E’ 11:5c (building)

 D’ 11:6 (counter plans and inventions)

 C’ 11:7 (communications disrupted)

 B’ 11:8 (disruption of place)

A’ 11:9 (disruption of language)

There are several similarities between what when on at Migdal Bavel (Babylon) and what went on in Babylon with Esther:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Migdal Bavel** | **Esther** |
| **Gen. 10:9-10**, **Eiruvim 53a**, **Pesachim 94b**Nimrod ruled the world. | **Est. 1:1** Achashverush ruled the world |
| **Pesachim 118a** Nimrod tried to destroy Avraham (in the furnace) and thereby all the Jews. | **Est. 3:13** Achashverush tried to destroy all of the Jews. |
| **Gen. 11:4** The world wanted to make a name for themselves. | **Est. 1:1-4** Achashverush made a name for himself. |
| **Gen. 11:4** The world wanted to build a tower for themselves. | **Est. 1:2** Achashverush built a palace for himself. |
| **Avodah Zarah 19a**, **Gen. 12:1** Out of Bavel came Avraham headed for the promised land. | **Ezra 1ff** Out of Babylon came Zerubbabel and thousands of Jews headed for the promised land. |
| **Gen. 11:5** HaShem had to descend to see what was going on. | **Book of Est.** HaShem hid His face from His people. |
| **Gen. 11:4** Folks in Shinar wanted to be together (bricks) | **Est. 1:5** Folks in Babylon was to blend in. |

Hakham Shimshone Rafgael Hirsch suggests that the event at Bavel was the birth of technology through collabeoration enabled by a single language. Here we see the diversification of labor couled with a unified purpose facilitated by a single language.

# The Book of Yasher

**The Book of Jasher**

**Chapter Seven**

1. These are the sons of Yoktan; Almodad, Shelaf, Chazarmoveth, Yerach, Hadurom, Ozel, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah and Jobab; all these are the sons of Yoktan.
2. And Peleg his brother begat Yen, and Yen begat Serug, and Serug begat Nahor and Nahor begat Terah, and Terah was thirty-eight years old, and he begat Haran and Nahor.
3. And Cush the son of Ham, the son of Noah, took a wife in those days in his old age, and she bare a son, and they called his name Nimrod,[[105]](#footnote-105) saying, At that time the sons of men again began to rebel and transgress against God, and the child grew up, and his father loved him exceedingly, for he was the son of his old age.
4. And the garments of skin which God made for Adam and his wife, when they went out of the garden, were given to Cush.
5. For after the death of Adam and his wife, the garments were given to Enoch, the son of Jared, and when Enoch was taken up to God, he gave them to Methuselah, his son.
6. And at the death of Methuselah, Noah took them and brought them to the ark, and they were with him until he went out of the ark.
7. And in their going out, Ham stole those garments from Noah his father, and he took them and hid them from his brothers.
8. And when Ham begat his first born Cush, he gave him the garments in secret, and they were with Cush many days.
9. And Cush also concealed them from his sons and brothers, and when Cush had begotten Nimrod, he gave him those garments through his love for him, and Nimrod grew up, and when he was twenty years old he put on those garments.
10. And Nimrod became strong when he put on the garments, and God gave him might and strength, and he was a mighty hunter in the earth, yea, he was a mighty hunter in the field, and he hunted the animals and he built altars, and he offered upon them the animals before the Lord.
11. And Nimrod strengthened himself, and he rose up from amongst his brethren, and he fought the battles of his brethren against all their enemies round about.
12. And the Lord delivered all the enemies of his brethren in his hands, and God prospered him from time to time in his battles, and he reigned upon earth.
13. Therefore, it became current in those days, when a man ushered forth those that he had trained up for battle, he would say to them, Like God did to Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter in the earth, and who succeeded in the battles that prevailed against his brethren, that he delivered them from the hands of their enemies, so may God strengthen us and deliver us this day.
14. And when Nimrod was forty years old, at that time there was a war between his brethren and the children of Japheth, so that they were in the power of their enemies.
15. And Nimrod went forth at that time, and he assembled all the sons of Cush and their families, about four hundred and sixty men, and he hired also from some of his friends and acquaintances about eighty men, and be gave them their hire, and he went with them to battle, and when he was on the road, Nimrod strengthened the hearts of the people that went with him.
16. And he said to them, Do not fear, neither be alarmed, for all our enemies will be delivered into our hands, and you may do with them as you please.
17. And all the men that went were about five hundred, and they fought against their enemies, and they destroyed them, and subdued them, and Nimrod placed standing officers over them in their respective places.
18. And he took some of their children as security, and they were all servants to Nimrod and to his brethren, and Nimrod and all the people that were with him turned homeward.
19. And when Nimrod had joyfully returned from battle, after having conquered his enemies, all his brethren, together with those who knew him before, assembled to make him king over them, and they placed the regal crown upon his head.
20. And he set over his subjects and people, princes, judges, and rulers, as is the custom amongst kings.
21. And he placed Terah the son of Nahor the prince of his host, and he dignified him and elevated him above all his princes.
22. And whilst he was reigning according to his heart’s desire, after having conquered all his enemies around, he advised with his counselors to build a city for his palace, and they did so.
23. And they found a large valley opposite to the east, and they built him a large and extensive city, and Nimrod called the name of the city that he built Shinar, for the Lord had vehemently shaken his enemies and destroyed them.
24. And Nimrod dwelt in Shinar, and he reigned securely, and he fought with his enemies and he subdued them, and he prospered in all his battles, and his kingdom became very great.
25. And all nations and tongues heard of his fame, and they gathered themselves to him, and they bowed down to the earth, and they brought him offerings, and he became their lord and king, and they all dwelt with him in the city at Shinar, and Nimrod reigned in the earth over all the sons of Noah, and they were all under his power and counsel.
26. And all the earth was of one tongue and words of union, but Nimrod did not go in the ways of the Lord, and he was more wicked than all the men that were before him, from the days of the flood until those days.
27. And he made gods of wood and stone, and he bowed down to them, and he rebelled against the Lord, and taught all his subjects and the people of the earth his wicked ways; and Mardon his son was more wicked than his father.
28. And every one that heard of the acts of Mardon the son of Nimrod would say, concerning him, From the wicked goeth forth wickedness; therefore it became a proverb in the whole earth, saying, From the wicked goeth forth wickedness, and it was current in the words of men from that time to this.
29. And Terah the son of Nahor, prince of Nimrod’s host, was in those days very great in the sight of the king and his subjects, and the king and princes loved him, and they elevated him very high.
30. And Terah took a wife and her name was Amthelo the daughter of Cornebo; and the wife of Terah conceived and bare him a son in those days.
31. Terah was seventy years old when he begat him, and Terah called the name of his son that was born to him *Abram, because the king had raised him in those days, and dignified him above all his princes that were with him.*

# Final thoughts

***Sanhedrin 38b*** *When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create man, He created a group of ministering angels and asked them, “Do you agree that we should make man in our image?”*

*They replied, “Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds?”*

*God showed them the history of mankind.*

*The angels replied, “What is man that You are mindful of him?” [Let man not be created].*

*God destroyed the angels.*

*He created a second group, and asked them the same question, and they gave the same answer.*

*God destroyed them.*

*He created a third group of angels, and they replied, “Sovereign of the Universe, the first and second group of angels told You not to create man, and it did not avail them. You did not listen. What then can we say but this: The universe is Yours. Do with it as You wish.”*

*And God created man.*

*But when it came to the generation of the Flood, and then to the generation of those who built the Tower of Babel, the angels said to God, “Were not the first angels right? See how great is the corruption of mankind.”*

*And God replied (Isaiah 46:4), “Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient.”*

Meaning: I, God, am prepared to wait. If it takes ten generations for a Noah to emerge, and another ten for an Abraham, I will be patient. However many times humans disappoint Me, I will not change. However much evil they do in the world I will not despair. I despaired once, and brought a Flood. But after I saw that humans are merely human; I will never bring a Flood again.

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1. Bavel and Borsif (The word Borsif means a pit emptied of its water - a sign of forgetting Torah.) are (both close to the tower, therefore they are) bad omens for Torah. (Tosfot Shabbat 36b DH Nafka says that there is no city Bavel. The name is used only for the entire region. The Rashash says that Gitin (Sof 65a) connotes otherwise. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The name “Bavel” can be split to show *Bava* meaning *Gate* and *El* means *God*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Dor* Haflagah – דור הפלגה: Is a Hebrew phrase that means “the generation of the dispersion”, i.e., the generation who constructed the Tower of Bavel and as punishment were divided and dispersed throughout the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. As culled from Pirke d'Rabbi Eliezer, the Talmud, and Sefer HaYashar [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bereshit (Genesis) 10:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In fact the Talmud Yerushalmi records a dispute as to when exactly the world developed unique languages with one side maintaining that it occurred even before the flood. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bereshit Rabbah Ch. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Insights in the Torah, by Rabbi Zalman, Sorotzkin, pg.82 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Hilchot Beit Habechira 2:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Kapara – or atonement – means to say that a person can relate to God, even though he is inherently a lowly being. This is an astonishing thing, as King David states (Psalms 8:5) “What is man that You shall be mindful of him?” Man should be trapped in his mundane activities, unable to reach the metaphysical. When a person offers a sacrifice, he is recognizing his state, and the ability to bring himself to closeness with God. This explains the Rabbis’ statement: “From the pace of his atonement was man created.” It was essential to man’s creation, that there was the capacity to relate to God. If the means of attaining closeness to God was not specifically set up in his creation, man would be unable to create such a relationship; man’s existence would be worthless. This is why all of these individuals built their altar in the same place. They all desired their sacrifice to reflect the idea that a person’s ability to relate to God is only due to God’s kindness in endowing man with that capability. The events the Rambam lists were not merely personal sacrifices. Rather, each one of these sacrifices marked the beginning of a new period in human existence. At the beginning of each period, the person brought a sacrifice to express the fact that the nature of this existence is one of “kapara”. In other words, as mankind began a new epoch in his existence, (viz, Adam upon his Creation, Noach after the Flood, etc) this new era demarcating man’s ‘renewed existence’ demanded the characterization of man’s inherent need for atonement. Man, without the notion of atonement, is a flawed view of man. “Kapara” in the forgiveness sense means the same thing; namely that even though the person sinned and should be permanently distant due to his low level. When he does teshuva God allows the relationship to be reestablished. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Bereshit Rabbah Noach 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Yalkut Shimoni Vayera 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Bereshit Rabbah, Yafeh Toar, pp 231, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Adam had to move to the east when he was evicted from Eden - Bereshit (Genesis) 3:24, Cain traveled eastward when leaving “the presence of God” Bereshit (Genesis) 4:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The entire earth had one language with uniform words, (or policies, or ideas, as in the Hebrew, devarim ahadim). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. **Chazal** is an acronym for the Hebrew “**Ch**achameinu **Z**ichronam **L**ivracha”, (**ח**כמינו **ז**כרונם **ל**ברכה), literally “our sages of blessed memory”. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Avraham and his family lived in Shinar and observed the building of the tower at Bavel. Since they did not participate their language was not as confused as those who did take part. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The builders of the Tower of Babel. Abraham was a younger contemporary of Peleg in whose days was the earth divided. (Gen. X, 25.) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Judges XVI, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. International Civil Aviation Organization [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The following section is © 2012 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:6-9 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. the Radak interprets that they will be dedicated to pure and Godly purposes; the Ibn Ezra maintains that they will all speak Hebrew. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Zephaniah 3:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Shemot (Exodus) 34:5- 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Bereshit (Genesis) 18:18-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Babylonian Ziggurats [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Bereshit Rabbah, ad loc [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 2, Maimonides Laws of Kings 8,10 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Micah 4:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Sanhedrin 4:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. © 2012 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Dor* Haflagah – דור הפלגה: Is a Hebrew phrase that means “the generation of the dispersion”, i.e., the generation who constructed the Tower of Bavel and as punishment were divided and dispersed throughout the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The east was where Adam was created, and where mankind was concentrated before the Flood. It would seem proper that Noah returned to his native land after he landed at Ararat which was also in the east.. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. What was their plan here? The Netziv eplains that these people had heard what happened in the great flood and knew that it was because of the corrupt actions of the people of the world. They then thought of a ‘solution:’ The troubles of the world were caused by people doing what they want. The problem, in their eyes, was individuality - each person acting in their own different way. And so they planned to build a huge tower from which they could look down at everyone and make sure that everyone was behaving in exactly the same way. Their idea was to destroy individuality, because that’s what they felt the problem was. And HaShem, midda kenegged midda, split them up across the world and made them into different individuals with their different languages. The idea of Bavel as a totalitarian state, based on the stories of Nimrod and Avraham, is also quoted by the Abrabanel in the name of the Ran. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Bereshit Rabbah Ch. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Tanchuma, Noach 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Bereshit Rabbah Ch. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Tehillim (Psalms) 55:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See Ramban, Bereshit (Genesis) 1:28; Bacheya 11:4; Or HaChayim 11:1, et al. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:28, 9:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 45:18. See also Likkutei Sichos, Vol. V, p. 159, fn. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Bereshit 8:16 and 9:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Bereshit (Genesis) 12:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Bereshit (Genesis) 17:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Shemot (Exodus) 23:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Identified by Obermeyer. op. cit. 314, as the Borsippa Tower, near Babylon. V. next note [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. A city frequently identified with Babel. Neubauer, op. cit., pp. 327, 346, observes that Borsif was not far from Borsippon. A sect of Chaldean astrologers had their locale there, for which reason the Talmud says that the place is unfavourable for study. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Because one’s learning is soon forgotten there. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. I.e., a pit emptied of its waters — a place where all knowledge is forgotten. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Abraham stayed with Noach and Shem, in Ararat , for nearly 39 years, until the year 1997. It was at the end of this period, when he was 48 years old, while still at Noah's house, that Abraham heard about the world-shattering event of the Tower of Babel, which took place in the land of Shinear, where Nimrod reigned supreme. Nimrod and his people wanted to build a tower that would reach up to heaven, so that they might establish their reign upon the heaven as well as on the earth. It was the height of arrogance and defiance of men against God, and it led to confusion and to their dispersal and division into seventy tongues and nations. Abraham decided that it was high time for him to go out and teach them the truth about God, and about the falsehood and worthlessness of the idols. He knew that in defying Nimrod, and even his own father, he would be risking his life, for Nimrod had proclaimed himself god and demanded that all the people worship him. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Contest of wild beasts with beasts or with men; hunt of animals. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. The builders of the Tower of Babel. Abraham was a younger contemporary of Peleg in whose days was the earth divided. (Genesis 10:25.) [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Bereshit (Genesis) 13:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Shofet (Judges) 16:25. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. see Rashi on Bereshit (Genesis) 10:25 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. See Tanya, ch. 7, which states that when a person eats without an intent to elevate the food, his eating “is not better... than the kelipos and the sitra achra in this world,... which are in the majority — indeed to the extent that one can say entirely — evil,” [i.e., kelipah permeates the gestalt of our world and thus bricks are unfit for the Beit HaMikdash]. --- See Pardes Shaar Erchi HaKinnuim, erech leveinah; (quoted in Or HaTorah, Shmos, p. 24, the maamar entitled Zos Chanukas 5640, the conclusion of ch. 14; see also the maamar entitled VeHayah HaNishar, sec. 17) which states that “A brick is from the side of impurity.” [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Rabbi Nissim Lagziel [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Rabbi Daniel Lapin [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Stones and words are correlated: Just as stones build a house so do words build a sentence. Just as houses make up a city, so do sentences form an essay. Just as cities make up a country, so do essays make up a book, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Kabbalah compares the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to stones and those of other languages to bricks. Both bricks and stones can be used to build. However, stones are creations of G‑d, while bricks are creations of man. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Pri Etz Chayim, Shaar Chag Hamatzot. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Hebrew - רְשׁוּת [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. See *Torah Or,* p. 77c [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer 24:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The Torah (“Teaching”, also known as the Five Books of Moses), Nevi’im (“Prophets”) and Ketuvim (“Writings”)—hence ***T****a****N****a****K****h*. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) chapters nine and sixty-five. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Yehezechal (Ezekiel) 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Shemot (Exodus) 15:1-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. The Talmud, in Megillah 16b, says that “Shirat Hayam” is written in the Torah as a **brick** wall, with interlocking **bricks**. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Shemot (Exodus) 1:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Concurrent with the importance of bricks will be the devaluing of human life. The Midrash describes that the men of Bavel would cry if a **brick**fell but would not pay attention if a **man** was injured or killed in the building process. It was only the bricks, not the individual, that counted.  [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Shmuel alef (I Samuel) 2:27. This is taken to mean that God revealed himself to Aaron in Egypt even before Moses came. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 43:14. E.V. (incorrectly) ‘have sent’. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 30:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. A tower or raised bed. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. AKA Amraphel [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Actor Rainn Wilson [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Although Rabbi Schneur Zalman does not state it clearly, it seems that what is meant is as follows:

Elsewhere Rabbi Schneur Zalman uses the example of a seed, which contains within it the potential for the entire tree—branches, leaves, fruits, including the pit and peel of the fruit. Every aspect of the tree is contained within the seed in an undefined form that will eventually take on a concrete existence.

While in that indistinct form, the part of the seed that ultimately becomes the branch can theoretically become the fruit, while the part that becomes the fruit can become the branch. On that level all is interchangeable. By contrast, once the branch becomes a branch and the fruit becomes a fruit, there’s no turning back (see our essay on dreams (*Miketz*) and on the Copper Serpent (end of *Mattot*).)

Similarly, in the early, spiritual stages of creation [**Akudim** and **Nekudim**], when all exists in potential form, everything is interchangeable. But the world of *Tikkun*, structure, is compared to the fully matured tree. Here a branch is a branch and a fruit is a fruit. You cannot build a house from fruits nor eat branches.

The same is true in the realm of Torah. In the pre-*Tikkun* worlds, the laws of Torah are not set (see essay on *Vayishlach*). In *Tikkun*, the world of structure and order, the tree is full grown—the *tefillin* must be a certain shape and size; Shabbat begins at a very specific moment etc.

The Generation of the Dispersion sought to bypass the rules of *Tikkun*—to live without the restraints it demands. They wished, through unity, to access the pre-*Tikkun* reality. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. A euphemism for the lavatory. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Bereshit (Genesis) 4:26 [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. **Kolel** – is the number of words, which is often added to the **gematria**. In the case of one word, the standard value is incremented by one. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *Tzemach Tzedek*’s gloss [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. This section was written by a kabbalistic Rabbi who wishes to remain anonymous. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Isaac ben Samuel of Acre (fl. 13th–14th century) (Hebrew: יצחק בן שמואל דמן עכו, Yitzhak ben Shmuel d'min Akko) was a Jewish kabbalist who fled to Spain in 1305. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. the measurement of the stature [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. page 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. 1690-1764, in his *Tiferet Yonatan* commentary on the Torah. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Bereshit (Genesis) 11:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. later Babylon [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Andrew Lawrence the banker who first conceived of the “Skyscraper Index”, said, “skyscrapers seem to mark a very large economic boom that typically ends in large recession,” as he told the Chicago-based Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat in a recent interview. “They tend to mark the top of the cycle.” [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Controversially in fact – Willis has more storeys, but the Petronas towers have big spiky spires that reach higher. Spires count towards the record, Willis’ antennae don’t. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Nimrod comes from the root מרד - mered - rebellion. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)