



GIVE
2012

Tolerance

FINDING UNITY IN A COMPLEX COMMUNITY

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A COMMUNITY?

What is a community?

Clear leadership?

A place where everyone agrees with you? Where everyone argues?

There are a lot of different ways to structure a community. As we will see this was a question that was discussed in the Torah and during the formation of the United States of America:



FINDING HARMONY WITHOUT GOD'S PRESENCE: HIDE AND SEEK & THE SONG OF TORAH

DEVARIM CHAPTER 31

יח ואנכי, הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא, על כל-הרעה, אשר עשה: כי פנה, אל-אלהים אחרים .

18 And I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evil which they have brought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

יט ועתה, כתבו לכם את-השירה הזאת, ולמדה את-בני-ישראל, שימיה בפיהם: למען תהיה-לי השירה הזאת, לעד--בבני ישראל .

19 Now therefore write this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me and the children of Israel.

-
- ❖ WHY IS THE TORAH COMPARED TO A SONG?
 - ❖ AND WHY NOW, RIGHT AFTER GOD SAYS HE WILL HIDE HIS FACE, IS THIS ANALOGY EMPLOYED?
-

RABBI YECHIEL MICHEL EPSTEIN (1829-1908) PROVIDES AN AMAZING EXPLANATION:

Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829-1908), often called "the Aruch ha-Shulchan" (after his main work) was a Rabbi and posek (authority in Jewish law) in Lithuania. He was one of the foremost rabbinic authorities in Europe in the nineteenth century.



The debates and argument of Torah leaders in fact represent the truth of the living God. All of their views have merit from a Torah perspective. In fact, this diversity and range constitute the beauty and splendor of our holy Torah. The entire Torah is called a song whose beauty derives from the interactive diversity of its voices and instruments. One who immerses himself in the sea of Talmud will experience the joy that results from such rich variety.

James Madison, during the formation of the United States of America, wrote a paper advocating for a centralized government that contained within it different groups. Though many opposed such a government because it would include too many factions and disrupt unity, he countered:

As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other.



This argued Joseph Ellis, in his work *Founding Brothers: the Revolutionary Generation* was the primary contribution of the revolution of the United States:

The achievement of the revolutionary generation was a collective enterprise that succeeded because of the diversity of personalities and ideologies present in the mix. Their interactions and juxtapositions generated a dynamic form of balance and equilibrium, not because any of them was perfect or infallible, but because their mutual imperfections and fallibilities, as well as their eccentricities and excesses, checked each other"

THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND HONEST AND OPEN DISCUSSION HELP US ALL BECOME BETTER PEOPLE AND CREATE A MORE UNIFIED COMMUNITY.

IT ALSO HELPS GROW GOOD CORN.

There was a Nebraska farmer who grew award-winning corn. Each year he entered his corn into the state fair where it won a blue ribbon...

Once year a newspaper interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors.

“How can you afford to share your best corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?” the reporter asked.

“Why sir,” said the farmer, “didn’t you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it around from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn.”

All of life and community is connected. His corn cannot improve unless his neighbor’s corn also improves. Also together can we have a perfect harmony.



❖ **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU BENEFITTED BY INCLUDING PEOPLE OR IDEAS YOU DID NOT AGREE WITH?**

❖ **ARE THERE SOME PEOPLE OR IDEAS THAT SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED? HOW SHOULD YOU DECIDE?**

TOLERANCE: BEING TOLERANT OF OURSELVES

WHAT IS HARDER? BEING TOLERANT OF OTHERS OR
HAVING TOLERANCE FOR ONESELF?

בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א

כו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֵׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדִמוֹתֵנוּ וַיְרִדוּ בְדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכַבְּהַמָּה
וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ
כז) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם

BASED ON YOUR KNOWLEDGE, WHAT IS THE BASIC DEFINITION OF אָדָם אֱלֹהִים?

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE WERE CREATED WITH צֶלֶם
אֱלֹהִים? HOW DOES THIS MAKE US DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CREATURES CREATED BY
GOD?

רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה פרק ד



הלכה ח

נפש כל בשר היא צורתו שנתן לו האל והדעת היתרה המצויה
בנפשו של אדם היא צורת האדם השלם בדעתו, ועל צורה זו נאמר
בתורה נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו כלומר שתהיה לו צורה היודעת
ומשגת הדעות שאין להם גולם כמו המלאכים שהם צורה בלא גולם
עד שידמה להן, ואינו אומר על צורה זו הניכרת לעינים שהיא הפה
והחוטם והלסתות ושאר רושם הגוף שזו תואר שמה, ואינה הנפש
המצויה לכל נפש חיה שבה אוכל ושותה ומוליד ומרגיש ומהרהר,
אלא הדעה שהיא צורת הנפש ובצורת הנפש הכתוב מדבר בצלמנו
כדמותנו, ופעמים רבות תקרא זאת הצורה נפש ורוח, ולפיכך צריך
להזהר בשמותן שלא יטעה אדם בהן, וכל שם ושם ילמד מענינו

Love Yourself,
Believe in Yourself...
Find the Spirit Within
And Your Dreams
Will Come True!

The Soul of Each person is his form; which Hashem gave him, and the superior intellect within the soul of man is the form of man...it is of this form that the Torah states, "let us make man in our form, in our likeness, i.e that he will have a form which knows and understands opinions, which is not physical, just as the angels, who have a form without a physical shape, so that man resembles them. And this does not refer to the form which is visible to the eyes such as the mouth, the brow, and the cheeks, and the other parts of the body, which are referred to as a toar. And this spirit is not the one found in all living creatures, with which they eat and

drink, give birth and feel and think but the intellect, which is the form of the soul, when it says, "in our form, in our likeness." And this form is often referred to as nefesh and ruach.

MAN WAS CREATED TO BE FREE: TO CHOOSE AND DETERMINE HIS OWN ACTIONS

RABBI AVRAHAM TWERSKY: LET US MAKE MAN.



R. Twerski is one of our generation's most eminent interpreters of the Torah's teachings regarding self-control and self-improvement. He is a psychiatrist, an ordained rabbi, and founder and medical director of Gateway Rehabilitation Center in Pennsylvania.

Animals are completely under the domination of their internal drives...Man however, was intended to be free, to choose and determine his own actions. If a person avoids a given act only because it might result in distress, whether this be financial penalty, physical pain, incarceration, or social disapproval, he is essentially functioning on an animal level, since animals too will forgo gratification in order to avoid punishment. Man is truly free only when he chooses his actions and determines his behavior according to what he believes to be morally right or wrong, without regard to any discomfort that might result from his behavior. It is not man's intellect alone which distinguishes him from other forms of life but rather his spirituality, his ability to become master of his own person, a mastery which he achieves by his own efforts. In accomplishing this, man becomes the being that G-d intended."

... The final product, mature man, was the goal of G-d's creation. But it was G-d's desire that man achieve this maturation by his own efforts, and that he strive

toward perfection by his own means. Certainly G-d could have created man completely perfect from the outset, but this would not have been the being that G-d desired. Inasmuch as it was G-d's wish to have man develop his own character and work toward his perfection, man had to be created an imperfect being."

"G-d therefore addressed this newly fashioned lump of clay which was to be man and said let us make man. You and I together will make man. I will give you the capacities and the potential and I will assist you in the process, but the works must ultimately be your own. I can create many beings that are perfect from their incipience, but that is not my concept of man."

WHY WAS I NOT MYSELF?

Rabbi Meshulam Zusha of Hanipol (Anipoli), Reb Zusha (sometimes spelled Zusya) (1718–1800) was one of the great Hassidic Rebbes of the third generation. He was a well known tzaddik and the brother of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk. He was known for his great passion and piety towards Judaism.

Reb Zusha was on his death bed, and tears were streaming down his face. "Why are you crying?" asked his disciples. "If God asks me why I wasn't like Moses or Maimonides," answered Reb Zusha, "I'll say, I wasn't blessed with that kind of leadership ability and wisdom." But I'm afraid of another question," continued Reb Zusha, "what if God asks, Reb Zusha, why weren't you like Reb Zusha? Why didn't you find your inner being and realize your inner potential?"

WHY DIDN'T YOU FIND YOURSELF? THAT IS WHY I AM CRYING."



I WANTED TO CHANGE THE WORLD

When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I

could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

The Serenity Prayer

"God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference."

NOW THAT WE KNOW THE POWER AND
POTENTIAL G-D INSTILLED WITHIN US THROUGH
CREATING US WITH TZELEM ELOKIM, THINK OF
AN AREA IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU NEED TO BE
MORE TOLERANT OF.

MAINTAINING OUR INDIVIDUALITY BUT BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY: OXYMORON?

*HOW DO WE MAINTAIN OUR INDIVIDUALITY AND
CREATIVITY WITHIN A COMMUNITY? IS IT POSSIBLE?*

TALMUD BRACHOT 58A



ישראל אוכלוסי הרואה: רבנן תנו
שאין. הרזים חכם ברוך: אומר
ואין, לזה זה דומה דעתם
לזה זה דומים פרצופיהן

“Our rabbi’s taught: One who sees a huge gathering of Jews says: Blessed G-d who knows secrets. For just as the faces of every individual are different so are their minds and character.”

*WHY IS SEEING A HUGE GATHERING CONSIDERED AN
APPROPRIATE TIME TO PRAISE G-D ABOUT THE
INDIVIDUALITY OF MAN?*

*SHOULDN'T HE PRAISE G-D ABOUT AM YISRAEL AT THIS
POINT?*

דע את נפשך ואחר כך תדע את אלקיך

-רבינו בחיי

THE FIRST STEP IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS NOT TO KNOW HASHEM; IT'S TO KNOW YOURSELF."

(R' SHLOMO FREIFELD)

If there was an overriding goal that *Rebbi* had for his talmidim, it was that they be happy and well adjusted. He would always remind them that it was a mitzvah to be normal.

One of his favorite sayings was that of William Shakespeare, "This above all else; to thine own self be true."

In a discussion with talmidim about setting realistic, attainable goals, he shared a personal story.

"I read somewhere that the Klausenberger Rebbe wouldn't start davening until he had some novel insight, some fresh appreciation for the words of tefillah. So one morning I decided that I too, would implement that custom in my life.

I sat down early in the morning; closely studying the words in the siddur, waiting for inspiration to strike. I sat there for quite awhile with no success. It got later and I grew hungrier, but still no chiddush.

The end was that I davened later than usual, without the same concentration as usual.

Reb Shlomo smiled: "I learned that day that I am not the Klausenberger Rebe."

A good idea is only good if it works for you.

-From the Life and Legacy of Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld Page 271



"THIS ABOVE ALL ELSE; TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE."

-WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

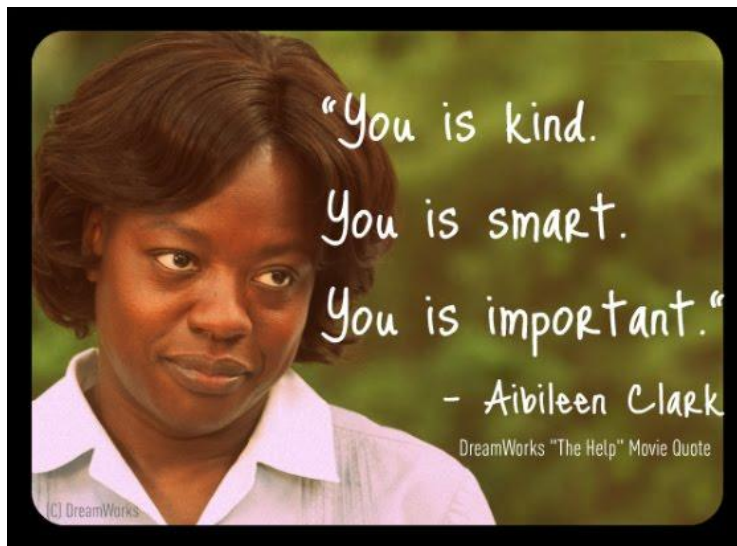
IS ANYONE PERFECT? ARE WE SUPPOSED TO BE PERFECT?

IS THE POINT OF BEING BORN WITH TZELEM ELOKIM TO STRIVE FOR PERFECTION?
IS THERE ROOM FOR MAKING MISTAKES SINCE WE HAVE TZELEM ELOKIM WITHIN US?

TALMUD SANHEDRIN 37A

כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר
בשבילי נברא העולם

EVERYONE IS REQUIRED TO SAY: THE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR ME.



-
- ❖ IN WHAT WAY IS THE WORLD OURS? WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS WRITTEN IN THIS WAY?
 - ❖ WHAT MENTALITY IS THE TORAH DRIVING AT? IT SOUNDS A BIT EGOTISTICAL? COULD THAT BE?
-

THE BALANCING ACT

RAV SIMCHA BUNIM OF PSICHA:

Rabbi Simcha Bunim Bonhart of Peshischa (Przysucha, in Poland) (1765–1827) was one of the main leaders of Hasidut in Poland. After studying Torah at yeshivas in Mattersdorf and Nikolsburg, he was introduced to the world of Hasidism by his father-in-law, and became a chasid of Rabbi Yisroel Hopsztajn (Magid of Kozhnitz), and then Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak of Lublin (Chozeh), and the Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Rabinowitz (Yid Hakodosh), the Hasidic leaders of the day. After the death of the Yid Hakodosh, most of the chasidim followed Rabbi Simcha Bunim as their rebbe.

Not wanting to take up a rabbinical position, he supported himself by practising pharmacy. At a later stage he became an agent for Temerl Bergson, a wealthy businesswoman who supported many of the chasidic leaders of her time.

Over three hundred years ago, Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Pshishke told his disciples: Everyone must have two pockets, with a note in each pocket, so that he or she can reach into the one or the other, depending on the need. When feeling lowly and depressed, discouraged or disconsolate, one should reach into the right pocket, and, there, find the words: "For my sake was the world created." But when feeling high and mighty one should reach into the left pocket, and find the words: "I am but dust and ashes."

-
- ❖ HOW DO THESE TWO SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTORY WORK TOGETHER IN OUR LIVES?
 - ❖ ARE WE ABLE TO SAY "FOR MY SAKE THE WORLD WAS CREATED" WITHOUT FEELING HIGH AND MIGHTY?
 - ❖ ARE WE ABLE TO SAY "I AM BUST DUST AND ASHES" WITHOUT FEELING BADLY ABOUT OURSELVES AND OUR IMPERFECTIONS?
-

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

AN EXCERPT FROM *NOBODY'S PERFECT* BY MIRIAM ADAHAN

You are a being of equal value to all beings. You have intrinsic worth because you were created in the image of G-d. No one can take that away from you. Nobody's criticism of you or rejection of you can alter this fact. This is the first and most important principle of good mental health.

IT MEANS THAT NO MATTER WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE, WHAT YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED, OR HOW MUCH MONEY YOU HAVE, YOU ARE A WORTHWHILE HUMAN BEING OF EQUAL VALUE TO OTHERS.

Only a person who inwardly feels good about himself will be able to fulfill the commandment to love your neighbor."

האדם דומה לעולם קטן

***A PERSON IS COMPARED TO A SMALL WORLD
(MIDRASH)***

- ❖ ARE WE SOMETIMES TOO HARD ON OURSELVES? DO WE EMBRACE ALL THAT WE ARE?

 - ❖ HOW CAN WE STRIVE TO BE OUR BEST SELVES BUT WHILE EMBRACING OUR FLAWS AT THE SAME TIME? DISCUSS.
-

HAPPINESS

EXERCISE: THE HAPPINESS PROJECT

WRITE DOWN SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE HAPPY ABOUT AND GIVE IT TO THE GIRL NEXT TO YOU. EVERY GIRL WILL READ THEIR NEIGHBORS NOTE.



FOR FURTHER THOUGHT



Happiness is not something we find but something we make. You can tell the people who know this. They radiate with positive energy. They give you a sense of worth and acceptance. When you speak, they listen. When you make an effort, they notice. In their presence you feel enlarged.

-Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

SAY WHAT? ME!? JUDGEMENTAL?

- ❖ WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE JUDGMENTAL OF ANOTHER PERSON OR IDEA?
 - ❖ ARE WE ALWAYS HONEST ABOUT HOW JUDGMENTAL WE ARE?
 - ❖ ARE THERE TIMES WHEN IT IS OKAY TO BE JUDGMENTAL?
-

PIRKEI AVOT CHAPTER 2

הלל אומר אל תפרוש מן הצבור ואל תאמן בעצמך עד יום מותך ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמוע שסופו להשמע ואל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה שמא לא תפנה



*Hillel said: Do not separate from the community. And do not trust yourself until the day of your death. **And don't judge your friend until you are in his place.** And don't say something is impossible to hear because it will be heard in the end.*

WHAT DOES HILLEL MEAN WHEN HE SAYS "UNTIL WE ARE IN HIS PLACE." CAN WE EVER REALLY BE IN SOMEONE'S ELSE'S PLACE?

TALMUD PESACHIM 50A

. כי הא דרב יוסף בריה דרבי יהושע בן לוי חלש ואיתנגיד. כי הדר, אמר ליה אבוח: מאי חזית? אמר ליה: עולם הפוך ראיתי, עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה. אמר לו: בני, עולם ברור ראית. - ואנן היכי התם? - כי היכי דאיתו אנן הכא, הכי איתנין התם. ושמעתי ...

Rav Yosef was sick and weak in this world. He died and then came back, his father then asked him what he saw. He said. "I saw an upside world. The things that are high in our world are at the bottom in the other, and the things that are on the bottom in our world are on the top in the next world.

BEIS ELOKIM

Moses ben Joseph di Trani (Hebrew: משה מטראני) known by his acronym Mabit (Salonica, Greece 1505 – Jerusalem, Palestine 1585) was a 16th-century rabbi in Safed.



Sefer Beis Elokim explains that many misunderstand the previous Talmudic passage. The world to come appears upside down **not** because the values are different, but rather because in the world to come the only credit you get is for the spiritual effort you exert. So people who seem righteous and learned in this world, if they had a personality naturally inclined to spirituality will not get the same reward as someone although they weren't as "frum" put in more effort to get to their own personal level. In the world to come the only thing that matters is how much effort you exert.

HOW DOES THE IDEA THAT THE WORLD IS "UPSIDE" DOWN HELP US TO UNDERSTAND NOT BEING JUDGEMENTAL? DOES IT SHED LIGHT ON HILLEL'S STATEMENT ABOVE?

TRACTATE TAANIS

כארז קשה יהא ואל כקנה רך אדם יהא לעולם

A man should always be gentle as the reed and let him never be unyielding as the cedar.



RAV HUTNER SAYS WHAT DOES BEING GENTLE LIKE A REED MEAN? OPEN TO OTHER'S OPINIONS. THE PERSON WHO IS GROWING IN TORAH, MUST BE FLEXIBLE TO OTHER'S TORAH VIEWS WHILE AT

**THE SAME TIME DO NOT WEAKEN YOUR OWN GROWTH
AND DEVOTION.**

פחד יצחק אגרות וכתבים ס' צו שכתב שם וז"ל: כל מי שלמד הלכות דיינים בחו"מ יודע כי ישנם זמנים הפסולים לשיבת הדיינים... אבל ישנה בכאן הערה שאינה מפורסמת כ"כ הערה זו מלמדת אותנו כי יחוד הזמן הכשר לדון בו איננו נוהג דוקא בדיין הבא לדון את חברו אלא שגם אדם היושב על כסא המשפט לדון את עצמו גם הוא מחוייב להתאים את שעת המשפט לזמן הכשר זה... עומד בנסיגותיך מתוך חדוה פנימית מבלי חטוט בקביעות צורות חייך ואני מבטיח לך כי עלה תעלה וגם יוכל תוכל... ע"ש.

HOW DOES BEING "GENTLE" ADD TO OUR PERSPECTIVE OF NOT BEING
JUDGEMENTAL?

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

Reb Shlomo Freifeld was sitting in his sukkah with a large group of talmidim during the Yom Kippur War when someone made a disparaging remark about the soldiers, commenting that they didn't keep the mitzvoth, Reb Shlomo pounded on the table and thundered in protest "Remember, we were at the 49th level of tumah, in the depths of impurity, and a mere seven weeks later we stood at Har Sinai. Be careful how you talk about a Yid! (Exerpt from Reb Shlomo biography)



- ❖ ***HOW CAN WE PREVENT OURSELVES FROM JUDGING SOMEONE RIGHT AWAY?***
- ❖ ***CAN WE TRAIN OURSELVES TO DO SO FROM THE ADVICE OF HILLEL, RAV YEHOSHUA, AND RAV HUTNER?***
- ❖ ***WHAT IS ONE IDEA YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS SESSION?***

TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF TOLERANCE? WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF PLURALISM? IS THERE SUCH THING AS TOO MUCH TOLERANCE OR PLURALISM?

TOLERANCE: Tolerating the activities of another even though one might prefer that such an activity not take place.

PLURALISM: the ideology that maintains the diversity of thought and practice are beneficial to society and thus desirable.

DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE DEFINITIONS?

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE? ADD? REPLACE?

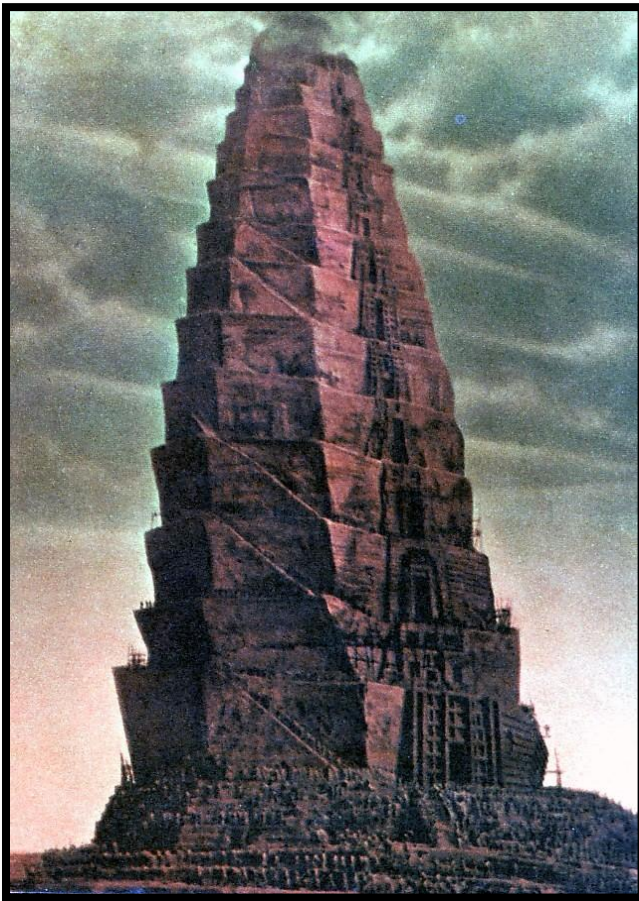
BEREISHIS CHAPTER 10

א (וַיְהִי כָל הָאָרֶץ שְׂפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים:
ב (וַיְהִי בְּנֹסְעֵם מִקֶּדֶם וַיִּמָּצְאוּ בְּקָעָה בְּאֶרֶץ שִׁנְעָר וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם:
ג (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ הִבֵּה נִלְכְּבָה לְבָנִים וְנִשְׂרָפָה לְשִׂרְפָה וַתְּהִי לָהֶם הַלְּבָנָה לְאָבוֹן וַתְּחַמֵּר הַיָּה לָהֶם לְחֹמֶר:
ד (וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִבֵּה נִבְנֶה לָנוּ עִיר וּמְגִדָּל וְרֹאשׁוֹ בְּשָׂמַיִם וְנַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ שֵׁם פֶּן נִפְוֶז עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ:
ה (וַיִּרַד יְקֹנֹק לְרֹאֵת אֶת הָעִיר וְאֶת הַמְּגִדָּל אֲשֶׁר בְּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:
ו (וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֹק הֵן עִם אֶחָד וְשָׂפָה אֶחָת לְכֻלָּם וְזֶה הַחֲלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת וְעַתָּה לֹא יִבְצָר מֵהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת:
ז (הִבֵּה נִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שָׁם שְׂפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׂפַת רֵעֵהוּ:
ח (וַיִּפֹּץ יְקֹנֹק אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וַיִּחְדְּלוּ לְבַנֹּת הָעִיר:
כָּל פְּנֵי עַל יְקֹנֹק הִפְיָצָם וּמִשָּׁם הָאָרֶץ כָּל שְׂפַת יְקֹנֹק בָּלַל שָׁם כִּי בָבֶל נִשְׂמָה קָרָא בֶן עַל (ט)
פ: הָאָרֶץ

GENESIS CHAPTER 11:

1. 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.

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3. And they said to one 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, which the children of men builded.
 5. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built.
 6. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.
 7. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city.



8. 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.

WHAT WAS THE SIN OF THOSE WHO BUILT THE TOWER OF BABEL? DOES IT TELL US EXPLICITLY IN THE TEXT WHAT THEIR SIN WAS?

WHAT WAS THE INTENTION/GOAL OF THE PEOPLE WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR THE TOWER?

WHY DOES THE STORY HAVE TO BEGIN WITH STATING HOW UNIFIED THE PEOPLE WERE?

THE SIN OF UNITY

SUMMARY IS FROM RABBI DR. GIL PERL'S ARTICLE, "NO TWO MINDS ARE ALIKE" : TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM IN THE WORK OF NEZIV

While his introduction to Genesis and the above cited essay seem to call for basic tolerance, Neziv's interpretation of the story of the Tower of Babel is often understood as advocating full-fledged pluralism.

In describing the society from which the tower emerged, he paints a picture of a totalitarian regime which hoped to restrict its populace to a single uniform ideology. The Bible's seeming omission of the sin that provoked G-d's wrath, and its concurrent emphasis on the unity of Babel's society, leads Netziv to conclude that the initial sin of the people of Babel lay in the very fact "that they were one." He states that they sinned further, though, by appointing guards to enforce the uniformity of thought and by making the espousal of divergent ideas punishable by death. When the Bible writes that the members of this community desired a tower "lest they be scattered throughout the land." Netziv comments:

WHY DID THEY FEEL THAT THEY MUST BUILD A TOWER?

*"We must first understand why they feared that some might emigrate to another land. And it is clear that this was related to the uniformity of thought which existed amongst them. Since the minds of people are not identical, they feared lest someone leave their ideology and adopt another; **thus they made sure no one let their domain.**"*

WHY DID THEY FEAR THE HUMAN MIND SO MUCH? WHY DID THEY THINK THEY HAD TO INSTILL FEAR AND TERROR UPON THEM?

*"**Humans are naturally predisposed toward diverse patterns of thought**, allowing them to encounter alternate environments with diverse stimuli likely to bolster their inherent individuality, thereby hindering the goal of this totalitarian regime. Thus the guards stood watch on the Tower of Bavel to make sure no one traveled beyond the limits of their settlement."*

The Netziv is advocating here that a totalitarian regime is not how the world should operate because it is the opposite of human nature. He pinpoints the sin of the people of Bavel. It seems here that the Netziv is advocating a pluralistic and tolerant society.

❖ BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR OWN JEWISH COMMUNITY?

❖ HOW DO THESE IDEAS PLAY OUT IN IN OUR COMMUNITY? HOW SHOULD OUR SOCIETY LOOK?

❖ WHAT DO YOU THINK?
