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HEMDAT YAMIM

Parashat HaShavua

Noach, 30 Tishrei 5781

Who Were the Tower Builders? – part I

Harav Yosef Carmel

The Tower of Bavel, discussed in our *parasha*, turned into a symbol for generations in many aspects. In contemporary times, archeologists have uncovered antiquities from ancient Bavel, and they learned that building towers was a very accepted way of creating temples for their idol worship.

Over the coming weeks, we want to deal with the following questions: Who, in *Tanach*, do we find building towers, what did they have in common, and why does it seem to be so antithetical to the Torah? Also, who in the Jewish people fought the trend?

The motivation of the builders of the Tower of Bavel was to “make for ourselves a name lest we scatter upon the face of the earth” (Bereishit 11:4). “Men of name” and “*gibborim*” were already mentioned last *parasha*, in the context of the powerful men who took wives as they pleased. This is certainly a negative social situation, which the Torah frowns upon (see *ibid.* 6:2,4), and it was part of Hashem’s decision to destroy the world with the flood.

Despite this fact, a few generations after the flood, there were people who started sinning in connection to the tower. Nimrod was described as a *gibbor* (*ibid.* 10:8-9). *Chazal* identified him as the leader of the tower builders (see Rashi *ad loc.*). He too, then, was a *gibbor* who wanted to “make a name.” We will discuss later why he failed.

The next tower builder in *Tanach* was the King of Ashur (Assyria) at the time of King Chizkiyahu, who we know to be Sargon II, who exiled the Ten Tribes. Yeshayahu actually refers to him as the King of Bavel, who said: “I will raise my throne and will sit on the mountain ... I will go up to the clouds and will be like a deity” (Yeshayahu 14:12-14). We see from here that Sargon II built a tower that reached the clouds and compared himself to a god.

The third tower builder was Nevuchadnetzar, who destroyed the First Temple and exiled the Judeans to Bavel. He built a massive idol 60 *amot* high, gathered a huge crowd of nobleman under the dominion of his empire, had many musicians play music, and then forced everyone to bow down to the idol (Daniel 3:1-5). *Chazal* understood that he imitated Sargon II in sitting on top of the idol/tower at that time (see Pesachim 94a). As opposed to Nimrod, Nevuchadnetzar seemed to have learned a lesson and did not try to force everyone to speak one language. Rather he understood that music could serve as a single international language of sorts, which is why he ordered in the orchestras of different rulers.

Next week we will see who ruined the plans of these mighty leaders, and what the Jewish response is to tower builders. We pray that we will be able to unite the Jewish Nation, in Israel and the Diaspora, and to strengthen the State of Israel, so that it will be a tower of light, spreading the light of kindness and justice to peoples all over the world.

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Those who fell in wars for our homeland. May Hashem avenge their blood!



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Ask the Rabbi

Davening for a Friend on Shabbat

Question: I regularly *daven* that my friend will find a *shidduch*. May I do so, mentioning her name, on Shabbat?

Answer: After seeing ostensibly conflicting sources on making requests of Hashem on Shabbat and seeing some distinctions that *poskim* raise, we can address your question about your friend's *shidduch* needs.

The Yerushalmi (Shabbat 15:3) forbids *davening* for needs on Shabbat. It asks on this rule from the part of *Birkat Hamazon* in which we ask for sustenance and answers that this is *tofes berachot* (most explain this means that the requests are part of a set *beracha*, not a special request). Most authorities (see Chiddushei Harashba, Shabbat 113b; Mishna Berura 288:22) explain that Shabbat is a day of happiness, and *davening* for needs highlights the pain in his life. Midrash Tanchuma (Vayeira 1) says that this is the reason we remove the middle thirteen *berachot* of *Shemoneh Esrei*, as when going through the standard requests, one may feel the poignancy of a given need. Another approach sees the matter as related to *daber davar*, not talking about things that are extraneous to the focus of Shabbat (see She'eilat Yaavetz I:64).

The *gemara* (Berachot 21a) provides an apparent side reason for the lack of *Shemoneh Esrei's* middle *berachot* on Shabbat – “the Rabbis did not want to toil people due to the honor of Shabbat.” Therefore, if one started a weekday *beracha* on Shabbat, he completes it. This implies that other than taking time, the section of requests is not objectionable.

Other sources focus on danger-related needs. The *gemara* (Ta'anit 19a) cites opinions on steps of “calling out” one can take due to security concerns, including “screaming” in prayer if marauders have surrounded the city, as opposed to blowing shofars. The *gemara* in Shabbat (12a-b) reports that it was with a sense of “no choice” that the Rabbis permitted visiting the sick on Shabbat. The *gemara* (ibid.) also discusses the language one should use regarding the ill – blessing him within the totality of sick people and stating that we do not pray too forcefully on Shabbat.

We will review some distinctions raised to navigate when requests are more likely to be permitted. 1. When the request relates to a minor and/or future need it is not upsetting (Mahari Bei Rav in Shut Avkat Rochel 12). 2. In the other direction, when the need is great and, particularly, cannot be pushed off, it is permitted to call out to Hashem. While this primarily relates to life-threatening situations (Shulchan Aruch and Rama, OC 288:9-10), it can also apply to a severe shortage of food (ibid.). 3. Regarding the sick, even if the matter is not immediately life-threatening, a *Mi Sheberach* may be done using the correct formula (Mishna Berura 288:28; see above). 4. If the subject of the request is not present, emotional distress is less likely (Mahari Bei Rav ibid.). 5. It may be permitted to request divine help with something it is permitted to do on Shabbat (B'tzel Hachochma V:41 – apparently a minority opinion; see Dirshu 288:33 in the name of the Chatam Sofer).

Let us analyze your case. According to most distinctions, it would be forbidden to make the specific request for your friend. If you are *davening* regularly, she is presumably, in your subjective eyes, already in a concerning state. On the other hand, assuming she is, *baruch Hashem*, healthy, she is not in an acute situation that warrants *davening* on Shabbat before it is “too late.” *Tefillot* of this nature do not need to be consecutive to be effective, and *davening* with feeling six days a week, while showing respect for Shabbat on the seventh, will *iy”H* be effective. On the other hand, some (minority) opinions may permit it (based on distinctions 4,5), especially if you word the request to follow the *Mi Sheberach* language. If you generally make the request after reciting *Tehillim* privately, the best solution is to leave out the request and recite the *Tehillim*, with her (and/or other needs) in mind as a recipient of the *z'chut* (Halichot Shlomo, *Tefilla* 14:(19) permits this).

Do not hesitate to ask any question about Jewish life, Jewish tradition or Jewish law.





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Ein Ayah

(from the writings of Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, z.t.l.)

Going Beyond the Obvious

(based on Ein Ayah, Shabbat 13:6)

Gemara: Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Whoever is lazy in his eulogy of a scholar is worthy to be buried alive, as the *pasuk* says: “They buried [Yehoshua] on the border of his estate in Timnat Serach, which is in the mountain of Ephrayim, to the north of (*mitz’fon*) Mount Ga’ash” (Yehoshua 24:30). This teaches us (based on the meaning of the name Ga’ash) that the mountain churned with the desire to kill the people.

Ein Ayah: When referring to someone as lazy about a eulogy, it implies that he is involved in eulogizing the scholar, but that he does it with an element of laziness, i.e., he does not complete the picture of honor as he should. Indeed a person should be concerned lest he fail to give the proper honor and stress the proper points when eulogizing the scholar.

Whenever one appraises a scholar, he should be aware not only of the clear positive attributes, regarding which many people are aware and in fact have benefited directly from his light. We should realize that there are many ways in which a scholar’s persona can impact people beyond those ways in which his wisdom and all other positive matters find expression in known projects and manners. There is a treasure house that is sealed shut and hidden in the spirit of the scholar, whose holy spiritual characteristics work in a manner that secretly qualitatively improve his open contributions.

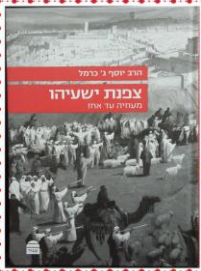
One who is lazy about the eulogy does not care to try to uncover the hidden treasure that the world lost when the scholar passed away. He suffices with matters that are known and their clear impacts, which everyone feels upon his death. This is very damaging laziness, as not only does he not touch on very important unknown elements, but he does not even capture the full impact regarding the known matters. This is because all of the scholar’s achievements are nurtured by certain internal, hidden strengths.

The “measure for measure” consequence for the eulogizer is to be “buried alive,” i.e., that all of his own known achievements will not be considered of consequence. This is similar to the way he did not make an effort to ensure that the scholar’s achievements would be given their full due.

This shortcoming occurred in Yehoshua’s generation. Everyone knew that Yehoshua had led the people into *Eretz Yisrael*, had conquered it, and had vanquished many powerful kings. Because this was so obvious, people did not bother to penetrate his spiritual being and notice that he was a great prophet and was tremendously diligent about his Torah study, fulfilling, “the Torah will not move from you” and “you shall be involved in it day and night” (Yehoshua 1:8). The eulogizers missed the true spiritual advantage found in Yehoshua’s heart but noticed only the famous achievements which were less profound than his main attribute as a servant of Hashem.

That is why the mountain desired to kill them. It was not Mount Ga’ash itself which wanted this, because that refers to the side that churns noisily. Rather it was the part to the north, with the word *tz’fon* being a play on words with *tzafun* (hidden). The churning side is actually the less important element that the generation missed, while the hidden side was wondrous and holy.

We learn this rule for all generations. If people cannot notice the inner greatness of the spirit, they do not have an appreciation of true life. Therefore, it is fitting for them to be covered up and buried alive.



**Tzofnat Yeshayahu -
Rabbi Yosef Carmel**

The Prophet Yeshayahu performed in one of the most stormy and dramatic periods of the Israeli nation's life, a period of anticipation for the Messiah that was broken by a terrible earthquake, and also caused a spiritual and political upheaval. The light at the end of the tunnel shone again only in the days of Chizkiyah.

"Tzofnat Yeshayahu – from Uziya to Ahaz" introduces us to three kings who stood at this crossroad in our nation's history: Uziya, a king who seeked God but was stricken with leprosy because of his sin; Yotam, the most righteous king in the history of our people; And Ahaz, the king who knew God but did not believe in His providence.

In his commentary on the prophecies of Yeshayahu, Rabbi Yosef Carmel, Head of the Eretz Hemdah-Gazit rabbinical court and a disciple of Rabbi Shaul Israeli zt"l, clings to the words of Hazal, our sages, and to the commentaries of the Rishonim, the great Jewish scholars of the middle ages, and offers a fascinating way to study Tanach. This reading attempts to explain the Divine Plan in this difficult period and to clarify fundamental issues in faith. Tzofnat Yeshayahu reveals to the reader the meaning of the prophecies in the context of the prophet's generation and their relevance to our generation.

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P'ninat Mishpat

Adjoining Properties but Unclear Neighbors

(based on ruling 80035 of the Eretz Hemdah-Gazit Rabbinical Courts)

Case: The plaintiff (=pl) and the defendant (=def) bought adjacent plots in a *yishuv*, Pl built first, and because of a difference in height between the properties, needed to build a retaining wall (to prevent the collapse of pl's ground into def's property). Both sides agreed that def should pay half of the cost of the wall (app. 10,000 NIS), since it is needed for the safety of each property, and def believes that pl went about building the wall responsibly. Def says he does not have the wherewithal to pay. After pl turned to *beit din*, def agreed to pay in monthly installments; eventually pl agreed, but by then def preferred to argue in *beit din* that he should be exempted. Def spelled out his financial difficulties. He continued that he has now checked his situation and discovered that his purchase of the plot was never legally completed, as he did not pay the Israel Land Authority for the land. The Authority has claimed that since a lot of time has gone by, he has to start the process of acquisition from the beginning, including being accepted again by the *yishuv*. If they do not succeed in one of the steps, they will have to back out of the purchase and get their money back from the Housing Ministry. In that case, it will turn out that they are not owners of the property, do not benefit from the wall, and should be exempt from paying despite their previous agreement.

Outcome: [We changed the usual title of the second part of our presentation from "Ruling" to "Outcome" because this is one of the times that the best outcome was to avoid needing to rule. While we do not usually highlight such cases in this forum, as there is not much to "discuss," from time to time it is worthwhile to take a look at such situations.]

Beit din analyzed the situation with def and convinced him that even if he decides not to build a home on the plot, he would benefit from selling the plot, which would show profit since the value of the land in the *yishuv* has gone up. (If he "gets his money back," he will not be compensated for many fees that are levied on land purchasers.) Def should pay pl, and if he sells the plot, *beit din* suggested that he can, in addition to the fee for the land, charge the buyers separately for their part in the retaining wall. Pl promised to send potential buyers about whom he knows to def. The sides agreed that def will pay 1500 NIS immediately and make the rest of the payment in monthly installments over the course of a year.

We daven for a complete and speedy *refuah* for:

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Rivka Reena bat Gruna Natna

Vicki Victoria bat Daisy

Yishai ben Tamar

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