The Tower of Babel
in Politics & Science Fiction

By HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok
Copyright © 2008 by Ariel Bar Tzadok. All rights reserved.

There is so much more to the story of the Tower of Babel than meets the eye. I come to relate what this story means and what it could possibly mean with a spirit of trepidation and amusement. This entire bizarre episode in human history was not recorded for us merely to remember the past, but rather to serve us as a warning for the future. In light of current events, I find the message of the Tower of Babel frighteningly relevant. The future is now.

The Biblical story relates, “And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 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. 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.' And HaShem came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 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. Come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So HaShem scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. 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.” ( Genesis 11:1-9)

The story reads like one of the many ancient myths. Religious individuals will accept the story as truth and the atheist will dismiss it with equal and opposite fundamentalism. Yet, this story is not unique to the Bible. Correlative narratives exist in other Mesopotamian cultures. There is even a good deal of archeological evidence to suggest that at least there was a city of Babel and very possibly a great tower therein reaching into the sky. Whether or not the historicity of this story can or cannot be proven is only relevant to the fundamentalists on either side whose job it is to prove their point. The message of this lesson is what is relevant and its truth far outshines the argument to prove or disprove historicity.

The story begins a few generations after the Great Flood, another ancient episode spoken of in cultures worldwide and apparently verifiable through numerous geological records. Mankind was directed by Heaven to spread out and populate the Earth, with each family unit going their own way, to develop, change and evolve in accordance to whatever their individual experiences makes them. And yet, here we find that instead of everyone going their own way, they all came together, not only with common accord but with a singular language. Whether or not this is a metaphor, it still reveals a state of global
unity never seen before or since. The generation of the Tower accomplished a first, the long sought after one world government.

The great question for us to ask is what on Earth possessed everyone to come to live and work together for a common cause. What could have been so overwhelmingly motivating that this one generation managed to accomplish a task unrivaled in all of human history before it or after it?

According to our Sages, quoted throughout classical sources, the generation of the flood was motivated by two distinct factors that only when added together materialized into this uncanny state of unity. The first element shared by all was a terrible memory of the flood. In these days, Noah and his sons were all still alive. Their children and children’s children were the ones who had to rebuild the world. For them the Flood was certainly no myth. They believed, just as Noah and his sons taught them, that the Flood was sent by G-d as a punishment for the sins of humanity. Essentially, these later generations lived in terror that G-d would somehow seek to destroy them all again. They concluded, therefore, that there is strength in numbers, and thus decided to band together, which in their eyes, gave them a better chance to defend themselves just in case Heaven would choose again to strike them.

This being said, all these fears and intentions would have come to naught if it were not for the vision and charisma of their leader, the infamous Nimrod ben Cush. Nimrod is called in Torah a great hunter. He was indeed a hunter of human souls. He used every means of persuasion to submit others to his will. Although the generation of the Tower moved together as one body, Nimrod was its head. Without him there would have been no unity, no city and no Tower. Nimrod was the fire in everyone’s heart and the voice collectively heard in everyone’s ear. Nimrod epitomized the generation of the Tower. He was its motivation and inspiration. Before anyone comes to think well of Nimrod and to subtly succumb to imagination believing him to be a wise and beneficent ruler, let us remember that the Hebrew name Nimrod would best translate as rebel. This rebel is not of the benign type made popular in the movies of the western media. This type of rebel needs to be understood as a traitor and a danger. Nimrod was the first despot, the archetypal dictator and tyrant.

So what was so traitorous about Nimrod? What about him was so evil? What was his purpose in gathering everyone together to build Bavel and its Tower? The answer is, as I said above; was to defend themselves against further Divine wrath. Yet, how was this to be practically accomplished? Here now is the secret.

The members of this generation were certainly not primitive fools. Their fathers saw first-hand the pre-flood world with all its splendor and advanced technologies. They saw the angels who walked with men and knew the ways of Heaven. If they truly wanted to safeguard themselves from a repetition of the past, they had to know how not to repeat it. According to our Sages, this is the knowledge that they possessed.

The builders of the Tower worked with very specific intent and with precise design. Our Sages said that the builders sought to create on Earth a structure that would parallel the Heavenly design of the universe. What this means is that the builders sought to construct a completely artificial environment, one completely removed from nature and thus from all natural elements, and most importantly removed from all natural influences. The builders thought that by creating a totally contained environment separate from nature they would be able to neutralize the powers and influence of any angelic or Heavenly force that had authority over natural forces and operated through them.

In order to create such an environment and edifice they sought to replicate the “pattern of Heaven.” This means that they harnessed fundamental natural forces of energy and sought to use them to comprehensively provide for themselves outside the sphere and influence of natural events. Accomplishing this they would be immune to fire, to wind, to water and the earth. They even sought
to create some type of mind control that would disconnect the people from being subconsciously influenced by angelic whispers.

In this last endeavor they failed and it was through this very same technique that Heaven did enter the minds of the people and created within them thoughts of separation and dissent. This is what the Torah refers to as the confusion of speech. It is not that one morning everyone woke up and found themselves speaking different languages. Rather, they awoke with thoughts of dissatisfaction and this aroused resentment, which led to a loss of interest in the project. This led to its demise. The angels planted the thoughts of dissent into the unconscious minds of the masses and they sprouted like seeds, taking root and blossoming into full grown dishuny.

Essentially the builders of the Tower were seeking to create the first Socialist state where the government or ruling authority would have relatively complete control over every aspect of individual's personal lives. The builders sought to create the perfect State, complete in providing for all the needs of the people. This in itself is not a bad thing. However, being that the fulfillment of such a lofty goal was materialized in the form of a rebellion against Heaven and thus against the natural order, their plans were evil and they needed to be thwarted. However, Heaven did not deem them worthy of destruction. They were, after all, unified in purpose. Their unity was their blessing. Yet, the intent of their unity was wrong and ultimately self-destructive. This then was their downfall. Therefore, Heaven intervened and thwarted their plan, scattering them throughout the Earth.

We have never since had a time of such global unity that existed then. Indeed, all modern talk of the conspiratorial new world order is simply the desire to restore the global order once enjoyed in ancient Babel. Unfortunately, it is prophesied that the new world order is to be ushered in by the reincarnation of the same man who instituted it the first time. Legend says that the Armilus (“anti-christ” as the Christians call him) will be none other than Nimrod ben Cush himself returned.

Now, there is yet another side to this story. This will take us outside the realm of politics and into the realm of what possibly might be science fiction; then again, maybe not. Read on and you can decide.

The Tower was said to be built to the skies and on top they were to place the image of a soldier with an upraised arm holding a sword facing Heaven. Our Sages teach us that another purpose of the Tower was for the people to be able to ascend in it all the way to Heaven and to thereby attack Heaven and take revenge for the Flood. In light of what I have described above I understand this Midrash of our Sages as a metaphor. The attempt to remove oneself from any natural influences directed by Heaven is the greatest attack on Heaven one can make. Not for naught is the leader of this project called Nimrod, the traitorous rebel. Yet, maybe there really was a more literal reality to this story.

There is another, more interesting way to understand this Midrash of the people’s desire to ascend and to attack Heaven. Rabbi Eliezer Ben David in his book “Out of the Iron Furnace” brings evidence from the Zohar that the builders actually were using nuclear technology to build their artificial environment. Others have stated that the builders had desired to fly the Tower through the power of magic into the Heavens to literally take the fight to the angels that they blamed for the flood. The use of the term magic is always the ancient’s way of referring to what today we would call forms of technology. Therefore, if the Tower was indeed nuclear powered and if somehow it was to be used as a transportation device to fly off to the stars to initiate the first “star wars,” what would have been its destination? If we wish to contemplate this line of thinking, extracting this story out of myth and contemplate where in reality it fits, we can find some rather interesting discoveries.

According to the Sages the builders wished to build the Tower in accordance to the pattern of Heaven above. Again this is a metaphor for being comprehensive in service, just as the natural world comprehensively provides. However, our Sages go one peculiar step further. They state that the distance between Heaven and Earth is 236 thousand rabboh parsangs and that this was the distance
needed to be crossed in order to reach Heaven. While this strange number has its source in the most ancient of Kabbalistic, Merkava literature dating back to Temple times, its significance is almost completely unknown. Some will interpret it philosophically and interpret the number as more of a moral message. However, the original “Shiur Komah” literature in which this and other similar numbers appear was not written in this moralistic genre. These numbers had meanings lost to most today, including the Kabbalists.

While I cannot offer a meaning to that which no one else can either, I was intrigued enough to at least translate the distance described in this 236 thousand rabboh parsangs into modern measures of distance. Following the formula that a parsa equals 4 mil; that one mil equals 2000 amah; that an amah equals 6 tetachim; that a tefach equals four fingers and that each finger is one inch by modern standards; we can now calculate the distance. According to my conclusions, the distance the Tower was supposed to fly according to this scenario is 7,150,800,000 miles.

What is out there in outer space that is seven plus billion miles away from Earth? The last planet (micro-planet) in our Solar System is supposedly Pluto and that is only 4 billion miles away from Earth. What is out there at almost twice the distance? Here is where things get a little bizarre and possibly very scary.

In numerous circles of pseudo-science and conspiracy theories there is talk about a mysterious tenth planet lurking somewhere on the edge of our Solar System. Now, modern science has indeed found a number of planet sized objects out there rotating around the sun, some which even have their own moons. Yet, modern science balks to call them planets. They, like Pluto are now given the title of dwarf-planets. Yet, regardless of how modern science defines them, they are nonetheless still there.

The pseudo-science and conspiracy crowd claim that possibly one of these so far identified planets is the ancient, legendary Planet X, the fictitious (or not?) Nibiru. Whether or not there is any credence to anything coming out of pseudo-science or conspiracy theories only time will tell. Yet, in the mean time, I find it entertaining to contemplate the “what ifs.” Being that truth is always stranger than fiction, and that modern science has a definite anti-religious agenda, I cannot completely accept the word of secular atheist scientists as being final in any matter. Unfortunately, their own fundamentalisms and philosophical agendas have in my opinion, marginalized as many scientists as it has pseudo-scientists. It is hard to tell today what is and what is not scientifically true.

With this being said, Torah tradition does not specifically speak about a Planet X in our Solar System. Then again Torah tradition never mentioned Uranus or Neptune either. However, it is clear from my essay indentifying the Benei Elohim (sons of G-d) in Genesis 6 that there is a significant Torah belief in life in outer space that has indeed come and visited Earth. I also wrote an entire work on this subject (which is available in e-book form on our KosherTorah.com website). So now, let us ask some “what ifs.”

What if the builders of the Tower truly wished to travel to the stars? What if the destination of said travel was as we calculated about 7 billion miles or so from Earth? The destination of such a trip would then be into the Kuiper Belt around the edge of our Solar System where these so-called dwarf planets reside. What if this was indeed the destination of the builders? Would this mean that the believed home of the angels whom the builders blamed for destroying Earth was one of these dwarf-planets or some other yet undiscovered or undisclosed body in this area? If so, then maybe the pseudo-scientists and conspiracy theorists are on to something? This would be rather scary to me!

What is scarier is that the pseudo-scientists and conspiracy theorists do not stop with a discussion about secret planets. They also speak of these planets being the home of the fallen angels spoken of in Genesis 6. Judging from what we have learned above, I dare to consider that maybe their beliefs have some relationship to ancient Torah legend? More than this, the conspiracy theorists believe that we
are again being visiting by these same beings today. Judging from the tales we hear about UFO’s, abductions and the like, one must consider that something is really going on, whatever that may be. In light of Torah teachings of the coming feared Armillus, reincarnated Nimrod and his new world order, which may not in the end be so very new; maybe there is more to the conspiracy theories than meets the eye?

I am not willing to “jump on that boat,” at least not yet anyway. Yet, by reviewing our Torah in the light of so many extraordinary ideas surely many more questions are raised than are answered. I believe this course of inquiry is worthy of our consideration.

We are living in strange and indeed difficult times. Truth is very much hidden from us, sometimes right out in the open, under our very noses, in the place where we would least expect it to be or believe it to be. The truth is out there, and indeed, it is very much inside our Torah. The truth has been in Torah since the beginning.

Therefore, what really did happen with Babel, its Tower and with Nimrod? There is much more to this story than its mere surface fairy-tale like rendition. Considering the strange and bizarre, as long as it is well founded in our Torah and the words of our Sages might very well reveal to us a hidden truth, one hidden right underneath our very noses.