

"Hey Mr. Tally Man, tally me banana! Here me come and me wanna go home."

So went the words to Harry Belafonte's famous song of an earlier era, of times past, back in the 1950s. But what makes me recall such a tune today, in the 21st century? The answer, my friends, is blowing in the wind-swept plains of Afghanistan, where several nations have united in a global war against the scourge of terrorism. And what, may we ask, does this have to do with this week's Torah reading?

The Talmud teaches that though the floodwaters of Noah rose above the tallest peaks, the flood waters never entered the Holy Land. If so, how did the people there die? After all, all of mankind was destroyed. The Talmud answers, "They died from the **hevel**" (hot and stifling air; *Zevachim* 113a).

We don't have to be cynical. We can let others provide the cynicism. Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State who, back in 1991, made the decision to allow Saddam Hussein to live and be well, has promised he "would never sell out Israel." Am I encouraged? Or totally terrified? With his track record, the implication is that he will "never sell us out," but he might offer us on a platter with an appeasing apple in our mouths as a present. In addition, we are threatened to be engulfed by the floodwaters and compassionate waves of the United Nations against Terrorism. No one can question the UN's sincerity since the sovereign state of Syria was just elected to its Security Council in order to ensure that humanitarian interests will be served globally and that all nations shall work together to eliminate terrorism.

This is the contemporary meaning of people being killed by *hevel*. Even if the "floodwaters" and atrocities don't actually kill people in the Land of Israel, there is only so much hot air and hypocrisy one can stand before expiring from it.

But there's more. Much more. The Torah details the Tower of Babel (*Genesis* 11). "The world was united as one tongue, with uniform words. When the people migrated from the east, they found a valley and dwelled there. They said, 'Let us build a city, with a tower that reaches to the sky and make ourselves famous...'. God descended to see this city...He said, 'They are united, all having a common language, and this is what they do?!...Let us confuse their speech...and they were scattered all over the globe.'" What happened to the tower? One-third sank into the earth, one-third burned and one-third remained aboveground.

What happened to the people? Those who had wanted to sit atop the Tower in quiet were scattered all over the globe. Those who had intended to use the Tower for idolatry lost their common tongue and unity. Those who wished to do battle against God were changed into monkeys and demons (*Sanhedrin* 109a).

Today, a cry to unite the world against terrorism has gone forth. All speak a common tongue, all reiterate the call for the eradication of terrorism. But those who initiated the cry, long ago "migrated from the east"—and have forgotten the Arabic mind. They settled in the western hemisphere where they found open plains and valleys (terrorizing Native Americans that had terrorized them). They settled and built great cities. After many, many years they came upon the idea to flex their financial might and built a Tower that reached to the sky to make themselves famous. But the Tower was destroyed in what was called a battle for justice in God's Name.

There is no common language. Speech now has become confusing. The call for unity to fight terrorism

seems like empty rhetoric. They say "let us eradicate terrorism," but they elect Syria to oversee human rights. The call for waging "God's battle" also rings hollow—God has compassion for all, so why are they all killing in His Name?! And there are still those who try to wage battle against God, by causing the destruction of mankind. This is civilization after the Flood, a civilization which tries to go forward despite its endless attempts to destroy the Land of Israel.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been poured into studies of the ape as man's predecessor. Truth be told, we must wonder who the monkeys really are. As the Talmud teaches, the apes were the result of the Tower of Babel, not that man evolved from monkeys. Just a quick glance at "civilization" today is the strongest reminder that evolution really only works the other way, for a human being can be transformed into a very dangerous beast indeed but "animals" rarely turn out to be compassionate and decent human beings.

And so, Harry Belafonte's song comes truly alive: "Hey Mr. Taliban, tally me banana..." for look how many monkeys were made by all the terrorists and anti-terrorists all over the globe and how they all are using "banana republics" as the means to bring humanity to its goal.

And what are we, here in the Holy Land, supposed to do about it? Yasir pledges his allegiance to anti-terrorists factions while supporting Bin-Laden. Then he suppresses Bin-Laden supporters because he requires crowd-control equipment from Israel, who might be foolish enough to supply it, after Yasir's soldiers used guns supplied by Israel against Israelis! Peace-loving Iran swears to fight terrorism, as does Algeria and others. Fallen towers indeed lead to a confusing tongue.

The Torah describes the Flood, its causes and effects. Similarly, the Torah describes the idolatrous intentions of the builders of the Tower and the resulting catastrophes that befell mankind. What can we do about our "Flood" and "Babel?"

Rebbe Nachman stresses again and again the importance of prayer. In one lesson, he speaks about our Patriarchs and Matriarchs, (almost) all of who were barren (see *Likutey Moharan* I, 10). The reason for their barrenness, our Sages explain, was because God wants us to pray to Him. Because our ancestors would never slacken in their prayers and petitions to God, they were born barren. They prayed continuously, until God answered their pleas. The Torah thus states, "Sarah was barren, she had no *v'lad* (child)" (*Genesis* 11:30). Our Sages ask, since she was barren, of course she had no child. What does the redundancy of the verse imply? She did not even have a womb (*Yevamot* 64a)! And despite the physical impossibility of her having children, she gave birth to Yitzchak, the first Jewish child, fore bearer of the Jewish Nation. In addition, Rebbe Nachman teaches that Sarah herself represents prayer (*Likutey Moharan* I, 49:1-2), the means by which God's Malkhut can spread over the entire world.

Thus, in our circumstances, Rebbe Nachman's suggestion is prayer. For prayer **CAN** bear fruit. You'd be surprised at the results. "Try it! You'll like it!" You'll be amazed at what you can accomplish. You can literally accomplish the impossible. See what Sarah did. You can too! We need not allow the current vaudeville show to continue. We can effect a solid solution to a ridiculous situation. We can pray, and with the inspiration of our Matriarch Sarah, we can get our prayers to bear fruit. Then we can get relief from the hot, stifling air of the floodwaters of "humanitarian" interests in the Holy Land, and we can live in true peace and unity. Forever. Amen.

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