

KOL MEVASSER

President's Message

By Ronald Einy

What is a night in Italy?

A night in Italy is Dean Martin singing "Arrivederci Roma." It is the films of Marcello Mastroianni. It is a fine chianti at Armando al Pantheon and Neptune's fountain in Piazza Navona.



A night in Italy is a gondola ride under the Rialto bridge on the Grand Canal. It is a stroll on Piazza San Marco amidst the pigeons. It is shopping on the Via Veneto. It is pizza Margherita with a Café Italiano at Harry's Bar.

A night in Italy is browsing for trinkets along Firenze's Ponte Vecchio bridge. It is viewing Michael Angelo's David in all its glory. It is returning home in the shadow of Il Duomo.

A night in Italy is living "la dolce vita." It is the first love of "Innamorata." It is a moonlit night at the Coliseum; it is a Puccini opera under the stars.



But most of all "A Night in Italy" is Sunday, November 4th at 7 pm in Kahal Joseph's Errol Levi Ballroom.

Individual & Collective Responsibility

by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

I once had the opportunity to ask the Catholic writer Paul Johnson what had struck him most about Judaism . . . He replied in roughly these words: "There have been, in the course of history, societies that emphasised the individual – like the secular West today. And there have been others that placed weight on the collective—communist Russia or China, for example."

Judaism, he continued, was the most successful example he knew of that managed the delicate balance between both – giving equal weight to individual and collective responsibility. Judaism was a religion of strong individuals and strong communities. This, he said, was very rare and difficult, and constituted one of our greatest achievements.

It was a wise and subtle observation. Without knowing it, he had in effect paraphrased Hillel's aphorism: "If I am not for myself, who will be (individual responsibility)? But if I am only for myself, what am I (collective responsibility)?" This insight allows us to see the argument of Parshat Noach in a way that might not have been obvious otherwise.

The parsha begins and ends with two great events, the Flood on the one hand, Babel and

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KJ Schedule

Friday, October 19, 2012

Shaharit/Morning Prayer 6:30 am
 Shabbat Candle Lighting 5:55 pm
 Minhah/Arbith 5:55 pm

Shabbat Noah

Saturday, October 20, 2012

Shaharit/Morning Prayer 8:30 am
 Minha, Seudah Shlisheet, Arvit 5:00 pm
 Motzei Shabbat / Havdallah 6:39 pm

Weekdays

Sunday, October 21, 2012

Shaharit 7:30 am
 Talmud Torah 9:30 am

Monday to Friday, October 22 to 26, 2012

Shaharit 6:30 am

Erev Shabbat

Friday, October 26, 2012

Shaharit/Morning Prayer 6:30 am
 Shir Hashirim 5:35 pm
 Shabbat Candle Lighting 5:47 pm
 Minhah/Arbith 5:47 pm

TORAH & HAFTARA READINGS

Shabbat Torah Portion 26 to 40
 Haftara 41 to 44

Kahal Joseph Congregation

Rabbi Hagay Batzri
 Sarah Bouchoucha, Administrator
 Dafna Ezran, Communications / Editor
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 310.474.0559

Shabbat Kiddush

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KJ Members of the Week Danny & Yoni Wozniak

The members of the week were
the youngest to date and an in-
spiration to all. Danny and Yoni
Wozniak, are two amazing young
members who beautifully read
the selihot on Yom Kippur and who come
every Shabbat to pray and participate. They
also announced that they both fasted on Yom
Kippur. Not bad for a 9 and 11 year old!

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In Memoriam

We remember these yahrzeit anniversaries of pass-
ings, for October 20 to 27, 2012. It is customary to
light a memorial candle, donate tzedakah, and at-
tend services the preceding Shabbat.

4 Heshvan / Shabbat, October 20th

Sam Bekhor *Shmuel ben Yaacob*

Hilda Gillis *Haviva bat Gillis*

Grace Saltoon *Garziee bat Masouda*

5 Heshvan / Sunday, October 21st

Salha Hoory *Salha bat Noona*

Jacob Izaac *Itzhak ben Yaacob Itzhak*

Rivka Khatoun *Rivka bat Salha Khatoun Cohen*

Menashe Levi *Menashe Hai ben Yoseph*

6 Heshvan / Monday, October 22nd

Shaoul Cohen *Shaoul ben Avraham Shalom Sofer*

Meyer J. Jonah *Meir ben Yaakov*

9 Heshvan / Thursday, October 25th

Ezekiel Ezra

Farha Joseph *Farha bat Haviva*

10 Heshvan / Friday, October 26th

Jacob Azoor *Yaacov Yehezkel*

Nissim Elie *Nissim ben Dona*

Edward E. Sassoon *Yehezkel ben Aharon*

11 Heshvan / Shabbat, October 27th

Jacob Silas Mussry *Yaacov ben Saleh*

Naji Perry

Refuah Shlemah

Gerry Shapiro, Yocheved bat Rachel, Mazal bat
Malka, Dan Herdoon, Mazal Tov bat Salha
Matana, Moshe ben Ezra, Mordecai ben Avra-
ham / Mordecai Cohen, Sasson ben Rahel /
Sassoon Moses, Penina bat Henia,
Avraham ben Ruth, Dov Ber ben Sonia

its tower on the other. On the face of it they have nothing in common. The failings of the generation of the Flood are explicit. "The world was corrupt before God, and the land was filled with violence. God saw the world, and it was corrupted. All flesh had perverted its way on the earth" (Gen. 6: 11-12). Wickedness, violence, corruption, perversion: this is the language of systemic moral failure.

Babel by contrast seems almost idyllic. "The entire earth had one language and a common speech" (11: 1). The builders are bent on construction, not destruction. It is far from clear what their sin was. Yet from the Torah's point of view Babel represents another serious wrong turn, because immediately thereafter God summons Abraham to begin an entirely new chapter in the religious story of humankind. . . .

Both the Flood and the Tower of Babel are rooted in actual historical events. . . . Mesopotamia had many flood myths, all of which testify to the memory of disastrous inundations, especially on the flat lands of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. . . . Excavations at Shuruppak, Kish, Uruk and Ur—Abraham's birthplace—reveal evidence of clay flood deposits. Likewise the Tower of Babel was a historical reality. Herodotus tells of the sacred enclosure of Babylon, at the centre of which was a ziqqurat or tower of seven stories, 300 feet high. . . . [R]eferences have been found in the literature of the time that speak of such towers "reaching heaven."

However, the stories of the Flood and Babel are not merely historical. . . . They are there because they represent a profound moral-social-political-spiritual truth about the human situation as the Torah sees it. They represent, respectively, precisely the failures intimated by Paul Johnson. The

Flood tells us what happens to civilization when individuals rule and there is no collective. Babel tells us what happens when the collective rules and individuals are sacrificed to it.

It was Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the thinker who laid the foundations of modern politics in his classic *Leviathan* (1651), who — without referring to the Flood — gave it its best interpretation. Before there were political institutions, said Hobbes, human beings were in a "state of nature." They were individuals, packs, bands. Lacking a stable ruler, an effective government and enforceable laws, people would be in a state of permanent and violent chaos — "a war of every man against every man." . . . Such situations exist today in a whole series of failed or failing states. That is precisely the Torah's description of life before the Flood. *When there is no rule of law to constrain individuals, the world is filled with violence.*

Babel is the opposite, and we now have important historical evidence as to exactly what was meant by the sentence, "The entire land had one language and a common speech." This may not refer to primal humanity before the division of languages. In fact in the previous chapter the Torah has already stated, "From these the maritime peoples spread out into their lands in their clans within their nations, each with its own language" (Gen. 10: 50)

The reference seems to be to the imperial practice of the neo-Assyrians, of imposing their own language on the peoples they conquered. One inscription of the time records that Ashurbanipal II "made the totality of all

peoples *speak one speech.*" A cylinder inscription of Sargon II says, "Populations of the four quarters of the world with strange tongues and incompatible speech . . . whom I had taken as booty at the command of Ashur my lord by the might of my sceptre, *I caused to accept a single voice.*" The neo-Assyrians asserted their supremacy by insisting that their language was the only one to be used by the nations and populations they had defeated. On this reading, Babel is a critique of imperialism. Babel . . . represents an empire that subjugates entire populations, riding roughshod over their identities and freedoms.

If this is so, we will have to re-read the entire Babel story in a way that makes it much more convincing. The sequence is this: Genesis 10 describes the division of humanity into seventy nations and seventy languages. Genesis 11 tells of how one imperial power conquered smaller nations and imposed their language and culture on them, thus directly contravening God's wish that humans should respect the integrity of each nation and each individual. When at the end of the Babel story God "confuses the language" of the builders, He is not creating a new state of affairs but restoring the old.

Interpreted thus, the story of Babel is a critique of collective power when it crushes individuality — the individuality of the seventy cultures described in Genesis 10. . . . *When the rule of law is used to suppress individuals and their distinctive languages and traditions, this too is wrong.* The miracle of monotheism is that Unity in Heaven creates diversity on earth, and God asks us (with obvious conditions) to respect that diversity. So the

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Flood and the Tower of Babel, though polar opposites, are linked, and the entire parsha of Noach is a brilliant study in the human condition. There are individualistic cultures and there are collectivist ones, and both fail, the former because they lead to anarchy and violence, the latter because they lead to oppression and tyranny.

So Paul Johnson's insight turns out to be both deep and true. After the two great failures of the Flood and Babel, Abraham was called on to create a new form of social order that would give equal honour to the individual and the collective, personal responsibility and the common good. That remains the gift of Jews and Judaism to the world.



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