

JewishTimes

9/11/2011

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MEN & *Monuments*

Heroes

RELIGION

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murderers

RESILIENCE

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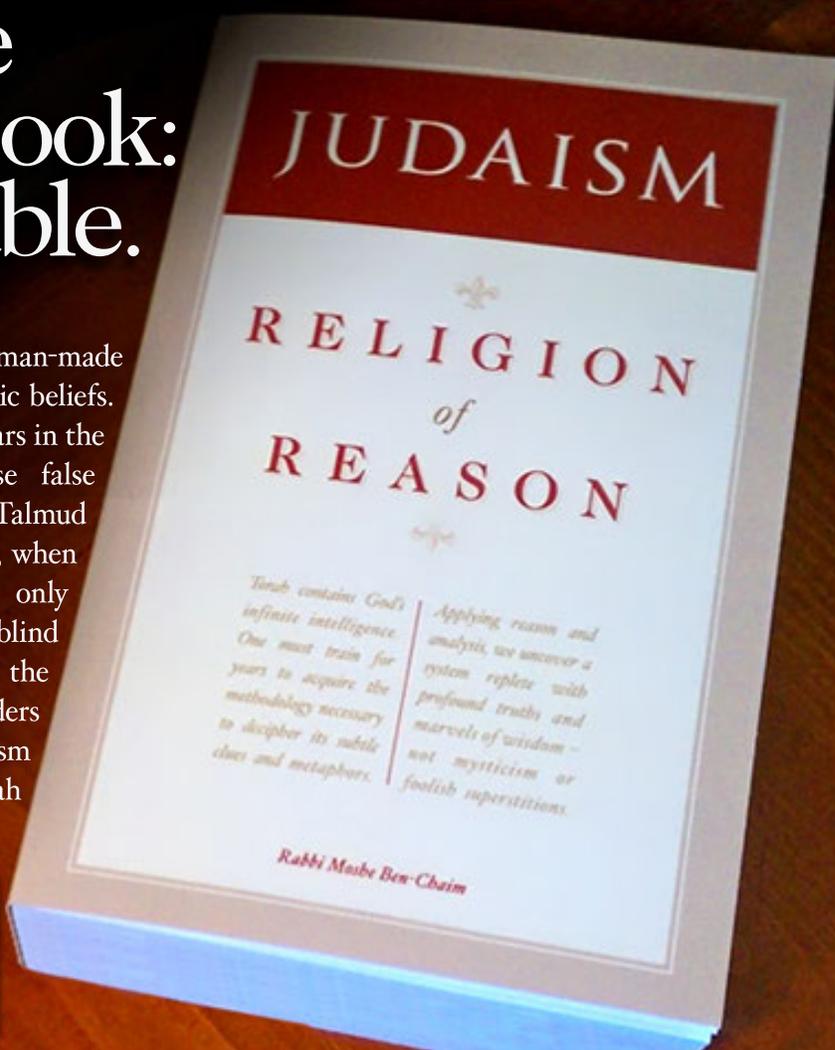
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MEN & MONUMENTS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Much can be learned from history and from an intelligent analysis of the Torah and psychology.

"And they said, 'Let us build for ourselves a city and a tower with its top reaching the heavens and let us make for ourselves a name, lest we be scattered upon the face of the entire Earth (Gen. 11:4).'"

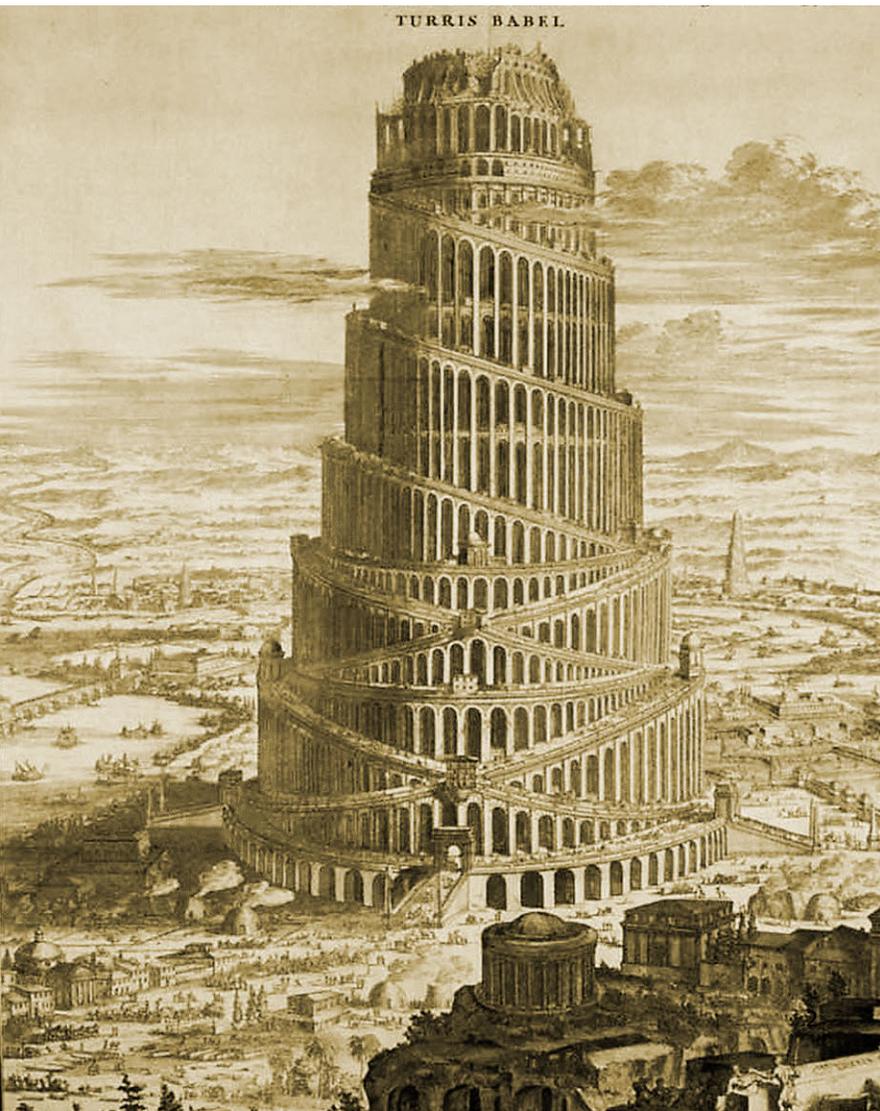
The builders of Babel's Tower sought to make a name for themselves that would also survive their own generation, as they

said, "let us make for ourselves a name (Ibn Ezra, Gen. 11:3)." Man constructs monuments to attribute eternal value to his beliefs or values. Man thinks that just as a monument will stand eternally, so too will the subject of its testimony. But man errs thinking his beliefs might be validated through a structure. Man is correct to value only that which is real, and what is real, is eternal. But something false is not rendered true by building a testament.

"...with its top reaching the heavens"

Tis expresses man's desire to create something unsurpassed by others. In other words, "Ours will be noticed more than others." Man is unchanged, and today is no different as countries erect structures taller than others, as if the tallest structure "wins". Sadly, too often the sentiment heard about 9/11 refers to the towers'

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"The brutal and vicious attack of Americans in the world known Towers – beacons of democracy – displays the terrorists' need for human recognition, just like Babel."

collapse, not loss of life. This validates this truth that people are awed by structures.

The brutal and vicious attack of Americans in the world known Towers – beacons of democracy – displays the terrorists' need for human recognition, just like Babel. If erecting a monument gains recognition for the builder, destroying that monument is a rejection of those values and proclaims the terrorists' values. But if God were truly man's sole concern, human recognition would be irrelevant. Islam is clearly preoccupied with man, valuing a social agenda over the Divine.

The tower builder, and destroyer – the terrorist – are both insecure individuals where opposition is intolerable. This intolerance is a denial. It is generated by the unanswered questions other religions pose to one's own views. One thinks, "If other views exist, perhaps my view is invalid, and maybe even rejected by God." The terrorist's solution is "might makes right," similar to the Crusades and pogroms. He murders, since reason will not validate his views, and he senses his doubt. As he does not follow a life of reason that will allow him to abandon his beliefs when shown to be false, he is propelled to preserve his view as "right" by murdering all opposition.

But this self doubt exist only in the minds of those who follow unproven views. In contrast, the Jew is not threatened by any number of religions of philosophies. He has proof. He knows all other religions are impostors. The Jew is calm, content and confident. The only times the Jew kills, is in defense, or for punishment, or to remove irreparable cultures that would mislead others. But even in war, we extend peace before using force. And all that we do is based on God's commands. These commands are all validated by Revelation at Sinai. This one time in history, God revealed a religion. Its is from here that the Jew derives his complete conviction in Torah, and realizes all others are false. God proved which religion is His, so man need not prove anything.

An additional insecurity is displayed in the phenomenon of "culture." What causes so many people to follow a singular path, even though outsiders clearly see the flaws of such a culture? The desire for social acceptance propels people of all cultures not to deviate from their peers. The ego is powerful, and most people act on it daily. If others like us, this satisfies our egos, so we follow others to gain their applause.

Throughout time, men and women of all generations followed their peers to attain and maintain a pleasing self image. Mankind has thereby forfeited the pursuit of truth, in place of the pursuit of the self. This is why most cultures exist. What adds to the phenomenon of culture, is the trick of the mind that whichever culture I am part of, must be the best. This is another reason why the builders of Babel's tower said "Let us make for ourselves a name."

"...lest we be scattered upon the face of the entire Earth"

Babel's builders ascribed to "strength in numbers." The fear of being scattered expressed their dependence on masses. The insignificance of the individual is bothersome. But the Jew understands that truth is worth following, regardless of few adherents. Babel's culture was attached to people, not truths. Thus, if scattered, they felt this compromised their philosophy. The Hajj is the largest Islamic event where yearly, pilgrims join processions of hundreds of thousands of people, who simultaneously converge on Mecca for the week of the Hajj, and perform a series of rituals.

From the opening chapters of Genesis, God has long ago revealed the workings of the human psyche. Monument building and destruction present nothing new to the Torah student. When misguided and living based on emotions and not intellect, man will act today as he did back then. Building monuments, taller than others, he will strive to eternally validate his beliefs and culture, and silence opposition. Following the pack and never questioning the religious status quo, he derives his much needed self image. And since such men cannot reason and are propelled emotionally, when confronted by other views, these cultures will continue to execute innocents, unprovoked, in the name of "proving" themselves right.

We await the prophet's words. A day when all people will not simply defend what their neighbors cherish, so that they might enjoy peer acceptance. But a day when truth is sought over all other considerations. When this occurs, when intelligence is invited to religious discussions, it will naturally emerge that God created only one mankind, and only one religion. A religion that never needs an update.

History proves this is so, and intelligence says it must be. ■

9/11



& THE JEWISH PEOPLE

RABBI REUVEN MANN

It is difficult to believe that a decade has passed since the numbers 9 and 11 became indelibly etched in the annals of infamy. We cannot come to grips with the sadistic character of the horror we witnessed with our own eyes. What evil movement would consign thousands of innocents who had no connection to its “grievance” to a sudden and horrible death?

We generally underestimate the full extent of human sadism. We naively imagine that all people, especially those, who profess to act in the name of G-d, have some element of “compassion.” The primary cause of the horrible explosions was the religious zeal of the terrorists. On the surface, this is impossible to comprehend. Most people associate religion with

peace, restraint and compassion. Moslem theologians continuously insist that the term Islam means submission to the will of their deity. How can people who hold that faith act with such complete cruelty and contempt for human life and the most cherished institutions of advanced civilization? In my opinion, we are very naïve about the real nature of “religion.”

Throughout history people have had intense “religious experiences.” The danger of confusing one’s personal “vision” with the will of the Creator is very great. Most of the wars of history were fought by competing religions seeking to impose their theological falsehoods. Man made religion can be very dangerous. You can tell that a religion is a human invention by

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the behavior of its adherents. Their psychological insecurity about the truth of their system compels them to act ruthlessly against non-believers. Skeptics are a threat who must be forcefully converted or eliminated.

The freedom to inquire and live by reason is the greatest danger to religion because if the real origin of the doctrines were discovered, the claim of divinity would be seriously compromised. Make no mistake about it; the 9/11 criminals were not men of true religion. They were cruel people in pursuit of personal glory in an imaginary paradise whose souls were purged of any element of pity for human beings. Let us recognize the fact that false religion can lead to the worst horrors. Much crime has been committed by those who arrogantly claim to speak in G-d's name. 9/11 ranks with the most heinous abuses of religion in history! There is certainly much evil in the world. None is worse than that which rationalizes itself in the form of misbegotten "theologies."

Judaism stands apart from the religions of man. It is based on submission to the will of G-d as He has revealed it to us, not as we would like it to be. In Judaism, we strive to approach G-d through recognition and appreciation of His Infinite Wisdom, which is revealed in the world of nature,

and in the ideas of His Torah. This produces a certain humility and a sense of compassion for all of His creatures. Judaism, unlike other religions, does not proselytize. We do not seek to impose our views on others. Yet, the question arises: If we regard the Torah as G-d's instruction to mankind, do we not have the obligation to disseminate this knowledge? I believe that there is no greater compassion than to educate people in the proper "way of life." However, we cannot assume the role of missionaries. Our national goal is expressed in the words, "And I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel." Our wisdom, behavior, kindness and commitment to justice in all situations, in our personal and national dealings serve to sanctify the name of G-d and draw mankind closer to His service.

Some have said that 9/11 gave religion a bad name. I say, it gave false religion a very bad name. We must, in every area, use of our G-d given intelligence to differentiate between the true and the false, between darkness and light. Our task is to reflect the wisdom and beauty of our religion of truth. Let us at this time renew our appreciation of our eternal Torah heritage and rededicate ourselves to our national mission of Kiddush Hashem, the sanctification of G-d's name. ■

"...false religion can lead to the worst horrors. Much crime has been committed by those who arrogantly claim to speak in G-d's name."





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9 11

“On September the eleventh, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars — but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war — but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks — but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day — and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.” So said former president George W. Bush addressing a joint session of congress on September 20th 2001.

This Sunday is the 10th Anniversary of the 9-11 terrorist attacks. It was the apogee of Al-Qaeda’s lethal apocalyptic reach and the end of an era of innocence for Americans on a par with the Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations. It led to two wars. It led to covert and overt missions still going on today to destroy Al-Qaeda and their fellow travelers. It led to changes in

privacy rights and surveillance of American citizens. It led to massive amounts being spent to interdict would-be terrorists and bolster airline safety. It led to burgeoning patriotism and concurrently to divisions in American society about the War on Terror that have been extrapolated to other spheres in American politics to such an extent that these days you’re either a red state or blue state with very little room in the middle for purple.

Thanks to the ubiquity of 24/7 full time media, most Americans were treated to the horror, live, of the second plane slamming into the second tower followed by the collapse of both buildings, a hitherto unimaginable sight of death and destruction on a scale straight out of the movies. Only everyone watching knew this was all too real.

American media this week has been rife with disturbing images being shown again and again. One can only imagine the post-traumatic stress all of this must be triggering among our friends and neighbors.

One of the post 9-11 divisions in our society has been over the nature and seriousness of the conflict we’ve been thrust into. There are many in our country who refuse to believe that we are engaged in a war with militant Radical Islam — naively insisting that we’re only battling a lunatic fringe and not the sentiments of a vast segment of the Islamic world. Just as there were appeasers and apologists for Communism during the Cold War, there are quite a few today who believe in “American guilt,” our policies are to blame. These same people don’t believe in the use of force for any reason and delude themselves into thinking that if only we cater to and kowtow to the Islamists that we’ll be able to buy their love. These are many of the same people who believed before Rudy Giuliani became mayor of New York City that rampant crime was being caused by poverty. Rudy posited that crime is caused by criminals and they need to be dealt with harshly. The light of history has shown that he was entirely correct.

The conflict with Radical Islam has taken the place of the Cold War in the existential nature of the danger and no amount of self-delusion will change the reality of the situation. As distasteful as it is to see soldiers returned home killed or crippled in far away lands, every day they take the war straight to the enemy so that we don’t have to fight that war here on our streets, on our buses, trains, shopping malls or heaven forbid in our schools or places of worship.

The resolve of our military and covert services to win this war has kept the home front relatively safe and life here relatively normal in the years since 9-11. On Sunday, Americans will remember and honor the memory of all the heroically brave first responders from that tragic morning 10 years ago. We will also recall the thousands of innocent civilians who were vaporized sitting at their desks or jumped to their doom or were buried under the rubble.

We hope the U.S. will keep up the pressure on the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan and keep targeting Al-Qaeda leaders for assassination. We also call on the Obama Administration to get off Israel’s back as it too combats the intolerant forces of evil who view the U.S. with equal antipathy. It is also time to deal harshly with the Islamo-Fascist regime in Iran and make sure that there is both regime change and that Tehran never gets nuclear capability with which it would threaten the entire civilized world.

There are no amount of words that will bring back our loved ones, no amount of praise that will suffice to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice, although the words must be said and the praise repeated. The best way to honor the legacy of the fallen from 9-11 is to see the triumph of American Democracy both at home and abroad and the utter vanquishing of our enemies so that future generations will never be threatened by the kind of violent, twisted religious fanaticism that took so many of our best and brightest on both 9-11 and in the War on Terror that has followed. ■



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9/11 & GILAD

CHAZAK VAYEMATZ

YOUR VOICE MATTERS



Imagine it is you. Kidnapped and jailed for over 5 years in a terrorist prison. You have not seen the faces or heard the voices of friends or family all that time. You wonder what is taking your country so long to rescue you. You cannot give up hope. You are convinced that people are working on your behalf. You know your family is grieving and doing all they can 24/7 to obtain your release. It pains you that they are pained over you.

It never enters your mind that they are becoming apathetic. "Apathy" does not exist in their vocabulary.

As much as you would be yearning for your release so you might be free, live, marry and have a family like all others...Gilad has been painfully yearning for over 5 years. Just as you could not stomach the thought of anyone giving up on you, do not give up on Gilad.

As Jews, we are strong and steadfast, "Chazak Vayematz." We never let emotions of weakness, weariness or tiredness cloud the clear and obligatory mission to defend and save our brothers and sisters. We are stronger than that. We spare no expense to save a life. Certainly, we will take mere min-

utes to sustain a cry for help. And we won't be quiet until salvation is a reality.

No matter how long, we fight, we are determined and we will be victorious. Our trust is in God that as we act as He demands for others, He too will act.

9/11 has become the day to fight terror. Today, show your care for another Jew. Show your resilience against terror. Add your vote for Gilad by "liking" of Facebook page. With 1,000,000 of us, we offer Gilad the leverage that makes leaders act. Like it and tell others.

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