

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' הֵן עַם אֶחָד וּשְׂפָה אַחַת לְכָלֶם וְזֶה הַחֲלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת וְעַתָּה לֹא־יִבְצָר מֵהֶם כָּל
אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת:

“And Hashem said, ‘Behold, one nation and one tongue for all of them. And this is the profanity they are doing. And now nothing is restrained from them, that they plot to do.’” (Bereishis 11:6).

“And Hashem said.” Hashem was talking to the earth. When making man it says “let us make” and “in our likeness.” (Ibid 1:26). Hashem was talking to the earth, as it says, “And the Lord created the person in its image. In the image of the Lord, He created it.” (Ibid 1:27). The pasuk repeats the creation of the image because it refers to two different images. First, the pasuk uses the word וַיִּבְרָא because the person was created from something else. He was created from earth. (Ibid 2:7). Then the pasuk uses בְּרִא for “in the image of the Lord.” *Bara* denotes a new creation from nothing, in this case the Lord’s image. And that is why the pasuk seems to repeat itself. The earth was a partner in creating man. *Let us create a person.*

Hashem now returned to His partner, the earth, to discuss the matter of this advancement. The pasuk says “Come and descend and mix up their tongue.” (Ibid 11:7). However, that pasuk cannot mean descend in direction, because it already said, “And Hashem came down to see the city.” (Ibid 11:5). It means to make the people descend, to bring them down from their tower.

“Behold! One nation and one tongue for all of them.” הֵן means they but also means behold, denoting a surprise. What can surprise Hashem? It cannot be the one tongue and one nation. They all descended from Noach and it already said, “And it was the entire earth was one tongue.” (Ibid 11:1). This was an announcement.

“And this is the profanity they do.” Some commentaries translate it as “*the beginning of their work*” but that would be with a ת. Behold! They are one nation and one tongue and they choose to build a city and tower. What were they doing wrong? They were building a tower and trying to make a monument to themselves so that they would not be forgotten. There is no mention of idol worship, violence, or another sin. They were unified and yet, that is a profanity. The answer is in the solution that Hashem enacted.

The Torah says, “Come, let us descend and confound – over there – their speech, that they do not listen, a man to his fellow’s tongue.” (Ibid 11:7). Hashem was targeting this place, in the land of Shinur – later to be known as Bavel – that the communication should break down. In this way, they were “scattered from there over the face of the entire earth.” (Ibid 11:8). The solution was to scatter them. The problem was they’re not wanting to be scattered. (Ibid 11:4). The purpose of the city and the tower was so that they can all be in one place. *Behold! They can communicate well and advance technology, but they are using that to remain in place. They are people of the earth and they are meant to inhabit the entire earth.* When the Lord partnered with the earth to make a person, the pasuk

says they should rule over the entire earth. (Ibid 1:26). They were not meant to be cooped up in one city. Their dominance was meant to spread worldwide.

Behold! Man has ceased his purpose by ceasing global travel, settlement, and dominance. People were already in the east. If they did not continue west, they would never reach the Land of Canaan, Africa, Europe, and beyond.

This was not a sin and punishment situation. This was meant for world advancement, so that people do not stagnate. They profaned their purpose. They must explore and dominate the world, and then use that for mankind's benefit. Hashem was talking to the earth, "let us descend." I will come to your level because this is an earth problem. Hashem did not want to break the unity. Speech separates man from beast. Hashem then attacked them at their tongues. "They should not listen man to his fellow's speech." (Ibid 11:7). Some should break off and explore and move on.

"And now, they cannot be restrained." They should not be holed up in this one city.

"All that they plot to do." Mankind is capable of incredible things. Necessity is the mother of invention. They invented bricks and mortar to advance building because they wanted to stick with their own language speakers. Thus, they needed to build a city and a tower to house everyone. They also wanted to build a monument to their kind so that the world will not forget them. A monument by nature stands in one place. They put a stake in the ground, that was where they would remain.

Hashem simply made it that they no longer listened to the idea of staying put. "They ceased building the city." (Ibid 11:8). They scattered and wandered across the earth. They each came up with their own ideas and countries, inventions, advancements, explorations, and discoveries.

This can be seen in Gemara Avos d'Rabbi Nasan 12:7 that says, *love everyone and that will save humanity. The people of the tower had unity so Hashem simply scattered them. Those in Sodom were destroyed.* The Gemara is saying that the people of this project did have unity. Hashem scattered them, not as a punishment, but for their own benefit. Sodom did not have unity. Evil in it of itself creates a situation where unity cannot exist. Haamek Davar says, there was evil and the situation would have descended into violent chaos. If there is unity then there cannot be evil. These people were not sinning. They were simply staving off mankind's progress. Hashem returned to his partner and they gave mankind a little nudge. This solution was not to create disunity. It was simply meant to facilitate an environment where new ideas, discoveries, exploration, and breakthroughs can be achieved.