

## **“Come, let us build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.” (11:4)**

Researchers say that those who participate in extreme sports do it because they want to have a life-altering experience. They are individuals who are anything but irresponsible risk takers, but rather, highly trained men and women with a deep knowledge of themselves, who simply want to experience an activity that is life-enhancing and life-changing. For them, it is an exhilarating experience that makes them come alive, transcending everyday ways of being and glimpsing their own potential. They view dealing with death as an affirmation of life that gives it greater meaning. There are those who seek to carve out a niche for themselves by which they will be remembered, with “being remembered” serving as the antidote to cessation of life. We all want to live, but how many want to live on, to establish a legacy of life whereby we connect with eternity?

The early builders of the Tower of Bavel thought that it was all about making a name for themselves. Thus, they were willing to risk building an impossibly high tower, in which one slip meant certain death. It was all worth it, because they wanted to be remembered. Their legacy was their tower. The Great Wall of China cost its builders thousands of lives, as did the Siberian railroad. They thought that somehow, some way, they were, by virtue of the name they made for themselves, connecting with eternity and cheating death. Others have gone so far as to act negatively to achieve their goal of being remembered. *Naase lanu shem*; “Let us make for ourselves a name”: We all want to be remembered, but only positive memories are of value. We all want to share in a piece of eternity, but how many are willing to change, to alter their lifestyle in order to connect with eternity? A lasting monument, an enduring legacy, is not one which makes a name for ourselves, but one which transforms and betters the lives of others. Eternity is achieved by connecting with something eternal. The only true eternity is Hashem. One who wants to be remembered, to share in an enduring legacy, has one recourse: connect with Hashem through Torah, *tefillah* and *mitzvah* observance. This eternalizes our every action.

Hashem told Avraham *Avinu* that He would establish an eternal covenant with him and his descendants. What more can a person ask for than to be a part of the eternal people, the nation which Hashem promised that He would never reject? In one way or another, every human seeks to immortalize himself. No one wants to have lived and be forgotten. The physical achievements of man are temporary testaments to temporary actions which are about as eternal as the nations of the world who meant us harm, persecuting and murdering, pillaging and destroying. Where are they now? Gone and forgotten – as useless as their goals in life. We are the only eternal people, because we connect to Hashem. We listen to Him when we study His eternal Torah. We speak to Him via the medium of sincere prayer. We earn a place in the eternal world of *Olam Habba*, World-to-Come. We do not have to make a name for ourselves. We already have an eternal name: *Yehudi*, the name that Hashem conferred upon us.