

## **"They said to one another, 'Come let us make bricks and burn them in fire.'" (11:3)**

The *Torah* begins the narrative discussing the sin of the *Dor Haflagah*, generation of the dispersion. Everyone assembled under the leadership of the evil Nimrod, self-proclaimed king of the world, to build a tower ascending to Heaven. From this vantage point they planned to wage war against the Almighty. It seems, therefore, superfluous to mention their comments of, "*Let us make bricks.*" Do the technicalities of the development of the tower carry any significance with regard to the sin? It is clear that Bavel/Iraq is -- as *Rashi* notes -- situated on a plain, where there are no stones available for bricks. Is it necessary, however, to mention this in the *Torah*?

*Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, z.l.*, responded to this question in the course of a conversation with Thomas Masaryk, President of Czechoslovakia, during his visit to Yerushalayim (1927). *Rav Yosef Chaim* commented that one should always view whatever success he merits as being the result of Hashem's benevolence. He constantly warned against viewing success as the product of one's own talents. Indeed, *Rav Yosef Chaim* declared that mankind's ethical and moral regression in the aftermath of World War I was attributed to their amazing technological breakthroughs. Their "ability" to accomplish what previously had been thought of as impossible served to stoke the flames of their reprehensible arrogance.

*Rav Yosef Chaim* developed his point and applied it to the *Dor Haflagah* whose prime sin was their faith in their own power. If so, why does the *Torah* mention their declaration, "Let us make bricks"? What is the connection between this statement and their sin? In addition, what difference does it make whether they used stones or bricks to make the tower? The answer to this question, explained *Rav Yosef Chaim*, was the root of their sin. The goal of that generation was to remove their yoke of dependency upon Hashem. Their desire to make "their own" bricks was their way of indicating that they could do it themselves. They had no need for Hashem's support. "We do not need His stones; we will make our own bricks," they said. It was such a treasonous statement that led to their blatant rebellion against the Almighty.