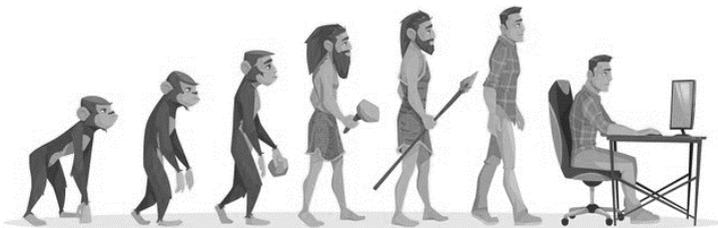

The evolution of society!

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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Bereshit 5782



Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he then founded a city, and named the city after his son Enoch... Adah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who dwell in tents and amidst herds. And the name of his brother was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all who play the lyre and the pipe. As for Zillah, she bore Tubal-cain, who forged all implements of copper and iron. And the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah. **Bereshit 4:17,20-22**¹.

It recorded only the names of those who began the building of cities, the grazing of sheep, the art of music, and the skill of working with metals. **Ramban on Bereshit 4:17**²

And he built a city: As Cain now understood the will of God: That it is good to deal much with his needs, and not to live like an animal or beast by way of only working the ground - but rather to

pursue a particularly human life. Therefore he built himself a city. **HaEmek Davar on Bereshit 4:17**³ The development of agriculture instigated the most important revolution in human history; it changed the economic conditions and the cultures of societies that adopted agriculture. The agricultural revolution transformed human relations and the way societies and economies were organized, as well as the relationships of people to one another and to their physical, social and technological environments. It brought about a new civilization with its own society, economy, culture, social structure and political organization. "The change from hunting and gathering to agriculture involved more than a mere change in subsistence pattern; it represented a complete change in the social and cultural fabric of life." It "meant also a mental change." **Mohamed Rabie, The Development of Human Societies in Saving Capitalism and Democracy**⁴

And he built cities

וַיְבַנֶּה עֵיר

Bereshit 4:17

Where then did Jewish strength lie if not in numbers? The Torah gives an answer of surpassing beauty. God tells Moses: Do not count Jews. Ask them to give, and then count the contributions. In terms of numbers we are small. But in terms of our contributions, we are vast. In almost every age, Jews have given something special to the world: the Torah, the literature of the prophets, the poetry of the Psalms, the rabbinic wisdom of Mishnah, Midrash and Talmud, the vast medieval library of commentaries and codes, philosophy and mysticism.

Then, as the doors of Western society opened, Jews made their mark in one field after another: in business, industry, the arts and sciences, cinema, the

media, medicine, law and almost every field of academic life. They revolutionised thought in physics, economics, sociology, anthropology and psychology. Jews have won Nobel Prizes out of all proportion to our numbers.

The simplest explanation is that to be a Jew is to be asked to give, to contribute, to make a difference, to help in the monumental task that has engaged Jews since the dawn of our history, to make the world a home for the Divine presence, a place of justice, compassion, human dignity and the sanctity of life. Though our ancestors cherished their relationship with God, they never saw it as a privilege. They knew it was a responsibility. God asked great things of the Jewish people, and in so doing, made them great. **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks in Ten Paths To God**⁵