

THE KING'S PALACE (1)

A Beautiful Palace

The *shul* ought to be the most impressive structure in town. A town in which the homes are taller than the *shul* will be destroyed (*Rachmana litzlan*).

(שבת יא ע"א, שו"ע או"ח סי' קנ ס"ב)

When discussing the obligation to give *HaShem* the best of our possessions, the Rebbe related this principle to the building of a *shul*. From the *possuk* that says, *Zeh Keili ve'anveihu*, we learn that all *mitzvos* should be fulfilled in a beautiful manner. How much more does this apply to a house of *davening* and learning.

Thus the *Midrash* specifies that gold was created especially for the *Beis HaMikdash*. That was its prime purpose. From this we learn that only after one has donated some of his gold to *tzedaka* is he himself also allowed to benefit from it. The same applies to a *shul*: after we have built a beautiful *shul*, we may build ourselves a comfortable home.

To this the Rebbe added, "If a person would claim that for *davening* and learning it is enough to have some kind of tent, as *Yaakov Avinu* had, while his own residence is built lavishly... Is that befitting?!"

(שיח"ק תשכ"ו ע' 438)

On another occasion, the Rebbe noted that since enormous sums are spent on building all kinds of other centers, there should be increased efforts to build houses for *davening* and learning.

(תו"מ הל"ד ע' 45)

Holy Construction

In preparation to build his *shul*, the *tzaddik* Reb Shalom of Belz stayed awake for a thousand nights, learning Torah and reaching great *ruchniusdike* heights. His *Rebbetzin* stood nearby attending to his needs, and if he fell asleep for more than half an hour she would wake him up. On the thousandth night he was overcome by a deep sleep, but the *Rebbetzin* did not let him succumb, for on that night he finally attained the level for which he had waited so long.

When the *shul* was finally being built, the *tzaddik* himself would often take part in the construction, laying bricks with deep *kavana*. His older brother, Reb Leibish Rokeiach, then visiting Belz, expressed his disapproval. Reb Shalom shared with him its significance and concluded, "If I had the ability, I would build the entire edifice myself! But since I don't have the energy to do so, I'm doing whatever I am able to do."

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 267, 387)

On a groundbreaking for the expansion of 770 took place, in which the Rebbe participated, wearing *Shabbos* clothing and delivering a *sicha* on the significance of the event. The Rebbe explained that every edifice must be based on a foundation of *kedusha*, and that in order to build there must be a "groundbreaking" – the breaking of one's *yeshus* – the realization that the power to build comes from *HaShem*. The Rebbe then dug a hole in the ground, placed the foundation stone inside, covered it with earth, and finally distributed dollars for *tzedaka* to all those present.

(התוועדות תשמ"ח ח"ד ע' 287)

Keeping the Shul Clean and Tidy

One should show respect to a *shul* by keeping it clean, as is done in the palaces of mighty kings. Indeed, there have been great *tzaddikim* who would sweep the floor in front of the *Aron Kodesh* with their beard. Some say that by virtue of doing so, the grandfather of *Rashi* was blessed with this illustrious grandson.

(סיפורי חסידים קכח ובמקו"ח שם, ר"ח שער היראה פט"ו סמ"ב)

The Rebbe often reminded his listeners about the upkeep of the *shul*. He pointed out that a *shul* should be respected, as the *Beis Hamikdash* was, and according to some sources, this obligation is *min haTorah*. Whenever the *shul* at 770 was not properly cleaned, the Rebbe expressed pain over this, and would at times bend down himself to pick up litter.

Once the Rebbe said, "If someone were to leave litter on the floor of his home, he would be perceived as crazy, yet when litter lies on the floor of his *shul*, he does nothing to clean it up!"

On another occasion, he commented, "When a child causes a mess at home, his parents are quick to admonish him. How much more so should this apply to the *kedusha* of a *shul*, which is the home of *HaShem*!"

Once when the Rebbe came into the *shul*, he noticed some litter that had been pushed under the *bima*. He bent down, picked it up, and placed it on the table where he sat, until someone took it away. The Rebbe commented, "There is no point in hiding litter somewhere, for *HaShem* sees it there as well..."

(שיח"ק תשמ"ו ח"ג ע' 934, תשכ"ח ח"ב ע' 488, תשורה סיפוענברון תשס"ו ע' 25)

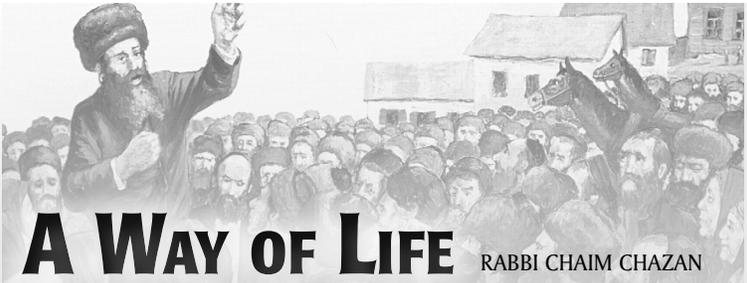
In the course of his travels, Reb Meir of Premishlan once went to *daven* in a *shul* that was in a state of dire neglect. As soon as he opened the door, he exclaimed, in the words of *Yaakov Avinu*: *Ma nora hamakon hazeh! Ein zeh ki im beis Elokim!* – "How dreadful is this place! This is no other than the house of *HaShem*!"

The *chassidim* who accompanied him assumed that with these words the holy Reb Meir was expressing some profound *ruchniusdike* insight. Seeing that they had not understood him, he explained, "This place is indeed dreadful; it is dangerous to walk around in here! It must be the house of *HaShem*, for I see that there is no one responsible for caring about its upkeep – unlike the other homes in this town, which seem to be in proper condition..."

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 113)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Does *HaShem* need a nice home? Why then should we invest so much to beautify it?
- Why would *Rashi's* grandfather and the Rebbe clean the *shul* themselves? Was there no one else who could do it?



A WAY OF LIFE

RABBI CHAIM CHAZAN

Donning Tefillin Before A Sefer Torah

May one put on tefillin while the Sefer Torah is out of the aron kodesh?

- The Alter Rebbe writes in his *Shulchan Aruch*¹: If one takes off his tefillin before the Sefer Torah is returned to the aron kodesh, he should do so not in the presence of the Sefer Torah, but should turn aside [and face away from the Sefer Torah or alternatively he can remove his tefillin under his tallis²]. The reverence with which a Sefer Torah is treated should be no less than the reverence shown by a talmid to his rebbe – and³ a talmid should not take off his tefillin in his rebbe's presence, because he is demeaning his rebbe's honor by uncovering his head in his presence.
- From the Alter Rebbe's wording, "Before the Sefer Torah is returned to the aron kodesh," it would seem that this applies even while the Sefer Torah is covered with its mantle⁴.
- Based on the reasoning given, namely that it is dishonorable to bare one's head before a Sefer Torah, it would appear that the same would apply to putting on tefillin. However, *poskim*⁵ note that baring one's head is not demeaning when done for the holy purpose of putting on tefillin.
- Another reason to be lenient: Some *poskim*⁶ say that perhaps the halacha was only said in days of old when the custom was to completely cover their heads with a turban, and thus removing tefillin would necessitate uncovering their heads. However, in later generations, we can easily remove tefillin without uncovering our head and it would then be permissible to put on or take off tefillin before a Sefer Torah⁷.

1. חיי שרה אות ב' הקיל.
 2. מושגב"ס" כה"ק נח בשם פמ"ג א"א.
 3. שו"ע ר"ס"י לח סעי' 1.
 4. תהילה לדוד ס"י לח סעי' יא לגבי תלמיד בפני רבו (ועי' בשו"ת רבבות אפרים ח"א ס"י לב), ועפ"ז פסק כן בשו"ת שבט הקהתי ח"א ס"י כא לגבי לפני ספר תורה.
 5. כן ראיתי מדייקים מסתימת לשון המחבר, וכן נקטו בפשטות כמה ממוחברי זמנינו. אבל בעמח"ס בן איש חי בספרו עוד יוסף חי פרשת
 6. החיד"א בברכ"י ס"י לח.
 7. שבט הקהתי שם.

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OUR HEROES

Rabbeinu Gershom "Meor Hagolah"



Rabbeinu Gershom, who lived approximately one thousand years ago in Mainz, Germany, is known as the "Meor Hagolah," the luminary of the exile. The breadth of his knowledge and teachings were vast, and about him Rashi has written, "All members of the Ashkenazi Diaspora are his students." Rabbeinu Gershom wrote on many subjects, such as the tradition of the *Torah Shebiksav*, a *pirush* on Gemoro, and many responsa. Unfortunately, we currently do not have many of these. He is well-known for the many *charamos* he instituted, including the ban on polygamy.



From a *farbrengen* of Yud beis tammuz 5727:

In various *seforim* the following *geshmakeh vort* is brought: Why did Rabbeinu Gershom earn the title "Meor Hagolah" when there were *geonim* before him and after him, who did not merit such a name?

The *seforim* attribute this to two of the *takanos* of Rabbeinu Gershom which are very well known, even to those who are not so familiar with the *Shulchan Aruch*: the prohibition of marrying more than one wife, and the prohibition of divorcing a wife against her wish.

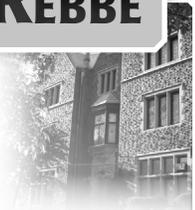
In the spiritual realm, these *takanos* have a profound reflection. It is known that the bond between Hashem and the Yidden is likened to a man and his wife, and being that Yidden are in a very dark golus, it is necessary to forewarn the possibility of Hashem *ch"v* "divorcing" us. Spiritually, the prohibition of "divorcing a wife against her wish" implies that because a Yid "cannot and will never want to be disconnected from Hashem," it is therefore impossible for Hashem to "divorce" us.

However, being that it is still possible for Him to "take an additional wife," a nation other than the Yidden, the other *takana* was instituted, namely the prohibition of marrying more than one wife. Every *takana* made below is followed on high, beginning with Hashem himself.

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

"A Shortage of Children?!"



The legendary Rav of the Lubavitch community of Tel Aviv, Harav Moshe Ashkenazi a"h, was in *yechidus* with the Rebbe in the year 5724. The Rebbe's concern, as well as familiarity, with all matters concerning *yiddishkeit* in Eretz Yisroel was very broad, so the *yechidus* covered a wide scope of issues.

At one point, the Rebbe inquired why the Chabad *cheder* of Tel Aviv, on Harav Kook Street, had recently closed down. Harav Ashkenazi replied that it was due to a shortage of children. The Rebbe looked very surprised. The Rebbe rose somewhat in his chair, and asked:

"When my father in law was in Eretz Yisroel, ten thousand people came to visit him. Where are their children? There's a shortage of children in Eretz Yisroel?!"

At a *yechidus* with a certain *rav* in Adar 5741, the Rebbe raised the topic of *chinuch*, the *rav* inquired of the Rebbe if he is referring to "unzere kinder" (our children - of the *frum* community). The Rebbe responded sharply, "Our children' are all the children of *Klal Yisroel!*"



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