

THE KING'S PALACE

THE KEDUSHA OF A SHUL

Hashem spoke to the Navi Yechezkel: "Although I have removed the Yidden from their land, placing them far off among the nations, I have become for them a *Mikdash Me'at* (miniature) in the lands where they have come." Chazal explain that this refers to the shuls and *Batei Medrashim* outside of Eretz Yisroel. When Moshiach will come, these shuls and *Batei Medrashim* will be transplanted there.

(יחזקאל יא, טז, מגילה כט ע"א)

Chazal say that Hashem is closer to a Yid in a shul; therefore, one should always make an effort to daven in a shul, where tefillos are best accepted. Abayei said, "Once I would daven in shul and learn at home, however I have learnt that one should learn in shul as well."

Although Hashem fills the entire world, nevertheless, out of his love for us, He designated special places to reveal Himself, like the *Beis Hamikdash*.

(ירושלמי ברכות פ"ה ה"א, ר"ח שער היראה פט"ו)

One must show great respect for a shul, for it is the resting place for the Shechinah.

When Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua was asked why he merited to live long, he attributed it to his respect for shuls, having never used them as a shortcut. Similarly, Rabbi Zeira merited long life for never having slept, even briefly, in the *Beis Medrash*.

When Rabbi Yochanan was informed that there are elderly people in Bavel, he was surprised, for the Torah only promises long life to those who live in *Eretz Yisroel*. When he heard that these people spent long hours in shul, he said, "This was their merit."

Similarly, Rav Assi said, "A shul which is used for mundane activities brings death to the city's inhabitants."

(מגילה כז ע"ב, ברכות ח ע"א)

It is ruled in *Shulchan Aruch* that it is forbidden to behave in a frivolous manner while in shul. This includes joking and idle conversations.

One is also prohibited to use a shul as a shortcut or as a refuge from the weather. Eating and sleeping in a shul is inappropriate, unless it is for a mitzvah.

Furthermore, one should not kiss young children in shul, in order to implant in his own heart that there is no love comparable to the love of Hashem.

(שו"ע סי' קנ"א ס"א, שו"ע אדה"ז סי' צ"ח ס"א)

On the occasion of his son's *upshernish*, one young chossid brought his son to 770, and arrived in time for Mincha. During davening, the boy began to cry, so his father calmed him by stroking him and then kissed him lightly on his forehead.

The following morning, the chossid received a phone call from the Rebbe's secretary that there is a letter from the Rebbe waiting for him in the office. Surprised by the urgency, the young man hurried to 770. Written together with the standard bracha for his son, there was a note: "See *Kitzur shulchan Aruch Siman 13 Se'if 1*." Finding the sefer, he read: "One may not kiss his children in shul, in order not to show any love other than for Hashem..."

(כפר חב"ד גליון 300 ע' 24)

On one of his travels, the Rebbe Rashab was in shul and saw a young boy acting wild and foolish. He called the child over and reprimanded him, that he is now in a shul, a *Mikdash Me'at*, and he needs to behave properly.

(רשימות דברים ח"ב ע' ק"י)

Similar to a king's palace, one should act humbly in a shul. One should not shout across a shul to call someone.

In an unsigned letter written by one of the first Rebbeim, it is written: "When entering a shul, one should do so with humility and fear of the King of Kings, Hashem. The Torah tells us to fear the *Beis Hamikdash*, and the same applies to a shul, which is called a *Mikdash Me'at*. One should not speak any idle talk the entire time he is in shul. With this, they will merit much good, in this world and in the next, and we will merit the coming of Moshiach."

(ר"ח שער היראה פט"ו, אג"ק אדה"ז אדהאמ"צ אדהצ"צ ח"א ע' שעז)

Reb Chaim Vital writes that his Rebbe, the Arizal, would entirely

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refrain from speaking in shul, even words of inspiration, so that he not come to speaking mundane matters.

(שער הכוונות)

Inappropriate behavior in shul will cause the shul to later become a place of negative behavior, such as *Avoda Zara*.

(סמ"ק מצוה יא)

A BEAUTIFUL PALACE

The shul is supposed to be the most impressive structure in town. A town in which the homes are taller than the shul, will be destroyed R"L.

(שבת יא ע"א, שו"ע או"ח סי' קנ ס"ב)

When discussing the obligation to give Hashem our best, the Rebbe emphasized the importance of this with regard to the building of a shul. If all mitzvos have the command of "*Zeh keili v'anveihu*" (mitzvos should be beautiful), how much more so regarding a house of davening and learning. The *Medrash* specifies that gold was created especially for the *Beis Hamikdash*; only when one donates from his gold, is he allowed to benefit from it as well. The same applies to a shul; after we erect a beautiful shul, we can build for ourselves a nice home. The Rebbe commented, "He claims that for davening and learning it is enough to have a 'tent' as *Yaakov Avinu* did, while his own residence is built well?!... This is not befitting!"

(שיחוק תשכ"ו ע' 438)

On another occasion, the Rebbe noted that since enormous sums are spent on building centers not in line with Torah, there should be an increase in efforts to build houses for davening and learning.

(תו"מ הל"ד ע' 45)

In preparation to build his shul, the tzaddik Reb Shalom of Belz stayed awake for a thousand nights, learning torah and reaching great *ruchnius'dike* heights. His Rebbetzin stood nearby attending to his needs, and if he would fall asleep for more than a half 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 being built the tzaddik himself would often take part in the construction, laying bricks with much *kavana*. His older brother, Reb Leibish Rokeiach, once visited Belz, and expressed his disapproval. Reb Shalom shared with him its significance and concluded, "If I had the ability, I would build the entire edifice myself! Since I don't have the energy to do so, I'm doing whatever I am able."

(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 saying 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 the yeshus, to know

that the power to build comes from Hashem. The Rebbe then dug a hole in the ground, placed the foundation stone inside and covered it with earth. Afterwards, the Rebbe distributed dollars for tzedakah to all those present.

(התוועדויות תשמ"ח ח"ד ע' 287)

KEEPING IT NICE

One should show respect to shuls by keeping them clean, as is done in the palaces of great kings. It is known that great tzaddikim would sweep the *Aron Kodesh* and the floor in front of it with their beard. Some say that by doing so, the grandfather of Rashi merited his illustrious grandson.

(ס' חסידים קכה ובמקו"ח שם, ר"ח שער היראה פט"ו סמ"ב)

On numerous occasions, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of the shul's upkeep. A shul should be respected, like the *Beis Hamikdash* was, and according to some this is *min hatorah*. When the shul in 770 was not properly cleaned, the Rebbe expressed pain over this, and would at times bend down himself to pick up garbage.

Once the Rebbe said, "If someone were to have garbage on the floor of his home, he would be perceived as crazy, yet when garbage 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 be with regard to the kedusha of a shul, Hashem's home!"

Once when the Rebbe came into the shul, he noticed some garbage which had been pushed under the bimah. The Rebbe bent down, picked it up, and placed it the table where he sat; until one person took it away. The Rebbe once commented, "There is no point in hiding it somewhere, for Hashem sees it there as well..."

(שיחוק תשמ"ח ע' 934, תשכ"ח ח"ב ע' 488, תשורה טיפענברון תשס"ו ע' 25)

The tzaddik Reb Meir of Premishlan once passed through a town where the shul was neglected and in dire condition. Entering the shul to daven, he cried out in the words of *Yaakov Avinu*, "*Mah nora hamakon hazeh, ein zeh ki im beis elokim...*" (How dreadful is this place! It is no other than the house of Hashem!). Noticing that his chassidim were perplexed, he explained, "This is no other than 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 fair condition."

(אור המזיר)

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