



## The Mikdash Me'at

By Rav Paysach Krohn shlita (Shiur E26)

*Inspiring us to upgrade our relationship with Shul and Davening.*

### *Looks can be deceiving*

The Shul where you Daven may look like a brick-and-mortar building in the city or town of your residence. But looks can be deceiving. The נביא יחזקאל and פסוקים tell us otherwise. The נביא יחזקאל tells us that those buildings are a מקדש מעט<sup>1</sup>:

לְכֵן אָמַר פֶּה אָמַר א' ה' כִּי הִרְחַקְתִּים בְּגוֹיִם וְכִי הִפְיִצְתִּים בְּאַרְצוֹת וְאֵהִי לָהֶם לְמִקְדָּשׁ מְעַט בְּאַרְצוֹת אֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ שָׁם.

Hashem is announcing that though we are physically distanced and scattered, He will be a מקדש מעט for us in the lands of our dispersal. The Gemara<sup>2</sup> wonders what is this מקדש מעט that the נביא is referring to. It answers:

ואהי להם למקדש מעט, אמר רבי יצחק: אלו בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שבבבל.

Hashem has promised that the houses of prayer and study in the Exile will be small versions of the בית המקדש. And further the Gemara points out that those houses of prayer will be embedded into ארץ ישראל. The מהרש"א highlights the implications of this teaching:<sup>3</sup>

ונמצא עתה בגלות שאני עומד בבית הכנסת הרי הוא מקום המקדש גופי' דלעתיד

Standing in Shul, wherever the Shul is located, is standing in the future בית המקדש. How many times do we need to review that teaching until the new reality dispels the false impression that we are 'just' in Shul?! [The Gemara<sup>4</sup> reports a remarkable comment when ר' יוחנן heard that there were elders in Bavel. "How could that be," he asked, "does not the פסוק say למען ירבו ימיכם – long life is a feature of ארץ ישראל, not of חור"ל." When he was told that they start their days early in Shul and the Bais Midrash and end their days there as well, he relaxed. "Ah," he responded, "that is what enables them to have long life." We can now understand his question and answer. After all, they are 'living' in ארץ ישראל! When you step into Shul you are stepping into ארץ ישראל – no flight needed!]

*Come on in  
and find the  
שכינה that is  
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you.*

### *The steps needed to protect the קדושה*

With the above in mind surely each of us will be thinking of ways to protect the קדושה of the בתי כנסת and מדרשות. The רמ"א gives us a place to start when he rules<sup>5</sup> that it is forbidden to kiss one's children in Shul. The children know that we would love to kiss them; and now they will learn that while in Hashem's embrace that love precedes all others.

<sup>1</sup> יחזקאל יא: טו

<sup>2</sup> מגילה כט.

<sup>3</sup> מהרש"א שם ד"ה עתידין

<sup>4</sup> ברכות ח.

<sup>5</sup> אור"ח סימן צ"ח סעיף י"א ברמ"א



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Discover the Joy of Shabbos

The *Brurah* there cites the שלי"ה who would rail against those who brought little children into Shul as though it were a playground. Running around Shul without יראה paves the way for them to lose their way as adults. The children who run around in Shul today are the adults who carry on in Shul tomorrow. It is only once the child can begin to observe his parent's focus and intensity as the parent humbles himself before Hashem is it time for the child to have a place in Shul. There will no need to remind such an adult how to Daven as he will have the image of how his parent Davened etched in his mind.

### Going to Shul with fervor

The פסוק tells us to go to Shul with *enthusiasm* – אֲשֶׁר יִחַדְדוּ נַמְתִּיק סוּד בְּבֵית אֱלֹקִים נְהַלְךְ בְּרִנָּה.<sup>6</sup> The word ברנש does not only mean with great feeling and fervor, but it also spells out the acrostic of ברד, (we come not only with enthusiasm, but with dedication, even in the face of inclement weather, hail, wind, rain or snow). And if you prefer your acrostics in Yiddish, my uncle, Reb Yehuda Ackerman ע"ה, reported that in Yiddish they say שניי גליטש, ריגען, גליטש, שניי (lightning, rain, ice or snow).

Indeed, we are meant to give tangible expression to the enthusiasm we feel upon going up to the miniature House of Hashem. The Halacha<sup>7</sup> teaches us that we should run, even on Shabbos, when a דבר מצוה such as Shul is the destination. The פרישה points out not to run on Shabbos when nobody can tell that the glory of Shul hangs in the balance. But when it becomes clear that the

destination is Shul then each person, depending on his ability, picks up the pace. Give expression to your fervor.

### Bring the שכינה

The Gemara<sup>8</sup> teaches that a person should try to get the merit of being one of the first ten men in Shul. What is this merit? To understand this merit, points out the מהרש"א, we need to know that a Jew brings קדושה with him wherever he goes. If there are two Yidden, there is more קדושה, three still more (allows for זימון). But when the number reaches ten, there is a quantum jump in the level of קדושה in the room. They are now called an עדה and Hashem said that His Name will be sanctified in the presence of an עדה. Thus, once there is an עדה, they can recite קדיש, קדושה, ברכו, קריאת שבת, etc. The קדושה that we are speaking of is the power to draw down the שכינה into their midst. The first ten draw down that powerful measure of שכינה. And while every person adds honor to the King – ברוב עם הדרת מלך – it is the first ten that brought the שכינה. They are considered to have that merit even if 100 people come after. If people knew the power of being one of the first ten there would be a bidding war over who merits to enter the Shul as one of those ten.

### Speaking of coming early

Imagine that one's relationship with Davening is the same as a member of a philharmonic orchestra or choir. One finds out the time of the rehearsal or the performance (when the Minyan starts) but that is only to work backwards to

<sup>6</sup> תהילים נה: טו

<sup>7</sup> אור"ח סימן צ' סעיף י"ב

<sup>8</sup> ברכות מז:



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know when to come. The performer knows that he must take off his hat and coat, settle in, acknowledge with respect the others who have come and tune his instrument (פסוקי דזמרא and קרבנות). One would not imagine that one would jump in with an untuned instrument, in the middle of the rehearsal or performance. He certainly would not think of 'catching up' by playing the piece faster than everyone else to get to the 'important part' with them. He certainly would not leave before the great finale (the final מברך (אמן יהא שמיה רבה מברך). Now consider how you relate to the 'start time' of Davening.

If you think your involvement with Davening is somehow different or less significant than the philharmonic player, it is only because the Yetzer, the great deceiver, knows the truth and tries to hide it from us. And he has done a marvelous job of keeping us from knowing that everything that we need or want in our lives hinges on the relationship that we build with Hashem and the sincerity of our requests to Him. Then going to greet the שכינה in the presence of ten Yidden would certainly not be considered 'optional.' It would be an 'I cannot wait for the next opportunity' moment for each of us.

And when we did not cherish the proximity of the שכינה in ירושלים, we were sent away and exiled from His House. And we are all witnesses that the same can happen to our own precious Houses of Tefilah. The נביא declares<sup>9</sup> כי תבאו לראות פני מי בקש זאת מידכם רמס תצרי – If we do not cherish these moments, we can easily be 'told' to stop coming.

<sup>9</sup> ישעיהו א: יב

### *But at least I came*

There are those who comfort themselves, or defend themselves if confronted, by saying that they are better than those who do not come at all. After all, at least I came.

One Jew who used that defense was shown, just a couple of days later, how empty that defense really is. He was berated for coming consistently late. The הלכה provides guidelines for the once-in-a-blue moon occurrence when coming late was unavoidable. But those הלכות are not meant to become the 'new normal' as permitting cutting this corner or that of Davening! "How could you come late all the time," he was chided. And he responded with the standard defense, "at least I come in the end."

A couple of days later he found himself pleading with the fire department to come and save his burning store. His livelihood was going up in smoke! And, *in the end, they came*. But coming 'in the end' was not enough to save his store. They managed to spare the neighboring stores by soaking them down before the fire could reach them, but he spent eight months without his source of פרנסה. That was time to consider the defense of 'in the end I came.' Surely, that is not an approach to Davening.

### *The ways that we demonstrate the specialness*

There are tangible ways that we show Hashem, ourselves, our children, and others, how special it is to be in the House of Hashem. We already mentioned picking up the walking pace when approaching. But what about when we are there?



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The Gemara<sup>10</sup> teaches that one may not go onto the הר הבית with his 'ordinary' attire. The same must be for the מקדש מעט. You can feel this difference between someone who prances into Shul with his sneakers versus someone who puts on a hat and jacket and perhaps even a tie to daven. This is not about 'frumkeit.' This is about how we declare that this is not an 'ordinary' place and Davening is not an 'ordinary' activity.

Similarly, shutting off one's phone is not simply appropriate decorum, something that we would, or hopefully do when attending any meeting of significance or sitting with one's spouse or child. When it comes to Shul, turning off the distractions is a way of declaring that this space and time are sacred. Nothing is going to encroach on this sanctity. My time here is

limited and precious and I will not have other things on my mind. Imagine the philharmonic player getting a text message in the middle of his performance...

### *At the door?*

We know that a person needs a set place to Daven. The Gemara<sup>11</sup> speaks of the great merit of one who has a set place for his תפילות. But we also know that there is a door to the Shul and חז"ל tell us to set one's place in the Shul, not near the door.<sup>12</sup> Sitting (or standing) near the door is a sign that one does not embrace the שכינה that is there. Only one who wants to leave stays near the door.

Come on in and find the שכינה that is waiting for you.

***Takeaway: I will try to upgrade my relationship with Shul and Davening.***

<sup>10</sup> ברכות סב:

<sup>11</sup> ברכות ו:

<sup>12</sup> שם ח.