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**How to Become a Great Baal Chesed if You Don’t Have Wealth**

**By Daniel Keren**

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**Rabbi Zev Smith**

One of the featured speakers at the recent Flatbush Hakhel Presidents Day Event was Rabbi Zev Smith, renowned Maggid Shiur who spoke on the topic of “Turning a Moment into Eternity: Practical Guidelines to Generate Real Zechusim for Yourself, Your Family and Klal Yisroel.”

Rabbi Smith explained that when someone applies for a position, there are a few requirements that the applicant must have. When someone strives to be a gadol (become spiritually great) in Klal Yisroel.

What was Dovid Hamelech’s qualification to become a gadol? Rabbi Smith said that his qualification was based on the fact that he was a shepherd and the way he lovingly treated the animals in his father’s flocks. Similarly, Moshe Rabbeinu’s quality that made him worthy of being the leader of the Jewish nation was also the way in which he treated the small sheep that was running away from his flock because it was thirsty.

**Saved by His Kindness to a Simple Fly**

Rabbi Smith spoke about a non-Jew who was saved because of his character trait of being of being kind to a fly. Once he was travelling on a bus in which the driver lost control of the vehicle. The front of the bus fell into a river and the driver and most of the passengers drowned. However, this non-Jew was sitting in the back of the bus that was almost ready to completely fall into the river. He was able to open a window and a soldier was able to miraculously rescue him. He later said that he has the custom of when a fly falls into his cup, taking it out and not killing it. This non-Jew thought that because of his mercy to the simple fly, G-d had mercy on him.

How much of our Torah observance is the result of our observing things in our life,? Rabbi Smith asked the Hakhel audience. The Rambam’s first choice of Ahavas Yisroel (love and concern for a fellow Jew) is to give kind words to others. Such words give life-saving confidence to the person whom you speak to. You may never know just how much you have helped that person you gave Chizik (inspiration) to. Do you know how powerful your simple phone call to your parents can be?, allowing them to know that you are there for them.

**Don’t Be Shy in Complimenting Others**

The government has a program urging that if you see something, say something. Rabbi Smith urged everyone to adopt that program. If you see a shaliach tzibbur (one who leads the Minyan in praying), after the conclusion compliment him on his excellent davening, even if it wasn’t [that good.]

Sometimes a person performs a particular chesed (kindness) and Hashem holds that good deed in store for him when he needs a chesed or even later on for someone else in his family.

The Rambam say that there is no greater joy in the world than to give or help someone else who is need of assistance. Rabbi Smith recalled a story he had heard about Rav Aharon Kotler (1892-1962) the founder of Beth Medrash Govoho in Lakewood, NJ. Rav Kotler was a great Torah scholar who when not fundraising for his and other yeshivas spent all his time in learning Torah. One time, he was seen playing a chess game with a simple Jew who was not a Torah scholar.

When asked about why he spent so much time on such a seemingly mundane activity instead of studying more deeply into Yam HaTorah, Rav Kotler explained that the person he was playing with was a Holocaust survivor who was still struggling with the horrors he endured. He wasn’t able to study Torah but enjoyed playing chess. Therefore, as an act of chesed, Rav Kotler opted to cheer up his friend by playing a game of chess.

**You Don’t Need a Lot of**

**Money to be a Great Baal Chesed**

Rabbeinu Yonah (Rav Yonah ben Avraham Gerondi, 1200-1263), author of the classic sefer “Shaarei Teshuvah” writes that even if you don’t have a lot of money, you can still be the greatest baal chesed if you generously bestow kind words on those who are lonely and ignored by others.

Rabbi Smith said that just as there is a punishment for saying a bad word to someone, perhaps there could also be a punishment for not having said kind words to someone who could have benefited from those thoughtful words.

Are we careful or thoughtful to give compliments to our own family members? Do we appreciate the small things our spouse constantly do for us? Do we take time to compliment our children and grandchildren? Do you have any idea of how important those compliments are to your children?

**The Most Important Thing**

**in the History of the World**

The Midrash teaches us that when you do a mitzvah, do it with simcha and know that it is the most important thing in the history of the world! Every one of us can be a One Man or One Woman Chesed Machine in our daled amos with our family and those who we come into contact with on a daily basis.

Rabbi Smith concluded with the message that everyone has a mitzvah to do tzedokah, but that even if you don’t have a lot of money, you can still perform the mitzvah with kindness and sweet words.

*Reprinted from the March 7, 2024 edition of The Flatbush Jewish Journal.*

**Thoughts that Count**

*These are the accounts of the Tabernacle* (Ex. 38:21)

Moses fully accounted for all the materials which went into crafting the Tabernacle. We can understand why he listed exactly how much gold, silver and gems were used; they are highly valuable. But why did he account precisely for the copper, which has so little comparative value? The copper was not a compulsory tax. The Torah recognizes that it is often those who give "freely" but less than they are truly able who demand the strictest accounting of every penny. For they are ever on the lookout for an excuse not to give any more. *(Der Torah Kvall)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Pekudei 5752/1992 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**How Can a Yeshiva Bochur**

**Avoid to Hearing Lashon Hara**

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**QUESTION:** How does a yeshiva bochur refrain from hearing loshon hara in his dormitory room?

**ANSWER:** He should walk out of the room until the people go to sleep. Let him sit in the beis hamedrash until his chaveirim go to sleep. And in case they don’t go to sleep until late, he should tell them, “Chaveirim, please excuse me. I have to go to sleep and when you talk I can’t sleep; do me a favor, please.” Ask rachamim, mercy, from them, and then you go to sleep so that way you won’t hear loshon hara and you’ll also be able to get up for davening the next morning on time.

**At Least Don’t Show Any Interest in Their Loshon Hara**

Rabeinu Yonah gives an eitzah like this: He says that when you hear loshon hara and you’re not able to rebuke the people – for some reason you can’t give them reproof and tell them it’s loshon hara – so at least don’t show any interest. Show a sad face, he says, an uninterested and bored face, and that will discourage them.

He brings a possuk: ופנים נזעמים לשון סתר – “An unhappy face will dispel the false tongue” (Mishlei 25:23). If you show an unhappy face, that might quiet him down. But if you show an interested face – he’s talking to you and you show an interested face, a lively face – it means you’re encouraging him, “Keep on, keep on talking.” And he’ll keep on pouring loshon hara into your ear. But if he sees that you’re discouraged, you’re not interested, that will stop him from talking loshon hara.

So, let’s say there’s somebody in your house talking about something and you don’t want to talk. They’re wasting your time. Let’s say, it’s not even loshon hara, but it’s devorim b’teilim, idle chatter. So, if it’s possible to show that you’re not interested in a way that wouldn’t insult him, then that will help to stop it.

**A Mitzvah to People of Lower Character**

**Talk if It is Free of Loshon Hara**

Sometimes however, when the person is not talking loshon hara, it’s a mitzvah to let that person talk. Many times, for some people of lower character, talking a good deal helps them to feel happy. So, if you’ll lend them your ears just as a donation, in order to let them relieve themselves, it’s a mitzvah as long as there’s no loshon hara involved. The truth however is, that it’s impossible. ברוב דברים לא יחדל פשע – “When many words are spoken, you cannot avoid loshon hara, that’s for sure” (Mishlei 10:19).  So sooner or later, something will come up that’s forbidden. Therefore, it’s always better not to talk much.

When you look at your children and see the ones that don’t talk much, it’s a ma’alah, a good quality. And your grandchildren too. I look around at my grandchildren and I admire some of them, I love some of them very much – the boys and girls who don’t talk much. It’s a very big ma’alah. They’re intelligent, but yet they don’t have the habit of opening their mouths and talking. It’s a midah tova ad me’od, an exceptionally good quality.

**Silence is a Sign of Aristocracy**

And the gemara says it’s a sign of aristocracy, of good yichus. שתיקותא דבבל היינו יחוסא – “In Bavel silence was always a sign of aristocracy” (Kiddushin 71b). If they wanted to marry into a family, and they wanted to know if it was a good family, so they couldn’t always investigate their antecedents, their ancestors. So, what did they do? If they saw that it was a person who didn’t talk much, or his family didn’t talk much, so they surmised that it must be a good family, a family of good pedigree. In Bavel that’s how they judged: שתיקותא דבבל היינו יחוסא – Silence, that was their pedigree.

And so, in general, if you want to make a good impression, keep your mouth closed. I wrote a poem once:

In lion’s skin an ass did hide

And none could know who was inside

Until himself he did betray

By opening his mouth to bray

That’s an Aesop’s fable. A lion once left his skin on the road, and a donkey came along and found this lion-skin.  So, this donkey thought, “Oh, what an opportunity! I can wear the lion-skin and now people will be afraid of me!” So, he put on the lion-skin to make himself look like a lion, and everybody was afraid of him. He was so happy! He was so excited that he opened his big mouth and he brayed. And now all the animals in the forest realized: “Oh,” they said, “It’s nothing but a donkey!” So, they took their sticks and beat him over the head.

And so, you’re a good-looking young man, your face is tzelem Elokim – I’m looking at you right now and you make a good impression on me. You’re a good-looking girl, a nice decent girl. Open up your mouth however, and you bray, and now you spoiled the whole thing! That’s why silence is golden – silence makes you look better.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Vayakhel 5784 email of Toras Avigdor. Transcribed from Tape #910.*

**11 King Solomon Facts**

**Every Jew Should Know**

**By**[**Yehuda Altein**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/17830/jewish/Altein-Yehuda.htm)

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***Art by***[***Sefira Lightstone***](https://www.chabad.org/3159160)

*King Solomon (Shlomo in Hebrew) was the fourth king of Israel and the second king of the Davidic dynasty. His reign marked an era of peace of prosperity for the Jewish people, and he is famous for his exceptional wisdom and for building the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Want to know more? Read on for 11 facts about King Solomon.*

**1. His Parents Were David and Bathsheba**

Solomon was born in [Jerusalem](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4246466/jewish/Jerusalem.htm) to King David, founder of the House of David which ruled Israel until the destruction of the first Holy Temple. Solomon’s mother was Bathsheba. (King David’s other sons were Solomon’s half-brothers, born from his other wives.)

**2. His Name Portended a Reign of Peace**

The Hebrew name for Solomon, “Shlomo,” means “peace.” In contrast to King David’s reign, which was marked by ongoing conflict with the Jews’ adversaries, Solomon’s kingship was characterized by peace, tranquility, and widespread prosperity.

**3. He Asked G‑d for Wisdom**

Shortly after Solomon ascended the throne in the year 2924 from Creation (837 BCE), [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm) appeared to him in a dream and offered to grant any wish he desired. King Solomon humbly requested a wise and discerning heart with which to govern his subjects. Pleased, G‑d not only bestowed upon him unparalleled wisdom, greater than anyone who ever lived, but also gifted him with the wealth and honor he did not ask for.

**4. His First Case Involved Two Mothers Fighting Over a Baby**

Scripture records the first case adjudicated by King Solomon, involving two mothers who had each recently given birth. When one of the infants died in his sleep, each mother claimed that the deceased child belonged to the other mother. Hearing the story, Solomon ruled that the baby who was still alive should be cut in half, and each mother would receive a piece. One of the mothers begged that the child be given to the other woman rather than be killed. Solomon immediately awarded the child to that woman, as she was undoubtedly the true mother.

**5. He Built the Holy Temple**

Once Solomon felt that his kingship was firmly established, he set out to complete the project that his father King David had begun: the building of the Holy Temple—a home for G‑d and a place where the Jewish people could worship Him. Construction took 7 years and was completed in 2935 (827 BCE). The finished structure, an architectural masterpiece of unsurpassed beauty, would stand for the next 410 years, until being destroyed by the Babylonians in 3338 (423 BCE).

**6. He Understood the Language of Animals and Birds**

Midrashic sources detail Solomon’s ability to understand the language of the animals and birds. Nachmanides explains that certain angels reveal future events to humankind by causing the animals and birds to call in a certain way, and King Solomon was able to decipher these heavenly messages.

**7. The Queen of Sheba Tested His Wisdom**

The Queen of Sheba embarked on a journey to King Solomon's court, driven by curiosity to verify the widespread tales of his extraordinary wisdom and immense wealth. Alongside her royal retinue and lavish gifts, she came prepared with a series of riddles, intending to test the king. Solomon, however, effortlessly unraveled these riddles, surpassing her expectations. His brilliance left an indelible impression on her, inspiring her to bless G‑d for appointing him king of Israel.

**8. He Authored 3 Books of the Bible**

A small part of King Solomon’s vast wisdom is encapsulated in the 3 books of Scripture under his authorship: [Proverbs (Mishlei)](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16372/jewish/Chapter-1.htm), a book of sayings and aphorisms; [Song of Songs (Shir Hashirim)](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16445/jewish/Chapter-1.htm), a song depicting the love between G‑d and His people; and [Ecclesiastes (Kohelet)](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16462/jewish/Chapter-1.htm), [Solomon](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=9298)'s wise observations on the world and on life. Scripture mentions an additional book of wisdom he authored that is no longer extant.

**9. Some of His Wives Worshiped Idols**

In addition to his Jewish wives, King Solomon married many foreign women. Their conversion to Judaism was insincere and they continued practicing idolatry. The king’s failure to properly curb their behavior led G‑d to view his inaction as complicity. As a result, G‑d told Solomon that his kingdom would be torn from him upon his death, with only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remaining loyal to his successors.

**10. The Kingdom Split Upon His Death**

After leading the nation for 40 years, King Solomon passed away in 2964 (797 BCE) and was buried in Jerusalem. He was succeeded by his son Rehoboam. When Rehoboam disregarded the people’s plea for fair treatment, 10 of the 12 Tribes of Israel withdrew their allegiance, appointing Jeroboam (of the tribe of Ephraim) as their king. This pivotal event resulted in a centuries-long schism, in which the nation of Israel was ruled by two separate monarchies—the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Israel.

**11. He Represents a Peaceful Way to Conquer Evil**

Unlike his father David, who vanquished his enemies through battle, Solomon’s rivals were pacified simply by observing his court and the extent of his wisdom and power. This offers us an important lesson: overcoming our inner temptations doesn’t always require direct confrontation. Instead, King Solomon’s example encourages increasing in *mitzvot*and good deeds, until our bolstered spiritual power naturally diminishes the negative influences within us.

Reprinted from the current website of Chabad.Org

**Why Our Seemingly Mundane Mitzvah Performances are**

**So Important to G-d**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion, Pekudei, enumerates all the details that pertain to the erection of the Tabernacle, a subject that has already been dealt with exhaustively in the previous chapters of the Torah. If the purpose of this week's portion is to teach us that indeed, all the work on the Tabernacle was carried out exactly as G-d had commanded, would it not have sufficed to say so in one sentence? Why go through the bother of listing every single detail all over again?

This question can also be asked about another section of the Torah, which speaks about the period immediately following Moses' completion of the Tabernacle. Each of the 12 leaders of the tribes of Israel brought offerings to the newly erected Sanctuary, and the Torah tells, in great detail, what these offering entailed. Yet on the face of it, all 12 offerings were identical. Why was it necessary to repeat the same words 12 times, rather than say that all of them brought the identical offerings?

**Each Offering Had a Different Purpose**

The answer lies in the explanation that only externally did the 12 offerings resemble each other; spiritually, each offering had a different content and purpose. The Torah could not have said that each of the 12 leaders brought the identical offering, for in fact, they all differed from one another.

This explanation is true for this week's Torah portion as well: The Tabernacle which G-d commanded the Jews to build was in reality a different entity from the one which Moses erected. The Torah states, "These are the accounts of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the testimony." This repetition of the word "tabernacle" alludes to the two sanctuaries implied by the text--the physical and the spiritual.

The physical Tabernacle was the one which G-d instructed Moses to erect. This tabernacle was built of various physical materials--silver, gold, acacia wood, etc. The second Tabernacle is the spiritual one which each of us must build, and the various building materials are spiritual entities which we must utilize to reach our goal.

**“Moses Completed His Tasks”**

Even though the spiritual Tabernacle G-d showed Moses on Mount Sinai was doubtless on a higher spiritual plane than the one built by the Children of Israel, it was precisely in the lowly, physical one where G-d's Presence dwelled. It was only after "Moses completed his tasks" that "the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Glory of G-d filled the Sanctuary." G-d desired an actual physical location in the corporeal world to show the manifestation of His infinite nature.

It is easy to belittle the power of the individual to influence his surroundings, and make an impact on the world. How can one person make a difference and bring pleasure to His Creator, when we are so puny and insignificant? The Torah answers: it is precisely because we are in such a physical world that G-d desires our performance of mitzvot. It is up to us, we who are in this world, to imbue it with G-dliness and turn it into a true dwelling place for the One Above.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Pekudei 5752/1992 edition of L’Chaim Weekly. Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Pekudei 5784**



The end of the book of Shemot describes the culmination of the events of the exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai and the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. All of these events are certainly on the positive side of the historical ledger. On the other side that the book of Shemot represents there is the sin of the Golden Calf and the constant carping and complaining of the Jewish people against Moshe and against the G-d of Israel.

In effect, this sets the template for all further Jewish history. There are always ups and downs, plus and minuses in the national behavior of the Jewish people. The book of Shemot ends on a triumphant note – the spirit of G-d, so to speak, invests and dwells within the Jewish people, and the Mishkan/Tabernacle that they so lovingly built –promising an eternal relationship.

Jewish tradition teaches us that this is the ultimate result of the long story of our existence. It will end triumphantly but there will be many serious bumps on the road before we arrive at our ultimate destination. It seems especially appropriate that at the conclusion of this holy book, the entire congregation rises to proclaim that we will be strengthened in our lives and experiences. We will attempt to strengthen the positive side of our ledger and minimize the entries on the other side. The Torah expended much detail and space to the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle. Part of the reason for the need to adhere to the laws in this regard is that the devil lies in the details. All of history instructs us that seemingly unimportant details shape great events, with unexpected results.

The ineptness of Archduke Ferdinand’s chauffer, who drove the car back into the teeth of the assassins’ ambush after first escaping from it, helped bring about the cataclysmic events that are called World War I. The Jewish people questioned why Moshe was late on returning from his ascent on Mount Sinai and thus the conditions for the construction of the Golden Calf somehow presented themselves.

All of Jewish law and halachic decisions are built upon recognizing and analyzing the details of the issues involved. It is the small detail that builds the general rule, not the other way around. We are all aware how in architecture, manufacturing and construction for example, it is the smallest detail that is the difference between success and failure, achievement or disaster.

This is in line with the details regarding the Mishkan/Tabernacle, which in turn reflect the Torah itself, which represents all human life. Today’s parsha teaches us the requirement of accountability in all aspects of our lives. All of these ideas are taught to us to help us form a proper ledger book on the basis of whose entries we will be eventually judged. This book of Shemot stands as the book of human judgment and understanding.

Shabbat shalom

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

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When Joseph was in Egypt and was tempted by Potifar's wife, the image of his father Jacob appeared to him, saying, "The names of all your brothers will one day be inscribed on the stones of the High Priest's breastplate. Do you want your name to be missing, if, G-d forbid, you commit this sin?" The 12 stones of the breastplate serve as a memorial for all of Israel. When a person reminds himself that all Jews were represented on it, he too will be ashamed and too embarrassed to commit any transgressions. *(Meshech Chachma)*

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**Selling a Shul**

**By Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

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**Rabbi Hillel Raskin**

May a shul be sold to build a new one in a different neighborhood? The Gemara distinguishes between a “village shul” that may be sold and a “city shul” that may not be sold because it belongs to the public.

Rishonim offer three explanations for the uniqueness of a city shul:

(1) It is designated for and therefore owned by Jews in the entire world;

(2) Jews worldwide donated money for this shul and are partners in it; and

(3) because many Jews—including from other locations—daven in it, the shul has added kedusha.

The first two points prohibit the sale from a monetary perspective, while the final one prohibits the sale due to the unique kedusha the shul possesses. A communal mikvah would follow similar guidelines according to the first two points but not according to the third since it doesn’t have kedusha.

If the money for the shul was collected solely from the local community, that shul may be sold according to the second reason. In generations when the community council and leadership (“shiva tuvei ha’ir”) had full communal power, some say they had the right to sell even a city shul that was built with local money if they see fit. It was considered a precondition during the original construction that they had the right to make changes later.

Additionally, more recent poskim posit that the categorization of a “city shul” is no longer applicable in the present age. Shuls can also be sold with the consent of a major rov to whom all are beholden.

Still, Halacha prohibits selling a shul to goyim or to be used for disrespectful or sinful purposes, and certainly not for a place of non-Jewish worship. An allowance to sell it to goyim only applies in a case of great necessity when no one other Jews live there.

**When it is a Chillul Hashem to Sell a Shul**

In places where non-Jews do not let go of their deserted places of worship, it is a chillul Hashem to sell a shul. However, this only applies where we can upkeep it by holding on to it—unlike the destroyed communities in Europe with desolate shuls occupied by squatters, where it is recommended to sell the shul and transfer the kedusha onto money. Even then, it should be sold for a respectable purpose.

In the famous sicha on Acharon Shel Pesach 5729 (1969), the Lubavitcher Rebbe decried the selling of Jewish homes in Crown Heights to non-Jews and, even worse, the selling of shuls and batei midrash.

The Rebbe noted three primary issues: (1) the kedusha they possess—this would be mitigated if they were originally built with a stipulation; (2) the decrease in the number of shuls—unless new ones will be built in a different neighborhood; and (3) that the locals won’t have a shul with their nusach anymore. This final point applies even if a new shul will be built in a different neighborhood.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Tisa 5784 edition of The Weekly Farbrengen. Rabbi Raskin is Rov of Anash in Petach Tikva, Israel.*

***The Tabernacle of the Testimony* (Ex. 38:21)**

The Hebrew word for testimony--"eydut"--alludes to the "adiyim" ornaments or heavenly crowns, the Jewish people received when the Torah was given. When the Children of Israel sinned by making the Golden Calf, their crowns were taken back, and with them their extra measure of spirituality. When the Tabernacle was erected, G-d forgave them their sin and their crowns were returned to them. *(Ohr HaTorah)*

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