

BUILDING BLOCKS

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

People who live in New York City walk the streets oblivious to the grandeur of the tall buildings that surround them as they navigate to work, shop or play in their hometown. Many a tourist has stood in awe of the magnificent structures that make up the conglomerate called the New York City skyline. If one would only stop for a moment and look at even one of these architectural giants one would be impressed with the magnitude of the engineering feat incorporated into the assembly of the mini-city that is contained within the structure. Stores, offices, restaurants and atriums contained in a piece of city real estate built vertically to meet the sky.

After absorbing the grandeur of a skyscraper one might be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task of constructing such a big building. But those who undertake such projects are rarely discouraged by the size of the task. They realize that "Rome wasn't built in a day" and that persistence will prevail. Even the largest structure is built brick by brick-- floor by floor.

There is a life-task that is more difficult than building a skyscraper that confronts each of us on a daily basis. The job of building a good reputation. Like a building, it is a monumental task. But like a building it is simple if one is consistent and persistent in doing what is right --brick by brick A good name is something one must earn but it is something one "Can take with you" when all is said and done.

Today -- when you have a tough moral decision to make in your personal or business relationships - - stop. It only takes a minute to push aside temporal considerations and to consider the long-term affect of your choice. This choice is one of the bricks that will go into your building a good name for yourself. Make the choice based on the ethical architectural plans for your skyscraper. As King Solomon said, "A good name is better than fine oil".

DID YOU KNOW THAT

The one who is invited to "go up" to the Torah should stand on the right of the reader -- even if he is the Rabbi of the congregation and he is reading the aliyah himself. When the one reading for others is invited to an aliyah-- someone must stand next to him as he reads. [Just as the Torah was given to us through an agent Moshe Rabenu -- so too when we read we have a reader and another by his side]. The reader, however, stays in his place on the left of the one standing with him as he reads his own aliyah. [Source Yalkut Yosef, volume 2, O'H Siman 141:3]

FROM THE TALMUD

The Mishnah teaches that if a woman wants to collect her Ketubah money from orphans she must swear that she did not collect all or part of the Ketubah previously. This swear was eliminated by the Rabbis. The Gemara explains the reason for this change. Once, during hard times, a man left a Dinar [valuable coin] with a widow for safekeeping. It was left in a flour jar and the woman unknowingly baked the coin into a loaf of bread that she gave to a poor man. Eventually, the owner of the coin returned and attempted to reclaim his money. The woman said she did not know the whereabouts of the coin and swore "May one of my children die if I benefited personally from your money". Soon after one of her children died. The Rabbis said, "If one who swore truthfully suffered such a decree, imagine what would befall one who swears falsely" and they nullified the requirement for a widow to swear before collecting her Ketubah. [The Gemara asks --How could she be punished? -- she did not benefit from the coin. The Gemara answers she benefited the minute amount of dough that she did not use to bake the loaf in the space occupied by the coin].

NOTE: We see the severity of swearing and the danger in saying anything negative about oneself. One must guard one's tongue at all times.

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