

## **Thought for the Day: "achievement cannot be measured by the splendour of our edifices alone... but by the number of generations who continue to embody our values"**.

by Benjamin Gee - Wednesday, April 17, 2019

<https://chiefrabbi.org/all-media/thought-for-the-day-achievement-cannot-be-measured-by-the-splendour-of-our-edifices-alone-but-by-the-number-of-generations-who-continue-to-embody-our-values/>

**Ahead of Pesach the Chief Rabbi explains that the strong values we instill in our children far outlive even the greatest of physical structures.**

Our buildings say a lot about who we are.

For more than eight centuries, the Cathedral of Notre-Dame has been a symbol of France; a veritable trove of priceless national heritage and a precious place of worship.

Sometimes, our buildings are so significant that they influence our identity. This is what archaeologist Mark Lehner meant when he said the ancient Egyptians didn't build the pyramids; the pyramids built Egypt. Those extraordinary ancient structures shaped civilization.

Today, our iconic structures look very different but are no less ambitious. There is a global drive to now build ever-taller sky scrapers – or 'supertalls' as they are often called.

Last week, 'The Tulip' was granted planning permission. It will stand alongside 'The Shard' in London at over 300 meters. Around the world, the coming years will no doubt see more supertalls to rival even the Jeddah Tower in Saudi Arabia, which will be the world's first structure to measure a full Kilometre in height.

A leading neuroscientist, Adam Kampff, suggests that the primal instinct of early humans to climb trees enabled them to better understand their environment and protect themselves. He told the Times, "the brain hasn't changed much since humans descended from the trees and thus our drive to 'be up high' remains".

Our traditional sources relate that during the construction of the legendary Biblical Tower of Babel, if a brick fell to the ground the builders would mourn the broken pieces, but if one of the workers fell to their death, no-one batted an eyelid. We find disturbing echoes of such scant regard for the sanctity of life in occasional reports from construction sites around the world, where labour is cheap and the rewards of large infrastructure projects are great.

This Friday evening marks the beginning of Passover, when Jews will be gathering to teach our children about our deliverance from Egyptian slavery. We'll teach them that the iconic structures for which ancient Egypt is so well known came at great human cost and that is why, ultimately, the culture symbolised by the pyramids and the sphynx has long since been consigned to history. We'll teach them

that achievement cannot be measured by the splendour of our edifices alone, impressive as they are, but by the number of generations who continue to embody our values.

The words for 'child' and 'builder' in Hebrew share the same root, because our children are the builders of the future. To them we impart the message that while we marvel at the tallest sky scrapers, God primarily resides within those whose hearts are filled with virtue.

---

PDF generated by Kalin's PDF Creation Station