

Parshat Vayakhel- Pekudei Intelligence and Inheritance

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Appointing Bezalel as chief contractor for building the *Mishkan* was not an obvious choice. He was only thirteen years old. The Chayei Moshe points out that by noticing what heights a thirteen year old can reach, we too can be inspired to reach greater heights. How did Bezalel attain these heights?

Rabbi Roberts cites the Medrash Tanchuma that a person has three names. The first is given to him at birth. His social circle also knows him by a particular name, and finally, the individual calls himself by the name he deems appropriate. Each of these names reflects the individual's inner character. The parents give their child a name they hope he will rise to. His community recognizes the major way in which he interacts with others. And the name he calls himself is his personal vision of his life's mission. Bezalel was called by his own name to build the *Mishkan*. Although he had family connections and social status from the tribe of Yehudah, these were not the deciding factors in his appointment. Rather he was chosen because of his personal commitment to work with devotion and self-sacrifice in this most difficult assignment.

Ethics of Our Fathers discusses three "crowns," the crown of Torah and the crowns of priesthood and royalty. However, the fourth crown - that of a good name - rises above the rest. Rabbi Bunim explains that this is a super crown. Only through achieving a good name can any of the other crowns be effective, especially in influencing others. The greatness of Bezalel was that he had achieved the crown of a good name and could therefore

lead and teach others.

This can only be achieved through the confluence of the forces from below with the forces from above. As Rabbi Shmulevitz teaches, it starts with the inner strength of discipline to do the will of Hashem, and then Hashem enables us to do the task. Our will to achieve evokes Hashem's help, and we are credited with its completion. Moshe was credited with completing the *Mishkan* even though the walls came together supernaturally, for Moshe had completely dedicated himself to its construction. Similarly, says the Shaarei Derech, Bezalel and his assistants succeeded in their work not because of their skill, but because of their dedication to fulfill Hashem's command. Therefore, Hashem miraculously gave them the abilities to build the *Mishkan*. This is what Hashem wanted us to learn. More important than training is the degree of passion you have for the task at hand.

In order to achieve the *Mishkan's* purpose to atone for the golden calf, the artisan had to be someone who could sublimate his entire will to Hashem. This was Bezalel's personal name, for he lived beneath the shadow of God. Bezalel's grandfather Hur was the perfect role model of self-sacrifice. He lost his life while trying to prevent *Bnei Yisroel* from fashioning the golden calf. Hashem rewarded him through his grandson, who would merit to build the Tabernacle, which atones for the sin he had tried to prevent, says the Shemen Hatov. Bezalel got this same passion for doing Hashem's will from his great grandmother Miriam, who defied Paro's edict to kill the Jewish boys at birth. He also learned from his

tribe Yehudah, for Nachshon, the leader of the tribe was the first to jump into the Red Sea at God's command.

There is a definite danger in getting caught up and believing in one's personal wisdom and knowledge. This is what brought *Bnei Yisroel* to sin with the golden calf, and this caused so many others to fall. The Chassid Yavetz bears witness that those who succumbed to the Inquisitors were the educated Jews who used their reason to rationalize the decision to convert. On the other hand, the simple Jews with blind faith and a deep love of Hashem did not falter in their belief and often died in sanctification of Hashem's name.

Each of us is building our own personal inner sanctuary, notes the Tiv Hatorah. We each face many challenges. Some need to be handled forcefully and hammered out while others require a gentle touch like working with soft silver. Still others may require the elements to be woven into the fabric of our daily lives to achieve their proper purpose. In each case, we must identify what our overriding mission is and how we are to act to create our *shem tov*, our good name.

When we model *kedushah* for our children writes Rabbi M. Young, and then give them direction to achieve it too, they will build confidence in themselves and continue the legacy that began with Avraham Avinu. This common purpose unified us as a people at Mount Sinai, continued through the *Mishkan* in the desert, and survives to this day.

The Jewish People: Remnants of G-d's Inheritance

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

Hashem put us in this world for the purpose of emulating his *middot* and following in His ways. The verse in Micha tells us that Hashem is, "Nosso ovon v'over al pasha. He bears our sins and overlooks our iniquities." The Gemara tells us that Hashem washes the dirt of sin off of us through the process of repentance. The Nefesh Hachaim explains that a sin stands counter to the world's purpose. It is a stain on the pure soul that a person received at birth. The only way to remove the blemish is by washing it off. We can do this through the power of *teshuva*. If fear serves as the motivating factor of the *teshuva*, *teshuva m'yirah*, fear of punishment or of what people will say, the stain may not be removed completely. But if it is *teshuva m'ahava*, of wanting to come closer to Hashem, then stain is completely removed. *Teshuva* is returning to the state of what one

was meant to be. It changes a person's entire personality, his name, his place, his life perspective, and his thoughts. You are no longer the individual who you were before with the stain on your soul. You return to the state of purity with which you came into this world. All of this cannot happen without the help of Hashem.

The verse says Hashem is, "Rochetz et tzoat b'not Zion. Hashem cleanses the impurities of the daughters of Zion." In the book of Yeshaya the navi says, "The way a man's mother will console her son, so will Hashem console you." Rav Soloveitchik explained that a father is only available during the good times. But Hashem is like a mother, *over al pasha*, He washes off our impurities. Without Hashem's help we cannot do proper *teshuva*. The Tomer Devora tells us one should emulate Hashem's *middah*

of *v'over al pasha*. A person should not say, "Should I rectify that which someone else did wrong, it's his problem not mine." Rather he should emulate Hashem, who involves Himself in our *teshuva*. Hashem is like a *mikve*, purifying us from our impurities. So too a person should help his friend rectify his sins. Therefore, the Tomer Devora says, if a person thinks that when he commits a sin Hashem will need to be involved in the purification process, he'll be embarrassed to sin. Why does the Tomer Devora mention this idea of shame regarding the third *middah* and not for the first two? The V'halachta B'drachav explains that when Hashem has to wash off our impurities it creates a greater embarrassment than just knowing Hashem tolerates and supports us despite our sins.

Thirty Days Before Pesach

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Michael Taubes

The Gemara in Pesachim discusses the obligations of someone who travels away from home before Pesach. Is he obligated in the *mitzvah* of *bedikat chametz*? The Gemara differentiates between someone who leaves less than 30 days before Pesach and someone who leaves earlier than that. People who leave less than 30 days before are required to search for *chametz*. People who leave even earlier have no obligation. Where does the concept of 30 days come from? The Gemara says, "Shoalin v'dorshin sheloshim yom kodem lachag. We ask questions and speak about the laws of Pesach 30 days before the holiday." It seems from the Gemara that 30 days before, one should be in the Pesach mode. This has ramifications on the issue of searching for *chametz* as well.

However, the Gemara does not clearly state that there is an actual requirement to begin studying the laws of Pesach 30 days beforehand. Although one opinion does say that one should begin 30 days before, another opinion says one can even begin 2 weeks before. The Gemara provides scriptural

sources for both opinions. Regarding 30 days, the Torah tells us in Parshat Behaalotcha that on the 13th day of Nissan, Moshe told the people to prepare themselves to celebrate the holiday of Pesach and to offer the *korbon Pesach*. At that point a group of individuals came forward and complained to Moshe that they were impure and could not bring the sacrifice. Some commentaries say these were the people who were responsible for carrying the coffin of Yosef. Moshe told them to wait and he would ask Hashem. Hashem told him that there would be a makeup date on the 13th of Iyar called *Pesach Sheini*. Rashi in Pesachim points out that Moshe taught them the laws of *Pesach Sheini* 30 days beforehand. From this we can understand that 30 days before a holiday is an appropriate time to review the laws. Rav Shimon ben Gamliel held that one begins two weeks prior to the holiday because for the first Pesach in Egypt the laws were taught two weeks beforehand. However, the accepted practice is to follow the opinion of the *Chachamim* that we begin 30 days before.

The Gemara in Megilah notes that Moshe instituted that one should study the laws of the

holiday on the holiday itself. Does this contradict the directive to study 30 days in advance? Many *Rishonim* hold that one should do both. Rashi in *Brachot* makes specific reference to the practice of reviewing the laws 30 days before. In the *Sheiltot*, Rav Hai Gaon mentions that 30 days before a holiday people should gather together to study the relevant laws. The Bahag, who lived in the period of the *Gaonim*, also mentions this.

However, the Ran holds that there is no obligation for an individual Jew to study the laws 30 days beforehand. On Pesach, part of the fulfillment of feeling the joy of the holiday is to study the relevant laws. Based on a Tosefta in Sanhedrin, the Ran explains that the Gemara meant that within 30 days anyone with a question related to Pesach gets precedence with the Rav over other questions. The Chidushei Rabbah agrees and brings proof for this from the Tosefta, which says that one should study the laws 30 days before Pesach in the *beit havaad*, the meeting place of the Rabbis. In the *beit havaad* Pesach questions get priority.