

Vayhakhel-Pekudei Rabbi David Mahler

Wisdom is an aspired goal. It is something we strive to attain. We might talk about it often and feel inspired, humbled and in awe when around those who have acquired it. We use the word often, yet probably have difficulty defining or putting our finger on it. What is true wisdom?

Both in *Parshas Terumah* (31:3) and *Vayakhel* (36:2), the *Torah* teaches that *Hashem* blessed the wise with wisdom. What a weird formulation – *Hashem* gives wisdom to those who are already wise? The rich get richer! Even more so – the *gemara* (*Berachos* 55a), based on these *pesukim*, comment that *Hashem* only gives wisdom to those who have wisdom.

Understandably, the *midrash* finds this peculiar as well and tells a story of a woman who commented to *Rabi Yosi bar Chalafta*, “It should be that G-d grants wisdom to fools as they need it more.”

Rabi Yosi answered her with a parable. He asked her whether she would rather give a loan to a poor person or to a rich person? She answered that she would rather give a loan to the rich person who needed the money at that time because he was more likely to pay her back. *Rabi Yosi* then explained to her that it is the same with wisdom, which *Hashem* views as an important investment. He prefers to invest wisdom in those who He knows will use it wisely, rather than in fools, who are likely to squander it, or even misuse it.

Based on *Rabi Yosi*'s response, there are two basic types of wisdom. One type, wisdom of the heart, is a prerequisite for the second, primary type of wisdom, which is wisdom itself. Wisdom of the heart transforms a person into a *kli*, a vessel for true wisdom. The *Ramban* (35:21) explains wisdom of the heart. He writes that none of the freed slaves from *Mitzraim* had any skill or had learned any trade which would have made them candidates to take part in the construction of the *mishkan*, its vessels or any aspect of the enterprise. Therefore, how was it built? How was it put together?

The *Ramban* states that the builders were people whose hearts moved them to volunteer. They had desire and determination to be a part of building a dwelling place for *Hashem* in this world. According to the *Ramban*, these people, with no prior background in craftsmanship, came to *Moshe* and said, “I will do whatever my master says!” *Hashem* then filled their hearts with the knowledge they needed to build their part of the Temple. That is why the *pesukim* repeatedly say about the

donors, volunteers, and craftsmen, “Everyone whose heart carries him”. These people did not come with extensive skill-sets. They came with their hearts motivated to do whatever they could do to be part of the building has *Hashem’s* house.

Wisdom of the heart is the desire, the grit, determination and enthusiasm to want to succeed.

As an extension to this idea, it is often the case that the common denominator between the majority of successful people in almost every walk of life is their tremendous motivation to accomplish; their hearts carry them.

They are determined and filled with a longing and a desire to achieve their goals. In contrast, those who lack determination and enthusiasm, even if they have greater innate talent or intelligence, often remain ordinary and mediocre, never achieving greatness.

With respect to the building of the *mishkan*, the successful people were not expert artisans or craftsmen. Rather, they were those who accepted the work of the *mishkan* upon themselves wholeheartedly. This is the prerequisite for wisdom, and greatness. Someone with wisdom of the heart has the humility to know that he may not be capable on his own but he’s willing to work to achieve his goal nonetheless. Such a person is given the deepest wisdom and the power to attain great things.

As *Chazal* state, nothing comes between a person and their desire. This reality is true both in the negative and positive. If a person truly wants it, they very often attain it.

Hashem offers wisdom to those who are wise of heart. When we want something and are willing to work for it without giving up, he sees that we represent a good investment and will take us to the next level. And each of us merit to tenaciously chase greatness and to see the Divine assistance that will ultimately make us flourish.