

Vayakhel - Rabbi Lerner - February 20, 2011

The selection of Betzaleil and Oholiav

35:30 *And Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael that Hashem called (selected) by name Betzaleil, son of Uri the son of Chur from the tribe of Yehuda.* This selection was first told to us in 31:2-5, with almost the same language. **Abarbanel**: there was a great deal of machlokes (not surprising) about who would get the zechus - this plum appointment - to build the Mishkan that will bring the shechina down to earth - there was tremendous buzz about who would be the one selected to do this holy work. There were many outstanding religious Jews who were volunteering to do this holy work Leshaim Shamayim, with no personal agenda. Moshe knew Betzaleil was incredibly qualified, but he was hesitant to select him because Betzaleil was the great-grandson of Calev and his sister Miriam, and it could be viewed as nepotism; he was concerned that the people would say that he appointed himself king, his brother Aharon the Kohein Gadol, his nephews Kohanim, and now another relative to collect all of the money to build the holy Mishkan and then actually construct the Mishkan. The people would say that how could any Jew know how to do this incredibly difficult work - they had no knowledge or experience working with gold and silver since they did manual slave labor only in Egypt, and there is no way that Betzaleil would be qualified more than anyone else. Plus, Oholiav was more knowledgeable about these arts than anyone else and maybe he should be the one to head this project. In addition, Betzaleil was only a child of 12 years at this time - how could he be placed in such a position of responsibility. Therefore, Hashem had to step in to make the selection; the pasuk says Moshe said to the people that Hashem has proclaimed by name Betzaleil... - it was Hashem's choice, not Moshe's. Hashem will fill him with the spirit of God, a wondrous spirit of Hashem, not the spirit of man; he will be filled with the various skills and knowledge to do all of the work needed to construct the Mishkan. Hashem steps in so that Moshe can avoid all of these suspicions of the people.

35:31: *He was filled with Godly spirit, with knowledge of every craft.* **Ibn Ezra**: Hashem filled him with wisdom and the knowledge to do all these different things; in addition, in 35:34, he was given the ability to teach others. There are many brilliant scholars in the world who lack the gift to transmit their knowledge to others; not only is Betzaleil brilliant and will know how to do everything in the Mishkan, he will be able to teach others what to do; he and Oholiav can do and teach. **Or Hachayim**: He was a genius in teaching as well as making the various objects; the Gemorra says that there were families of Kohanim later on in history that did not want to teach their skills to others and wanted to keep their skills in the family; they wanted a monopoly on their arts, such as one family that wanted to keep the knowledge of the Lechem Hapanim to themselves - these people were cursed; Betzaleil had a great desire to teach anyone who was motivated; the two of them wanted to share their knowledge with Bnei Yisrael.

Kli Yakar: what is the word *Beshaim* all about, that Hashem called him out by name, Betzaleil the son of Chur; what is the focus on this word? Moshe said you should not just know these two people being selected, but look at their names as well. Hashem created these people specifically for their mission in life; Hashem motivated their parents to name them with names that would indicate their roles. Betzaleil means *Betzail Kail* - in the shadow of God - he will not only build the Mishkan, but the Aron as well, the place where the shechina will reside. When the Torah details the actual construction of the Mishkan and its keilim, in perek 36 there are the details of the building of the walls of the Mishkan (the house was built before the furniture) and then in perek 37 it goes on to detail the construction of the vessels. In 37:1 it says specifically

Betzaleil made the Aron; and then in 37:10 it says *he* made the shulchan; and then in 37:17 *he* built the Menorah. It sounds like Betzaleil did it himself - the word used is *Vaya'as* in the singular. **Ibn Ezra**: it mentions his name only with the Aron, but he actually built all of the holy vessels that were the backbone of the Mishkan. **Ramban**: it is not so; it also says in 36:20 that *he* made with the walls as well; it was not he who did all of it, he could not have done all of it himself. It was the knowledgeable workers who did most of these; the only one that Betzaleil himself made was the Aron, as it says specifically in the Torah; that was the holiest and most crucial object in the Mishkan, and he himself made that one in order for the shechina to come down. **Kli Yakar**: only Betzaleil could make the Aron because he was in the shadow of God. As it says in Tehillim, Hashem dwells in the hidden places (Betzeil) - Betzaleil finds God in the shadows where God is to be found (*Yosheiv Beseiser Elyon*). The wings of the Keruvim are like schach, they create a shadow, and the shechina dwells in the shadow. Betzaleil's very name defines his being. Ben Uri means *ben or* - he brings the light of Torah to the world. Chur is the one who was killed by the mobs during the sin of the Egel; Betzaleil was from that yichus, the ones who fight against the those who negate the concept of the invisible God.

What about Oholiav? He was called this because he built the Ohel Le'av, for his father in heaven. Ben Achisamach means Achi Samach - the brothers are close; Hashem wants to be close to us (Lema'an Achai Veray'ai). Why this combination of the two of them, one from the tribe of Yehuda, one from Dan? It represents Hashem's names and characteristics. Yehuda has all of the letters of Hashem's name of midas Harachamim; Dan has the letters of Midas Hadin. Hashem uses both of these midos to create and run the world. It is with the names of God - Beshaim - that Hashem will have them build the Mishkan. The Mishkan is the microcosm of the world, and that is how Hashem runs the world, with both of these midos.

Meshech Chachmah: Why did Betzaleil alone build the Aron? This is a remez to the Bais Hamikdash later on; other artisans in the future will build other replacement vessels with different dimensions; the Aron, however, did not fall into the hands of the enemy - there was never another replacement Aron built - the kodesh kadashim was empty in the second Bais Hamikdash, the Aron was absent - they could not make another set of Luchos so there was no point to making another Aron. Only the Aron that Betzaleil made was unique and could not be reproduced. This might have been deliberate, that God did not want anyone else to build one. This could be because the keruvim were dangerous because people can misconstrue them and go into the path of idolatry. Only a pure, unadulterated person who was not into gashmius - Betzaleil - could build the Aron; he won't go down a slippery slope of Avodah Zarah; he was on the highest level of understanding Hashem and would not get into a worship of concrete idols.

Malbim: when Moshe gathers the people, they collect all of the objects they need, and there was too much material coming in; Moshe then stops the collections. What would be the problem if there was extra materials collected? It would be terrible for the Mishkan, because there was explicit directions from Hashem how to build each object and of what material and what size; if they collected more, they might have been tempted to do more than what Hashem had commanded, which would countermand Hashem's instructions. Therefore, Moshe stops the collections.

35:32: One of the qualities of Betzaleil was the ability to *think thoughts* of gold, silver, and copper; *Lachshov Machshavos* - to think deeper thoughts of what this work represented. Just like a shinui of some forbidden melachah on Shabbos can avoid a De'oraisah sin, any thought going into building of a holy object can have significant impact. **Reb Chaim Voloshin** said that on a deeper level, *Lachshov Machshavos* means he was given incredible power to think thoughts

about the many donations to the Mishkan - he had to figure out the thoughts and motives of the donors who brought different materials for the construction; were they bringing things with the purest of intention with great simcha and no desire for kavod? Was it totally for Hashem's honor? The thoughts of the donors can elevate the donation. Those who did not bring gold with great joy, but because of embarrassment of others giving more - there was less kedusha attached to that donation - that gold was not used for the Aron - it was used for the outer layer of the boards. That is what the pasuk means by *Lachshov Machshavos La'Asos Bazahav, Uvakesef, Uvanechoshes* - he knew what to use from which donor to make what object. An example of the motives of donors can be further seen in this story: Reb Chaim Voloshin was the rosh yeshiva and he had a meshulach who used to go around raising money for the yeshiva. There was a simple villager who gave the enormous sum of 50 rubles to the yeshiva every year; Reb Chaim marveled about this annual donation. After a few years, the meshulach told Reb Chaim that he should be better dressed to approach people, and he would get more money that way. Reb Chaim allowed him to do that. He then approached him some time later to get his own transportation to impress donors and Reb Chaim again agreed. He then agreed to allow him to hire a wagon driver to take him around. When the meshulach then approached that same villager, he would not give any money. Reb Chaim heard about this, and he then went with the meshulach to the villager and asked why he stopped giving. The villager answered that he gave the money because he thought the yeshiva needed the money; when he saw this well-dressed meshulach in a wagon with a chauffeur, he concluded that they don't really need his money. Reb Chaim then showed him this pasuk and said that his donations are not like the money obtained from others who give only because of the well-dressed meshulach; his money would go to further limud hatorah in the yeshiva, the holiest use of all.