

Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Chur...did all that Hashem commanded Moshe. (38:22)

Chazal attribute Betzalel's name to his superior wisdom. They relate that when Hashem told Moshe to oversee the construction of the *Mishkan* and its vessels, Moshe conveyed the message to Betzalel so that the sequence was: first the vessels and then the *Mishkan*. Betzalel questioned this order, remarking, "The *minhag ha'olam*, usual custom, is to build a house and then afterwards bring the furniture into it. You, however, are telling me to first make the vessels. Where will I put them in the interim until the *Mishkan* is built? Perhaps Hashem told you to construct the *Mishkan* first and then the *keilim*, vessels?" Moshe responded, "You must have been *b'tzel Kel*--in the shadow of the Almighty -- to be able to perceive the true order." The dialogue between Moshe and Betzalel begs interpretation. On the one hand, why did Betzalel audaciously question what Moshe had heard directly from Hashem? How did he have the nerve to express a contradictory opinion? On the other hand, it seems incredulous that Moshe would assume the real intent of Hashem's command. Why did it not enter Moshe's mind to "suspect" that perhaps he had not carefully noted the order of the command. Also, why was Moshe so impressed with Betzalel's ability to comprehend the correct sequence? Was it so difficult to determine that one builds the house before the furniture? How did Betzalel's reply indicate his spiritual superiority and astuteness?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, prefaces his response by first establishing that the concept of *Mishkan* as the place where Hashem would repose is something "above" human comprehension. Hashem's command that *Bnei Yisrael* construct an edifice in which the *Shechinah* would find its "home" on earth is not to be understood in the usual sense. While it is understandable that an edifice must be built prior to its furniture, this only occurs in the natural sequence, according to the order on this world. Hashem, however, is not bound by the constrictions of "nature" and "order." It is, then, no wonder that Moshe understood that the construction of the *Mishkan* would follow a supernatural pattern. Nothing astounded him in regard to building a Sanctuary for Hashem. This would not be an ordinary building! The limits of time, sequence, place, and thought would not confine this building. It was the *Bais Hashem*.

Betzalel conveyed a *chiddush*, novel idea, which could have been perceived only *b'tzel Kel*, in the shadow of the Al-mighty. He told Moshe that every decree of Hashem, every command that emanates from Him concerning mankind, must -- and will -- adhere to the "rules" of this world. Regardless of the profound spiritual nature of the edifice/idea, if it is meant for this world, it will be restricted to the limitations of the physical dimension. If logic dictates that one first make a building to house the vessels, then so be it! This building will be for the *Shechinah* which is not bound by any constraints. When the *Shechinah* descends to this world for the benefit of *Am Yisrael*, however, then the *Mishkan* will be constructed according to "laws" governing this world. Only someone who was totally infused with the spiritual nature of the construction of the *Mishkan*, only someone who existed in the shadow of the Al-mighty, could make such a statement.

Horav Ezrachi posits that this adds a new dimension to the concept of *Toras Chaim*, the *Torah* of Life. Not only does the Torah increase the value and quality of one's life, Hashem gave it specifically to the living. Without *Torah*, what reason is do we have for living? Does a transitory life have meaning? Moreover, Hashem designated the entire *Torah*, along with its dictates and codes, to synchronize in harmony with life as we know it. The *Torah* is not divorced from life. Rather, it constitutes life!