

"See, Hashem has called by name Betzalel." (35:30)

Moshe's intention was to publicize to *Bnei Yisrael* that it was Hashem Who had chosen Betzalel for the position of chief architect and builder of the *Mishkan*. Why does the *Torah* use such an idiosyncratic manner of speech? It could have simply said, "Hashem chose Betzalel." What is the significance of "calling him by name?" In the *Midrash*, *Chazal* imply that the phrase "*called by name*" represents a deliberate attempt to emphasize the importance of a good name or reputation.

Chazal comment, "*A good name is better than precious oil.*" A number of reasons are given for this. First, good oil cannot flow very far. Its effect is limited by the distance it can "travel." Conversely, an honorable reputation can travel from one end of the world to the other. A good name is not limited to a specific place nor constrained by any boundary. Second, a good name endures even after the person has passed on. *Chazal* use the metaphor of a dead person's body anointed with oil. Regardless of the high quality of the oil, it will eventually become putrid as the body decays and the stench rises. A noble reputation, however, lives on long after a person's earthly remains have disintegrated.

Why did *Chazal* choose oil as the metaphor? Why did they not compare a good name to fine wine or other liquids? The *Midrash* responds that one of the characteristics of oil is that it rises to the top when it is mixed with other liquids. Wine and other liquids, on the other hand, simply become absorbed in one another. *Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita*, elucidates this *Midrash* as he points out a profound insight concerning the value of a good name.

By its very nature, oil has an advantage over other liquids. Its chemical composite does not allow for it to combine with other liquids. Consequently, it floats to the top. This is true only when another liquid serves as a base upon which the oil rests. If the oil is isolated in a jar, it will obviously sink to the bottom, since there is nothing upon which it can set. Oil does not have its own "*atzmius*," essence or substance. It has mobility only as long as there is a foundation under it or it attaches onto something. This is because of its corporeality. Like all material substances, it must adhere to something else to give it stability and endurance. A good name, however, is spiritual in nature. It is incorporeal and not confined by any limitation. Thus, it lasts forever.

This sheds light upon the metaphor of the dead body. Oil which is placed upon a body is affected by its odor, since the characteristic of oil is to rest upon something. If the object beneath it has a rancid odor, it will begin to possess the same odor. A good name is something for which we should all strive. Perhaps one of the greatest legacies we can bequeath our children is our favorable reputation.