

“See, Hashem has proclaimed by name Betzalel... He filled him with G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight and knowledge...He gave him the ability to teach. (35:31,34)

Hashem selected the young Betzalel to become the master architect of the *Mishkan*, as he was endowed with exceptional wisdom, insight and knowledge. He had the necessary knowledge vital to creating a dwelling place for the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence. *Chazal* (*Tanchuma Mikeitz* 69) teach that Betzalel manifested his extraordinary qualities and talents even before his appointment to this distinguished position. Hashem grants wisdom to one who already possesses wisdom. *Yahiv chochma la'chakimi*; “He grants wisdom to the wise” (*Daniel* 2:2).

It makes sense to grant wisdom to the wise. After all, they will know what to do with it. *Chazal* (*Midrash*) relate that a Roman matron once asked Rabbi Yosi ben Chalafta why Hashem gave wisdom to the wise, when it is the one who is not wise that can use it most. He explained that if one were to lend money, and he has a choice between lending to a poor man or a rich man, common sense would dictate that he give the loan to the one who has the means to pay it back. Likewise, Hashem gives wisdom to the individual who will not waste it, to who he will not tarnish it, to who he will use it properly.

This would indicate that the definition of wisdom is the ability to use the gift for the greater good, to make the most out of it. One who either does not know how to apply his G-d-given wisdom, or uses it inappropriately, does not deserve it, because he does not appreciate it. Thus, a wise person is he who appreciates wisdom, who knows what to do with it, who will care for it.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl (quoted by Rabbi Sholom Smith in “*Messages from Rav Pam*”), asks the source of the original wisdom. He cites Shlomo *Hamelech* (*Mishlei* 4:7): *Reishis Chochmah knei Chochmah*, “The beginning of wisdom is to require wisdom.” The desire for wisdom determines one’s “wisdom.” One must appreciate it sufficiently, such that it is so meaningful and vital to his life that he searches for it relentlessly. Thus, he demonstrates that no commodity is more precious to him than wisdom. Such a person deserves to be granted wisdom. This person was Betzalel, who valued wisdom and knew how to utilize this Heavenly gift. It was not simply in his mind; it was in his heart. His heart inspired him to make the *Mishkan*. He knew how to apply the wisdom for the greater good.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* notes that possessing a high IQ, a superior mind, does not ensure that one is wise. If one employs his wisdom as a means for committing inappropriate activities, hurting others, manipulating and taking advantage of those who require his assistance, he is far from wise. His wisdom is all in the brain – not in his heart.

How many students who are not blessed with abundant natural intelligence make it to the pinnacle of Torah erudition? Greatness in Torah is not dependent upon *kishronos*, natural intellectual ability,

but rather, on one's willingness to toil diligently in the field of Torah, to grow slowly, day by day, until he receives the blessing from on High. That is his second dose of wisdom. The first dose was manifest by his appreciation of the critical importance of Torah to his life.

Perhaps there is another manner in which to show one's appreciation for the value of wisdom. When someone truly values an object, he seeks to share its beauty with others. Imagine purchasing an exquisite piece of jewelry, an expensive, ornate piece of silver or gold, or a rare manuscript, etc., and keeping it under wraps. One who takes the object and conceals it, so that no one is able to gaze upon it, is a fool who does not appreciate what he has. He should be proud of his purchase and seek every opportunity to share its beauty with others.

Betzalel, the master architect of the *Mishkan*, was blessed with extraordinary talents, with which he was able to build the resting place for the *Shechinah*. The Torah implies that he possessed another exceptional skill: the ability to teach, to train, to inspire and infuse others with the skills necessary for the construction of the *Mishkan*. He understood that being blessed with a unique talent, but keeping it to himself, would constitute a gross dereliction of his mission. It would also indicate that he did not value his G-d-given gift. To be blessed and hoard the blessing solely for oneself indicates that he neither values nor appreciates his gift.

It was at a Torah Umesorah convention that a well-meaning lay leader presented Rav Pam with a query. The significance of training *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, to become Torah educators notwithstanding, would it not be more beneficial and more productive to have these talented young men enter the world of commerce or other profession so that they (hopefully) do well and achieve the financial success necessary to support their own families and become learned, *machzikei Torah*, supporters of Torah study? [The *yeshivos* rely on the support of people. The need is great, and individuals with the sensitivity for Torah which comes from learning and grasping the value of Torah are not necessarily that abundant.] Would it not be a better service to the community to prepare *baalei batim bnei Torah*? [Since not everyone is appropriate for *chinuch*, why not prepare them for another vocation – following their stay in *Kollel*?]

Rav Pam replied that it would be an unforgivable waste of talent, quite akin to Betzalel ignoring his extraordinary talents and entering another field of endeavor. [Not one to look askance at lay leaders, the questioner, by his very question, indicated that he was clueless concerning the inestimable value of Torah, and the extraordinary talents and character required of a master rebbe. It is people such as this distinguished leader who impose their distorted outlook on the world of Torah *chinuch*. They are not *machshiv*, do not value/appreciate, the world of a *rebbe*, because they do not consider *chinuch* a worthy profession. Obviously, their understanding of Torah is either limited or stunted. Would they let a second-rate physician treat their precious child? Certainly not. Why should their spiritual education be any different?]

Who would have built the *Mishkan*? Hashem granted Betzalel his unique talents for a purpose. Likewise, a *ben Torah* who has spent years immersed in the sea of Torah, growth in *middos*,

character refinement, and fear of Heaven has the ability to transmit his Torah knowledge to the next generation. Why would we want or settle for anything less than a superstar?

Betzalel's power was his personal brilliance and unique ability to transmit his knowledge and skill to others, so that they, too, could one day be like him and demonstrate that they valued *chochmah*, Torah wisdom.