

And you shall speak to every wise-hearted person whom I have filled with a spirit of wisdom, and they shall make the vestments of Aharon, to sanctify him to minister to Me. (28:3)

The Torah refers to the craftsmen who fashioned the various vessels used in the *Mishkan* and the priestly vestments which the *Kohanim* were enjoined to wear when performing the *avodah*, service, as *chachmei lev*, wise-hearted people. The pasuk states that Hashem filled these men with *chochmah*, wisdom. Why was it necessary for these men to be invested with Heavenly wisdom? *Ramban* explains that the *Bigdei Kehunah*, priestly vestments, require that its manufacture be *lishmah*, for its purpose, and it is possible that it even required *kavanah*, intent, as well. In order that they understand what they are doing, Hashem infused the craftsmen with a spirit of wisdom, enabling them to understand the inner esoteric meaning of the vestments and all their details.

In his commentary to *Shemos* 31:2, *Ramban* expands on this idea. He begins with a question that troubles every student: Where had these craftsmen learned the skills which they must have had to manufacture the many vessels and vestments? After all, they had come from 210 years of brutal slave labor in Egypt. Perhaps they knew how to build pyramids, but they certainly had not been trained in the art of working with gold and silver, cutting precious stones, carving wood, weaving and embroidery. Furthermore, even if one were to be an understudy to a master artisan, he would garner the knowledge needed for one or two of these skills – but not all.

Betzalel, the architect of the *Mishkan*, oversaw all the work. He was greatly endowed with *chochmah*, *tevnah* and *daas*, wisdom, insight and knowledge. He had to be in order to understand the secret behind the *Mishkan* and its *keilim*, vessels. Thus, Hashem filled Betzalel with the Heavenly wisdom necessary to render him suited for this position. Why specifically Betzalel? What made him stand out above the others to be granted Heavenly wisdom?

The answer lies in the concept behind the term *chachmei lev*, which is used in both *Parashas Tetzaveh* and *Parashas Ki Sisa* (31:6), *U'b'lev kol chacham lev Nasati chochmah*, “And I have endowed the heart of every wise-hearted person with wisdom.” The obvious question is glaring. Why do *Chazal* refer to these men as *chachmei lev* prior to receiving Heavenly wisdom? *Chazal* (*Berachos* 55a) state, “Hashem gives wisdom only to one who has wisdom.” How does one become wise in the first place? *Horav Chaim Volozhiner*, *zl* (*Nefesh HaChaim* 4:5) explains that this refers to *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, as it says in *Tehillim* 111, “The beginning of wisdom (*reishis chochmah*) is the fear of Hashem.”

Horav S. R. Hirsch, *zl*, explains that a wise person is one who does not allow obstacles and challenges of any kind to stand in his way to prevent him from achieving his goal. When these men heard the call for artisans, they came forward. “What skills do you possess?” “We will learn on the job.” Betzalel’s unusual determination and strength of character distinguished him, so that he was the primary choice to be the chief artisan of the *Mishkan*. His ambition and striving comprised his

personal *chochmah*, upon which Hashem added His Heavenly spirit of wisdom.

Some people are willing to settle, deciding to leave well enough alone. They have made up their minds that they are unable to do better. If an opportunity surfaces, which one has convinced himself is beyond his ken, he will not even bother to make an attempt to overcome the challenge. His comfort zone will not be impugned. He would rather settle for where he is. Our greatest leaders achieved their success specifically because they refused to relegate their lives to second best or couch potato. Nothing stood in their way. They were not deterred by acumen, money, illness, troubles. They made the attempt, and Hashem did the rest.

Horav Eliezer Halevi Turk, Shlita, quotes *Horav Eliyakim Schlesinger, Shlita* (London), who related that his *Rebbe*, the venerable *Mashgiach* of Ponovezh, *Horav Abba Grossbard, zl*, would motivate the *bachurim* to strive for greatness, not to settle. He would reiterate, “*Rabbosai*, if a person can become a general, why would he settle to be a soldier?” When the students heard this, they pushed to greater heights, because they knew deep in their hearts that they could achieve more.

Horav Chaim Kamil, zl, related that, when he learned in Slabodka (Bnei Brak), his *Rebbe*, *Horav Aizik Sher, zl*, instructed him to study *Mesillas Yesarim*, beginning first with the last chapter, which is the climax of the *sefer*. The *Shaar Ha’Kedushah*, gate of holiness, is what the finished person – who has completed all the necessary steps to achieve holiness – becomes. Only then should he return to the beginning and study each step. His *Rebbe* did not give a reason for this. Later in life, however, *Rav Chaim* realized that *Rav Aizik* wanted his student to set a high goal and study it until he absorbed it. Once he had this goal before him, from the very beginning of writing the *sefer*, he had a sense of *kedushah*, its meaning and life-altering impact on a person.

Horav Avraham David Rosenthal, zl, was the *Rav* of the *Shaarei Chesed* section in Yerushalayim. During his early years of *rabbanus*, he authored various volumes of commentary on the *Rambam*, entitled *Be’er Hamelech*. He wrote and published most of his volumes prior to his seventy-fifth birthday. He authored the last volume after a hiatus of eighteen years. He was ninety-three years old when the last volume saw the light of day. When he was asked why he had published yet another volume at such an age, he replied, “This *sefer* is in the *z’chus*, merit, of *Rav Shach, zl*.” *Rav Rosenthal* and *Horav Elazar M. Shach* knew one another, but the idea that *Rav Shach* inspired the writing of this *sefer* left the listener waiting for an explanation. The *Rav* explained, “A few years ago I attended the rally that established the *Degel HaTorah* party. It was an awe-inspiring event which thousands attended. The highlight of the evening was to see the elder statesman, the *gadol hador*, *Rav Shach*, enter and speak from the rostrum. The sage, who was well into his nineties, was feeble and ill. Yet, he spoke like a lion, charging the crowd with a mission on behalf of Torah. When I saw a man, who was older than I and in poor health, express such dedication for Torah, I decided that the least I could do was write my commentary.”