

he continued his repose in the *Mishkan*. The punishment of destruction was put on hold, to be remembered every time we do something negative that warrants recalling the sin of the Golden Calf.

Nonetheless, *Chazal* do state that the *Mishkan* symbolizes Hashem's forgiveness. Yet, after all is said and done, we are still paying for the *cheit ha'eigel*. We derive a powerful lesson from here. True, Hashem still bears *charon af*, anger, for the sin of the Golden Calf. This is not going away, as it will be with us for generations – each one paying part of the punishment. I guess that is the price of not being annihilated right then and there! The fact that Hashem continues to be with us, that we are able to maintain *kirvas Elokim*, a closeness with G-d, is worth it all. It makes us feel as if we have been forgiven. With Hashem, we are able to surmount any challenge. Heaven forbid, without Hashem, we have nothing; we are nothing.

A *Yiddish* expression refers to a special Jew, a spiritually elevated Jew: a *derhoibener*. I think this refers to a Jew who feels a complete closeness with Hashem to the point that, in his mind, he senses a form of tangibility to this relationship. These are unique individuals, quite possibly not among the movers and shakers of a community, but rather, the ones who are in the background, *davening*, learning, reciting *Tehillim*. They do not require anyone's attention. They have Hashem's attention. These people are in constant communion with the Almighty. European Jews were like that. Most lacked material wealth. They were satisfied simply with serving Hashem with all of their hearts and souls.

Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, was known to become very emotional when he would relate the following story that he had heard from a Holocaust survivor. A group of Jews was taken to Auschwitz in what was to be their final earthly journey. The infamous sadistic practice of the Nazi beasts was to remove anything of value from their victims prior to sending them to their deaths. Gold teeth were mercilessly removed, followed by their clothes, and then the accursed "showers," which were actually the gas chambers. While one group went "in," another group waited in the anteroom until their turn came. To prevent the Jews from running away, they were surrounded by guards and vicious dogs (actually, they were one and the same).

The Jews that were corralled in the ante room were acutely aware that in mere moments they were going to sacrifice their lives for the glory of Hashem. Each one of them must have had a potpourri of thoughts and remembrances going through his mind. Suddenly, one of them remembered that day was *Simchas Torah*, and he screamed out to his friends, "*Yidden*, today is *Simchas Torah*! We may not have a Torah with which to dance – neither do we have a *Chumash* or *siddur* – but we have the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. Let us dance with Hashem. This will be our last earthly dance." They all joined in spirited singing and dancing – with Hashem.

Rav Shach commented, "Believe me, how envious I am of

them. The ecstasy that they achieved during these moments of spiritual affinity were the most pleasurable moments that one could ever achieve."

Va'ani Tefillah

פאנו...אבינו...רפאנו – S'lach lanu avinu...refaeinu. Forgive us our Father... Heal us.

Interestingly, the blessing of *S'lach lanu*, in which we ask Hashem for forgiveness, precedes the blessing of *Refaeinu*, which entreats Hashem for our continued well-being. In the *Shabbos* prayer of *Mi Shebeirach*, which precedes *Mussaf*, we ask Hashem to bless us – and all congregations, singling out the individuals who provide the means and services for the general welfare of the Jewish community. Then, however, we say: "And all who are involved faithfully in the needs of the community – May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* pay their reward and remove from them every affliction, heal their entire bodies and forgive their every iniquity." In this prayer, forgiveness follows healing. Should it not be the other way around?

Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, distinguishes between the individual praying for himself, as in *Shemoneh Esrai*, and the communal prayer on behalf of those individuals who serve the community. An individual has no right to ask for personal healing unless he has first repented and received penance and forgiveness. Thus, *S'lach lanu* precedes *Refaeinu*. The *Shabbos Mi Shebeirach* was established for those who selflessly serve the community – which direly needs their services. Thus, for the *tovas ha'klal*, benefit of the community, it is critical that these *chesed*, kindness, providers stay healthy – even if their forgiveness might take "a bit longer" to attain. (Obviously, we are not talking about individuals of very questionable repute. They have no business leading the community – period. They are in the "process" of receiving forgiveness.) *Klal Yisrael* needs them "now".

Sponsored by

Yaakov and Karen Nisenbaum
and Family

in memory of our Father and Grandfather

Martin Nisenbaum

ר' מרדכי בן ר' אפרים ז"ל

נפטר ר"ח ניסן תשנ"ג

זכה לראות דורות עוסקים בתורה ויראת שמים

Parashas Vayakhel-Pekudei

תשע"ז

פרשת ויקהל-פקודי

**ויאמר משה אל בני ישראל ראו כי קרא ד' בשם בצלאל בן אורי בן חור למטה יהודה
Moshe said to Bnei Yisrael, "See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. (35:30)**

The *Midrash Tanchuma* quotes this *pasuk* as the basis for making two points – one *halachic*, the other, *hashkafic*; both are ambiguous in terms of their relationship with the *pasuk*. First, the *halachah*: One may not wear a garment of *kilayim/shatnez*, a mixture of wool and linen, even if ninety-nine garments separate him from the forbidden garment. As long as the *shatnez* is on his body, it does not matter how much space interposes between himself and the garment. The *halachah* is understandable, but what does it have to do with the *pasuk*?

Second, the *Midrash* states that when a person performs good deeds, he creates a Heavenly angel that protects him, and he merits the privilege of performing more good deeds. One good deed creates the opportunity for more good deeds. Once again, an inspiring lesson, but what does it have to do with the *pasuk* which designates Betzalel as the architect of the *Mishkan*?

Horav Nisson Alpert, zl, explains that *mitzvah* performance engenders a good name for a person. A good reputation is precious; one that is derived from performing good deeds is especially meaningful. This is indicated by Hashem's choice of Betzalel as the architect of the *Mishkan*. He was an individual who thoroughly understood the profound mystical secrets required to execute this awesome task. When the Torah writes that Hashem proclaimed Betzalel by name, it means that it was Betzalel's good name that made him worthy of this lofty position. It was his good name that gave him the ability to construct the abode that served as the resting place for the Divine Presence. It was in Betzalel's own *z'chus*, merit, that he warranted this honor – not because he was Chur's grandson, the man who had sacrificed his life for the honor of Hashem in an attempt to prevent the Golden Calf from materializing.

How does a person develop a good name worthy of Divine recognition? It is achieved by distancing oneself from evil, i.e. guarding oneself from committing transgressions. Once this hurdle is achieved, he will merit doing good. Two types of evil exist. While most people do not comport with hard-core evil, there is a type of evil from which we must take great care to distance ourselves. It is the evil that conceals itself within the gray area of what is permissible, as

the behavior is not clearly defined a "*mefurasha issur*". The Torah does not spell out that this activity is prohibited, despite it being the antithesis of what any observant Jew would do. *Ramban* refers to such activity/person as *naval b'reshus haTorah*, a despicable person with the Torah's dispensation. In other words, some activities are just plain forbidden, and other activities are not forbidden, but are just "not right". An observant Jew does not act in this manner.

We now understand why the *Midrash* cites *kilayim* as a transgression from which one must distance himself, even if ninety-nine garments separate him from it. *Shatnez/kilayim* is an admixture of otherwise permitted items – wool and linen. Despite the fact that they are independently permissible, when mixed together, they present a serious transgression. The *Midrash* asks how far should one distance himself from *kilayim*, or from a combination of two otherwise permissible items? *Chazal* say that, even if ninety-nine layers of clothing separate him from the *kilayim* garment, he is committing a sin. In other words, regardless of how one presents it, *kilayim*, or gray-area prohibitions, are extremely dangerous.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* underscores the lesson to be derived from here. Even if there technically is a *heter*, *halachic* dispensation, for some matter, and one could even suggest that it will not directly lead to anything *asur*, prohibited, nonetheless, if one knows deep in his heart that there is a possibility of certain inappropriate consequences occurring "indirectly", but as a result of his actions, one may absolutely not do it.

Sadly, not all people are able to "smell out" the prohibitions which lurk in concealment, to anticipate what might go wrong. These people do not take chances. Simply, if there might be deadly poison somewhere in the food, who in his right mind would chance it? A person who is aware of the "black and white" and distances himself from the "gray", is a person who is worthy of building the *Mishkan*. That person was Betzalel.

Betzalel's grandfather, Chur, gave up his life to prevent the *eigel ha'zahav*, Golden Calf, from becoming a reality. Why? He saw the possibility of it turning into full-scale idolatry. Perhaps, now, they were only seeking a tangible replacement for Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The next step, however, was to transform the *eigel* into a god. He saw the *kilayim* and died for it. His grandson inherited that incredible insight.

ראו קרא ד' נשם בצלאל בן אורי בן חור למטה יהודה
"See, Hashem has proclaimed by name, Betzalel ben Uri
ben Chur of the Tribe of Yehudah." (35:30)

In recording Betzalel's pedigree the Torah atypically goes back two generations – to Betzalel's grandfather, Chur. This is unusual, since the Torah usually records only the name of the father. Obviously, Chur played a significant role in Hashem's choice of Betzalel to head the work on the *Mishkan*. The *Mishkan* was referred to as *Mishkan Ha'Eidus*, the *Mishkan* of the Testimony, since it served as a testament that Hashem had forgiven *Klal Yisrael* for their involvement in the *cheit ha'eigel*, sin of the Golden Calf. Therefore, it was necessary that Betzalel not have any vestige of relationship with the Golden Calf. A prosecutor may not be a defense attorney; *ein kateigor naaseh saneigor*. This is why gold was not brought into the *Kodesh HaKedoshim*, Holy of Holies, and why Aharon *HaKohen* was not given access to the *Parah Adumah*, Red Heifer, which served to atone (among other things) for the sin of the Golden Calf.

This, explains *Horav Moshe Bick, zl*, is why the Torah details Betzalel's lineage back to his grandfather Chur, who was killed when he stood up to *eigel* revelers. Chur sacrificed his life as a result of the Golden Calf. His grandson followed in his ways. He was focused only on G-d – not on any other faith or worship. Nothing would deter Betzalel from carrying out the word/command of Hashem. It was his family legacy. He proudly carried his family's legacy of *emunah*, faith.

There are those who might suggest that Betzalel must have had some subconscious degree of animus within him. Knowing that he was creating the edifice which would serve as penance for the violent, sinful behavior that catalyzed the murder of his grandfather, could he be trusted to carry out the deed with holy and pure motivation? Can we be certain that there was not a vestige of hatred against those who left him grandfatherless at a young age?

This is why Moshe *Rabbeinu* declares that this was Hashem's decision. He knows that Betzalel was holy and pure and that his motives would likewise not be swayed in any way. He was first and foremost devoted to Hashem and, as such, would comply obediently with what he was told to do.

I think, perhaps, that Betzalel's pedigree signifies even more. What about Uri, Betzalel's father? How does he factor into the equation? He is *nisht ahin nisht aher*, neither here nor there: He is not Chur, who sacrificed himself for Hashem, nor is he Betzalel, whose commitment was unwavering and who built the *Mishkan* exactly as commanded by Hashem.

I once heard that the lesson to be derived from here is that not everyone has his own significance. Some of us are present to maintain the chain, so to speak. Indeed, the middle link of a chain is the strongest, since it connects numbers one and three – or past and future. Uri was the one who saw to it that Chur's legacy was passed on to Betzalel. Without Uri, Betzalel would never exist.

Some individuals in life appear to be "simple" – not the "movers and shakers." To the superficial spectator, their contribution to a community is minimal. Quite possibly, Uri *ben Chur* was like that, but look at the son that he raised! Without Uri, no Betzalel would ever exist! There is no such

person as a simple Jew. Everyone serves a purpose. He may not have *yichus*, exalted pedigree, but, as a result of his parental excellence, his son will be the founder of an exalted lineage.

Perhaps we may add another aspect to our appreciation of Betzalel's father, Uri. I was always bothered by the choice of Betzalel to be architect of the *Mishkan*. If the purpose of using Betzalel to build the *Mishkan* was that he was Chur's grandson, thereby exhibiting his selflessness in executing the Divine mandate, then why not use Uri, the orphaned son of Chur, to be the *Mishkan's* builder? I think the answer lies in one of the most important qualifications for being the *Mishkan's* builder. The *Mishkan* served as testimony that Hashem had forgiven the Jewish People for their sin of the Golden Calf. Thus, the one who was to construct the *Mishkan* must be a loving, caring individual to whom forgiveness was second nature. He could never harbor a grudge against anyone. A person is not just born with such incredible character traits. He must be raised, nurtured and imbued with the knowledge that people err and, when they repent, their repentance must be accepted – without malice.

Uri saw his father killed before his eyes. It was an image he would never forget. Yet, he was able to forgo his personal feelings and teach his son that a Jew forgives. Regardless of the infraction, we bear no malice. Hashem forgives; so should we. Without Uri there would not have been a Betzalel of such incredible character. He was *mevater*, willing to forgo what might have/could have been his personal feelings, because he was raised in a home where it was the big picture that counted. When Hashem said, "Do", he immediately acted.

Pikudei

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדת אשר פקד על פי משה
These are the reckonings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan
of Testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe's bidding.
(38:21)

Was there no one other than Moshe *Rabbeinu, Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael*, capable of doing an accounting of the *Mishkan*? An accounting is a vital function in any endeavor, especially one as spiritually significant as building the *Mishkan*. Surely, there were others, possibly more proficient in mathematics, who could have performed this service. *Horav Moshe Bick, zl*, derives an important principle from here. When one builds a *makom kadosh*, holy edifice, when he undertakes a holy endeavor, one would think that all *halachic* questions and issues should be decided by the *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar. The monetary and financial issues should remain in the domain of the businessman whose specialty is finance and management. The problem is that, at times, we attempt to have the end justify the means, such that those who want to cut corners concerning the appropriation of funds, or the propriety of the funds might accept funds from questionable sources, which suddenly become "*kosher*" for the purpose of building a sanctuary, school, *shul*, etc.

Therefore, the Torah teaches that Moshe *Rabbeinu* himself was involved in every aspect of the finances concerning the *Mishkan*. He collected the money after he

spoke to the people about the significance of donating to the *Mishkan*. He was fundraiser, collector, and he oversaw every expenditure. *Halachah* and finance were not dichotomized one from another. Indeed, they worked together with *halachah*, directing every aspect of the financial endeavor. This was to be a *Mishkan* built upon the highest standard of ethical and spiritual rectitude. Thus, Moshe was involved throughout.

The Torah alludes to this when it implies that the *Mishkan* was a *Mishkan HaEidus*, Testimony, attesting to Hashem's forgiving *Klal Yisrael's* sin of the Golden Calf. This is because it was *pukad*, reckoned, *al pi* Moshe, at Moshe's bidding. Moshe *Rabbeinu's* involvement in the finances of the *Mishkan* assured the *halachic* integrity of the *Mishkan's* every aspect.

It is a well-known maxim from the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*, that even if one nail of a *shul* is of questionable ownership (it was appropriated illegally), it would present the prayers rendered in that *shul* spiritually ineffective. The flipside is that if everything – even the tools used for building the edifice – are all of the highest level of spiritual integrity, the prayers recited there will always achieve efficacy.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mir *Yerushalayim, Horav Nossan Tzvi Finkel, zl*, was involved in every aspect of the *yeshiva's* exceptional growth – even the technical, mundane aspects of its construction. Despite his extraordinary *hasmodah*, diligence in Torah study, he felt it so important that, whenever they were building, pouring foundations, he would personally witness and see to it that everything was executed properly.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* was following in the footsteps of his revered grandfather, *Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl*, who oversaw the reestablishment of Mir from Europe to *Yerushalayim*. The *Rosh Yeshiva* would often laud the fact that the Mir edifice was built by *yehudim yirei Shamayim*, observant, G-d-fearing Jews, many of them *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars. This was due, in no small part, to the fact that it was following the second World War, which had displaced *yeshiva* scholars, leaving them without an opportunity to earn a living from spiritual endeavor and forcing them to do whatever they could to subsist. The *Rosh Yeshiva* would often reiterate how he would hear the "bricklayers" discussing a passage in the *Talmud* while they were performing their mundane labor. *Rashba, Rambam, Ketzos HaChoshen*, names that one expected to hear in the hallowed halls of the *bais hamedrash*, were commonplace on the worksite, since, even on the worksite, the minds of these scholars remained anchored in the *bais hamedrash*.

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדות
These are the accountings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan
of the Testimony. (38:21)

Rashi explains the redundancy of the word *Mishkan* as alluding to the *Bais HaMikdash*, which was taken as collateral in its two destructions for the sins of *Yisrael*. *Mishkan HaEidus*, the *Mishkan* of the Testimony, attests to the fact that Hashem forgave *Klal Yisrael* for sinning with the Golden Calf. Despite the people's incursion, the Divine Presence still rests among *Klal Yisrael*. Two explanations for

the *Mishkan*: it serves as collateral; it is a symbol of forgiveness. Obviously, this requires a bit more elucidation. *Horav Yaakov Kaminetsky, zl*, offers an analogy which sheds light on the *Mishkan's* dual function.

A wealthy man, who is slowly seeing his material assets depreciate as his business investments go sour, must act quickly in order to save whatever he can. Otherwise, he will lose everything to bankruptcy. First, he sells a portion of his assets, items which are not of much use to him or which have little to no significance. If necessary, he will sell more. He certainly will not sell those items which are of great sentimental value or those which he needs for living. In other words, one gives up that to which he is not that attached.

When *Klal Yisrael* was asked to contribute towards the building of the *Mishkan*, they gave wholeheartedly. This was despite the fact that they had a long journey before them and a war against the kings who inhabited *Eretz Yisrael*. They could have said that gold and silver were metals of great value, items which they might store away in case of hardship. Hashem's resting place could be constructed of copper or other materials of lesser value. Why not save the gold and silver? The fact that they contributed their precious metals toward the *Mishkan* indicates how vital the *Mishkan* was to them. The fact that Hashem only temporarily destroyed the *Batei Mikdash* indicates how much they mean to Him. One does not part with that which is critical to one's survival. Likewise, Hashem values what is vital to His People.

The Jews gladly parted with their money when they contributed toward the *Mishkan*, because they understood its significance. Hashem agreed; therefore, He never permanently destroyed our Sanctuary. This is also why Hashem forgave the sin of the Golden Calf. The reason that they sinned was that they were misled into believing that Moshe *Rabbeinu* had died. The fear of being left alone, adrift in the wilderness without a leader to guide them, was overwhelming to them, causing them to lose it and sin. Now, however, when they demonstrated their complete faith in Hashem by emptying their pockets, by giving up their material assets just so that there would be a place for Hashem to rest His Divine Presence among the people, they showed their deep abiding faith. This was sufficient reason for Hashem to forgive them.

Did Hashem really forgive them for the sin of the Golden Calf? Did we not read (*ibid.* 37:34), *U'b'yom pakdi u'pokaditi*, "And on the day that I make My account, I shall bring their sin to account against them." Hashem declared that, whenever *Klal Yisrael* would sin in the future, they would suffer some of the punishment they should have received in retribution for the sin of the Golden Calf. Apparently, all was not forgiven. What, then, is represented by the *Mishkan*?

The commentators explain that actually, Hashem imposed two punishments upon *Bnei Yisrael* with regard to the Golden Calf. First and foremost, Hashem was prepared to do away with the Jewish People. A nation that does not maintain fidelity is not a nation. Second, Hashem put a halt to His *Hashroas HaShechinah*; the Divine Presence would no longer repose among the Jewish People. Hashem relinquished the punishment of *Hashroas HaShechinah*, and