



Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion



A Perfect Craftsman

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as Betzalel ben Uri ben Chur. Rashi points out that Chur is the son of Miriam, making Miriam Betzalel's great-grandmother – which certainly gives Betzalel some pretty important *yichus*! He's a well-connected guy!

Often when including a person's lineage, we question why the Torah includes more than just the father or mother's name. Nowadays when we call someone up to the Torah or daven on their behalf, we say their name "*ben/bat*" their parent's name. So when the Torah decides to go back a generation (or more) further, we appropriately ask why. In this case, Rashi is telling us that Betzalel is connected to the most important family in the nation!

But so what? Are we really that concerned with *yichus*? Is the criteria for building the Mishkan that you have to know the right people or be well-connected? Is this the lesson the Torah is

trying to teach?

The Ba'alei HaTosfot urge us to look deeper. In their commentary to the Chumash called the "Da'at Zekeinim", they remind us that although we don't know a lot about Chur, we do know one very important story that tells us a lot about Chur's character. When the Jews decided to build the *egel ha'zahav* in last week's parsha, they rushed to Aharon to pressure him to create something that would serve as their conduit to God. While his uncle Aharon tried to stall by sending them home to collect gold jewelry, Chur stood his ground, accusing the people of foolishness and betrayal. In response, the people struck and killed Chur!

On a simple level, this additional layer of information about Chur seems to tell us that his grandson Betzalel was his spiritual heir, sharing his moral character and therefore making him a good choice of builder for the holy Mishkan. But the Da'at Zekeinim pushes us even deeper. Only someone like Chur, who understood just how terribly wrong the *egel ha'zahav* was in building our relationship with God, could understand the incredible potential of the Mishkan to achieve that same goal. So Chur, the zealot who stood against the *egel*,

would have been the perfect person to build its positive counterpart, the Mishkan. Had Chur not been assassinated, he seemingly would have been chosen for the lofty task of building a place where the people could direct their thoughts and feelings towards God in an appropriate way. Instead, his grandson Betzalel is chosen to represent his grandfather – not only by the moral fiber of his character but by his depth of understanding of the mission itself.

The Torah doesn't waste words. By associating Betzalel with Chur, the pesukim are not simply giving us his impressive lineage but are telling us that Betzalel was the perfect person to craft the Mishkan with his heart and mind singularly focused on the importance of his task.

Shabbos: A Day of Emunah

Eden Pardau ('26)

Parshat Vayakhel describes how the Mishkan was built, but before this, Bnei Yisrael are reminded to observe the laws of Shabbos. On the day following Yom Kippur, Moshe gathers all of Klal Yisrael and says (Shmot 35:2):

שְׁשָׁתْ יְמִים תַּעֲשֵׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי יְהִי לְכֶם קָדֵשׁ
שְׁבָתָ שְׁבָתוֹן לְהָ

Simply put, Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that work may be performed during six days of the week, but on the seventh, they must refrain from doing any work. Moshe then goes on to teach Bnei Yisrael the 39 *melachot*, which are categories of labor forbidden on Shabbos. Moshe concludes with the warning that anyone who does work on Shabbos will be put to death.

Why would Hashem command Moshe to urge Bnei Yisrael to keep and follow the rules of Shabbos before instructing them to build the Mishkan? According to the midrash it's almost as if Shabbos is complaining to Hashem saying that Bnei Yisrael is likely to profane its holiness because of their great love for the Mishkan. Therefore, Hashem commands Moshe to emphasize to Bnei Yisrael that Shabbos and the laws surrounding it should not be neglected on account of the building of the Mishkan. Moshe needs to ensure that building the Mishkan does not supersede the importance of Shabbos. Ohr HaChaim suggests another interesting point

about this pasuk. He states that the reason the Torah emphasizes the work be performed on the six days of the week serves as a hint to the fact that if a person keeps Shabbos on the seventh day and considers it a holy day, then the work needed to maintain themselves during the next six days will take care of itself.

Instead of solely focusing on the construction of the Mishkan, Bnei Yisrael was reminded to always put Shabbos first. If Bnei Yisrael were to follow through with this command from Moshe through the words of Hashem, they would be taken care of. By keeping Shabbos, they wouldn't have to worry about their next week's worth of work because it would be taken care of and everything would work out—Shabbos is therefore all about having emunah and trust in Hashem.

This serves as a reminder to us all about the importance of Shabbos. Instead of focusing on and dwelling on material things, it is essential for us to take time each week to decompress and focus on what is really important. Along with being a time to strengthen our relationship with Hashem, Shabbos is also a time for Klal Yisrael to come together as one and unite, which is especially important now because our brothers and sisters in Israel need our *chessed, tefillah, and Ahavat Yisrael*. Good Shabbos!

Fighting Fire with Fire

Shira Nyer ('26)

At the beginning of this week's parsha, Parshat Vayakhel, we find the prohibition:

”לَا תְּבֻעֵרוּ אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מַשְׁבָּתוֹתֶיכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבָּתָה”
“Do not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day” (Shmot 35:3).

There was historically a breakaway sect of Judaism known as Karaite who interpreted this verse literally to mean that no fire may be burning on Shabbat; so they sat in darkness throughout Shabbat. They did not accept the Torah SheBa'al Peh, the Oral Law, which teaches us that if the fire was lit before Shabbat, it may continue to burn throughout Shabbat. With the discovery of electricity in the modern era, there emerged different opinions whether electricity constitutes “fire”. In the twentieth century the

two famous opinions are those of the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Abraham Isaiah Karelitz) and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. The Chazon Ish held that lighting electricity is a Torah prohibition. Rabbi Auerbach believed it is only a rabbinic prohibition.

Today there is a new invention: LED light. The consensus among the poskim is that this is not true fire and only a rabbinic prohibition. When women light candles before the sunset of Shabbat, they recite a special bracha. Some historians say that this *bracha* was instituted to oppose the Karaites and demonstrate that it is actually a mitzvah of *shalom bayit* to have the lights burning Friday night.

Collaborative Construction

Miriam Wolk ('26)

In Parshat Vayakhel, we learn about the construction of the Mishkan. The Torah describes the various materials that were used, the craftsmanship that went into each detail, and the overall beauty of the final product.

But what strikes me most about this parsha is the emphasis on community and collaboration. The Torah tells us that Moshe assembled the entire nation to construct the Mishkan and that everyone contributed their skills and resources to the project. Some donated precious metals and fabrics, while others used their expertise to weave, sew, and build.

This teaches us an important lesson about the power of working together towards a common goal. The Mishkan was not built by one person alone, but by a collective effort of many individuals with diverse talents and skills. Similarly, in our own communities, we can achieve great things when we come together and use our resources, expertise, and passion.

Furthermore, the Mishkan represents a deeper symbolism of unity and connection with Hashem. By working together to build a holy space, Bnei Yisrael were able to use their individual identities and connect with something greater than themselves.

In our own lives, we can learn from this exam-

ple by seeking out opportunities to collaborate and build together. Whether it's volunteering for a community project, participating in a group hobby, or simply lending a helping hand to a neighbor, we can create a sense of unity and purpose that goes beyond our individual doings.

Don't Be A Bystander!

Elisha Horowitz ('25)

In the middle of this week's parsha, Parshat Vayakhel, Moshe tells the people:

“שֶׁשֶׁ בְּצַלָּל וְאַהֲלִיאָב וְכָל אִישׁ חִכְסִילָב אֲשֶׁר נָתָן הָרֶבֶת חִכְמָה וַיַּבְנֵה בְּהִמְדָה לְדִעָת לְעֵשֶׂת אֶת־כָּל־מִלְאָכָת עַבְרַת הַקְרֵשׁ לְכָל־אָשֶׁר־צָוָה הָרָבֶת”

“Let, then, Bezalel and Oholiav and all the skilled persons whom Hashem has endowed with skill and ability to perform expertly all the tasks connected with the service of the sanctuary carry out all that Hashem has commanded” (Shmot 36:1).

Clearly, the Torah is not just designating Bezalel alone for the building of the Mishkan, but also Oholiav and anyone else with the capabilities to help in the construction. It is surprising then, that only one perek later, as the Torah records the crafting of each of the *keilim*, the pasuk only says: “וַיַּשְׁבַּצְלָל” – “and Bezalel made” (Shmot 37:1).

Why does the Torah only record Bezalel's name for the making of the *keilim*? Were the other men not skilled enough to merit being mentioned?

Rashi explains that Bezalel merited to have his name specifically written down because he did the work more wholeheartedly than the other craftsman. It was not that Bezalel did it alone. Rather, he was more committed than anyone else, so he gets his name recorded.

Even though there were other skilled men and Bezalel could have taken it easy, he made the decision that it would be by the work of his hands that the Aron and the other *keilim* would be built. Bezalel is modeling an important

character trait for us. Whatever the task, we must do our part wholeheartedly, even if there are other people that could also accomplish the job.

A similar idea can be seen in Megillat Esther. At the climax of the narrative, when Mordechai discovers Haman's plot, he sends a message to Esther, hoping she will appeal to Achashverosh. He says something that seems a little strange.

“**כִּי אִם־הַחֲרֵשׁ תַּחֲרִישׁ בַּעַת הַזֹּאת רֹוח וְהַצְּלָה יַעֲמֹד לִיהָוִדִּים מִמְּקוּם אַחֲרָה**”

“For If you keep silent in this time of crisis relief and deliverance will come to the Jew's from a different place” (Esther 4:14)

Was Esther not the only hope to save the Jews? Was there another ace up Mordechai's sleeve in case Esther refuses to step up?

The answer comes from the *middah* that Bezalel models in our parsha. Mordechai knew that Hashem would not let the Jewish people be murdered by a *rasha* like Haman. But would Esther be the instrument for that salvation? Would Esther sit back and let redemption come from elsewhere, or would she follow Bezalel's lead and wholeheartedly dedicate herself to saving her people.

We are living at an important moment for our people. There are many who would like to kill us and many more who try to delegitimize our attempts to protect and defend ourselves.

The solution is to follow in Bezalel and Esther's footsteps. We must wholeheartedly dedicate ourselves to our *tefillah*, *chessed*, and *mitzvot*. My bracha is that all of us will do our part, and no one will sit back and be a bystander to the continuing story of the Jewish people. Let us all actively and wholeheartedly *daven* for and support our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Good Shabbos!



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