

# PARSHAS PEKUDEI

תשע"ט

Last week we mentioned that Chur was the grandfather of Betzalel. The first time we encounter Chur is at the end of Parshas Beshalach when Amoleik attacked. There were three people who assisted Moshe Rabbeinu. Yehoshua is sent out to lead the physical battle, and Aharon and Chur support Moshe in the spiritual battle. Who is Chur's father? Calev ben Yefuneh. His mother is Miriam. Chur went with Aharon to help Moshe in his tefillah for Klal Yisroel's victory.

When Moshe left the camp after kabbolas haTorah to go up to Har Sinai, he told Klal Yisroel to look to his nephew Chur and his brother Aharon for guidance. Chur is one of the main leaders to lead Klal Yisroel in Moshe Rabbeinu's absence.

When Klal Yisroel insisted on making the egel hazahav, Chur openly protested and was killed for it. Seeing this, Aharon had no choice but to go along with it and try to delay it until Moshe Rabbeinu came back.

Betzalel was a descendant of Chur and was chosen by name to be in charge of the Mishkon's construction. The midrash says that Chur was rewarded for his mesirus nefesh by having this descendant. But he wasn't the only one. Miriam and Yocheved were also rewarded with having a Betzalel as a descendant. What did they do to deserve reward? They were also moser nefesh—they stood up to Pharaoh. They were rewarded not for saving Klal Yisroel, not for listening to their inner moral conscience; it was for their brave display of yiras shomayim. In the end of the day, we have to be more afraid of Hashem than of any other power in the world. Hashem responded to this by giving them descendants. Botei kehunoh, leviyoh and malchus. Malchus was given to Miriam, she married Calev, and gave rise to Chur, Uri, and Betzalel and finally to Dovid Hamelech.

What kind of wisdom did Betzalel receive? Chazal in Brochos say he received the wisdom of tziruf osiyos. This is the metaphysical chochmoh through which Hashem created the world. This wisdom is written in the Torah and understood only by those who are granted the ability to understand the deepest and most esoteric parts of the Torah. It is the chochmoh of the Torah itself which Hashem used to create the world. This spiritual process had physical consequences. The spiritual process of tziruf osiyos resulted in the physical creation of the world. If you understand this chochmoh, you understand everything about the creation from its inner spiritual mechanics. This is why every wisdom in the world—about the world—is found in the Torah. It is hard to find this chochmoh by just reading the Torah. But a few unique individuals were given this wisdom. Moshe Rabbeinu was one of them, Shlomo Hamelech was another.

It is not simple to give a human being such a high level of chochmoh. One prerequisite is having deep yiras shomayim. Understanding the Torah goes together with yiras shomayim and they complement each other. It is on a higher level than yiras cheit.

This yiras shomayim—with mesiras nefesh—was exemplified by Betzalel's ancestors—Chur and Miriam. This is what is necessary to build a Mishkon. It required the highest level of understanding the Torah—tziruf osiyos—which in turn, requires the highest level of yiras shomayim. The posuk doesn't say Hashem simply gave people specific skills to carry out these specific tasks of working with these materials. It was a wisdom inextricably tied up with ruach Elokim.

Chazal tell us that people began complaining that Moshe Rabbeinu chose his nephew Betzalel because of nepotism. He picked his brother for the kehunoh and his sister's grandson to lead the construction, etc.

This is why the Torah gives a detailed accounting of all the donations and what they were used for. There is an azloch geiriesh on the taamim when it comes to the silver hooks of the Mishkon. What's so exciting about these hooks? The Midrash says Moshe felt under pressure to make sure there is nothing missing in the accounting of the donations. He didn't want Klal Yisroel to suspect the Mishkon was a family racket.

Just imagine! This is the same Moshe Rabbeinu who performed the ten makkos, brought them out of Egypt, split Yam Suf, brought down the mon. Klal Yisroel heard Hashem talking to Moshe in the highest level of nevuah. He went to shomayim alive and came back, and he still has to worry about suspicions that he isn't honest! It's mind-boggling.

So Moshe Rabbeinu made an accounting of how all the silver and gold were used properly. He realized that he was missing some silver in the account. He suddenly looked up and saw the silver hooks on the pillars and was immediately put at ease.

Later on, Klal Yisroel were suspicious of Moshe having designs on their wives. Aharon and Miriam suspected that Moshe was neglecting his wife Tziporah without justification. It is a very interesting phenomenon—that people drum up suspicions about great people.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz once explained the story about Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachiah and osoh ho'ish. Yehoshua ben Perachiah and oso ish were walking down the road when a beautiful woman was walking past them, and Rabbi Yehoshua made a bracha about the beauty of Hashem's creations. Oso ish made an off-color comment about that woman, assuming Rabbi Yehoshua would appreciate it, but instead, Rabbi Yehoshua looked at him and reduced him to a pile of bones.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz asked, why would oso ish have thought Rabbi Yehoshua would appreciate a low-class comment? He answered that if the talmid is a menuval, then naturally he thinks his rebbe is a menuval too...

We tend to project our own faults and weaknesses on to those greater than ourselves, in a subconscious attempt to bring them down to our level.

The same lesson we see in the story of Noach and the oreiv. The posuk says that Noach sent the oreiv out of the teivoh to scout for dry land. But the oreiv refused to leave. He just circled around the teivoh and came back. The midrash, quoted by Rashi explains that the oreiv resented being sent on a potentially life-threatening mission by Noach. What if something happens to him? The oreiv decided Noach is really plotting to get rid of him in order to take his mate for himself! Does this make any sense?

Chazal tell us that it was forbidden to engage in pru u'rvu during the time of the mabul. Only two animals violated this issur. The kelev and the oreiv. This means the oreiv is a supreme baal taivoh for his mate. The nature of a baal taivoh is to assume that everyone else has the same issue with taivoh that you have. They can't imagine that others could rise above their baser instincts and control them. So naturally, the oreiv suspected Noach of harboring the same taivos he had for his mate.

The unfortunate reality of human nature is that people often automatically presume that the other people they deal with are functioning on the same level that they are on.

The Torah instructs us to take this reality into account. There is

a halacha that the kohen who took from the terumas halishkoh to pay for korbonos had to wear garments with no seams and pockets when he entered the room. There can be no room for suspicion that he is pilfering the coins and hiding them in his clothing. There is a Torah obligation to conduct one's self in a way that doesn't allow for suspicion. Even Moshe Rabbeinu had to make an exact accounting. He was nervous when the cheshbon didn't come out and was excited when he discovered it worked out. So on the one hand, even great people are not supposed to take their integrity for granted and rely on people's trust.

But on the other hand, Klal Yisroel is supposed to recognize that great Jews are truly great. We need to have the sensitivity to greatness and appreciate that some people are operating on a whole different level. They are thinking and acting with an entirely different set of cheshbonos than ordinary people. If we fail to appreciate this, we are punished—just as Miriam was punished for suspecting Moshe Rabbeinu was neglecting his wife without justification.

It doesn't happen overnight. Betzalel didn't just appear on the scene to build the Mishkon with this incredible chochmoh. There was Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon, Miriam, Chur. These were people who sacrificed their own safety and comfort for yiras shomayim. They stood up for the truth no matter the personal cost. Aharon was the leader of Klal Yisroel throughout the bitter years of slavery in Egypt. He took upon himself the burden and the responsibility to keep Klal Yisroel going. Who refused to kill the Jewish boys with incredible yiras shomayim? Yocheved and Miriam. Through tremendous mesiras nefesh, they passed on this commitment to future generations. Only with pure sincerity do these traits get passed on.

It was only the children of Levi who stayed devoted to the mesorah of the Ovos and didn't compromise. They absorbed values from their father and more than that—they saw it was possible to raise one's self above one's natural inclinations and become something bigger.

Sometimes people are shortsighted and small-minded. They view

the world and they view other people through the lens of their own shortcomings. They don't realize that it is possible for people to rise above their petty concerns. A large part of chinuch in Torah—and we are talking about self-chinuch as well as for one's children—is associating with people on a higher level than you. Only then, can you realize that attaining higher levels is possible and it can obligate you not to make excuses to stay stagnant on your current level.

One of the problems of our generation is the lack of personal connection with great people. People run around and wait on line to get two seconds in with one godol to get a quick bracha and then run to the next godol to get two seconds with him for a quick bracha. There is no real contact—no guidance—no life lessons that are being learned in such short encounters. You need to forge a deep connection with a person on a higher level so he can teach you what heights a human being is capable of reaching.

People have to recognize that there is such a thing as a great human being—a Moshe, an Aharon, a Miriam, a Chur. Certainly most of Klal Yisroel appreciated who Moshe Rabbeinu was. But there were always a small group of people who were on Moshe Rabbeinu's back—always starting rumors and suspicions—forcing Moshe to always look over his shoulder to make sure he was acting above any possible reproach. So on the other hand, there is a chiyuv on great people to not act in a way that can make people suspicious in the first place. Not to give these people an opportunity to cast aspersions on great people and knock them down to the lowest common denominator in people's eyes.

This is one of the important lessons of the parsha.

Of course Moshe didn't choose Aharon or Chur or Betzalel because they were relatives. These were people who came from generations of mesiras nefesh and yiras shomayim. But it is a tragedy when people don't understand that one can be on a higher level and can't be viewed through the lens of ordinary cheshbonos. Such a cynical outlook prevents a person from realizing that he himself has the potential to rise above his own pettiness.