

Mussar HaTorah

ת"סב

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Parshios Vayakhel – Pikudei

“[BETZALEL] AND AHALIAV SON OF ACHISAMACH FROM THE TRIBE OF DAN.” (SHMOS 35:34)

THE TORAH TELLS US that Betzalel and Ahaliav were chosen to create the vessels of the *mishkan*. A few *pasukim* earlier (ibid. 30) Betzalel is described as the son of Uri, who was the son of Chur. Rashi points out that Chur was the son of Miriam the prophetess. This seemingly random comment is explained by the Sifsei Chachamim, who states that Rashi is really addressing the following question: Why did the Torah list Betzalel’s lineage beyond his father Uri, and yet only until one generation earlier. Either the *pasuk* should just say Betzalel’s name and his father’s name, or it should list several generations, perhaps back to Yaakov Avinu. Rashi is answering that Chur is the key figure, representing his mother Miriam, and the *pasuk* is teaching us why Betzalel was chosen for this job – because he was the great-grandson of Miriam the prophetess.

Ahaliav, on the other hand, was chosen for quite a different reason

Ahaliav, on the other hand, was chosen for quite a different reason: Ahaliav was from the tribe of Dan – a less significant tribe. Betzalel, however, was from the princely tribe of Yehuda. Hashem chose Ahaliav to fulfill the dictum, “[Show] no partiality to princes, nor regard the rich more than the poor” (Iyov 34:19). Not only would Betzalel – from Yehuda – be appointed, but also Ahaliav – from the less important tribe of Dan (Rashi 35:34).

We can understand that Hashem did not want to show partiality to the royal tribe of Yehuda. But, when Hashem picked Betzalel, it was not due to his tribe; it was due to his great-grandmother’s standing as a prophetess. Why, then, would the other tribes feel slighted? Hashem was not showing favoritism to any tribe. How would choosing Betzalel alone be violating the maxim of the *pasuk* in Iyov?

This concept is not limited to reasonable, well-founded suspicion

The Torah’s standards for proper behavior include avoiding actions that would cause others to suspect us or feel negatively towards us. From this Rashi we learn a fascinating insight: This concept is not limited to reasonable, well-founded suspicion. It applies even if others will be illogical in their negativity. If Hashem had chosen only Betzalel to work in the *mishkan*, the other tribes would have felt some sort of resentment. Even though this bitterness would have been uncalled for and incorrect, nevertheless Hashem wanted to forestall these negative feelings. Although there would have been nothing wrong with selecting only Betzalel, if negative feelings would be created – even baseless negative feelings – action must be taken to counteract those emotions.

They are obligated to judge us favorably, but we can’t rely on that

We have an obligation to refine and uplift our conduct so that no one will fall into the trap of suspicion and resentment due to our actions. This care for others extends to protecting them from their own foolish conclusions. Do we think before we act to examine how others will perceive our behavior? Many times we can be completely justified in what we are doing, and yet it “looks bad” to people who tend to view things in a superficial way. Of course, they are obligated to judge us favorably, but we can’t rely on that. We should not give others opportunities to misjudge us, rather we need to elevate our actions beyond the shadow of a doubt of impropriety. If we think twice before we act, and try to anticipate the perspective of fallible and sometimes shallow onlookers, we can avoid their suspicion and act in a manner that shines beyond reproach, and thereby sanctify and bring glory to Hashem’s name.