

# YOURS TRULY

by Rabbi Label Lam

*Bezalel made the Ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits its length; a cubit and a half its width; and a cubit and a half its height. He covered it with pure gold within and without, and he made for it a gold crown all around...He made two Cherubs of gold - hammered out did he make them...(Shemos 37: 1-7)*

Bezalel made: Because he gave over his very soul for the task more than the other clever craftsmen it is attributed to his name. (Rashi)

Bezalel was not the only one busy with the project of building the Holy Ark or the rest of the Tabernacle but extra credit is given to him for his role in completing the task. The Torah is not a history book recording some ancient event as much it is a dense collection of lessons and teachings. What can we learn from the fact that Bezalel was singled out for his performance in building the Holy Ark? Was it simply that he did better or more than others did? We know that Bezalel was an extremely talented fellow. Did that alone make him worthy of such an everlasting honor?

Allow me please to share with you an exercise we do at our Shabbos table every Friday night for the last few years. I'm only sorry we had not done for twenty years before then, but it's never too late. The kids and adults have grown to accept and even look forward to these special moments at the meal. At first I was met with huge resistance. Eyes rolled way back in the head and some groaned aloud, "Are we in school?!" Now it's a highlight of the week. Even my six year old wants to know if he can go first. We go around the table and everyone is asked to give their answer to the question, "What do you feel accomplished by this week?"

The variety and range of answers to that question is fascinating and very telling. One older guest said, "I had a good conversation with my mother this week." Another younger Yeshiva student told us that he finished the whole Book of Tehillim every day this week. The fellow seated next to him felt accomplished that he made it to morning davening three days that week. My little boy was anxious to tell everyone about the chart that he made for himself with fifty-five boxes to be checked off leading him to the reward of a Pez dispenser. He made his mother the arbiter of what's deserving of a check and he felt extra good about himself to have a goal and to be making measurable progress. Another child revealed that she felt accomplished to have gotten an 85 on a math test. Someone immediately remarked that 85 is not such a good grade which got the response, "I'm not so good at math and I studied hard. I was afraid I would fail!"

We have come to realize and we mention it constantly with amazement that the things that make us

feel the most rewarded and accomplished may not be what others consider to be our successes. We find time and again, that people feel accomplished by having done or resisted doing something difficult, by overcoming some limitation or fear, or by doing something for somebody else. One of our daughters proudly proclaimed, "I feel accomplished that I didn't go shopping for shoes in three weeks!" Wow! Nobody ever said, "I feel accomplished by buying an extra pair of shoes!", unless the shoes were for someone else.

The beauty is that in anticipation people are already thinking during the week days what they are going to declare as an accomplishment for the week, only to be outdone by some new sense of accomplishment later the same week. Through the process everyone gets a little rub of congratulations and encouragement and at the same time discovers where their individual struggle lies. What is easy for one to do will rarely yield real feelings of accomplishment.

Does that mean we should not work in our area of natural talent? Of course not! Bezalel was extremely gifted as an artisan and a builder but Rashi is careful to point out that his accomplishments are made worthy because he "gave over his very soul" to get the job done. That's something that can never be given to a person nor can it be taken away. It remains yours truly!

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