

# INVESTING FOR THE LONG TERM

*by Rabbi Naftali Reich*

The master craftsman who implemented the Torah's blueprint for the building of the mishkan was an individual named Betzalel. The Torah tells us that Betzalel was uniquely endowed with a "spirit of wisdom" that equipped him for this loftiest of tasks.

Mystical sources tell us that the mishkan, the tabernacle, was a spiritual microcosm of the entire world. Betzalel was knowledgeable in all areas of esoteric wisdom. He knew the letters and permutations with which Hashem fashioned heaven and earth; he knew how to harness this spiritual energy in the construction of the mishkan, Hashem's heavenly abode in its earthly form.

Our sages tell us that Betzalel was a young boy at the time of the mishkan's construction--no older than 13. How could such a youngster have a level of wisdom that towered way above all the greats of his generation?

The Torah alludes to the spiritual greatness of Betzalel in the pasuk that enumerates his lineage. "Behold I have called upon Betzaelel, the son of Uri, the son of Chur from the tribe of Judah," it says.

Here is precisely where Betzalel's greatness lay--in his being a grandson of Chur. Who was Chur and what was the source of his greatness that he merited such an extraordinary grandchild? We find scant information about Chur's life in the Torah. However, we do find Chur at the tragic scene of the Golden Calf, where the Jewish people embraced the worship of the golden image.

Chur was appalled at their behavior and stood up to admonish them. The frenzied mob was carried away by a wave of hedonistic behavior and anarchy. They silenced Chur by brutally killing him.

When we consider these tragic events, we can't help but ask ourselves why Chur chose to admonish and oppose the people who were bent on defying reason? Surely he saw it was futile, that they were determined to carry out their degenerate plans. Why endanger your life, Chur, where is your common sense? Wait a bit until the people's senses return and then they will be more receptive to your sobering message.

The commentaries explain that Chur was motivated by something nobler than practical common sense. He saw the Jewish people hovering at the edge of an abyss. Just one day before, the nation was the connecting bolt between heaven and earth; now that divine bond had been ruptured. The people were plunging wildly downward.

His grief over this downfall was so great that he was willing to sacrifice his life even if his action

could not prevent catastrophe.

Whenever we act for the sake of Heaven, our self-sacrifice calls down Divine reciprocity. Although we may not see this cause and effect immediately, the reward for such mesiras nefesh will be great.

Chur was willing to give up his life to secure the Divine connection between heaven and earth; his grandchild was therefore given transcendent wisdom far beyond his age and capacity to absorb. He merited the Divine mission of repairing that sublime connection between heaven and earth through the medium of the mishkan.

Oftentimes I look at students in the yeshiva who hail from families that are so distant from our Torah heritage. These students persevered against all odds and miraculously found their way back to their spiritual source. From where did they draw the courage and inspiration?

Very likely there was a grandmother in their family tree who cried copious tears for her children's spiritual safety when lighting the Shabbos candles. They were off to the 'Goldene Medina' and she prayed that they would not succumb to the temptations that abounded there.

The answer to those heartfelt prayers may not have come in her own lifetime. But when we see evidence of it in her grandchild and perhaps much further down the line, in a great-great grandchild, we can be sure of what its source is--the pure prayer of a devout, beseeching heart.

Let's invest our heart and soul into our spiritual undertakings and do our best to ensure that we will reap the dividends of our good deeds for many years to come.

Wishing you an inspiring Shabbos.

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