

WISE-HEARTEDNESS - IN YOUR DREAMS

by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann

Moshe summoned Betzalel, Oholiav, and every wise-hearted man whose heart Hashem had given wisdom - everyone whose heart inspired him - to approach the work; to do it. (36:2)

Numerous verses describe the wisdom of the architects of the Mishkan (Tabernacle). It refers to them as "wise-hearted," although in reality it is normally the brain which is considered the seat of wisdom. Here, it again speaks of their wisdom, only to change course by interjecting "every man whose heart inspired him." Was it wisdom, or inspiration, that best described the qualities of those who built the House of Hashem?

Ramban (35:21) comments that in the natural order of things, it's hard to believe there would have been Jews in the desert who were expert gold and silversmiths, carpenters, and weavers. After all, as slaves in Egypt, it was not gold and silver they were working with, but rather bricks and mortar. Even if there were individuals who had studied these professions in their youth, their lessons would have by now been long forgotten, and their delicate hands and fingers permanently harshened by the coarseness of slavery and its implements.

The materials for the Mishkan - gold, silver, copper, wool, linen, etc. - are donated unequally by whomever pleased, with one exception; every Jew had to contribute a half-shekel, from which the sockets, which held the beams in place, were cast. When Hashem tells Moshe about the half-shekel requirement, He does so by showing him a coin of fire. Why must every Jew give exactly a half-shekel, and what is the significance of the fire?

The Ramban notes that while both the builders of the Mishkan and its benefactors are called "inspired," it is only the builders whose inspiration is referred to as coming from their hearts. This is because, he writes, their inspiration - and their "wisdom" - was entirely from their hearts; they hadn't the faintest idea how to build a Mishkan! They were not carpenters, smiths, or weavers. Their only qualification was a burning desire to take part in such a monumental mitzvah. "Hashem wants to dwell among man - He has asked us to construct for Him a Sanctuary!" They came to Moshe and confidently declared their readiness to participate - even though they should have been intimidated by the daunting and "un-doable" tasks they were being asked to perform.

This, writes Ha'amek Davar, was their wisdom - their "wise-heartedness." Hashem would not ask us to do something we're incapable of doing, they reasoned. They jumped into the fray not knowing how things would play out, and in a most powerful display of "learning on the job," their hands taught

them what to do. They provided the inspiration and burning desire - Hashem provided the wisdom and mastery.

In every "rags-to-riches" story, writes R' Yerucham Levovitz zt"l (Da'as Torah p. 348), there is one common denominator: a relentless desire to succeed where others have failed. Truly great individuals never stop to think how they are going to achieve their dreams; they dream, they act on those dreams, and they are never put off by the disparaging comments of the nay-sayers and dreamslayers of the world. They barely even hear them.

If one would have reasoned with the Chazon Ish as a young man that it is impossible in these Torah-impooverished times to be a master of all areas of Talmudic study and Jewish law; that to write volumes on almost every topic imaginable is no more than a pipe dream - all of this on top of building communities, answering halachic queries, and personal involvement in almost every aspect of Torah Judaism - do you think he would have payed you heed? Would he have even heard you? If you would have told R' Moshe Feinstein that it is ridiculous to dream of finishing Shas 202 times (and more), would he have given up trying?

In the trying days of post-war America, the Bobover Rebbe zt"l made the decision to rebuild the chassidus that had once been Bobov. Although he started out with less than a minyan, in his heart he had no doubt that one day study-halls and Yeshivos would again reverberate with the sounds of Torah study. One erev Shabbos, as he walked to mikveh (ritual bath), he voiced his dreams to the young man accompanying him. "Here," he pointed to a building, "we can build a beis medrash. And over there can be the cheder. That building will be the Yeshiva - and over there we can build a girls' school! Oh, by the way," he turned to his confidante, "do you have a nickel you could lend me for the mikveh?"

None of the Torah giants of the past, from whose waters we drink and whose words guide our lives, would ever have achieved what they did, writes R' Yerucham, unless they, like the builders of the Mishkan before them, dreamed an impossible dream. They raised the bar of human achievement, and in doing so changed the Torah world forever.

We, likewise, are not only permitted to dream - we are required to do so! "A person is obligated to say, 'When will my deeds reach the deeds of my forefathers?!'" (Tanna D'bei Eliyahu Rabbah chapter 25)

We have much to learn, says Shlomo Ha-melech, from the ant. "Go to the ant, you sluggard; see her ways and grow wise... She prepares her food in the summer, and stores up her food in the harvest time. How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise from your slumber?" (Mishlei/Proverbs 6:6-9)

There are many industrious animals and insects. Why does King Solomon rebuke the sluggard with the ant?

The Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 5:2) remarks that the average ant lives only six months. In that time it is capable of consuming only 1« grains of wheat. Yet during her short life span, she amasses as much as she possibly can - wheat, barley, even beans! In a single nest they once found over 300 cor (14,000 gallons)! Why, asks the Midrash, does she collect so much? Doesn't she know she is soon to die? "Perhaps," she says, "Hashem will grant me long life. I'd better be prepared!"

We think we know what we're capable of; we recognize our limitations and our shortcomings, and we restrict our goals and aspirations accordingly. Consider this: What others might call "foolhardy," the Torah refers to as "wise-hearted!" We will never know what hidden gifts Hashem has waiting for us - unless we jump-in over our heads and push ourselves further than we think we can go.

The idea of a half-shekel is to recognize that we're only half of the picture. It's up to us to make the first move, but not to determine the finishing line. We must do our part, but it must be with the awareness that the "bottom line" may turn out to be far more lucrative than we ever imagined. The condition is that the half-shekel must be a fiery one - we must jump in and give life everything we have and more, like the flame that constantly jumps to higher and higher extremes (Midrash Moshe).

This is why every Jew had to give the half-shekel, which formed the very base of the Mishkan - because the potential for greatness lies within everyone; those who believe it, and act upon it without giving heed to the "realists" who stand ready to dash every dream and lofty goal, will achieve things they never imagined possible.

How many individuals were there that finished Shas this week that seven years ago would never have believed it possible? How many of us are inspired by their accomplishments, yet reluctant to undertake something so great, whether Daf Yomi or some other ambitious study program, lest we fall short. "Your task," say Chazal (Avos 2:16), "is not to finish the job" - where we ultimately arrive is Hashem's contribution. "But neither are you free to absolve yourself from trying."

Have a good Shabbos.

***** This week's publication has been sponsored by R' Benzion Jakubovicz and his family, in honour of the marriage of their daughter, Bailu, to R' Chazkel Einhorn. May they see much Yiddishe Nachas from the new couple! ***** Text Copyright © 2005 by [Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann](#) and **Torah.org**