

EMOTIONAL

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

The job of building the tabernacle was not a simple contractor's task. The holy kavanot -intentions- that had to be infused into the structure and its utensils were not for a simple Jew either. Moshe was correct in assuming that he was probably the best suited for the task. However, Hashem informed him that it was to be Besalel the grandson of Hur who would merit the misvah. It was Hur's brave defense of Hashem's honor in the face of a mob of idol worshippers that tipped the scale in favor of his offspring. The Tabernacle was, after all, atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf that Hur so strongly opposed at the cost of his life.

The question is raised, however, "Wouldn't Besalel's personal animosity towards those who murdered his grandfather invalidate him to serve as the one to represent all of the people in this holy task?" This emotion should have interfered with his ability to act on behalf of the entire congregation with the unity and purity of intent needed to complete the job correctly. The Midrash points out that the Tabernacle was built with such a degree of purity that it was hidden and never destroyed as were the two Temples that later served as the House of G-d. How did he attain this level and block out the negatives feelings?

The Messilat Yesharim describes vengeance as one of the most powerful human emotions - one that can block common sense and clear thought in even the wisest of people. It is, he says, one of the hardest feelings to control. Besalel gathered all of his tremendous energy to overcome this force. He knew that if the Torah demands of a person then the command is achievable. This power that he so definitely invoked earned him the honor of building the Mishkan even more than Moshe. It was the love of his brothers that prompted his grandfather to sacrifice his life and this same feeling made Besalel most suited for the job.

We often feel that our emotions are in charge of our behavior. "I couldn't help myself" is a common excuse. We should realize that we have powers far beyond what logic dictates to conquer our emotions and to do what Hashem prefers. Understanding that this is true, increases our responsibility to perform as the Torah dictates - even in the face of the strongest waves of emotion. If more of us used this energy to forgive rather than avenge we could bring peace to our people and redemption speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom

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