

# United We Stand

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Parshas Ki Tisa

18th of Adar, 5783

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## The Parsha's Paths

*See, I have called by name: Betzalel son of Uri son of Chur (31:2).*

After describing the Sin of the Golden Calf and its aftermath, this week's Parsha describes G-d's command to create the Mishkan, a dwelling place for His Glory in the midst of the nation, as it were. G-d appoints Betzalel, a thirteen year old boy, to be in charge of the Mishkan's construction. Why did such a young boy whom the Torah tells us almost nothing about merit this important role? Furthermore, the Torah doesn't usually describe a person's genealogy up through their grandfather, yet Betzalel's grandfather is mentioned when introducing him both here and again in both Vayakhel and Pekudei. Why?

Rabbi

Yissocher Frand quotes the midrash in Vayakhel, which explains that it was in the merit of Chur that Betzalel was chosen and given the wisdom to build the Mishkan. Rashi cites the midrash (32:5) that when the Jewish people desired to build the Golden Calf, Chur, one of the leaders of the nation, protested. The people killed him, and perhaps that is why Aharon took a different approach, trying to delay and steer the people instead.

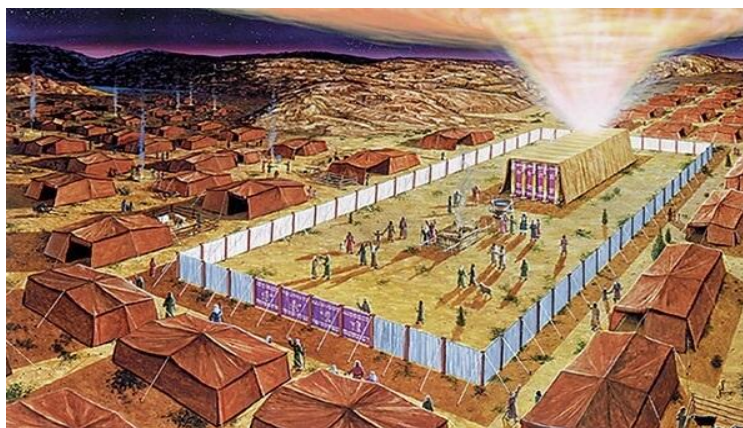
While Chur's uncompromising stance may have been ineffective, it was nevertheless crucial. Sometimes it is necessary to stand up for what's true and right regardless of what we ultimately accomplish.

Perhaps it is not incidental that it is precisely this quality through which Betzalel merited to lead the creation of the Mishkan. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks points out that if we examine the chapters in between the Sin of the Golden Calf and the command to build the Mishkan, the 33rd perek seems strikingly out of place.

G-d was angry, so to speak, and Moshe had been trying to appease Him. While later (in the 34th Perek) G-d reveals His Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and seems to be appeased, this narrative seems interrupted by what seems to be a very personal request of G-d by Moshe: He asks to "show me Your ways" and "show me Your glory." Amid other peculiarities in this encounter, Rabbi Sacks is led to conclude with an approach that has a deep foundation in the midrash and is expounded on by the Beis Halevi: Until this point, the Jewish people experienced and related to G-d in His Majesty, as a purely Transcendent Being. They witnessed the Ten Plagues, the Splitting of the Sea, and the Revelation at Sinai. However, this way of relating to G-d was

unsustainable; it demanded a transcendent level of being that we could not achieve in our day to day lives. G-d was not felt "in our midst"; He was only "in the heavens." This is what led the people to so quickly descend to idolatry; the people's desire to replicate the transcendent experience of G-d in a way that did not entail the overwhelming and perhaps unachievable demands of the real thing, the same way that instead of purely focusing on what G-d wants of them, people fixate on various more attainable ideologies, goals, and desires.

Moshe was telling G-d, "The people need to see Your Glory. They need to feel Your presence in their midst. That's why this sin happened and that's what's necessary to prevent it from happening again." In response, G-d shifted the entire nature of our relationship with Him. We were no longer expected to prepare ourselves to absorb G-d's glory from the heavens. Now, G-d would come closer to our level, enabling us to focus on just doing what we can in the



**In honor of the Bar Mitzva of Netanel Orlan.**

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moment while still feeling His presence. This was the idea of the Mishkan; that we can make a space for G-d in our midst, wherever it is we may be.

It was precisely this way of thinking which personified Chur. Chur was not concerned with what he would ultimately achieve; He was not obsessed with a transcendent connection and desire for perfection which possessed his fellow Jews. All he cared about was what he was supposed to do in the here and now, regardless of the ultimate consequences. The Mishkan enabled all of the people to appreciate this mentality - no matter where they were or what they were doing, G-d was with them there. They didn't need to shoot for the heavens. That is why it was precisely Chur's grandson who merited to build the Mishkan.

Perhaps it's also no coincidence that Betzalel was thirteen. Having just started his Jewish journey as a Bar Mitzva boy, Betzalel would not approach the Mishkan project with the perspective of years of spiritual growth and any pretensions about needing to achieve a certain exalted state in order to serve G-d. He would approach the project with the knowledge that he was just beginning his journey, yet with the passion and excitement to do whatever it was that he was supposed to do to serve G-d. It was this humility and presence which personified what the Mishkan was all about.

Big-picture aspirations can be exciting, motivating, and important, but the story of this week's Parsha teaches us that it can also be terribly destructive. We can't obsess over how much we've accomplished or what we ultimately want to do or become; our primary focus must always be, "what does G-d want from me right now? What can I achieve in this moment?" What we ultimately accomplish is not in our control and is not the goal. G-d is with us in the here and now, no matter how messy and removed it may be from where we might want to be, and our most important task is what's right in front of us.

This Shabbos, my wife and I have the privilege of celebrating another Bar Mitzva boy who is also a "son of Uri," Netanel Orlian. I give him my humble blessing that like Betzalel and like his own family, he should always recognize the primacy and the opportunity of the here-and-now, feel G-d's presence wherever he may find himself, and inspire others to do the same.

## Deeper Meanings

Reprinted from our Mishloach Manos poem.

Near the end of the Megillah it is told  
How Mordechai left the king's presence with a  
crown of gold.

With a mantle of purple wool and fine linen,  
The people cried joyously, they were huggin' and  
kissin'

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But the best part of the outfit, before I digress,  
Were the royal robes of white and **te-chei-les!**  
As we say in *Shoshanas Yaakov*, after the Megillah we  
recite,

How as the people saw Mordechai's Techailles (boy  
what a sight)

They rejoiced and were merry, glad as can be,  
But what is it about it that made them so happy?  
The Shem MiShmuel explains, as cited by Rabbi  
Yamin Goldsmith,

That the Jews thought their salvation was the stuff  
of a legend or myth.

It couldn't be relied upon to happen again if they'd  
need

Maybe another time they wouldn't succeed  
They felt unworthy of merit, bereft of a reason to  
believe,

Why G-d would continue to spare them from having  
to grieve.

But Techeiles has a unique property; it never will  
fade.

It manages to maintain its bright royal shade.  
When we tie it to our tzitzis it's there to remind us

How G-d is always there, even in golus,  
No matter what happens, we just have to search  
And G-d will never leave us in the lurch.

It's the message of Purim, even if it's not always  
clear,

The techeiles reminds us of our relationship so dear,  
With HaKadosh-Baruch-Hu, the Master of All,  
He's always there with us, even when we feel so  
small.

So may this mishloach manos remind you of the  
great gift we share,

A relationship precious beyond measure - now make  
others aware.

## Goal of the week

Write a thank you letter to someone in your life whom  
you're grateful for.

**This week's bulletin is dedicated for a Refuah Sheleima for Reuven ben Golda and Gavriel Margoliot Ben Malka. Please have them in mind in your Tefillos.** [Have A Great Shabbos!](#)