

March 17, 2012      VA-YAKHEL (He Assembles) / PEKUDEI (The Accounts)

We live in an age of technical expertise and calm deliberation. Civilization functions smoothly because there is a form that fits every occasion and dispassionate experts and clerks keep the system going. What we seem to be short of is passion. But then again, passion is often disparaged in our culture. Someone who is motivated by a dream is derided as an idealist. Someone devoted to a cause is accused of having an agenda. Someone who is devoted to an individual becomes a groupie. We seek advice and leadership from the bland, the opportunistic, and the practical. Then we resent our leaders for their lack of passion.

Passion is precisely what streams just under the surface of this *parashah*. In speaking about the artisans who will fashion the *Mishkan*, - the Tent of Meeting - and its implements, HaShem proclaimed the name of Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and also Oholiav and gave them the ability to teach. HaShem also put understanding in the heart of every wise-hearted man who was willing to help build the sanctuary.

So, if all of these craftsmen are at work on the *Mishkan*, why is Bezalel the only one who is given credit? Why does the Torah state in chapter 37 verse 1 that Bezalel made the Ark of *shitim* wood? Was Bazalel the only one who worked on that project? Maybe so, but Why not mention the other craftsmen and give them a little credit where credit is due?

Rashi, in one of his *midrashim*, says that Bezalel was unique in the degree of his devotion and passion for the *Mishkan*. He wasn't motivated by his wages, nor did he consider it a good career move. His motivation was to serve *HaShem* and his people at the same time. He was inspired by a sense of mission and was willing to devote endless hours to the many technical details that such fine artistry requires. He insisted that he give his all because he was serving a higher cause. He truly had passion for what he was doing.

Perhaps we need to rekindle that sense of purpose, passion, and service in the details of our own lives and jobs. Instead of seeing each assignment as a task to finish and cross off a list, and instead of evaluating each option for what it can do for our advancement, perhaps we could train ourselves to see an opportunity for service in each new challenge. If we learned to speak the word *mitzvah* anytime helping another human being was a possibility, think of what a world we could fashion.

Theme: Passion      Hebrew reader: Judy Cohen Exodus 36:1

Parashah reading: Exodus 36:1-5

Haftarah: Ezekiel 36:24-30

B'rit Chadasha: Hebrews 9:1-11