

ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר שמות
פרשת ויקהל

SERIES 2: ISSUE 22

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE MISHKAN AND OF BETZALEL

Chapter 35

10) *Every wise-hearted person among you, they shall come and they will do everything that Hashem has commanded:*

11) *The Mishkan and its tent-covering and its roof and its hooks and its beams and its bars and its pillars and its sockets;*

25) *Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands and they brought the spun yarn of turquoise, deep red, and crimson [wool], and the linen.*

26) *All the women whose hearts filled them with wisdom spun the goats.*

30) *Moshe told Bnei Yisrael, "See! Hashem has called with the name Betzalel, the son of Uri, the son of Chur, from the tribe of Yehuda.*

31) *He has filled him with the spirit of God – with wisdom, understanding and knowledge – and every type of craftwork.*

32) *And to think thoughts and to make in gold, in silver, and in copper.*

(י) וְכָל-חֶכְמֵי-לֵב בְּכֶם יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה'.

(יא) אֶת-הַמִּשְׁכָּן אֶת-אָהָלוֹ וְאֶת-מַכְסֵהוּ וְאֶת-קַרְסָיו וְאֶת-קַרְשָׁיו וְאֶת-בְּרִיחָו וְאֶת-עַמֻּדָיו וְאֶת-אֲדָנָיו.

(כה) וְכָל-אִשָּׁה חַכְמַת-לֵב בְּיָדֶיהָ טָווּ וַיָּבִיאוּ מִטּוֹה אֶת-הַתְּכֵלֶת וְאֶת-הָאַרְגָּמָן אֶת-תּוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי וְאֶת-הַשֵּׁשׁ.

(כו) וְכָל-הַנָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא לִבָּן אֲתִנָּה בְּחֶכְמָה טָווּ אֶת-הָעֲזִים.

(ל) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוּ קָרָא ה' בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל בֶּן-אֹוֹרִי בֶן-חֹוֹר לְמִטָּה יְהוּדָה.

(לא) וַיִּמְלֵא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחֶכְמָה בְּתַבּוּנָה וּבְדַעַת וּבְכָל-מְלָאכָה.

(לב) וְלַחֲשֹׁב מַחְשְׁבֹת לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּזָהָב וּבַכֶּסֶף וּבַנְּחֹשֶׁת.

Consider the following questions:

1. Why is each item of the Mishkan mentioned in this passage (as exemplified in verse 11) preceded by the word **אֶת**? It seems extraneous.
2. Why does verse 25 say that *every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands*? Spinning is a skill of the hands and does not need a "wise heart."
3. Why does verse 26 repeat "*all the women whose hearts filled them with wisdom*"?
4. The words "*the spirit of God*" in verse 31 seem redundant. It could have just said, "He has filled him with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge."
5. In verse 32, what does it mean that Betzalel knew how to *think thoughts*? And why say "*in gold, etc.*" rather than "from gold"?

The descriptive term “*wise-hearted*” refers to those upon whom Hashem bestowed a Divine spirit of wisdom in the merit of their desire to throw themselves enthusiastically into fulfilling Hashem’s will in building the Mishkan even though they did not possess the proper technical skills. This enabled them to begin the job – and in effect, for the Mishkan to be built by itself, through Hashem’s intervention. How so?

Bamidbar Rabbah (12:12) states that as one Mishkan was being built on earth another was being set up in heaven. All that was needed was the eager, initial effort of those doing the work below, for the *shefa* (spiritual bounty) inherent in each Heavenly part then wrapped itself in its physical counterpart and helped it to be constructed in a way that they would exist together in the lower world. The Hebrew word *אִתּוֹ* precedes each part of the Mishkan to include its corresponding part above (for *אִתּוֹ* also means “with,” and thus often comes to include something additional). **[This answers Question 1.]**

Each woman who *spun with her hands* the coverings of the Mishkan also needed to be “*wise-hearted*,” i.e., enthusiastic about her work. **[This answers Question 2.]** But the ability to receive a Divine *shefa* to build the Mishkan depended on each individual’s personal level of spiritual preparation, and there were some women who reached a higher level than this. These were women whose hearts filled them (lit., raised them up) *with wisdom* (verse 26); their hearts literally overflowed with a desire to serve Hashem. They were therefore able to spin the goats’ hair while it was still on the goats – something which involved an extra high level of skill. **[This answers Question 3.]**

The merit of those involved in the Mishkan was sufficient to draw down the *shefa* from the Mishkan above. But it was not enough to confer the same level of holiness on the Mishkan below as existed in the Mishkan above to the extent that Hashem’s awesome Presence could dwell within it. For this, help was need from Betzalel, who knew “how to combine the Hebrew letters through which the heavens and the heart were created” (*Berachos* 55a) and who would be able to bring into being a new level of existence within the Mishkan in the world below. He knew how to have special *kavvanos* – thoughts trained on the higher worlds – due to his knowledge of the source of every part of Creation in the worlds above. Through the *kavvanos* he would have in his mind, he would cause the spirituality of every part of the Heavenly Mishkan in the higher worlds to infuse the earthly one below. This is what Moshe meant when he said that Betzalel was able “*to think thoughts*”. Through these *kavvanos*, he was actually able to make a fundamental change “in” the nature of the metals he was using. He was not just fashioning a vessel from gold, where the metal remains gold but in a new form. He was making the holy, spiritual vessels of the Mishkan, by transferring into them the spiritual essence of the Heavenly Mishkan. **[This answers Question 5.]**

Moshe explained how Hashem transmitted to Betzalel this ability by saying, “*He has filled him with the spirit of God* (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) – *with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge*.” Why do these three particular spiritual qualities represent the “spirit of God”? Because these are the three qualities that Hashem used to create the world, as *Mishlei* 3:19–20 says: *Hashem established the earth with wisdom, He arranged the heavens with understanding. With His knowledge the depths were split open and the heavens transmitted dew*. Since Hashem wanted Betzalel to join together the Mishkan he was making in the world on earth with the Heavenly Mishkan above, and create a new physical and spiritual reality, the verse tells us that Hashem granted him the very qualities which He had used to create and join together the heavens and the earth. **[This answers Question 4.]**