

Working From the Shadows

Parashat Ki Tisa – Rav Benjy Myers

Two homes are referred to in this week's parasha. Both mobile, and both serving as a focal point for the Jewish people camped in the wilderness. The first belongs to God, and the second to His trusted servant, Moshe.

The final instructions are given regarding the construction of God's home in this world, the Mishkan – Tabernacle. There was no call for bids, and no public discourse as to what the Mishkan should include and what its final shape should be. This was entirely God's decision, and Moshe passed this decision onto the people with no discernable quarrel from the Israelites. Furthermore, the decision on who the chief architect and builder will be was not met by any argument. His name was Betzalel, and he was from the tribe of Yehuda.

The Talmud (Berakhot 55a) relates an interesting conversation between the chief architect, Betzalel, and the primary conveyor of instructions from Upon High, Moshe:

At the time when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe; Go and tell Betzalel to make me a tabernacle, an ark and vessels, Moshe went and reversed the order, saying, Make an ark and vessels and a tabernacle. Betzalel said to him: Moshe, our Teacher, as a rule a man first builds a house and then brings vessels into it; but you say, Make me an ark and vessels and a tabernacle. Where shall I put the vessels that I am to make? Can it be that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to you, Make a tabernacle, an ark and vessels? Moshe replied: Perhaps you were in the shadow of God and knew!

Betzalel was blessed with insight. He knew that there must be a correct order in which things must be constructed, and that God would not have given instructions to the contrary. Moshe is astounded at this insight. He comments that the name must be indicative of the person's characteristics. *Btzel* – "in the shadow," *El* – "of God."



Schultz Rosenberg Campus, 12324 Merit Drive, Dallas TX, 75251

Phone: 214-295-3525

Fax: 214-295-3526

Email: kollelofdallas@sbcglobal.net

Web site: www.kollelofdallas.org

The Community Kollel of Dallas is an affiliate of the Center for the Jewish Future of Yeshiva University



Betzalel has taught Moshe an important lesson, one that he takes to heart and implements. There are times when you gain a better understanding of your surroundings, a greater insight into Divine thoughts and plans when you are in the shadows.

Soon after this announcement, the Torah relates the incident of the sin of the Golden Calf. Moshe must now intercede on behalf of the Jewish people, and save them from annihilation at God's hands. He does this, successfully.

Immediately after the initial intervention and rescue operation, Moshe moves house. He removes his tent from the inner circle of the Levite camp into the outskirts of the Israelite encampment. Out of the limelight and into the periphery. Now when he communes with the Divine, the cloud will come and envelop him and his tent. It is possible he learned this from Betzalel, and the need to be in the shadows to better understand what God is all about. He even has a constant reminder of the need to be in the shadows in the form of Yehoshua, who never leaves the tent, and is always to be found in the shadow of his master.

But this is not enough. Even in the cloud of the Divine presence, even with the clear insight into Divine will, it is not clear enough. Moshe turns to God and asks: "Show me Your glory!" Moshe wants to understand not only what God's plans are, but why. It is at this point that God delivers the final part of the lesson:

He said: "I will let all My goodness pass before you; I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you, and I will favor when I wish to favor, and I will have compassion when I wish to have compassion." And He said, "You will not be able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live." And the Lord said: "Behold, there is a place with Me, and you shall stand on the rock. And it shall be that when My glory passes by, I will place you into the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove My hand, and you will see My back but My face shall not be seen" (Shmot 33:19-23).



Schultz Rosenberg Campus, 12324 Merit Drive, Dallas TX, 75251

Phone: 214-295-3525

Fax: 214-295-3526

Email: kollelofdallas@sbcglobal.net

Web site: www.kollelofdallas.org

The Community Kollel of Dallas is an affiliate of the Center for the Jewish Future of Yeshiva University



God's reply is unambiguous. There is no way for a person, even one as great as Moshe, to fully comprehend the reasons for God's actions in this world. We may be able to grasp what is expected of us, but we will still be working in the shadows.

Betzalel understood this message. Yehoshua understood this message. It is possible to build an edifice as breathtaking as the Mishkan from the shadows. It is possible to become the heir-apparent, and then lead the people in a successful conquest of the Promised Land from the shadows. Moshe stands back as God passes over him, and he too comes to this understanding of the importance of a shadow.

This shadow then takes over Moshe's life. As Moshe returns from his trek up the mountain, his face shines so brightly that the people are unable to look at him directly, and so he covers his face. It is the construction of the Mishkan from the shadows that inspires Moshe to understand that he too can, and must, guide the nation through trial and tribulation, and even come to its salvation when necessary, from the shadows.



Schultz Rosenberg Campus, 12324 Merit Drive, Dallas TX, 75251
Phone: 214-295-3525 Fax: 214-295-3526
Email: [kollofdallas@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kollelofdallas@sbcglobal.net) Web site: www.kollelofdallas.org

The Community Kollel of Dallas is an affiliate of the Center for the Jewish Future of Yeshiva University

