



RABBI EPHRAIM

SPRECHER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

A Word To The Wise

“See, G-d has proclaimed Bezalel by name...he filled him with G-dly spirit, with wisdom, insight, and understanding.” (Shmot 35:30-31)

Bezalel, the master architect of the Mishkan, was endowed with exceptional wisdom and knowledge necessary to make a dwelling place for G-d's Shechinah. Midrash Tanchuma comments that Bezalel already had possessed great wisdom before he was appointed to this monumental position. This is because G-d grants wisdom only to one who already has wisdom, as the verse in Daniel 2 states, “He gives wisdom to the wise.”

The Midrash relates that a Roman matron once asked Rav Yosi about the logic of this verse in Daniel. Why does G-d give wisdom

to the wise? Wouldn't it make more sense to give it to fools who need the wisdom, she asked. Rav Yosi answered her, like a Jew always does, with another question: If a rich man and a pauper would approach you for a loan, to whom would you lend money?

“To the rich man, of course” the matron replied, “because I am more assured of getting back my money from him. The pauper may default on the loan and have nothing with which to repay me.”

G-d will grant him this unique gift

This is the answer to your question, Rav Yosi replied to the matron. G-d gives wisdom to the wise because they know how to use the wisdom to repay G-d. The fools will take the wisdom and waste it on nonsense, thereby default on the wisdom they were given.

Where does the original wisdom of the wise come from? Shlomo Hamelech answered this when he said, “The beginning of wisdom is to acquire wisdom.” (Mishlai 4:7) A person must have a desire to acquire wisdom and demonstrate that it is the most precious commodity in life for him. Then G-d will grant him this unique gift. Bezalel was such a person. He was someone whose heart inspired him to approach the work



and to do it. (Shmot 36:2)

A person may have an extremely high IQ, but that does not make him wise. He must desire to use this special intelligence for the right purpose. There was a landmark study done a number of years ago which showed that some of the most evil people in recent history had exceptionally high IQ's. Yet this did not prevent them from committing some of the worst crimes.

What is the message for us today in our personal lives? Rav Pam stated that any Torah teacher can testify that success in Torah learning is not necessarily dependent on intellectual ability. What is needed is a strong desire to succeed, to review and to patiently grow. What's more, one has to treasure every bit of Torah knowledge that one acquires. That is the key to success! ■



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