

Parashat Ki-Tissa & Parah 5773

By Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

At the end of Parashat BeShalach [17:10], when Amalek came to do battle against our people, Moshe Rabbeinu assigns Yehoshua the task of leading the battle, while he, together with Aharon his brother and “Chur” ascended to the top of the hill. Who is “Chur”? Rashi identifies him as being the son of Miriam and Kaleiv, in other words, Moshe’s nephew.

In our parasha, [32:1] we find the people agitated as they gathered around Aharon and said to him: “Rise up, make for us gods that will go before us, for this man Moshe who brought us out of Mitzrayim - we do not know what became of him!” Aharon sees he has no chance of stopping them asks that they to bring their gold earrings to begin the process for the “eigel zahav” [golden calf]

Questions to ponder: Why didn’t Aharon try to stop them? And Chur, who was previously with Aharon all the time, why is he not mentioned here at all? The Midrash VaYikra Rabba, cited by Rashi [32:5] answers these questions. It says that Aharon saw that his nephew Chur [Miriam’s son] tried to interfere with the mob and to persuade them not to do this horrible deed of going against G-d. His words of admonition only fell on deaf ears and further angered the people, that in their rage they killed him. Aharon saw all this happening and realized that no words will dissuade the people from their intent. So Aharon tried a different strategy, namely, to play along with the people and stall them as long as possible, hoping by then that Moshe would return.

My question to all this is, what was the purpose and meaning of Chur’s death? It seems that he didn’t accomplish anything and that he died in vain; leaving his wife an Almana and his children as Yetomim. However, by looking further in the parasha we see something extraordinary and profound. The young genius who was given the task of being the chief architect in constructing the Mishkan, was Betzalel, the son of Uri, who was the son of Chur [31:2]. So Betzalel was the grandson of Chur.

Interestingly, whenever the name Betzalel is mentioned [see 38:22] his genealogy is always connected back to his grandfather, which is unusual for the Torah. In doing so here, it is teaching us that Chur *did* accomplish something. By his verbal interference he is credited with causing a *delay* in that awful sin of eigel zahav. Chur was rewarded by having a grandson whom he taught and nurtured to eventually become the Chief Architect of the Mishkan.

A lesson for us, in our responsibility of *Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Lazeh*, that we are responsible for one another, if we see another Jew about to do an *aveira*, and we cannot stop him or dissuade him from the transgression, but we can at least cause a delay or a pause, then that too is meritorious.