

“These are the reckonings of the Mishkan.” (38:21)

The *parsha* begins with a detailed listing of the amounts of the various metals used for the *Mishkan*. Even though Moshe *Rabbeinu* himself deposited the metals under the supervision of Betzalel, both individuals whose integrity was beyond dispute, Moshe, nonetheless, made a public reckoning of all of the proceeds and donations. Leaders must be above reproach, and Moshe refused to take a chance by relying on assumptions. The people must be absolutely certain. Only a great man cares about every little detail in regard to other people's money. Leaders, as well as each individual, must keep an accounting of the funds that pass through their hands. Indeed, the *Kav Ha'yashar* writes that this is a sign of true *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven.

A man once informed the *Chazon Ish* that his daughter had become engaged to a person who was an outstanding Torah scholar and *yarei Shomayim*. The *Chazon Ish* replied, “You are probably correct in stating that he is an outstanding scholar. This is something that you can either inquire about from people or you can speak with him yourself in learning. How do you know, however, that he is G-d-fearing? Have you had financial dealings with him?”

Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, z.l., was known for taking meticulous care of other people's money. He was especially careful not to benefit personally from his *yeshivah*. When one of his sons became engaged, one of the *yeshivah*'s supporters offered him a substantial loan. He politely refused, explaining that if he accepted it, the potential lender might think, “*Rav Moshe Aharon* represents the *yeshivah*. I have already given him a loan, so why should I extend myself further and give the *yeshivah* money?” He refused to be party to any situation in which the *yeshivah* might sustain a financial loss because of him.

Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, z.l., the *Alter m'Novardok* once stayed at an inn during one of his many travels on behalf of the *yeshivah*. One of his fellow lodgers was a distinguished Jew from Moscow. It was *Erev Shabbos*, and the *Alter* was preparing for *Shabbos*. He asked the other gentleman if he could borrow a clothes brush to clean his suit for *Shabbos*. When the *Alter* went to return the brush, the man had already left for *shul*. After *Shabbos* was over and the *Alter* had returned from *shul*, he immediately sought out the man, only to be told that he had already left.

The *Alter* was disconcerted. What should he do? He was in possession of an article that belonged to someone else. How could he return it? There were millions of people living in Moscow. To find one would be like searching for a needle in the proverbial haystack. In hopes of finding someone who might know the elusive owner of the brush, the *Alter* carried the brush with him wherever he went. Maybe he would become lucky and meet someone who knew someone who knew the owner of the brush. Regrettably, his efforts proved to be in vain.

It was seven years later, and the *Alter* was riding on a train – the brush still with him. During the course of the trip, he and his seatmate engaged in conversation. The *Alter* asked the man from where he hailed. When the man replied that he lived in Moscow, the *Alter* excitedly asked him

whether he knew the owner of the brush. To the *Alter's* great joy and relief, the person not only knew the individual, but he was even his close neighbor. The *Alter* immediately explained his predicament regarding the brush and asked him to return it.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, z.l., once went to someone's house for a *bar-mitzvah Kiddush* after *Shabbos* morning *davening*. He arrived shortly after the celebration had commenced, so that he had to make his own *Kiddush*. It was not *Rav Elya's* nature to tarry long at these affairs. It was, therefore, inexplicable that he remained until the end of the *Kiddush*, which had lasted some time. After all of the guests had departed, *Rav Elya* asked to speak to the mother of the *bar-mitzvah* boy. "I would like to beg your forgiveness," he began. "My hands trembled as I made *Kiddush*, causing some wine to spill onto the tablecloth." He then added that in situations such as this, he would ask forgiveness not only for himself, but for all of the guests. "When we first arrived at your home, the tablecloth was sparkling clean and laid out so beautifully. Now it is covered with crumbs and spills. This did not have to occur, since it is quite possible to take food without causing a mess. Please forgive me, along with everyone else, for the trouble we have caused you."

One might think that the above narratives are unique episodes in the lives of people who were above and beyond our perception. While this might be true, we must understand that they were only acting in accordance with *Halachah*. Their sensitivity towards other human beings, as well as their sense of responsibility to carry out the ethical dictates that are part and parcel of *Halachah*, was exemplary. That is why they were acclaimed as Torah giants.