

These are the reckonings of the Mishkan, the Mishkan of Testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe's bidding. (38:21)

A person's perspective, his viewpoint on circumstances, his outlook concerning people and situations, is most often molded by his interests, his endeavors, the areas of life in which he is personally involved. In other words, a person's outlook is controlled by where his "head" happens to be. Let us see how this preface fits into explaining a statement which *Chazal* made concerning Moshe *Rabbeinu's* decision to give a full accounting of every ounce of gold, silver and copper that the people contributed towards the construction of the *Mishkan*.

The *Yalkut Shimoni*, as cited by **Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita**, relates that, when Moshe would leave his tent to walk through the camp, two types of onlookers commented about their leader. One type viewed our quintessential leader in the positive manner that he should: "Fortunate is the one who gave birth to him; all of his days, Hashem speaks to him; all of his days he is complete with Hashem." These people characterized Moshe as an individual who had reached the apex of spiritual distinction, a human being who was closely connected with Hashem. Others harbored more jaundiced opinions of Moshe. They looked at his physical build and saw what they felt was a well-fed specimen of humanity. This prompted these miscreants to suggest that our leader was nourishing himself on that which rightfully belonged to all of the Jews. They intimated that not all of the contributed funds had made it to the *Mishkan*, some of them lining our leader's pockets.

Such ludicrous slander is mind-boggling. To think that money played a role in Moshe's life; to suggest that he was pocketing some of the till was laughable – and sad. How low could these people descend? To what nadir of perversity could they plunge?

Rav Levinstein feels that this is an example of what had earlier been suggested: a person views life, the world around him, people and situations, through the lens of his own context. We are different from one another; thus, we each view things and people in the context of our own personal perspectives. We will be most sensitive to that which affects us personally and manifest less empathy towards that for which we have no personal concern.

Rav Levinstein relates that years earlier, sitting in the Arab *Shuk* in Yaffo, his friend noticed two men of differing professions sitting on chairs in front of their shops. One was a barber; the other was a shoe maker. They were talking to one another over cups of coffee. Interestingly, whenever a passerby went by, each man took notice. It was on that which they each seemed to be focusing that spelled the disparity between their perspectives. The barber would glance at the passerby's head of hair, while the shoemaker set his sights on the man's shoes. One gazed upward; the other looked downward. A similar variance presents itself when an electrician and a carpenter enter a room. One looks at the lighting; the other looks at the chairs and tables.

Horav Mordechai Mann, zl, explains that this is the reason that an infant puts everything he touches into his mouth. An adult understands that, as a mature person, he requires many different items in order to function properly: food to eat; clothing to wear; transportation vehicle for enabling him to get around, etc. Everything has its specific purpose and place in his life.

A child's world is very limited. His parents provide everything for him. The only thing that the child thinks about, his only area of concern, is satisfying his immediate hunger. Therefore, from his limited perspective, everything revolves around his mouth! Therefore, whatever is in his hand, he immediately places in his mouth.

We return to Moshe *Rabbeinu* and the discrepant perspectives through which the people viewed him. The individual whose life revolved around materialism-- for whom the mighty dollar regulates his life and defines the value of individuals with whom he comes into contact -- looked at Moshe and wondered what happened to the millions that he had gathered for the *Mishkan*. If Moshe were dressed impeccably in clothing that bespoke an individual who was materially comfortable, the question that would come to mind was how did he come into so much money? After all, he did not really have a job. "Clearly," he must be skimming off the top. When a person's head is always in the mud, it is not surprising for him to come up dirty.

The other viewpoint of Moshe was held by he who understands that there is more to life than money: Our leader neither knows nor cares about money. Someone whose life revolved around money wondered what Moshe did with the gold and silver.

Chazal teach (*Shabbos* 112b), "If the earlier ones (Torah leaders) are (viewed by us) as angels, then we are like human beings. If, (however), the earlier ones (in our eyes) are viewed as human beings, then we are mere donkeys." What are *Chazal* teaching us?

Horav Yechezkel Sarna, zl, explains that, when a donkey views a man, he thinks to himself, "This is no ordinary donkey. This is a special donkey, one that walks on two legs, instead of four. This donkey is capable of doing incredible things, which no ordinary donkey could achieve." In short, the human being seen through the eyes of a donkey is a super donkey!

Now, how do human beings view angels? An angel can fly, can achieve in a moment what might take a human being a year to accomplish. An angel must be a superman! Man thinks like a donkey. Thus, a human being must be a super donkey!

Veritably, we all know that an angel is no more a man than a man is a donkey. It all depends on the context of the perspective of the individual. We must understand that it is impossible to fathom the greatness of the sages who preceded us, because they were more than simply of a different caliber – they were completely different entities! They are not like us in any way!

The individual who feels he can judge Moshe *Rabbeinu* through the context of his human

perspective is wrong. Moshe was beyond our ken. We cannot grasp Moshe *Rabbeinu*. To judge him and ascribe to him the frailties which are common to us is like a donkey judging a human – or a human judging an angel. We are just not on the same page as Moshe.