

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

Imagine Moshe *Rabbeinu* gave an accounting of every item used for the construction of the *Mishkan*. He gave this accounting to the Jewish People to allay any fears that they might have concerning the propriety of his leadership. It is astounding – almost unreal – that the *adon haNaviim*, master of all prophets, the quintessential leader of the Jewish nation, had to prove himself! Concerning Moshe, Hashem attests: *B'chol Beisi ne'eman hu*, "In all My house he is trusted" (*Bamidbar* 12:7). Yet, Moshe felt it necessary to give a clear accounting to the people of every piece of gold, silver, copper and precious stones. Why did he do this? Was it not beneath his dignity?

*Chazal* teach us that Moshe was responding to the *leitzanei ha'dor*, jokers/scoffers of the generation, who grumbled that he had pocketed some of the funds. It was to this group of malcontents, individuals who liked to talk, slander, degrade and undermine, that Moshe reacted. Hashem did not ask for an accounting. The nation did not question his propriety. It was the work of a few sick individuals, the usual complainers – the ones for whom whatever one does for them is still insufficient – it was to them that Moshe gave a reckoning. It seems ludicrous, but Moshe was not permitting this to fester, which is why he presented a complete accounting of the *Mishkan*.

Clearly, those who spoke against Moshe were uncouth individuals, who represented the nadir of the nascent nation's citizenry. Yet, Moshe nonetheless responded. Why? Furthermore, what basis did these scoffers have? Even a joke must have some truth to it. What rationale did they have for maligning Moshe?

*Be'er Yosef* explains that following *Krias Yam Suf*, all of *Klal Yisrael* became wealthy overnight. The *bizas ha'yam*, spoils of the Red Sea, were so vast that the *Talmud* ascribes enormous sums of gold, silver and precious stones to each and every Jew. Moshe, however, became wealthy neither from the spoils of Egypt, nor from the spoils of the Red Sea. He was preoccupied with locating and salvaging Yosef *HaTzaddik's* coffin. This *mitzvah* was more precious to him than "cleaning out" Egypt. Yet, Moshe was quite wealthy. What was the source of our leader's newly-found wealth? *Rashi* explains that when Hashem commanded Moshe to engrave the second set of *Luchos*, He also told him that the *pesoles*, carvings/chips and stone dust belonged to him. These were extremely precious stones valued at a considerable sum. Moshe's bank account soared due to this *pesoles*.

There is, however, one catch: Hashem commanded Moshe to prepare a second set of *Luchos* on *Tammuz* 18. Moshe immediately ascended *Har Sinai* for a second forty-day visit. He returned on *Yom Kippur*. The next day, he made the appeal for the *Mishkan*. A few days later, the people noticed that Moshe seemed to have somehow increased his financial portfolio. How did this happen? What business deal did he arrange that netted him such profit? Overnight, their leader

was transformed from living a life of abject poverty to becoming wealthy beyond the norm. Something was wrong. Moshe should be asked to explain. Apparently, the people were unaware of the *pesoles* of the *Luchos*. They had no idea that prior to ascending *Har Sinai*, Moshe had fashioned the second *Luchos*, with a healthy profit of its *pesoles* going to his bank account. Thus, the people had “reason” to suspect.

Having explained the above, we still wonder why the people are considered *leitzanei ha’dor*, scoffers of the generations. Call them slanderers, untrusting, even foolish – but why scoffers? *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, Shlita*, explains that, after all is said and done, the situation may be quite damaging: one does not suspect and slander a *tzaddik*. He should always be given the benefit of the doubt. One who does not trust a *tzaddik*, an individual who at the slightest provocation – slightest, suspected, shred of impropriety – immediately turns against the *tzaddik*, is a truly evil person!

The lesson we derive from here is compelling. One can have abundant rationale to justify his claim against the *tzaddik*, the scenario appears quite bleak; in fact, there seems no way to justify the *tzaddik’s* action. Yet, if it is a *tzaddik* about whom one speaks, then he is a slanderer, a *leitz*, scoffer, and his name will descend to infamy – together with all of the other wicked throughout time. The choice is simple; the ramifications are not quite so simple.

How often does the situation present itself in which circumstances imply that an individual of distinguished repute “seems” to be guilty of behavior unbecoming his station in life? This is a person who has an impeccable reputation of piety and virtue. The choice is up to us: Do we look at the “purported” facts, or do we trust the man’s distinguished track record? The choice we make will determine our spiritual status on the Heavenly scale.