

# Where are the Gedolim today?

## Parshas Pikudei

### ספר שמות פרק לח

כא) אלה פקודי המשכן משפן העדת אשר פקד על פי משה עבד דת הלוים ביד איתמר בן אהרן הכהן

### פירוש בעלי התוספות על שמות פרק לח פסוק כא

וי"מ לכך אמר משכן העדות משה אמרו בשעה שחשדוהו שגנב ט"ו שקלים ממלאכת המשכן אמר משה אני רוצה שיהיה המשכן עדות וחזרו ומנו ומצאו חשבונם

*(Shemos 38:21) These are the reckonings of the Mishkan; the Mishkan of testimony, which were reckoned at Moshe's request.*

Parshas Pikudei begins with a detailed accounting of all of the gold and silver that was collected for the Mishkan. A cursory reading would lead us to assume that while a man as great as Moshe was, of course, above question, he must have asked for this calculation because public leaders must remove all suspicion no matter how farfetched.

However, the Baalei Tosfos explain things a bit differently. It seems that Moshe was in fact suspected of stealing money from the Mishkan. There were sixteen shekalim that were unaccounted for, and Moshe was suspected to have taken them. Therefore, Moshe asked for a formal accounting to remove the suspicion. At that point, it was discovered that those sixteen shekalim were actually used in the construction of the hooks of the Mishkan.

The difficulty with this Baalei Tosfos is understanding how *anyone* would suspect Moshe Rabbenu of stealing. The Mishkan was to be the dwelling place of HASHEM on this earth. It was one of the holiest objects ever created. Monies that were separated for the Mishkan were consecrated and holy. How could anyone suspect Moshe Rabbenu of pilfering those monies? And more than that, the people who accused Moshe Rabbeinu knew who he was. From the time that he came down from Har Sinai, his face shone like the sun, and for that reason, he constantly wore a veil. These people had seen Moshe go up to Shmayaim and receive the Torah. They heard the sound of HASHEM's voice speaking through him. They understood him to be the greatest human ever created. How is it possible that they suspected him of petty thievery — sixteen shekalim, no less?

This question becomes even more difficult when we take into account the circumstances of those times. This was the generation of the Midbar when all the Jews' daily needs were taken care of. They ate Mon that fell from the Heavens. They drank water from a huge rock that followed them through the desert. Their clothes grew on their backs, and their shoes never wore out. They didn't work for a living, and had no need for their money. Their entire focus and occupation was growing in learning and Yiras Shamayim. It was the ultimate kollel community. What possible motivation would Moshe have to steal the shekalim?

***How could they suspect Moshe of stealing from the Mishkan?***

The answer to this question is based on a perspective of living during those times.

## ***Appreciating Gedolim***

The story is told that one day a poor man came to the Chofetz Chaim's door asking for tzedakah. The Chofetz Chaim invited him in and offered him a full meal. When the man was finished eating, he left. As the Chofetz Chaim was cleaning up, he realized that this man had *stolen* a spoon. The Chofetz Chaim ran out into the street after him calling, "Wait, wait! Don't forget the spoon is fleishig!"

While this is a beautiful illustration of the giving nature of a Tzadik, there is a subtle message here. The man *stole a spoon from the Chofetz Chaim*. How was that possible? The Chofetz Chaim! The revered sage, the final word in Halacha, the teacher of generations. Could we imagine anyone today being lowly enough to actually steal something from such a holy man?

The answer is that no one today would act that way to the Chofetz Chaim because we have an appreciation as to who the man was. In his own generation, they didn't. That stature was only something that he acquired long after he died. For most of his life, he was viewed as a regular man — maybe a talmid chacham but nothing extraordinary. And even when the world began hearing of the Chofetz Chaim, it wasn't as some huge, towering, historic figure — a gadol maybe, but not someone who would shape history.

This seems to be a quirk in human nature. When we live in proximity to greatness, it is hard to appreciate its magnitude, so we tend to minimize it. It is far easier to lump gedolim together with other people of the generation and assume that they can't be that much greater. *Acharei Mos- Kedoshim*; it isn't until a person has passed on that people begin to appreciate who he was.

### ***The view from that generation***

This seems to be the answer to Moshe Rabbeinu. While the people living then knew of the greatness of Moshe, they still viewed him as a man of their generation. Granted he went up to Shmayim and received the Torah, "but he is a man like you and me, and who is to say that he didn't just pocket some of the shekalim? While later generations wouldn't in their wildest dreams suspect such a man, people living in those times didn't have that historical perspective, so they couldn't see him for the lofty giant that he was.

This concept has particular relevance to us as we look at the leaders of our generation and say, "Where are the Gedolim today? Where are the powerful beacons of the Mesorah?" We aren't the first to utter that cry; it has been expressed by every generation since Har Sinai, and will continue through the generations. What we see from Baalei Tosfos is that this sentiment was even expressed in regards to Moshe Rabbenu. If they suspected him of pilfering funds from the Mishkan, they didn't quite appreciate who the man was.

The correct attitude is that HASHEM provides Gedolim for each generation to guide the people living in those times. Chazal tell us that as Yiftach was for his generation, so too, was Shmuel for his. It is our job to seek out the Torah leaders of our times, to take counsel from them, and to learn the ways of HASHEM from those whom He sends to lead us.

**For more on this topic please listen to Shmuz #**

To receive the Shmuz views weekly, or to listen to any of the Shmuzin FREE, please visit [www.TheShmuz.com](http://www.TheShmuz.com)

***This issue sponsored: Li Ilui Nishmas Shayna Necha Bas Shalom. To sponsor a future issue, please contact Sponsorships@theShmuz.com***