

Dvar Torah Parashat Pikudei

These are the accountings of the Mishkan of the Testimony, which were counted at the word of Moshe...” (38:21) The Ibn Ezra cites a difficulty posed by Rav Sadiyah Gaon: The Torah gives an account of what was done with the silver and copper donated for the construction of the Mishkan and its vessels, but no such account is given in reference to the gold collected.

Perhaps the solution lies in understanding a statement by the Daas Zekainim in Parshas Terumah. The Torah lists gold, silver, and copper as the three metals donated for the construction of the Mishkan. The Daas Zekainim comments that these three alloys represent three levels of charitable donations. Gold represents the donations of a healthy individual, silver represents the contributions of someone who is ill, and copper represents the donations of someone who has already passed on. When making a charitable donation, there are two factors to be considered: the impact on the individual giving up his resources and the return on his investment, i.e. what he hopes to get in return. A person who donates after death bears no loss in his giving but hopes to accumulate merit to protect him in the next world. This is the lowest level of donating, and is represented by the giving of copper. Someone whose giving is spurred by illness bears a loss of resources, but hopes to see a return on his investment, i.e. regaining his health. This is the middle level, the giving of silver. A person who has his health yet donates, bears a loss of funds and gives without ulterior motives. This is the highest level of donating, the giving of gold.

People generally tend to attribute to others the very faults they themselves possess. The Talmud refers to this behaviour as “kol haposel bemumo poseil” – “One who finds deficiencies in another is transposing his own deficiencies upon that person.” If a person gives with ulterior motives, he will ask for an account of how his donation was spent. Since he cannot give altruistically, he assumes that the person collecting from him has a personal agenda as well. Therefore, he requires a complete account of how the donation was allocated. The Torah gives a complete account of the silver and copper donations, for it was for these donations that the donor required a complete account. However, since the gold donor’s giving was completely altruistic, he had no doubt that the treasurer’s motives were just as pure. Therefore, an account was not necessary.