

אלה פקודי המשכן משכן העדת אשר פקד על פי משה. The אלשיך, as quoted by R' Yitzchok Zilberstein in his new ספר, אחת שאלתי, explains that משה רבינו anticipated that the ליצנים would accuse him of taking money for himself from the משכן. Therefore, he gave an exact accounting of everything. The question is: If these people were ליצנים, would they trust his accounting anyway?

The answer is in the phrase: אשר פקד על פי משה - these calculations were made according to משה's instructions. Even if the public refuses to accept an accounting from their leader, he must still provide it to be vindicated both in the eyes of Hashem and of ישראל. In other words, משה רבינו did this not just for the people, but to ensure that he himself was acting properly. R' Zilberstein brings a fascinating משל that illustrates this point powerfully. Here is the story from a Yid:

“Some time ago, I boarded a plane to ארץ ישראל from America. Sitting next to me was a well-known ראש ישיבה. When they served our meals, I waited for the ראש ישיבה to make a ברכה so I could answer אמן. To my astonishment, he put the food directly into his mouth without saying a ברכה - not even mumbling the words under his breath. This continued throughout the entire long flight. He ate and drank, yet he did not say a single ברכה ראשונה or אחרונה. Later in the flight, a group of passengers organized a מנין for מנחה. Before joining, I gently woke up the ראש ישיבה and said, ‘They’re starting a מנין now near the galley.’ To my surprise, he did not move from his seat. He could hear and see us davening, but he continued to sit quietly, detached from all that was going on. I was horrified. The entire flight, I watched his behavior - no davening, no ברכות, no קדיש, no קדושה. A storm of emotions raged inside me, but I controlled myself and did not say anything. When we landed, everyone gathered their things and prepared to disembark. I was ready to leave, but the ראש ישיבה remained in his seat, motionless. Curious, I asked him, ‘Is ראש ישיבה staying here? Everyone is already off the plane.’ He answered, ‘I’m waiting for them to unload my mother’s ארון from the plane.’

I was shaken to the core. The man I had suspected of disregarding מצוות, or worse, of being a fraud, was actually an אונן, bringing his deceased mother’s body for קבורה in ארץ ישראל. An אונן - one whose close relative has not yet been buried - is not only פטור from מצוות, he’s not allowed to do מצות, he doesn’t daven, he doesn’t say ברכות, and that is brought down in יורה דעה. I was deeply embarrassed. Not only had I failed to be זכות לכף זכות, but I had also not even thought to ask him directly what was going on.

The question that was asked to R' Zilberstein was did the ראש ישיבה act correctly? Should he have announced to the מנין that he was an אונן, to prevent people from suspecting him of disregarding מצוות? R' Zilberstein gave a fascinating answer. On one hand, a person should avoid suspicion, as we learn in מסכת שקלים. A person must pass scrutiny in the eyes of others just as he must in the eyes of Hashem. As the פסוק says in במדבר, you should be vindicated before both Hashem and ישראל. However, there was justification for the ראש ישיבה’s silence. Some airlines refuse to divulge whether or not there is an ארון on board, as passengers may find it disturbing. Had the ראש ישיבה announced that he was an אונן, people might have asked him questions, forcing him to reveal that the ארון was on the plane. Perhaps he chose to avoid this out of concern for the airline. Nevertheless, R' Zilberstein suggested that he could have handled it slightly differently. Instead of remaining seated, he could have stood with the מנין and mumbled under his breath ה' נתן, ה' לקח, יהי שם ה' מבורך and keep saying that over and over again so that the people would think he was davening, and that would avoid מראית עין that he was not davening.”

In this story, it mentions that the הלכות of an אונן are in יורה דעה. It reminded me that my father, עליו השלום, was נפטר on a Friday night. I received the news, but no one else knew - it was late at night. I realized, ‘I have to learn הלכות אנינות.’ I had always avoided learning the הלכות of אבלות or אנינות. So I started searching. I went through the entire משנה ברורה but could not find הלכות אנינות. I was stuck.



