



RABBI JUDAH

MISCHEL

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY
Executive Director, Camp HASC

Dedicated L'IluY Nishmas HaChaver
Shlomo Michael ben Meir z'l

Appreciation

Rav Yitzchak Alfasi, “the Ri”f”, was one of the great *Rishonim*, whose commentary is featured in every edition of the printed Gemara. In his later years, the Ri”f suffered from a skin ailment, and was prescribed to take regular warm, soothing baths. A wealthy businessman heard of Rav Yitzchak’s condition and offered the Rav regular use of a bathhouse he owned. Thankfully, after a number of healing baths, the Ri”f recovered completely.

After some time, the generous *Yid* went through a trying economic period, and was forced to sell some of his properties, including the bathhouse, in order to pay off his creditors. The prospective buyer, together with the owner, approached the Ri”f, and requested that he assess the value of the bathhouse and preside over any halachic issues that might arise in the process. The Ri”f sighed and declined: “My friends, please forgive me, but I would not be able to rule objectively regarding this bathhouse which benefited me so much! For me, it was a priceless blessing; if I were

to underestimate its monetary value it would be an insult to the very waters that soothed me.”

“Hashem said to Moshe, “Say to Aharon, “Take your staff and stretch forth your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their canals, over their ponds, and over all their bodies of water, and they will become blood, and there will be blood throughout the entire land of Egypt...” (*Shemos*, 7:19).

Rashi explains that Moshe Rabbeinu would not ‘strike’ the water to bring about the *makos* of *dam* and *tzfardea*, for he had been saved in those waters as an infant when his mother placed him in a small *teiva* in the Nile River. Likewise Moshe could not hit the earth to begin *Makas Kinim*, the Plague of Lice, for the ground ‘protected’ him after Moshe slew and buried the Egyptian who had been attacking a Jew.

Rav Yaakov Meir Shechter, *shlit’a*, draws a lesson in *midos* from Moshe Rabbeinu. Our obligation to express *hakaras ha-tov*, recognize benefit and express our gratitude, is to a large extent, for our own sake — not *only* to honor others. While the water and the sand had provided security for Moshe at different points in his life, neither water nor sand have feelings.

Neither would have been insulted if Moshe had fulfilled Hashem's instructions and hit them, utilizing them to exact vengeance on Mitzrayim. Nonetheless, Moshe saw it fit to have *hakaras hatov* on them. This is because *hakaras hatov* sensitizes us to fully appreciate the good fortune we have experienced. Beyond the obligation to thank our benefactors, cultivating appreciation is essential for our own development as moral, religious, feeling people.

בְּיָדָא דְּשִׁתִּית מִיְנֵיהּ לֹא תִשְׂדֵי בְּיָהּ קֶלְא, “Do not throw a clod of earth into a well from which you drank” (*Bava Kamma*, 92b). After we have quenched our thirst from the refreshing water of a well, it is improper to treat it carelessly or with disdain. Everything that exists in this world is enlivened and given existence by a Divine spark, an extension of Hashem Himself. Jewish consciousness sees that which is *domem*, ‘silent’, or seemingly inanimate, as alive in some way. Everything is worthy of respect, especially if it has served us or supported us in some way.

The renowned Maggid Rabbi Paysach Krohn relates that when Rav Mordechai Schwab, zt”l, wore out a suit, he wouldn’t just throw it away. Rather, he would wrap it up carefully and say to the suit, in Yiddish, *Du hust mir goot badint*, “You served me well.” He would then respectfully donate or dispose of the garment.

May the example of Moshe Rabbeinu remind us to be grateful to everyone — and everything — in our lives, and express our *hakaras hatov* to them, and to Hashem, always. ■



THE GUSH ETZION FOUNDATION AND THE KFAR ETZION FIELD SCHOOL INVITE YOU FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ENGLISH TO THE 73RD MEMORIAL FOR THE LAMED-HEH

Sunday, January 17, 2021 (Shevat, 4) at 7:30 PM Israel time, 12:30 PM US East Coast

Join us for a short event via Zoom to mark the annual commemoration of the fall of the brave Lamed-Heh. We will share stories of heroism about those soldiers who fell in 1948, as part of a convoy whose mission was to bring essential supplies to the besieged Etzion bloc.

Opening Remarks: Shlomo Ne'eman, Gush Etzion Regional Council

Gabi Harow, Director of Development, Gush Etzion Foundation

Aryeh Rotenberg, Kfar Etzion Field School - presenting the saga of the Lamed-Heh

Host of the event – Josh Hasten, Gush Etzion Regional Council Spokesperson

For more information and to register - <https://did.li/L57q>



LAST DAYS TO SIGN UP FOR SERIES

**8 SATURDAY NIGHTS at 8:00 PM
(January 9-March 6)**

Through Zoom ONLY by prior arrangement & payment!

**HOW THE JEWISH BIBLE
(TANACH) VIEWS CURRENT
ISSUES IN THE STATE OF
ISRAEL
THIS WEEK**

**JANUARY 16 - HOW TANACH VIEWS
INTERNATIONAL ISRAEL RECOGNITION**

200 nis/ for entire lecture series. Lecture will be rebroadcast each Sunday (6 pm) for the same price. Payment in advance to join the lecture. IF YOU SIGN UP NOW, YOU WILL GET A FREE VIDEO OF THE FIRST LECTURE SENT TO YOUR COMPUTER

Special offer on Rabbi Wein's newest book "IN MY OPINION – 150 Essays by a Very Opiniated Rabbi" 33% reduction if you sign up for the new lecture series. Only 100 NIS including shipping.

nachum@jewishdestiny.com or 0544-54-36-18