



RABBI JUDAH

MISCHEL

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY
Executive Director, Camp HASC

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

Sweet Waters

One day, when the Baal Shem Tov was standing outside his house with his students, they saw Cheikel the water *shlepper* coming down the street with two heavy pails of water on his shoulders. The Baal Shem Tov noticed that Chaikel was without his usual smile, and inquired as to his well being. “Oy, Rebbe”, *krechted* the water shlepper, hunched over and tired, “to tell you the truth, I’m feeling so down. I’m getting older, losing strength every day. *Yidden* are building new homes and moving up the hillsides, how am I supposed to *shlep* up there with heavy buckets on my back? It’s taking me so long to complete my route, and I’m losing money every day. Rebbe, things are really tough....”

The next morning, the Baal Shem Tov was once again standing with his students

outside of his house as Cheikel passed by shlepping his water. This time, as he approached, Cheikel had some spring in his step, and looked a head taller than the day before. The Baal Shem Tov greeted him and again asked how he was. This time, Cheikel responded with a big smile, “Rebbe, *chasdei Hashem*, all is well! Every day and it’s new opportunities, new challenges and new mountains to climb. What a privilege to be in the service of others!”

Cheikel joyfully made his way up the hill, leaving a group of baffled talmidim in his wake. They looked at their Rebbe in disbelief. It was as if they had seen two different people, two different Cheikels! Said the Baal Shem Tov: “*Chevreh*, it’s the same Cheikel, the same water pails, the same *shlep* to the houses high upon the hills. Cheikel is a *vasertreiger*, it is his place in the world. It is also his decision every day to decide whether he will be *sameach b’chelko*, happy with his lot, or *chalilah*, be mired in negativity and bitterness.”

The holy Baal Shem Tov looked his students in the eyes. “You might think that yesterday Cheikel had a bad day, and today he had a good day. But it’s not true! I tell you, there are no good times and bad times; there are only happy times when a *Yid* chooses to be *b’simcha*, and sad times, when we don’t see that

TRANSFER YOUR OLD FILM/VIDEO'S
(All formats) In Quality to Digital

Preserve Family History from Fading

Michael 052.286.8626

Photography with feeling

Facebook.com/L'Dorot Photography



everything happens for a reason. All that we experience in our lives is the same *ratzon Hashem* — it just depends on how we receive it.”

Following the awesome and open miracles of the Splitting of the Sea, our sedra narrates: “Then Moshe caused *Bnei Yisrael* to set out from Yam Suf. They...traveled three days in the wilderness and found no water. They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water of Marah, *ki marim heim*, for they were bitter; that is why it was named Marah.” (*Shemos*, 15:22-23). Parched and exhausted from the journey, we cried out and complained to Hashem. As David haMelech describes in *Tehillim*, “Our forefathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; לא זָכְרוּ, אֶת־יְרֵכְךָ הַסִּדְּיָךְ, they did not remember Your manifold deeds of kindness, וַיִּקְרוּ עָלֵינוּ בָּיִם, סוּף, and they rebelled by the Sea of Reeds” (*Tehillim*, 106:7).

Reb Dov Ber, the great Maggid of Mezeritch, zy’a, offers a linguistic *he’ara*, an insight on this episode: “They could not drink water from Marah, *ki marim heim*, for they were bitter.” The pronoun

heim, “they” can be interpreted as not referring to the waters, rather to the Jews themselves. The real reason the water at Marah was undrinkable was because the Jews were bitter. In the same vein, the verse in *Tehillim*, “and they *rebelled* by the Sea of Reeds,” can mean, ‘and they *made bitter* the Sea of Reeds.’ Our negative attitude and ‘bitterness’ made all that we experienced — even the Splitting of the Sea and crossing through on dry land — seem bitter as well.

Indeed, being *farbissen* is a kind of ‘rebellion’ against our Creator and Redeemer. During our forty years in the *Midbar*, Klal Yisrael enjoyed open miracles all around them. From the clouds of glory and the pillar of fire accompanying us to show the way, to clothing that never wore out, Hashem took care of all our needs. Despite the clear *chesed* and revealed good we enjoyed throughout, we continuously complained. Again and again, we *kvetched* to Moshe Rabbeinu about our dirtied feet at the muddy banks of the Yam Suf, the waters at Marah, the lack of fresh meat, fruit and vegetables, and even about the miraculous *manah* that



Oded
Lewensohn,
Adv. & Notary

לבינסון רז ושות'
משרד עורכי דין ונוטריון

Lewensohn Raz & Co.
Law Offices & Notary

**Estates, Probate,
and Inheritances***

**Real Estate
Transactions**

**Tama 38 and Renovation
Construction Projects**

* Durable Powers of Attorney for Health and Financial Matters



Moshe Raz,
Adv.

27 Keren Ha'Yesod St., Jerusalem | Tel: 02-6731000 | Email: office@lawlr.co.il | www.lawlr.co.il

sustained us. After all Hashem had done for us, how could we have become so bitter?

On the other hand, David haMelech provides some insight as to how such an emotional condition could have developed: אֲלֵי־תִקְשׁוּ לִבְכֶּם כְּמִרְיָהּ... “Do not harden your heart as at Merivah, as on the day of *Massah* in the Desert, when your ancestors tested Me; they tried Me, even though they had seen My work (in Egypt)” (*Tehillim*, 95:8-9). This last phrase points out that our ‘bitterness’ was not rational; we had “seen” and even celebrated Hashem’s miraculous works. Deep down, we knew we had all we needed. The problem was, we were not yet unable to fully accept that we were worthy of all this Divine kindness. After so many generations of suffering, there was still

much for us to process. It would take some time for us to open our hearts and believe that we deserved Hashem’s *chesed*, and that Hashem loved us and would always take care of us. Such ‘bitter’ generational trauma can take a few decades to heal.

No matter our personal or family history, there is always something to complain about and there is always something to be grateful for. Regardless of our ups and downs, good times and difficult times, there are always at least small opportunities to receive the *ratzon Hashem* with *simchah*. May we take a lesson from Cheikel, open our hearts, and feel the “*chasdei Hashem*” in the water we are schlepping; may we taste the Divine sweetness in the water we are drinking, and may we know that we are truly worthy of it. ■



OU Israel Community Help Desk

- ▶ Are you a recent or veteran Oleh, striving to find your place here in Jerusalem?
- ▶ Having challenges or difficulty negotiating the medical system, school for your children, bureaucracy or the supermarket?
- ▶ Are you feeling isolated and in need of resources or advice?

The staff & volunteers of OU Israel's Community Help Desk are here to assist you. **Call *3263**

9:00am-1:00pm Sun, Tues & Thur.

5:00pm-9:00pm Sun, Mon, Wed, Thur.



OU ISRAEL CENTER | WWW.OUISRAEL.ORG