

## Hashem said to Moshe, “Say to Aharon, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land, it shall become lice.’” (8:12)

*Rashi* explains that, like the plague of blood and frogs, Moshe could not catalyze this plague. Just as the water had protected him as an infant, the dust of the land protected him when he used it to conceal the Egyptian that he had killed. To smite the earth would have been an act of ingratitude on his part. This begs elucidation. The water saved Moshe – end of story. His basket was placed in the water and remained there until Bisyah, Pharaoh’s daughter, discovered it. The dust of the earth’s protection was short-lived, since it did not successfully hide the Egyptian’s body, thus compelling Moshe *Rabbeinu* to run for his life. Is there a reward for short-lived or failed good intentions?

*Horav Aizik Ausband, zl*, derives from here that the *chiyuv*, obligation, to be *makir tov*, maintain a sense of gratitude, extends to all situations – even when the benefits do not endure. Thus, if the benefactor’s action only serves as a vehicle to delay the inevitable, one must still feel a debt of gratitude – and repay the debt.

Perhaps we might take this lesson a bit further. One of the peeves we find in the field of education – both secular and Torah studies – is the primary teacher who becomes lost in the shuffle, in the larger scheme of the educational structure.

The *aleph-bais rebbe* is replaced by the *Chumash* and then *Mishnayos rebbe*, who sees his young student go on to be immersed in *Gemorah*. Once the student goes on to *yeshivah*, the elementary school *rebbe* is history, and he is no longer recognized – unless either he is a superstar or the student had serious learning issues which he ameliorated. In such a case, his contribution is duly noted. If, however, a *rebbe* just does his job well, he is, for the most part, nothing more than a feature in a young man’s history. Unless he is very friendly with his student’s parents, he will probably not be invited to his wedding. Why? What happened to *hakoras hatov*? The answer is: Where does *aleph-bais* come to *lomdus*, analytical dissecting and elaborating a difficult topic in the *Gemorah*?

We forget that every teacher/*rebbe*, from primary school through *bais medrash*, plays a crucial role in shaping our foundation for success.