

Only the land of the priests did he not buy, since the priests had a stipend from Pharaoh. (47:22)

Rashi explains a set decree which Pharaoh established, that the priests should receive a daily stipend of bread – regardless of the country's economic condition. Thus, it was unnecessary for them to sell their land for food. *Targum Yonasan* disagrees, explaining that Yosef established this rule out of a sense of gratitude to the priests for saving his life. Potifar was a priest, whose wife claimed that Yosef had made advances toward her. Understandably, for a lowly slave to act in such a reprehensible manner warranted the death penalty. Potifar sought the advice of his colleagues – both as verification concerning the veracity of her accusation and for collaboration concerning a fitting punishment. They did their due diligence, researching her claim, and determined it to be untrue. They informed Potifar that his wife had lied and Yosef was innocent.

Yosef *HaTzadik* felt a sense of gratitude to the priests for the role they played in saving his life. The *Shlah HaKadosh* (cited by *Shlomim Mitzion/Horav Sholom Bentzion Felman, zl*) said that Yosef acted solely out of *hakoras ha'tov*, a sense of appreciation, for what they had done for him. All they did was to present their honest findings concerning Potifar's wife's accusation, but, in their culture, even telling the truth is an act of nobility. Furthermore, the *Shlah* says, we see that *hakoras ha'tov* extends to benefits and favors we receive from an *eino Yehudi*; Yosef repaid all Priests for all future generations – their land could not be touched. This is the extent of the obligation to be *makir tov*.

Rav Felman relates that he heard from *Horav Michel Feinstein, zl*, about an incident which occurred concerning the *Shaagas Aryeh* and the gratitude he felt towards a woman who acted kindly towards him. The *Shaagas Aryeh* was *Rav* in Volozhin. He refused to be a sycophant to the movers and shakers of the community. It was not uncommon for individuals who were fortunate to have an abundance of material bounty to demand and expect preferential treatment. While nothing is wrong with showing appreciation to a philanthropist for his economic assistance, but when he feels that this entitles him to hold sway over the *Rav* and the congregation, however, it crosses the line. The *Shaagas Aryeh* was firm in his commitment to the community, and he refused to bend under pressure. Apparently, these men either had no inkling of the meaning of *kavod haTorah*, or simply felt that their wealth empowered them to make demands. As a result of the *Shaagas Aryeh's* courageous obstinacy in the face of ignoble pressure, he was compelled to leave Volozhin on an *erev Shabbos* with not even a morsel of food for *Shabbos*. One woman, her name was Bluma, ran after the *Rav* and brought him whatever food he needed for *Shabbos*. She could not tolerate such a grievous outrage against a Torah giant.

The *Shaagas Aryeh* was emotionally stirred by her single-minded act of *chesed*. He blessed her that, as a reward for her kindness, she would merit to build two *kloizen* (a *kloiz* was a *shul* where people studied all day): one in Europe; and one in *Eretz Yisrael*. Bluma was not a wealthy woman and the limited money she had was a far cry from what was needed to build a *shul*. *Eretz Yisrael*

was a pipe dream for someone like her. Yet, as a result of the *brachah*, a mere few days passed, and her business investments grew exponentially, to the point that Bluma became a very wealthy woman. She built a *kloiz* in Minsk and a second *shul* in Yerushalayim. Both *shuls* went by the name, "Bluma's *Kloiz*." The *shul* in Yerushalayim was used until World War I, and supported by Bluma's descendants -- those who studied there. All of this was the result of a *brachah* from the *Shaagas Aryeh*, who felt a debt of gratitude to this *ishah chashuvah*.