

The RYS Daily 10/23/06 At the Expense of Others

From The Mussar Movement, Volume 1, Part 2 pages 218 - 219.

Here R. Israel opened up an entirely novel approach. He would check his performance of each and every mitzvah, examine its every aspect, to see whether it entailed any harm to others. He exercised meticulous and far-reaching care. He would balance the gain against the loss incurred in the performance, to prevent any hidden negative element from creeping in. The examples are legion and an object lesson. It is worthwhile to repeat the most characteristic of those that have been recorded.

Visiting Kovno he was the guest of the philanthropist R. Jacob Karpas. R. Jacob noticed that R. Israel was very sparing in the water he used for the ritual washing of his hands. He only poured out sufficient water to cover the minimum, mandatory area. He made no effort to pour liberal quantities over each entire hand as was the prevailing practice. Asked the reason for his conduct, R. Israel replied that he had seen the housemaid dragging the water pails uphill from far off. She was hunched under the weight of the pole that was bearing down on her shoulders. There was no justification for observing the mitzvah punctiliously at the expense of the back and shoulders of someone else.

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