

**First Yahrzeit of David ben Ezra haLevi (tz"l)**

Our sedra starts “אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה” (these are the words which Moshe spoke...). The whole of the book of Devarim goes over again what happened to Moshe and the people of Israel. We read this once a year to remind ourselves of these events and those people, just as we meet once a year on the anniversary of a loved one’s death to remind ourselves of the events of their lives and their special qualities.

We are now in the “9 days”, the period between Rosh Hodesh Av and the fast of Tisha b’Av commemorating the destruction of both Temples. Our Rabbis tell us to remember this each day because the loss of our sanctuaries left us with a aching hole in our spiritual lives.

Just the same way the loss of a loved one, particularly a father or mother, leaves us with emotional and mental scars which, with time, will diminish but never completely fade away.

David, Hana’s father, whom I had the privilege to know for many years, died at the age of almost 94, בשיבה טובה (in a good old age) זקן ושבוע (an old man and full of years) – Berashit 25:8

We may live a long time or a short time but our sages tell us that this world is like an entrance hall to the “real” world – the world to come. We can waste the time filling up the entrance hall with material possessions but we cannot carry any of these into the house (the world to come). We can only bring with us from this world our good deeds, and David had these in abundance.

We talk about mitzvot (carrying out the commandments) and gemilot hachessed (good deeds) but we are told that whereas mitzvot are between man and his maker, good deeds are between man and his fellow men. Hashem does not need our mitzvot, they were given for our benefit not for His, but we all need good deeds, our world could not survive unless people helped each other.

In the Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot Ch2:13-14) Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai asks his five students what is the best thing a person should have, and received five different answers.

Rabbi Eliezer said – A good eye

Rabbi Yoshua said – A good friend

Rabbi Yossi said – A good neighbour

Rabbi Shimeon said – To consider the consequences of one’s actions

Rabbi Elazar said – A good heart

David had all these qualities –

A good eye – a generous, unselfish spirit, an open-hearted receptivity to people, things and ideas

A good friend – all of us considered ourselves his friend, David was someone who was a pleasure to know

**A good neighbour – he was always talking to everyone he met, always with a smile**

**To consider the consequences of one's actions – he was always concerned about others, and what he could do to help, because what we do always affects others in some way**

**A good heart – David always was the first to greet people and ask after their family and themselves.**

**The 5 books of Moses ends with the letter Lamed and starts with the letter Bet, so looking back on the whole Torah we see that the word לב (heart) encompasses it all.**

**Similarly I would sum up David's life with what Rabban Yohanan said was the best quality for a person to have and encompassed all the other qualities:**

**David had a לב טוב and we can give no higher praise than this.**

**דוד בן עזרא הלוי  
יהי זכרונו לברכה**

**May his memory be for a blessing.**