

Dedication to Asher Peter Schick

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Asher Schick was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1931. In 1939 he emigrated to Palestine, becoming a citizen of Israel upon the founding of the State. An international figure in both physical geography and the earth sciences, Asher Schick's work and career also reflect the flourishing of the natural sciences in Israel over the last half century. He received his undergraduate degree and PhD in geography with complementary studies in geology, climatology and meteorology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he has taught since 1964.

Asher Schick's research focused upon the landscape of Israel, a small area encompassing a gradient of semiarid to arid climates superimposed upon a complex and varied geological terrain. With extraordinary skill and dedication, Schick and his colleagues have teased from a harsh environment an understanding of the behaviour of surface processes and the way in which they mould the landscape. Thus Schick's work has been concerned with geomorphic processes, landform evolution, and hydrology in the arid zone. It is marked by a conceptual framework, careful observation, and detailed measurements sustained continuously over decades. The results are striking.

At Nahal Yael in the arid south of Israel near Eilat, Schick established an experimental watershed nearly half a century ago. A continuous record of precipitation, runoff, and sediment transport has provided the framework for careful studies of hydrological and geomorphic processes in this extremely arid environment. The variety of fundamental studies represents a unique assemblage in the world. Nahal Yael has become a mecca for scholars interested in arid zone phenomena experienced in diverse regions of the world.

Observing landforms and processes throughout the region, Schick, his students, and colleagues, have shed light on the characteristics of desert floods, on the mechanisms of transport of bed load and suspended load in rivers, and on the runoff and groundwater behaviour of precipitation in arid regions. In carrying out the research, they have pioneered in developing and testing methods for measuring the rates of movement of sediment in the desert environment. The work has encompassed evaluations of the impact of climate change as well as the reciprocal relationship between human activities and natural processes. The latter includes observations and models of the impacts of urbanization on arid zone hydrology as well as the way in which early agriculturists adapted to and modified hydrological processes to meet their needs.

But, Asher Schick's contributions to the field of geomorphology reach far beyond his research and congenial teaching of graduate students, many of whom have become his lifelong collaborators. Not only has he been a lecturer abroad innumerable times,

he has been continuously active in commissions of the International Geographical Union since his professional career began. He has chaired most of them. Topics have ranged from measurement to desertification to erosion and environmental change. Asher's field excursions are noted for the quality of the sites, the coffee and the presentations. Virtually everyone at the conference in Jerusalem in May 1999 celebrating Asher Schick and his work noted with affection that where Asher goes he brings with him several attributes: unflinching encouragement to colleagues everywhere, a capacity for inclusion, and, what Maria Sala called at the opening ceremony, his capacity to "urge in a very gentle way". Asher has high standards, and the most graceful ways of conveying them. Beyond his peers, Asher's persuasive powers are equally formidable extending to fire departments, school children and teachers and business tycoons whom he enlists in the geomorphological enterprise.

This volume and the remarkable galaxy of superb international scholars who gathered in Jerusalem testify to the pioneering and inspirational work of Asher Schick, and to the warmth of his leadership in the profession. It is a pleasure to acknowledge this spirit on behalf of my colleagues in geomorphology.



Asher Peter Schick