

CHIZUK *and* IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

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Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

Vayeilech - Yamim Nora'im 2019

Life is full of transitions; the world is in constant flux. As we are in the middle of the Yomim Norai'im, with Yom Kippur almost upon us, it is natural to think of our own personal destiny, as well as to wonder what the future of our People, and the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael holds in store: Who will lead us? Will the leaders of yesteryear move on, and new ones arrive on the scene? In which direction will they take us?

This week's parsha begins with the words VAYEILECH MOSHE! - "And Moshe went and spoke these words unto all Israel, and he said unto them: 'I am 120 years this day and can no longer go out and come in'..." (D'varim 31:1-2).

With these words the Torah describes how the Jewish People's leader par excellence, Moshe Rabbeinu, relates to the realization that it is time for him to go, and for another leader (-Yehoshua) to take the lead. In response to the unspoken question as to where did Moshe 'go',

the Ibn Ezra explains that, as could be expected from a true leader, Moshe was primarily concerned with the wellbeing of his flock. As a result, Ibn Ezra writes, Moshe went to tell the People that he was about to die, in order to prepare them in advance, so that they should not be afraid of the necessary changes to come. Moshe 'went' to encourage the people to be accepting of Yehoshua's leadership, and to loyally follow his directives "for he shall cause them to inherit the Land".

The Alsheich adds that Moshe wished to convey the message that in his passing the People should not feel as if they are losing an irreplaceable leader, since Hashem - the true Ultimate Leader - will always be with them.

The Kli Yakar explains that Vayeilech refers to actual walking. He writes that Moshe was aware that the words "I can no longer go out and come in" could erroneously be understood by the people as a statement pertaining to his own physical health and stamina. Therefore, Moshe demonstrates his vigour: VAYEILACH MOSHE - Moshe 'went' - i.e. he walked briskly through the entire length and breadth of the camp to demonstrate that he still had the physical ability to lead, however, his

time had come and he now lacked the Almighty's permission to continue on in his role. The baton had to be passed on to the next in line.

When a leader moves on - and others rise to take their place - their legacy may be forgotten with time. A historical footnote that I recently came across, brings us back to the first Rosh Hashana celebrated shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The scene is the city of Rechovot. The shul is the city's central synagogue and the Rabbi was Zvi Yehuda Meltzer zt"l, the city's Chief Rabbi.

Rabbi Meltzer, the son of the world-renowned Rav Isser Zalman Melzer zt"l (and brother-in-law of R. Aharon Kotler), had been inducted to the position of chief rabbi one year earlier. He had come to Rechovot after having served as Rabbi of Pardes Chana where he had founded Midrashiyat Noam and the Kletzky Yeshiva. Coming to Rechovot he founded Yeshivat HaDarom - (both Yeshivot Noam and HaDarom combined secular studies with Limudei Kodesh, religious studies). Rabbi Meltzer's independent and out-of-the-box approach may have influenced his son-in-law, Rav Yehuda Amital zt"l (-of Yeshivat Har Etzion), who - amongst other things -

breathed life into Rav Zvi Yehuda Meltzer's belief that army service should be combined with Yeshiva learning, perfecting the model of the Hesder Yeshiva.

Three months after the founding of the State of Israel, as Rav Zvi Yehuda Meltzer zt"l rose to deliver his Rosh Hashana Drasha, he was faced with a predicament: Should he deliver his prepared words emphasizing Teshuva and related topics, or should he first acknowledge the illustrious guest who had walked into the shul - Rechovot resident, and president of the nascent State of Israel - Prof. Chaim Weizmann z"l. Although Weizmann had been appointed to the position two days after the founding of the state, he had been delayed abroad and only stepped foot in the independent state, and arrived in his home in Rechovot, a few short days earlier. As Rabbi Meltzer stood up and headed towards the podium, a thought flashed through his mind, and thus he began: "During all the years in Galut, as Jews turned to Hashem their thoughts and prayers were always clouded by the primal and urgent fear of what the non-Jewish host nation may be plotting against them. Thus their prayers were focused - first and foremost - on a plea for compassion from the nations." Rav Meltzer zt"l

continued by saying that we no longer live in Galut, and here in Eretz Yisrael we are no longer ruled over by others. "Today", he continued, "we are blessed to be in the presence of our own President, whose very existence symbolizes our ability to serve Hashem with a 'Lev Shalem', with a complete and pure heart; a heart unclouded with fear." When asked how Prof. Weizmann had responded to these words, R. Meltzer answered that the president's eyes "welled up with tears".

The central figures in this historical vignette, have long gone from this world. - Worthy others have taken over their roles.

As we pray to Hashem on this year's Yamim Nora'im, we pray that today too we be granted true leaders; leaders whose primary concern is the welfare and best interest of their people.

We pray that we be granted an additional year of good health, and be allowed LATZEIT V'LAVO - to come and go in the Holy Land, completing G-d's will and finding favor in His eyes. 🇮🇱🇺🇲