

CHIZUK 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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The Torah lovingly portrays the life stories of each of the three Avot. Although certain similarities can be found between every one of these accounts, each tale is unique.

In this week's parsha, Yitzchak is planning on following in his father's footsteps as he prepares to leave the land during a famine. Yitzchak hopes that by replicating his father's example he will find greener pastures abroad. Surprisingly, though, the Almighty vetoes his decision. Appearing to Yitzchak, G-d conveys a clear directive: "Do not go down into Mitzrayim, SH'CHON BA'ARETZ HAZOT, dwell in this land! (B'reishit 26:2). The midrash (Tanchuma, Toldot 6) says that the full message clearly acknowledged Yitzchak's thought process: "Your Father had indeed descended into Egypt, nonetheless, you, Yitzchak, will not go there." If indeed Avraham was allowed to go down from the Holy Land, why is Yitzchak barred from treading along this same path? The Midrash quotes

Rav Hoshaya who explains that Yitzchak is likened to an Ola T'mima, a pure offering, and therefore he is not to leave the borders of the holy land. Just as the Korban ola, the burnt offering is sullied when removed from the precincts of the Azara (temple area), so too Yitzchak would diminish his holiness were he to leave the Holy land. In the words of Rashi: "You are an ola t'mima, an untarnished offering, and the diaspora is not good enough for you (LO K'DAI L'CHA)" (Rashi on 26:2). Yitzchak is deemed to be too good - too holy - for the Diaspora.

The Midrash Rabba (B'reishit 64:3) says that SH'CHON BA'ARETZ has a two-fold meaning as the word SH'CHON can be understood both as a derivative of the word Sh'chuna, neighborhood, as well as a verb derived from the word Sh'china, the divine presence. Yitzchak is told to create a sh'chuna (neighbourhood) in the land - to build and to plant, and by so doing causing the Sh'china to dwell therein. The physical and the spiritual must go hand in hand!

Coming on Aliya over thirty years ago, I had the merit of taking part in the formation of a new neighborhood, a new sh'chuna. At the time the Jerusalem neighborhood of Har Nof was still being built and for a number

of years I served as the head of the Minhelet Hashechunatit, the local Neighborhood Council. One of our tasks was dealing with the fair allocation of the plots of land zoned for the building of Shuls, mikdashei me'at, sanctuaries for the Sh'china, between the different groups in the neighborhood.

Today we live in Ramat Beit Shemesh where a similar process is taking place. Rav Boaz Mori a very talented Oleh who founded a local Yeshiva for Modern-Orthodox talmidim, has been instrumental in molding a new community (RAMAT SHILO) comprised of like-minded families who could jointly serve as a model community for his talmidim.

Not everyone can, like Rav Boaz, build a community but each and every Oleh can take part in the blessing G-d directed to Yitzchak. G-d says: "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you, and to your seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to Avraham your father" (B'reishit 26:3). Just as the oath with Avraham was reiterated with Yitzchak, so too, every Oleh who arrives in this land thereby helping to develop it further, can rightfully claim a share in this blessing.

The S'forno explains that "I will bless

you" refers to material prosperity and physical possessions. Even though the land is experiencing a famine, G-d promises Yitzchak that he will prosper only within the land. By remaining here, explains the S'forno, you will be seen by all as N'SI ELOKIM, G-d's appointed ruler of the land; and through your unbroken presence you will acquire title to the land and bequeath it to your children."

Returning to what we saw above, we might ask once again: Why was Yitzchak expected to maintain higher standards than those exemplified by his father Avraham? If Avraham was allowed to leave the land why was Yitzchak barred from doing so? Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that as opposed to Avraham who was born in the diaspora, and therefore could descend to Egypt, Yitzchak was born in Eretz Yisrael. Comparing the story of each of our patriarchs, we find that Avraham was born outside of the land and died in Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov, in contra-distinction, was born in the land but died outside, in Egypt. Yitzchak is the only one who lived and died in the land, without ever having left it!

If you want your children to be N'si'ei Elokim who merit the divine blessing and pass it on to your grandchildren - bring them on Aliya! 