

# 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*

## Vayeitzei 5777

Years ago, when I sat shiva for my Mother a"h, in Montreal. her first cousin came to console. She had been born and bred in Winnipeg and told me that her two sons had "wonderful" wives: "But", she added, "You would not sanction such marriages since they married out." At that point I asked her how it could be that 2 brothers, her father and my grandfather, both of whom came from the same town in Poland (Przemysl), had the same upbringing, the same cheder education, yet their grandchildren had a radically different status. Her children's children are not considered Jewish halachically whereas my mother and her siblings married Jews and stayed shomrei mitzvot.

Her answer was instructive. "Though my father was chazan in shul on the High Holy Days, my mother, who had been born in Canada, was not observant." She let me know that my mother once visited them in Winnipeg and would speak to them in Yiddish asking them if they had

recited "Modeh Ani" upon waking in the mornings. She also informed me that when my mother had been offered a shiduch with a West Coast Jewish lawyer (a Jewish lawyer in the 1930s!) she turned it down because he was not Shomer Shabbat! There were very few Shomer Shabbat people in those days in Canada!

This then is the secret of Jewish survival. The woman is called AKERET HABAYIT - The Homemaker. The Midrash of B'reishit Rabba 71 says: "call her not AKERET HABAYIT but IKAR HABAYIT - the bastion of the home. The woman maintains and steers the Jewish family through stormy seas while steering the family ship with an all-Jewish rudder.

This was my mother. (whose Yahrzeit is this week). Maybe she was that way because her mother's maiden name was Langsam and that family traces its roots to the tsadik Rav Elimelech Shapiro of Dinov, the Bnei Yissaschor. In truth, her Midot can be traced back to Rachel Imeinu.

Rachel was a very beautiful young woman, and our Rabbis tell us that her external beauty was more than matched by her inner beauty. We might ask why Yaakov chose Rachel over Leah. We assume that Leah was as beautiful as Rachel - so why was Rachel chosen.

Some suggest that while both sisters were righteous, the difference was that Rachel went out of her way to do good for others. Leah's goodness was kept inside her - this is line with the suggestion of Ibn Ezra who comments on the 50 Tzadikim within the city - Avraham in dialogue with Hashem could have said 50 Tzadikim why "in the city" - Ibn Ezra states - within the city - in Public - B'FARHESYA. To be a true Tzadik one must operate in the midst of society. It is not enough to be a tzadik when one is alone. That was the difference between Rachel and Leah. That is why Yaakov chose Rachel.

Most of us remember the Haftora for the second day of Rosh Hashana where Rachel is mentioned- Yirmiyahu 31:15-17:

"Thus says HaShem: A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not.

Thus says HaShem: Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says HaShem; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

And there is hope in your end, says

HaShem that your children shall come again to their own border.

Rachel is crying for her children who are not. Could it be that 'they are not' means they cease to be Jews? Most commentators understand the tears of Rachel are caused by her children going out to Golut.

Many visit Kever Rachel, Rachel's Tomb, to pray, to be inspired by her memory and draw strength from her spiritual image, knowing as we do that Rachel refuses to be comforted for her children (plural), crying that we may yet return home, KI EINENU, for he (singular) is not yet here (31:14). Rachel does not cry for us as a collective, but rather, like every mother, she weeps over each and every one of her children. Seeing the unique characteristics of each and every one of her children she will not forsake them, hoping that even the most distant will ultimately return home.

The Almighty answers Rachel telling her to: "keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from shedding tears, for your children will come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for the future, V'SHAVU VANIM LIGVULAM, your children shall return to their own border."

Rachel is buried "by the wayside" to enable her to beseech the Almighty on behalf of her children in exile (Rashi B'reishit 48:7). We have to strive to make Rachel's tears our own! 📖👉