

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*

*by Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness
Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh*

Va'eira 2016

Young love, first love, filled with true devotion. Young love, our love, we share with deep emotion.

These lyrics from a popular folk song in the 1950s, poignantly describe how one's first love tends to be the most intense, the most passionate.

Before you impatiently blurt out: "How does this have anything to do with Chizuk & Idud"?!

I hasten to point out that the oft used Mashal, simile, describing the matrix of intimacy, love and commitment between the Almighty and the Jewish People as a romantic connection (ANI L'DODI V'DODI LI, V'EIRASTEECH LI L'OLAM), is used to describe our connection with the land as well. To quote from R. Soloveitchik's poetic formulation: "The union of the people of Israel with the Land of Israel is comparable to a marriage... a union of rocky hills and sandy trails with a people whose future destiny is to this day bound up with the state and welfare of the land" (Reflections of

the Rav, p. 121).

In this week's parsha we read: "I will bring you into the Land which I swore to give to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. I will give it to you as a Morasha (heritage or inheritance)", Sh'mot 6:8. According to the simple understanding of MORASHA as inheritance, our verse makes reference to two distinct promises: The first is that of entering into the Land, which will then be followed by a second stage relating to the more distant future. Here we are to imagine the rosy image of a homeland transformed into an inheritance or heritage, as it is peacefully passed down from one generation to another. (Rabbenu B'chaye makes the point that MORASHA does not mean inheriting the land but rather bequeathing it and transmitting ownership over to one's children). The Talmud (Pesachim 49b) teaches us, however, that the word MORASHA should be read as if it were written with an ALEF, thereby spelling the word ME'ORASA - betrothed. According to this suggested reading, the structural makeup of the verse should be understood rather differently: The verse does not contain a lineal progression from near to the more distant future, but rather works backwards in time, beginning with a

depiction of the future, the verse returns from there to the present. The Talmud's suggestion would have us understand the promise encapsulated in this verse as speaking not only of the future but of the present as well. The verse declares us to be currently betrothed to the Holy Land, notifying us that we shall consummate this figurative marriage sometime in the future when we are to enter into and possess the land.

This is not to be seen as a whimsical or playful D'rasha, but rather as an important educational statement of purpose: Being engaged brings anticipation of the next moment. - One should see the Land and the Torah, which are referred to as MORASHA-ME'ORASA, not as something ancient but as something fresh and exciting.

We must always have the land in our minds, just as one's beloved always appears in one's heart, relating to its welfare with both passion and commitment.

This transplanting of MORASHA for ME'ORASA has additional ramifications. A YERUSHA is something that falls into one's lap. A romantic connection, on the other hand, requires effort - one must woo a beloved. So, too, with Torah and the land of Israel: Torah must be acquired

through diligence and study, and as our Rabbis teach us, the acquisition of Eretz Yisrael is fraught with difficulties.

All of this notwithstanding, the Torah chose to write MORASHA; why could it not have written ME'ORASA explicitly? We may suggest that our foundational connection to the land is built upon the characteristics of an inheritance and heritage. Returning to the words of R. Soloveitchik, one major aspect of our relationship with the land markedly diverges from that of a human relationship:

"In a human marriage, divorce or death can sever the relationship. The bond between the Land and the People, however, is for all time."

As the Netziv writes, once the land is defined as our Morasha, this entails the understanding that even if we are exiled from it, it will forever remain ours. Even in exile we always turn and pray to it, never letting the land out of our minds. We know that ultimately we will return.

Returning to the original verse, Sh'mot 6:8, G-d promises us V'HEIVEITI ETCHEM - and I will bring you to the Land. From the Pesach Hagada we learn that four cups of wine are drunk to commemorate the /four expressions of Geula -

V'HOTZEITI, V'HITZALTI, V'GAALTI, V'LAKACHTI. Yet, we do not drink a 5th cup because V'HEVEITI was not fully fulfilled. This is alluded to at the Seder with the goblet of wine is set aside for Eliyahu HaNavi, the precursor of the Mashiach, for in Messianic times the 5th cup will finally be drunk.

If only we were to truly cherish our Land as we would a valuable inheritance and relate to it as we would to a dear beloved, this day could be brought nearer! 🏠👉