

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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Every year we read Parshat D'varim on, or very near, the 9th of Av. This juxtaposition is a timely one, seeing as at the outset of the parsha, Moshe Rabeinu reminds the people of the sin of the Meraglim. The ten spies besmirched the Holy Land causing the people to cry bitterly, and the Talmud (Ta'anit 29a) relates the following Divine reaction to this sorry episode: "You cried without cause", Hashem declared, "therefore, I will set this day (the 9th of Av!) for crying throughout the generations."

The Psalmist describes the immediate punishment which was received by that entire generation: "They despised the pleasant land (VAYIM'ASU B'ERETZ CHEMDA), they believed not His word, they murmured in their tents and did not hearten to the voice of Hashem", (T'hilim 106:24). And as a result: "Therefore He lifted up His hand against them swearing to overthrow them in the wilderness..." (106:26). As we know, all the males between twenty and sixty years of age would be destined to die in the desert.

The Psalmist's choice of words, referring to those who "despised the pleasant Land", leads us to an interesting machloket among Mefarshim regarding the Meraglim's report back. Moshe tells us that the Meraglim "Took the fruit of the Land... and brought it down to us... And said it is a good land which Hashem has given..." (D'varim 1:25).

Who exactly stood behind these words? Which spies were responsible for this positive report? The Malbim understands that the words: "It is a good land" were uttered by Kalev and Yehoshua while all the rest of the Meraglim rebelled against the words of Hashem. The Ramban however points out that all twelve Meraglim agreed that it was a good land - after all, they had carried with them the produce to prove it! Yet, nonetheless, ten of the Meraglim claimed that despite the bounty of its produce "it is a Land that devours its inhabitants", and therefore, not worth the fight. Only Kalev and Yehoshua said it is our Promised Land and worth fighting for ALO NAALEH V'YARASH-NU OTAH!

The Torah's next verse describes the peoples' response: "Yet you would not go up but rebelled against the commandment of Hashem and murmured in your tents" (1:26). The Malbim explains that the people sinned in three regards:

They did not want to go up; they did not believe that Hashem would exile the enemies; and they rebelled in their unwillingness to sacrifice themselves to follow Hashem's commands.

As Tish'a b'Av comes around, and we read these words once again, we should make sure to take them to heart and learn the appropriate lessons.

Today, too, there are many Jews who voice their appreciation for the bounty of the land. They are proud to partake of Israeli produce, and when eating the fruit and vegetables of the Land will remark how delicious they are! Nonetheless, they are not prepared to go up to the "Good Land". They know about the mitzva of Aliya - What is holding them back? Could it be, as the Malbim suggests, that as important as this mitzva is in their hearts and minds, they are not prepared to make the sacrifices needed?

They are lacking the Mesirut Nefesh, the sense of personal sacrifice, L'MAAN HA'AM V'HA'ARETZ, that is required to make the move.

The Ramban stated that the mitzva of Yishuv Ha'aretz is found in the pasuk V'HORASHEM ET HA'ARETZ VISHAVTEM BAH (from Mas'ei), as opposed to Rashi who interpreted these very same words as a divine promise rather than as a Mitzva.

While the difference may seem somewhat prosaic, the ramifications are immense. Those holding like Rashi can rightfully claim that if it is a promise then:

"I can patiently wait for the Almighty to bring his promise to fruition. The onus is on Him!"

On the other hand, if it is a Mitzva, the onus is on us.

This dichotomy plays itself out in other spheres as well: Thus, in general when it comes to T'shuva and Geula, do we say regarding - HASHIVEINU HASHEM EILECHA V'NASHUVA or is the correct approach to realize that we must take the first step, saying SHUVU EILAI V'ASHUVA ALEICHEM. Or, in the words of Kabbala, what comes first - IT'ARUTA DI'LETATA or IT'ARUTA DI'LEILA - the awakening from below or the awakening from above. Where does the initiative lie?

The 20th century Zionist enterprise is predicated on Jews taking the initiative into their own hands and coming home.

We can only conclude by noting that on Tish'a b'Av it is not only the Jews the world over who will be crying for the destruction of the Temples. The Gemara (Chagiga 5b) tells us that the Almighty sheds three tears: One is for the First Beit Mikdash, one for the

Second Beit Mikdash and the 3rd for the Jewish People who had been exiled from their homeland.

Like the Almighty we also cry for the destruction of the Batei Mikdash, but are we crying for all of those who had been exiled from their homeland? (and remain afar by choice?)

Today your exile need not be extended. It can be ended. Come home and make Hashem's tears stop!



These weekly words of Torah wisdom can be found in my recently published book "Eretz Yisrael and Aliyah in the weekly Parsha". It can be ordered by calling 052-336-0553 or by ordering it on Amazon