

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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RACHEL IMEINU

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 two 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 tzadik 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 beautiful as well - 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 in line with the suggestion of the Ibn Ezra who comments on the fifty Tzadikim within the city mentioned by Avraham regarding Sodom. Avraham in dialogue with Hashem could have said fifty Tzadikim - why stress "in the city"? Ibn Ezra states- within the city means in Public - B'FARHESI'A. 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 Haftara 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. 🏠👉

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