

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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Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau describes an interesting conversation he had with his future father-in-law as he arrived at his house in order to meet his daughter and take her out on a shidduch date. "How can it be possible", the prospective shidduch's father asked, "that parents invest so much time and effort in their children's education and upbringing and yet the Torah instructs the bridegroom to "leave his father and mother and cling to his wife".

Not ever having been posed such a question before, certainly not in such a setting, R. Lau listened respectfully as Rabbi Yitzchak Yedidya Frankel, the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, began to suggest his own reply. His surprising claim was that the question itself was based on a misreading of the Biblical verse. The Hebrew verb YA'AZOV (a man should leave his father and mother), should not be understood as a directive guiding one to leave and forsake their parents but rather the very opposite. The true meaning of YA'AZOV in the context of this verse is that by clinging to one's wife one is

to see to it that he helps and supports his parents. The word, YA'AZOV, should be understood as bearing a similar meaning to its usage in this week's Parsha, where we read: "when you see the ass of him that you hate falling under its burden... AZOV TA'AZOV IMO (Sh'mot 23:5). As Rashi writes, the word AZOV means to help unload the animal.

Rashbam, the Pashtan, or literalist, concurs with Rashi's general understanding of the verse, translating AZOV as a commandment to grant assistance, or to strengthen. Rashbam points to the verse in Nechemia 3:8 which describes the actions of the Jews returning to Jerusalem, where we read that: VAYA'AZVU ET YERUSHALYIM AD HACHOMA, they fortified and strengthened the walls of Jerusalem.

Indeed, this may be seen as a timeless requirement incumbent upon all those who wish to take part in the historic process of the return to our homeland: We must do all that is in our power to strengthen and fortify the walls of Jerusalem.

Surely, such fortifications can manifest themselves in various ways. Today we are witnessing a major contretemps between the US and the Israeli administrations over the question of whether or not Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu should accept the invitation extended by the

Republican leader to speak in the Congress. It seems to me that whatever one might think regarding the propriety of the decision itself, if the Israeli Prime Minister decides to go through with it, the Jewish community should see its own responsibility as one of AZOV TA'AZOV IMO. The community should gather together choosing to lend a helping hand and show support in every possible way.

Just as in the time of Nechemia, VAYAAZVU ET YERSUHALAYIM, we must strengthen Jerusalem and its government rather than boycott it.

Returning to Rav Lau's story, he adds an additional beautiful caveat regarding relationships: The word AZOV can also be understood to be a derivative of the word IZAVON which means inheritance or patrimony. Following this possibility, we understand that the verse in B'reishit wishes to direct a person as he prepares to leave his parents' house in order to begin building his own home, that he is to take a spiritual inheritance with him. He is not to forsake his parents, but rather to remember all that which his parents have inculcated in him; take into account their outlook and way of life, and attempt to incorporate this all within his own home.

If we ask what our patrimony is as children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and

Yaakov, the answer is clearly - Torah and Eretz Yisrael. Interestingly the only times that the word MORASHA, or heritage, is used in the Torah is in connection to both Torah and Eretz Yisrael.

There are those who do not possess a deep understanding of Torah, or a strong commitment to the Mitzvot, and yet they successfully pass on a love of our traditions, so that in future generations there will be those who will actually learn Torah and possess it. So too, one who does not live in and possess Eretz Yisrael, must pass on the love of the land and the belief in its centrality.

May we look forward to the day when our children will take possession of their ancestral inheritance. 🏠👉

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