

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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Each and every Yom Tov has a symbol closely associated with it: Rosh Hashana has the Shofar, Purim has the Megila, Sukkot the Arba Minim etc.

When we think of Pesach, our imagination immediately conjures up images of the Matza which we eat for seven days. In the time of the Mikdash the most salient image would have been that of the Korban Pesach itself. In its absence, though, the Matza grabs center stage. What does the Matza represent on a symbolic level?

Looking into the matter we find that the Matza has a two-fold meaning. On the one hand we refer to it at the beginning of the Haggada as HALACHMA ANYA, as LECHEM ONI, the bread of poverty or of affliction. The Matza is a physical representation of our difficult experiences during the long years of affliction and of slavery (AVDUT). On the other hand, this very same Matza is also a symbol of our freedom (CHERUT) and our salvation. The Matza thus represents two polar opposites: both SHI'ABUD and

GEULA, AVDUT and CHERUT, experienced at one and the same time.

As the Torah says: "Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread... that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt - all the days of thy life" (D'varim 16:3).

As Rashi comments, we thereby remember the Exodus.

The Rambam explains that this notion of reliving Y'TZI'AT MITZRAYIM during the Seder night, is an actual halachic requirement incumbent upon all: "Each generation must see itself as though it left Mitzrayim." It appears to me, though, that in order to re-experience the depths of slavery - as a necessary backdrop for the reliving of the joy of the redemption - one need not only travel back in time to Mitzrayim itself. The history of the Jewish People follows a circular path - periods of SHI'ABUD like that we experienced in Mitzrayim have occurred throughout the generations. Therefore, in order to get the full sense of AVDUT MITZRAYIM, we need only place ourselves in the Warsaw Ghetto of Pesach 1943. As Shlomo Carlebach retells in his famous story of Moishele's recitation of the MA NISHTANA. Some of the thousands of Jews who had been herded into the Ghetto were doing their utmost to fight and rebel against the full might of the German army. The Jewish remnants were

hiding in the sewers and basements in the Ghetto. Slowly, the Ghetto was being incinerated, block by block. Moishele hears the guns going off as the Germans find another hidden bunker. Moishele turns to his father wondering whether there will be anyone left to ask the Four Questions the following year. The father answered with a heavy heart: I don't know if I will be around, nor do I know if you will. But I do know that there will always be a Moishele to ask the Four Questions. For the Almighty has sworn in His Holy Name, that the light of Judaism will never be extinguished.

The above story permits us to see that despite all adversity, the Jewish People have never succumbed to despair and have always attempted to maintain their optimism. Blessedly, the circular aspect of Jewish history does not only contain repeated episodes of suffering. Just as we have replicated the oppression experienced in Galut Mitzrayim, our long history has contained times of Ge'ula as well. This hopeful aspect of our historic journey through time is readily apparent vis a vis Eretz Yisrael.

Picture if you will, the reality which met the Ramban hundreds of years ago as he arrived in Eretz Yisrael in fulfillment of his life-long dream. The Ramban knew, and was deeply appre-

ciative of the fact, that he had merited that which so many others before him had not. He had physically entered into the Land. Nonetheless, the sights that met his eyes were disheartening: The land was desolate and primarily uninhabited, and as the Ramban writes "that which had once been the most sacred, is now the most desecrated". The Jewish population was tiny. The Ramban encountered two Jewish tradesmen in Yerushalayim but could not gather a minyan.

Having arrived at the age of 72, three years before his death, the Ramban spent the rest of his life engaged in CHIZUK V'IDUD, rebuilding the community life which had been decimated by the plundering and pillaging Crusaders.

Fast-forward approx. 550 years, the TALMIDEI HA'GRA (at the beginning of the 19th century) re-enact the Ramban's Aliya. They arrive animated by the GRA's view that the Redemption is not a one-time event, but rather a lengthy process set in motion by human action. Their goals were to begin the process of the ingathering of the exiles, to settle the land, and ultimately rebuild Yerushalayim. Fast-forwarding once again, and surveying the current scene in Eretz Yisrael, we can appreciate the fact that we have been blessed to live in the most glorious of times.

The mitzva of re-enacting the glory and joy of the redemption from Egypt, is a lesson in HAKARAT HATOV. We are required to never forget, and to never minimize the importance of these historical events. The Seder night is, in effect, an extended and experiential lesson in a person's duty to appreciate the blessings G-d has bestowed upon him, and to give heartfelt thanks for them. This is the time to appreciate the Ge'ula of modern times - to praise G-d for the fact that we have merited to see YERUSHALAYIM HA'HOLECHET V'NIVNEIT - the holy city of Jerusalem gradually expanding its borders and multiplying the number of its Jewish residents.

L'SHANA HABA'A BIRUSHALAYIM

HAB'NUYA! 🏠👉

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