

# 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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The journey from slavery to freedom was a hazardous one. Movement from galut to geula was not easy. Exodus did not end with all the Jews entering Eretz Yisrael in a triumphant fashion through the Jaffa Gate. Rather, everyone, except for Yehoshua and Kalev, died during the 40 years of wandering in the desert. So, too, in the 20th century the movement from slavery to freedom was punctuated with hair-raising tales of brutality and destruction, with the occasional episode of heroism.

Today with Eretz Yisrael flourishing, we some times forget the low point of European Jewry's existence in the 20th century. To accentuate this point, we have only to quote Rav Shlomo Carlebach's z"l famous story of the Seder in the Warsaw Ghetto. The scene of Seder night in Warsaw of 1943 as the Nazis extinguish the last vestiges of Jewish power and resistance - extinguish the Ghetto itself by using flame-throwers. The child (Moishele) asks his father a 5th question: "Will we be alive next year to make a Seder? The father replies:

"I do not know if you or I will be alive next year to make a Seder but, somehow, some where in the world, there will be a Jew alive, a Moishele, who will make the Seder and ask the "Ma nishtana" because I know one thing ... VELO YICHBEH NEIRO L'OLAM VA'ED.

I remember Rav Yaakov Warhaftig shlita, talking about his late father, Rabbi Dr. Zerach Warhaftig zt"l, who survived World War II and returned to Europe to search for survivors as a member of the Vaad Hahatzalah of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis. His mission was three-fold: he wanted to provide former camp-inmates with direct relief, to raise the spirit of the refugees and to provide the camps with religious facilities as he searched among the survivors for Rabbis and Yeshiva heads. In this connection, Rav Zerach, in his autobiography, "Refugee and Survivor" pg. 272, states that he had been told that "In a town in Bavaria there lived an old Rabbi of note." He went to investigate and in a little apartment he found an old man, bent and frail, sitting alone. Suddenly the old man stumbled toward Rabbi Zerach and clutched him while calling out in a sobbing voice: "Warhaftig there are some Jews still left in the world?" He was in a state of shock as he had believed himself to be the sole Jewish survivor in all of Europe. Some time would elapse before he would

regain his mental if not his physical composure. This survivor was none other than Reb Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, the Baal Sridei Eish.

While we do not know the explanation for this dark era in Jewish history known as the Holocaust, Chazal do discuss why the Jews had to wander, suffer and die during the 40 years in the desert. In Sh'mot 13:17 we read that the Almighty did not lead the Jews through the Land of the Plishtim though it was close, lest they face a war and choose to return to Egypt. This, indeed, is how Rashi and the Rashbam, explain the words "Because it was close" - When faced with conflict and war, they would immediately return to Egypt. Returning from the far away desert, however, would be harder to accomplish.

As opposed to Rashi and the Rashbam who view KI KAROV HU as a precautionary preventative measure, the Rambam, in Moreh Nevuchim 3:24, says that if not for the difficulties and travails of desert life, they would not have been able to conquer the land and fight a war against its inhabitants. The Rambam also says in Moreh Nevuchim 3:32 that Man, who had grown up in a state of slavery could not rise up, remove filth and fight giants, overnight. Hashem, therefore, took them through the desert in order for them to learn to shoulder hardship and strengthen their inner resolve.

While the commentators have found solid reasons to explain and justify the desert experience, I would be hard put to deign to understand and explain the Holocaust experience. Yet, one fact is obvious. The Jewish State, established soon after the Holocaust (in 1948) has been standing 68 years and it is still beyond my understanding why Jews continue to refuse to make Aliyah today. This is especially felt when I read the words of Jacob Lind in his book "Counting My Steps". Jacob Lind, a non-religious Jew, who surviving the War having possessed false identification papers which allowed him to be employed sailing on a barge down the Rhine bringing coal to German communities. On July 25, 1945, (after the War), he arrived by ship and saw the coastline of Haifa. He wrote the following: "Zionism, (in) gathering of the exiles, return of the lost tribes, the rebirth of the nation, is also rebirth for every single Jew. How to describe this? How to describe love for something insanely abstract like a country? It hadn't been for nothing... it hadn't been a fantasy. If Palestine exists, so do I! 🇮🇱👉"

*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*