

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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Some readers have communicated the concern that it may be misguided to target the rabbis and teachers who continue to reside in the galut. Our efforts in encouraging Aliyah, they claim, should be focused on the laity. The spiritual leaders are needed overseas, and they would do best using their talents there. Only if, and when, their constituents were to move here, should the leaders follow suit.

I was recently reminded of this claim when my son showed me a passage in the sefer "Shivivei Ohr", a collection of letters and talks given by Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank (1873-1960), the longtime Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. Rav Frank who had been born in Kovno, a city filled with Talmidei Chachamim, and was directly influenced by its Rabbi, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spector zt"l, studied in some of the greatest Lithuanian Yeshivot. He was first a student in Slobodka, and later studied in the Telz Yeshiva under Rav Shimon Skhop zt"l and Rav Eliezer Gordon zt"l. In 1892, as a young man, he preceded his parents making Aliyah to Jerusalem,

where he continued his studies and teaching of Torah.

Having made the move here himself, R' Frank zt"l felt the need to turn to European Roshei Yeshiva in the hope of encouraging them to take a similar step, convincing them to come to Eretz Yisrael bringing their students along with them. R. Frank successfully influenced the heads of the Slobodka Yeshiva, Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein zt"l and Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l to bring their yeshiva to Yerushalayim and then later to Chevron. He conducted similar conversations with the Rosh Yeshiva of Slutsk, the great Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l, as well, and the following passage is taken from a letter R. Frank addressed to R. Meltzer in the year 1920:

"Amongst the many things that I would like to bring up, I would prevail upon the honorable Rav to think profoundly about rising up and coming with his Yeshiva to the holy mountain (Yerushalayim). Why not be motivated by the upright amongst the free thinkers who are far removed from the Torah and its teachings, and yet, are prepared to offer their bodies and souls to our holy Land? Why, then, should those who maintain and support our Torah stand afar at this critical moment, as we witness the unfolding of Divine assistance from on-high? The time has arrived to fulfill the words of the verse: 'For

your servants desired its stones and favored its dust' (T'hilim 102:15). I think that there is a holy obligation for the Gedolim of our generation to hasten and leave (galut), to arrive in the Holy Land armed with Torah, and establish here a spiritual and holy center of Torah and Avoda. Only thus will the lost glory and beauty be restored (L'HACHZIR ATARA L'YOSHNA), in order to fulfill the verse of Yishayahu: "For out of Zion will go forth the law and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim - KI M'TZION TEITZEI TORAH... With the grace of G-d we have merited to arrive at a propitious time in history. Happy will be he who prepares himself for the great and holy mitzva which is the pinnacle of our endeavor. It is surely unnecessary for me to over-emphasize the essential nature of this mitzva."

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank was a spiritual leader deeply immersed in the public life of the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael. He played a central role in the appointment of Rav Kook, his predecessor in the role of chief rabbi of Yerushalayim, and after R. Kook's passing (after having loyally served on his rabbinical council), he succeeded him, maintaining the position for twenty five years until his passing in 1960. Rav Frank believed the leaders have to set the tone, their responsibility is not to follow their constituents but rather to show them the way by example.

When questioned how one can make Aliyah with so many non-religious abounding, R. Frank was adamant: Come to Israel yourself and emulate their dedication to the People and the Land of Israel, supplementing it with your added dedication to the Torah.

On Yom Haatzma'ut we cry out ZEH HAYOM ASA HASHEM NAGILA V'NISM'CHA VO" (T'hilim 118:23) - this is the day the Almighty brought about, let us rejoice and be happy upon it. Rav Shaul Yisraeli points to the Midrash (Shir Hashirim Raba) which notes that although the word BO can indeed be understood as a reference to the day, a no less plausible reading of the verse, however, is that we are to rejoice BO - in Him - the Almighty.

The celebration of Yom Haatzma'ut, Israel's Independence Day, must be tied together with our religious belief in the source of our victories. Acknowledging the Divine role in the events leads to rejoicing in Him - the Almighty himself. This great belief must then lead to action! For, indeed, R' Frank's words still bear the ring of truth: There still is "a holy obligation for the Gedolim of our generation to hasten and leave (galut), to arrive in the holy land armed with Torah"! 🕍🕍

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