

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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When we hear the triumphant declarations made by the young, unaffiliated, Birthright Israel participants at the end of their visit to Israel, we rightfully feel a sense of pride and identification. One can seemingly never tire of hearing proclamations like: "I was happy to finally be able to learn where I came from. I was introduced to a beautiful country where I somehow felt right at home."

Surprisingly, though, the subterranean connections between the Jews and their heritage can be felt even when submerged for centuries.

Doreen Carvajal, a New York Times reporter brought up as a Roman Catholic, describes how she experienced a feeling she refers to as the "call of the blood". Although her Marrano ancestors' separation from the Jewish community took place hundreds of years ago, nonetheless she felt a yearning to return to her Marrano ancestors' native land. "Something inexplicable drew me to their hometown in Spain - Arcos de la Frontera". This pull to discover her

roots did not end with the strong emotional response to the sight and sounds of the alleys and bells ringing in this small town, and today she has returned full circle to Judaism. Summing up her personal odyssey, Doreen is quoted as saying that "Past generations and their trauma can become so ingrained that it becomes part of one's DNA."

If one wishes to trace the source of this feeling, there is no better place to start from than the very beginning - the beginning of it all... On the 6th day of Creation, Man is formed - as the Torah tells us (B'reishit 2:7) "Hashem formed man of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." We know that Man was formed from AFAR MIN HA'ADAMA, but which AFAR was used in making Man? From whence was the dust collected? Rashi cites two views:

The Almighty gathered dust from all four corners of the universe thus indicating that upon a person's death all earth will accept Man for burial. Man issued from dust and returns to dust.

The second view states that the Torah uses the definite article HA'ADAMA - dust of the earth - indicating a specific location. How can we proceed to identify the exact place? This puzzle is solved when

noting the similarity between AFAR MIN HA'ADAMA and the expression MIZBACH ADAMA TA'ASEH LI, (Sh'mot 20:21). ADAMA (earth) matches ADAMA - thus the Torah hints to the fact that the dust used in the formation of Man was gathered from MAKOM HAMIZBEI'ACH, the Altar on Har HaMoriya.

Thus Har Hamorya - Jerusalem - is in a very real sense a part of every Jewish person's DNA.

We always try to retrace our steps back to our point of origin. If Man originated in Jerusalem then ultimately Man must retrace his steps back to the beginning.

Rav J.B. Soloveitchik zt"l writes in his discourses On Repentance (p. 89) that Teshuva is, in effect, the process of completing a spiritual circle. The process of returning to Hashem may be started anywhere on the globe: "Man may wander about in circles and become entangled in many vain causes, yet, like Samuel, Man must return to Rama for there is his home" (Shmuel Alef 7:15-17). One might say that this spiritual circle of Teshuva has its geographical counterpart as well. The geographical Teshuva of the wandering, globetrotting, Jew is accomplished as he ultimately returns to his point of origin, to Har HaMoriya.

After eating of the forbidden fruit

Man is expelled from the Garden of Eden (3:23-24) and charged with the task of making amends returning to the place from whence he came.

Man, today, is still charged with this same task of completing the circle that Adam began when he was exiled from the Garden of Eden. We, today, know that living in the Diaspora means being exiled from the Garden of Eden. Those who have visited Eretz Yisrael (whether through Birthright or otherwise), have already savored the sweet smell of Gan Eden. After the Yamim Nora'im, it is time to match one's spiritual process of Teshuva with its geographical counterpart: Now is the time to come home and return to the K'dusha of Yerushalayim and Gan Eden. 🏠⚡

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