

# CHIZUK <sup>AND</sup> IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra  
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -  
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

## POST-PURIM THOUGHTS

Every Purim, we celebrate Mordechai and Esther's miraculous delivery from the impending threat of utter annihilation. The story is a joyous and uplifting one, and yet one cannot but wonder how history could have played itself out differently were we to have experienced a similar episode of divine intervention to spare us the horrors of Nazi Germany.

This Purim I was told the story of a young man living in Poland in the early 1930s. When he shared with his parents his plan to make Aliya and go live in Eretz Yisrael, his parents objected and requested that he first consult with the family rabbi. The Rabbi was adamantly opposed to the plan declaring that only "Kofrim" (heretics) made such a move, and yet, the young man who was no less adamant about pursuing his dream, made Aliya nonetheless. Upon the instructions of their rabbi, the parents proceeded to sit Shiva for their son... The bitterly ironic postscript to this story is that when the young man found out that his entire family had been wiped out in the Holocaust, it was he who sat Shiva for them.

As I listened to this story, I was reminded of my own late mother-in-law. Born and bred in the town of Satmar (Satu Mar?), she remembered once overhearing her older brother HY"D speaking in a conspiratorial manner. Upon inquiry he explained that he was planning something 'dangerous', namely,

attending a local Zionist gathering. She still vividly recalled, so many years later, the ringing smack across the face her brother received from their father when discovered. Here too, it was she, the family's sole survivor, who ultimately made it to Israel's shores atop the Knesset Yisrael Ma'apilim ship.

Knowing the amazing growth experienced in Eretz Yisrael in the years after the Holocaust, the vexing hypothetical question is whether the rebirth of Israel could have taken place without the Holocaust? Were we to have been saved from Hitler's nefarious scheme would so many of our brethren been willing to leave their comfortable homes abroad in order to come here?

Returning to Mordechai and Esther, we might examine the reaction of the Jews of their day immediately after their survival was assured. They rightly attributed their survival to "Yad Hashem" and not simply to fortuitous circumstance. But what lesson did they derive from this? Sadly, it seems that for most of the Jews everything remained the same. They did not feel it was important to pick up and move to Eretz Yisrael, perhaps they too consulted with the rabbis of the day and were advised not to do so! [The Talmud (B'rachot 24b, Ketubot 110b) relates the story of R' Abba and of R. Zeira who both hid from their Rebbe, R. Yehuda, when they wished to go up to Israel. They knew that their Rebbe fiercely objected to Aliya believing that the Jews were required to remain in exile, quoting the words of Yirmiyahu: "They shall be taken to Babylonia and there they shall remain until the day that I recall them, said the Lord" (Yirmiyahu 27:22).

Time would still have to pass before Ezra and Nechemiah would make a bold move, and even then, only a small percentage of Jews picked up to go to Eretz Yisrael.

When times are good Jews are not overly concerned by the fact that Har Tzion is still "Shameim" - desolate, nor do they worry about the question of Jewish continuity, and the crippling consequences of assimilation. [In the free world today the intermarriage rate hovers between 50-70%, while in Israel, on the other hand, it is less than 1%.]

The Talmud (Megila 12) tells us that the Jewish inhabitants of Shushan were liable to the death penalty because they attended, and thoroughly enjoyed, Achashverosh's gathering. The Talmud explains that there was no issue of Kashrut involved, leaving us to conclude that the problem was one of assimilation and identification with a foreign culture. When so many Jews want to be accepted by the majority culture, it is only natural to adopt Persian names, and this trend must ultimately lead to assimilation. [Curiously, the heroes of the Megila bear names stemming from Persian gods, Marduk and Ishtar. For more details on this subject, see the discussion in Avoda Vol. 26 No. 94]

Michael Eisenberg, a highly successful American Oleh, who is deeply bothered by the propensity of Jews not to learn from past history, has recently engendered a renewed discussion of this topic. In his new book "The Vanishing Jew - A Wakeup Call from the Land of Israel", he details his concern regarding the fate of Jewish people, concluding that Aliyah is good for the individual Jew both spiritually and financially, and will

guarantee the survival of the Jewish People as a whole.

So if you are concerned about your Gashmiut and/or Ruchniut, and even more, want to perpetuate Am Yisrael B'eretz Yisrael, the time to come is now!

*Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness, Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh*