

# CHIZUK AND IDUD

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

This past week my wife and I spent a few days in the Golan Heights with our children and grandchildren. We were enjoying the blissful atmosphere, talking and singing around a bonfire, when we heard suspicious blasts alarmingly close by. Trying to calm the children's fears (as well as our own...), we readily accepted the explanation that most probably we were privy to the sounds of Tzahal's military exercises. Not knowing any better we innocently assumed that the events were connected to the downing of a Syrian airplane in Israeli airspace a day before. Checking the news, we discovered that earlier that same afternoon, vacationers bathing in the Kinneret were startled as they witnessed two Grad missiles fall into the sea. Realizing the magnitude of the potential disaster which could have transpired, the Israeli press noted how "we were very lucky that the missiles fell where they did". Thinking of these events, I thought that a more proper Jewish reaction would have made reference to this week's Parsha. The Torah teaches us that Eretz Yisrael is a land "that Hashem looks closely after (Doresh Ota); Hashem's eyes are always upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year" (D'varim 11:12). Thus, it would have been more appropriate to give blessing to Shomer Yisrael, the Guardian of Israel, who was clearly very much on duty at that moment...

Rabbeinu B'Chayei expands on this Pasuk explaining that the verse is not teaching us that G-d has a special regard

for the Holy Land, but rather something much more encompassing: While it is true that G-d's providence extends over all lands, it starts from the Holy Land and then extends from there to the rest of the world.

Rav S.R. Hirsch quotes the Sifri as making the same point, and in his own inimitable manner he explains the significance of this process: "G-d's solicitude for the world of mankind is concentrated in His care for the Land; because the Land bears in its bosom the historical memorial of G-d's revelation of His Torah. Through the Torah the morality of mankind will make the Kingdom of G-d a reality. Therefore, every drop of rain on earth falls for the sake of Zion, for the whole future of mankind which is guaranteed by Zion." To this Rav Hirsch adds the following caveat, declaring that the above description holds true even when it may appear otherwise. "However little, any contemporary time may appear worthy, of the drop of rain." This last declaration of faith must have flowed forth from deep wellsprings of faith when penned in the late 19th century, as it was so patently divorced from visible reality. The very same statement appears almost self-evident to our eyes today, as modern-day Israel commands such great attention upon the central stage of global politics. This timeless spiritual reality of G-d's Derisha, His seeking out, of his Holy Land - has taken clear concrete form in the past few generations. That is why we look to the disciples of Rav Hirsch to be in the vanguard of those who turn their eyes to Zion, just as Hashem has been doing for the last seventy years. [V'hameivin Yavin].

In his famous article "KOL DODI DOFEK" (My beloved knocks), Rav

Soloveitchik notes that "today G-d is knocking on our door", and that one can experience closeness to the Creator by experiencing Hashem's actions in the Land. Noting how each one of these "knocks", or miraculous events, brings us closer to our Creator, the Rav enumerated the following (amongst others):

1. The historic U.N. resolution recognizing Israel.
2. Jewish self government and its theological implications.
3. Tzahal's victories on the battlefields despite being outnumbered by the united forces of the Arab nations surrounding us.
4. Our ability to maintain Jewish affiliation even amongst those who are not religiously affiliated (more recent case in point the amazing "Birthright" initiative).
5. The ingathering of the many exiles.

As R. Soloveitchik, describes (and as I myself felt this past week), sometimes we can clearly hear the knocking but we are unable to identify and understand its true source and significance. It is by living here and being attuned to Hashem's Providence over Eretz Yisrael that our spiritual development can be enhanced. The harmless landing of those missiles in the waters of the Kinneret, was not merely a good stroke of "luck", but rather a sharp knock on the shut doors of our hearts and minds.

My grandson told me of a certain rabbi who had escaped injury during an act of terror. He approached the Gri"z (the Brisker Rav - Rav J.B. Soloveitchik's beloved uncle) with concern as to whether his Z'chuyot, his accumulated

spiritual merits, were seriously undercut by dint of having been the subject of such a miracle? The Gri"z replied: "In the Diaspora, where protection is guaranteed by the angels, a person's merits are indeed deducted when saved by a miracle. However, in Eretz Yisrael, where we live under direct Divine protection, there is no such diminution."

B"H living in Eretz Yisrael affords one Divine protection M'reishit Hashana V'ad Acharit Shana - "from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (D'varim 11:12).

Kol Dodi Dofek, G-d is steadily knocking, all we have to do is open the door and let Him in...

*Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness, Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh*