

# 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*

As the impending separation from Moshe Rabbeinu inches closer, a mood of sadness pervades all. Moshe gives voice to the realization that his end is imminent, and turning to the people he says: "I am 120 years old today. Lo Uchal Od - I can no longer, go out and come in, the Almighty has told me 'You will not cross over the Jordan'", (Devarim 31:2). Many of our commentators tried to understand the exact meaning of the phrase 'Lo Uchal' - is Moshe speaking of his own physical frailty? Perhaps he is notifying the people that his time is up, and he no longer has the authority to fulfill his role of leadership.

Rashi writes that since we are told that Moshe's 'eyes did not dim' and his force was not diminished, we must conclude that when the verse says Lo Uchal Od Lazeit V'lavoh - 'go in and out' it must mean that he has no longer the right, or divine permission, to fulfil his former role since Yehoshua has already been authorized to take over.

The S'forno, on the other hand (perhaps speaking from his medical background) was of the opinion that Moshe was indeed referring to his waning physical capabilities. Seforno explains that Moshe was trying to convey a comforting message, convincing the people that they need not be overly affected by the thought of his imminent death. He understands the inevitability of the laws of nature and what this means. His years are creeping up on him leading to a necessary lessening of mobility and thus his ability to fulfill his role.

The Ibn Ezra similarly understood that Moshe's comment was focused on his physical abilities, explaining that Moshe wished to stress the fact that his infirmity means he is no longer able to lead his nation onto the battlefield, and therefore he is no longer a valuable asset.

The Ramban continues with this direction, writing that Moshe wishes to comfort the people, by convincing them that his advanced age renders him useless to them. At the same time, Moshe adds the additional essential message: They need not fear the future, or be dismayed by the thought of his absence, since Hashem will always be there with them.

In tandem with Moshe's attempts to prepare the people for the changing of the guard, the Gemara in Sotah (13b) describes how Hashem prepared Moshe himself, in order to lessen the difficulty of the transition process. Moshe had already been told that he would not cross the Jordan, that Yehoshua would take his place. The Gemara says that at this point Moshe's wellsprings of wisdom slowed down and ceased to flow so that Moshe himself would not find it so difficult to watch as Yehoshua assumed his responsibilities.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that the special divine blessing which Moshe had received, i.e. his faculties remaining fully intact despite having lived way beyond his hundredth birthday (-'His eyes were not dimmed and his vitality not diminished', Devarim 34:7) - was intimately connected to his fulfilling a role of communal leadership. With his role coming to an end, Moshe was experiencing a quick deterioration as age-related illness finally began to take their toll.



Veematz! Welcome!

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The Kli Yakar returns us to the view that "Lo Uchal" means "I am no longer allowed", and as such has nothing to do with physical abilities, or the lack thereof. Indeed, adds the Kli Yakar, when the Torah tells us that Moshe "went out" (literally: he walked, Vayeilech), this alludes to his purposefully striding to and fro placing his physical prowess on full exhibition. Moshe wished to dispel all contrary rumours and prove that his actions dedicated to the passing on of the mantle of leadership, were a result of divine command not human frailty!

As the torch of leadership is passed over to the next staunch bearer, Moshe's charge to Yehoshua contains the well known phrase Chazak Ve'ematz "Be firm and strong". Every new leader must be firm and strong but here a reason is given: "for you are to go with the people to the land".

Those of us living in Eretz Yisrael know intuitively what SR Hirsch teaches, when he writes that the directive: "Be firm and strong", is directed to both the people and the leader Yehoshua. To the people, "Chazak Ve'ematz" in the wars. To the leader be strong and firm as you stand at the helm of the nation. [It is important that a leader not only be firm, but also that they appear as such and are seen in this light - Le'Einay B'nai Yisrael. Hashem Himself, so directs Yehoshua : "Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I swore unto their fathers to give them . Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest (Joshua 1:6,7).

To these two groups, I would add a third: Chazak Ve'ematz all those who have, or are planning, to make Aliya, Chazak