**The Pesach Seder –Coming Home**

**הנך יפה עיניך יונים (שיר השירים)**

It is an age-old Minhag in some Kehillos of Yerushalayim, to arrive in Shul well before Shabbos to recite Shir HaShirim with the Tzibbur or in pairs. It is so heartwarming to see fathers and sons sit together, reciting the holy words in tandem. R’ Aryeh Levine zt”l, the beloved Tzadik of Yerushalayim, relished that special time every week, when he would sit side by side with his revered Rebbi, R’ Chaim Berlin zt”l, and recited Shir HaShirim together. One Erev Shabbos, as they finished the first Perek, R’ Chaim became overwrought with emotion and burst into tears. R’ Chaim explained that while saying the Pasuk, הנך יפה עיניך יונים, he recalled Chazal’s poignant interpretation and a memorable incident that occurred during his tenure as Rov of Moscow.

The opening Pesukim of Shir HaShirim speak of the greatness and magnificence of Klall Yisroel, despite their failings and lapses. In this Pasuk, we speak of every Yid’s unwavering loyalty to his Jewish heritage. הנך יפה עיניך יונים - Behold how beautiful you are, with your eyes like a dove. As much as a dove may stray from its nest, she will never go beyond her line of sight from the nest, without intention to return. Similarly, a Yid may reject his upbringing or may become completely assimilated, ר"ל. Shabbos, Kashrus, Tefilin, all may, unfortunately, fall by the wayside. Yet, one Mitzvah remains inviolate. Even the most distant “Chilonim” will not hesitate to enter their child into the Bris of Avraham Avinu. They just cannot bring themselves to disconnect completely.

R’ Chaim recalled how a member of Moscow’s elite, upper class approached him one day. The fellow, a respected industrialist, wished to arrange a Bris for his newborn child. He requested that the Rov come to his house and perform the Bris. It was to be done without fanfare and kept confidential. He made it clear, that in his position, he could not afford to let slip that he was actually a Jew. His high level connections and lucrative associations could never be maintained, if there was even the smallest possibility of a Jewish background. Sure enough, the Rov came to perform the Bris in a magnificent mansion that was completely devoid of any hint of a connection to Judaism. There were no guests or other family members present, other than the father and the Rov. Even the house staff had been given the day off. After the Bris was completed and he made ready to leave, R’ Chaim Berlin turned to the father and asked curiously, why did you go through all this trouble to have a Bris done for your son? You don’t look Jewish or act Jewish. This child will grow up in a home and an environment that is completely devoid of any hint of a connection to Yiddishkeit. Why did you insist that your son have a Bris, when he will likely not ever know of Torah and Mitzvos? The father replied that when he was younger,he at least had some exposure to a Jewish way of life. He was raised among Jews. This child, however, will not see a Jew or ever get a taste of his heritage. I want him to at least carry with him this irrevocable identification of being a Jew. No matter where he ends up, he will know that he is, after all, a descendant of our forefathers and a member of the holy nation. Like the dove, a Jew will likely never become fully separated from our people, no matter how far off he has become. This memory, while saying these holy words, and the assurance of Netzach Yisroel, brought forth a wellspring of emotion.

R’ Dovid Feinstein Shlit”a, always reminds us in his Shiurim, that the רשע always has a place by the Seder table. The Seder will be incomplete, if we don’t include רשע מה הוא אומר - the disagreeable tone of the רשע- and the appropriate response. Despite having earned the title of רשע, he still comes to Seder table and he still wants to understand the purpose and message of the Mitzvos. Like the קטורת being invalid without the sharp, unpleasant aroma of the חלבנה, Klall Yisroel is missing something if we don’t make place for those who stray from home and from our Heilig and exalted way of life. They, like the dove, will never completely let go. We, therefore, must never let go of them.חג כשר ושמח, yk

*An Encore Presentation of one of our most favorite pieces for Pesach*

***Pesach - Shir HaShirim***

**אני לדודי ודודי לי הרועה בשושנים- Say it With Flowers**

I had a neighbor when I lived in Boro Park, back in my teenage years, who decided to move to Eretz Yisroel and become a shepherd. No kidding! He had already gone through Yeshiva and college and seemed to be a pretty regular guy. It doesn’t take much training or expertise. It is a low stress occupation. You just have to keep an eye out for straying sheep and any predators common to your region. There must be something to it. After all, some of our greatest leaders proved their mettle as leaders of Kllal Yisroel through their exceptional performance as shepherds.

Every shepherd has his particular method for keeping the sheep in line. Some use their voices by shouting or using some choice phrases the sheep get to recognize. Some have a mechanical or natural whistle. Still others may use a good ol’ shepherd’s staff or dogs to go after any sheep who stray from the flock. But who ever heard of tending to a flock with flowers? Yet, the *Pasuk* here describes the perfect bond of love between Kllal Yisroel and The Ribono shel Olam with this very attribute. מה דודך מדוד - What is it about HaKadosh Baruch Hu that our love is so perfect? It’s the perfection of Tender Loving Care that is the ultimate in sheepherding. It’s not with the stick, the dog or the loud noises to bring back the wayward sheep. Theרועה בשושנים uses fragrant, pleasant smelling flowers that make the sheep not want to leave or get to far from their shepherd in the first place. In his presence they find comfort and fulfillment. Away from him, they feel that something is missing. That’s the brilliance here. The sheep never have a desire to stray too far from the comforting presence of their guide.Parents, *Mechanchim*, Rabbonim and all who are constantly working to maintain a close relationship with their children, *Talmidim*, *Kehillos*, etc. may use any number of methods and techniques to keep their charges in the fold. Sometimes we resort to words. Sometimes we need some sort of stick or other strong method of recall. *ShlomoHaMelech*teaches us an even better way. If the leader of the flock exudes a fragrant love then there will be little need to work on recalling any strays.

I once heard RavAvrohom Pam, zt”l at a gathering of *Mechanchim*. He was a delicious person. He certainly embodied this manner of fostering a loving relationship that you don’t want to upset. He adjured the participants, a cross-section of Rabbeim of all grade levels from all *MosdosHaChinuch*, to avoid harsh words or discipline when dealing with difficult, misbehaving children. I’ll never forget his words – “No child ever learned to behave or cooperate from being spoken to or disciplined harshly”. Show them your love. They will never want to leave you.

*“Ha Lachma Anya…KolDichfinYeseiV’Yeichol”*. What is the *Hemshech*in these words? We point out the poor bread and then generously invite anyone to join us. The Klauzenburger Rov, zt”l explained that it’s the contrast that each represents. With the bread of affliction we have the state of being “*Hachah”* in *Galus*and being *Avdei­*– slaves to a foreign entity. With the freedom of *KolDichfin*, we have the state of *L’shanaHaBa* as free men in a redeemed land. I heard the Rebbe with my own two ears as he challenged the Ribono shel Olam – “If you place us in *Galus* and make us live with the bread of affliction, what will You have from it? We end up being *Avdei* to the foreign powers, far from Torah and Mitzvos. I’M TELLING YOU - NO YID DID TESHUVAH IN THE CAMPS! But if you give us the *Ravchus* of being able to bring others together and enjoy the good of this world, then *L’shanaHaBa* we will serve you as *B’nai Chorin*!

Please Hashem, lead us with the pleasant scent of your *Shoshanim*. We will stay with you always. *Amein, KeinYehiRatzon*. *A FreilichenYomTov*, yk