



Yeshiva University
S. DANIEL ABRAHAM ISRAEL PROGRAM

Divrei Torah for the Shabbos Table

פירות הארץ

FROM THE TALMIDIM, FOR THE TALMIDIM | 2009 - 2010 • תש"ע



Pesach / פסח

Yaakov Ribner
Orayta

On Chol Hamoed Pesach, we read *Megilat Shir Hashirim*. Over the year, we read five different *megilot* on special occasions, but it seems that the *megilah* that we read on *Pesach* has nothing to do with the *chag* itself. *Pesach* is about freedom; about a people becoming a nation; about family and our history. *Shir Hashirim* tells the story of a man and woman searching for each other, for ultimate love. There seems to be no clear connection between that and *Pesach*!

The first and most obvious connection is the time of year: "*For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;*" (*Shir hashirim* 2, 11-12) Both *Pesach* and the *megilah* take place during the changing of the seasons, but a further look into the *megilah* shows a much deeper connection between the two.

Shir Hashirim is about a couple in search for each other. But throughout the *megilah* they will never meet! They will run and hide; they will talk about love and how wonderful it is; but they will never have the opportunity to actually meet. In essence, this is a relationship which happens in the imagination of two people. They live a life filled with missed opportunities. When the chance to meet finally comes, they miss the opportunity: "*Sleep, but my heart waketh; Hark! My beloved knocketh: 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with flowing myrrh, upon the handles of the bar. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had turned away, and was gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.*" (*Shir Hashirim* 5, 2-6)

How does the *megilah* end? We would hope that it would have a happy ending- that at the end the couple will finally meet. But the *megilah* chooses to leave us in suspense! All it says is: "*Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*" (*Shir hashirim* 8, 14).

What is *Pesach*? *Pesach* is the beginning of a great journey; in a sense it is also the journey of two people looking for each other. We left Egypt with no clear idea what was going to happen to us. Slowly, we became one, we became a nation, and finally met Hashem at *Har Sinai*. But it took time! We couldn't go straight to *Har Sinai*! We had to go through a few tests before we accepted G-d. We had to cross *Yam Suf*; we had to fight *Amalek*; we had to look up to G-d for food. Only then were we able to meet Hashem at *Har Sinai*.

What is the connection between Pesach and *Shir hashirim*? *Chazal* say that the man in *Shir Hashirim* allegorically symbolizes Hashem, and the woman refers to Bnei Yisrael. Both *Pesach* and *Shir Hashirim* speak of relationships. We can talk about Hashem; we can hope for a deeper connection. But do we make the effort? Do we try our best? *Shir Hashirim* describes a relationship that was missed, that never really happened. On the other hand, Pesach tells of a relationship that worked. It tells of a group of people that followed *Hashem* into the unknown, but who will eventually accept Hashem. They will declare “*na`aseh venishma*”. *Pesach* is about the need for a leap of faith, to take that one step forward even though we are not so sure what will happen- to answer the knocking on our door.

In today's world it is very easy to become lazy, to wait for things to happen, to hope for good- but never to do anything about it. On Shabbat Chol Hamoed Pesach, we read *Shir Hashirim* to remember the lesson of *emunah temimah*, of simple and honest belief in Hashem. We remind ourselves of the basic belief that at the end of the day we have a constant relationship with Hashem, and that all that He does is for our good.