**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Shir Ha-Shirim**

**Rav Tzvi Sinensky**

**Shiur #14: *Shir Ha-Shirim* 6:4-12**

Followingthe fateful conversation between the woman and daughters of Jerusalem, the narrative turns back to the unfiltered adulation of the *dod* for the *raya*. He begins:

You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirtzah, Comely as Jerusalem, Awesome as bannered hosts. (6:4)

Tirtzah refers to the home of northern kings, beginning with the reign of Yerovam ben Nevat, until the capital Shomron was completed. The *dod* is therefore complimenting her by comparing her to the seat of each of the monarchies during the period of *Melakhim*.

The meaning of “*ayuma ka-nidgalot*” is less clear. *Ayuma* seems to refer to her being fearsome or awe-inspiring. While at first glance this might seem an ill-fitting description of the *raya*, in fact there are other instances in which she is described as awe-inspiring. The meaning of “*nidgalot*” is difficult to pin down, despite its appearance earlier in the *sefer* (see 2:4, 5:10). As we discussed in relation to its usage in 2:4, the classic translation of “banner” seems difficult. And though many modern-day commentators translate “*ve-diglo alay ahava*” as “his look upon me is loving” based on the Accadian, this meaning does not seem to fit in context of its usage in our *pasuk*. Accordingly, others have suggested that its meaning here is in reference to banners of warriors. On this interpretation, the woman is described as “awe-inspiring like banners of warriors.” If correct, this is important, as the woman is described as not just beautiful, but also as awe-inspiring. The military allusions, while seeming out of place, will eventually become extremely important in understanding the woman’s independence as the story concludes.

The verses continue:

Turn your eyes away from me, For they overwhelm me! Your hair is like a flock of goats Streaming down from Gilad. (6:5)

He asks her to turn her eyes away from him, as they are so beautiful as to be overwhelming. Instead of looking at her eyes, he turns to her hair instead, which is shaped like a flock of goats descending from the mountainside.

The reference to the flock of goats is not new to *Shir Ha-Shirim*; precisely the same phrase appears in 4:1, which also includes a praise of her eyes. In fact, with relatively minor discrepancies, verses 6:5-7 mimic 4:1-3. Why would *Shir Ha-Shirim* simply repeat already-familiar phrases? On one level, this makes the most sense if we assume that these two sections parallel one another, as both reflect the loving relationship between the prince and his beloved. But in light of this striking parallelism, we may take a further step: the repetition of these verses suggests that in the story of the princely lovers, there is relatively little movement or growth in the relationship. The royal relationship is static, while the relationship between the shepherds is growth-oriented, if tumultuous.

The next verse states:

Your teeth are like a flock of ewes Climbing up from the washing pool; All of them bear twins, And not one loses her young. (6:6)

While some commentators explain *matimot* as perfect, more simply it means that they bear twins, as JPS translates. The teeth are perfectly paired; not one of them is lost.

The man continues:

Your brow behind your veil [Gleams] like a pomegranate split open. (6:7)

While the commentators debate exactly which part of the head is referenced here, the basic point is clear. Even though she is hidden behind the veil (*mi-ba’ad le-tzamatekh*, as in 4:3), some part of her head gleams with the beautiful blend of red and white that is visible in the pomegranate.

He then shifts gears, comparing her favorably with all the women in the king’s life:

There are sixty queens, And eighty concubines, And damsels without number. (6:8)

The number sixty is noteworthy and echoes the song of King Shlomo’s wedding, which describes him as having been surrounded by sixty soldiers. R. Cherlow suggests that this represents a key turning point in the narrative: she has been afraid of court life, and even fled after marrying him. Yet here he offers encouragement, explaining that court life is filled with other women. At the end of the day, she is the only one who is truly beloved. This assuages her insecurities. But a more likely reading would seem to be that this is simply another form of praise and that this section need not reflect any insecurity on her part.

Not only is she greater than all the other royal women, but she rises above all women:

Only one is my dove, My perfect one, The only one of her mother, The delight of her who bore her. Maidens see and acclaim her; Queens and concubines, and praise her. (6:9)

She is the delight of all those who know her: her beloved, her mother (her siblings notwithstanding), maidens, queens, and concubines.

Picking up simultaneously on the most recent verse and the beginning of this section, he continues:

Who is she that shines through like the dawn, Beautiful as the moon, Radiant as the sun Awesome as bannered hosts? (6:10)

The imagery of her brightness echoes the previous *pasuk*. The closing phrase, “awesome as bannered hosts,” mimics the phrase in 6:4. Further, the opening words “Who is she” echoes the phrase which appears in the song of Shlomo (3:6) and well as in the book’s final chapter (8:5: “Who is she that comes up from the desert, Leaning upon her beloved?”).

Finally, she responds to his extended speech:

I went down to the nut grove To see the budding of the vale; To see if the vines had blossomed, If the pomegranates were in bloom. (6:11)

Before I knew it, My desire set me Mid the chariots of Ammi-Nadiv. (6:12)

Taken together, the idea seems to be that when she descended to the nut grove, she was unexpectedly by royal visions of chariots. Who is Ammi-Nadiv? It would appear to be a shorthand reference to the prince of the nation, the beloved himself. She thought she was going down to check on the status of the nut grove, but she was completely overtaken by the vision of her lover.

Next time we will analyze the first half of chapter seven, the final chapter addressing the relationship between the royal and the *raya*.