

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Torah tells us this week, "If you will follow my decrees and observe my commandments and perform them... I will walk among you and I will be a G-d unto you and you will be a people unto Me." (Vayikra 26:3,12) The commentator Sforno explains that Hashem is telling us: Be good, keep my mitzvahs, and I, Hashem will go with you the Jewish Nation wherever you go in golus (exile). Our lesson for this week is therefore the following: As long as we stay loyal to Hashem, He will walk with the Jewish Nation.

The Midrash describes the Jewish Nation as a sheep surrounded by 70 wolves. (Midrash Rabbah, Megilas Esther 10:11) The Jewish Nation has a shepherd; Hashem is our Shepherd, as Dovid HaMelech tells us "Hashem is my shepherd, I shall not lack anything..." (Tehillim 23:1) Many innocent Jews have been killed by the 70 wolves who represent the Nations, such as: the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Turks, the Spanish, the Russians, the Germans, and the Communists, to name a few, may Hashem blot out the names of the wicked. However, even if some of the sheep may get lost, the flock remains intact; the Jewish Nation is alive and well, keeping the same Shabbos, putting on the same Tefillin, and keeping the same Kashrus. Soon will come the time for our Shepherd to call all of His Sheep home from the pasture, and we will experience the in-gathering of the exiles. Until that time, which should be soon, we see more and more how even those sheep, which have strayed far from the flock, are coming home. Let us now conclude our amazing story from last week...

...Well, maybe Hashem was watching us for another reason, too. You see, I was one of the Yaldei Teheran, the refugee children gathered from the concentration camp survivors who were transported through the Balkans and Turkey on the way to Teheran, from where they were eventually brought to Eretz Yisroel. I was placed in a kibbutz and there I spent my days and nights, thinking that I would be there forever. I met a girl who had come from Germany and I asked her to marry me. It was then that she told me she had a secret of great importance to tell me.

She told me of her last emotional moments with her mother. The Germans had burst into her home and the Jews knew they were going to be carted away. Rumors abounded about parents being separated from their children, never to be reunited again. The desperate mother took her seven-year-old daughter, held her tightly, and said to her, "My dear child, they will soon take us away and who knows if we will ever be together again. I want you to promise me one thing. There is something called a Kosher Jewish home. You're too young to understand what it is, and there is no way that I can explain it to you today. When you get older go to a rav and he will explain what it means. Promise me that you will abide by those laws."

The little girl was bewildered but saw the seriousness in her mother's face and promised to obey her wishes. Mother and daughter were torn apart and never saw each other again. But she remembered. Years later, after being freed from the torture of imprisonment in the valley of horror and death, she went to a rav and learned the significance of her promise. Although she was not an observant Jew, she resolved to keep "a Kosher Jewish home."

"As we walked in the field," continued Mr. Kruger, "she told me that she could only consent to marry me if I would agree to her commitment. The fact that we would be living on a kibbutz where no one else observed these laws would make matters very difficult. But the young woman was determined to uphold these laws. I told her I would need time to think about it and asked for three days.

After much thought I told her that I would agree to her condition. All the years that we lived on the kibbutz, we had to make extra efforts, usually in secret, and often go to the nearby town. Nevertheless, we were very serious about the promise, and until we met Rabbi Shapira, that was the one mitzvah that we observed.

Now R' Boruch Yadler smiled broadly. "I knew your children were special. Indeed, they are truly holy children." And then he repeated it again softly. "Pure and holy children. It's no wonder Hashem gave you both the opportunity to become observant Jews." (From, The Maggid Speaks, R. Paysach Krohn, p.106)

Let us be inspired by this story to return to the flock. Soon will come the time for our Shepherd to call all of His Sheep home from the pasture, and then we will experience the words of the Prophet: "And it shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of Hashem's house shall be set over all other mountains and lifted high above the hills and all the nations shall come streaming to it. And many peoples shall come and say: Come let us go up to the Mountain of Hashem to the house of the G-d of Yakov and He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths. For out of Tzion shall go forth the Torah and Hashem's word from Yerushalayim." (2:2-3) **Good Shabbos Everyone.**