



Final Call for Happiness

Tamara Avner

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"You don't break up a home. It's that simple: a home is not something you take apart, period. Once you get married, you're married for life. From then on, you just keep climbing the ladder until you reach the top. There's no opportunity to stand still and look down, nor to look around to see whether or not it suits you. End of story."

It is with these words - spoken so authoritatively by Colonel Udi Am-Shalom - that the novel *Final Call for Happiness* begins. He makes this statement, however, before his sensitive wife Yael meets an experienced older man, a master artist of love and courtship, and before he himself has to evacuate a family from a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip in the line of duty, on government orders. Only after these two life-changing events does Udi grasp how lonely and isolated he really is, and how deeply he yearns for the most basic bond - the one between a husband and a wife. >

This contemporary novel follows the unfolding events leading to the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and their impact on the life of one typical Israeli family. Although this withdrawal is geographically far from them, it penetrates the deepest cracks in the walls of their home. Constantly flowing from the personal into the national it depicts the acute pain that disengagements entail, and the agony that ensues when something whole is unraveled. The national turmoil serves as a backdrop to the gradual crumbling of the Am-Shalom family, and to the reconstruction efforts aimed at bringing new hope and meanings. >

Voices of four members of one family

Final Call for Happiness is an accomplished and affecting work, narrated in the voices of four members of one family: the measured, decisive voice of Udi, a right wing, army man; the dreamy poetic voice of his wife Yael, a secular leftist literary editor; the broken stammer of their twelve years old stuttering son, Ophir, who suffers from ADHD, and whole heartedly believes that he holds the power to rescue his father from the dilemma he faces and save his parents' marriage; and the sad, sweet words of little six years old Maya, who is much too mature for her age.

Emotionally grasping from beginning to end

This is a powerful story, written in a unique style, in a language that is surprising at times. It looks at the emerging differences between individuals in a marriage, in a family, and in a crowd. It chronicles how Attention Deficit affects parenthood in our times, how at times spoken words cannot fully express our feelings, thoughts and emotions, and how every disengagement brings with it a call for closeness and love.

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Robert Knight:

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