

Parashat Bamidbar-Shavuot 5784, 2024:

*“And I will Betroth You to Me Forever”*

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ה' יעזור וירחם על אחינו כל בני ישראל, בארץ ישראל ובכל חלקי הארץ

This week's *haftarah* concludes with two of the best-known *pasukim* in *Sefer Hoshea*:

And I will betroth (*v'arastich*) you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy. And I will betroth you to Me with faith, and you shall know Hashem. (2:21-22, this and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

This three-fold repetition of the term “*v'arastich*” foretells the time when the intimacy characterized by a loving husband – wife relationship will be completely restored between the Almighty and our people.

The Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, 1512-1609) underscores the everlasting nature of the bond that will exist between Hashem and our nation:

The connection that will exist in the future between the Holy One blessed be He and the Jewish people will be eternal (*yi'yeh l'netzach*), [that is,] this link will never cease nor be severed... It is in this sense that the prophet Hoshea said: “And I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy.” Behold, the prophet explicitly stated that this connection, that is, “the betrothal,” will be everlasting in nature... (This and the following quotations, *Sefer Netzach Yisrael*, chapter 47, translations and brackets my own.)

In the Maharal's opinion, the central features of this relationship are symbolized by the repetition of the phrase “*v'arastich*”:

And in this passage, we find the word, “*v'arastich*” repeated three times... [A person must] realize that this future connection entails three different aspects. Firstly, it will be permanent in nature. Secondly, the Jewish people will cleave to all of the behavioral characteristics (*middot*) of the Holy One. Lastly, this bond will be all-inclusive (*chibur gamur*).

The Maharal explains how each repetition of *v'arastich* supports the essential ideas of the new relationship:

“And I will betroth you to Me forever” proves that the connection will be eternal. In addition, the text states, “And I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy.” Each of these qualities is mentioned, since they...encapsulate the *middot* of Hashem [that the Jewish people will develop and master] ... Afterwards the text states, “And I will betroth you to Me with faith (*b'emunah*), and you shall know Hashem.” This proves that the new relationship will be all-inclusive.

Based upon a careful reading of our two verses, one may question why Hoshea needed to state the third instance of *v'arastich*, “And I will betroth you to Me with faith,” which focuses upon the *chibur gamur* motif. After all, would not the second phrase of *v'arastich* have led one to this conclusion? Apparently the Maharal wrestled with this problem, as we find in his keen analysis:

The notion of the new relationship being one of *chibur gamur* (all-inclusive) is an idea that stands on its own (*ma'a'lah bifnei atzmo*), since when the text states, “And I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy,” this only teaches us that the Jewish nation will cleave to the Blessed One with all of these *middot*... Therefore, the prophet proclaims, “And I will betroth you to Me with faith,” as this phrase suggests the concept of a complete and total connection [to Hashem].

*Chazal* established the calendar in such a manner as to ensure that the public reading of our *haftarah* frequently precedes the Festival of Shavuot. Based upon their divinely inspired wisdom, they understood that there is a close association between this portion from Hoshea and the giving of the Torah on Shavuot. With the Maharal as our guide, we find that the link between *nevuat Hoshea* and Shavuot becomes quite clear: Both Hashem and the Jewish people ultimately yearn for an intimate and permanent relationship based on the Almighty's never-ending *tzedek, mishpat, chesed* and *rachamim*, and our desire to emulate these actions. May we achieve these holy heights soon and in our days. *V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

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\*\*\* I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Ray](#)