

Parashat Bechuchotai 5782, 2022:

I Will Walk Among You and Be Your G-d

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechezkel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, and the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Our *parasha* is best known for the 31 *pasukim* that comprise the *Tochacha* (Admonition or Reproof, *Sefer Vayikra* 26:14-41, and 43-46). Although these frightening verses far overshadow the preceding *Brachot* section (26:3-13), to the extent that the blessings are nearly eclipsed, these very same *brachot* have been a powerful force in the creation of the Jewish faith structure. This idea is given poignant voice in the early midrashic work, *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* (19):

In our time, the nations of the world ceaselessly deride the Jewish people and say to them: “For how long will you be murdered for your G-d, give up your very souls for Him and be killed for Him? How much misery He brings upon you, how much embarrassment He brings upon you, how much anguish He brings upon you! Come and join us and we will make you commanders, town governors and treasurers!” (Midrash translations and brackets my own)

[And how do the Jewish people respond?] And the Jews enter their synagogues and houses of study and take a *Sefer Torah* and read therein [from the *Brachot*]: “I will walk among you and be your G-d,” (26:12) “and I will make you fruitful and increase you, and I will set up My covenant with you.” (26:9), and they are comforted. (All Tanach translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

And when the time of ultimate redemption arrives, the Holy One blessed be He will say to the Jewish people, “I am amazed! How have you waited for Me for all these years?” And they will respond before the Holy One blessed be He: “Master of the Universe! Were it not for the *Sefer Torah* You have written for us, the nations of the world would already have destroyed our relationship with You! As the text writes: “This I reply to my heart; therefore, I have hope.” (*Megillat Eichah* 3:21) And so, too, did *Dovid* [*HaMelech*] declare: “Were not Your Torah my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction.” (*Sefer Tehillim* 119:92)

This midrash is comprised of three distinct sections: The mockery of the nations of the world regarding our relationship to the Almighty and their “offer” to abandon Him, our Torah-centric

response to their abuse, and the dialogue that will *b'zman karov* (one day soon) take place between Hashem and our storied nation. I believe it is the middle portion that is of singular import and, in particular, the verse, “I will walk (*v'hithalachti*) among you and be your G-d, and you will be My people.”

In my view, one of the most cogent analyses of this verse is offered by the Sforno (Rabbi Ovadiah ben Ya'akov, c. 1475-c. 1550) in his examination of the term, *mithalech*, the nounal form of *v'hithalachti*:

The term, “*mithalech*,” connotes one who walks to multiple locations rather than to one place alone. Therefore, it as if [Hashem] said: “I will walk among you, and my divine illumination will not flow to one place alone as it did in the *Mishkan* and in the *Beit HaMikdash*.” As the text states: “And they shall make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst.” (*Sefer Shemot* 25:8) That is, in this manner and in this place alone I will dwell among you... Instead, I will walk among you and you will see My glory in every place where there will be the righteous ones of the generation, for they are “the holy place of the dwellings of the Most High.” (*Sefer Tehillim* 46:5) This is where His ultimate intention (*kavanah*) is realized...

The Sforno’s explanation of *mithalech* is reminiscent of a *pasuk* that appears in Parashat Bereishit: “And they [Adam and Chava] heard the voice of Hashem Elokim going— *mithalech*—in the garden toward the direction of the sun and the man and his wife hid from before Hashem Elokim in the midst of the trees of the garden.” (3:8) The fact that Adam and Chava immediately recognized “the voice of Hashem” indicates that they were accustomed to hearing it prior to having eaten from the *Pri Eitz HaDa'at* (Tree of Knowledge). In other words, in their pre-sin state, when they had a perfect relationship with the Almighty, He was accessible to them 24/7. After their sin, however, this state of bliss would no longer be.

In my estimation, the Sforno is teaching us a very profound lesson, namely, in the time of the *Mashiach*, when our *pasuk*, “I will walk (*v'hithalachti*) among you and be your G-d, and you will be My people” is finally realized, we will return to the kind of relationship that obtained between

Hashem and Adam and Chava: His divine presence will be palpable in “every place where there will be the righteous ones of the generation.” With the Almighty’s help and our fervent desire, may this time come soon and in our days. *V’chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>.

Please contact me at rdbe718@gmail.com to be added to my weekly email list.

*** My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah*, *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpyd>

*** 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 Rav](#)