

To Know the Eternal **Rabbi Zev-Hayyim Feyer**

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Parshat Bamidbar

On that day I shall make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creepie-crawlies of the ground, and I shall shatter bow, sword, and warfare from the land, and I shall enable them to lie down in safety. Thus shall I betroth thee unto Me forever; indeed, I shall betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, in justice, in kindness, and in compassion. I shall betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Eternal. (Hosea 2:20-22)

Our sages (*Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* 37:8) teach that there are seven *middot* (characteristics of G*d) that serve before the Heavenly Throne – Wisdom, Righteousness, Justice, Kindness, Compassion, Truth, and Peace. Why is Peace the last mentioned? Because, the tradition teaches, Peace is the climax of the other *middot*, the one to which the others build, the one without which the world could not survive. And it is Hosea 2:20-22 that Rabbi Nathan cites as a proof text.

Here, however, we find that Peace is not only the climax of the other *middot*; it is the condition (v. 20) which enables the betrothal (vv. 21-22).

When we put on our *t'fillin* in the morning, binding ourselves to G*d, we recite verses 21 and 22, betrothing ourselves, as it were, to G*d. And the “knowledge” of G*d, the conclusion of the passage, is, as we learn elsewhere in the Torah, a relationship of intimacy. The first use of the expression *to know* is found in Genesis 4:1. (**Adam knew his wife Eve.**) We usually think of this as a euphemism for sexual relations, but not every sexual relationship in Torah is so described. *Knowing* is an expression of absolute intimacy, an intimacy that, while it is symbolized by sexual union, goes far beyond sexuality, far beyond anything physical.

It is that ultimate intimacy with G*d to which Hosea calls us, and that intimacy can be attained only when we have done our share as partners, co-creators, with G*d in **shattering bow, sword, and warfare from the land, and enabling all to lie down in safety.**

May we speedily reach that place of peace which Hosea enjoins upon us.

Shabbat Shalom.