

PARSHAS NETZAVIM - VAYEILECH

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

Yeshaya 61:10

This week's haftorah marks the climax of a seven week series of reflection on Jewish redemption. In this final presentation, Hashem announces His personal return to the Jewish people. Now that every other dimension of redemption is in place, the time has finally arrived for Hashem to rest His Divine Presence amongst His people. Eretz Yisroel has been revived, Yerushalayim has been rebuilt, the exiles have returned en masse, but the ultimate objective has yet to be seen. In response to this, the prophet Yeshaya quotes the Jewish people saying, "I will be gladdened by Hashem, My soul will rejoice over My G-d." (61,10) Chazal in Yalkut Shimoni (505) view the Jewish people's response to be specifically related to the return of Hashem to Yerushalayim. The Jewish people respond to all the magnificent prophecies of their glorious future and proclaim that their true source of happiness is but one, the return of Hashem to His beloved people. They sorely long for the privilege of sensing the presence of Hashem amongst them and feeling the closeness and love He has for His people. They resolve that they will be gladdened and happy only through His return to them.

The prophet continues and describes the proportions of this return and the extent of Hashem's cherished relationship. "No longer will you be referred to as forsaken because about you it shall be proclaimed, 'My desire is in you'." (62, 4) Hashem pledges to fully identify with His people and to display His true desire in them. His relationship with them will be so encompassing and evident that a newly gained identity will be conveyed upon the Jewish people, "Hashem's desirable one". But a worry crosses the minds of the Jewish nation concerning the nature of their forthcoming relationship. After all, weren't they previously associated with Hashem in similar proportions before being rejected by Him? If so, they reason that although Hashem will truly return to them it will only feel to them like a remarriage. Their long awaited association will have a nostalgic air to it and won't bring them the true happiness they seek.

The prophet responds and reveals to them the indescribable proportions of their new relationship. Yeshaya says, "Hashem will rejoice over you like a groom over His bride." (62, 5) The Radak explains that Hashem's return to the Jewish people will possess all the freshness and novelty of a groom to his bride. Their relationship represents the epitome of happiness and appreciation as they begin forging their eternal bond with love and respect. In this same manner Hashem's newly founded relationship with His people will possess similar qualities. It will be so complete and perfect that it

won't leave room for reflections upon their past. The happiness and fulfillment that they will experience will be so encompassing that it will feel like a fresh start, a relationship never experienced before. The Radak adds an indescribable dimension to this relationship and explains that this sense of newness will actually continue forever. Instead of becoming stale and stagnant their relationship with Hashem will always be one of growth and development and will constantly bring them to greater heights. Each newly gained level of closeness will be so precious and dear to them that it will be regarded as a completely new relationship replete with all of its sensation and appreciation.

But the most impressive factor of all is that the above description is not only our feelings towards Hashem but is, in truth, Hashem's feelings towards us. The prophet says that Hashem Himself will forever rejoice over us with the sensation of a groom over His newly acquired bride. From this we discover that Hashem's feelings towards His people are literally boundless. Even after all the straying we have done, Hashem still desires to unite with us in the proportions described above. He desires to erase the past and establish a perfectly new relationship, so perfect and new that it will continuously produce the heightened emotions of a bride and groom for eternity.

These emotions are, in truth the hidden message behind the tefillin which we don each day. As we wrap the tefillin strap around our finger we recite special passages expressing our betrothal to Hashem. This experience represents our placing the wedding ring of Hashem on our finger, portraying our perfect relationship with Him. But our Chazal (see Brochos 6a) inform us that Hashem also wears tefillin. In proof of this, they cite a passage in this week's haftorah which states, "Hashem swears by His right hand and by the strength of His arm." (62, 8) Chazal explain that the words, "the strength of His arm" refer to the tefillin worn on the left arm. The Maharsha expounds upon this concept and explains that Hashem actually binds Himself to the Jewish people. Hashem's tefillin, like ours, represent devotion and commitment, His commitment to His beloved people. Hashem cherishes His relationship with us and as an expression of His commitment to us, He also wears a betrothal band. Eventually our boundless love for Hashem will find its expression together with Hashem's boundless love for us and together we will enjoy this indescribable relationship forever and forever.