

May 21, 2009

Shabbat Shalom!

***“I will betroth you to Me forever;
I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice,
In steadfast love and compassion.
I will betroth you to me in faithfulness
And you shall know the Eternal.”***

-- (Hosea Chapter 2, Verses 21 and 22)

With this declaration, the ancient prophet Hosea declared how his people could grow closer to God, godliness, and the best of their character. The values embodied in this formula (which have found their way into wedding ceremonies and the ritual of putting on t'fillin on one's hand) are central and integral in creating a positive community:

- **TZEDEK** - Righteousness
- **MISHPAT** - Justice
- **CHESED** - Goodness, steadfast love, kindness
- **RACHAMIM** - Mercy, compassion
- **EMUNAH** - Faithfulness

*This passage from Hosea is assigned as the Haftarah/prophets reading to correspond with the beginning section of the book of Numbers, in which the Israelites were to take a census of their community. Counting the people is, on one level, a process of arriving at a “sum total” of membership and population. Hosea's words remind us the being part of a community is much more than being “counted” as a number. It means finding the right path, being fair and honest in our dealings with each other, showing kindness and concern, extending our hearts to others with compassion, and acting with consistency as much as possible. As members of a congregation, and the greater community of humanity, this is our goal and mission. May our daily lives and our service to the community lead us in paths of **TZEDEK, MISHPAT, CHESED, RACHAMIM, and EMUNAH.***

-- L'shalom, Rabbi Larry K.