

## HAFTORAH OF THE SIDRA : במדבר

*This week's Haftorah is taken from the Book of Hoshe'a,  
one of the shorter Books of the Prophets which together make up "The Twelve,"  
Chapter 2, from verse 1 till verse 22.*

IN THIS WEEK'S NOTES ON THE HAFTORAH,  
AS IN MANY OF THESE "HAFTORAH OF THE WEEK" SHEETS,  
CONSIDERABLE USE HAS BEEN MADE OF THE ADMIRABLE SERIES  
"THE MIDRASH SAYS ON THE WEEKLY HAFTAROS"  
BY RABBI MOSHE WEISSMAN AND PUBLISHED BY BENEI YAKOV PUBLICATIONS  
FOR WHICH HELP GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS AGAIN HERE MADE.

1. The Novvi Hoshe'a was a contemporary of the prophets Yeshayohu, Amos and Micha and was a prophet for ninety years. He was a sad witness to the people of the Northern Kingdom being taken into exile by the king of Asshur as a result of their ignoring the repeated warnings of Hoshe'a to them (over a period of some forty years) to stop their idolatry. [See **HAFTORAH OF THE SIDRA VA-YIKRA** — ויקרא for some background explanation concerning the idolatry of ancient times.]
2. Our Chachommim tell us that when HaShem told Hoshe'a that He was angry with the Jewish People for their disloyalty to Him, Hoshe'a did not jump to their defence as quickly as HaShem would have wanted. On the contrary, Hoshe'a accepted HaShem's criticism of the Jewish People and even said that seeing that the whole world is HaShem's, He can choose another nation. But that is not what HaShem wants to hear about His People and in response, HaShem tells Hoshe'a to imagine himself in a situation where he marries a woman and has children from her and then he is told to send her away with the children! Would he be willing to do so? Yet Hoshe'a had implied that HaShem should abandon His People. "See," says HaShem, "would you be willing to throw out your wife and children — even if there was some suspicion that she has been unfaithful and that the children are not even yours? Of course not! And yet you would suggest that I should take another people to be Mine? Never!"
3. Perhaps we can understand the response of Hoshe'a in a different way. Maybe Hoshe'a meant to say to HaShem: "The Jewish People," You say, "are disloyal to Me and have

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gone after other gods.” But **I** say, “Master of the Universe, the whole world is Yours! You can choose anyone You want to be Your People. Well, then, go ahead! See if you can find another people like them! You will not!” So, although the way he answered HaShem seemed to imply that HaShem should take another nation instead of the Jewish People, Hoshe’a is in fact saying that there is no-one who is as good as the Jewish People. Seen in this light, Hoshe’a is a champion of the Jewish People, even if his words to HaShem could have been more clearly in their defence.

4. The point has been made before in these explanation sheets that the different Nevi'im used very different kinds of delivery when they brought us their messages from HaShem. [See **HAFTORAH OF THE SIDRA VA-YAY-TSAY — וַיֵּצֵא**.] Indeed, even the ways in which HaShem communicates with His prophets differs greatly from Novvi to Novvi, perhaps reflecting the state of the relationship of the Jewish People and HaShem at the time or perhaps at different times in our history different methods of awakening the Nation are called for.
5. This Haftorah is a case in point. HaShem tells Hoshe’a to take as his wife a woman of bad repute. From this woman, known to have been unfaithful in the past, Hoshe’a is to have three children. Furthermore, Hoshe’a is told to give these children weird and unusual names for these names too are to serve as warnings to the Jewish People. The first, a son, he is to name “Yizre’el,” that is, “Wind-tossed,” implying how the Jewish People are about to be scattered among the Nations in exile because of their disloyalty to HaShem and His Torah. The second child, a daughter, Hoshe’a is to name “Lo-Ruchommoh” meaning, “No-Pity” because at that time that’s how HaShem feels towards the Jewish People. And the third child, another son, is to be called “Lo-Ammi,” “Not-My-People,” because that is how HaShem then considered them. Then he is to divorce the woman and throw out the children. As mentioned before, at this order, Hoshe’a protested that he couldn’t do it. “She is my wife and they are my children!” And HaShem rebukes him, saying, “And yet you would suggest that I abandon My Jewish People and take another people instead?! Never!”
6. There are differing opinions held by the classic commentaries about this Nevuah. Some do take it literally. But others say, “Heaven forbid that HaShem should ever command anyone to do this!” In the final analysis, whether it actually happened or not is not important: it is the message that counts. But besides this “acted-out prophecy,” the language and metaphors that Hoshe’a uses in his prophecies are particularly vivid and explicit and are intended to shock his listeners to cease their unfaithfulness and that the Jewish Nation should return to her loving “Husband.” That is, they should stop their consorting with strange gods and return to HaShem.
7. The connexion between the Sidra and the Haftorah is pretty straightforward. The Sidra is the first of the “*Chumash HaPekuddim*,” that is, the Chumash which is concerned

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with “*the counting*” of the Jewish People in the Wilderness and this Sidra indeed starts with HaShem’s command to Mosheh to take up the count of the Jewish People. And the first Possuk of the Haftorah is the memorable prophecy by Hoshe’a that “the number of the Jewish People will be as numerous as the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured nor counted.”

8. But that’s more or less where the connexion ends. As described above, the prophecy of Hoshe’a continues with the message from HaShem exhorting the Jewish People to return to Him, but expressed in the surprisingly shocking language that was only too clear to the generation of the time of Hoshe’a. Hoshe’a tells them how they had strayed from the path of the Torah and therefore HaShem has decreed that they shall be scattered among the nations of the world as grain is winnowed in the wind and He shall have no pity on them.
9. The prophecy of Hoshe’a continues with the promise that in the great future to come the Jewish People will indeed return to HaShem, His anger will be transformed to love and those three signal-names of the children of Hoshe’a, too, will be transformed for the Jewish People. Greater and more spectacular than the scattering of the Jewish People will be the ingathering of their exiles; HaShem will again call them “My People” and He will indeed have pity on them. The Haftorah ends with the memorable promise of HaShem to His People: “I will take you in love to Me forever. I will take you in love to Me, for the sake of your righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and in mercy. I will take you in love to Me because of your trust in Me and you will truly know HaShem.”