

HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : כִּי תבֹּא

This week's Haftorah is taken from the Sefer Yeshayohu, Chapter 60, verses 1 — 22

1. This Haftorah is the sixth in the series of seven “Consolation Haftorahs,” all of them taken from Sefer Yeshayohu. In this week’s Haftorah, the Novvi tells how in the future, when HaShem takes us back again and demonstrates to everyone that the Jewish People alone are His Chosen People, we will be accorded great respect by the nations of the world. He also tells how in that great future to come, all the wealth and riches which the nations of the world have taken from us will be returned and that all of Mankind will pay homage to HaShem and His People. This Haftorah thus provides an opportunity to recall some history and explain something of the Jewish attitude to wealth and riches.
2. When HaShem told our father Avrohom to leave his homeland, his birthplace and his father’s house to make his own way in the world, He promised him that He would make him into a great nation and that he would bless him with fabulous wealth and make him famous. (See **SIDRA OF THE WEEK**: לך לך.) To Avrohom, this promise of great riches was not at all an incentive in itself, nor was it intended as such. The promised wealth was simply a tool, an item of equipment, so to speak, that was necessary in his life’s work to make HaShem known in the world for firstly, it is in the nature of people to respect a rich man and his ideas and, secondly, for Avrohom to carry out his mission to the world, quite simply, was going to be a costly undertaking. From our father Avrohom we learn the Jewish attitude to riches, namely, that wealth always shall be nothing more than a tool to be used in the service of HaShem. It is never an end in itself. Neither are we to consider personal wealth as our exclusively private property. Wherever possible, wealth is to be used for the good of others, to make their lives better and generally to make the world a better place, a place fit for the Divine Presence.
3. Furthermore, we are always to be mindful that our wealth and fortune is a gift from HaShem, bestowed upon us for a higher purpose, to be used with care and responsibility. We are not to use our wealth as a means of exerting power or control over others. Neither are we to use our riches to exploit those less fortunate than ourselves for wealth is not ours and it is not granted to us for this purpose nor indeed are we to allow our own wealthy situation make us forget our sensitivity to the plight of others.
4. Thus, we find that when there was a famine in the land, Yaakov told his sons to go down to Egypt to buy food even though he and his sons and their families did not suffer from the famine, for they were rich. Nevertheless, said Yaakov, we must show solidarity with the inhabitants and we must be seen to be experiencing hardship like them and with them. From this we can learn that we should not let it be seen that we have plenty when others don’t have much, for if generally people are experiencing financial

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difficulties, it is insensitive to flaunt one's riches in their faces. (It also is rather imprudent and is bound to invite trouble.)

5. Our Rabbis point out for us the marked contrast between Yaakov and his brother Aysov in how they regarded material possessions. When Yaakov offers his tribute to Aysov, Aysov declines to accept it, saying, "My brother! I have much already!" Whereas Yaakov says to Aysov, "Please take my gift, for HaShem has been gracious to me and I have everything!" (After some persuasion, Aysov does take the gift.) On the surface, it seems as if Aysov is the more reserved and modest, unlike Yaakov who appears to be showing off that he "has everything." But it is just the other way round. Aysov says that he "has much," implying that even though he has plenty, nevertheless there is room for more. Yaakov, on the other hand, first of all attributes whatever he has to HaShem's grace and then he declares that he has everything he needs. He is fully satisfied and he has no need for any more! That, too, is important: to be satisfied with what we have, whether it be much or little, and not to hanker after what we have not got.
6. On the other hand, being the People of HaShem whom He has blessed with prosperity, it is wrong for us to make out as if we are poor because this can be seen as if HaShem cannot provide for His People. On the contrary, without showing off and with all due modesty and quiet confidence we are to let it be seen that we — and indeed all who live their lives in accordance with HaShem's wishes — are favoured with success in our endeavours and are blessed by HaShem. So long as we always remember that our prosperity is from HaShem and not the result of our own efforts and so long as we use it in serving Him by living by His Torah and Mitzvos, there is no need to apologize for being wealthy. But the main thing is to use that wealth to serve HaShem. If we do so, instead of this being our reward for our good deeds, it becomes rather material resources which are, so to speak, "ploughed back into the business" — and with the main reward yet to come.
7. Sadly, because of the hatred that others have for us, we have often had to hide our wealth. For instance, one of the canards put about by Christians is that when the Jewish People rejected the founder of their religion (because we worship only HaShem and worshiping anything else is forbidden as idolatry) he cursed them that they shall always be poor. For this reason, throughout the centuries, Christians, understandably self-conscious of their status as a copycat Johnny-come-lately religion, have tried to usurp our primary position in the world as HaShem's Chosen People (what is called "the theology of transposition") and have done their utmost to make the Nazarene's curse a reality. But then, because their founder's hateful curse has quite clearly not been fulfilled, the noble Church Fathers of the Christian Religion of Love have vigorously asserted that if the Jews *do* have any money, it obviously cannot be honestly earned (because if so, their founder's "prophecy" is patently false) and therefore it must be that the riches of Jews can only be ill-gotten, stolen, or as a result of unfair exploitation, etc.. (Sadly, much the same can be said about the Moslems' attitude towards us, too.)
8. Seeing that this is so, there is perhaps a valid reason for Jews not to be too modest about the wealth that HaShem has bestowed upon us as this wealth exposes our

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enemies as malevolent liars and, more importantly, shows how the People of HaShem is indeed blessed by Him. Having said that, it is of course prudent for us to keep a low profile and not be ostentatious in our lifestyle for the unwelcome attention of our detractors is never a good thing. But we need never be ashamed of benefiting of the material blessings of HaShem just because of those that hate us. In any case, we have always been aware of the purpose for which HaShem has bestowed wealth upon us and Jewish people are acknowledged by all that know them as the greatest philanthropists in the world.

9. As the People of HaShem, we are to show by our example how we use the material resources with which HaShem blesses us, to serve Him and to benefit others. But this applies to us not only as a Nation but as individuals, too. Thus each and every one of us is to emulate our forefathers, Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov who all utilized their wealth in the service of HaShem and for the benefit of others. And we know too that when HaShem sees that a person uses his possessions in a way that pleases Him, this then shows that this person can be trusted with wealth — and invariably He bestows more upon him.
10. As said, a prominent theme in this week's Haftorah is how in the great future to come, the wealth of the Jewish People which was taken by our enemies will be returned to us. Indeed, non-Jewish kings and princes will bring to the Jewish People rich tribute for in the new age of goodness and compassion for all humanity they will want their material wealth to be used to do good and help to make the world a better place for everyone.