



Parashat Ki Tetze
Isaiah 54:1-10
September 6, 2014 / 11 Elul 5774

If you wish to study alternative selections from the Prophets and First Kings that have a more direct link to the Torah portion read the selection from 2 Samuel 14:21-19:1.

This is the fifth of seven of haftarot of consolation that follow the fast of Tisha b'Av; and it finally speaks to me in a clear and poignant way. The haftarah reflects the period following the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. E. and more precisely sometime immediately after 538 when Cyrus, the Mede conquered Babylon and issued a series of proclamations some of which permitted the return to Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple. But for some reason Isaiah's words more easily resonate with me than those which he uttered and we repeated for the four preceding weeks.

This morning Isaiah speaks to women who can't become pregnant and attempts to transform their pain into joy. Shout! O barren one, You who bore no child!

Isaiah speaks to single mothers and boldly announces Don't grieve single parents will soon outnumber married couples! Isaiah seems to understand what so many of us are coming to realize, that when a single woman chooses to become pregnant or a single mother raises a child it deserves our respect. It's a mitzvah.

Isaiah speaks to our people and tells them Enlarge the size of your tent, extend the size of your dwelling...spread out to the right and to the left. He is telling us to grow and that we will succeed because we are loved. If only those of our people who identify with the political right wing of Jewish life could learn from this morning's haftarah to be less judgmental and more accepting.

Perhaps this haftarah was meant for Conservative/Masorti Jews? Perhaps those of us who identify in this manner, understand that the message of Jewish living calls us on us to enlarge our view of Judaism and to embrace humanity without fear that our way of life will be compromised. Perhaps this morning's haftarah can be understood as a metaphor for today.

Selections for Study Ki Tetze Deuteronomy. 21:18-21 If a man has a wayward and defiant son, who does not heed his father or mother and does not obey them even after they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the public place of his community. They shall announce: "This son of ours is disloyal and defiant; he

does not heed us. He is a glutton and a drunkard. Thereupon the men of the town shall stone him to death.”

The second book of Samuel describes an incident where a father is in part responsible for the death his son. Chapters 14-19 tell the story of Absalom, son of David and the campaign and ultimate rebellion he initiated in order to usurp his father's throne. It is a story filled with political intrigue and at the same time reveals the desires and jealousy of the son of a successful father as well as the love a father has for a son, albeit too late.

I suspect every parent, at times, harbors feelings of anger and or regret about their children's behavior. Some of our children break the law, others violate a family code, others will behave in a manner of which we disapprove but rather than respond in the manner that the Torah recommends, we have learned that parental love can and should be unconditional. At the same time all of us know and many of us wrestle with allowing our children to separate from us.

The Torah confronts parents with a situation. The book of Samuel tells us a story that involves father/son relationships and the grief that comes when a child, for whatever reason, is lost. The challenge of every parent is when the time arrives that their children no longer listen, they should still be able to demonstrate love.

This week's Haftarah commentary is reprinted from one originally written for the Unraveller for August 21, 2010 by Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director of the FJMC and author of "Understanding the Haftarah: An Everyperson's Guide" and "The Non-Jewish Spouse: Strategies for Clergy and Lay Leadership".

- **Have you had regret or anger over a child's behavior? Have you spoken to or confronted the child, and did your action produce a positive or negative result?**
- **What does it mean to give "unconditional love"? Can you relate a personal example?**