



Parashat Ki Tavo
Isaiah 60: 1-22
September 13, 2014 / 18 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 Deuteronomy 27:22 and 2 Samuel 13.

In this, the sixth of the special haftarot, we see movement and can more easily discern a pattern in the Isaiah haftarot. Our sages cannot fully explain their order and the reasons for their selection, but it is possible to conjecture that a pattern exists that leads us from the darkness described several weeks ago to a place of security and prosperity. Initially we pleaded to God for comfort. This was followed by our being challenged to understand what it felt like for God to have abandoned us. We would have felt just like a child would feel if his/her mother had disappeared. Two weeks ago we were shaken like a parent shakes a child and told to “wake up! I haven't forgotten you” and last week we were told that our future would be glorious. The metaphor continues in this morning's haftarah and we are told to “Get up, recognize the light.” Nations will walk by our light.” Our children will no longer suffer but be carried in joy upon our shoulders. All that I have promised you is coming to pass, I am your light and you will bathe in my brightness.

Okay, I get it, and in less than two weeks it will be Rosh Hashanah. We have gone through a penitent period that has begun to lift as we get closer to celebrate the joy of renewal. But frankly, this haftarah reads like bad poetry. I am no longer inspired. The metaphors are repetitious I want something more. Deuteronomy is a fascinating book; what can the other books in the Bible offer me?

The following selection from this morning's Torah reading has a connection to the book of Samuel and the story of the rape of Tamar, the sister of Absalom. Absalom was the third son of David. He was born in Hebron around 1007 B.C.E. David had two older brothers, Chileab (2 Samuel 3-3) and Daniel (1 Chronicles 3:1). They either died young or were mentally handicapped because Absalom, the next oldest was the most obvious candidate for succession.

Deuteronomy 27:22

Cursed be he who lies with his sister, whether daughter of his father or of his mother.

When Absalom's half-brother Ammon raped Absalom's full-sister, Tamar, Absalom assumed the responsibility of avenging her honor. The story is well worth a read. Like too many grade B

movies which are made today, the story is filled with passion and challenges us to consider the implications of tragedy.

We'd like to continue the conversation on the FJMC's forum for men's issues, www.Mentschen.org. Here are some questions for you to ponder and we invite you to respond on that website.

- What does it mean to “get even”?
- What will it take, if anything, to have our feelings appeased?
- Have you ever had a moral dilemma as great as that faced by Absalom, and how did you resolve it? [don't tell us where you may have buried the body, please.]

This week's Haftarah commentary is reprinted (with some additional questions for thought added at the end) from one originally written for the Unraveller for August 28, 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".