

Tell a story
Haftara of Noah
by Julie Zhuk on 2022-10-29

Comments

Isaiah 54:1-10

Jerusalem is compared to a woman who isn't able to have children. The Jews have been in exile and many feel that G-d has forsaken them. With the help of the prophet Isaiah, G-d comes to the Jewish people encouraging them that He is actually around. He does care for them and they will be out of exile soon. In the Haftara it feels as if G-d is speaking to Jerusalem, but really he is talking to the Jewish people. He tells them that He didn't forsake them.

He does let them know that for a short while, He did hide his face from them. He promises to gather them from their time in exile and He will have great mercy on them. The Haftara compares the final Redemption to the pact that G-d made with Noah. G-d promised to never bring a flood on the entire earth. Here, G-d is again promising the Jewish people to never again be angry with Jewish people. The last and final words G-d tells the Jews through the prophet Isaiah, "The mountains may move. The hills may fall apart, but My kindness shall not depart from you. Neither shall the covenant of My Peace fall on you.

This Haftara is about the comfort of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is going to be rebuilt with the use of precious gems. All the Jewish people will come to know the Torah. Jerusalem will be repopulated. G-d will gather the Jewish nation to come together. This time, G-d will make sure the Jewish nation never gets dispersed again. The Jewish people's future wealth will grow and they will feel spiritual greatness coming from Him. If the Jews obey G-d, they will not need to fear the enemy. A call to all Jews who study Torah will be made. There will be a subordination of all the nations to the Jewish people in the time of Mashiach.

There is a verse mentioned in the Haftara that has a reference to the Great Flood that happened in Noah's time. The prophet, Yeshayahu promised the Jewish people that just as G-d kept His oath in which He swore Noah never to bring another flood worldwide, so too He will keep His word to never forsake the Jewish people. G-d was waiting for the Final Redemption to take place. The Haftara is connecting the Parsha by warning the Jews to stay away from being dishonest. This was the one transgression the Jews committed that sealed the generation of the flood's verdict.

The Haftara goes on to explain that we may compare our current situation being in exile to the generation of the Flood. The people in the flood many years ago were warned to do teshuva and failed to listen to that commandment. By not doing teshuva they drowned in the flood. G-d is sending us a message now to repent for our sinful ways and we won't be engulfed in a flood of troubles that will compromise our exile.

Just as the righteous Noah was able to survive the flood, so will the tzaddikim of Israel. They will live many joyous days when the Mashiach will come.

After the destruction of the two Batai Mikdash they were sent into exile. The city of Jerusalem had once been a beautiful place and one filled with pride and joy of the Jewish nation. Now it was reduced to a desolate ruin. When the Jewish people were in exile, Jerusalem was lonely and unhappy. Jerusalem was like a childless woman. There was still hope in her future, for she Jerusalem would not be childless forever.

In verse 54:1 it starts out by saying, Sing Jerusalem and it compares it to a barren woman who has never been able to have a child. All of a sudden everyone brings into a song and shout joyfully, you, Jerusalem, who is the same as a woman who could never have labor pains. The song is thanking the sons of the desolate one, Jerusalem is going to be more numerous than those of the nation that once oppressed the Jewish people. It is talking about the nation of Edom, which was known as Rome. G-d was the one who compared Jerusalem to a barren woman. We are told in this Haftara that at the redemption the sons of Jerusalem would come back and be more densely populated than Edom ever was.

The Haftara brings up a story about a Sadducee, whose name was Tzedoki. He made fun of a Rabbi's learned wife who said, look what nonsense your prophet, Yeshayahu spoke. This Sadducee was talking about the quote mentioned earlier in Sing, you barren woman, who did not give birth!" The Sadducee was making fun of the words of why should she sing if she never had a baby. The wife, of the learned man, Bruria called him a fool. She told him that he only looked at the beginning of the verse and didn't consider the end of it where it says, For the sons of the desolate one will grow.

Bruria went on to explain to Tzedoki that it is clear that the desolate woman did' have any sons. The word 'barren' was only being used as a figure of speech. The 'barren woman' is referred to as the Jewish nation. She certainly didn't have evil sons who would end up in Gehinnom like some people such as Tzedoki and others like him. Her last words about Jerusalem being compared to a barren woman were enough for the Jews to rejoice. The next part of the Haftara starts to explain how G-d wanted Jerusalem to expand, G-d told Yeshayahu to let the Jews know that Jerusalem was going to stretch out.

Jerusalem would widen the place of your tent and let the curtains of its dwelling places swing right and left to enlarge the tent. No one was to hold anything back, everyone was supposed to lengthen their strings to make the tent go even higher. This way they would be securing the tent pegs to hold the tent in place permanently. They would also be making room for all the Jews who would be returning to Jerusalem at the redemption. The Haftara asks us if we are to take these words literally. We learn that when the Mashiach comes, Jews from everywhere all over the world will go back to Jerusalem.

There is a question here of how all the Jews in the world could ever fit into Israel?? G-d would make the command for Jerusalem to spread out and miraculously the city would have enough for all the Jews to enter. G-d performed more than one miracle in our history, some of these happened on the second day of creation when the waters filled the entire earth. G-d then commanded for the waters to gather in the oceans and the rivers. How could the waters in the

past fill the whole world if it was limited to certain spaces, but still leave room for dry land? G-d made a miracle happen.

He made more miracles, another one was before Joshua led the Jews across the Jordan River into the land of Canaan, G-d gathered the entire people between two bars of the aron. Their bodies became spiritual and didn't occupy any space. Joshua told the Jews that this miracle was coming from G-d, He was in their midst. There are a few more examples the Haftara uses showing G-d's providing the Jews with miracles. There was a holy atmosphere in the Bais hamikdash, this miracle happened a lot. Every yom tov, the Jews who came to visit stood crowded in the court area.

There wasn't an inch of space between the Jews, but when they would bow down during their prayers some space opened up. Each Jew suddenly had an area of about two feet in each direction around them. This was done so they would have complete privacy for their prayers between themselves and G-d. This happened on Yom Kippur, for the Jews were confessing of their transgressions. In the Haftara we are promised that in the future another miracle similar to the last one will happen. Jerusalem is going to be given spiritual power to expand and accommodate all of its returning sons.

The question that is brought up about this topic is, why must all the Jews fit into Jerusalem? Isn't it possible for some of them to settle in different parts of Israel? The answer is yes there will be Jews who will live outside of Jerusalem, but G-d prefers for every Jew to spend some time in Jerusalem. This is because the city is so holy. It is only in Jerusalem that the Jews can absorb supreme holiness because the Presence of G-d rests there. By being in Jerusalem every Jew is able to become elevated spiritually.

The prophet continues to bring comfort to the "barren woman". He says that there will be so many of her returning sons in the future. They will spread past all of the boundaries. For the Jewish nation, it would burst forth to the right and left. It would go past the boundaries of Israel. The children of this barren woman would inherit other nations and populate desolate cities as well. The Midrash explains that just like in Egypt when G-d caused the Jews to multiply, so too, in the time of Mashiach, the Jews will grow by the numbers. Having a lot of children is a real honor, even today for it helps to bring Mashiach.

The Gemara teaches that every soul in G-d's heavenly treasury must come down to the world before the Mashiach comes. By bringing more children into the world, we are helping speed up the process of having Mashiach coming. Yeshayahu is assuring the Jewish people that once again, redemption will come and they will never be in exile again. He told the Jewish nation to have no fear, for they will never again be put to shame of being subject to strange nations. They shouldn't feel embarrassed to hold their head high, for they will not be disgraced again with any more exiles.

The Jewish people would never forget the shame of their youth, and their wanderings in exile. They will no longer recall the disgrace of their widowhood when they were separated from G-d. Yeshayahu tells the Jews that G-d will keep this promise, for no one can change His idea of

fulfilling it. G-d rules over the hosts that are above and below, no one can oppose Him. He is the Redeemer and He is the Holy One of Israel. He will then be called G-d of the whole world.

G-d will call the Jewish people, the Jewish nation, He will call them back to Him. Just like a husband calls back a wife, who thought she was left by her husband and is in low spirits. The Haftara asks us if the wife of one's youth can become permanently detestable in her husband's eyes. G-d says no way to that and He assures the Jews He will again have mercy on them. In the verse Jewish nation is likened to the wife of one's youth, who can't be replaced by any other woman. A famous Rabbi named, Mendel Hirsch notes that the verse is based on the Jewish nation's ideal of matrimony.

It's a far cry from the world's cheap attitude to marriage. A Jewish husband who lives a Torah life will not consider just "dropping" his wife in favor of some other woman. When it comes to marriage, as the years go by, the couple will grow closer. They will know the key to a happy marriage lies in their hands, by their being committed to each other. At the same time, they will know their marriage is in G-d's hands. The prophet couldn't find a better simile to describe how G-d is attached to the Jewish people. All of this time, Yeshayahu is trying to bring comfort to the Jewish people.

G-d lets the Jews know that there was a short period of time when they felt He had forsaken them. G-d has a great amount of kindness and He loves them so much, so He plans to bring them back eternally. The words of G-d forsaking the Jews mean that G-d's providence for us is not always apparent. He does allow evil to happen to us. Our exile is far longer than what is known as a "short period". The destruction of the Second Bais Hamikdash happened and we have spent almost two thousand years among the nations. The redemption will come and our period of being in exile will to us like a very short time.

The situation we are in now can be compared to a person who had a horrible nightmare. Their terror seems to last for hours, but when he wakes up he comes to realize that it lasted no more than a few moments and the terrifying images are no longer there. Not in real life. King David predicted in the book of Tehillim that when G-d would return the captive Jews from being in exile, they would be like dreamers. The redemption will be the start of such overwhelming and never-ending goodness and kindness on G-d's part.

All the thousands of years of hardships and troubles the Jews underwent will seem like a dream disappearing from us and it will feel like a short period had gone by. Our Sages teach us that G-d had a measurement of reward and it far exceeded that of punishment. The exile period was so long and so hard on the Jewish people, we can now look forward to a redemption of infinite and eternal proportions.

The verse mentions G-d having a little anger towards the Jewish people.

He concealed His face from the Jewish people for a moment, but with everlasting kindness, He will still be merciful to the Jews. He is still the Redeemer of the Jewish people. G-d gives an oath, to never forsake the Jewish people again. He says that this promise is as binding as His

oath concerning the waters of Noach. He had sworn before that the waters of Noach would never again pass over the entire world.

At the same time, He is swearing that after the redemption He would never become angry with us or rebuke us again. G-d is telling us this because when we were in exile, He was angry at the Jews for their many sins. Since we had atoned for our sins in exile, G-d has forgiven the Jewish people. He is no longer upset and we are finally redeemed. The Great Flood was named the waters of Noach. The reason for this is Noach heard that G-d wanted to destroy all mankind, Noach should have begged G-d to be compassionate and spare the world.

He failed to do so the flood of the waters happened and is blamed on Noach. That is why it's called "The waters of Noach." Three people reacted differently when they heard about their fate ending in evil ways. The Hafara starts out explaining Noach's reaction, he didn't pray for his generation. Avraham many years later did come to G-d and asked Him to spare the lives of even the people who were wicked. These people were living in S'dom at the time.

The last example is Moses, he went as far as risking his life to spare the Jewish people from destruction. When G-d wanted to wipe them out after the Sin of the Golden Calf, Moses begged Him to not destroy the people. Moses even asked G-d to blot him from among those who were living. When Jews pray, all of our requests are stated in the plural, one prayer this refers to is the Shemone Esrey. When we say that, we are reminding ourselves and other Jews, "Let us complete teshuva, we are asking G-d to forgive us, and we are asking G-d to heal us. The word at the end of the sentence, being us is very crucial here.

Noach made a mistake because he didn't pray for the people. We learn from his mistake and we include our fellow Jews' welfare in our personal prayers. The prophet Yeshayahu, continues to explain G-d's everlasting kindness after the redemption. G-d says He will move mountains in an earthquake and hills may cave in because He is angry. His kindness though will never leave the Jews. The Jewish Nation will always have the Covenant of peace with G-d. G-d reminds us that He is the One who has compassion on us.

The Haftara is asking us if the Jews great forefathers' merit benefit the Jewish nation forever? Our Sages debate this point. There are some opinions, the effect of the forefathers' honors will expire after a certain period of time. Is there a way for Jews to gain favor in the eyes of G-d after this time has stopped? The verse about the mountains moving in an earthquake symbolizes the three patriarchs of the Jewish people. The hills in the verse refer to the four mothers. After the mountains are moved and the hills cave in and after their merits will have been used up, G-d still says that His kindness will still not leave the Jewish people. What this means is G-d has everlasting mercy and it will benefit the Jewish people even after the merit of our forefathers loses its power.

If the Jewish people imitate the deeds of our great fathers and mothers, G-d's quality of mercy will be aroused. He will have compassion on all of the Jewish people. We have to keep ourselves busy with performing acts of kindness for our fellow men. The prophet is continuously trying to bring comfort to Jerusalem. He lets the Jews know that Jerusalem is going to be rebuilt with gems. Jerusalem is again compared to a poor woman with a stormy heart and all the nations state that, "She will never be comforted because of her troubles."

G-d says He will in the future underlay Jerusalem's stones with Nofach gems. G-d will lay Jerusalem's foundation using sapphire stones. This Haftara brings another verse here to better describe this one.

G-d planned to make Jerusalem's window panes from Kadkod gems. Jerusalem's gates from Edkach gems, and Jerusalem's entire territory from precious stones. This is G-d's way of promising the Jews that in the future the city of Jerusalem, will become very rich. The Haftara asks if the precious gems with how the city is going to be built just a metaphor or should the Jews take Yeshayahu's words literally.

The Gemara gives us the answer through a story. Rabbi Yochanan taught, that in the future G-d was going to provide gems that would measure ten by twenty amos, meaning twenty by forty feet. He was going to set them into the gates of Jerusalem. One of his students made fun of him when he heard this. The student said that there is no such gem that exists. The student added that one could rarely find even a gem that was the size of a bird's egg!

It didn't take long after that for the student to go on a traveling trip. He was on a ship and as punishment, G-d made the ship sink into the depths of the ocean. That young man saw a wondrous sight, there were angels who were cutting down gems and pearls to the size of ten by twenty amos. Those precious stones had already been prepared in the sea since the Six Days of Creation.

The student asked who the stones were for and was told that in the future, G-d was going to set them into the gates of Jerusalem. The student was able to survive this trip by a miracle, and right away found Rabbi Yochanan and apologized to him. He told the Rabbi that every word he said was true. He saw it with his own eyes, he saw these gems being cut down to size. The Rabbi rebuked him by saying, that without seeing it yourself you didn't believe what the Sages taught. The Rabbi called the student out, and told him he made fun of him and that he was not a believer. Rabbi Yochanan was really upset with him and the student stared at him for a long time. This caused the midas hadin to strike the young man down. The young man turned into a lifeless heap of bones.

There have been a lot of statements coming from our Sages and verses in the Torah that have been ridiculed throughout the ages. As time passes and there are new scientific discoveries that are laid bare, humans have a limited understanding of the universe. There are opinions that have mellowed, and in a lot of cases have actually turned into respect for the teachings of our faith. Words like "impossible" and "fantasy" are obsolete and we witness what was yesterday's science fiction turning into today's reality.

A Jew can utilize scientific and technological advancements to reinforce his emunas chachamim belief in the Sages' teachings. The reason for this is they are Divinely inspired. There is another story similar to the one mentioned earlier. The story is about fabulous gemstones that are cited in the Midrash. There was a pious man who was walking along the coast of Haifa. He was deep in thought. He asked himself, can it really be true that in the future G-d would use two huge gemstones as windows for the Eastern Gate of the Bais Hamikdash. A sense of doubt went through the man's mind, when that happened he heard a Heavenly voice say to him that if he was not perfectly righteous G-d's strict judgement would already have punished him!

G-d created the universe in six days. Do we really need to think that He can't fashion the Eastern Gate of the Bais Hamikdash as He sees fit? This was coming from the Heavenly voice. Right away that righteous man started begging G-d to forgive him. He said, please spare me, the thought just crossed my mind; I didn't bring it to my lips. G-d then miraculously allowed him to view a wondrous sight. It was in the middle of the ocean, there were angels who were smoothing and polishing huge gems. These are for the windows of the Bais Hamikdash they informed the man. The man said one of the gems mentioned were kadmah, he asked what was that. There was an argument among the Sages about this.

Rabbi Yehuda taught that Kadmah was a shoham stone. It usually got translated as an onyx. Rabbi Chizkiya taught that it was the yashpeh, a jasper gem. The angels in heaven weren't sure what was the right answer about this specific stone, G-d had promised to use it in the future. Gavriel and Michael, the angels were arguing about it and finally G-d said that He would take both explanations into account and use both kinds of gems. The great tzaddik, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi once requested of the prophet Eliyahu. He asked him to please show him the precious gem Kadmah. He wanted to see what G-d promised us for the future. In order to complete this, the tzaddik's request, Eliyahu Hanavi performed a miracle.

He explained that there was a certain ship traveling on the high seas. On board was a Jewish child and they secretly owned the gem called Kadmah. The Midrash doesn't reveal who this child was. Suddenly there was a storm and the ship was in danger of sinking. Eliyahu appeared in front of the child. He had an offer for the child, if you do as I say, I will save the ship in your honor. The child asked what they could do and Eliyahu reminded them they own the gem. Eliyahu asked the child to show the gem to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi. The child was a boy and he exclaimed that he was only a child. Eliyahu reminded the boy that Rabbi Yehoshua was one of the greatest leaders of their time.

The boy didn't think that the Rabbi would believe him! Eliyahu told him to not worry about that. He reassured him, and he said just make sure that no one else sees the gem. Maybe, it was because only special tzaddikim could see it. Eliyahu told the boy to take Rabbi Yehoshua ben Laivi to a dark cave, six thousand amos outside of Lud, and show it to him there. The child found Rabbi Yehoshua in the Bais Hamidrash. He was teaching his students. He told the Rabbi that he had a secret to share with him. He told the Rabbi they had to leave the Bais Hamikdash.

Rabbi Yehoshua listened to the boy and when they got to the cave, the child said to him I have the gem Kadmah that you wanted to see. When the boy uncovered it the precious stone gave out such a strong light that the entire cave started illuminating. The light reached the city of Lud. It wasn't until afterward that the child threw the gem to the ground and it was covered. Jews may have another question about these kinds of stones, why will we have to be so wealthy in the future? Would it not be sufficient if G-d promised that we would reach great spiritual heights? What is the point of rebuilding Jerusalem using these stones? T

These gems would make Jerusalem so beautiful that it would become world-famous for its magnificence and splendor. It would cause all of the nations of the world to honor the Jews a lot more than they already are. At the same time, the nations would appreciate the teachings of the Torah and hold the Jewish nation in very high esteem.

The Jews' future wealth would do away with the need to worry about earning a living. This way they could devote their time to fully studying the Torah. The Midrash explains how this wealth would help the Jews get to a time of peace. There were two people having an argument about money matters. They went to a judge to settle their case. The judge rendered his verdict, which usually leaves at least one of them dissatisfied. In the future, if two Jews have a disagreement, one Jew can suggest to the other to go talk to King Mashiach in Jerusalem. King Mashiach would decide who is right.

When they got to Jerusalem, they found the city to be covered with precious stones. They could pick up as many as they wanted to and if Mashiach decided that one of them owed the other money, the latter would say that the trip had already made him so rich that he didn't need the money anymore. In the past, the Jewish people had served idols even in the holy city of Jerusalem. People who made fun of believers in G-d would be tempted to claim that Jerusalem could acquire the status of a Jewish city where idol worship was prevalent. If that were to be the case, the city would need to be destroyed and never be rebuilt.

When the Jews saw how G-d would get rid of every trace of idol worship completely changing the city's landscape and beautifying it with these precious gems, they would be silenced. It was clear for everyone to see how G-d loved this special city, Jerusalem. G-d gives the Jews spiritual wealth, this refers to G-d sending the promise of material fortune being a prelude to the wealth of the Torah. The Jews would enjoy it at the time. The verse continued to say all of Jerusalem's sons would be learned in Torah in this world. G-d, Himself would teach all the Jews in the future world. Jerusalem would become G-d's students and they would all be taught by G-d. The Jewish people would never forget what they learned.

This would result in the people having a great sense of peace, there would be no more arguments or disputes because of the forgotten traditions. Jews often ask each other if we find it difficult to learn Torah today, why should we bother if G-d is going to teach it to us in the future? The answer lies in, even if G-d has promised to give us Torah knowledge, the levels of comprehension would differ. The more a person would exert themselves in Torah study in this world, the higher the level of instruction he would receive from the Presence of G-d.

In the end, it is one's effort to learn that will pay. The words "your sons" peace will be great underscore a basic principle. Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Chanina taught that Talmidai chachamim will bring peace to the world. As it says in the book of Yeshayahu 54:13. How do Torah scholars bring peace, one answer is found in Parsha Bechukosai. We are promised that if the Jewish people will study and fulfill the Torah, then G-d will give peace to the land. The words your sons can also be read or understood as your builder. The two are related because our children are the future builders of the people of Israel.

We, are the parents and we are responsible for developing them into Torah-true Jews who will continue to build up the nation according to the tradition that is handed down to us from Mount Sinai. Chofetz Chaim used to say that every Jew is a builder and should be conscious of their role.

Just like every human being needs a roof over their head and will pay if need be, a high price for it, every soul needs "an apartment" when it comes back to heaven. Those apartments will not be built from stone or brick. They will be built from all the Torah and mitzvos that one gathers in their lifetime. Our Sages tell us that whoever is able to acquire Torah can get a home in the

world to come. There is the question of how much effort goes into building, renovating, and, furnishing one's home in this world. Yet, it is only temporary, because it is so much more important to concentrate on building a proper home for oneself in the world to come.

Yeshayahu has painted for us a colorful picture of the future financial and spiritual wealth of the Jewish nation. Still the Jews have their role to play in order to deserve all of this to happen. There is a verse that talks about the sake of giving charity, Jews will be established with all good things. We will be removed from oppressors and need not fear them anymore. We won't need to be afraid of catastrophe either, for it will not come near us. The word charity means to be righteous and the performance of good deeds.

Rambam once wrote that Jews have to be scrupulous in giving charity to the poor. This characteristic is a given that we are descendants of our forefather Avraham. G-d always said that He knows that he will command his sons and his household after him to give charity as the prophet, Yeshayahu said. It is because of the charity people give, they will be established. Charity is only acceptable to give out if the money has been earned honestly.

Another verse that talks about charity is we must stay away from being dishonest when we are doing business. Otherwise not only is our charity not evoking Heavenly mercy, but the opposite will also happen. It will result in Divine anger and retribution coming from G-d. In the honor of our giving charity, G-d is going to silence our oppressors. The verse promises that if we are being righteous and give charity, then calamity will not threaten us. We can be sure about this because G-d's power is absolute. He is the only one who if we are not with Him then we have to worry about trembling with fear. If anyone wants to fight with us, when we are righteous, they will fall under our dominion.

That means they will have to obey us. Jews can be sure of this because G-d had created the smith who blows into the coal fire and brings out from it any object that is needed. One of these things can be weapons. G-d has created the destroyer to ruin the instrument. Yeshayahu tells the Jews that it is actually G-d's doing that there are weapons in the world. G-d created the smith and gave human beings the idea to forge weapons in the fire. Of course, fire too is G-d's handiwork and it is G-d's will that allows fire to melt iron so that weapons can be forged. From reading this, we see that when someone uses a weapon to kill, he is in reality an agent of G-d's.

He will still be held responsible for misusing his free will.

G-d is clearly in charge, so the Jewish people are reassured that any instrument of war formed against the Jews will not succeed. Jews will condemn any tongue raised against us for if they are words of evil in judgment. This is the blessed lot of G-d's servants and their reward coming from G-d. G-d assures the Jewish people that as long as they are his servants, the nations can plot and plan against us. But they won't be able to harm us. G-d states that other nations are always scheming against the Jews. G-d will always foil these nations' plans. Pharaoh commanded his people to throw every Jewish firstborn into the river.

Pharaoh's plan didn't work, because G-d increased the Jewish nation. This is when most families back then had six children at a time. Haman tried to wipe out the Jewish people too, but the reverse happened. The enemies of the Jews were destroyed. Balak and Bilam wanted to curse the Jewish nation, but G-d forced them to bless the Jewish people instead. This was how

G-d kept His promise of any weapon of war forged against the Jews to not succeed. The Jewish people's enemies tried to wipe out the Jews by using two methods.

Either physical assault or verbal attacks. In Moses' time, Balak had hired the prophet Bilam to curse the Jewish people. In later times the church forced debates between Jewish and Christian leaders trying to "disprove" the truth of the Torah. Yeshayahu assured the Jewish people that both methods would fail. G-d said that any instrument of war formed against us would not succeed and neither would any tongue being raised against the Jews either. This promise only stands as long as the Jewish people consider themselves to be G-d's servants. Jews need to demonstrate this by studying Torah and keeping the Torah.

The little word *zos* appear in the verse reinforces the thought. It always refers to the Torah. Our nation becomes worthy of G-d's blessings through the fulfillment of the Torah. We are getting close to the end of the Haftara, the point of keeping and studying the Torah is elaborated in another verse. Yeshayahu gives Jews advice on how to survive being in exile. He also gives advice on how to speed up the redemption process. There is a big focus in the Haftara where Yeshayahu tries to encourage the Jews to study Torah. He is comparing it to wine, milk, food, and water. He tells them that it is free of charge.

He tells the Jews that teachers are not getting paid for their lessons when it comes to instructing Torah. The reason these drinks are compared to the Torah is they are best kept in plain and inexpensive containers. The words of the Torah stay in people who are humble. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya had conversations with the Roman emperor, he was trying to impress the ruler with his wisdom. One day the emperor's daughter, who considered one of the Jewish Sages to be ugly made a statement. She said the Sage said wise words, but he was really not good looking. The Rabbi called her a Princess and asked her, in what containers does her father store all of his wine. She told him in earthenware vessels.

The Sage then in return asked her how a king could keep his wine in such containers because it's the commoners who use earthenware vessels. The daughter of the emperor asked the Sage what kind of containers her father should use. The Sage suggested that he could surely afford more expensive containers being the king that he was. The kind of vessels the Sage suggested were gold and silver. The princess right away sent some messengers to change were the kind of containers her father had stored his wine. She was going to do what this Sage said.

It didn't take long for all of this wine to be discovered to have gone sour. The emperor heard it was his daughter who had the wine transferred from the earthenware containers to these nice gold and silver vessels. He tried to question his own daughter, but she pleaded to be innocent. She put the blame on Rabbi Yehoshua since it was the advice he gave her in the first place. The emperor was pretty upset and he sent for the Rabbi. He asked the Rabbi why he gave such awful advice to his daughter. Rabbi Yehoshua said he was simply giving an answer to her question of why G-d made him so ugly.

The Rabbi was showing the emperor's daughter that just as wine is better kept in earthenware vessels. The Torah prefer to be around people who are humble and don't feel they have a reason to be superior to others. The emperor objected to what the Rabbi was saying, he said that there are Torah scholars who are good-looking. The Rabbi said in response, that if these Torah-scholars were less handsome, they would be even greater scholars! His point was that it's a lot harder for a handsome person to refrain from pride, and the Torah prefers the humble.

Rambam stated that the teachings of the Torah are to be found only by someone who is humble and subordinate to the Torah Sages themselves. A person who stays away from contemporary pleasure-seeking and who spends the least time possible on earning a living. This way they can always occupy themselves with Torah learning. Yeshayahu explains the virtues of studying the Torah. One question that the Midrash brings up here is why do we weigh money to buy food if it's not bread and if it doesn't satisfy us. G-d said it's better to listen to Him and eat what is good, and our souls will delight in rich and enjoyable foods.

This is one comparison of how Jews can find the Torah to be delightful. Yeshayahu reprimands his generation along with ours. We exchange Torah for things of lesser value, that can't satisfy us. These things are alluring, but having an elusive desire to get more money. Money seems to look like it is the potential for making humans happy. It satisfies the human craving for all sorts of pleasure, but it's really just an illusion. The actual exhilaration is sooner or later followed by a moment of truth. This is when a person will admit to themselves that their life is empty and not worth anything.

Torah is the true "bread" for people, it keeps the soul just as bread keeps the body full. When Jews study Torah, they find real and permanent satisfaction. Every Jew has to make Torah study their main aim in life. If they do that all other occupations will be secondary, and a Jew is obligated to study Torah on a daily basis. When Alexander the Great was traveling down near a spring he found a meal of salty fish. He dipped the fish into the water, it was his way to rinse off the excess salt. When the fish touched the water, it became alive and had a sweet smell to it. Alexander the Great was amazed by this and he rinsed his hands in the water and washed his face in the water. He felt wonderfully refreshed afterward.

He thought for sure this spring is from Gan Eden. He called out that he wanted to follow that water to its actual source. Following alongside the stream he climbed as high as he could until he was standing face to face to a pair of firmly locked gates. He ordered for the doors to be open, but he heard that this door leads to where G-d was. It was only tzaddikim who were allowed to come there. Alexander stated that he was the emperor and not just any ordinary person, he wanted to have a souvenir from this place. The gates did open and he was handed a bone that surrounds the human eye socket.

Alexander packed the strange thing among his belongings. When he got home, he summoned the Jewish Sages to unravel what this bone was for. He didn't know what was so special about this bone. The Sages advised Alexander to bring a scale, they were going to show him. The scale was brought and the bony frame was placed in a bowl.

The Sages told Alexander to pile silver and gold in the other bowl. The point was to see which bowl would outweigh the other. Alexander was surprised to see that the bowl with the bone outweighed all of the gold and silver.

Alexander wanted to know what this meant, the Sages said it teaches us that the human eye is insatiable, no matter how much gold or silver is given, it will always want more. Alexander asked if there was any other way that could tip the scale in another way. The Sages said yes if Alexander was to put a little dust over the silver and gold. The emperor did that and right away the bowl sank down with a heavy thud. Alexander asked what the lesson there was, and he was told that death puts an end to a man's ceaseless cravings for anything that is rich.

This was how Alexander was warned from up above to stop his endless conquests and trying to get more treasures. He didn't listen to this warning and went about life as he did before getting any of this advice. The dust tipped the silver because when he died, he had reached only half of an average man's lifespan. There was another desire that was referred to by the above verse, people have a huge thirst for secular knowledge. A person can enjoy studying subjects not related to the Torah, but these studies can only give them temporary pleasure.

These subjects won't benefit the person's soul in the world to come. It will be in the world to come where the delights will surpass the person's imagination and description. The person will have "weighed money for that which is not bread." They will be wasting their time instead of applying themselves to Torah. That is the purpose of the person's whole existence. The next verse in the Haftara has a theme, which is to incline one's ear. That way all the Jews will come to G-d to learn Torah.

If we hear the Torah, our soul will live and it will be revived at techiyas hamaism. Our souls will live forever and in the time of the Mashiach, G-d will make an eternal covenant with the Jewish people. This way G-d will know that we are no longer in exile, just like He endured promises of kindness to David. He promised that David's kingship would last forever. Yeshayahu promises that those Jews who listen to the words of the Torah and take them to heart will have eternal life. All of the nations will be subordinate to Mashiach.

G-d made David King and he was a witness for the nations. The Jews see that G-d's promise of eternal rulership for David's dynasty would come true. Then they would believe G-d's words rang true and He had fulfilled His promise to the Jews. This also meant that Mashiach was going to stem from the seed of David. Mashiach would come as a prince and commander over the Jewish people. Mashiach was going to come and he would summon a nation that the Jews didn't know to serve him. The people wouldn't know if the Mashiach would do their bidding.

The reason for this is not because of the Jews's military superiority, but for the sake of G-d. G-d who was dwelling in us, and for the sake of the Holy One Who has beautified the Jews by letting the presence of G-d rest all around them. This is where the Haftara comes to an end, it makes a promise about the future. That promise is about the Jews becoming spiritually elevated, the presence of G-d would be all around them. It would be so desirable for the Jews that the nations of the world will voluntarily become subordinate to the Jews. All of mankind would be united in serving G-d.

Part of the text in this Beraishis Rabba and Shir HaShirm Rabba relate the miracle specifically to the city of Jerusalem. Some others explain that all of Israel would expand at techiyas hamaism. There is a source known as Abarbanel, the verse there refers to the future conquest of three nations. These are Kaini, Kenizi, and Kadmoni. These will enlarge the country of Israel. There was a question at the end of the Midrash it brings up how Noach was a tzaddik. Yet still, he didn't pray for the people in his generation. The Zohar tells us that his failure to do this shows he was selfish. Noach heard that he personally was going to survive, he didn't worry about the fate of the rest of mankind. A source called Sefer Aish Dass explains that Noach's attitude came from misplaced modesty.

He was very humble and felt unworthy of being saved. He didn't think that he would be able to annul a Heavenly decree that concerned his entire generation. It would have been Noach's job

to talk to his fellow men, even if he didn't think that the outcome would be successful. From this we learn, that G-d still wanted Noach to at least try. Even with this opinion, zechus avos doesn't end completely. It is still beneficial for us, but we need it in small measurements. When the Haftara mentioned the different kinds of gems used to rebuild Jerusalem, it was symbolizing the mitzvos and righteous deeds of the Jews. By doing these kind of things, we would shine like these gems. The angels were busy cutting them down, they were doing that because these gems needed to have the proper kind of effect on the upper worlds. This is coming from the source of Klil Paz.

That source, Klil Paz is citing a Rabbi Moshe Kordevero because he has a different approach. Every tear that a Jew will shed is because of the exile has turned into a "gem". This is when G-d stores away the future Bais Hamikdash. The word ekach is related to a burning fire where it is symbolizing a searing heartache that the Jews had. It will turn into happiness in the future. These symbols don't exclude a literal understanding of the teachings coming from Our Sages.

A book by the name of Sefer Sodi Rozi and which is quoted by Mirkeves Hamishneh gives another kind of explanation. The different gems have different segulos and remedial qualities. When a Jew touches a particular gem, they will be able to acquire the wisdom or skill and inherit it too. The source known as Malbim elaborates on the qualities of the various gems. There is one example, "Puch" in verse 54:1, this is the same as "Nofach".

The gem of the tribe of Yehuda was set in the kohen gadol's breastplate. It was the stone of royalty known as, "Kadkod." It was identical with "Shoham" which was Yissachar's gem. That tribe was famous for its wisdom and Yeshayahu describes these two gems as the foundation of the future of Jerusalem.

It is to symbolize that it will be based on royalty and combined with Torah wisdom. There used to be a famous Rabbi known as Mendel Hirsch and his thoughts on Jews staying away from being dishonest. This Rabbi says every Jew has to distance themselves from anything that borders on untruth. People who study Torah and its teachings are available free of charge. The only thing someone could charge for is the time that they spend, during which he may be trying to make a living.

The Haftara mentioned earlier how it compared Torah to milk, wine, and water. The revealed part of the Torah is likened to water, the human body can't exist without water. Every Jew needs the open part of the Torah in order to survive spiritually. The secrets of the Torah are likened to wine, for they must be imbibed with care and aren't equally tolerated by all. Most Torah secrets are stored away for the World to Come and are described as the wine that was preserved from the Six Days of Creation. The Midrashim of the Torah are likened to milk and honey because they are considered sweet and nourishing. They are instilling love and fear of G-d. The Maharal, throughout this entire Midrash, is to be interpreted allegorically. Alexander the Great, was important and was granted a spiritual trip up to the gates of Gan Eden.

Alexander the Great washing his face in the waters of Gan Eden, meant that he was animated by Gan Eden's spiritual power. At the same time, he was refused to come into the gates, and that was to warn him that he was taking the wrong course in life.

In the verse about Jews learning Torah, readers will argue that in order to understand the Torah fully or having knowledge of other sciences such as mathematics or geometry is dispensable. These studies that are not Torah related are not discouraged or prohibited by Our Sages. It is also considered allowed according to Jewish law to study subjects needed for one to build their career.

If we are to become outstanding Torah scholars, we need to be totally steeped in Torah. It is tragic that many parents deprive their children of this opportunity because they fear that they will lose out in other areas. In order for our generation to produce Torah giants like the ones before our time, we have to allow the younger generation to concentrate fully on their Torah studies to the exclusion of all else.