

HAFTARAH EXHORTATIONS: Haftarah Lech Lecha

by Mark Huey posted 08 November, 2008 www.outreachisrael.net

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

“Choices That Renew Our Strength”

Lech Lecha (Genesis 12:1-17:27), our Torah portion for this week, begins by familiarizing the reader with the exploits of the great Patriarch Abraham. In Romans 4 the Apostle Paul later describes him as the father of the faithful. While Abraham is noted for his faith in the Almighty, we need not overlook the declared promise of God to bless those who bless Abraham, or contrarily to curse those who curse Abraham. Many of his physical descendants and spiritual onlookers down through the centuries have claimed to build their personal faith and trust in the God of Creation based on His dealings with Abraham:

“And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3).

Did you note in this often-quoted phrase, which delineates blessings and curses to Abraham’s respective benefactors or enemies—that **God also notes that in Abraham that all of the families of the Earth will be blessed?** Is it possible that this reference is to the literal Seed of Abraham who would one day appear as the Messiah Yeshua Himself? It is absolutely true that Paul appeals to Genesis 12:3 in Galatians 3:8, saying, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, ‘ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.’” The ultimate blessing for all of humanity is the Redeemer and His accomplished work at Golgotha (Calvary). About eighteen-hundred years after the promise was made to Abraham, the blood sacrifice required to atone for the sin of mankind is completed. There can be no greater blessing for all the families of the Earth!

However, about seven centuries prior to the crucifixion, the words of the Prophet Isaiah to Ancient Judah—now considered in conjunction with *Lech Lecha*—were delivered to a people who would be in exile. **Isaiah declares the eternal promises of God, and the choice that He has made to be faithful to His people who follow the patterns established by the life of Abraham.** Just consider how the words of Isaiah 40:28-31, another frequently quoted set of verses, are great reminders of the faithfulness of God to His chosen nation of priests:

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary” (Isaiah 40:28-31).

Isaiah provokes his audience by asking simple rhetorical questions that force them to remember just who it is they are serving. He is an everlasting God, the Creator of the Universe—One who does not contend with human frailties evidenced in either weariness or being tired. Instead, the Lord actually gives strength to the weary and gives power to the tired. Even the youth who become tired and weary are given new strength. In fact, as Isaiah waxes eloquent with poetic terms, he describes men gaining enough strength like an eagle that soars high above or those who run without getting tired or walk without being weary.

How many times have you turned to these verses when you needed a lift as the challenges of life may have weighed you down? Have you ever meditated about soaring like an eagle above all of your cares and troubles, giving such cares and troubles over to your Heavenly Father?

On another hand, have you also reminded yourself of *your* inherited blessings promised to Abraham by our Creator? Are there times when you have been subjected to curses or cursing and, you simply remind yourself that because you are one who worships the God of Abraham that anyone who casts ill intentions your way will have to contend with the omniscient God of Creation?

As you read through the balance of the Haftarah portion as it spills into Isaiah 41, you should note that Isaiah repeatedly reminds his audience of just who it is they serve. The Lord is the one who is the first and the last:

“Who has performed and accomplished *it*, calling forth the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He’” (Isaiah 41:4; Revelation 22:13).

Notice the similarity to the promise made to Abraham about being blessed in this passage, versus what God will do to those who contend with Israel:

“But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend, you whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts and said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish” (Isaiah 41:8-11).

Also be reminded that God continues to admonish His people that we are not to fear. After all, the Holy One is our Helper and Redeemer:

“For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, who says to you, ‘**Do not fear, I will help you. Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel; I will help you,**’ declares the LORD, ‘**and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.** Behold, I have made you a new, sharp threshing sledge with double edges; you will thresh the mountains and pulverize *them*, and will make the hills like chaff. You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, and the storm will scatter them; but you will rejoice in the LORD, you will glory in the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 41:13-16).

The concluding statements in this passage relate that Israel will be like a thresher that will chew up those that oppose them. This is a critical part of Israel’s destiny before the other nations of the Earth. Ultimately in being God’s instrument to declare His glory to the nations, Israel will naturally rejoice and glory in Him.

Of course the ultimate declarations come when His people went forth after the resurrection of His Son, declaring the good news of the accomplished work of the Messiah. Everything that God has purposed for His people in ancient times, He is accomplishing through them to this very day! Let us rejoice in not only the blessings, but confidently rest in God’s plan for the ages, trusting His choice. After all, He continues to renew our strength and faith in order to proclaim Yeshua to our family, our neighbors, our fellow workers, and whomever else we are led to share.

Let us thank the Lord for not only choosing us, but renewing our strength—so that we can choose to share Him with others!

Until the restoration of all things...

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