

Bear with me as I diverge from this week's parsha, and look with me at the haftarah. Haftarah is not the half-torah, but a word meaning conclusion. These portions of prophets were read to the people when the Romans forbid public recitation of the Torah. The haftarah for this week is especially poignant, from Isaiah 55.

It begins: All who are thirsty come for water. Even if you have no money, come, buy food and eat. Buy food without money. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, your earnings for what does not satisfy? Give heed to me and you shall eat choice food and enjoy the richest meats.

This is an incredible offer: Give heed to God, and we will be fed with wonderful food. An amazing offer as we continue to see the images from the Gulf Coast, and as we begin to prepare for the High Holidays.

Isaiah asks why we focus on that which is non-essential. So as I try to get my head into **teshuvah**, I know I have to begin to understand what doesn't matter – and what will be left is where my heart is. Then I will know what the prophet sees as the real water and food that each of us needs to live.

And what I understand now is that what matters is so basic. Food, water, safety. And after what's basic for human life, we are left with a profound need for human connection.

As Dumbledore tells Harry Potter, it is only the power of love that separates good and evil. Love is our most essential bond and protection.

I hope that we can go into the holidays with a deepened knowledge of how little we need. Maybe then we can approach God and this community with the humility and respect that each deserves. Maybe then we will truly give heed to God – and we will all be fed with choice food. Maybe then we will all thrive together.

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