

## Faith Beyond Fortune (Ki Tavo)

*“He who loses money, loses much; he who loses a friend, loses much more; he who loses faith, loses all.” – Eleanor Roosevelt*

The Zohar teaches that at the dawn of the Messianic era, the Jewish people will experience unprecedented prosperity and quality of life. Yet when abundance becomes expected and comfort is treated as a given, it can also be taken away. Times of material decline remind us that wealth is never guaranteed, and that financial security can shift with little warning.

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno offers a perspective that speaks to both the ancient and the modern condition.

Deuteronomy 26:17 states:

“You have distinguished Hashem today to be a God for you, and to walk in His ways, and to observe His decrees, His commandments, and His statutes, and to hearken to His voice.”

Sforno explains that as the forty years of wandering in the desert came to an end, the Jewish people renewed their covenant with God and His Torah. That renewal included two key truths about material life:

1. Financial difficulty can be a consequence of drifting from God’s ways.
2. Following God’s commandments carries greater worth than any material gain.

In our own time, these teachings feel especially relevant. Many families face rising costs, unstable markets, and economic uncertainty. The pressure to maintain a certain lifestyle, or even to hold onto basic security, can be overwhelming. Sforno’s reminder is not to diminish these struggles but to reframe them: our worth is not measured by what we own, but by the values we live and the commitments we honor.

This perspective does not erase the pain of financial loss, nor does it absolve us from the responsibility of supporting one another. Instead, it invites us to ground ourselves in something more enduring than wealth. Even when the future feels precarious, the path of Torah and the bonds of community can anchor us with meaning and dignity.

May we be blessed to have what we truly need, and may we recognize those blessings with gratitude even in challenging times.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

*Dedication*

*To the release of the documentary film "Fiddler on the Moon," in which I have a small role.*

*Find a screening near you (in the US only for now):*

*<https://www.ironboundfilms.com/fiddleronthemoon>*