

Messianic Rabbi: The Biblical Way to Celebrate Becoming Rich

Read Time: 4 Minutes 33 Seconds

Some people enjoy “people watching.” I enjoy “people listening.”

It is amazing what you can learn if you are sitting with a group of people and just listening to their conversations. Recently, I was sitting in a room listening to a group of people as they were discussing what they would do if they suddenly were given billions of dollars.

I listened as one person shared that they would buy a house on a private island where they would quietly live out their life, peacefully watching the waves roll in. Another said that they would buy a house up on a mountain and spend their time sitting on their porch watching the seasons change. A third said that they would travel the world and see all of the places that they had only been able to read about in books and magazines.

A fourth participant in the discussion shared how they would donate a large amount of money to cure cancer and other diseases. The talk continued as they spoke about buying cars, boats, homes and the inheritances that they would or would not leave to their children.

As they spoke, I was listening with interest because the more they spoke, the more they began to sound as if they had actually had billions of dollars to spend. Somehow, the more they spoke, the more their conversation sounded less like “what if I had a billion dollars” and more like they began to debate the use of the money as if they actually had billions

of dollars to spend. The conversation that had begun as a fun way to dream about what they would each do if they suddenly became rich, had devolved into an argument.

The discussion waned and the room became quiet and I began to think to myself about what I had just heard. I wondered what G-D might have thought about the conversation I had just heard.

I was reminded of two times in the Scriptures when we read about Israel gaining wealth and how G-D instructed them to respond to gaining wealth. In both cases, we find them being commanded by G-D to do the same thing.

The first of these two events is when the children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt. We read in Exodus 12 that when the Israelites left Egypt, they plundered Egypt's wealth.

"So Bnei-Yisrael acted according to the word of Moses. They asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold, and for clothing. Adonai gave the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and let them have what they asked for. So they plundered the Egyptians" (Ex. 12:35-36).

The children of Israel find themselves suddenly going from poverty to wealth, just like the people were discussing above. After they leave Egypt, G-D commands the Israelites to have a yearly celebration to commemorate their redemption.

"You are to live in sukkot for seven days. All the native-born in Israel are to live in sukkot, so that your generations may know that I had Bnei-Yisrael to dwell in sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am Adonai your God," (Lev. 23:42-43).

Notice that the way they are to celebrate their freedom and sudden wealth is by living in rickety, temporary booths called sukkahs.

The second example is how G-D commands the Israelites to celebrate after they gathered their abundant harvest.

“Also you are to observe the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors that you sow in the field, as well as the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather your crops from the field,” (Ex. 23:16).

The Feast of the Ingathering is another name for the Feast of Sukkot. So, we see that the way G-D commanded His people to celebrate a successful harvest was by moving out of their homes and into rickety, temporary booths.

I find it fascinating that, in both of these cases, the way G-D wanted His people to celebrate financial success was by moving temporarily into something temporary. I don't believe that G-D is against His people having nice homes, such as the house on the private island or even the mountainside home spoken of above.

But I do think that He wants His people to always remember that this world we live in is temporary and that even the most expensive house on a private island or a mountainside is, in reality, just a rickety sukkah compared to the home He has prepared for us in the world to come.

So, if one of us suddenly wins the lottery or finds a gold mine on our property and becomes instantly wealthy, the first thing we should do isn't to buy a home on a private island or on a mountainside. The way we should celebrate is by putting up a sukkah and living in it for seven days, so we will remember that everything we buy in this world is only really a rickety, temporary shack.

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