

HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : וישלח

***This week's Haftorah is the complete Sefer Ovadia
(one of the shorter Books of the Prophets which together make up "The Twelve")
Chapter 1, verses 1 — 21***

IN THIS WEEK'S NOTES ON THE HAFTORAH,
AS IN MANY OF THESE "HAFTORAH OF THE WEEK" SHEETS,
CONSIDERABLE USE HAS BEEN MADE OF THE ADMIRABLE SERIES
"THE MIDRASH SAYS ON THE WEEKLY HAFTAROS"
BY RABBI MOSHE WEISSMAN AND PUBLISHED BY BENEI YAKOV PUBLICATIONS
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1. Once again, we have a Haftorah which has but a tenuous connexion with the Sidra. The Sidra tells of the meeting of Yaakov with his twin brother Aysov after an absence of many years and ends with the intimidating list of the ranks of chieftains of Aysov — this all in contrast with Yaakov, who in this same time has not built up any kind of militia or kingdom but rather has focussed on building a family whose aim and purpose is to live their lives following in the noble ways of Avrohom and Yitzchok, to spread the knowledge of HaShem in the world. This week's Haftorah, the prophecy of Ovadia, likewise contrasts the Jewish People, the House of Yaakov, with the peoples that would emerge from Aysov later, with their belligerence and cruelty and their overbearing influence over mankind. Aysov figures prominently in this week's Sidra and this week's Haftorah, too, is Ovadia's prophecy concerning the people of Edom (that is, Aysov) and their followers.
2. Interestingly enough, Ovadia was a convert to Judaism who came from the very people of Edom concerning whom he prophesises. Ovadia lived in the time of Achov. Achov was one of the worst of the kings of Israel who remorselessly killed out the Torah teachers of the Jewish people and tried with all his strength to obliterate Torah from the Jewish people in his kingdom and in its stead to spread idolworship throughout the land. Ovadia was the extremely capable Master of the King's Household. It would seem that Achov himself had no idea of the personal religiousness of his own Chief Chamberlain and the fact that Ovadia was quite clearly physically not of Jewish descent probably deflected Achov's suspicions, if he had any. But not only was Ovadia a convert to Judaism, even more: at great personal risk Ovadia saved from the death squads of Achov one hundred Torah students, hiding them in safety in two large caves in the desert, and at his own cost he provided for them all. In other words, single-handedly he maintained a fair-sized Yeshiva at his own expense and at risk of great personal danger.
3. Quite incidentally, it might be mentioned here how even the evil Achov, who had taken the Phœnician princess Izevvel as a wife (there is a doubt if he put her through even a charade of

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conversion to Judaism and even if he did, events showed that she never renounced her idolworship) who was so cruelly hell-bent on destroying the Torah leadership in his land, nevertheless kept the laws of the Torah! For see! Eliyohu the Novvi, threatened with death by Achov and therefore forced to flee to the wilderness, was sustained by HaShem by the ravens who brought bread and meat to Eliyohu in his hiding place — from the table of Achov! HaShem would not feed Eliyohu food that was below the Tzaddik's standard of Kashrus. In other words, the evil Achov kept kosher to the same high standard as Eliyohu! Of course, this can very well show the sickening hypocrisy of Achov, but it says something nevertheless. (See also the last comment to last week's **HAFTORAH OF THE WEEK : ויצא** — Ashkenazzim.)

4. Ovadia's prophecy is a warning to all those brutal tyrants throughout the ages till the end of time who would cruelly enslave mankind. Their time will come, says HaShem through Ovadia, when the nations of the world will rise up against these conquerors and be rid of them. At the time that Ovadia spoke his prophecy, he spoke about Edom and his hearers knew exactly to whom he was referring, as, no doubt did the people of Edom themselves (and they did take serious notice of the Hebrew prophets, too) but we know that the prophesies of Holy Writ are not only for that particular time but are for all time. Our Chachommim, the Rabbis of the Gemorroh, of blessed memory, reveal to us some of the other meanings that these prophecies include and they have told us that these prophecies refer to the evil power of the Roman Empire, yet to emerge. (One of the chieftains of Aysov was the ancestor of the people that became the Romans.) But they say further that these prophecies are in fact concerning any nation or folk that ever set themselves up against HaShem by tormenting His Chosen People. For in much the same way as the frustrated bully, these people know full well that they can't get at Him, so they think they will hurt His People instead and that way show their disdain of Him.
5. Says Ovadia: the time will come when those cruel despots and their followers will get their come-uppance. Those megalomaniacs and power-hungry tyrants who would seek to enslave humanity, who will not allow humanity to recognize the Sovereignty of HaShem because they demand that all people bend the knee to them and not to HaShem, they will lose any wisdom that they might have and their understanding will be taken from them. Their plans and designs will fail and their lands will be divided up amongst their victims who will come from far and wide. Their merciless robbery of their Jewish victims will become known to everybody and all peoples will look down disdainfully upon this "superpower." Despite their pretence to being a civilized people, everyone will see how they are no more than a pack of common thieves.
6. The brutal masters over everyone else will be seen to be not even masters over their own passions, ripe for destruction by the people that are the epitome of self-control. The mighty empire of Edom will be shown to be nothing more than straw, easily consumed by fire and flame. And while Edom and those that would follow in his G-dless ways will be punished for their rebellion against HaShem and their cruelty against His Chosen People, the Jewish Kingdom will be a refuge of holiness and spirituality, ushering in a new age for the whole of Mankind, at last ready to acknowledge the Sovereignty of HaShem and to follow His ways.