

SIDRA OF THE WEEK : האזינו

1. The whole of this week's Sidra, with the exception of the last two paragraphs, is devoted to the poem which Mosheh taught to the Jewish People, as HaShem had commanded. Mosheh calls upon the everlasting heavens and earth that they shall be witnesses to the great destiny of the Jewish People, to the warnings of punishment if we should forsake our duty, and to the blessings that HaShem will bestow upon us for our faithfulness to HaShem and His Torah. The poem is directed not only to the Jewish people of that time, but also to events in our own times and indeed far into the distant future, too. It is a timeless message: it will never cease from the consciousness of the Jewish People. Couched in the beautiful and powerful language of prophecy, its message is directed to every generation and remains clear for ever: every age — indeed, every individual Jew in every age — is reflected in its words.

2. Mosheh firstly calls upon us all to pay homage to HaShem our G-d, righteous and correct in all His dealings with us. Only a people which is crooked in its thinking would ever contemplate that HaShem intends anything but the best for us, His children. Right at the beginning, when the world was yet in its infancy, HaShem had already ordered events into their particular sequence for the sake of His Nation which was yet to emerge, and when they did come into existence, HaShem cared for them, tenderly sheltering them from all harm.

3. But then when things went well with them they became too self-confident: they thought that they needed HaShem no more and they were disloyal to His Torah and Mitzvos. Prophetically looking into the future, Mosheh our Teacher warns that he sees that this is a sad and repetitive cycle of events: things go well with us when HaShem bestows His great goodness upon us; we then become over-confident and think that we can manage without HaShem's care and protection and we turn aside from His Torah and Mitzvos. Then, after having strayed away to follow empty and despicable alien cultures and lifestyles, the fearsome rod of HaShem's wrath brings us back to Him — for HaShem always will call us His People. Mosheh begs us to learn to enjoy HaShem's blessings and at the same time to remain loyal to the Torah, for the consequences of ignoring our responsibilities and duties as HaShem's People are dire and terrible indeed.

4. Indeed, considering the great, all-important purpose for which HaShem has called us into existence, namely, to be His message-bearers to the whole of Mankind, when we then evade our high calling, HaShem's anger and disappointment would be even more terrible. Were it not for the deliberate shortsightedness and plain stupidity of the heathen nations of the world, who choose to interpret the punishment of the Jewish People as a proof of their own might over HaShem's Chosen People and who thus show disdain and disrespect to HaShem, He would have used even harsher methods to

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bring us back to Him, for we shall always be HaShem's People and He will never part with us, and neither will He allow us to part from Him, whatever happens.

5. Therefore, says Mosheh, let the Nations of the world of all ages beware of inflicting any harm upon HaShem's Jewish People, for those that would contend with HaShem's People thus set themselves up as the enemies of HaShem Himself, and the day of reckoning and vengeance will come. Let them but consider that if HaShem chastises His Own People so strictly, how terrible will be HaShem's anger when the inevitable day of retribution comes to them. Let the Jewish People, for their part, be ever mindful of their purpose, and let all the Nations of the world make their lot a happy one. HaShem, the Creator and Father of all humankind, has allotted to each Nation, and to each individual too, their own special tasks, and the Great Almighty G-d will reward — or punish — every single one justly and exactly.
6. The Sidra concludes with Mosheh, together with Yehoshua bin Noone, teaching this epic poem to the entire Jewish People, just as HaShem commanded. Yet again, Mosheh urges us to remain true to the Torah of HaShem, for our very lives depend upon it.
7. HaShem then tells Mosheh to ascend Mount Ne'vo and from there to glimpse the Land which HaShem is about to give to His People. But Mosheh himself will not be allowed to go there, just as HaShem decreed.

The explanation of the Haftorah of Sidra הַאֲזִינָה is being prepared.