

HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : שמות

This week's Haftorah, for Ashkenazzim, is taken from the Book of Yeshayohu, Chapter 27, verse 6 — Chapter 28, verse 13 and Chapter 29, verses 22 and 23

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
FOR WHICH HELP GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS AGAIN HERE MADE.

1. Once again, we have a Haftorah which has but a tenuous connexion with the Sidra. In fact, about the only real connexion is the very first word of the Haftorah which is the same as the rather unusual word ("הַבְּאִים") in the opening Pessuk of this week's Sidra. This is quite in keeping with the main reason for the institution of Haftorah in the first place, namely, to remind the Jewish People what Sidra would have been read this Shabbos (if the public reading of the Torah would not have been banned by the government of the day, that is) and to "synchronize" the private readings of the people, that everyone should be up to the same Sidra in their private reading and study of the weekly Sidra.
2. Although the opening Pessukim of the Haftorah can be understood to refer to the time when we first went down to Egypt and how HaShem protected us as a people and increased our numbers (and thus can be seen as a connexion with our Sidra) nevertheless this is not the ordinary understanding of these words of Yeshayohu. However, as with all the prophetic declarations of our Nevi'im, their messages are deliberately worded in such terms as to be able to refer also to events passed as well as to events yet to happen.
3. Yeshayohu tells the people of his time that if they are to be reconciled to HaShem and indeed to merit redemption in the future, they must be rid of their idolatry. Just as harmful as idolatry and the consequent turning away from HaShem and deserting His Torah and Mitzvos, is the people's indulging in pleasure for pleasure's sake. Instead of utilizing the good things in life to better serve HaShem, they have made a life of pleasure their goal and this, in turn, has deflected the people from their true purpose, which is to be a spiritual people of G-d. Yeshayohu foretells the end of the northern Kingdom of Israel because of their self-indulgence and he warns those people in the southern Kingdom of Yehudah who were tempted to copy the Ten Tribes, that they too were courting disaster.
4. Yeshayohu implores the people to listen to his message, but they only scoff, childishly mimicking his words. He warns them that if they ignore the laws of the Torah, they will be made instead to obey the laws of their enemies amongst whom they will be scattered and diminished.
5. So as to end on a more hopeful note, the Haftorah concludes with two Pessukim taken from the next chapter. These Pessukim also help to even out, as it were, the sharp words of rebuke by HaShem spoken by the Novvi (whose appointed task it is, after all, to reprove his people) and the words of praise of HaShem concerning the Jewish People. For, after all is said and done, they are the children of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov and they have in them the capacity for great goodness, as has been seen so often throughout our history.