

HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : וזאת הברכה

This Haftorah is from the first chapter of Sefer Yehoshua, from Possuk 1 till Possuk 18.

1. The Sidra **וזאת הברכה** is the last Sidra in the Torah and is read on Simchas Torah morning. Simchas Torah, when we celebrate our completion of reading the Torah in the weekly Sidras (and immediately commence the next cycle) in Chutz Lo'Oretz is the name given to the Second Day of the Yom Tov of Sheminni Atserres, which follows straight after the Yom Tov of Sukkos. (In Eretz Yisroel, Simchas Torah is celebrated together with the one day Yom Tov of Sheminni Atserres.) The Haftorah of **וזאת הברכה** is the first Chapter of Sefer Yehoshua, which is the first of the Books of the Prophets, thus clearly demonstrating the connexion of the Books of the Nevi'im (the Prophets) with the Five Books of the Torah, the Chumash, and how the Books of the Nevi'im are the continuation of the Chumash.
2. After the death of Mosheh our Teacher, the Jewish People were understandably anxious and even afraid of what the future held. We stood at the threshold of the Promised Land and were perfectly aware that the present inhabitants of the Land were not going to just melt away. The Haftorah tells of how HaShem spoke to Yehoshua directly and told him repeatedly to "be strong and take courage" and that He would be with him as He was with Mosheh. At the same time, HaShem tells Yehoshua, and the People whose leader he now is, that they must "be strong and take courage also to guard and do all the Torah which Mosheh commanded, not to turn from it, neither to the right nor to the left" and that then we will succeed in all our undertakings. Indeed, "this Torah shall not depart from your mouths at all and you shall meditate in it day and night so that you shall be careful to do all that is written in it, for only then shall you succeed in all that you do."
3. With these words of encouragement from HaShem, Yehoshua announced that the people shall start their preparations for the invasion and the taking of the Land. He summoned the representative elders of the Tribes of Reuven and Gad and Menashe and reminded them of their promise that they had made to Mosheh. Even though they had received as their portion in the Land the lush grazing lands on the east side of the River Yardayn (in what is today called the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) and they had settled their women and children in the stockade cities there, the men of these Tribes had promised to stand together with the rest of the Jewish People and help them with the conquest of the whole Land till they, too, will be settled in their allotted territories.
4. The people of Gad and Reuven readily confirmed their promise. Indeed they said that they would honour and obey Yehoshua exactly as they had honoured and obeyed Mosheh and they made it clear that all the Jewish People were solidly behind Yehoshua. Our Chachommim tell us that this held true all through the term of Yehoshua's leadership. He never had any problem with any of the Jewish People: no-one ever questioned his leadership till the end of his life.