

## HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : בחוקותי

*The Haftorah for this Sidra is taken from the Sefer Yirmiyohu  
from Chapter 16 verse 16 till Chapter 17 verse 14.*

1. The Sidra tells of the blessing and happiness that will come upon the Jewish People in their Land if they faithfully observe the Torah and Mitzvos of HaShem. This is then contrasted with the calamity and grief that will befall them if they should forsake HaShem and His Torah. In the Haftorah, the prophet Yirmiyohu is once again bidden to deliver a similar warning to the Jewish People concerning their idolatry and waywardness and that they were courting disaster, individually and nationally, by deserting HaShem and His Torah.
2. Yirmiyohu is perfectly aware that his message does not make him the favourite of the people or their king and his courtiers. Indeed, his life was often in danger because of his unpopular message of rebuke. Nevertheless, declares Yirmiyohu, it is HaShem Who is his stronghold, his support and protector from those who would try to harm him. In any case, the message is true and it is pointless — and unfair — to blame the messenger-boy.
3. But Yirmiyohu's message is not directed only to the Jewish People. The time will come, says Yirmiyohu, when even the Nations of the world will recognize the emptiness of their own religious heritage, they will marvel at their own past stupidity in worshipping sticks and stones and man-made idols. As for the errant Jewish People, they will look even more foolish than the non-Jews. After all, the non-Jews, it could be claimed, had worshipped idols in their quest for spirituality, whereas the Jewish People had knowingly substituted the Living G-d for fraud and emptiness.
4. Most years this Sidra is read together with the preceding Sidra of Behar and in some ways these two Sidras form one whole. The main subject of Sidra Behar is the law of Shmittoh, when, by command of HaShem, the Land is to lie fallow "as a Shabbos Year to HaShem" to demonstrate that the earth is HaShem's and that we are, as it were, His tenant farmers. Normally, it would be folly indeed for all the land under cultivation to be made to lie fallow altogether, all of it in the same year. In the natural way of things, it would be tantamount to national suicide. But the Jewish People is not a "natural" people any more than the Holy Land is a "normal" land and this Mitzvah is a great demonstration of HaShem's providence for He promises that there will be plenty in the Shmittoh Year from the previous years. On the other hand, our observing HaShem's command of Shmittoh is no less a demonstration of our complete trust in HaShem, too, for which HaShem bestows upon us His blessings of peace and prosperity.

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5. In Sidra Bechukosai is the prediction of what will happen if we fail to observe Shmittoh properly. The Torah warns that the People will be exiled from their land so that during their absence, the land will lie waste and will make up for all the rest years that it missed during the years that Shmittoh was not properly kept. In this Haftorah, Yirmiyohu reiterates the warning of the Torah, that while we are in exile, the Land will be abandoned and will have its rest and that we, instead of living securely in our own land, we will be forced to work the fields of our enemies. (The word used by Yirmiyohu for “abandoned” is from the same root as the word for Shmittoh and therefore is another connexion with this topic.) Yirmiyohu declares how the man who places his trust in humans and turns aside from HaShem is lost and, in stark contrast, how blessed is he that places his trust in HaShem (for instance, by observing the Mitzvah of Shmittoh). Indeed, to the extent that a person places his trust in HaShem, so does HaShem provide for him and protect him.