

**HAFTORAH OF SIDRA : קדושים**

*As explained in the introduction to the Haftorah of Sidra מות אהרי , there are various customs concerning the Haftorahs of the two Sidras מות אהרי and קדושים .*

*Here is the Haftorah of Sidra קדושים of the Ashkenazzim according to one custom.*

*(Interestingly enough, according to another custom, exactly the same Haftorah is the Haftorah of Sidra קדושים according to the Sefaraddim, and according to this custom, this Haftorah is read when the two Sidras מות אהרי and קדושים are combined.)*

*It is taken from Sefer Yechezkel, Chapter 20, from verse 2 till verse 22.*

1. In the Sidra קדושים there are dire warnings against immorality and the Haftorah, too, continues this theme. In addition, in this prophecy, Yechezkel speaks out and warns the people to observe the Shabbos properly and this is an opening topic of the Sidra, too.
2. As mentioned before (see **HAFTORAH OF SIDRA (מות אהרי)**) the prophet Yechezkel ben Buzi HaKohen was among the first ten thousand people, amongst whom were the Torah teachers and the leaders of the Jewish People, who were taken into exile by Nevuchadnetzar, King of Babylon some years before the Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and the holy city of Yerushalaim. Yechezkel was thus a contemporary of Yirmiyohu HaNovvi (who was the Torah leader of that generation and the Head of the Sanhedrin) and other Nevi'im, including Chabakkuk, Tsefania and Chaggai. During the years leading up to the Destruction, Yechezkel had warned of the impending catastrophe that would overtake the people if they would not do Teshuvah and after the calamity indeed came to pass, it was Yechezkel, together with the other Torah leaders, who gave comfort and support and guidance to the Jewish People in their grief and sorrow.
3. When Nevuchadnetzar carried away the Torah leaders of the people and the ruling classes into captivity, these first exiles then set about building the Jewish community in exile, as Yirmiyohu had said they should. Thus, when the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed some years later and the majority of the people were then driven into exile, the new exiles found in their places of dispersion readymade established communities with their functioning infrastructure of Mikvo'os and Shules and Chaddorim and Yeshivos.
4. It must also be borne in mind that although this Destruction and Exile was the first that we had ever experienced and was a most traumatic event, nevertheless, we were able and permitted to build our communities in Babylon. The Jewish people were a defeated people and Nevuchadnetzar was a cruel despot. But he treated the Jewish people with dignity and acknowledged that they were a noble people, the People of G-d. The Jewish People was not a humiliated people nor was it a people singled out for persecution and insult. (That only came about with the emergence of the Christian Religion of Love.)
5. Our Haftorah tells of the time when some of the Elders of the Jewish People came to Yechezkel to ask him what would be the future of the Jewish People. Here they were, they said, exiled in a foreign land and the situation of their brethren in Eretz Yisroel was not much better (although it would be another four years or so before the Beis HaMikdash would be destroyed and the people in Eretz Yisroel too would be driven into exile) and it seemed as if HaShem had deserted His People. But Yechezkel sensed that their very enquiry, "Why has

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HaShem forsaken us?” was not so much a question as a complaint and it showed that they accepted no blame for the catastrophe of the Jewish Nation. They refused to see that the people had brought the calamity upon themselves by forsaking HaShem and His Torah. By way of reply, HaShem gives Yechezkel a message of sharp rebuke for these Elders.

6. Ever since He had taken us as His People, HaShem says through Yechezkel, there had been some who had been disloyal to HaShem and His Mitzvos. Really, because of this disloyalty (which perhaps in truth stems more from a spirit of independence than from actual rejection of HaShem and His Torah) HaShem would have allowed us to be annihilated and lost but, for the sake of our mission to bring G-dliness to all Mankind, HaShem spared us and so will he continue to spare us always. As for the “question” about why has HaShem forsaken us, it is not HaShem who has turned away, it is the Jewish People who try to forsake HaShem and go after strange gods and alien ideologies. “I raised you up out of the depravities of Egypt and Kenaan and made you holy with the righteous Mitzvos of My Torah, Mitzvos by which you could live so happily. But you rebelled and rejected Me and My Torah! I blessed you with My Shabbos, the special sign between Me and you. But you gravely desecrated My Shabbos! Even in the Wilderness, when you were on the way to that cherished Land which I promised you, you were disloyal and I would have destroyed you all were it not that that would have been a desecration of My Name in the eyes of the Nations of the world! I have saved you from numerous enemies in your Land and even now, you seek an excuse to abandon Me and My Torah! Well, know this: You are My People. I have taken you to be Mine because of the great goodness and huge potential that I know is in you. Further, I have chosen you to be the bearers of My message to all Mankind because you are a tough people and a most obstinate people, but be sure to use these strengths to complete your mission in My world and do not try to abandon your holy duty. For even if you try to forsake Me, know that I will rule over you, if need be against your will, with a strong hand and in the sight of all and even in great anger — but I will always be your King and you will always be My People!”
7. These powerful words delivered by Yechezkel are at once both fearsome and encouraging. There have been times when we have not lived up to our high calling and as a result our enemies have done us great harm with terrible cruelty and have threatened our very existence. But HaShem has saved us and we have continued our journey down the centuries and millennia in all lands and amongst all peoples to bring the message of G-d to all Mankind.
8. In a curious and strange way, HaShem’s declaration to Yechezkel that He will always be our King — whether we like it or not! — has made us just as determined to always be His People. Despite the fact that some might choose to drop away, there will always be that nucleus of the real Jewish People which is loyal to HaShem even to the point of stubborn disregard of HaShem’s hiding Himself from us. A wonderful and inspiring example of this Jewish stubbornness was discovered after the Second World War in one of the cellars in what had been the Warsaw Ghetto. While the Germans were systematically murdering the people of the Ghetto, a group of Jews, hidden in a cellar in an attempt to avoid being deported and killed, gathered themselves into a Minyan, to davven, to learn Torah, to the best of their ability in those fearful circumstances. After the War, the following words were found written on the walls of that cellar: “Almighty G-d! Our Father in Heaven! It seems that You are angry with us and that You have rejected us because of our sins. So be it! But whatever You do to us, however much You try to shake us off, we will always be Your People and we will never forsake You!”