

HAFTORAH SUMMARY FOR PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

This week's Haftorah is the Book of Ovadiah, which is the smallest book of the Prophets - only one chapter. Ovadiah lived during the time of Eliyahu, and the difficult reign of Achav and Ezevel (3043-705 b.c.e.) We were introduced to Ovadiah in the Haftorah of Parshas Vayera when Elisha miraculously helped his widow.

Ovadia's personal commitment and courage in saving 100 prophets from the purges of Ezevel (Jezebel) was rewarded by himself becoming one of the prophets who would prophesies about the demise of evil and the ultimate salvation of the righteous.

The connection to our Parsha is the emphasis on Eisav's eventual demise. Yoseph, who is the positive manifestation of what Eisav could have been, will triumph in eradicating Eisav's evil influence from society. "...the house of Yoseph a flame, and the house of Eisav stubble. They will set them ablaze and consume them..." (1:18-19) Eisav had been given his chance of joining in the creation of the Jewish nation whose influence over society would redirect destiny. Instead of joining, Eisav challenged Yakov, and attempted to destroy him.

Throughout history, Eisav rejoiced in Israel's misfortune and boasted of his contribution to their pain and distress. Ovadiah's prophecy, portrays the times of Mashiach when justice will manifest itself in the "measure for a measure", of Eisav's destruction. Eisav, who destroyed the Bais Hamikdash and sent Israel into exile, will live to see the in-gathering of the exiled and the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash. He will experience the ultimate retribution of witnessing what might have been his own glory and triumph, if only he had chosen to do good, rather than bad.

Ovadiah is chosen to deliver this prophecy because he chose to do good over bad. As a servant to the evil Achav and Ezevel, he could have chosen a life of power and glory while carrying out their evil wishes. Instead, he chose to place himself in mortal danger to save the intended victims of Ezevel. In his capacity as the Navi, Ovadiah says to Eisav, "You have no excuse! Everyone is challenged and everyone must choose." Those who choose evil will be destroyed, and those who choose good will witness Eisav's punishment, and the coming of Mashiach. (1:21)