

# Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

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**TAZRI'A-M'TZORA - 18 p'sukim - M'lachim Bet 7:3-20**

As the haftarot taken from Nevi'im Acharonim (the later prophets), whose ancient words of morality, critique or comfort have educated, improved and comforted later generations, so too the haftarot taken from Nevi'im Rishonim, (the earlier prophets) with tales from our history have left important messages for the future generations. And that is certainly true of this week's selection from the seventh perek in Sefer M'lachim Bet.

The story that unfolds in the haftara is a seemingly simple one yet requires some background to fully understand. The northern tribes of Israel, and their king Yehoram, suffered under the thumb of their powerful northern neighbor, Aram for years. When the Aramean king Ben-Haddad besieged the Israelite capital of Shomron, famine raged in the city and many of the residents were starving. While Yehoram attempted to give courage and hope to his people he was accosted by a local woman who related the horrific story of she and another woman had

agreed, due to their hunger, to eat the flesh of their children. Upon hearing the story, the king tore his royal garments, and, in anger, sought out the navi Elisha, whom he blamed for the tragic situation. The prophet responded by promising the population that there would soon be more than enough food for the starving residents of Shomron - a promise mocked by the king's captain.

Our haftara opens by continuing the story and telling of four M'TZORA'IM (hence, the connection to our parasha), who, upon discovering that the besieging enemy had fled, report the news to the King and, by dawn's light, the starving people rush to the abandoned camp and ease their hunger. And, indeed, just as Elisha, had promised, there was a surplus of food for all.

A nice story... but something is missing: Where is G-d?

Yes, it is true that we can clearly see His hand in all of these events:

- In the famine that overtook the residents of Shomron
- In the involvement of the navi, Elisha
- In the mysterious flight of the Aramean army
- In the M'tzora'im's discovery of their absence
- In the salvation of the starving population through the food left by the enemy

**It is obvious that Hashem was present throughout the story!**

**But what did the citizens see?**

**Did they see Hashem's involvement?**

**Did they marvel at of His miracles?**

**Did they appreciate His salvation?**

**It certainly doesn't appear that they did!**

- **Throughout their distress, we find no prayers or pleas being offered to Hashem.**

- **The King tells the starving woman that he couldn't help because Hashem wouldn't help - and yet, he never asks G-d for help!**

- **The King attributes their misery to Elisha (!) while never asking the prophet what Hashem wants of the people.**

- **Elisha is even mocked by the King's guard who doubts Hashem's ability to save Israel: "Will G-d make windows in the heaven? Can such a thing ever happen?"**

- **And when the miracle does occur, no prayers of thanksgiving or praise were offered by the people.**

**It seems that, to this population, G-d was "missing"!**

**But - in truth, it was they who were missing G-d.**

**When you are blind to Hashem's demands, or deaf to His entreaties, you might soon be oblivious to His kindnesses and to His miracles as well. And if that occurs, you lose any awareness of His very presence - hence, for you, G-d is "missing".**

**Each day we turn to Hashem and thank Him for His daily wonders - AL NISECHA... SHEB'CHOL YOM IMANU - just so that we don't fall victim to the mistaken belief that Hashem is "missing" from our lives. We are enjoined to remember the gift of life, the wonder of birth, the joy of friendship - that all are, miracles showered upon us by G-d.**

**On this week of Yom HaAtzma'ut it is essential to realize that, if you are part of this nation, if you are amazed by her survival, and you revel at her return... and yet you feel that G-d is "missing" - then allow me to enlighten you: Hashem is never missing.**

**But you, my friend, are missing everything! ✨**