

## **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

This shabbat is Shabbat HaGadol and therefore a special Haftara is read. However, I would like to share with you the Haftara we would have read this week if not for Shabbat HaGadol. Parshat Metzora includes the complicated diagnosis of leprosy and detailed requirements for quarantine and ritual purification. The Haftara we would have read discusses Samaria, the capital of the Northern kingdom of Israel, being under siege by the armies of Assyria. There is famine and food are unattainable.

The condition of four lepers outside the city walls was considerably worse. The Talmud indicates that these lepers were inflicted as a Divine punishment with a spiritual leprosy. Exiled from the city, due to their illness they faced certain death by starvation. They decided to surrender to the Assyrian army, knowing only too well that they had no other choice. As they approached the Assyrian camp, they surprisingly found the camp empty and hastily abandoned by the enemy. The four lepers first ate all the food they could find. One said to the rest "We are not acting properly, for today is a day of

good tidings. We dare not sit passively for if we delay, we will be guilty of unforgivable sin."

They immediately relayed the good news of the enemies retreat to the people of Samaria. The miracle of the deliverance of Israel, was achieved by lepers, spiritual outcasts.

This Haftara emphasizes that Israel's miraculous deliverance from evil Assyria was not through the assistance of great sacred men but rather by four lepers. This prophecy enlightens us that no Jew is excluded from the grace of G-d or denied being instrumental in His missions.

Jewish survival supersedes repentance as a reason for G-d's intervention. When Jewish survival is at stake, deliverance is brought by the hand of anyone who devotes himself to saving Jews, including a sinner or a leper.

This was seen as early as the first Pesach in which even though we were at such a low level of purity, the Israelites took a role in exiting from Egypt themselves, ready to follow G-d into a barren desert. This Haftara remains a prophecy to the Jewish people's ability to gain salvation no matter what our past maybe. What an appropriate Haftara to discuss on Shabbat HaGadol, even if we do not read it aloud.