

Inspirations from the Haftarah-Shabbos Parah **by Rabbi Eliyhu Kirsh**

On the second to last Shabbos in the month of Adar or the last Shabbos if Rosh Chodesh Nissan falls on Shabbos we have a special Torah and Haftarah reading. The Shabbos is called Shabbos Parah because the special Torah reading is about the *Parah Aduma*, the Red Heifer whose ashes were used to make a special sprinkling water to purify all of those who came into contact with death. The reading gets into the details about the laws of ritual impurity contracted by anyone who either makes contact with a dead body or is even under the same roof as a dead body. The relevance of this subject for this time of the year is that in the days of the Bais Hamikdash everyone had to purify themselves in order to eat their portion of the *korbon Pesach* so this reading was a reminder for everyone to prepare themselves accordingly. While the practical aspect is no longer relevant today, our rabbis, and according to some opinions the Torah, ordained that we read this portion to remind ourselves of our obligation to be ritually pure from things that cause defilement when we are involved in *korbonos*. As always, we continue to be hopeful that these laws will very soon become relevant again and we will all be bringing our *korbon Pesach*.

The Haftarah that is read on Shabbos Parah continues with this theme of purification from spiritual defilement but on a broader scale. The Haftarah is taken from the book of Yecheskel 36:16-38. Hashem gave Am Yisroel the Torah to be the 'light unto the nations', showing the world showing the world the beauty of holiness. Sadly, we strayed far from our mission and sank into the depths of idolatry and immorality. Rightfully, we were punished and exiled from our land. But this caused a great profanation of Hashem's name. After all, when we were sent into exile and scattered all over the world, the nations would say, "can these people really be the people of Hashem who are punished so severely and forced out of their land?" [Indeed, this is what the Christian world has been saying about us for centuries and many of them underneath their modern guises still believe

till today.] So, in order to remove this shame from his name he will gather us from all over the world and bring us back to our homeland. Then, in the defining pasuk of our Haftarah, Hashem tells Yechezkel that he will sprinkle clean water over us and cleanse us from all of our impurity. Just as a parent will personally and lovingly clean the child who has become soiled, the Ribono Shel Olam will clean and purify us from all of the contamination of our galus. The desolate cities will become inhabited again. We will live in our homeland Eretz Yisroel securely and with abundance in all of our needs. Then, all of the nations shall again see that we are the Am Hashem, the 'light unto the nations, representing all that is holy and pure.

As Stated before in this column, messages such as these were needed for us to hear throughout our years of galus. While we were downtrodden and hated by the world, we heard these messages from our prophets regularly and knew our inner essence would never be totally destroyed by our galus. Regardless of how the world saw us, we knew we were the Am Hashem. We merely have to wait for the time it will be revealed to the world.