



**Shabbat Chol Ha-moed Sukkot
Ezekiel 38:18-39:16
October 11, 2014 / 17 Tishrei 5774**

The fruit of the earth has been gathered and harvested and the earth is beginning to ease itself into its period of annual sleep. The days are becoming shorter; each evening the amount of darkness increases. It is precisely during these times when the fear of the coming darkness rises that miracles are needed. Miracles and redemption occur in order to champion God's power and to counter the negative and hostile forces that confront us. The darkness of the coming winter parallels the mythological forces that are allied against God, forces that will attack Israel from the North and will be utterly destroyed by Divine fury that will be manifested through earthquakes, pestilence and bloodshed.

It is Sukkoth, the Festival of Booths, and our ancestors dwelt in fragile shelters. Just as they experienced the fragility of life, we symbolically imitate their wanderings, and become more sensitive to the fragility of our lives today. Just a few days ago, on the first day of Sukkoth, we read the words of the prophet Zechariah, who like Ezekiel in today's haftarah, described the potential future in apocalyptic terms.

This morning's haftarah was most probably composed some time around 573 B.C.E., thirteen years before the Temple's destruction. While this period could have been described as a period of doom and gloom, the prophet sees beyond the destruction and understands this to be a precursor to a better national future.

This week's Haftarah commentary is reprinted from one written for the Unraveller for October 15, 2011 by Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director of the FJMC and author of "Understanding the Haftarah. An Everyperson's Guide" and "The Non-Jewish Spouse: Strategies for Clergy and Lay Leadership."