

The
Haftarah

Laws, Customs & History

ספר שעה ברכה
עניני ההפטר

Shlomo Katz

Hamaayan/The Torah Spring

Silver Spring, MD

~~+888-593-2232~~

~~hamaayan@torahmail.com~~

301-775-9623

thetorahspring@gmail.com

© 2000
by Shlomo Katz

*Dedicated in loving memory
to our parents*

Jack and Regina Ciment

זכרונם לברכה

by their children

Norman and Joan Ciment

& family

Melvyn and Barbara Ciment

& family

*May their legacy of tzedakah be a
continuing merit and inspiration to their
children*

וצדקה תהיה לנו

(Devarim 6:25)

THE YESHIVA

OF GREATER WASHINGTON

ב"ה

Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer
Rosh HaYeshiva

Rabbi Yitzchok Merkin
Headmaster

Rabbi Zev Katz
Principal, Judaic Studies
Girls Division

Sima Jacoby
Principal, Secular Studies
Dean of Girls

Rabbi Zvi Teitelbaum
Menahel Ruchani
Dean of Boys

Arnold Brodsky
Assistant Principal,
Secular Studies

OFFICERS

May 16, 2000

Melvin Rische
President

Jeffrey Cohen
Avrom Landesman
Executive Vice Presidents

Emil Braun
Jack Delman
Samuel Franco
Aaron Lerner
Yitzchok Siegel
Abe Zwany
Vice Presidents

Shlomo Spetner
Secretary

Richard A. Klein
Treasurer

Michael Elman
Dr. Alan Goldman
Jerrold Hercenberg
Daniel Jacoby
Dr. Alan Kermaier
Trustees

Rabbi Kalman Winter
Chairman,
Vaad Hachinuch

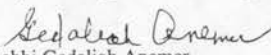
Dr. Carl Posy
Chairman,
Board of Education

Bruce W. Herst
Executive Director

Tzivia Bramson
Administrative Assistant

Reb Shlomo Katz has authored a comprehensive and detailed Sefer on the Haftorah, written in a clear and concise manner. I found it to be an encyclopedic work which will help familiarize one with the many Halachos and Minhagim relating to Haftoras. Reb Shlomo, who has for many years authored the "Hamayan" on the weekly Sedra, has again made an outstanding contribution through his latest Sefer.

May Hashem grant him with opportunities to continue to be a Mezakah Harabim..


Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer
Rosh Yeshiva



BUSINESS OFFICES: P.O. Box 2125, Silver Spring, MD 20915-2125 (301) 949-7114 FAX (301) 949-7040
ARCOLA CAMPUS: 1216 Arcola Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20902 (301) 649-7077 FAX (301) 649-7053
GIRLS CAMPUS: (301) 879-8835 FAX (301) 879-8973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	ix	
INTRODUCTION	1	
The Origin of the Haftarah	3	
PART I: THE CONCISE LAWS OF THE HAFTARAH		
From <i>Sefer Sha'arei Ephraim</i>	17	
1. The Concise Laws of the Haftarah	19	
PART II: THE MAFTIR, The One Who Reads The Haftarah ..		45
2. The Maftir's Qualifications	47	
3. A Minor As Maftir	51	
4. A Bar Mitzvah	54	
5. A Yahrzeit	59	
6. A Bridegroom	69	
7. Is It an Honor to Read the Haftarah?	73	
8. Reviewing the Haftarah	80	
PART III: THE BERACHOT		83
9. Introduction to the Berachot	85	
10. The Berachah Before the Haftarah	89	
11. The First Berachah After the Haftarah	94	
12. The Second Berachah After the Haftarah	101	
13. The Third Berachah After the Haftarah	104	

14. The Final Berachah After the Haftarah	107
15. Listening to the Haftarah	110
PART IV: THE HAFTARAH TEXT	113
16. Choosing A Haftarah	115
17. Prophecies That May Not Be Haftarot	120
18. Skipping in the Nevi'im	124
19. The Length of the Haftarah	126
20. The Ketuvim	129
21. A Haftarah in Minchah	133
PART V: SELECTED HAFTAROT	137
22. Pesach	139
23. Shavuot	142
24. The Seven Haftarot of Consolation	147
25. Rosh Hashanah	151
26. The Two Haftarot of Repentance	153
27. Shabbat Shuvah	156
28. Yom Kippur	161
29. Sukkot	166
30. Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah	169
31. Chanukah	171
32. Shabbat Hagadol	175
33. Erev Rosh Chodesh	182
34. Fast Days	185
35. Acharei Mot and Kedoshim	187
36. Other Rarely-Read Haftarot	191
37. "Sos Asis"	193
PART VI: THE HAFTARAH BOOK	197
38. Books or Parchments	199
39. The Sanctity of a Haftarah Scroll	209
INDEX	213

PREFACE

The Purpose of This Book

Any mitzvah that no one seeks and no one asks for, you should seek, for it is like a מצוה מת / a corpse that has no one to care for it. A mitzvah that no one pursues, you should pursue and perform, for the mitzvah complains, "How lowly am I that I have disappeared entirely?" (Sefer Chassidim, paragraph 105)

Love a mitzvah that is a מצוה מת for which no one cares. For example, if you see a mitzvah that is degraded or that no one studies, study it and you will receive reward. (Ibid. paragraph 261)

The haftarah certainly qualifies as a מצוה מת — as one can see from the decorum in many *shuls* during the reading of the haftarah. (This is aside from those people who leave *shul* during the haftarah to make *kiddush*!) The study of the laws of the haftarah likewise is a מצוה מת. Indeed, a typical response that I received upon mentioning that I was writing a book about the *halachot* / laws of the haftarah was: "I didn't know that there were any!"

The haftarah does have its own *halachot*, but one must be persistent in order to find them. In the *Shulchan Aruch*, the primary reference work for practical *halachah*, these laws are dispersed among various *simanim* / chapters. Many necessary *halachot* are not

found there at all. Some of these are collected in *Mishnah Berurah*, but even more are not.

The two most comprehensive collections of *halachot* of the haftarah are found in the early nineteenth century work, *Sha'arei Ephraim*, by R' Ephraim Zalman Margalioth and the early twentieth century work, *Mikraei Kodesh*, by R' Zvi Hirsch Grodzinski. I have chosen the *Sha'arei Ephraim* as the starting point for this work, and the main text of Chapter One of this book is an almost literal, paragraph-by-paragraph translation of the ninth *Sha'ar* (literally "Gate") of that work. Thus, any given paragraph in Chapter One corresponds to the same paragraph in *Sha'ar 9* of *Sha'arei Ephraim*.

The footnotes to Chapter One provide necessary background information to the *halachot* contained in the text, elaborate on some of the laws discussed by the *Sha'arei Ephraim* and/or note where in this book those laws are discussed at greater length. In particular, the footnotes point out those instances where *Mishnah Berurah* and other leading authorities disagree with the rulings of the *Sha'arei Ephraim*. The chapters which follow Chapter One elaborate on the subjects mentioned there and also address many subjects that are not discussed in *Sha'arei Ephraim*.

In the introduction to this work we examine the mystery of the haftarah's origin. Other historical facts about the haftarah are presented throughout the book and the *halachic* significance of many of those facts is discussed. Many variant customs that came to my attention during my research also are presented.

A word of caution: while I have attempted to be thorough, I cannot be certain that I identified all opinions on each side of every issue. In addition, I have not been careful to distinguish between *Ashkenazic* and *Sephardic* authorities. Accordingly, this book should not be relied upon for practical *halachic* guidance; indeed, this writer is not qualified to render definitive *halachic* rulings.

Acknowledgments

Many years of work have gone into this book and many acknowledgments are due. First and foremost, I express my gratitude to *Hashem* that I have been privileged to begin and complete this work. I also thank Him ששם חלקי מיושבי מבית המדרש / that He gave me a share among those who sit in the study halls of Torah, although not full-time, at least on a regular basis. His infinite kindness has enabled me, despite the challenges and demands of a professional position, to join regular Torah study groups and to teach Torah to thousands world-wide via the written word and the Internet.

The rabbis of the congregations to which I have belonged have been a source of encouragement and inspiration to me, particularly with regard to the publication of *Hamaayan / The Torah Spring*. I refer of course to *Harav* Gedaliah Anemer, Rabbi of Young Israel Shomrai Emunah and *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington, and to *Harav* Kalman Winter, Rabbi of the Southeast Hebrew Congregation, both of Silver Spring, Maryland. I would also like to thank *Harav* Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel of Congregation Beth Aaron in Teaneck, N.J. (my in-laws' congregation) for allowing me on several occasions to deliver chapters of this book as *shiurim* in his *shul*. The necessity to prepare coherent talks and the feedback and new insights which I received from some of Rabbi Kanarfogel's congregants have definitely improved this work.

Mel and Barbara Ciment and their family have sponsored the publication of this work. Dr. Ciment customarily purchases the haftarah on one of the days of *Rosh Hashanah*, and he agreed to sponsor this book after I teased him that it would be more worthwhile to purchase *hagbahah* / lifting the Torah. (Please see Chapter Seven.) As the months since that conversation turned into years, Dr. Ciment protected his investment by good-naturedly, but frequently, inquiring when my work would be finished. Without this encouragement, I

might never have completed this work, and I therefore express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Ciment.

A number of people have directed me to important works for anyone studying the haftarah. In particular, my thanks goes to Rabbi Myron Wakschlag who has played a leading role in publicizing to the world the writings of R' Zvi Hirsch Grodzinski and who introduced me to those works.

Chazal have taught in *Pirkei Avot*: “עשה לך רב וקנה לך חבר” / “Make for yourself a teacher and acquire for yourself a *chaver*.” I have been privileged to do both. I have acquired a *chaver* in Rabbi Dr. Abbe Mendlowitz, my *chavruta* / study partner of the last twelve-and-a-half years, part of that time devoted to studying the material discussed in this book. I have acquired a teacher *par excellence* in מורי ורבי *Harav* Shlomo Naiman who has selflessly given me of his time, his knowledge and his wisdom for more than 14 years. Both have them have contributed to this book, both directly and indirectly. Indeed, my interest in the haftarah began when I studied Tractate *Megillah* in Rabbi Naiman's *shiur* some ten years ago. I am particularly grateful to Rabbi Naiman for graciously agreeing to preview this book, though I retain full responsibility for any defects that it contains.

I can not sufficiently express my gratitude to my dear parents, Dr. and Mrs. Irving Katz שיחי who have encouraged and supported me in my desire to study and teach Torah. I am particularly grateful to my father for the countless hours that we have studied together, continuing to this day. My father also reviewed this book and made many valuable suggestions. My in-laws, Rabbi and Mrs. Sam Vogel שיחי similarly are a source of encouragement and inspiration to me. It is my prayer that my parents and my in-laws know only happiness and that they merit to derive *nachas* and pleasure from me, my wife and our children, and from all of their descendants.

Chazal say that a father is obligated to teach his son Torah and to find him a wife. The late *Dayan* Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss comments that these are not two separate obligations, but one. The end result of one's Torah study depends on his wife for it is a good wife who enables one to preserve the Torah that he has studied. Thus, until one finds an appropriate wife, the outcome of all of his Torah study hangs in the balance.¹

This can certainly be said in my case. No thanks that I might express to my wife could adequately reflect her silent contribution to my Torah study, to this book and to everything else that I undertake. May it be *Hashem's* will that I be a source of *nachas* to her and that we merit to see בנים ובני בנים עוסקים בתורה / children and descendants toiling in Torah study, who will bring *nachas* to their families, their communities and, most importantly, to *Hashem*.

Shlomo David Katz
לייא בעומר תשי"ס

¹ *Minchat Yitzchak Al Hatorah* p. 345.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Origin of the Haftarah

Why Is There a Haftarah?

The beginnings of the haftarah are shrouded in mystery. Although the practice of reading a selection from the *Nevi'im* / Prophets following the Torah reading is discussed in the Talmud, no explanation is offered as to *why* the haftarah is read. Neither does the Talmud tell us when or where the practice first started.¹

One of the earliest accounts of a haftarah reading appears in *Megillah* 25b, where we are told that a haftarah was read in the presence of the sage R' Eliezer ben Hyrcanus.² This sage, the same R' Eliezer whose views figure prominently in the *Mishnah* (סתם ר' אליעזר), flourished in the years just before and after the destruction of the Second *Bet Hamikdash* in approximately 70 C.E., and we therefore know that *haftarot* were already being read at that

¹ The question of the haftarah's origin has interested both *halachic* and academic (Jewish and non-Jewish) scholars alike. A survey of many academic views may be found in S. Weingarten, ראשיתן של ההפטרות in *Sinai*, Vol. 83 (5738), pp.107-136. (For the most part, those views duplicate the information found in the *halachic* and *midrashic* sources cited here.) See also S. Weingarten, על מאמרי "ראשיתן של ההפטרות" תשובה למשיגים, in *Sinai*, Vol. 85 (5739), pp.276-279, where that writer responds to R' Yosef Kapach's critique of his prior article.

² That incident is discussed in detail in Chapter 17.

time. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the reading of a haftarah was not yet widespread when the *Bet Hamikdash* was destroyed, as the *Mishnah's* description of the Yom Kippur service in the Temple mentions a Torah reading but not a haftarah.³

What is probably the best known explanation for the haftarah's origin places the custom's beginning in the time of the *Chanukah* story, approximately 165 B.C.E. This view explains that among the decrees of the Greco-Syrian king Antiochus was a ban on the Torah reading; therefore, in place of the *parashah*, congregations began reading a selection from the *Nevi'im* whose subject related to the *parashah* that would have been read that week.⁴ Some say that the portion from the *Nevi'im* was divided into seven *aliyot* as the Torah reading is.⁵

R' Baruch Halevi Epstein suggests that this explanation for the haftarah's origin finds support in the words of the *berachah* after the haftarah, "צדיק בכל הדורות" / "Righteous in all generations." It is as if we say, "Do not wonder why *Hashem* would allow decrees to be made against us — He is 'Righteous in all generations'."⁶

On the other hand, there are several difficulties with this explanation: first, why does no one mention such a decree before the Middle Ages,⁷ and why is there no source connecting the decree to

³ *Yoma* 68a. But see *Rashi*, *loc. cit.* ד"ה ראש הכנסת.

⁴ *Tosfot Yom Tov to Megillah* 3:4 (in the name of R' Eliyahu Bachur, *Sefer Ha'tishbi*).

⁵ *Mishnah Berurah* 284:2.

⁶ *Baruch She'amar* p. 258.

⁷ The existence of such a decree is mentioned by R' David Avudraham in the late thirteenth century. In the eighteenth century Yemenite work *She'eilot U'teshuvot Peulat Tzaddik* (Part I, No. 13), the twelfth century sage *Ra'avad* is given as the source for this historical account.

Antiochus before the fifteenth century *Sefer Ha'tishbi*?⁸ Indeed, older accounts of Antiochus' decrees mention only that he banned observance of *Shabbat*, *Yom Tov*, *Rosh Chodesh* and *berit milah*.⁹ Second, why is the haftarah read in places that were never part of Antiochus' realm?¹⁰ Finally, if Antiochus banned the Torah reading, how did the Jews get away with reading a haftarah?

In answer to the first question, perhaps the ban on Torah reading is alluded to in the following passage from *Sefer Chashmonaim I* (also known as the *First Book of Maccabees*):

*It happened in the year 145 [of the Greek kingdom], on the fifteenth of Kislev, they erected an abomination on the altar of Hashem, and they built altars in all of the cities of Judea. They slaughtered [animals] and sacrificed them in the streets of the city and at the doors of their homes, and they tore the books of the Torah of Hashem to shreds and burned them in fire. And anyone in whose possession a book of the Covenant of Hashem was found and anyone who observed the word of Hashem, they smote with a sword, as the king had commanded.*¹¹

⁸ See footnote 4.

⁹ The most famous version of Antiochus' decrees is found in *Megilat Antiochus*, verse 11, and states that the king prohibited the observance of *Shabbat*, *Rosh Chodesh* and *berit milah* (Wertheimer, *Batei Midrashot*, Vol. I. p. 319). *Rambam* (*Hil. Chanukah* 3:1) does state generally that Antiochus prevented the Jews from "engaging in Torah and *mitzvot*."

¹⁰ See *Binah La'ittim: Drush Sheni Le'Chanukah* [*Machon Lev Sameach* ed. p. 206], where the fact that only a relatively small percentage of Jews lived within Antiochus' realm is given as the reason that Chanukah is not observed in the same festive way that Purim is observed.

¹¹ Ch. I, v. 53-55. This book's authorship is unknown, but it is accepted as a reliable, contemporary account of the *Chanukah* story.

The first century historian, Flavius Josephus, writes similarly, “And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed.”¹² If the Syrian soldiers were searching out and destroying copies of the Torah, presumably they were not permitting the Jewish people to read from the Torah publicly.¹³

Our second query — why the haftarah is read in places that were never part of Antiochus' realm — may be answered by speculating that the haftarah began at a different time and for a different reason in each locality. Perhaps places that were never part of Antiochus' realm began reading a haftarah for one of the reasons discussed elsewhere in this chapter.¹⁴

Finally, several theories have been advanced to answer the third of the above questions. R' Zvi Hirsch Grodzinski suggests that from the beginning, the haftarah was read from a book, not from a scroll that looked like a *Sefer Torah*. As a result, the government's inspectors did not realize what was transpiring and the Jews got away with reading a haftarah.¹⁵

¹² *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 12, Chapter 5, paragraph 256 [New Updated Edition, Hendrickson Publ. 1987 p. 324].

¹³ S. Weingarten p.107. However, in *Sefer Chashmonaim II*, Chapter 2, verses 14-15, we read of the aftermath of the war:

Just as Nechemiah sought out the books of David and the kings and the prophets, which they wrote regarding the sacrifices, and he gathered them in, so Yehuda [Hamaccabee] did; for he gathered the books which had been dispersed in the abominable war in the Land.

This may suggest that the books of the *Nevi'im* were available only after the war against Antiochus. If so, how was the haftarah read while Antiochus' decree was still in force?

¹⁴ If true, this might also explain why different communities read different haftarot on different occasions. See Chapter 16.

¹⁵ *Mikraei Kodesh*, Part III, *Kuntreis Acharon*. (As will be discussed in Chapter 38, this theory has significant *halachic* implications.)

Others suggest that although the decree originally prohibited reading from the *Nevi'im*, the Jewish activists of the day succeeded in having the decree relaxed so that the Jews were permitted to read from the Prophets.¹⁶

Whatever the historical problems with the view that connects the haftarah to the decrees of Antiochus, the *chassidic* master R' Tzaddok Hakohen adopts this view and derives a lesson from it. He writes that when Antiochus banned the Torah reading, *Chazal* took this as a sign that the Jewish people were not sufficiently attached to Torah study. *Chazal* therefore responded by adding a new form of Torah study — the haftarah. In typical *chassidic* fashion, R' Tzaddok adds that the wicked Antiochus therefore deserves credit for making a positive contribution to the goal of spreading G-d's Name, a responsibility which every person, Jew and non-Jew alike, shares.¹⁷

A different explanation — apparently the earliest explanation — for why we read a haftarah is found in the *midrash Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu Rabbah* (Chapter 1). There we are taught:

ישכים אדם וישנה בשבת וילך לבית הכנסת ולבית המדרש
ויקרא בתורה וישנה בנביאים ואחר כך ילך לביתו ויאכל
וישתה לקיים מה שנאמר "לך אכל בשמחה לחמך ושתה
בלב טוב יינק" לפי שאין לו מנוחה לקב"ה אלא עם עושי
תורה בלבד.

A person should arise early on Shabbat and study, go to shul and the bet hamedrash, read the Torah and study the Nevi'im, and then go home to eat and drink. This fulfills the verse (Kohelet 9:7), "Go eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a good heart, [for G-d has already accepted your deeds]." This is because G-d has no rest except from those who do [i.e., study] Torah.

¹⁶ *Midrash Talpiot*, הפטרה, ערך.

¹⁷ *Tzidkat Ha'tzaddik* §178.

Although this *midrash* does not expressly state that the *Nevi'im* that are read are a haftarah as we know it, some commentaries do understand the *midrash* to be referring to a haftarah.¹⁸ If this explanation is correct, then we can infer from the *midrash* that the purpose of reading a haftarah is to engage in Torah study.

The commentaries on the above *midrash* further explain that although *Hashem* has permitted us to work for our livelihoods during the week, on *Shabbat*, He expects us to devote more time to Torah study. Hence, we read from the *Nevi'im*.¹⁹ A similar explanation for the haftarah is offered by several *Rishonim*, based on the following passage from the *Teshuvot Ha'Geonim*.²⁰

*Regarding that which you asked, why we say “וקרא זה אל” and “ותשאני רוח”*²¹ . . . The following was the custom of the early generations: In a place where there are Torah scholars, after they would say Shemoneh Esrei and Tachanun and Kaddish, they would bring a Navi and read ten verses, more or less, and translate them. Then they would say “וקרא זה אל זה ואמר” and translate it as they had translated the Navi, and they would conclude with “ותשאני רוח” in order to end with praise of G-d. Then they would study Torah — he who wanted would study Mishnah and he who wanted would study Talmud. In this way [i.e., by reading *Nevi'im* and then studying Mishnah and Talmud], they fulfilled the dictum of the Sages that a person

¹⁸ Zikukin D'Nura.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; *Tosfot Ben Yechiel*. The latter notes that for this reason the *shemoneh esrei* of *Shabbat* is shorter than that of weekdays, so that more time will be available for Torah study (including the Torah reading and haftarah).

²⁰ *Sha'arei Teshuvah*, siman 55.

²¹ I.e., the prayer which we know as “ובא לציון.”

should divide his studies in thirds — one third Scripture, one third Mishnah, and one third Talmud.

However, as poverty became more prevalent in the world, Torah scholars needed to work, and they could not study Torah all of the time. Nor could they divide their time in thirds anymore . . . and they uprooted the practice of reading from the Navi on a daily basis. Nevertheless, they did not uproot the custom of reciting the two verses which had been recited after reading the Navi.

Although this passage also makes no mention of the haftarah, it says that it was once customary to read from the *Nevi'im* every day, and that this custom was abolished only because people had to go to work. It follows from this that on *Shabbat*, when people do not go to work, the original custom remains in place, and a haftarah is read as a form of Torah study.²² Similarly, the ninth century sage, R' Achai Gaon, writes that the haftarot of *Yom Tov* are read as part of our obligation to study material relating to each holiday on that day.²³ Additional support for the view that the purpose of the haftarah is Torah study may be found in *Otzar Ha'Geonim*,²⁴ where R' Hai Gaon is quoted as saying that if no translator is present, the haftarah should not be read.

R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik rejects the thesis that the purpose of the haftarah is Torah study. He argues that as far as the *mitzvah* of Torah study goes, it is no more of a *mitzvah* to read verses from several different places in *Tanach* (i.e., from the Torah and then from the *Nevi'im*) than it is to simply read from the Torah. Accordingly, a

²² *Shibbolei Ha'lekket*, siman 44 (cited in *Encyclopedia Talmudit* Vol. X, p. 1). I also heard this reason given in the name of *Sefer Ha'pardes*, attributed to *Rashi*.

²³ *She'iltot D'Rav Achai Gaon*, Nos. 26 and 161.

²⁴ *Sotah* 40a.

haftarah would be unnecessary. Rather, the reason for both the Torah reading and the haftarah is to hear the “word of *Hashem*,” not as “Torah study,” but as an end in itself. To accomplish this, one must hear the word of *Hashem* wherever it is found, both in the Torah and in the *Nevi'im*.²⁵

Alternatively, R' Soloveitchik suggests that the purpose of the haftarah is primarily to strengthen our belief in the final redemption and in the coming of *mashiach*.²⁶ We see this in the *berachot* of the haftarah, in which the redemption is a recurring theme.²⁷ This also may be seen in the fact that virtually all *haftarot* end with words of consolation.²⁸

Another opinion states that the haftarah was a response to the rise of the Samaritans or the Sadducees, Jewish sects that questioned the legitimacy of all or part of *Tanach* (other than the Five Books of the Torah).²⁹ This view cites the *Midrash Tanchuma*,³⁰ which records the disrespect that certain Jews had for the books of the *Nevi'im*:

When Asaf came along, he said (Tehilim 78:1), “Listen, my people to my Torah, incline your ear to the words of my mouth.”

²⁵ *Shiurim L'zecher Abba Mari* vol. II, p. 213.

²⁶ *Divrei Hashkafah* pp. 30 & 93.

²⁷ See Chapters 9 and following.

²⁸ One of the few exceptions is the haftarah for *Parashat Vayeishev*, which ends on a negative note to emphasize the serious consequences of fratricide and infighting (*Divrei Hashkafah* p. 30).

²⁹ R' Reuven Margaliot, *Nefesh Chayah*, *siman* 284. This appears to be the view of *She'eilot U'teshuvot Tashbetz*, Part I, No. 131.

³⁰ Beginning of *Parashat Re'eh*.

The Jews said to Asaf, "Is there another Torah that you must say, 'Listen, my people to my Torah'? Have we not already received the Torah at Sinai?"

Asaf answered: "The sinners of Israel say that the Nevi'im and Ketuvim are not Torah, and they do not believe in them. However, it is written (Daniel 9:10), 'And we did not heed the voice of Hashem, our G-d, to follow in His teachings which He put before us through the hand of His servants, the Prophets.' You see that the words of the prophets are Torah. Therefore I say, 'Listen, my people to my Torah'."

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch, who devoted his life to fighting nineteenth century heirs to the Saducees, elaborates on this idea. In explaining why the *halachah* requires the *maftir* to receive an *aliyah* to the Torah before reading the haftarah, R' Hirsch writes:

We must always remember that the Prophets were called for no other purpose but to spread among the people the realization of the Law of G-d as set down in complete form in the Torah. The Prophets served as intermediaries, warning and cautioning their brethren. It was their function to interpret to their people the Word of G-d and to offer them consolation, to teach them the true meaning of the joy which had been predicted long before in the Torah as the consequence of Israel's obedience, and the significance of the misfortune which comes as a result of disobedience. Hence the procedure prescribed in connection with the reading of the haftarah serves to refute, once and for all, the spurious idea that there are two

*separate forms of Judaism, the "Mosaic" on the one hand and the "Prophetic" on the other.*³¹

R' Hirsch's explanation, too, finds support in the language of the *berachot* of the haftarah. We say:

...הבוחר בתורה ובמשה עבדו ובישראל עמו ובנביאי האמת
וצדק

"Who chooses the Torah; Moshe, His servant; Israel, His nation; and the prophets of truth and righteousness."

Moshe and the prophets are mentioned here together to refute the claim that they represented different forms of Judaism.³² However, this view, too, is not without problems. For example, R' Yosef Kapach asks, if the purpose of reading a haftarah is to affirm the legitimacy of the *Nevi'im*, why are there haftarot from *Sefer Yehoshua*, whose legitimacy even the Samaritans acknowledge?³³

Finally, some say that the practice of reading publicly from the *Nevi'im* dates back to the times of the Prophets themselves.³⁴

What Does the Word "Haftarah" Mean?

Just as the origin of the haftarah is unclear, so the meaning of the word "haftarah" is not known for certain. While many explanations have been offered, one thing is clear. The word "haftarah" (whose root is "פטר") is in no way related to the word "Torah" ("תורה"), whose root is "הרה."

³¹ *The Hirsch Siddur* p. 339.

³² R' Yissachar Yaakovson, *Chazon Hamikra* p.23 (citing R' Yehuda Leib Fishman-Maimon).

³³ Quoted in S. Weingarten (cited in footnote 1 above). This question is raised also by R' Shem Tov Gaguine in *Keter Shem Tov* p. 378.

³⁴ R' Yitzchak Falagi, *Yafeh La'lev, Kuntres Acharon, siman 284:1* (citing a *teshuvah* of the *Geonim*).

The following are the traditional explanations given for the meaning of the word “haftarah.” (Note that each explanation contains a word that shares the root “פטר.”)

1. According to *Tikkun Yissachar*, the name suggests that the Jews who were prohibited from reading the Torah exempted themselves (“פטרו”) by reading the haftarah.³⁵
2. *Avudraham* writes that “haftarah” comes from the word “להפטר” / “to take leave,” for with the haftarah we take leave of the Torah reading and of *shacharit*, before beginning the *musaf* service.³⁶ (It is in this sense that we say, “אין מפטירין אחר הפסח וכו'” / “We are not *maftir* after the *Korban Pesach*,” i.e., after eating the *Korban Pesach*, we do not eat again. We leave eating completely.)
3. According to *Rabbenu Tam* (quoted by *Avudraham* and others), “haftarah” comes from the word meaning “to open,” just as a woman's first child is called “פטר רחם” / “the one who opens the womb.”³⁷ Why? Because during the Torah reading all talking is forbidden, while during the haftarah our mouths may open partially, for one is permitted to discuss Torah subjects. (As we will see later, the *halachah* does not follow *Rabbenu Tam*'s view, and talking is prohibited during the haftarah as well.)
4. Another opinion explains the name “haftarah” as follows: *Hashem* commanded, “This book of Torah shall not leave your lips, and you shall study it day and night” / “לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה פיך והגית”

³⁵ Quoted in *Midrash Talpiot*, ערך הפטרה.

³⁶ *Sefer Avudraham, Seder Shacharit Shel Shabbat* [Yerushalayim 5723] p. 172. The word “*maftir*” is used in the *Tosefta* (a work from the Talmudic period) to mean “take leave.” There it says that Rabbi Akiva was *maftir* from the *bet midrash* on Yom Kippur in order to remind parents to feed their children (*Tosefta Yoma* 4:2 as understood by the commentary *Minchat Bikkurim*). In *Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* (69:8), the word “haftarah” is used to mean “farewell speech” (*Pitchei She'arim*).

³⁷ See also the classical commentaries to *Tehilim* 22:8.

בו יומם ולילה³⁸ Unfortunately, we do not learn as much as we would wish. *Chazal* therefore ordained that several times a week we should hear the public Torah reading and thus be assured of learning at least a little. On *Shabbat*, we have more time to learn, so *Chazal* said that we should learn, not only from the Torah, but also from the Prophets. This reading is the haftarah which “frees us” (“פטר”) of our obligation to study the books of the Prophets.

Seven Other Allusions

R' Zvi Hirsch Grodzinski, in his work *Mikraei Kodesh*,³⁹ offers seven other allusions found in the word “haftarah,” again, all related to the root “פטר.” (Some of these allusions will be discussed again later in this book in connection with various laws of the haftarah.) These seven allusions are:

- The word “haftarah” recalls that the decree against Torah reading permitted (“פטר”) the reading of the Prophets. (This is, of course, complete conjecture; in fact, *Midrash Talpiot* believes that the decree originally did prohibit reading the Prophets, but that the Jews later received an exemption / “פטור” to read from the *Nevi'im*.)
- Before the Torah reading, reciting *kiddush* and eating was prohibited. Now it is permitted.⁴⁰
- The word haftarah comes from the word “פטור” / “exempt.” The name thus suggests that the book from which the haftarah is read is exempt from the laws which govern the writing of a Torah scroll.

³⁸ *Yehoshua* 1:8

³⁹ Part III, *Kuntres Acharon*

⁴⁰ This explanation uses the word “פטור” loosely to mean “מותר.” This explanation is found also in *She'eilot U'teshuvot Ya'avetz*, Part I, No. 40, in the name of the work *Tikkun Yissachar*.

- As mentioned above, the word may be related to “פטר רחם,” referring to a first-born child. This may be an allusion to the fact that one of the first *mitzvot* that a child may perform is reading the haftarah. (One is not required to be *bar mitzvah* age to read the haftarah.)
- The word may come from the Greek language and may suggest that the Prophets, from which the haftarah is read, are our “patrimony.” (Note the root “*ptr*”/“פטר” in “patrimony.”)
- It is customary for a boy to read the haftarah at his *bar mitzvah*, when his father recites the blessing, “ברוך שפטרני.”
- It is customary for the haftarah to be read in memory of the deceased. The Hebrew word for deceased is “*niftar*” (“נפטר”), hence the reading is called “haftarah.”⁴¹

⁴¹ *Keter Shem Tov* (page 391, note 411) suggests the opposite, i.e., that the haftarah is read in memory of the deceased because of the similarity between the words.