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PART VI  
THE HAFTARAH  
BOOK

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## CHAPTER 38

### Books or Parchments

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#### Introduction

We have seen throughout this book that there are differences in the laws of the haftarah depending on whether one is reading from a book or from a *klaf*, a parchment scroll written like a *Sefer Torah*. Most importantly, in a community where the haftarah is read from a *klaf*, the congregation must listen to the *maftir* and should not read along. In a community where a *chumash* is used, each member of the congregation should read along in an undertone.<sup>1</sup>

The question must be asked, then: is there, in fact, an obligation to read the haftarah from a *klaf*?

This *halachah* is not addressed explicitly either in the *Shulchan Aruch* or in *Rambam's Code*. However, we may infer that the *Shulchan Aruch* permits the haftarah to be read from a book from the fact that *Shulchan Aruch* permits skipping from the regular haftarah to the bridegroom's haftarah.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Kaf Hachaim* 284:3. Skipping is permitted when a book is used because the place can be marked with a bookmark to speed up the transition from one selection to the other (see Chapter 18).

### Rambam's View

According to R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, *Rambam* also does not require that the haftarah be read from a *klaf*. R' Kook's proof is as follows:

*Ketubot* 19b teaches that it is prohibited to keep a *sefer* which has not been checked for correctness. What kind of *sefer* is meant? *Rashi* explains that this refers to all of the books of *Tanach*. *Rambam*, on the other hand, states that this refers to a *Sefer Torah* alone.<sup>3</sup>

What is the reason that keeping a non-kosher (or unchecked *sefer*) is prohibited? There are two possibilities, writes R' Kook. One is that someone might take the *sefer* and learn from it and, because of a scribe's error, he will come away with a misunderstanding. The other possible reason is that the congregation might read from the *sefer* and unwittingly fail to fulfill its obligation because the *sefer* is not kosher.<sup>4</sup>

If one accepts the former reason, says R' Kook, there should be no difference between a *Sefer Torah* and other books of *Tanach*. In any of them, a mistake could be disastrous. Thus, *Rambam*, who maintains that the prohibition on maintaining a non-kosher *sefer* applies only to the Torah and not to the Prophets, must hold that the law is not based on a concern that someone will reach an incorrect conclusion from studying the *sefer*. Rather, the prohibition must be

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<sup>3</sup> Hil. *Sefer Torah* 7:12.

<sup>4</sup> Based on these two possibilities, R' Kook explains why many congregations keep *Sifrei Torah* that are known to contain errors. If the reason is that someone might take the *sefer* and learn from it and, because of a scribe's error, he will come away with a misunderstanding, today we do not learn straight from a *Sefer Torah*. On the other hand, if the reason is that the congregation might read from the *sefer* and unwittingly fail to fulfill its obligation because the *sefer* is not kosher, this is avoided by tying the *Sefer Torah*'s belt on the outside of its cover to indicate that the *Sefer* is not kosher.

based on a concern that the congregation will read from the non-kosher *sefer*. It follows, argues R' Kook, that since *Rambam* does not apply this prohibition to the books of the Prophets, that *Rambam* permits reading the haftarah from a non-kosher scroll.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, R' Kook's proof is not conclusive. Even if the prohibition on keeping a non-kosher *sefer* is intended to prevent one from learning incorrectly, it need not follow that the prohibition would apply equally to all books of *Tanach*. *Rashi* to *Megillah* 24a writes in another context (the question of skipping) that we are not terribly concerned if people misunderstand *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*. If *Rambam* agrees with this, then he could limit the prohibition to the *Sefer Torah* without indicating in any way what the reason for the prohibition is. In that case, we cannot infer whether *Rambam* would require the haftarah to be read from a *klaf*. Rather, *Rambam* might limit this prohibition to a *Sefer Torah* simply because it does not matter whether one makes an error in studying the Prophets.

Though R' Kook does not say so, one can infer that *Rashi* understands *Ketubot* 19a to require that the haftarah be read from a *klaf*. As we noted, *Rashi* prohibits *any* book of *Tanach* from being maintained in a non-kosher manner. As we have also seen, *Rashi* is not concerned with errors in one's learning of *Tanach*. It follows then, that the reason that *Rashi* requires that books of *Nevi'im* be kept in a kosher manner is so that one can read the haftarah from them in a technically correct manner. (Stated more correctly, *Rashi* appears to understand *this* teaching of the *Gemara* in this manner. That does not mean that *Rashi* holds this to be the *halachah*.)

### **The View That a Klaf Is Required**

The sixteenth century authority R' Mordechai Yaffe (the "*Levush*") strongly disagrees with the *halachah* that is implicit in the *Shulchan Aruch*. He writes:

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<sup>5</sup> *She'eilot U'teshuvot Da'at Kohen*, siman 174.

*I have always wondered at the fact that I have seen no place which writes the haftarot [in compliance] with the laws of [writing] a Sefer Torah. It appears to me that a congregation does not fulfill its obligation by reading the haftarah from a printed chumash.<sup>6</sup>*

Why is it important that the haftarah be read from a properly written *klaf*? *Chatam Sofer* explains that the context of each section of the *Nevi'im* and the exact spellings of the words (“קרי וכתוב”) all contribute to give the verses their meaning. All of this is lacking if the haftarah alone is printed in a *chumash*.<sup>7</sup>

Others explain that the *Levush* simply equates the haftarah to other public readings such as the Torah reading and *Megillat Esther*. Just as we would never think of reading the Torah or the *megillah* from a book, so the haftarah may not be read from a book.<sup>8</sup>

### The Opposing View

It is interesting to note that in the very same sentence where *Levush* argues that the haftarah should be read from a *klaf*, he acknowledges that he had never seen it done. (*Levush* lived in Prague and in Poland in the late sixteenth century.) The practice in some towns in Spain in the fourteenth century also was not to use a kosher *klaf*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Levush* 284:1.

<sup>7</sup> *O.C.* No. 68.

<sup>8</sup> Heard from R' Yissochor Frand (Tape No. 22).

<sup>9</sup> *She'eilot U'teshuvot Ha'Rashba* Vol. I, No. 487. *Kaf Hachaim* (284:3) appears to understand that *Rashba* approved of this practice, but this writer humbly suggests that no such inference can be made from *Rashba's* responsum.

In 10th century France, the haftarah was apparently read from a scroll which contained just the *haftarot* (see *Rabbenu Gershom Meor Hagolah* to *Bava Batra* 13b, first wide line).

(continued...)



Why was the haftarah not read from a *klaf*?

*Levush's* younger contemporary, R' David Halevi (the "*Taz*") writes that *no klaf* is required and that *Levush* "forgot a teaching of the *Gemara*."<sup>10</sup> Specifically, *Gittin* 60a states:

*Scrolls of haftarot [i.e., containing only the haftarah, but not the rest of the prophetic work from which each haftarah is drawn] may not be read on Shabbat. Why? Because it is forbidden to write such scrolls. [Rashi explains: It is prohibited to write less than a whole book of Tanach.] Mar the son of Rav Ashi says, "Carrying them is also prohibited [i.e., they are muktzah]. Why? Because it is forbidden to read from them."*

*In reality, this is not true. One is permitted to carry them and one is permitted to read them . . . Since it is not possible to do otherwise, "It is a time to act for Hashem; they voided Your Torah" [Tehilim 119:126]. [Rashi: Since many congregations do not have the ability to write full scrolls, the Sages may void the above law for the sake of Heaven.]*

This *Gemara* teaches that the laws that apply to writing a *Sefer Torah* were waived by the Sages with respect the haftarah. Thus, argues the *Taz*, the use of a haftarah book is permitted.

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<sup>9</sup>(...continued)

*Keter Shem Tov* (pages 387-88, note 409) lists numerous Sephardic communities that read the haftarah from a *klaf* throughout the middle ages. He writes that it was only the *Ashkenazim* who read from printed, vocalized books, perhaps because *Ashkenazim* do not study *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* and would be humiliated if they tried to read from an unvocalized scroll. This is unfortunately true even of the rabbis, he adds, who only know those verses of *Tanach* that they happen to have encountered in studying *Gemara*.

<sup>10</sup> *Turei Zahav* 284:1.

How can *Levush's* position be defended? Presumably he did not, in fact, forget this *Gemara*. R' Nachum Rabinovitch explains as follows:<sup>11</sup>

There are two ways to understand the *Gemara's* conclusion that since many congregations do not have the ability to write full scrolls, the Sages waived the prohibition on writing less than a full book of *Tanach*. One possible interpretation is that the Sages declared that the prohibition on holding any public reading from less than a complete book could be waived so long as all the other laws of writing a Holy Book are observed. If that is what the *Gemara* means, then *Levush* is correct that the haftarah must be written on parchment in accordance with all the other laws of writing a *Sefer Torah*. The only law that was waived was the requirement for a complete *Tanach*.

Alternatively, the *Gemara* may mean that since many congregations do not have the ability to write full scrolls, the haftarah may be read even *by heart*. Certainly, then, it may be read from a book, as the *Taz* contends.

There are other ways to understand the fact that few congregations read the haftarah from a *klaf*. One can theorize, as does R' Zvi Hirsch Grodzinski, that the very reason that reading a haftarah was possible when reading the Torah was forbidden was that the haftarah was not read from a *klaf*. It therefore was unobtrusive enough to slip by the government inspectors.<sup>12</sup> In that case, one could argue that the haftarah should specifically *not* be read from a *klaf* (in order to preserve the original practice).

*Magen Avraham* also defends what he calls the “custom of the ancients” not to use a *klaf*. The crux of his position is that printing has the same *halachic* status as writing. However, he writes, only a

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<sup>11</sup> In an article in the journal *Moriah* (heard from R' Yissochor Frand, Tape No. 22).

<sup>12</sup> *Mikraei Kodesh* III, *Kuntreis Acharon*.

complete *Tanach* should be used for the *haftarot*, not a book which contains just the *haftarot* (or a *chumash*). His reason is that *Gittin* 60a permitted reading from a “book” only because it was not practical to transcribe the entire *Tanach*. Once printing was invented and having a complete *Tanach* is again feasible, says *Magen Avraham*, it again became prohibited to write (or print) just the *haftarot*.<sup>13</sup>

*Chazon Ish* disagrees with *Magen Avraham*, and permits reading from a book of *haftarot*. He writes, “Once we are not reading from a properly written parchment, there is no difference between a complete *Tanach* and a haftarah book.” There is no equivalence, he explains, between handwriting and printing, and between *ידיו*/the special ink used for the Torah and printer's ink. Thus, all alternatives to *klaf*— both a complete printed *Tanach* and a haftarah book — are equally inferior. Thus, a haftarah book may be used because there are insufficient *Nevi'im* scrolls available and not enough *soferim* to write them.<sup>14</sup>

Several contemporary *poskim* agree with the *Chazon Ish* (and disagree with *Magen Avraham*) that there is no difference between a complete *Tanach* and a *chumash*. Specifically, both R' Ovadiah Yosef and R' Moshe Sternbuch argue that even if *Magen Avraham* was at first correct that a complete printed *Tanach* has the *halachic* status of a hand-written scroll, that was only with respect to the seventeenth century printing press on which the letters were hand set and which was hand-operated. Today, however, when printing presses are electronic and computer-operated, the *halachic* status of printing is not equivalent to that of writing.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Preamble to *siman* 284.

<sup>14</sup> *O.C.* 156.

<sup>15</sup> *She'eilot U'teshuvot Yechaveh Da'at* Vol. V., No. 26; *She'eilot U'teshuvot Teshuvot V'hanhagot* Vol. I, No. 152.



Accordingly, R' Ovadiah Yosef writes, one should preferably use a *klaf*. If that is not possible, one should use a complete *Tanach* (since some *poskim* prefer that), but a *chumash* or haftarah book is also acceptable.<sup>16</sup>

Even if we were to assume that printing is writing, R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik expresses another objection to treating a printed book like a scroll. A bound *Tanach*, he says, cannot be considered to contain an entire book. Because each page is printed on both sides, there is no way, even if the binding were undone, that the entire work could be viewed at one time. In that respect, a book is unlike a scroll, and thus should not be used. Perhaps if each page were printed on only one side, the book would be more acceptable.<sup>17</sup>

As noted above, it is important when studying *Tanach* to be aware of the “קרי וכתוב” words, i.e., words that are pronounced differently than they are spelled. Nevertheless, some say that when one reads from a *chumash* or haftarah book, it is acceptable if the pronunciation (rather than the correct spelling) is incorporated into the text.<sup>18</sup>

### Reciting the haftarah by heart

As noted above, some understand the *Gemara* (*Gittin* 60a) to permit reciting the haftarah by heart. This view is found expressly in a number of medieval *poskim*. According to *Mordechai* this may be done in an emergency, such as where there is no *eruv* and there is no haftarah text in *shul*.<sup>19</sup> However, *Radvaz* cites an opinion that reciting the haftarah by heart should be permitted *a priori* (לכתחילה) just as

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<sup>16</sup> R' Zvi Yehuda Kook writes that it is preferable to read from a *chumash* than to read from a complete *Tanach* printed by a known heretic (*Siddur Olat Re'iyah* p. 118).

<sup>17</sup> *Nefesh HaRav* p. 161

<sup>18</sup> *Kaf Hachaim* 284:5 (citing *Ketav Sofer*, No. 51). This has been done in the maroon-colored haftarah book that is widespread in the United States.

<sup>19</sup> *Eruvin*, paragraph 513.

the prayers are recited by heart.<sup>20</sup> This appears to be the ruling of *Pri Megadim*.<sup>21</sup>

R' Eliyahu ibn Chaim ("*Ra'anach*") also presents arguments that one who recites the haftarah by heart fulfills his obligation. These arguments are twofold: As we have seen, the *Gemara* objects to reading from a book which contains just the *haftarot*. The *Gemara* explains that it is prohibited to read such books because it is prohibited to write such books. The *Gemara* does not, however, object to reading from these books on the basis that reading from an incomplete book is like reading by heart (as would be the case if one read from a partial *Sefer Torah*). It follows, therefore, that one who reads by heart fulfills his obligation.

Secondly, the *halachah* requires the haftarah to have at least 21 verses. However, *Megillah* 23b states that if the haftarah is translated, only ten verses need be read. These ten verses, counted twice (original and translation), plus the additional time that the last verse is read (in order to conclude in Hebrew) make 21 verses. However, this can be only if recitation by heart is sufficient, as the *halachah* insists that the translator not have any text in front of him.

Nevertheless, concludes *Ra'anach*, while one might fulfill his obligation by reciting the haftarah by heart, it might be prohibited to do so because the "Written Torah" may not be "read" by heart.<sup>22</sup>

In *Sdei Chemed*, the author cites different opinions as to whether that prohibition of reciting the "Written Torah" by heart applies only to the Torah or also to the Prophets.<sup>23</sup> Clearly *Ra'anach* holds that it applies to both.

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<sup>20</sup> *She'eilot U'teshuvot Radvaz [Miktav Yad]* Vol. VIII, No. 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Eshel Avraham* 284:6.

<sup>22</sup> *She'eilot U'teshuvot Mayim Amukim* Vol. II, No. 73.

<sup>23</sup> *Pe'at Ha'sadeh: Ma'arechet Ha'dalet*, Klal 4.

### Haftarah from a Braille Text

The question of whether the haftarah may be read from a braille text really incorporates several questions. These include: Is braille writing? If not, may the haftarah be “read” by heart? If not, may it be read from a text which is not written in Hebrew?<sup>24</sup>

The second of these three questions was addressed above. As a practical matter, a number of authorities do permit a blind person to recite the haftarah by heart.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> R' J.D. Bleich, *Contemporary Halachic Problems*, Vol. III, p.29.

<sup>25</sup> *Minchat Yitzchak* III, No. 12. See also the discussion in R' Zalman Druck, *Mikraei Kodesh*, ch. 40.

*Mishnah Berurah* (139:13) states that a blind person should not be called for *maftir* on *Shabbat Parashat Zachor* or *Parah*. This implies that a blind person *may* be called for *maftir* on any other *Shabbat*. However, this does not necessarily indicate that *Mishnah Berurah* would permit a blind person to read the haftarah by heart. The logic for this is as follows: *Mishnah Berurah* rules elsewhere that it is preferable to read the haftarah from a *klaf*. Communities that use a *klaf* generally have a set *ba'al koreh* who reads the haftarah, while the *maftir* only recites the *berachot*. Perhaps only in this case would *Mishnah Berurah* permit calling a blind person for *maftir* (except for *Zachor* and *Parah*).

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## CHAPTER 39

### The Sanctity of a Haftarah Scroll

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As we have already seen, the *Gemara* permits writing a scroll with just the *haftarot* if writing a complete scroll is not practical.<sup>1</sup> But what is a complete scroll? Do those who require reading the haftarah from a “proper” *klaf* refer to a scroll which contains the entire *Tanach*, or just the entire book of *Tanach* from which that haftarah is taken?

*Rashi* comments on the above-cited *Gemara* that the objection to “haftarah books” is that it is forbidden to write less than a full book of *Tanach*. Presumably, then, writing the full book from which the haftarah is taken is sufficient. Indeed, the common custom in places that use is a *klaf* is to have separate scrolls for each prophet (except *Trei Asar*).

The proper way to write a *Tanach* is discussed in *Bava Batra* 13b, which records the following dispute:

*Rabbi Meir* says, “A person may glue together the Torah, *Nevi'im*, and Ketuvim into one scroll.” *Rabbi Yehuda* says, “Torah alone, *Nevi'im* alone, and Ketuvim alone.” *The Sages* says, “Each one alone.” [*Rashi* explains that each book of the *Nevi'im* and each book of the Ketuvim must be a separate scroll.]

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<sup>1</sup> *Gittin* 60a.



*R' Yehuda says, "It happened that Baitos ben Zonin had the eight Nevi'im glued together based on permission from Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah. Some say that he had each one separately."<sup>2</sup>*

This *Gemara* is not addressing how the *haftarot* should be written; it is discussing how a *Tanach* should be written in general. However, since the Sages forbid creating a scroll that contains more than one book of *Nevi'im*, it is clear that those who require a *klaf* for the haftarah can require only a *klaf* containing the specific book being read.

Additional laws regarding the writing of *Nevi'im* scrolls are found in *Masechet Soferim*.

### **Storing the Haftarah Klaf**

R' Ovadiah Yosef discusses whether a haftarah scroll may be stored in the *aron kodesh*, next to the *sifrei Torah*. R' Yosef appears to be referring to a scroll that contains only the *haftarot*.

The argument that it should be prohibited is based on *Megillah* 27a, which prohibits using the mantle of a *Sefer Torah* for a *Nevi'im* scroll. To make that change would be to lessen the holiness of the mantle itself. Similarly, it would be degrading to the Torah to store haftarah scrolls in the *aron kodesh*. The opposing argument is that there is an implicit condition placed on the use of communal articles (here, the *aron*) that they will be used however they are needed ("לב בית דין" "מתנה עליהם").

As proof for the latter opinion, R' Yosef notes that in virtually every congregation, non-kosher *sifrei Torah* are stored in the *aron kodesh* together with kosher *sifrei Torah*. This, despite the fact that a non-kosher *sefer Torah* does not have the holiness of a *sefer Torah*.

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<sup>2</sup> The eight *Nevi'im* are *Yehoshua*, *Shoftim*, *Shmuel*, *Melachim*, *Yishayah*, *Yirmiyah*, *Yechzkel*, *Trei Asar*.

Furthermore, most congregations keep the silver crowns and *rimonim* in the *aron kodesh* as well. Accordingly, R' Yosef rules that it is permitted to keep the haftarah scroll in the *aron kodesh*.

### **Rimonim for the Haftarah Scroll**

In any case, continues R' Yosef, it is forbidden to use the silver which is used with the *Sefer Torah* to decorate the haftarah scroll. Indeed, it was customary in eighteenth century Yerushalayim that the *rimonim* for the haftarah scroll had a different shape than those for the *Sefer Torah*. This was in order to remind the congregation that the reading of the haftarah is a lesser mitzvah than the reading of the Torah.<sup>3</sup> Some *Sephardic* communities made the *rimonim* out of copper in order to distinguish them from the silver *rimonim* of the *Sefer Torah*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Yechaveh Da'at*, Vol. III, No. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Keter Shem Tov* p. 388, in the name of R' Eliezer ben R' Yaakov Nachum, author of the *Mishnah* commentary *Chazon Nachum*.

תם ונשלם לקל בורא עולם