

**TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY**  
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**SHIUR #22: READING THE HAFTARAH**

The third *perek* of *megilla* describes the roster of *keriyat ha-Torah*. It iterates the days during which the Torah is read as well as determining the requisite Torah readings and *aliyot*. The first mishna asserts that though the Torah is read publicly on Shabbat during both *Shacharit* and *Mincha*, the *haftarah* is added ONLY during *Shacharit* and not subsequent to afternoon *keriyat ha-Torah*. The gemara does not clarify the source of *haftarah*; for that matter no gemara in the whole Talmud identifies the source of *haftarah*.

There are two variant reasons offered for the source of *haftarah*. Perhaps the most familiar one is cited by the Tosafot Yom Tov in *Megilla* 3:4 who cites a *sefer* known as *Sefer ha-Tishbi*. According to this account the Assyrian King Antiochus – the villain of Chanukah - banned public Torah reading. Substituting permissible reading of sections from the Prophets was a solution to sustain public readings during these difficult periods. Even after the repeal of this ban, *haftarah* was sustained as a complement to *keriyat ha-Torah*.

By contrast, the *Shibolei Ha-Leket* in chapter 44 cites a response of Rabbenu Shelomo which describes the common practice of devoting post-*Shacharit* morning hours to communal Torah study. A broad variety of Scripture, *Neviim*, *mishna* and *Talmud* was studied to adhere to the gemara in *Kiddushin* (30) which urges us to allocate Torah study time to all tracts of Torah. As economic conditions worsened, this morning study was curtailed and ultimately vanished. In memory of this experience the first two verses of the section known as "*uva le-tziyon*" were instituted. These verses are taken from Isaiah (59:20-21) and address, among other issues, the eternity of Torah study (*lo yamushu mipicha ... ad olam*). These verses were fitting reminders of the bygone experiences of post-*Shacharit* Torah study. Of course, Shabbat still allowed post *Shacharit* study and this experience was institutionalized as *haftarah*. Unlike the first version which views *haftarah* as a SUBSTITUTE for, and ultimately a complement to, *keriyat ha-Torah*, this opinion sees it as an independent experience appended to the conclusion of *Shacharit*. Incidentally, the *haftarah*

succeeds *keriyat ha-Torah* but in no way is an incorporated element of that *keriya*.

## ETYMOLOGY

Perhaps these two structural views - one which incorporates *haftarah* with *keriyat ha-Torah* and one which assigns it independent function - are already evident in an interesting etymological question: What does the term *haftarah* refer to. Though references to this question and its answer are scattered throughout Rabbinic literature, the most comprehensive list of answers is supplied by the Avudraham. One view he cites attributes the name *haftarah* to the term '*patur*' (exempt); by reading the *haftarah* we have completed and thereby acquitted ourselves from the mitzva of *keriyat ha-Torah*. This version seems to view *haftarah* as an appendage of *keriyat ha-Torah*. Until the *haftarah* is read, *keriyat ha-Torah* has not concluded. Alternatively, the Avudraham cites an opinion which attributes the term *haftarah* to the root of '*peter*' which means to open and release. A *peter rechem* refers to a first born which 'opens' the womb. Similarly the advent of *haftarah* releases the prohibition to speak - which according to the gemara in *Sota* applies to the entirety of *keriyat ha-Torah*. After Torah reading this prohibition is released and people can literally OPEN THEIR TONGUES to speak about important (presumably Torah centric issues) which were forbidden during *keriyat ha-Torah* proper. This second tracing of the term *haftarah* evokes a very different form for *haftarah*. Interestingly enough viewing *haftarah* as a post *Shacharit* tanakh-based study session would justify the relaxing of the strict prohibition against talking.

## HALAKHIC RAMIFICATIONS

This analysis of the root of *haftarah* - both the historical root as well as the verbal root - may impact some interesting halakhic considerations. For example, the need for ten men to facilitate *haftarah* reading may be justified by *haftarah*'s function as an element of *keriyat ha-Torah*. The mishna in *Megilla* (23b) lists *haftarah* as one of the experiences of *davar she-bikedusha* which requires a *minyan*. This association is not immediately obvious. In fact, the Rashba queries this identification and does not reach a conclusive answer. Similarly the Meiri attributes this condition to a coincidental factor. Since every reader of *haftarah* must first read from the Torah 10 men are necessary for that introductory *berakha*. Some actually view the prefatory *berakha* to *haftarah* as a *davar she-bikedusha* which requires 10; the actual reading is not deemed *davar she-bikedusha* and can be performed without the requisite 10 (if, for example, 10 attended the introductory *berakha* and subsequently some departed - see Shulchan Arukh)

If, however, we view *haftarah* as an historical substitute for *keriyat ha-Torah*- a substitute which was subsequently incorporated- we may view it as an INTRINSIC *davar she-bikedusha* as it carries the identity of *keriyat ha-Torah*!

Perhaps an additional halakha may be explained based upon this notion. The gemara in *Megilla* (21b) claims that the reader of the *maftir* must first read from the Torah - hence the practice of calling him up as '*maftir*' – beyond the 'natural' quota of *aliyot* for that day. The gemara subsequently questions whether the *maftir aliya* can actually be counted toward the base quota. For example, can the *maftir* be counted as the seventh *aliya* on Shabbat morning or must it be an independent additive BEYOND the desired quota. Again it would appear that *maftir* - and by extension *haftarah's* linkage to *keriyat ha-Torah* is being explored. If the *haftarah* experience is integrated with *keriyat ha-Torah* it is likely that the prior Torah reading should be considered basic to *keriya* and contribute to the *aliya* enumeration.

The gemara demands that the *haftarah* reader read some Torah prior to reading from tanakh. It would be dismissive to Torah for a person to start reading tanakh without first reading Torah - AFTER seven others have read from the Torah. What is unclear is whether a congregation can read *haftarah* if collectively they cannot read from the Torah beforehand (if for example they are not in possession of a Torah). The Shulchan Arukh rules that a *haftarah* cannot be read without a prior Torah reading. Viewing *haftarah* as an adjunct to *keriyat ha-Torah* would highlight *haftarah's* dependency upon *keriyat ha-Torah* in a structural fashion. Torah must be read first not merely to avoid prioritizing tanakh and trivializing Torah. Torah must be read first to establish the framework which warrants a *haftarah* reading!!

An interesting final issue surrounds the selection of Neviim and not Ketuvim as the source for *haftorot*. All formal *haftorot* are selected from Neviim and not Ketuvim. Rabbenu Tam believed that under certain conditions Ketuvim were chanted but certainly not within the legal framework of *haftarah*. Understanding this selection may first require a deeper understanding of the difference between Neviim and Ketuvim. Rav Chayim claimed that Neviim contains prophecies which were delivered to be spoken and were only subsequently transcribed. Alternatively Ketuvim were instructed as written works - which can subsequently be chanted or spoken. This variance of delivery establishes Neviim as a closer 'approximation' of Torah than Ketuvim. Of course seminal differences still divide Torah proper and Neviim, but Torah as well was first spoken by Moshe and subsequently written (Rav Chayim derived this from a gemara in *Menachot* 30a).

If *haftarah* is an attempt to create a substitute for *keriyat ha-Torah* we may likely chose Neviim (over Ketuvim) as a closer reproduction of Torah per se. Yet, if *haftarah* is merely a post-Shacharit study session, the selection of Neviim over Ketuvim would remain unanswered.

