

## HAFTARAH

### “אין מפטירים אחר הפסח אפיקומן”

The custom of conducting regular public readings from the Prophets goes back to Second Temple times, possibly to **the Hasmonean period**. It has been suggested that it was introduced during the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, **when the public reading of the Torah was forbidden**. Its purpose was to conclude the reading of the Torah—the main instrument for educating the people and strengthening their faith—with words of consolation and promises of messianic redemption. In later times the *haftarah* portion was no longer necessarily a prophecy of consolation but was instead suited to the occasion of its recitation. Thus, on a festival, the *haftarah* is in some way connected with the day, while on Sabbaths it is chosen on the basis of its association with the Torah portion for that day.

(Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion)

### ספר אבודרהם שחרית של שבת

R. David ben R. Yosef Abudarham lived in Spain during the thirteenth century

ואחר שגוללין ספר תורה קורא ההפטר וצריך שיהא בה מענין פרשת היום. ולמה מפטירין בנביאים לפי שגזרו על ישראל שלא יקראו בתורה וכנגד שבעה שהיו עולין לקרות בתורה ואין קורים פחות משלשה פסוקים עם כל אחד ואחד תקנו לקרות כ"א פסוקים בנביאים ולא יפחות מהם, ואם נשלם הענין בפחות מכ"א, כגון הפטרת שובה שהיא קטנה, אינו צריך לקרות יותר.

The Torah scroll is rolled up, we read the . It must be of the same subject as the days parashah. Why do we read the haftarah from the Prophets? **Because a decree was passed that Israel should not read the Torah**, and in lieu of the 7 who would be called for Torah reading, and since we read no fewer than 3 verses per person, the decree was to read at least 21 verses from the Prophets. However, if the subject is completed in fewer than 21, such as the haftarah *shuvah*, there is no need to read more.

ולכן נקראת הפטרה, לפי שהיו נפטירין בה מקריאת התורה. ור"ת כתב טעם אחר. למה נקראת הפטרה לפי שאמרין בסוטה בפרק ואלו נאמרין כיון שנפתח ספר תורה אסור לדבר אפילו בדבר הלכה, שנא' ובפתחו עמדו כל העם. ולאחר קריאת התורה הותרו לפתוח ולדבר, והוא מלשון יפטירו בשפה, ומלשון פטר רחם, פתוח. וי"א שהוא מלשון אין מפטירין לאחר הפסח, לשון סלוק מן הדבר. כלומר אחר שקראו ההפטרה נסתלקו מתפלת יוצר ומתחילין בתפלת מוסף.

Therefore, it is called a *haftarah*, because with it one takes leave of the Torah reading. Rabbeinu Tam gave a different reason: It is called a *haftarah* because the Talmud says that once the Torah scroll is open, it is prohibited to speak even of a halachic matter, as stated: “And when it was opened all the people stood [silently].” After the Torah reading is completed, it is permissible to speak and the word *haftarah* means commencing to speak, as in *peter rechem*, (opening the womb). Others say that it is related to the phrase “one does not *maftir* after the paschal sacrifice,” which is a term of departure. Namely, after the *haftarah* is read, we depart from the *shacharit* service and begin the *musaf* service.

אליהו בחור: ספר תשבי שרש פטר (Elijah Levita (Italy, 1469 –1549)

שמצא כתוב שאנטיוכוס הרשע מלך יון גזר על ישראל שלא יקראו בתורה ברבים. מה עשו ישראל לקחו פרשה אחת מנביאים בענינה דומה לענין מ"ש בפרשה של שבת ההיא. ועתה אף שבטלה הגזירה המנהג אינו בטל... ונקראת הפטרה מלשון הפסקה.

I have found it written that **Antiochus, the evil Greek king, forbade Israel to read the Torah in public**. What did Israel do? They read a portion of the Prophets whose subject resembled that which would have been read from the Torah on that Sabbath. Now, too, even though the edict is null, the custom has not been nullified... It is called *haftarah*, meaning an intermission.

#### **Leopold Zunz: הדרשות בישראל**

There was no distinct historical reason for the haftarah custom. Rather, it was a natural development of the Torah reading due to the inherent importance attached to the Prophetic writings themselves.

#### **R. Y.L. Fishman (Maimon) חגים ומועדים**

It is highly unlikely that the Greeks would have prohibited Torah reading but permitted reading from the Prophets. The custom does appear to have originated during the Hasmonean era, but was directed against the Samaritans, who rejected the Prophets (except for Joshua), in order to emphasize that their sanctity and importance was equal to that of the Torah itself.

#### **R. Y.Y. Jacobson חזון המקרא**

- The triennial cycle (maintained in the Land of Israel through the geonic era) has, naturally, three times as many haftarot.
- A list of these selections (published by Adolph Buchler in JQR, 1906) designates them by the term **אשלמתא**, meaning completion, they were considered an integral part of the liturgy and implying that Torah reading was incomplete without it.