



Reading the *Haftorah* from Printed Materials

K'riat HaTorah on Shabbat, Yom Tov, and fast days is followed by reading of the *haftorah*. The *haftorah* is the reading of a passage from *nevi'im* that has relevance to the Torah portion or to the day's occasion. R. David Avudraham, *Seder Shacharit Shel Shabbat*, suggests that the reason why the *haftorah* is read is because in earlier times there was a decree prohibiting Jews from reading the Torah. The rabbis instituted reading from *nevi'im* in place of reading from the Torah. Although we now read the Torah, the practice of reading from the *nevi'im* continues.

Levush, Orach Chaim 284:1, notes that many communities read the *haftorah* from the text printed in the *chumashim*. They do not use *sifrei nevi'im* that are written on parchment and follow all of the laws of writing a *sefer Torah*. *Levush* questions the validity of such a practice and states that the *haftorah* should be read from a text that conforms to all of the laws of writing a *sefer Torah*.

Taz, Orach Chaim 284:2, comments that the issue raised by *Levush* is already discussed in the Gemara. The Gemara, *Gittin* 60a, quotes Rabbah and Rav Yosef that one may not use a *sefer aftarta* (for the *haftorah* reading) on Shabbat. A *sefer aftarta* is a collection of all of the *haftorah* texts in one book (see Tosafot Rid, ad loc). The reason why one may not use a *sefer aftarta* is because one is not allowed to write *Torah Shebichtav* (the written scriptures) unless it is written following all of the laws of writing a *sefer Torah*. The Gemara then states that since nowadays, it is impossible to demand that all written scriptures be written like a *sefer Torah*, it is permitted to use a *sefer aftarta*.

Taz states that the leniency that allows one to use a *sefer aftarta* negates any requirement that one must use a text that conforms to all of the laws of writing a *sefer Torah*. The requirement to use parchment only applies when an entire book of *Tanach* is written. Therefore, the leniency to use a *sefer aftarta* implies a leniency to use paper instead of parchment.

The Use of the Printing Press

Taz notes that one can argue that the *sefer aftarta* has an advantage over the printed *haftorah* text. The *sefer aftarta* is written by hand, whereas the printed *haftorah* text is printed by machine. While the leniency to read from a *sefer aftarta* implies that there is no requirement that the *haftorah* be read from a text that has *kedushat kitvei hakodesh* (sanctity of one of the books of *Tanach*), there is a requirement that the text have some minimal level of sanctity. In order to achieve this minimal level of sanctity, the text must be written in a halachically valid form of writing.

With the invention of the printing press, numerous responsa were written discussing whether the printing press can produce a halachically valid form of writing. *Teshuvot HaRama MiPanu* no. 93, writes that the printing press can produce a halachically valid form of writing. R. Yair Bachrach, *Teshuvot Chavot Yair*, no. 16, argues that a printed item does not even have a minimal level of sanctity. Despite the potential distinction between hand written material and machine printed material, *Taz*

follows the opinion of Rama MiPanu, and therefore allows reading the *haftorah* from a text printed by a printing press.

Magen Avraham, 284:1, notes that one does not require the leniency of *sefer aftarta* to allow the use of paper instead of parchment. He quotes the opinion of Tosafot, *Shabbat* 115b, s.v. *Megillah*, that the requirement to use parchment and proper ink only applies to a *sefer Torah* and not to the other books of *Tanach*. Therefore, the only leniency that the *sefer aftarta* necessitates is the allowance of a non-complete book of *Tanach*. In the times of the Gemara, it was too difficult to demand that every congregation own a complete set of *nevi'im*. Therefore, the rabbis allowed the use of the *sefer aftarta*. *Magen Avraham* contends that with the invention of the printing press this leniency is no longer applicable. The cost of a complete set of printed *nevi'im* is affordable, and it must be used for the *haftorah* reading.

Practical Differences Between *Taz* and *Magen Avraham*

According to *Taz*, the allowance to use printed materials is based on the Gemara's leniency to use a *sefer aftarta*. According to *Magen Avraham*, there is no leniency applied, and one may read from a text printed from a printing press. R. Moshe Sofer, *Teshuvot Chatam Sofer, Orach Chaim* no. 68, notes that if one assumes that reading from printed materials is based on the leniency of *sefer aftarta*, the recitation of the *haftorah* is considered as if it is recited *ba'al peh* (by heart). Tosafot, *Temurah* 14b, s.v. *Devarim* write that when reciting text from *Tanach* by heart, one cannot fulfill another person's obligation. *Chatam Sofer* suggests that since reading the *haftorah* from printed material is considered like recitation by heart, every person must read the *haftorah* along with the *ba'al koreh*. One cannot fulfill the obligation of *haftorah* by listening to the *ba'al koreh*. According to *Magen Avraham*, if one reads from a complete book of *Tanach*, there is no need to rely on the leniency to recite the *haftorah* by heart, and therefore, one can fulfill his obligation by listening to the *ba'al koreh*.

Another difference between the opinions of *Magen Avraham* and *Taz* lies in the requirement to use a complete book of *Tanach*. According to *Magen Avraham*, a congregation that can afford a complete set of *Tanach* must use it for the *haftorah*. According to *Taz*, nothing is gained by using a complete book written on paper.

Mishna Berurah seems to adopt the position of *Magen Avraham*. He rules (284:1) in accordance with *Magen Avraham*, that one must read from a complete book of *Tanach*, unless it is not available. He also rules (284:11) that if the *haftorah* is being read from a *chumash*, all of the congregants should read along with the *ba'al koreh*. If the *haftorah* is being read from a *navi*, the congregants should not read along with the *ba'al koreh*. The distinction between *chumash* and *navi* seems to be a distinction between a collection of *haftarot* and a complete book of *Tanach*. If the *haftorah* is read from a *chumash*, according to *Chatam Sofer*, every person must read the *haftorah* along with the *ba'al koreh*. If the *haftorah* is read from a complete book, it is not necessary for each person to read along with the *ba'al koreh*. [Alternatively, it is possible that *Mishna Berurah* does not totally accept the position of *Magen Avraham*. If so, when *Mishna Berurah* refers to "*navi*," he refers to a complete *navi* that is written in accordance with all of the laws of *sefer Torah*.]

Chazon Ish, Orach Chaim 60:11, and R. Yosef D. Soloveitchik (in *Nefesh HaRav* pg.161) present a major limitation to *Magen Avraham's* opinion. They suggest that printed material cannot be considered a complete book unless the left side of one page is connected to the right side of the next page. A book that has writing on both sides of the page, and is bound together by a binding is not considered a complete

book. [According to this opinion, if one wants to fulfill the position of *Magen Avraham*, one can print the books of *nevi'im* on banner paper.]

Mishna Berurah, *Sha'ar Hatziun* 284:4, notes that since (at least according to *Taz*) the leniency to use printed materials is based on the inability of congregations to purchase properly written *sifrei navi*, congregations that can afford it should certainly purchase a set. R. Ovadia Yosef, *Yechave Da'at* 5:26, quotes *Eliah Rabbah* 284:3, who is of the opinion that using a *sefer aftarta* that is written in accordance with all of the laws of *sefer Torah*, is certainly better than using a printed text. R. Yosef therefore rules that if a congregation cannot afford a set of *sifrei navi*, they should purchase a *sefer aftarta* that is written on parchment. *Mishna Berurah* 284:1, in omitting the suggestion of *Eliah Rabbah*, implies that he prefers a complete book printed on paper over a *sefer aftarta* written on parchment.

The Weekly Halacha Overview, by Rabbi Josh Flug, is a service of YUTorah, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more halacha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting www.yutorah.org.