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Review Essay

A GLIMPSE INTO THE WORLD OF PROPHETIC DERUSH

Ben Haftara le-Parasha:

by YEHUDA SHAVIV¹

(Reuven Mass Publishers, 2000), 246 pages.

The study of *haftarot* in general, and their correlation to the *parashat ha-shavua* in particular, has not been a major focus of scholars and students. Yet, since we read *haftarot* each *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*, and because they seem to display a deliberate pattern of selection, it certainly seems pertinent to devote attention to them.

Why, in fact, do we read *haftarot* in our synagogue services? The most frequently quoted explanation is that Jews began to read prophetic passages when Antiokhus forbade Torah reading, and we now maintain this practice in the spirit of *minhag avotenu be-yadenu*.²

This conjecture, long established though it may be, is difficult to support. If Antiokhus were trying to disengage Jews from Torah study, why would he have permitted them to read from the Prophets? Why is there no mention of this decree anywhere in *Maccabees*, when so many other anti-Jewish decrees are enumerated there? Why did all Jewish communities, even those outside of Antiokhus' rule, institute the reading of *haftarot*? And why did no one put forward this theory until the 14th century (R. David Avudarham)?³

Although a number of resolutions to these questions have been offered, the questions appear far more compelling than the proposed answers. As a result, several rabbinic scholars have suggested alternate hypotheses regarding the origin of the weekly *haftara* reading.

Historical Hypothesis: *Haftarot* were instituted to combat the erroneous

beliefs of the Samaritans, who denied the sanctity of the Prophets (R. Samson Raphael Hirsch; R. Reuven Margaliot). This theory has been challenged on the grounds that several *haftarot* draw from *Joshua*, whose sanctity was accepted by the Samaritans (R. Shemtov Gaguin; R. Yosef Kapah).⁴

General Learning Hypothesis: *Haftarot* were instituted in order to promote Torah study (*Zekukin de-Nura; Tosafot Ben Yehiel*). This theory has been challenged on the grounds that it does not adequately justify the specificity of our *haftara*-reading tradition. If the purpose of the custom were simply to encourage learning, any prophetic selection would have sufficed; there would be no reason for our current system, in which the *haftara* directly relates to the Torah portion of the week (R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik).⁵

Consolation Hypothesis: *Haftarot* were instituted to instill a sense of messianic hope to the contemporary community. As a result, most *haftarot* contain (or at least end with) consolation, as do the blessings following the *haftara* (R. Soloveitchik;⁶ R. Hayyim David ha-Levi⁷). But this theory, while more specific than the previous, appears to be only a partial answer. While it is true that *haftarot* generally contain elements of consolation, the pervasive thematic connections between the weekly Torah portions and their *haftarot* clearly demonstrate that the originators of the *haftara*-reading custom were interested in creating more than just a year-round “*sheva de-nehemta*.”⁸

Haftarot as Derashot Hypothesis: The most comprehensive, and seemingly most likely, hypothesis is that the practice of *haftara* reading predates the Maccabean period, and possibly extends back to the time of the prophets themselves (R. Hai Gaon, R. Yitshak Palache⁹), or to Ezra (*Sefer ha-Makhria* #31 quoting Rabbenu Tam;¹⁰ R. Hayyim David ha-Levi¹¹). Their purpose: to serve as *derashot* on the *parasha*, applying themes and messages from each Torah reading to contemporary religious life.

The attractiveness of this theory lies in the fact that it accounts for the information we know about *haftarot*. The theory explains how reading *haftarot* became such a universal Jewish practice, the absence of the Antiokhus hypothesis before the 14th century, and, most importantly, the reason for the specific connections between each *haftara* and its *parasha*. Additionally, this hypothesis incorporates the suggestion that *haftarot* offer consolation, since redemption has long been a relevant theme for Jewish communities. And if *haftara* reading *also* served to combat the faulty beliefs of the Samaritans and promote the sanctity of prophetic literature, all the better.¹²

In his recently published book *Ben Haftara le-Parasha*, Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv adopts this final reason, and elaborates upon it:

It is insufficient to find a common theme between the *parasha* and *haftara*. One should find in the *haftara* something which adds to the *parasha*—which will enlighten, clarify, offer a more complete picture; which will highlight the ideas and messages . . . we shall strive to determine not only what is new in the *haftara*, but also what it comes to teach us . . . (introduction, p. 8).

In a sense, then, *haftarot* may be considered as divinely inspired *derush*; the prophets themselves applied Torah teachings to their own generations and beyond. But there is a fundamental distinction between the actual prophecies, and how they are used in our liturgy. Recently, Rabbi Shalom Carmy has referred to the “two *halakhot*” of *haftara* study: while the *pashtan* is preoccupied with understanding the revealed word of God, one exploring the connection between *parasha* and *haftara* is interested in the liturgical value of a particular *haftara*.¹³ Shaviv alludes to this distinction in his introductory remarks (p. 8), noting that his book primarily addresses the latter concern—i.e., the presumed intentions of those who selected the *haftarot* for each *parasha*.

For an illustration of this distinction, one can turn to the oft-recited thirteen attributes of Divine mercy. In the Torah, these attributes are revealed alongside God’s qualities of justice:

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, *but will by no means clear (ve-nakkeh lo yentakkeh)*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, to the third and to the fourth generation (*Exodus 34:6-7*).¹⁴

But our liturgy abruptly cuts this passage off, giving it an entirely new meaning, different from its original context:

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, *and clearing (ve-nakkeh)*.

Of course, it still is essential to appreciate the *peshat* of the prophetic passages employed in the *haftarot*, and, in fact, three works that address the connection between *parasha* and *haftara* devote more attention to *peshat* than any other consideration. R. Mendel Hirsch’s

work on the *haftarot* is, for the most part, a verse-by-verse commentary on each prophetic selection.¹⁵ R. Yissakhar Yaakovson utilizes each *haftara* as a springboard for a broader discussion of major themes running throughout *Tanakh* and *parshanut*.¹⁶ And Professor Feivel Meltzer lists the more technical linguistic and thematic links between each *parasha* and its *haftara*.¹⁷ Largely missing, though, has been a book that focuses exclusively on the *haftara* as a *derasha* on each *parasha*—an appreciation of its original liturgical function. It is here that Shaviv's book makes a unique and significant contribution.

Shaviv presents his book in two sections: the first contains essays on the *haftarot* for each *Shabbat*, the second on *haftarot* for holidays and other special days. Most essays span between three and five printed pages.

Shaviv faces a challenge as he commits to write only one essay per *haftara*. Some connections between the *haftara* and *parasha* or holiday are obvious (particularly with the holidays), leaving little to say or add. At the other end of the spectrum, some *haftarot* appear to have only tenuous links to the *parshiyot* they represent.¹⁸ As a result, Shaviv sometimes offers trite points, or goes to great lengths to identify additional, uncertain connections at the expense of developing a cohesive theme.

Shaviv (intro, pp. 7-8) quotes the *Kesef Mishneh* (*Hilkhot Tefilla* 12:12), who maintains that in the time of the *gemara*, *haftarot* for regular *Shabbatot* were not fixed. Each community selected prophetic passages that they felt were relevant to the *parasha*.¹⁹ As a result, a wide array of *haftarot* were chosen throughout the ages (a comprehensive list of which can be found at the end of volume ten of *Encyclopaedia Talmudit*).

The opportunity to contrast divergent customs is readily available in *haftara* study. Shaviv (p. 136) notes that the *haftara* for *Parashat Bemidbar* (*Hosea* 2:1-21) is the *only Shabbat haftara* universally adopted by all Jewish communities, past and present.²⁰ Much may be learned from a serious consideration of the choices for *haftarot* made by various communities over the generations.

Unfortunately, Shaviv consciously chooses to limit himself by giving precedence to Ashkenazic *haftarot* read in Israel. Shaviv originally lectured on this material at Makhon Herzog and Michlalah College. Given his prominent role in Jewish teaching institutes, especially in Israel, it is disappointing that he did not view himself as a Jewish educator of Jews, as opposed to an Ashkenazic educator of Ashkenazi Jews.²¹

But aside from educational philosophy, it would have benefited Shaviv's homiletical purposes to be more inclusive. Some of his best

points are made when he contrasts Ashkenazic practice with Sephardic and/or Yemenite traditions, or when he contrasts two *haftarot* which serve the same Torah portion—one read during the weekly cycle, and the other on a holiday. The reason is simple: by contrasting the different themes and emphases, Shaviv is able to hone in on what each community considers most central to the *parasha*.

An example of omission that detracts from the book can be found in Shaviv's essay on *Parashat Shemot*. Shaviv notes that *Ashkenazim* read from *Isaiah* (27:6-28:13; 29:22-23), focusing on the theme of national redemption. He argues that the liturgical application of this prophetic passage for *Haftarat Shemot* suggests that exile and redemption are intertwined as parts of the same Divine process. Noting that the Torah never attributes the Israelite slavery to any sin, Shaviv concludes that the slavery may be viewed (at least in retrospect) as an essential component of the ultimate Divine plan of redemption.²²

In the first footnote to his *Shemot* essay, Shaviv notes that *Sephardim* read for that week from the beginning of *Jeremiah* (1:1-2:3). This choice of *haftara* highlights the parallels between Yirmiyahu's initiation and ensuing reluctance, and Moshe's hesitations in accepting his own prophetic mission in the *parasha*. Yemenites read one of Yehezkel's harsh diatribes against the Jews for their infidelity to God since their inception as a nation.²³ In the footnote, Shaviv simply concludes that *Shemot*, being the "*parasha* of exile," is fittingly represented by a diversity of custom—a telltale sign of Diaspora Jewry.

But Shaviv could have built his essay around this diversity of custom. *Ashkenazim* highlight the link between the national process of exile and redemption—a relevant message of consolation to the community. Yemenites, in contrast, by selecting Yehezkel's caustic condemnation of the Israelites, seem to imply that the Israelites *deserved* slavery as a punishment for having assimilated in Egypt. And *Sephardim* see in *Parashat Shemot* primarily the development of its outstanding individual figure—Moshe Rabbenu, rather than a description of the national predicament.²⁴ An in-depth development of these ideas would have yielded a more interesting and comprehensive discussion of the relationship between *parasha* and *haftara*. Unfortunately, Shaviv's essay loses depth as a result of his choice of presentation.

When Shaviv does adopt the inclusive approach, he forms the basis for sharper and more creative points. For example, in his essay on *Parashat Bereshit*, Shaviv cites Rashi's quotation of two *derashot* as to why God created the world: either for the sake of the Torah which is

called *reshit* or for the sake of Israel which is called *reshit*.

Fond of considering the final verse of a *haftara* significant (as it leaves a lasting impression), Shaviv notes that although *Sephardim* and *Ashkenazim* both begin the *haftara* in *Isaiah* 42, *Sephardim* conclude earlier:

The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the Torah, and make it glorious (42:21).

Thus, *Sephardim* support the first *midrash* cited by Rashi, that God created the world for the sake of Torah. In contrast, *Ashkenazim* read a little further, concluding:

You are My witnesses, said the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen; that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He; before Me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after Me (43:10).

Shaviv argues that while all creation testifies to its Creator, Israel plays a special role in this process, especially given the prophet's earlier emphasis on Israel's role as "a light unto the nations" (42:6). Thus, *Ashkenazim* concur with the second *midrash* cited by Rashi, that God created the world for the sake of Israel. Whether or not this analysis in fact reveals the motivations of those who established the *haftarot* originally, Shaviv's points are well taken on a conceptual level.

Shaviv's essay on *Beshallah* largely ignores the differences between *Sephardim* and *Ashkenazim*, but benefits from a contrast between *Shabbat Beshallah* and the seventh day of *Pesah* (whose Torah reading comes from *Parashat Beshallah*)—when David's victory song is read (*II Samuel* 22).

On *Shabbat Beshallah*, *Ashkenazim* read the entire Devora episode (*Judges* 4-5), while *Sephardim* read only Devora's song (*Judges* 5). Shaviv notes that *Sephardim* preserve the title "*Shabbat Shira*" more literally, while *Ashkenazim* include the narrative dimension as well. Further development of this contrast would have been a welcome addition to this essay, especially given Shaviv's fine analysis of the parallels between the narrative portion of the Devora story (*Judges* 4) and the *parasha*.

The strongest part of the *Beshallah* essay is where Shaviv addresses the contrast between *Shabbat Beshallah* and the seventh day of *Pesah*. On *Pesah*, the Song at the Sea caps off the Torah reading, concluding with the themes of the *mikdash* and God's eternal reign. Fittingly, the *haftara* features David, who paved the way for the *mikdash* and who

represents the messianic dynasty. But on *Shabbat Beshallah*, the Torah reading continues beyond the grandeur of the Song at the Sea, to the day-to-day life in the wilderness. The people complain about the lack of food, and then must battle against Amalek. Therefore, we read about Devora's victory—which likewise provided only a short respite until the next disaster arose in the turbulent period described in *Judges*.

Generally, Shaviv's best essays are those dealing with the non-narrative sections of the Torah, or with broken-up narratives (e.g., the middle Parshiyot of *Sefer Bemidbar*). Confined by more limited themes, Shaviv develops focused and cohesive ideas.

In *Teruma*, Shaviv discusses some similarities and differences between *mishkan* and *mikdash*: the building of the *mishkan* involved national participation with both labor and contributions being voluntary. In contrast, the labor and taxes Shelomo imposed on the nation for the *mikdash* were mandatory. Shaviv develops a midrashic line of reasoning, that perhaps the *mikdash* building became mandatory as a negative consequence of the nation's lack of initiative.²⁵

In his essay on *Vayakhel*, Shaviv discusses the significance of the origins of chief craftsmen Betsalel and Aholiav—the former hailed from the royal tribe of Yehuda, whereas Aholiav came from the “lowlier” tribe of Dan. The same equal-opportunity message is taught in the *haftara*: Hiram (Shelomo's chief craftsman) was from Tyre, his mother from Naftali, and his father possibly was not Israelite. Shaviv stresses that both the Torah reading and *haftara* teach that one need not noble pedigree to build a House of God; one must rather have the proper skills and religious attitude.

Shaviv's essay on *Tetsaveh* begins by highlighting the *haftara*'s focus on Yehezkel's futuristic *mikdash*, rather than the first *mikdash* (which dominates the other *haftarot*). Thus, our study of the *mikdash* is not simply an exercise in nostalgia over past glory; it fans our greatest hopes and dreams for the future as well.

Shaviv calls attention to a significant conceptual contrast between the *parasha* and *haftara*:

Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and sanctify it (*ve-kidashta oto*) (*Exodus 29:37*).

Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and purify it (*ve-tiharu oto*) (*Ezekiel 43:26*).

In the building of the *mishkan*, the term *kedusha* is used, whereas Yehezkel employs the term *tahara*. Shaviv explains that the opposite of *kedusha* is *hullin*, a neutral term. To sanctify something is to elevate it from a neutral state to a positive state. But *tahara* is the opposite of *tum'a*, a negative state. To purify something is to elevate it from a negative state and restore its original neutral state—essentially, to make it regular *hullin* again.

Therefore, a somber message of the *haftara* is that while the building of the *mishkan* elevated a neutral Israel to a state of *kedusha*, the messianic age will primarily be a time when Israel undoes the spiritual damage of idolatry and other sins, and returns to a state of *tahara*. Shaviv further observes that the first verse of the *haftara* exhorts the Israelites to be ashamed of their sins, forming a circle within the *haftara* itself.

On a brighter note, Shaviv concludes that the status of the penitent is superior in some ways: “R. Abbahu said: In the place where penitents stand even the wholly righteous cannot stand” (*Berakhot* 34b).²⁶ In the end, then, the messianic *mikdash* has something about it superior to the *mishkan* as well.

Parashat Aharei Mot concludes by teaching that the Israelites are not inherently superior to the Canaanites. Settlement in the Land of Israel is based on good behavior—just as the Canaanites were expelled for their evils, so too Israel if they commit the same crimes:

Defile not you yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you; And the land is defiled; therefore I do punish its iniquity upon it, and the land itself vomits out her inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; nor any of your own nation, nor any stranger who sojourns among you; For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled; That the land should not vomit you out also, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you (*Leviticus* 18:24-28).

The *haftara* begins with the same premise. Amos reveals the startling prophecy, that even the exodus from Egypt need not be a unique historical event if the Israelites violate their covenant with God:

Are you not like the Kushites to Me, O people of Israel? Says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel out of the land of Egypt? And the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir? (*Amos* 9:7).

Lest one conclude that Amos also believes that the Israelite exile would be permanent, as was the Canaanite, Amos concludes with a messianic vision of a future time, when the people of Israel once again will dwell in the Land of Israel.

Shaviv cites the ruling of Rema (*Orah Hayyim* 428:8), that for all double-*parshiyot*, one should read the *haftara* of the latter *parasha*—except for *Shabbat Aharei Mot-Kedoshim*, when the *haftara* of *Aharei Mot* should be read. Shaviv also notes the Lithuanian custom (cited by R. Soloveitchik in *Divrei Hashkafa*, p. 89), to read the conclusion of *Amos* both for *Aharei Mot* and *Kedoshim*, even when the two *parshiyot* are read separately.

Providing conceptual basis for these unusual customs, Shaviv turns to the end of *Parashat Kedoshim*:

I have said to you, You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess it, a land that flows with milk and honey; I am the Lord your God, Who has separated you from other people. You shall therefore differentiate between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean birds and clean; and you shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by bird, or by any manner of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And you shall be holy to Me; for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from other people, that you should be Mine (*Leviticus* 20:24-26).

While *Parashat Aharei Mot* concludes with a statement of equality between Israel and the other nations, *Parashat Kedoshim* adopts a more particularistic standpoint, highlighting God's special relationship with Israel. Shaviv submits that the *haftara* serves as a bridge between the closing themes of the two *parshiyot*—Israel is responsible to uphold the Torah, or faces the consequences of its behavior;²⁷ still, God always will welcome Israel back, because of His unique relationship with it.²⁸

Shaviv begins his essay on *Behar* by noting that its *haftara* (*Jeremiah* 32:6-27) relates to only one verse from the *parasha*—pertaining to the redemption of a relative's field (*Leviticus* 25:25). Shaviv explains that Yirmiyahu's prophecy, received immediately preceding the destruction of the *mikdash*, came to restore hope to the nation at a time when disaster was imminent:

For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be bought again in this land (*Jeremiah* 32:15).

Shaviv then discusses the nature of the redemption of a field in general: when one is so poor that he must sell his field, he is effectively exiled from his land. But the *parasha* teaches that this exile is temporary—either a wealthier relative will redeem the field, or else God Himself will do so when the Jubilee year arrives. Yirmiyahu’s prophecy, while initially involving a personal case of field redemption, in fact symbolizes the bright outlook for the entire nation. Thus, says Shaviv, the *haftara* poses God as the “Relative” who will redeem Israel’s land in the future.

Shaviv proceeds to explain that *shemita* and *yovel* are paradoxical: the laws mandating that the land lie fallow detract from the idea of personal ownership; but the Jubilee year demonstrates one’s permanent connection to his land. Violating *shemita* could bring about exile; but *shemita* also strengthens one’s ties to his land. Thus, both *parasha* and *haftara* contain the threat of exile, but are accompanied by God’s eternal promise of restoration and permanence.

The *haftara* concludes:

Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there any thing too hard for Me? (*Jeremiah 32:27*).

The final verse of the *haftara* addresses the contemporary Diaspora, longing for redemption, no matter how distant it may seem.

Shaviv’s book is dedicated to the role of *haftarot* in our liturgy. This discussion helps us focus on the nature of prophecy itself. *Hazal* emphasize time and again that the prophets were not original thinkers:

R. Yirmiyah, or you may also say R. Hiyya b. Abba, also said: The [alternative forms of the] letters *M’N’Ts’P’Kb* were prescribed by the Watchmen (=the prophets). But is it not written, “These are the commandments” (*Leviticus 27:34*), which implies that no prophet is at liberty to introduce anything new henceforward? ...What we must say therefore is that they were forgotten and the Watchmen established them again (*Megilla 2b-3a*).²⁹

Here, the Talmud understands the prohibition against prophetic legislation to include even their inability to innovate final forms of Hebrew letters! In essence, then, one might argue that the prophets were the first *darshanim* of the Torah—using their prophetic inspiration to apply the Torah’s eternal messages to Jewish communities in their time and beyond.

TRADITION

In the age of prophecy, God revealed the Torah to the people of Israel, and later prophets received divine messages to inspire Jews to observe the Torah and come closer to God (and to instill the messianic dream). In the absence of prophecy, we read the Torah publicly to simulate the revelation at Sinai, and we read *haftarot* to highlight and draw relevant critical lessons from the Torah reading. In the end, a close examination of the connection between *parshiyot* and their *haftarot* helps us experience a taste of prophetic revelation in a world that no longer receives that supreme divine gift.

In his discussion of the challenges of *haftara* study, R. Soloveitchik writes:

It is not always simple . . . to establish the connection between the *parasha* and *haftara*. . . . On those occasions, it is imperative to explore the subject in all its depth. . . . When we achieve any success finding the connection between *parasha* and *haftara*, we sense that new light will be shed on both of them (*Divrei Hashkafa*, p. 88).

Shaviv's book takes up the mission of shedding new light on *parasha* and *haftara*, enabling us to derive further inspiration from both of our weekly liturgical readings. He helps us appreciate how much attention we should be paying to the prophetic *derashot* (and with them, the Torah's messages), applying their eternal teachings to our own contemporary religious lives.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank my students Jonathan Duker, Daniel Frankel, Joshua Gottlieb, Bryan Kinzbrunner, Yehuda Kraut and Chananya Weissman for reading earlier drafts of this essay and for their helpful comments.
2. First suggested by R. David Avudarham (14th century), *Seder Shabharit Shel Shabbat. Tosafot Yom Tov (Megilla 3:4)* cites this hypothesis in the name of R. Eliyahu Bahur's *Sefer ha-Tishbi* (15th century). Cf. *Levush, Orach Hayyim* 284:1.
3. For a survey of rabbinic discussions of these difficulties and possible solutions, see Shlomo Katz, *The Haftarah: Laws, Customs, and History* (Silver Spring, MD: Hamaayan/The Torah Spring, 2000), pp. 3-12. An excellent study of recent rabbinic and scholarly opinions can be found in R. Shemuel ha-Kohen Weingarten, "The Origin of *Haftarot*: When Were They Instituted?" (Hebrew), *Sinai* 83 (1978), pp. 105-136. See also *Encyclopaedia Talmudit*, vol. 10, pp. 1-32; R. Yissakhar Yaakovson, *Hazon ha-Mikra*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1957), pp. 17-35.

4. All cited in Katz, pp. 10-12; see further opinions in Weingarten, pp. 116-118.
5. All cited in Katz, pp. 7-10.
6. See *Divrei Hashkafa*, pp. 30, 89-100.
7. *Mekor Hayyim ha-Shalem*, vol. 3, pp. 153-156. Weingarten (p. 120) quotes Yosef Heinemann, who suggests that already in the Maccabean period, Jews read prophecies of consolation to offer solace during those difficult times.
8. R. Hayyim David ha-Levi (ibid.) cites a custom still extant in the Ge'onic period (see *Otsar ha-Ge'onim*, vol. 2, *Shabbat* 24a), that some Jewish communities in Persia and Elam read short prophecies of consolation from *Isaiah* (and perhaps also from *Jeremiah*) each *Shabbat* afternoon at *minha*. This practice, now discontinued, appears to have been innovated to offer consolation to the Jewish Diaspora; but *Shabbat* morning *haftarot* appear to stem from other considerations as well. For further discussions of the practice of reading *haftarot* at *Shabbat minha*, see Katz, pp. 133-136; *Encyclopaedia Talmudit*, vol. 10, pp. 3-4.
9. See *Otsar ha-Ge'onim*, vol. 5, *Megilla* 21b; R. Palache (*Yefeh Lev, Kuntres Aharon*, 284:1) cited in Katz, p. 12, n. 34. See also Weingarten, p. 106. R. Palache also suggests that *haftarot* are not drawn from the *Ketuvim*, precisely because these books were not yet canonized when *haftara* reading was instituted. In *Shabbat* 116b, the Talmud notes a custom in Nehardea to read from the *Ketuvim* at *Shabbat minha*. See Katz, pp. 129-132; *Encyclopaedia Talmudit*, vol. 10, p. 10 for rabbinic explanations of this practice.
10. Quoted in *Encyclopaedia Talmudit*, vol. 10, "Haftara," p. 1.
11. Ibid. p. 154.
12. Weingarten (p. 136) also adopts this hypothesis, adding that perhaps the canonization of the practice into the liturgy resulted from a desire to combat the erroneous beliefs of the Samaritans as well.
13. See R. Shalom Carmy, "Polyphonic Diversity and Military Music," *Tradition* 34:4 (Winter, 2000), pp. 6-32, especially pp. 14-15, and references cited in n. 27.
14. All translations of biblical and talmudic passages in this essay (with a few minor modifications) were taken from Soncino Press Judaica Classics CD-Rom.
15. Originally published in German in 1896, translated into English in 1966 by Isaac Levy, and into Hebrew in 1996 by Yitzhak Moshe Fridman.
16. *Hazon ha-Mikra* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Sinai Publishing, 1957-1959).
17. *Parashat ha-Shavua ve-Haftaratah* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1971).
18. At the beginning of his study of the *haftarot* in *Sefer Vayikra* ("Ben Pesah le-Shavuot"), R. Soloveitchik writes that not all *haftarot* connect readily to their *parshiyot*, and that he did not always succeed in uncovering the full association between them (*Divrei Hashkafa*, p. 88). Such is the challenge of finding the connections between some *haftarot* and their *parshiyot*.
19. See further discussion and sources in *Encyclopaedia Talmudit*, vol. 10, pp. 9-10; Katz, pp. 115-119.
20. Shaviv uses this remarkable fact to note homiletically that *Parashat Bemidbar* always is read preceding *Shavuot*, commemorating Israel's

national unity in their acceptance of the Torah.

21. For further discussion of the educational implications of exclusive teaching, see R. Marc D. Angel, "In Search of Shelemut: Teaching the 'Wholeness' of the Jewish People," *Ten Da'at* 3:1 (Fall, 1988), pp. 12-13.
22. Although the Torah never explicitly links the slavery to any sin, several *midrashim* and later commentators search for possible explanations. See *Nedarim* 32a, which offers three opinions blaming Avraham himself for the slavery of his descendants. Abarbanel blames the brothers' sale of Yosef, as well as Yosef's own role in provoking his brothers. Seforno (*Genesis* 15:13) avers that the Israelites assimilated in Egypt (see *Ezekiel* 20:8-9), and therefore were punished for their own sins. Similarly, R. Yehuda Kiel (*Da'at Mikra: Bereshit* [Hebrew], vol. 1 [Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1997]) suggests that the Israelites should have left Egypt after the famine in Yosef's time had ended; because they remained, they were enslaved (for a fuller survey of traditional opinions, see Kiel, pp. 426-8).

Abarbanel (*Genesis* 15, question 15) quotes Ran and R. Hasdai Crescas, who both contend that the Israelite slavery was not a punishment for sin, but rather an act of kindness of God toward His people. Ran suggests that the slavery was intended to humble Israel, so that they would be able to accept the Torah later on. Similarly, R. Crescas maintains that God wanted to perform miracles for the Israelites, so that they would learn that God controls the universe. Although Abarbanel initially prefers to believe that all calamities occur as the result of some sin, he eventually concedes the possibility that the slavery may have served to refine and purify Israel.

In the end, the theological causes of the slavery remain a mystery to the reader, and Shaviv's point is well taken.

23. The severity of this prophetic passage gave rise to an ancient debate over its appropriateness as a *haftara*. In *Megilla* 25a-b, R. Eleazar specifically rails against using this passage as a *haftara*: "R. Eleazar says: 'Make known to Jerusalem' (*Ezekiel* 16) is not read as a *haftara*." The *Talmud* (25b): "On one occasion a man read in the presence of R. Eleazar 'Make known to Jerusalem her abominations.' He said to him, 'While you are investigating the abominations of Jerusalem, go and investigate the abominations of your own mother.' Inquiries were made into his birth, and he was found to be illegitimate."

Following the majority opinion against R. Eleazar, Rambam (*Seder Tefillot le-Kol ha-Shanna*) adopts *Ezekiel* 16 as the *haftara* of *Shemot*, and the Yemenite tradition follows his ruling. For discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of R. Eleazar's position, see R. Shalom Carmy, "'Zion Extended Her Hands; She Has No Comforters': Sin, Abandonment, Defilement in the First Chapter of Eikha." *Ben Kotelei ha-Yeshiva* 8 (1998), pp. 19-28, especially pp. 25-26, and n. 7.

24. Shaviv compares and contrasts the role of the individual with the role of the nation elsewhere in the book. See, for example, his essays on *Yitro* and *Behukkotai*.
25. Shaviv cites *Midrash Shemuel* 31, which attributes the plague at the end of *Samuel* to the nation's laxity in building the *mikdash*. Cf. Ramban to *Numbers* 16:21.

26. For an elaborate analysis of R. Abbahu's position, see R. Hayyim David ha-Levi, *Aseh Lekha Rav*, vol. 8, #42 (pp. 101-108).
27. Excellent discussions of the biblical notion of "The Chosen People" can be found in R. Hayyim David ha-Levi, *Aseh Lekha Rav*, vol. 8, #69 (pp. 195-209); Moshe Greenberg, "Mankind, Israel, and the Nations in the Hebraic Heritage," in *Studies in the Bible and Jewish Thought* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), pp. 369-393. See also R. Jonathan Sacks' lecture, "Jewish Identity: The Concept of a Chosen People," at www.chiefrabbi.org/faith.
28. In his essay on the *haftara* of *Shavuot*, Shaviv contrasts the reading of the *merkava* (*Ezekiel* 1) on *Shavuot* with the reading of Yeshayahu's vision (*Isaiah* 6) for *Yitro*. He explains that on *Shavuot*, the Torah reading focuses exclusively on Israel's receiving the Torah. As a result, the *haftara* concludes "*Barukh Kevod Hashem mi-Mekomo*," a more particularistic portrayal of God (since God's "place" is the *mikdash* in Jerusalem). In contrast, *Parashat Yitro* begins with the attraction of Yitro, a non-Jew, to God. Therefore, the *haftara* highlights the angelic proclamation, "*melo kol ha-arets Kevodo*," a more universalistic expression that applies to all humanity.
29. Cf. *Sifra Behukkotai* 8:13; *Shabbat* 104a; *Yoma* 80a; *Temura* 16a.