

Priest and Prophet

Indeed, the sort of crimes and even the amount of delinquency that fill the prophets of Israel with dismay do not go beyond that which we regard as normal, as typical ingredients of social dynamics. To us a single act of injustice—cheating in business, exploitation of the poor—is slight; to the prophets, a disaster. To us injustice is injurious to the welfare of the people to the prophets it is a deathblow to existence: to us, an episode; to them, a catastrophe, a threat to the world.

—ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

It is otherwise with the Priest. He appears on the scene at a time when prophecy has already succeeded in hewing out a path for its idea . . . . The Priest also fosters the idea and desires to perpetuate it; but he is not of the race of giants. He has not the strength to fight continually against necessity and actuality; his tendency is rather to bow to the one and come to terms with the other. . . . Not what ought to be, but what can be is what he seeks.

—AHAD HA-AM (translated by Leon Simon)

B'rakhah Before the Haftarah

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space, who chose worthy prophets and was pleased by their words, spoken in faithfulness.

Barukh atah ADONAI, who has chosen the Torah, Your servant Moses, Your people Israel, and the prophets of truth and justice.

B'rakhah After the Haftarah

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space, eternal protector, righteous in all generations, the faithful God who fulfills what is promised, who accomplishes what is spoken, whose every word is true and just. Faithful are You, ADONAI, and Your words are trustworthy; not one of Your words will prove empty, for You are a faithful and compassionate sovereign.

Barukh atah ADONAI, God who faithfully fulfills all Your words.

Show compassion to Zion, our true home, and speedily, in our time, bring deliverance to those sad in spirit.

Barukh atah ADONAI, who makes Zion happy with her children.

Make us joyful, ADONAI our God, with Elijah the prophet, Your servant, and with the kingdom of David, Your anointed—may he soon come, making our hearts rejoice. May no stranger sit on his throne and may no other inherit his glory, for You have promised him, by Your holy name, that his light shall never be extinguished.

Barukh atah ADONAI, Shield of David.

For all this we thank You and praise You, ADONAI our God: for the Torah, for the ability to worship, for the prophets, for the Shabbat that You have given us, ADONAI our God, for holiness and for rest, for honor and for glory. May Your name be blessed by all that is living, always and forever, and may Your promise prove true and everlasting.

Barukh atah ADONAI, who makes Shabbat holy.

בְּרַכָּה לְפָנֵי הַהַפְטָרָה  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנְבִיאִים טוֹבִים,  
וְרָצָה בְּדַבְרֵיהֶם הַנְּאֻמִּים בְּאַמֶּת.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי, הַבוֹחֵר בַּתּוֹרָה וּבַמְשֵׁה עֲבָדוֹ  
וּבִישְׂרָאֵל עִמּוֹ וּבְנְבִיאֵי הָאַמֶּת וְצַדִּיק.

בְּרַכּוֹת לְאַחַר הַהַפְטָרָה  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, צוּר כְּלֵי-הָעוֹלָמִים,  
צַדִּיק בְּכָל-הַדּוֹרוֹת, הָאֵל הַנְּאֻמָּן הָאוֹמֵר וְעֹשֶׂה, הַמְדַבֵּר  
וּמְקַיֵּם, שֶׁפֶל-דְּבָרָיו אַמֶּת וְצַדִּיק. נְאֻמָּן אַתָּה הוּא יְיָ הוֹי  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְנְאֻמָּנִים דְּבָרֶיךָ, וְדָבַר אֶחָד מִדְּבָרֶיךָ אַחֲזוּר לֹא  
יָשׁוּב רִיקָם, כִּי אֵל מֶלֶךְ נְאֻמָּן וְרַחֲמָן אַתָּה.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי, הָאֵל הַנְּאֻמָּן בְּכָל-דְּבָרָיו.

רַחֵם עַל צִיּוֹן כִּי הִיא בֵּית חַיֵּינוּ, וְלַעֲלוּבַת נַפְשׁ תּוֹשִׁיעַ  
בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי, מְשַׁמַּח צִיּוֹן בְּבִנְיָהּ.

שְׂמַחְנוּ, יְיָ הוֹי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַלְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא עֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְמַלְכוּת  
בֵּית דָּוִד מְשִׁיחֶךָ, בְּמַהְרָה יָבֹא וְיִגַּל לְבָנוּ. עַל כִּסְאוֹ לֹא  
יָשׁוּב זָר וְלֹא יִנְחַלוּ עוֹד אַחֲרָיִם אֶת-כְּבוֹדוֹ, כִּי בְשֵׁם  
קִדְשֶׁךָ נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לוֹ שְׁלֹא יִכָּבֵה נֵרוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי, מִגֵּן דָּוִד.

עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל הַנְּבִיאִים וְעַל יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת  
הַזֶּה שִׁנַּתְתָּ לָנוּ יְיָ הוֹי אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְקִדְשָׁה וְלִמְנוּחָה, לְכַבּוֹד  
וְלִתְפָאֳרָת. עַל הַכֹּל יְיָ הוֹי אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ מוֹדִים לָךְ,  
וּמְבָרְכִים אוֹתְךָ. יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמֶךָ בְּפִי כָל-חַי תָּמִיד לְעוֹלָם  
וָעֶד. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹי, מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת.

and to the left is another one containing the five scrolls read on festivals, Tishah B'av, and Purim.

B'RAKHOT AFTER THE HAFTARAH. A series of b'rakhot concludes the reading from the Prophets. The earliest synagogue services probably centered on the public reading of biblical passages, and so the prayers concluding the haftarah reading may have constituted the core of the most ancient synagogue service. These prayers mention the sanctity of the day, express messianic longing, and speak of God's faithfulness in keeping the divine promise—themes also included in the Amidah for Shabbat.

HAFTARAH. The Hebrew Bible is composed of three divisions, in descending order of revelation: (1) the Five Books of Moses, known as the Torah; (2) the Prophets, both the historical books from Judges through Kings and the three major and twelve minor prophets; and (3) the Writings, including Psalms, the Five Megillot, Job, Proverbs, Daniel, and the late historical works of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. In the ancient synagogue in the Land of Israel, passages were read from all three sections on each Shabbat. Probably because of time constraints, the custom of a third reading died away, and today we read only from the Torah and the Prophets. The latter reading is called the haftarah, meaning "the parting" or "the conclusion," and it usually complements themes in the day's Torah reading. The custom of reading from the Writings remains on the festivals: on the intermediate Shabbat of Pesah we read the Song of Songs, on Shavuot we read the Scroll of Ruth, and on Sukkot we read Ecclesiastes.

The haftarah need not be read from a parchment scroll. Some older synagogues, though, have two smaller arks beside the main ark containing the Torah scrolls. To the right is a recess containing a scroll of the prophetic readings