

8. Reading the Torah on Shabbat and Yom Tov

דִּינֵי קְרִיאַת הַתּוֹרָה בְּשַׁבָּת וּבְיוֹם טוֹב

1. On Shabbat morning, after *Shaharit*, the *Sefer Torah* is taken from the *Aron Kodesh*¹ and the Torah portion of the week is read. Seven congregants are called for the reading,² but if need be more may be added.³

1. **Carrying the *Sefer Torah* to the *Bimah*** When the *Sefer Torah* is taken from the *Aron Kodesh* and carried to the *bimah*, the congregation should stand. It is customary to kiss the Torah and to accompany it to the *bimah*. It is not proper or an honor to the Torah, however, for the one who is carrying it to turn off to the sides, or to hold the Torah out to the worshipers so that it may be kissed.
2. **Calling to the Torah One Who Does Not Observe Shabbat** As a rule, a Jew is not to be denied the privilege of an *aliyah*, being called to the Torah, provided he has not married out or forsaken the faith. While it is fitting that the honor be accorded to those who keep the laws of the Torah, nonetheless, one who does not observe Shabbat is not, in our time, considered an apostate. The decision to give him an *aliyah* or not should be made by rabbinic authority, depending on the circumstances, as on the occasion of a *Yahrzeit*, with due consideration to the effect it will have on the individual in encouraging him to observe *Halachah*, and upon the community in preserving and strengthening Torah life. In any case, he should preferably not be called up as one of the requisite seven, but among the additional number called to the Torah. See Chapter 1, note 4.
3. **Calling to the Torah More Than the Required Number** It is not proper to have more *aliyot* than the requisite number, thereby prolonging the service and inconveniencing

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A *Kohen* is called up first, then a *Levi*, and following him a *Yisrael*. If there is no *Levi* present the same *Kohen* is called again instead, and they say “*Bimkom Levi*, In place of a *Levi*.” If there is no *Kohen* present, a *Levi* or a *Yisrael* is called up instead, and they say “*Ein kan Kohen, ya’amod Levi bimkom Kohen*,” or “*Yisrael bimkom Kohen*.” (There is no *Kohen*, arise (and come forward) the *Levi* in place of a *Kohen*,” or “*Yisrael* in place of a *Kohen*.”) If a *Levi* or a *Yisrael* was called in place of a *Kohen*, then a *Levi* is not called up next after him.

2. It is customary not to call a *Kohen* or a *Levi* after their allotted turn. However, if more than seven are called, it is permitted to call a *Kohen* or a *Levi* last, as *acharon*, since the requisite number of seven has already been called. A *Kohen* or a *Levi* may also be called for *Maftir*. Furthermore, one *Kohen* may be called for *acharon* and another for *Maftir*, since recitation of the *Kaddish* separates the two. On *Simchat Torah*, when the reading is done from three separate Torah scrolls, one *Kohen* may be called up as *Chatan Torah*, a second as *Chatan Bereshit*, and a third for the *Maftir*, since the reading for each is from a separate Torah scroll. However, in the case of *Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Chanukah*, even though the reading is from three scrolls, and eight are being called up for the reading from the first Torah, a *Kohen* may not be called as the eighth one, because the reading is not concluded in the first but rather in the second scroll where the portion for Rosh Chodesh is read and to which the *Kohen* can be called. The latter rule applies as well to *Shabbat Parashat Shekalim* and *Parashat HaChodesh* when they occur on Rosh Chodesh.

3. If a *Kohen* or a *Levi* is mistakenly called up out of turn, someone else should go up to the Torah in his place, and he should wait at the *bimah* and go up for *Maftir*, or for *acharon* after the requisite number has been called.⁴

the congregation, unless the occasion warrants it, as for a wedding, or a *Berit Milah*, and the like. However, this rule may be further relaxed, if need be, to avoid dissension. As a rule, the *gabbaim* in *shul* try to strike a balance among many needs.

4. **A *Kohen* or *Levi* Called to the Torah Out of Turn** If a *Kohen* or a *Levi* is mistakenly called up for an *aliyah* out of turn, and it is not possible to give him *acharon* or *Maftir* instead, he should say the blessing for the Torah reading to which he was called.

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4. On a Shabbat when two *sidrot* are read, they are combined in the Torah portion read for *revi'i*, that is for the fourth person called up to the Torah.

5. There should be no interruption in the reading of the curses in the sections of *Parashat Bechukotai* (*Vayikra* 26: 14-43) and *Parashat Ki Tavo* (*Devarim* 28:15-68), known as the *Tochahah*, or Admonition. The reading should begin with the preceding verse. However, so as not to start where there are less than three verses left to the section, the *ba'al koreh* should begin the reading with the preceding three verses. At the end he should read an additional verse, but he must take care not to end the reading where there are less than three verses left to the following section. In *Parashat Ki Tisa* the entire section (*Shemot* 31:18-33:11) dealing with the golden calf until the concluding verse, "But his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tent" (*ibid.* 33: 11), should be read for the *Levi*, because the *Levi'im* did not participate in the making of the *Egel HaZahav*. It is customary to read in a low voice the verses beginning with "*Vayitein el Moshe kechaloto...*" (*ibid.* 31: 18), and then to raise his voice for the verses beginning with "*Vayechal Moshe*" (*ibid.* 32: 11-14). He lowers his voice again with "*Vayifan vayeired Moshe*" until "*U'Moshe yikach et haohel*" (*ibid.* 32: 15-33:6); after which he resumes reading out loud to the end of the portion. The *ba'al koreh* reads the curses in *Parashat Bechukotai* and in *Parashat Ki Tavo* in a similarly low voice. In *Parashat Bechukotai* he reads the verse "*V'zacharti et beriti Ya'akov*, Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob..." (*Vayikra* 26:42) in a loud voice and the next verse "*Veha'aretz te'azeiv*, For the land shall be forsaken ..." in a low voice. He then raises his voice again at the following verse, beginning with "*VeAf gam zot*" until the end of the portion. In *Parashat Ki Tavo* he should raise his voice, beginning with the words "*Leyirah et Hashem hanichbad*" (*Devarim* 28:58) to the end of the verse, and then continue in a low voice until the words "*Ve'ain koneh*" (*ibid.* 28:68). In *Parashat Beha'alotecha*, it is likewise customary to read in a low voice the verses from "*Vayehi ha'am kemitonenim*" until "*VehaMan kezera gad*" (*Bamidbar* 11:1-7), which deal with the rebelliousness of the people. The *ba'al koreh* must read even the portions that are read in a low voice loud enough for everyone to hear, since they would

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otherwise not fulfill their obligation of reading the Torah. There should be no interruption in the reading of the forty-two stops on the journey of *Benei Yisrael*, recounted in *Parashat Mas'ei* (*Bamidbar* 33:5-49), as it is symbolic of the Divine Name comprised of forty-two letters.⁵

6. During the intervals between *aliyot* the Torah should be rolled up, but it need not be covered. However, before *Maftir*, when *Kaddish* is recited and there is a longer interval between the readings, the Torah should also be covered with its mantle. The scroll should likewise be covered whenever there is a longer interval, as when a *Mi-Shebeirach* is recited.⁶

7. If by error the *ba'al koreh* read the entire *parashah*, concluding with the sixth person called, no one should recite the *Kaddish* then, but the *gabbai* should call up a seventh person and the *ba'al koreh* should repeat the section that was previously read. Following this, *Kaddish* is recited and the order continues as usual. If *Kaddish* was said, the *gabbai* calls up the *Maftir*. Here, there is no need to call another person since the *Maftir* counts as the seventh person. You would follow the same procedures on Yom Tov if by error the Torah reading was completed with the fourth person called.

8. When three Torah scrolls are required for the readings and there are only two available, you should use the first Torah for the reading of the third portion (so that people can roll it to the right place while the community is reading from the second scroll) rather than rolling the second Torah to the right place.

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5. **The Divine Names** The Name that is associated exclusively with God, denoting His essence and existence as the Divine Being, consists of four letters (the Tetragrammaton). It is the ineffable Name of God referred to in the Mishnah and Talmud as the *Shem HaMeforash*, literally, expressed Name. *Chazal* cite other names of God consisting of twelve letters and of forty-two letters. It is believed that these Names signified certain profound theosophical ideas.
6. **Reciting a *Mi-Shebeirach*** It is customary to recite the *Mi-Shebeirach* on behalf of the person called to the Torah after the reading, as well as special blessings on the occasion of the birth of a child, and for a sick person. Although it is permitted to recite a *Mi-Shebeirach* for a sick person while he or she is present, it is best under the circumstances not to use the one usually recited for the sick, but rather the regular *Mi-Shebeirach* which also asks *Hashem* for protection and deliverance from "distress and illness."

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9. The *Sefer Torah* must be in perfect condition, free of disqualifying defects. If a scroll contains a serious defect involving a change in the form of a letter or a word, you may not read from it and you must take out another *Sefer Torah* from the *Aron* for the reading. If the defect is found in the reading of the *Maftir*, and it is a *Maftir* specially obligatory for that day, as on a Yom Tov, or on *Shabbat Rosh Chodesh*, or *Shabbat Parashat Shekalim*, etc., then the rules and procedure to be followed are the same as apply to any of the other sections of the Torah. However, if it is an ordinary Shabbat when the reading for the *Maftir* is but a repetition of what was read for the seventh person called, then another *Sefer Torah* should not be taken out. This is because the reason a portion of the Torah is read for the *Maftir* is out of respect for the Torah, so that it may not appear as though we accord equal honor to the Torah and the *Nevi'im*, since the readings from both are preceded and followed by their respective *berachot*. Therefore, it was instituted that there should first be a reading from the Torah for the *Maftir* in order to show that the essential reading is from the Torah. However, when a defect is found in the reading for the *Maftir* on an ordinary Shabbat, and as indicated another *Sefer Torah* is not taken out, the reading is completed in the same scroll, but the concluding *berachah* is not said. The *Haftarah* is then read with its *berachot*.

If you discover the defect after the Torah reading has been concluded, but before *Kaddish* was recited, you do not take out another Torah for *Maftir*,⁷ but the man who received the last *aliyah* proceeds to read the *Haftarah* with its blessings, and then *Kaddish* is recited. If you discover the defect only after *Kaddish* has been said, you read three verses from that same Torah for the *Maftir*, without the *berachot* before and after the reading, followed by the *Haftarah* and its *berachot*. In the latter instance, *Kaddish* is not said again afterward.

10. If the rabbi decides the discovered defect is not serious, involving only an error in the transcription of a word, such as the omission or addition of the letter *vav* or *yud* (that is not part of the root), and neither

7. **A Defect Found After Concluding the Torah Reading** This is the opinion of the *Mishnah Berurah* 143:23. According to *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, however, a second Torah is taken out for the reading of *Maftir*.

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the pronunciation nor the meaning is changed, you do not need to take out another Torah. However, if this happens on Shabbat, although you do not take out another Torah, you should not call more than seven to read in that scroll. The seventh person called should read the *Haftarah* as well, with its *berachot*, after which *Kaddish* is recited. This is the procedure for an ordinary Shabbat. But if it is obligatory to read a special *Maftir* for that day, as on *Shabbat Rosh Chodesh* or *Shabbat Parashat Shekalim*, you must call another person for *Maftir*. You should not use the defective scroll, however, later at *Minchah*.

11. On a day when the congregation takes out two Torah scrolls and finds the first to be defective, and there is a third in the *Aron*, you may not use the second Torah for the reading in place of the first, and then read the portion of the second scroll from the third scroll. Rather, in such a case, you should take the third scroll from the *Aron* for the reading of the first portion, replacing the defective scroll, and read the second portion from the second scroll, because each reading must be from the scroll originally designated for it. This rule applies as well on a day when three Torahs are taken out for the prescribed readings. Likewise, if you interchanged the scrolls, taking the second scroll by error in place of the first, you must roll it up and use the other scroll for the first reading, so that you read from each scroll its intended reading.

12. The following is the order of precedence in *aliyot* for those who are obliged to be called to the Torah:

- (1) A groom on the day of his wedding, a groom on the Shabbat before his wedding,⁸ if he had never been married, and (2) a boy who has become *Bar Mitzvah*⁹ during that week, have equal right to be called.

8. **Precedence to a Groom for an *Aliyah*** The degree of precedence given to a groom on the Shabbat before his wedding applies even when the wedding will not take place in the coming week, but only later because he must travel a great distance to the wedding, or for some other pressing reason.

9. **A *Bar Mitzvah* Leading the Prayers and Reading the Torah in a Different Pronunciation** A *Bar Mitzvah* who has been taught the Sefardic pronunciation may lead *tefillot* and read the *Maftir* and *Haftarah* in an Ashkenazic congregation, since people are by now familiar with the Sefardic pronunciation as well. As a rule, however, a

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- (3) A *sandak*, who holds the baby during the circumcision, on the day of the *berit milah*.
- (4) A *kvater*, who carries the baby to the synagogue to be circumcised, on the day of the circumcision.
- (5) The husband of a woman who has given birth to a daughter, when his wife comes to the synagogue.
- (6) The husband of a woman who has given birth to a son, when his wife comes to the synagogue. But if she does not come to the synagogue her husband is not obliged to be called to the Torah, unless it is forty-one days on the birth of a son, or eighty-one days on the birth of a daughter, as it was at these times that an offering was brought in the *Beit HaMikdash*.
- (7) A groom on the Shabbat after the wedding, when the wedding took place on Wednesday or thereafter and it is the first marriage for either the groom or the bride.
- (8) One who has *Yahrzeit* on that day.
- (9) The father on the day of his son's *berit*.
- (10) One who will have *Yahrzeit* during the week following Shabbat.
- (11) The *mohel* (one performing the circumcision) on the day of the *berit*.
- (12) The *sandak*, then the father, then the *mohel*, on the Shabbat before the *berit*.

If two people have equal claims to be called, the decision rests with the *gabbai*, or they decide by lots. Someone who is not a resident does not take precedence over a resident who is obligated to be called to the Torah. It is customary to call someone who is leaving on a trip after Shabbat, or who has returned from one. It is also customary to honor

congregation should not change its tradition. If the *Bar Mitzvah* reads the entire Torah portion, and not just the *Maftir*, Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* advised that the *Bar Mitzvah* be allowed to proceed in the pronunciation that he had learned, for the sake of keeping *shalom*. However, in deference to the established *minhag*, a small *minyán* should assemble in a side room in order to read the Torah in keeping with the established custom of the congregation. In this way, the congregation can balance two crucial factors; pursuit of *shalom*, and allegiance to *minhagim*.

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a visitor with an *aliyah*.¹⁰ However, none of these takes precedence over one who is obligated to be called to the Torah.¹¹

13. When called to the Torah,¹² you should wear a *tallit*, proceed to the reading *bimah* and stand to the right of the *ba'al koreh*. When the Torah is opened, you should look for the place where the reading is to begin, and after reciting the *berachah*,¹³ read along silently with the *ba'al koreh*. After the *ba'al koreh* has read the portion,¹⁴ recite the *berachah* and

10. **Being Given an Honor at the Torah** The sixth *aliyah* is deemed to be the most prominent and is usually reserved for a person of distinction. In other congregations, *shelishi*, the third *aliyah*, is deemed the most important. However, if you are called to the Torah, you should not refuse any *aliyah* or decline any honor, but should accept it with grace and humility.
11. **An *Aliyah* to Someone Recovering from Illness** Someone who has to recite the *berachah* of *HaGomel*, as on recovering from a serious illness, should be given preference for an *aliyah*, but he does not take precedence over any of those who are obliged to be called to the Torah. Although the blessing *HaGomel* is customarily recited at the reading of the Torah, you can recite it as well at any time in the presence of a *minyán*.
12. **Calling to the Torah by Hebrew Name** We call a person to the reading of the Torah by his Hebrew name and that of his father. This is a hallowed tradition, of great importance in the retention of Jewish names and in the preservation of Jewish identity which should not be abandoned. If you were adopted and raised by foster parents, you may be called to the Torah as the son of your adoptive father, if you prefer using the latter's name over that of your biological father. While this is true of being called for an *aliyah*, this is not necessarily the case in *halachot* such as names written on a *ketubah* or a *get*. In these circumstances, you should inform the officiating rabbi.
13. **Reciting the *Birchot HaTorah*** Some are accustomed to roll up the scroll before reciting the first blessing. The *Mishnah Berurah* is of the opinion that the scroll may remain open, so that the Torah reading will proceed without delay. Either custom may be followed. If you do keep the Torah open, however, you should not look inside the Torah while making the *berachot*. After the reading, you should roll up the Torah and recite the concluding *berachah*. When called to the Torah for an *aliyah*, you should say the *berachot* loudly so as to be heard by the congregation, providing an opportunity for everyone to respond *amen*.
14. **An Error in the Torah Reading** The *ba'al koreh* should prepare in advance, so he can read the Torah carefully for the congregation without any mistakes. If he makes an error in the reading, and he has already read part of the verse which contained *Hashem's* name, he should conclude the verse and then repeat it from the beginning. However, if the rest of the verse also contains *Hashem's* name, he should leave the

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wait for the next reading. When the person called after you has said the final blessing, you go back to your seat.

14. A boy who is not yet *Bar Mitzvah* should not be called to the Torah, nor should he act as a *ba'al koreh*.¹⁵

15. All of the congregation¹⁶ must listen attentively¹⁷ while the Torah is read.¹⁸ You may not talk during the reading, even on subjects

latter part of the verse unread, and begin again immediately from the beginning of the verse.

15. **An Aliyah and Torah Reading by a Minor** A boy who is not yet *Bar Mitzvah*, but has reached the age of *chinuch* (religious training) and knows to whom the *berachot* are directed may be called to the Torah for *Maftir*, provided he can pronounce the words and intone them correctly (see Chapter 9, paragraph 9). However, a boy who is not yet *Bar Mitzvah* may not act as *ba'al koreh* of a Torah portion. Some permit it in an emergency, when there is no one else available to read from the Torah, so that the reading of the Torah will not be entirely omitted, or if a *Bar Mitzvah* prepared the wrong *parashah* and is ahead by a week or so.
16. **Standing During the Torah Reading** The *Shulchan Aruch* writes that you do not need to stand while the Torah is being read. Following this ruling of the *Mechaber*, the Sefardim do not stand. The Rema, however, states that those who are more stringent stand during the Torah reading. While the prevailing view among the *poskim* is that you are not obligated to stand, some deem it proper to do so, with the thought in mind that when we read the Torah it is as though we are receiving it from Sinai, and *Benei Yisrael* stood at the foot of the mountain when the Torah was revealed to them at Sinai. If you find it difficult to stand, you should sit so that you can concentrate on the reading. In any case, you should stand while the one called to the Torah says *Barechu* and the congregation responds *Baruch Hashem hamevorach*. According to everyone, you do not need to stand during the intervals between the *aliyot*.
17. **Correcting the Reader** If the *ba'al koreh* misreads a word in the Torah he should be corrected, and he must repeat it correctly. However, if the error is in the intonation, or it is in the punctuation, and the mispronunciation does not change the meaning, he need not repeat the word. For example, if he reads “*et*” instead of “*eit*” or “*kesej*” instead of “*kasej*,” he should not be corrected. Since not every mistake needs correction, (and according to some opinions, no mistake needs correction), and for the sake of decorum and the dignity of the *ba'al koreh*, it is advisable that a congregation have a policy that only the *gabbaim* and the *Rav* do the correcting, and not allow the congregation at large to shout out.
18. **Use of a Microphone or Loudspeaker for the Torah Reading** Apart from the prohibitions involved in their use on Shabbat and Yom Tov, your obligation for the reading of the Torah, according to many *poskim*, is not fulfilled when you hear the reading

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relating to Torah, nor may you leave the synagogue at this time. In the intervals between the readings, when the Torah is rolled up, you may leave if it is urgent.

16. In a place where there is no *Sefer Torah*,¹⁹ someone from the congregation should read the Torah portion out loud from a printed *Chumash*,²⁰ while everyone listens.

through a microphone and other electrical or electronic devices and instruments such as a loudspeaker and telephone, or from a radio, television or tape recorder. In the operation of these instruments the sound of the voice is converted into electrical impulses, and you do not hear the natural voice.

19. **Failure to Read the Torah on Shabbat Morning** In the event that the congregation failed to read the Torah portion at *Shacharit*, they should read it on the following Shabbat, together with the *parashah* for that Shabbat. They may not read the make-up *parashah*, however, on Monday and Thursday mornings, as it would inconvenience people who must go to work. In the view of some *poskim* the Torah and *Haftarah* portions should be read, and the *berachot* recited, that very Shabbat afternoon before *Minchah*, followed by the regular *Minchah* service. If special circumstances warrant it, as in the case of hospital patients who cannot assemble for services on Shabbat morning, the latter arrangement can be followed.
20. **Reading the Torah Portion from a Chumash** When a *Sefer Torah* is not available and the Torah portion is read from a *Chumash*, the *berachot* over the Torah are not recited. If there is a *Sefer Torah* available, but no one present is proficient in reading from it, one person should read from the *Sefer Torah* with the help of another person who reads from a *Chumash*.