

CHAPTER 8 - THE TORAH READING

by Rabbi Dr. Azriel Rosenfeld

On Mondays, Thursdays, and Sabbath afternoons the Torah is read, starting just after the portion that was read on that Sabbath morning (135:1-2). This reading is divided into three parts; but more parts may be added if a religious celebration is taking place (135:1). These parts are read by a KOHEN, a Levite, and an Israelite (135:3). On exceptions to this order, for example if no KOHEN is present or able to read, see 135:4-13. On Sabbaths and holidays, when additional parts are read, see 135:4,10;136:1; 141:6 on the persons who read them. The reading must be at least nine or ten consecutive (see 144:1-2) verses long (see 137:1), and each person must read at least three verses (137:2); on errors see 137:3-6. Each person's reading should start and end with a good topic, and should not start or end only one or two verses away from a paragraph; see 138:1.

Only those who are called on are allowed to read; see 139:3. The person called should be able to read properly; since he may not be able to, a reader reads, and the person called follows him word for word (see 135:4,13;139:1-2; 141:2-3;143:5). The person who is called opens the Torah scroll, finds the place where he should start, recites BARECHU and the blessing "...Who chose us..." (holding the Torah, but not looking inside it), reads the passage, closes the Torah, and recites the blessing "...Who gave us a true Torah..." (139:4-11). On repeating the blessings in cases of error see 140:1-3 and 143:4; on answering "Amen" to the blessings see 139:6 and 141:5. The person who is called to read must stand (see 141:1), and someone else should stand near him (see 141:4). He must go to the Bimah (the platform from which the Torah is read) by the most direct route, and should not leave it until the next person arrives; see 141:7.

The Torah must be read correctly and accurately; see 141:8 and 142:1-2. It must be read from a properly written Torah scroll (143:2-3;144:1). On what to do if the reader makes an error see 142:1; on what to do if errors are found in the Torah scroll see 143:4; on bringing a Torah scroll to a group so they can read from it see 135:13 and 584:3. On occasions when two or more portions are read from different parts of the Torah, they should preferably be read from different Torah scrolls; see 144:3-4. It used to be customary to translate each verse [into Aramaic], but this is no longer done; see 145:1-3. The congregation should stand (see 146:4) and listen attentively to the reading, should not engage in unrelated activities, and should not leave during the reading; see 146:1-3.

When the Torah scroll is taken out of the Ark for reading, the leader recites "Magnify..." and the congregation respond "Exalt..."; see 134:2. After the reading is finished, the scroll is held up and shown to the congregation, who recite "This is the Torah..." (134:2). The scroll is then rolled up and covered;

see 147:1-6. A reading from the Prophets, or from another Torah scroll, should not begin until the previous scroll has been rolled up; see 147:7-8. The congregation should not leave until the Torah scroll has been put away, and they should accompany it to its place (see 148:1;149:1).

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