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LEYN CHANGES:

The Evolution and Future of Torah Reading in Reform Judaism

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LEYN CHANGES:
The Evolution and Future of Torah Reading in Reform Judaism
Paul J. Jacobson

Digest

This project addresses the development and future of the public reading of the Torah in the synagogue, noting as well that the form and content of the Torah reading has undergone significant change throughout the generations.

Evidence reveals that the development of Torah reading in the synagogue has been highly dynamic in nature. My first two chapters are dedicated to an analysis of this process. In Chapter 1, I explore the portrayal of Torah reading in biblical, rabbinic, and medieval sources, highlighting the characteristics unique to each text. Then, in Chapter 2, I trace the development of Torah reading in the context of the 19th-and 20th-century Reform movement, discussing the ways in which rabbis adapted the reading of the Torah to suit the needs of their congregants.

Change remains a constant at present. In Chapter 3, I present a survey of contemporary Reform congregations and their respective Torah reading customs. Widespread diversity remains prevalent.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I attempt to synthesize this data, offer conclusions and propose changes for the future. Accepting that the nature and structure of Torah reading in the synagogue has changed over time is important to our identity as Reform Jews. Such an understanding will permit us to make the positive and necessary changes that will enhance the sanctity of Torah reading in the synagogue and benefit future generations of Reform Jews.

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In loving memory of
Patti Jacobson (1949-2005)
My mother, my teacher

Introduction

Four years ago, while studying in Israel, a close friend of mine became deeply embroiled in a conversation about authenticity in Judaism. The person with whom my friend conversed said, "How can you call yourself a Reform Jew? There is no "reform" in Judaism! God gave the Written and Oral Torah to Moses on top of Mount Sinai. Ever since that moment, nothing has changed—not *shabbos*, not *kashrus*, and certainly not Judaism! The only thing different in Jewish communities is the way that the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim wrap their *t'fillin* in the morning!" Flabbergasted, my friend walked away from this conversation, unsure about how he should respond.

Which begs a series of questions. How might someone who identifies him or herself as a Reform Jew respond in a conversation like this one? How can Reform Judaism be considered authentic if it recognizes the giving of the Torah as a significant literary image, rather than a historical occasion of theophany? How ***has*** Judaism changed throughout the centuries?

Answers to each of these questions could, and likely have, filled dissertation after dissertation. Of course, I readily believe that there are many responses that a Reform Jew might offer. I believe that there is brilliance in recognizing metaphor, symbolism, imagery, and human authorship within our most cherished literature. And I believe that Judaism has changed and continues to change. Flexibility in responding to the needs of its adherents within contemporary Jewish society, is, perhaps, one of our religion's most enduring strengths.

But this paper is not intended to address all of the questions articulated above. Rather, the focus of this thesis revolves around one aspect of these questions.

For many years, I have found myself deeply fascinated by the reading of the Torah in the synagogue. My interest began during my first year at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem when I received a tape of Abraham Binder's version of "traditional" Ashkenazic Torah cantillation. I sat on the couch in my Jerusalem apartment chanting *mercha-tipcha-munach-etnachta* a thousand times before the melody stuck. Shortly after ironing out my fuzzy chanting abilities, I began chanting from the Torah on Shabbat and Festival mornings.

The whole learning process left me wondering. When did the reading of the Torah begin in the synagogue? Who was responsible for performing the reading? Why are two Torah scrolls, and sometimes even three Torah scrolls, removed from the ark? Was Torah always chanted? Have any aspects of this ritual changed over time?

Additionally, I found myself participating more and more often in services at traditional synagogues. What did it mean that I, a Reform Jew, should be drawn to participate in lengthier services, with far more Hebrew, and significantly longer readings from the Torah? From my experience in congregations in New Jersey and St. Louis, Missouri, I found that the Reform congregations I frequented removed the Torah from the ark on Friday nights and Saturday mornings and read anywhere between five and ten verses. I had no conception of what it meant to read "the full *parashah*."

This personal growth created more questions in my mind. And I was disappointed too. This ritual that I had found to be so beautiful was so much shorter in the Reform synagogues that I used to frequent. How could Reform Judaism still be authentic if it "did less" than "traditional" forms of Judaism?

This thesis marks my personal effort to address some of these pressing questions, specifically as they relate to the reading of the Torah in the Reform synagogue. As a Reform Jew I have always believed that our religious practice is based on the principle of "choice through knowledge." We are aware of the historical development of our religion and are free to choose the most meaningful personal and communal observance possible. But these choices must be dependent upon the foundations of our religion. In order to make choices, we need to have knowledge of the "tradition" from which we are choosing.

In the following pages, I return to that very "tradition," demonstrating through my research that the reading of the Torah has changed and evolved, developed and matured over the course of more than two thousand years. In the first chapter, I catalog and analyze the development of Torah reading throughout the generations, highlighting changes unique to each community and each piece of textual evidence. My research reveals that Torah reading was anything but constant during this time. The public declamation of Scripture began as just that—a reading of Scripture. It was only later that scriptural reading became integrated into a larger worship service. Furthermore, different communities throughout the world embraced a variety of reading cycles—some choosing the annual cycle with others electing to abide by a calendar of triennial readings. Changes are also evident in the identity of the reader, the nature of the blessings recited over the Torah scroll, and the calendar for the reading of the *arba'ah parashiyot*, the four special Torah readings performed during the month of Adar.

After providing this historical survey of biblical, rabbinic, and medieval sources, in my second chapter I turn my attention to the development of Torah reading in Reform synagogues. My analysis begins in early nineteenth-century Europe where synagogues

made changes to address issues of relationship to the Christian community, decorum, length of services, and lack of Hebrew knowledge among congregants. Efforts were made to reclaim the long-abandoned triennial cycle of Torah readings and some communities introduced an abbreviated form of the annual cycle. David Einhorn and later leaders in the Reform community addressed the reading of the Haftarah, finding readings in prophetic literature that related thematically to the subject of these shorter readings from the Torah. In the twentieth century, Reform rabbis in the United States faced issues similar to those of their European counterparts. They too enacted a series of changes to the scriptural calendar and the manner by which the reading of the Torah was translated to the congregational community.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, congregational Torah-reading practices in Reform Judaism had become highly diversified. Some congregations were still reading from the Torah according to the triennial cycle and some communities were following an abbreviated yearly cycle. But how widespread were these customs? Using my position as Student Representative to the Union for Reform Judaism's Joint Commission on Worship, Music, and Religious Living, I created and distributed a survey of Torah-reading practices in Reform congregations. The results of this survey are included in my third chapter, with a full text of the survey and charted results included in an appendix at the end of this project.

In my fourth and final chapter, I attempt to synthesize my data and offer some conclusions. By providing the historical foundation in my first and second chapters, and highlighting contemporary Reform practice in my third chapter, it seems only logical to examine the future of Torah reading in Reform Judaism. My suggestions for the future

integrate practical suggestions from our people's history. Among other things, I advocate for an examination of the triennial cycle of Torah reading, a heightened focus on the issue of translation, and greater participation by those congregants whom we already train for *b'nei mitzvah*. Increased involvement by congregants profoundly demonstrates a community member's dedication to lifelong learning and the ongoing study of Torah.

With the conclusion of this thesis, I recognize that the questions of authenticity and Reform practice with which I struggle are still ever-present. But instead of believing in constancy, I now recognize the validity of the oft-quoted proverb that, "The only thing constant is change." The future of Torah reading in Reform Judaism rests upon further change and the concepts I establish in the following three principles. First, our Reform community needs to recognize that the reading of the Torah has changed and evolved over time, never remaining static from inception to present. Second, if Torah reading changed throughout the past, then we may rely upon the authentic permission of our tradition to allow this long-cherished ritual to continue changing into the future. Third, we must not abandon our rich textual foundation in making these changes. There is great value in retaining tradition, especially when we find creative ways to reinvent the ancient and sacred customs of our people.

Chapter 1:
An Evolving Communal Ritual

The historical development of the reading of the Torah in the synagogue includes many intriguing customs and diverse elements.[1] Clearly, many practices appear immune to the passage of time. But some customs, specifically those involving the *arba'ah parashiyot*,[2] the blessings before and after the reading of the Torah, the identity of the reader, and the scriptural calendar have undergone considerable change. Using biblical, rabbinic, and medieval sources as the framework for our analysis, this chapter will address the evolution of the reading of the Torah in the synagogue, chronicling the changes unique to each generation of Jews. A historical survey of this liturgical activity will enable us afterwards to better understand the development of Torah reading in the Reform movement.

The Reading of Scripture in the Bible and Early Antiquity

The earliest episodes portraying the public declamation of torah appear in II Kings 22-23 and Nehemiah 8. Neither scene functions as a "Torah reading" in the contemporary sense. Rather, it is more reasonable to assume that the biblical authors intended these episodes to function as mere ideological depictions of what *should* happen during an occasional public declamation of Scripture.

In II Kings 22-23, the function of scriptural declamation is to effect change in communal behavior, and assert the centrality of divine instruction in the people's life and

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[1] Ruth Langer, "Celebrating the Presence of the Torah: The History and Meaning of Reading Torah," My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries, Volume 4: Seder K'riat Ha-Torah, ed. Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000) 20.

livelihood. King Josiah's scribe Shaphan recovers a scroll of the Teaching (in Hebrew *sefer Ha-Torah*) from the Temple.[3] The words of this scroll are so contrary to the behaviors of the community that Josiah immediately rends his clothes.[4] In one last-ditch act, Josiah sends his priests to seek out an oracle from a prophetess, a confirmation of the legitimacy of the scroll's message. The priests return, rather conveniently, with words of impending doom for the community. This plot sequence satisfies the author's intention and ideology and enables the author to proclaim Torah as the community's legal foundation. To achieve this message, he depicts Josiah calling the entire community forward. The text continues:

> And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll which had been found in the House of the Lord. The king stood by the pillar and solemnized the covenant before the Lord: that they would follow the Lord and observe His commandments, His injunctions, and His laws with all their heart and soul; that they would fulfill all the terms of this covenant as inscribed upon the scroll. And all the people entered into the covenant.[5]

As a result of this reading, King Josiah orders his priests to suppress idolatrous practices, while he himself proceeds to centralize worship at the Temple in Jerusalem.[6] Thus, Torah assumes its rightful place among the community.

Although this scene in II Kings functions as a depiction of a public reading of Torah, we may logically assume that this was not a Torah reading as we know of it in the later, institutionalized sense. Nonetheless, this scene is significant because the *Tanakh* establishes a precedent for the public declamation of Scripture.

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[2] The *arba'ah parashiyot* are four special Sabbaths that precede the beginning of the Hebrew month of *Nisan*. This term will be explained more clearly below.

[3] II Kings 22:10.

[4] II Kings 22:11.

[5] II Kings 23:2-3.

[6] II Kings 23:4-18.

Nehemiah 8 contains the other biblical episode devoted to a communal reading of "Torah." After seventy years of exile in Babylonia,[7] many Judeans returned to Jerusalem. Finally, when the seventh month arrived, Ezra performed a public reading of Torah for the assembled people.

This reading appears to be no small feat. First, it is lengthy. Nehemiah 8:3 states that Ezra read "from the first light until midday."[8] Second, the audience appears unwieldy. Scripture notes that "the entire people assembled as one man...."[9] We have reason to believe that this assembly was enormous in size. Third, Ezra's reading requires the assistance of many priests and Levites. These assistants are entrusted with the responsibility of explaining "...the Teaching to the people, while the people stood in their places...translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading."[10] This episode serves as a foundation for the future, where other scriptural readings will be actively translated for the assembled people, helping to insure that those in attendance properly understand the lessons they are being taught.

Ultimately, the reason for the reading in Nehemiah is different from the Josiah episode in II Kings 22-23. Whereas in the Josiah episode the purpose of the reading was to pronounce urgent changes in communal practice, the purpose of Torah reading in Nehemiah is to instruct the people in festival observance. The text indicates that the people learned to "eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks and send portions to whoever has nothing prepared...."[11] The day was meant to be one of true rejoicing.

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[7] 586-515 BCE.
[8] Nehemiah 8:3.
[9] Nehemiah 8:1.
[10] Nehemiah 8:7-8.
[11] Nehemiah 8:10.

The following day, additional scriptural reading and study occurred. The elite among the people, including priests, Levites, Ezra, and clan heads gathered to discern Torah.[12] They learned about the observance of the Festival of Booths.[13] According to the text, the people were overjoyed at the opportunity to observe this festival and had not celebrated its observance since the "days of Joshua son of Nun."[14]

Ultimately, both II Kings 22-23 and Nehemiah 8 function as valuable texts for our survey, providing ideological depictions of what should happen during an occasional, public reading of the Torah. Torah was read publicly to call the people to action regarding their behavior or inform them about an impending observance. Specifically in the Nehemiah episode, the priests and Levites taught and translated Torah for the people, educating them in what they believed to be the word of God.

Changes occurred in subsequent centuries. As Ismar Elbogen reminds us, "Like the prayers, the Torah reading [underwent] change; this development occurred almost completely outside the sources available to us, and we can do no more than make conjectures about it."[15]

The inception of weekly Torah readings (on Shabbat) is one area in which we are forced to make conjectures. Although specific dates are unclear, the custom of reading from the Torah on Shabbat is already well attested by the first century CE and likely originated before then. By this time, Philo of Alexandria, the New Testament, and Josephus Flavius all indicate that the ritual of Torah reading had evolved from an occasional occurence into a weekly event. According to Philo's writings, the laws of

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[12] Nehemiah 8:13.
[13] Nehemiah 8:14.
[14] Nehemiah 8:16.

Torah are taught "...at other times, indeed, but most especially on the seventh day."[16] Similarly, early Christian writings affirm the practice of Torah reading explicated by Philo. According to Acts 15:21, "The Torah of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."[17] This is Josephus Flavius' understanding of the ritual as well. Josephus affirms, "Moses demonstrated the law to be the best and most necessary instruction of all others, permitting the people to leave off their employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week."[18] Taking the words of Philo, the New Testament, and Josephus into consideration, we might assume that the seventh day was a holy day of rest, a day in which people frequented their synagogues. It became an ideal time for the public declamation and study of Scripture. Nevertheless, the date of the inception of this important ritual remains a mystery.[19]

Additionally, it does not appear that early Torah reading was couched in the context of worship or synagogue liturgy. According to Ruth Langer, Torah reading was always a "central activity of synagogues" but was rooted more in "study" than in "extensive prayer."[20] In fact, "...the earliest readings were probably functional, reminding the community of its obligations pertaining to a particular holiday."[21] She

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[15] Ismar Elbogen, Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History, Trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993) 129.

[16] Quoted in Joshua R. Jacobson, Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Art of Cantillation (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002) 536.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Sources from the Babylonian Talmud will offer their own response to this question below.

[20] Ruth Langer, "Celebrating the Presence of the Torah: The History and Meaning of Reading Torah," My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries, Volume 4: Seder K'riat Ha-Torah, ed. Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000) 22.

[21] Ibid.

remarks that even the Talmud "records no specific liturgy surrounding the Torah reading."[22]

In the Greco-Roman period, the ritual of Torah reading grew from "occasional practice" to "weekly ritual." As our study prepares to address rabbinic literature, it is important to remember that the institution of Torah reading in the synagogue was anything but static. The reading of the Torah has changed and evolved over the course of time.

The Mishnah

By the time of the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the public reading of the Torah has evolved into an entirely new practice with very detailed customs. Using Deuteronomy 31 as their foundation, tractates Yoma and Sotah record practices related to the public reading of a scroll on both Yom Kippur and the Festival Day of Sukkot, after the completion of the seventh year.[23] But the vast majority of Torah reading practices may be found in the third and fourth chapters of Tractate Megillah.

The initial concern of Mishnah Megillah 3:4 is the cycle of the *arba'ah parashiyot*—the four "special" Sabbaths that occur between the Sabbaths preceding Rosh Chodesh Adar and that preceding Rosh Chodesh Nisan. According to the Mishnah, special Torah readings are declaimed on these Sabbaths. *Shekalim* is read on the Sabbath before Rosh Chodesh Adar, *Zachor* on the Sabbath before Purim, *Parah* on the next Sabbath and *Ha-Chodesh* on the Sabbath before Rosh Chodesh Nisan.[24] Megillah 3:4

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[22] Ibid 20.

[23] Mishnah Yoma 7:1 & Sotah 7:7-8.

[24] *Shekalim* refers to Exodus 30:11-16, *Zachor* refers to Deuteronomy 25:17-19, *Parah* refers to Numbers 19:1-20, and *Ha-Chodesh* refers to Exodus 12:1-20. In all of these cases, we do not know when

teaches that "At all these times they break off [from the set order in the reading of the Law.]"[25] Additionally, Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah, Purim, fast days and the Day of Atonement all represent breaks in the lectionary cycle, which is taken for granted and the details of which are not specified.[26] Megillah 3:4 simply mentions that "On the fifth Sabbath they return to the regular cycle of Pentateuchal readings."

Next, the Rabbis clarify the practices related to the reading of *Parashat Shekalim*. If Rosh Chodesh Adar falls on Shabbat, then *Parashat Shekalim* is read. The following week, *Parashat Zachor* will be read. If Rosh Chodesh Adar will occur after Shabbat, then *Shekalim* will be read on the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh,[27] and a week will be skipped before *Parashat Zachor* is read to the congregation.[28]

In Megillah 3:5 and 3:6, we are privy to an early version of the scriptural calendar.[29] The following table lists the festival on the left and the reading established by the Mishnah on the right:[30]

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the practice of reading these verses was instituted or who was responsible for the decision to read these passages.

[25] All further sources from the Mishnah will be abbreviated in the form <m. Tractate chapter:mishnah>. The Hebrew text of the Mishnah used for this paper was Chanoch Albeck, *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah: Seder Moed* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Dvir Co., 1952). Herbert Danby's translation (see bibliography for full reference) was a helpful aid. There is no indication that these readings were simply "tacked on" as a *maftir* to the weekly Torah reading as they are today in traditional communities. Instead, the actual cycle of Torah reading was interrupted in order to read these special portions by themselves.

[26] m. Megillah 3:4.

[27] This practice is retained today. On *Shabbat Mevarkhim Adar* or *Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Adar*, we read from *Parashat Shekalim*.

[28] This custom is observed so that *Parashat Zachor* will be read on the Sabbath before Purim. The Mishnah does not state this expressly.

[29] The rabbinic basis for this calendar is *midrash*. The rabbis interpret Leviticus 23:44, "And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the set feasts of the Lord" to mean that Moses read the Torah to the Israelites on each festival day. Additionally, it is rather likely that is a midrashic justification after the fact. The custom does not depend upon the interpretation recorded here.

Passover	Leviticus 23
Shavuot	Deuteronomy 16:9-12
Rosh Hashanah	Leviticus 23:23 (ff.)
Yom Kippur	Leviticus 16:1-34
Sukkot (1st day)	Leviticus 23
Sukkot (Other days)	Numbers 29:17 (ff.)
Chanukah	Numbers 7:1-89
Purim	Exodus 17:8-16
Rosh Chodesh	Numbers 28:11-15
Ma'amad	Genesis 1:1-23[31]
Fast Days	Leviticus 26:3-46
Mon./Thurs. Mornings, Shabbat Afternoon	Consecutive weekly Torah readings

Similar to the scriptural selections for the *arba'ah parashiyot*, it is important to note that we do not know how this calendar of readings evolved! Nevertheless, later rabbinic and medieval texts begin by using this calendar as their foundation, and then proceed to make changes.

In Megillah 4:1, the rabbis shift their focus from the scriptural calendar to more functional matters, addressing the number of Torah readers and the manner in which the reading of the Torah is conducted. On Monday mornings, Thursday mornings, and Shabbat afternoon, three people read from the Torah. This number may be not be added to and it may not be subtracted from. Additionally, one does not conclude with a reading from prophetic literature.

Many of these rituals have changed substantially since the time of the Mishnah. First, when the Mishnah refers to "readers" it is literally referring to synagogue attendees who were called to "read from the Torah." As we will see below, the practice of having a community member read from the Torah is still retained in many sources, but for the

[30] The text of the Mishnah cites the passage to be read by the first Hebrew words of the selection. The information in the right column is taken from Danby's footnoting.

greater part has been superceded by the custom of calling a person for an *aliyah*, that is, to recite the blessings over the Torah. Second, the nature of the blessings recited over the Torah has developed considerably. In our communities, the reading from the Torah is divided into particular sections, each of which is also known as an *aliyah*. Each *aliyah* is its own integral unit. A blessing is recited over the Torah before the portion is read and after the portion is read. Then, the next person approaches the *amud* and repeats the practice, depending upon the particular ritual observance of the communtiy. In mishnaic times, we have evidence of another custom. The first person to read from the Torah would recite a blessing when he began his reading. The last person to read from the Torah would conclude his reading with a blessing. No blessings were recited intermediately.[32]

Mishnah 4:2 functions as an extension to Mishnah 4:1, explaining the number of Torah readers who are called on each day. Any day on which Musaf, the service recalling the additional sacrificial offering in the ancient Temple is recited, but which is not a Festival, there are four Torah readers. This rule pertains to observances like Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMoed. On a Festival Day, five readers are called, on Yom Kippur, six readers are called, and on Shabbat, seven readers are called. The number of readers on Shabbat may be increased but not decreased. Finally, Mishnah 4:2 reiterates the procedure offered in Mishnah 4:1, that the first reader recites a blessing before he begins, and the final reader recites a blessing when he concludes.

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[31] This observance has fallen out of practice since there is no longer a Temple. The *ma'amad* took place in the village whose priests were serving in the rotation in the Temple that week. The villagers gathered in the synagogue and read the creative story that justifies the Temple cult.

[32] m. Megillah 4:1.

Mishnah 4:3 stresses the importance of a *minyan*, liturgical activities that require the presence of a quorum, a community of ten adult members.[33] The Torah portion and Haftarah portion may only be read in the presence of a *minyan*.

Mishnah 4:4 is concerned with the length of the reading and the translation of verses into the vernacular. The minimum amount that may be read is three verses. When the Torah is being interpreted, the reader needs to offer the translator one verse at a time to be translated. It is not advisable to give the interpreter more than he can handle at any one time.

Mishnah 4:10[34] explores this topic of reading and translation even further. Recalling earlier practices indicated in Nehemiah, translation and interpretation were crucial to the public declamation of Scripture. In this mishnah, we learn that there are discrepancies regarding certain portions in the Torah and Haftarah that may be read but not necessarily translated because their subject matter addresses the sexual improprieties of Israelite heroes, the shameful behavior of the Israelites, or God's secrets. The following chart outlines those troublesome selections addressed by the Mishnah:[35]

Pericope	**May this be read?**	**May this be interpreted?**
Story of Reuben	Yes	No
Story of Tamar	Yes	Yes
1st Golden Calf Episode	Yes	Yes
2nd Golden Calf Episode	Yes	No
Priestly Blessing	Yes	No
Story of David	Yes	No
Story of Amnon	Yes	No
Ezekiel 1	No (General opinion) Yes (Rabbi Judah)	
Ezekiel 16	No (Rabbi Eliezer)	

[33] The Mishnah assumes that this *minyan* is comprised of ten men. Women were not traditionally counted as part of a minyan.

[34] Mishnayot 4:5-9 are not particularly relevant to the material of this research paper.

Having examined the mishnaic sources pertaining to the reading of the Torah, we have a relatively clear picture of how the reading was conducted, what readings were publicly declaimed, how many people were called to read from the Torah, and how the calendar functioned during the month of Adar. But accretion is quite common to Jewish tradition and a study of other rabbinic and medieval sources will further portray the reading of the Torah as an evolving ritual.

The Tosefta

The Tosefta may be dated around 300 CE, approximately one hundred years after the redaction of the Mishnah. The Tosefta includes some material from the Mishnah, some alternate versions of mishnaic traditions, as well as additional material that does not appear there.

The first concern of Tosefta Megillah 3 is the *arba'ah parashiyot*, the four special portions that are to be read on Shabbat during the month of Adar.[36] The Tosefta clarifies the customs related to these readings from the Torah. Additionally, it mentions the Haftarah portion, the reading from the prophets that will accompany the reading from the Torah.[37]

Clarifying the Mishnah, Tosefta Megillah 3:1 defines the week as Shabbat through Friday. We already know that if Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh Adar coincide, *Parashat Shekalim* will be read. Tosefta teaches us that if Rosh Chodesh Adar is to fall

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[35] This list is augmented and changed throughout the generations.

[36] Tosefta Megillah 3:1-4. All further sources from the Tosefta will be abbreviated in the form <t. Tractate chapter:paragraph>. The Hebrew text of the Tosefta used for this paper was Shaul Lieberman, ed. *Tosefta Megillah* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1961). Jacob Neusner's translation (see bibliography for full reference) was a helpful aid.

in the coming week, even on Friday, then *Parashat Shekalim* will be read on the preceding Sabbath.

The same counting method is utilized for the observance of *Parashat Zachor*, the second of the four special Sabbaths of Adar. It is worth noting that this is not necessarily the second Sabbath of the month, but the Sabbath before the week in which Purim will fall. Again, the week is regarded as Shabbat through Friday.[38]

In Tosefta Megillah 3:3, we learn of a custom that subsequently will change slightly. Tosefta refers to the third Sabbath of Adar, *Parashat Parah*, as the Shabbat that will immediately fall after Purim. Later sources indicate that this method of establishing the calendar is no longer practiced. No detailed information is offered regarding *Parashat Ha-Chodesh*, the fourth Sabbath in the month of Adar.

Tosefta Megillah 3:5-9 includes a discussion of the scriptural calendar. While much of the scriptural calendar of the Mishnah has been retained, there are a number of significant additions.

First, we find an addition to Torah reading on the holiday of Pesach. Mishnah indicated that we read from Leviticus 23. Tosefta articulates this too. Additionally, on other days of the festival, other portions in the Torah that discuss the festival of Pesach may be read.[39]

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[37] The first words of the portion are provided. For Shabbat Shekalim, the haftarah comes from II Kings 12; for Shabbat Zachor, from I Samuel 15:2; for Shabbat Parah, Ezekiel 36:25; for Shabbat Ha-Chodesh, Ezekiel 45:18.

[38] t. Megillah 3:2.

[39] t. Megillah 3:5.

Second, on Shavuot, the portion Deuteronomy 16:9 ff. is retained. But the Tosefta also indicates that in some communities, it is customary to read the Decalogue scene in Exodus 19:1 ff.[40]

Third, practices on the Yamim Noraim have changed. On Rosh Hashanah, the portion from Leviticus 23 is retained but it is the practice of some communities to read Genesis 21:1 ff.[41] On Yom Kippur, evidence of the earliest *maftir* portion appears. In traditional synagogues today, a concluding portion related to sacrificial offerings is read from a second Torah scroll on each festival day. Tosefta Megillah 3:7 affirms that an additional reading from Numbers 27:7 is appended to the traditionally established Torah reading from Leviticus 16, which details the actions of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

Fourth, the Torah reading for Sukkot has been increased. It is still customary to read from Leviticus 23 on the first day of Sukkot, but the Mishnah explained that on the following day, one should read from Numbers 29:17. Tosefta explores this concept in greater detail, stating explicitly the verses that must be read on each day of the Sukkot festival. Not coincidentally, the reading is correlated to the Sukkot sacrifices offered during each day of the festival. For example, on the third day, one would read from Numbers 29:20. This series of verses explores the sacrifices offered on the third day.[42]

Fifth, a new reading has been added to the scriptural calendar. The Tosefta offers us the first indication of a public Torah reading on Tisha B'av, the ninth of Av, the day commemorating the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. While this reading will change subsequently, the Tosefta establishes it as Leviticus 26:14 ff., the section

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[40] Ibid. This is the first indication of such a custom.
[41] t. Megillah 3:6.

pertaining to dreadful curses befalling the Israelites as a result of their having turned away from God.[43]

Next, Tosefta Megillah 3:10 asks the question, "How is the reading of the Torah to be conducted from reading to reading?" Two different opinions are offered. The first opinion believes that where one finished reading previously, one should continue reading. Where a reader stops on Shabbat morning, he should resume on Shabbat afternoon. Where he concludes on Shabbat afternoon, he should resume on Monday morning and so on. According to this opinion, there does not seem to be an established cycle of Sabbath Torah readings. Torah is simply read consecutively, according to the cycle of Shabbat, Monday, and Thursday readings.

The second opinion, which is maintained in many circles today, is more Sabbath-centric. Where a reader stops on Shabbat morning, he resumes the following Shabbat morning. Details may only be assumed. But it is possible at this point that a shorter portion of the next *parashah* was read on Shabbat afternoon, and Monday and Thursday mornings, as the practice occurs today. Hence, the reading on Shabbat afternoon, and then Monday, Thursday, and Shabbat morning would all begin in the same place, but on Shabbat morning one would read till the start of the next pericope.[44]

Regarding the number of readers called to the Torah, the Tosefta affirms the rulings of the Mishnah while also citing a different practice of Rabbi Aqiba. Supposedly, Aqiba reversed the number of readers for Shabbat and Yom Kippur, believing that six readers should be called on Shabbat, and seven readers should be called on Yom Kippur.

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[42] t. Megillah 3:8.

[43] t. Megillah 3:9. Deuteronomy 4:25-40 later becomes customary in the morning, with the section pertaining to Moses' smashing of the tablets (Exodus 32 & 34) being read in the afternoon.

[44] t. Megillah 3:10.

Perhaps Aqiba practiced this custom because Yom Kippur is called *Shabbat Shabbaton*, the ultimate Sabbath, and its sanctity is regarded as higher than that of Shabbat. But no other sources in the evolution of Torah reading indicate that this custom was observed in other communities.[45]

Tosefta Megillah 3:12 presents the first indication of diminishing Hebrew reading abilities. Apparently, some communities did not have enough qualified Torah readers to call to complete the reading. For this reason, the Tosefta includes an escape clause. If only one person in the community is qualified to read Torah, he may stand up, read from the Torah, sit back down, and then be called to stand up, read from the Torah and continue the process until he has been called seven times. While the Tosefta assumes that each person should read his own portion if he is able, here one individual fills the role of seven people. It is possible to assume that we are witnessing the very beginning of the shift to a professional community reader.

An additional practice of note is discovered in paragraph 3:17. We recall that the Mishnah established a three-verse minimum for reading from the Torah. The Tosefta adds to this teaching, noting that if a pericope is four or five verses, a person should read the whole thing. If a book only has two verses left, a person is encouraged to repeat a previous verse in order to make the section three verses long. It is worth noting that readings from the Torah were considerably shorter than they are today. In today's yearly cycle (which will be explained below), *aliyot* may be as long as seventy-plus verses at times. This is a far cry from the minimum and necessary three to five verses established by the Tosefta.

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[45] t. Megillah 3:11.

Finally, regarding the Tosefta, it is important to consider the developments in the reading and translation of particular passages. Again, we witness a process of accretion and change. While many texts mentioned in the Mishnah are included here, there are a number of additional texts that may be read and translated. This list includes the story of creation, the story of Lot, the curses[46], the declaration of warning and punishment[47], the story of Absalom, and the tale of the concubine of Gibeah.[48]

A number of changes have also been made to the rulings of the Mishnah. First, the story of Amnon was not translated. In the Tosefta, it may be read and translated. Second, Ezekiel 16 was not to be read in the Mishnah. It may be read and translated. Third, the story of David and Bath Sheba[49] was originally read but not translated. According to the Tosefta, it is neither read nor translated.[50]

The Palestinian Talmud

Further development of Torah reading customs are outlined in the Palestinian Talmud—a source that dates from around 425 CE. Once again, the first concern of Tractate Megillah that is of importance to our research is the discussion of the *arba'ah parashiyot*, the reading of Torah on the four Sabbaths of Adar.

Unlike the Mishnah and Tosefta, the Palestinian Talmud provides some historical background for the organization of these particular Sabbaths. The goal, according to the Palestinian Talmud, is to have *Shabbat Shekalim* precede *Shabbat Zachor*. *Shekalim* involves collecting money for use in the Temple as Pesach approaches. *Zachor* tells us to

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[46] The assumption is that this refers to Leviticus 26.
[47] The assumption is that this refers to Deuteronomy 28.
[48] Tosefta Megillah 3:31-33.
[49] Bath Sheba is a clarification by the Tosefta.

remember Amalek's ambush. In Jewish tradition Amalek is considered to be a relative of Haman, hence the reason *Zachor* is read prior to Purim. The Palestinian Talmud indicates that Haman would use money gathered against the Jews. Money in support of the Temple must always take precedence over money that will be used against the Jewish people. Hence, *Shekalim* is read prior to *Zachor*.[51] Regarding observance of Shabbat Shekalim and Rosh Chodesh Adar, practices from the Mishnah and Tosefta are appropriately retained.

In section 3:5, the Palestinian Talmud records a different custom regarding the calendar dates for *Shabbat Parah*, the third Sabbath of Adar, and *Shabbat HaChodesh*, the fourth Sabbath of Adar. The *machaloket* (controversy) is raised between R. Ba in the name of R. Hiyya bar Ashi and Levi in the name of Hiyya bar Haninah. In some years, there will be five Sabbaths during the month of Adar. Shabbat Zachor will always be the Sabbath before Purim. But because of the way the calendar falls, three Sabbaths might remain in the month. The final Sabbath, which is immediately before Rosh Chodesh Nissan, will be *Shabbat HaChodesh*. But which Sabbath in the month of Adar becomes *Shabbat Parah*? According to the Palestinian Talmud, we follow an analogy with the custom on Pesach surrounding the cups of wine. Generally, it is acceptable to drink between cups of wine. But between the third and fourth cup of wine at the Seder, drinking is not permitted. The Rabbis use this to suggest that between the third and fourth Sabbaths of Adar (*Parah* and *HaChodesh*), there should be no separation. Thus,

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[50] Tosefta Megillah 3:31-38.

[51] Palestinian Talmud Megillah 3:4. All further sources from the Palestinian Talmud will be abbreviated in the form <y. Tractate chapter:halakhah>. The Hebrew text of the Palestinian Talmud used for this paper was, *Masekhet Megillah min Talmud Yerushalmi*. Zhitomir: v Tipografil brafiev Shapirovykh, 1860. Jacob Neusner's translation (see bibliography for full reference) was a helpful aid.

Shabbat Parah's timing is flexible, but it must occur on the Sabbath immediately before *Shabbat HaChodesh.*

Section 3:5 also records two additional practices not mentioned in either the Mishnah or Tosefta. First, if Rosh Chodesh and Shabbat coincide, the regular weekly reading of the Torah is suspended in order to read the portion related to the New Moon. Second, the Palestinian Talmud is concerned with what happens on Rosh Chodesh Tevet, which coincides with a day of Hanukkah. In this case, according to our previous sources, four readers would be called. Three people would read from the Hanukkah portion while one would read from the Rosh Chodesh portion. If this date fell on Shabbat, these responsibilities would need to be adjusted to account for seven readers. In some cases the congregation would likely read from three Torah scrolls—one for the Sabbath portion, one for the Rosh Chodesh portion, and one for the Hanukkah portion.

In section 3:7, the Palestinian Talmud includes its own chart of Torah readings. Many of the readings, like those for Hanukkah, Purim, and Rosh Chodesh have been retained from the Mishnah. Again, as the Tosefta indicated, we see the blessings and the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 being treated as integral sections, read and blessed over as a cohesive unit by only one person. Also, it is clear that the Tosefta's struggle in Megillah 3:10 regarding the conception of the weekly cycle of reading has been resolved. The Palestinian Talmud sides with the second of the opinions recorded there, indicating that the Shabbat afternoon, Monday and Thursday morning Torah readings do not count as part of the continuous cycle of readings. Where the congregation stops on Shabbat morning is where they will continue reading on the following Shabbat morning. The weekday readings of Torah are conducted more to

fulfill the mitzvah of reading and for those gathered on market days to hear the Torah being read.

Additionally, section 3:7 mentions a variety of customs regarding the blessing over the reading of the Torah. Previously, in the Mishnah and Tosefta, we learned that the first person to read from the Torah would recite a blessing before he began reading and the final person to read from the Torah would recite a blessing when he had concluded his reading. The Palestinian Talmud establishes slightly different practices. First, the curses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are to be treated as integral units and not broken up over several readers, as we noted above. They require blessings before they are read and after they are read. Second, Bar Abuna adds that all songs require a blessing. Generally, the accepted practice is that of R. Simon who believes that the aforementioned curses, the Song at the Sea, and the Ten Commandments all require a blessing before and after, forming integral units, not to be interrupted in the middle. Although in most cases, blessings were only recited at the beginning and conclusion of the entire Torah reading, this is the first time we have witnessed specific units of Torah being sandwiched by blessings. The sandwich method is the normative practice in our day, but in the era of the Palestinian Talmud, it nevertheless appears to be in the process of evolution. The idea simply suggests that once begun, these portions must be read through to the end by the same reader—irrespective of where they fall in the cycle of readings.

Section 4:1 of *Masekhet Megillah* is expressly concerned with the translation of the Torah reading. Unlike the materials in Mishnah and Tosefta, the rabbis of the Palestinian Talmud focus on the importance of translation, rather than on specific

passages. The obligation of Torah reading is to have heard the Torah being read. Only one voice may read and one voice may translate at any given time. Ultimately, translation is regarded as an essential part of the Torah reading because it clarifies the meaning of the text.

The final area of concern in *Masekhet Megillah* of the Palestinian Talmud is the minimum number of verses to be read. In the Mishnah and Tosefta, we learned that a person may read no less than three verses. The Palestinian Talmud establishes another guideline when it says that three people who are called to Torah should read not less than ten verses of Scripture altogether.[52] Later sources will examine the division of these verses in greater detail.

Aside from what is indicated by the text of the Palestinian Talmud, the Palestinian cycle of Torah reading also warrants our attention. Into the eleventh century and beyond,[53] Jews in the land of Israel read Torah according to a triennial cycle.[54] But the cycle was not "fixed" per se. As Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman remarks, "The cycle is somewhat misleading, however, since the cycle actually took anywhere from three or four years to be completed, depending on the number of holidays that fell on Shabbat and postponed the normal readings."[55] Later, in the eighth and ninth centuries, there are lists of triennial cycles, indicating attempts to fix the cycle. In contrast, in the Babylonian communities and other communities under their influence throughout the Diaspora, the

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[52] y. Megillah 4:2.

[53] Norman A. Bloom "The Torah Reading Cycle Past and Present." Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy, Ed. Macy Nulman, Volume XVIII:1995-1996/5756/5757 (New York: Cantorial Council of America, 1996) 38.

[54] The Babylonian Talmud is aware of this practice. See b. Megillah 29b.

[55] Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Introduction to the Liturgy: The Reading of Torah—Retelling the Jewish Story in the Shadow of Sinai," My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries Volume 4: Seder K'riat HaTorah (The Torah Service) (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000) 8.

annual system was used, and congregations would complete the full reading of the Torah in one calendar year. This scriptural calendar is a subject with many different facets and will be discussed below.

The Babylonian Talmud

The Babylonian Talmud gives evidence for Babylonian practice only (the annual cycle, etc.) Subsequently, Babylonian customs and rules prevail in other communities as well. While the Talmud seeks to incorporate material from the Mishnah and the Tosefta, it also introduces a variety of nuances into the reading of the Torah.

Aside from the material in *Masekhet Megillah* that we will explore shortly, the Babylonian Talmud provides grounding for the reading of the Torah that has not been previously analyzed in this exposition. In *Baba Kamma* 82a, the Rabbis explore the meaning of the verse, "They traveled for three days in the desert and found no water...then the people rebelled against Moses and said: what shall we drink?"[56] The Rabbis interpret "water" to mean Torah. Regarding this metaphor, Elie Munk comments, "Man cannot forego the element of his physical life, water, for three days, without suffering serious harm. So too the Jewish people cannot last without the element of their spiritual life, the Torah, for more than three days."[57] With such thinking in mind, the Rabbis construed the ruling they attributed to Ezra that the Israelites should not go more than three consecutive days without hearing the words of the Torah. Therefore, Torah must be read on Shabbat, Mondays, and Thursdays.

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[56] Exodus 15:22.

[57] Rabbi Dr. Elie Munk, The World of Prayer: Commentary and Translation of the Daily Prayer (New York: Philip Feldheim Publisher, 1954) 170-171.

Having established the foundation for weekday and weekly Torah reading, *Masekhet Megillah* begins its study of related material by addressing the custom of calling three readers on Monday morning, Thursday morning, and Shabbat afternoon. Like the need to establish a foundation for the reading itself, the Talmud wonders why three readers are called. Two reasons are offered. Rav Assi explains that the three readers correspond to the three parts of the Tanakh—Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Rava disagrees. He suggests that the three readers symbolize Kohanim, Levites, and Israelites; that is, the three groups represented by the three men called to the Torah.[58] It is worth mentioning that the second reason appears to be more valid. In synagogues today, the three *aliyot* (divisions of the Torah reading) are assigned with the titles *Kohen*, *Levi*, and *Yisrael*, likely corresponding to Rava's opinion above.

Next, the Talmud addresses the number of verses being read. We learned above in the Palestinian Talmud that no less than ten verses should be read. Concerning the ten verses, the Babylonian Talmud offers four different opinions substantiating this reason. According to Megillah 21b, the ten verses symbolize: the ten unoccupied men whose duty it is to attend synagogue,[59] the Ten Commandments,[60] the ten praises said by David,[61] or the ten divine utterances according to which the world was created.[62] No further explanation is given for this practice.

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[58] Babylonian Talmud 21b. All further sources from the Babylonian Talmud will be abbreviated in the form <b. Tractate page>. The Hebrew text of the Babylonian Talmud used for this paper was *Masekhet Megillah min Talmud Bavli* which is derived from the Vilna edition. New York: Otzar HaS'farim, 1957. The Schottenstein edition/interpretive translation (see bibliography for full reference) was a helpful aid.

[59] The opinion of Joshua ben Levi.

[60] The opinion of Rav Yosef.

[61] The opinion of Rav Levi. This refers to Psalms 146-150. Each Psalm begins with a word of praise—Halleluyah!

[62] The opinion of Rabbi Yochanan.

Instead, the Talmud turns to the number of verses that a person called to the Torah should read. According to the Talmud, if a person read four verses, he is to be regarded as having completed a praiseworthy deed. Generally, the practice appears to be that the first two readers would read three verses each, and the third and final reader would read four verses, achieving a total of ten verses. The practice of increasing the number of verses for the final reader guarantees that the reading of the Torah is explained according to the concept of "ascending in holiness."

The Talmud is not only concerned with foundational reasoning. It also introduces a number of new practices. Most noteworthy in this discussion is the development regarding the blessings recited over the Torah before and after the reading. In the Mishnah and Tosefta it appeared that the first person to read from the Torah offered a blessing before the reading and the last person to read from the Torah offered a blessing at the conclusion. Intermediate readers offered no blessing at all. However, the Talmud indicates that, "Nowadays all make a blessing both before and after the reading, the reason is that the Rabbis ordained this to avoid error on the part of people entering and leaving synagogue."[63] The Rabbis desired that people should believe that each section of the Torah was special enough to warrant a blessing both before and after its conclusion. To this reasoning, Rashi adds that if a man entered the synagogue after the first blessing had been recited and did not hear the other blessings, he might say that there was no blessing prior to the reading of the Torah.[64] Therefore, blessings were added, interrupting the reading. If congregants entered or departed from the synagogue during the reading,

[63] b. Megillah 21b.
[64] Ibid.

they would see the Torah reading receiving a blessing a number of times, not just when it began or finished.[65]

Next, the Talmud turns its attention to the number of Torah readers for various occasions. The traditionally established numbers are retained—three readers on Monday morning, Thursday morning, Shabbat morning, public fast days, and Tisha B'av; four readers on Rosh Chodesh and Chol Hamoed; five readers on festival days; six readers on Yom Kippur; and seven readers on the Sabbath.[66] Because of the nature of the Babylonian Talmud, the Rabbis are able to enter into a significant discussion regarding an issue previously addressed by Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Aqiba in the Tosefta. Rabbi Ishmael argued that the number of people called to the Torah is the same as in the Mishnah, but Rabbi Aqiba disagreed. He believed that five readers should be called on festivals, *seven* on Yom Kippur, and *six* on Shabbat. The Talmud justifies the mishnaic practice by expounding upon the number of words in the Priestly Benediction.[67] There are three words in the first line,[68] five words in the second line[69] and seven words in the third line.[70] Thus, weekdays should have three readers, festivals five, and Shabbat seven. There should be six readers on Yom Kippur, because in Ezra's ancient reading six priests stood on either side of him.[71]

Having justified the number of readers, the Talmud proceeds to discuss the reading of the Haftarah. We will recall from our study of the Mishnah that certain

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[65] Although it was still customary for individual members of the community to read from the Torah, the introduction of having each person recite their blessings may also have been due in part to the decline of the ability to read Torah correctly.

[66] b. Megillah 22b.

[67] b. Megillah 23a, referring specifically to Numbers 6:24-26.

[68] Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yism'rekha.

[69] Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha v'chuneka

[70] Yisa Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom.

readings of the Torah close with a reading from Prophets and others do not. In Megillah 23a, the Rabbis explain that any person who reads from the Haftarah must also first honor the Torah itself by reading from it, so that none will say that the Prophets enjoy the same status as the Torah.[72]

In Megillah 25a, the Rabbis revisit the discussion of reading and translating various portions. Of all the sources that we have examined thus far, the Babylonian Talmud presents the most concise list of passages that are to be read and translated. This list includes: the account of creation, the story of Lot and his two daughters, the story of Tamar and Judah, the first account of the making of the Calf, the curses and blessings of Leviticus 26, the warnings and penalties of Deuteronomy 28, the story of Amnon and Tamar, the story of the concubine of Gibeah, and the passage in Ezekiel beginning "Make known to Jerusalem her abominations."

Concerning passages that are read and translated, the Rabbis return to the text of the Mishnah, citing its remarks in shortened form, word for word. The story of Reuben in Genesis 35, the second account of the Golden Calf in Deuteronomy, and the priestly blessing are all read aloud but are not translated.[73] Finally, the Rabbis clarify their decision regarding the stories of David and Amnon. Some confusion exists. Above, the Rabbis mentioned that the story of Amnon and Tamar may be read and translated. However, the stories of David and Amnon are neither read nor translated. Regarding David and Amnon, this concerns any place in the text where "Amnon, son of David" is written. The other comment, referring to Amnon and Tamar refers to places where only

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[71] Actually, the texts indicate that seven people stood to his left, not six. But the Rabbis regard Zechariah Meshullam as one person and not two.

[72] Rashi to b. Megillah 23a.

[73] b. Megillah 25a.

Amnon is stated. This "clarifies" the existing discrepancy, justifying it formally, ex post facto.[74]

Later in the tractate, the Rabbis devote their discussion to the *arba'ah parashiyot*, the four special Torah portions for the month of Adar. In Megillah 29a further reasoning behind *Parashat Shekalim* being the first of these significant readings is offered. In the time of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, the people paid their taxes on the first of Nissan. Hence, they needed a reminder that payment was due. *Parashat Shekalim* served as the announcement of that reminder.

Evidently, the nature of the Torah reading in Babylonia had changed by the time of the Babylonian Talmud. As we learned above, the *arba'ah parashiyot* used to supersede the regular weekly Torah portion. Now, at the end of the sixth century, it appears as if the special portion for the month of Adar is appended onto the weekly reading.[75] This is revealed in the discussion of the Torah reading for Rosh Chodesh Adar. Six people are called to read the regular weekly Torah portion, one person is called to read the Rosh Chodesh portion, and the *maftir* would read *Parashat Shekalim.* Ultimately, this is the opinion of Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha who argues that three distinct Torah scrolls were being read in the congregation on this day—one for Shabbat, one for Rosh Chodesh, and one for *Shekalim.* If *Shekalim* was meant to interrupt the regularly scheduled weekly reading of the Torah, the community would have had no need for

[74] b. Megillah 29a. The Rabbis spend a considerable amount of time discussing the passages that may be read and/or translated but we have already addressed the fact that the number of these passages and their requirements changed throughout the years. Further analysis would belabor this point.

[75] Ibid.

additional Torah scrolls. Thus the Babylonian rabbinic custom—to add to the weekly portion rather than interrupt the cycle of readings, becomes clear.[76]

As with many cases in the Talmud, the Rabbis digress from their discussion. Leaving aside the nature of the *arba'ah parashiyot*, the Rabbis concern themselves with tangentially related material. Rosh Chodesh Tevet, which falls during Chanukah, requires special practices. If this observance occurs on Shabbat, three Torah scrolls will also need to be used.[77] If this falls on a weekday, Rav Yitzchak and Rav Dimi of Haifa disagree regarding the division of the four readers on this day. Yitzchak argues that three will read from the Rosh Chodesh passage and one will read from the Chanukah passage. Rav Dimi suggests the antithesis—three should read from Chanukah and one from Rosh Chodesh. Disagreements abound in the discussion. The definitive ruling sides with Yitzchak. What occurs more frequently always comes first. Hence, we read the Shabbat portion first, then the Rosh Chodesh portion (which is read approximately eleven times during the year), and conclude with the Chanukah portion (which is only read eight times during the year).[78] This mirrors the reading of *Shekalim* on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Adar. We may assume that the Babylonian community would read the Shabbat portion first, then the Rosh Chodesh portion, and conclude with the reading of *Shekalim*.

Having reached this decision, the Rabbis return to their discussion of matters related to the *arba'ah parashiyot*, and specifically *Parashat Shekalim*. The matter in question is what happens when the weekly *parashah* is *Tetzaveh* and concludes at Exodus 30:10. If this is the case, people will not know the difference between the conclusion of

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[76] The only interruptions that remained were those for festival observance.

[77] One for the weekly Torah reading, one for the Rosh Chodesh reading, and one for the Chanukah reading.

[78] b. Megillah 30a.

Tetzaveh and the beginning of *Shekalim* at Exodus 30:11. The readings will simply run together. Abaye also questions what happens when *Parashat Ki Tisa* (beginning at Exodus 30:11) coincides with *Parashat Shekalim.* This is a valid question. The community would be required to read all of *Ki Tisa* (through the end of Exodus 34) and then return to the beginning in order to read the portion for *Shabbat Shekalim* (Exodus 30:11-16). Abaye claimed that the people would complain that the Torah was being read backward. Abaye's diffidence is registered in the Hebrew calendar. A brief examination of the placement of *Parashat Shekalim* reveals that it no longer coincides directly with either *Parashat Tetzaveh* or *Parashat Ki Tisa.*[79]

Much of the material quoted in the Talmud regarding the organization of the *arba'ah parashiyot* has already been mentioned and discussed in our analysis of the Mishnah and Tosefta. The primary area of concern in Megillah 30a is what happens when Rosh Chodesh falls on a Friday. The Rabbis confirm that if Rosh Chodesh should fall on Friday, then *Shabbat Shekalim* occurs on the Shabbat before. But this decision is not without controversy of its own. If Rosh Chodesh, the 1st day of Adar, falls on Friday, then Shimon ben Elazar asserts that *Shabbat Shekalim* would be the next day, the 2nd day of Adar, a Saturday. The 9th day of Adar, also a Saturday would be *Shabbat Zachor*, and the 15th, which would fall on a Friday, would be Purim. Since the Rabbis ruled that *Shabbat Shekalim* should be moved up before Adar to insure that there would be two full weeks for the collection of the shekel tax, then there would be appropriately, a week

[79] Arthur Spier, The Comprehensive Hebrew Calendar: Revised Expanded Edition (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1986). In most years, *Parashat Shekalim* coincides with *Parashat Mishpatim, Vayakhel, or Pekude.*

break between *Shabbat Shekalim* and the 9th of Adar. *Shabbat Zachor* would still fall on the Shabbat preceding Purim. This is the way the calendar exists at present.[80]

Regarding the Rabbis' discussion of *Shabbat Parah* and *Shabbat HaChodesh*, the Babylonian Talmud concurs with the stance found in the Palestinian Talmud. While the Rabbis still give voice to a *baraita* that mentions that *Shabbat Parah* must be observed on the week that is closest to Purim, they side with R. Chama ben Chanina who argued that *Shabbat Parah* and *Shabbat HaChodesh* must occur on consecutive weeks. Since *Shabbat HaChodesh* must be the Sabbath closest to the start of the month of Nissan, then counting occurs from that date, and we assign the date of *Shabbat Parah* by "working backwards." Hence, it does not matter if there is a week break between Purim and *Shabbat Parah*. A "regular Sabbath" can occur on this day without any "special" reading. This is very different from the first customs we witnessed in the Mishnah that mentioned that every Shabbat of the month of Adar had a special reading for which we interrupt the weekly lectionary cycle.[81]

Next, the Talmud offers a new and more detailed version of the scriptural calendar. The Babylonian Talmud is the first rabbinic text that we know was written outside the land of Israel. We do not know what texts the Rabbis had access to. But beginning on Megillah 31a, the Rabbis take a *baraita* that appears in Tosefta Megillah 3:5-9 and then interpolate their own "diaspora" additions into this list. These additions are distinguished by the Aramaic word *v'ha'adina*, meaning "here and now." Not surprisingly, the custom to observe a second day of festivals is also mentioned here.

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[80] b. Megillah 30a.
[81] Ibid and b. Megillah 30b.

Each of these days is sanctified with readings from the Torah and Haftarah, discussed below.

Regarding Pesach, there are many additional readings. The reading of Leviticus 23 for the first day of Pesach is retained. We learn that the Haftarah comes from excerpts from Joshua, chapters 3, 5, and 6. On the second day, the reading from the first day is repeated, and the Haftarah is taken from II Kings 23. For the remaining intermediate days of Pesach, readings are taken from the books of Exodus and Numbers. The Babylonian Talmud clarifies the readings for the 7th and 8th days of Pesach.[82] On the seventh day of Pesach, the Song at the Sea (Exodus 13-15) is rendered and the Haftarah comes from II Samuel 22. On the eighth day of Pesach, the communities read from Deuteronomy 15 and 16 and the Haftarah is taken from Isaiah 10-12.[83]

On Shavuot, we also witness evidence of a second-day observance. The Babylonian Talmud accepts the practice mentioned in the Tosefta—that the Decalogue should be read on the first day of Shavuot. The Haftarah for this day is Ezekiel 1 plus an additional verse from 3:12. On the second day, the Rabbis indicate that one should read from the Deuteronomic festival calendar[84] and recite a Haftarah from Habakkuk 2 and 3.[85]

Rosh Hashanah is also treated as a two-day festival observance within the Babylonian Talmud. After mentioning that the Haftarah for Rosh Hashanah should come from Jeremiah 31, the Rabbis mention that it is the practice of some communities to read

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[82] In our study of Mishnah, Tosefta, and Palestinian Talmud, we have not seen these readings explicated. However, a Palestinian reading for the 7th day of Pesach is provided in Pesikta d'Rav Kahana (Exodus 13:17 ff.) and possibly Deuteronomy 14:22 ff. for the 8th day of Pesach.

[83] b. Megillah 31a. These customs have been maintained for quite some time. Even in the present day, these are the passages that are now read.

[84] Like Pesach above. The community will read from Deuteronomy 15 and 16.

[85] b. Megillah 31a.

from Genesis 21 on the first day. Other communities will read *Akedat Yitzchak*, from Genesis 22, on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. This is the first time that we have seen Rosh Hashanah acquire a two-day observance.[86] The theoretical possibility for this observance is raised in the Mishnah (on account of doubt as to when the New Moon occurs). But the Mishnah's calendar of scriptural readings treats Rosh Hashanah as a one-day observance.

Yom Kippur practices have been expanded. While it is still customary to read from Leviticus 16 in the morning, the Rabbis have added Leviticus 18 as the reading for Mincha. The goal of reading this passage is to inspire those who have sinned to repent. In the morning, the Haftarah is recited from Isaiah 57 and 58 (still the Haftarah today) and the afternoon Haftarah is the entire book of Jonah. The Babylonian Talmud marks the first time we have seen the inclusion of the book of Jonah being read during the Yom Kippur Mincha service.[87]

On Sukkot, there are many new customs. We are already familiar with the reading of the festival calendar from Leviticus on the first day and we also know that on the second day it is customary to reread the same exact passage. On these first two days, the Haftarot are taken from Zechariah 14 and I Kings 8, respectively. It has already been established that on the rest of the intermediate days of Sukkot, one would read about the sacrifices offered on those days in the ancient Temple. This practice is retained. On Shemini Atzeret, the 8th day of Assembly and the final day of the Sukkot observance, the community should read from the Deuteronomic festival calendar in chapters 15 and 16.[88]

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[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Like the 8th day of Pesach and the 2nd day of Shavuot above.

The Babylonian Talmud also indicates that the final parashah, *Vezot Ha'bracha* was read on the day after Shemini Atzeret. This last portion, encompassing Deuteronomy 33 and 34 is the last reading of the Torah, and is matched with a Haftarah from either I Kings 8 or Joshua 1. The Joshua 1 passage is retained today because it allows a seamless transition from the end of the Torah to the beginning of the prophetic literature.[89]

The Rabbis are also concerned with observance of Shabbat Chol Hamoed. On both Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot and Shabbat Chol Hamoed Pesach, the reading is taken from Exodus 33 and 34, chapters including the festival calendar found in Exodus 34. On Pesach, the Haftarah is taken from the "Dry Bones" segment in Ezekiel 37. On Sukkot, the Haftarah is read from the story of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39, both of which are messianic passages.[90]

Regarding Chanukah, and Rosh Chodesh, there are a number of new additions to the lectionary cycle. First the Rabbis give voice to the fact that two Shabbatot may fall during Chanukah. Naturally, the weekly portion for Shabbat would be read because Chanukah does not interrupt the reading of the Torah on Shabbat. But when this is the case, two separate Haftarot are needed. These passages from the prophets are taken from Zechariah 2-4 and I Kings 8, respectively. Regarding Rosh Chodesh, when Rosh Chodesh falls on Shabbat, it is customary to read a special Haftarah from Isaiah 66. When Rosh Chodesh falls on Sunday, the portion known as *Machar Chodesh* from I Samuel 20 is read, which mentions that the new moon will occur tomorrow.[91]

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[89] b. Megillah 31a.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

Concerning Rosh Chodesh Av, Tisha B'Av, and fast days, there are also new customs. The Rabbis maintain that it is appropriate to recite Isaiah 1:14 on Rosh Chodesh Av. This would be followed by Isaiah 1:21 on Tisha B'Av. The Rabbis also indicate that the practice for Tisha B'Av includes the recitation of Leviticus 26:14, Numbers 14:11 and Numbers 14:27. On fast days, it has become customary to read about the blessings and the curses. The Rabbis of the Talmud explain that one may not interrupt the reading of the curses of the Leviticus (that is, separate them with a blessing over the Torah scroll), but that one may interrupt the reading of the curses in Deuteornomy.[92]

The final concerns of Bavli Megillah concern the beginning and ending of the reading of the Torah portion. There are two matters to discuss here. First, the Talmud sustains the principle established by the Tosefta. Where one concludes reading on Shabbat morning, one begins at Shabbat Mincha, Monday morning, Thursday morning, and the following Shabbat morning. The readings beside Shabbat morning are conducted for the sake of reading, but do not count in the full cycle of the Torah reading.[93] Second, the Rabbis establish a custom for reading from the Torah and reciting a blessing over the scroll. The blessings must be recited with the Torah closed, so as not to give the members of the community the impression that the blessings are written inside the scroll. One should open the scroll, look inside, roll the scroll closed, bless over the Torah, open the scroll, and read from it. Additionally, the Rabbis recommend that only one with a pleasing voice should read from the Torah scroll and that it is of dire importance to discuss the matters of the festival on the day on which the festival is observed. For

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[92] b. Megillah 31b.
[93] Ibid.

example, topics related to Pesach should be discussed on Pesach and topics pertaining to Shavuot should be discussed at the appropriate time as well.

Masekhet Soferim

Having considered the discussions of Torah reading in the Babylonian Talmud, we now turn our attention to the minor tractate known as *Masekhet Soferim*. *Masekhet Soferim* is difficult to date and place in a historical context. While the Hebrew resembles that of the Mishnah, and the text draws upon Mishnah, Tosefta, and both Talmuds, contemporary scholarship proposes that *Masekhet Soferim* may be a composite of different sources from locations as far spread as Palestine, Italy, and Byzantium.[94]

The first area in *Masekhet Soferim* pertinent to our study is the question of which passages are to be read and translated. The organization and structure of Soferim is so disparate from other rabbinic texts because the list of passages to be read and translated has never been the first subject of consideration. In fact, we approach Soferim in medias res, in the middle of chapter 9. The authors have just discussed the nature of how particular letters and words are to be read in public. Now, they turn their attention to how particular passages are to be read in public. Of all the passages in the table of readings and translations, not many changes are made. The most notable shift occurs in the reading of the Priestly Blessing.[95] This passage is no longer read nor translated. Additionally, the custom regarding the reading of Ezekiel 1 is revisited. Soferim explains

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[94] Debra Reed Blank, "Soferim: A Commentary to Chapters 10-12 and a Reconsideration of the Evidence," diss., Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1998, 9-10.

[95] Masekhet Soferim 9:10, referring to Numbers 6:24-26. All further sources from Masekhet Soferim will be abbreviated in the form <s. chapter:halakhah>. The Hebrew and accompanying English text of Masekhet Soferim used for this paper was Abraham Cohen, ed. and trans. Minor Tractates: Translated into English with Notes, Glossary, and Indices (London: Soncino Press, 1984).

that Rabbi Judah permits reading this passage as a haftarah. Soferim also clarifies that anything that denounces Jerusalem should not be read.[96]

The tenth chapter of *Masekhet Soferim* attributes the historical custom of public Torah reading to two important figures and retains many time-honored practices. Unlike any source before it, *Masekhet Soferim* attests that Moses introduced the reading of the Torah on Shabbat, Festivals, Rosh Chodesh, and Chol Hamoed.[97] Ezra was responsible for the reading of the Torah on Monday and Thursday mornings, and on Shabbat afternoon.[98] Regarding the starting point of the Torah reading, *Masekhet Soferim* accepts the principles of the Tosefta and Babylonian Talmud. Where a reader concludes on Shabbat morning, the reading will continue on Shabbat afternoon, Monday and Thursday mornings, and the following Shabbat morning.[99]

In Chapter 10, Soferim returns to customs established by the Mishnah, referring to those who are called to the Torah as "readers." Even though the Bavli already indicated that the custom in its time and place was to call people to recite blessings over the Torah, rather than read from the scroll, Soferim nevertheless cites the Mishnah. It is important to recognize that Soferim is not necessarily the next step in the evolutionary process of Torah reading. Soferim is extracted from Mishnah, Tosefta, and both Talmuds, and also includes new information.

Returning to the text, the number of Torah readers at various times remains the same (i.e. seven readers on Shabbat, six readers on Yom Kippur, etc.).[100] Furthermore,

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[96] s. 9:11.
[97] s. 10:1.
[98] s. 10:2.
[99] s. 10:4.
[100] s. 10:5.

blessings are only recited by the first reader at the beginning of the reading and by the last reader after the conclusion of the reading.[101]

A new custom is explained in Chapter 11 of *Masekhet Soferim*. Previously, we have seen the Rabbis mention that it was necessary to use two scrolls for a festival or perhaps even three scrolls, on an occasion like *Shabbat Shekalim* coinciding with Rosh Chodesh Adar. But the rolling of these scrolls has not been previously discussed. In the event that only one Sefer Torah is available, it is possible to roll the Torah scroll behind the curtain of the ark. However, it is preferable to have two scrolls available. If this is the case, the readers should complete the first reading, and then turn to the second scroll for the additional festival or Rosh Chodesh reading.[102]

The twelfth chapter of *Masekhet Soferim* details greater development in regard to the public reading of the Torah. Although we have already established that blessings were only to be recited at the very beginning and end of the Torah reading, *Masekhet Soferim* indicates that particular sections, specifically those pertaining to the blessings and curses, require a blessing to be recited before and after that section. In essence, these sections become individual rubrics, partitioned off by the blessings that surround them.[103]

Later in this chapter, the Rabbis return to the organization of the reading on days when Shabbat, Festivals, and Rosh Chodesh coincide. A number of different practices are recorded regarding Rosh Chodesh Tevet, the new moon that falls during Chanukah. Again, Soferim follows the pattern suggested by the Mishnah—namely that festival readings interrupt the cycle of Sabbath Torah readings.[104] Thus, if Rosh Chodesh Tevet

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[101] Ibid.
[102] s. 11:3
[103] s. 12:1-4.
[104] Blank 400.

occurs on Shabbat, one should read Numbers 7 (the reading for Chanukah), and then close with Numbers 28:9-15 (the reading for Rosh Chodesh).[105] In the event that Rosh Chodesh Tevet coincides with a weekday, and there are four Torah readers, three will read from the passage about the New Moon (Numbers 28), and one will read from the appropriate passage for Chanukah. The general rule is that the passage relating to the more frequent holiday observance takes precedence.[106] For example, on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, the order of the readings would be Rosh Chodesh and then Chanukah. On a weekday, the weekday reading is suspended and the order should be Rosh Chodesh and then Chanukah because Rosh Chodesh is more frequent. But there is a problem with this. Soferim says that on Rosh Chodesh Tevet that is Shabbat, the order should be Shabbat—Rosh Chodesh—Chanukah. But in Soferim 12:7 the Chanukah reading precedes the Rosh Chodesh reading. Then the matter becomes even more muddled. On the second day of Rosh Chodesh, three people read the Hanukkah portion and one person reads the Rosh Chodesh portion, because a Musaf is to be recited. Musaf is recited because of Rosh Chodesh, not because of Chanukah. Thus, Soferim presents a number of conflicting and confusing customs, suggesting that the text may be a composite with respect to its sources.[107] It is unclear when and how the information that *Masekhet Soferim* provides became more appropriately reconciled and standardized.[108]

The original blessings recited over the Torah and before/after the reading of the Haftarah are indicated in Chapter 13. According to *Masekhet Soferim*, the blessing recited over the Torah before the reading is, "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the

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[105] s. 12:7.
[106] b. Megillah 29b.
[107] Blank 404-405.
[108] s. 12:7.

Universe, who has given us a Torah from heaven, everlasting life from the heights. Blessed are You, O Lord, who gives the Torah."[109] This blessing is slightly different from the form of the blessing we use today.[110]

In contrast, *Masekhet Soferim* is the earliest source of the blessing recited after the reading of the Torah. This blessing is rendered in exactly the same fashion today as it was first introduced in *Masekhet Soferim* 13:8, many hundreds of years ago. The blessing reads, "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has given us a Torah of truth and has planted everlasting life in our midst. Blessed are You, O Lord, who gives the Torah."[111]

Chapter 14 of *Masekhet Soferim* introduces new customs related to reading of other scrolls. For the first time in rabbinic literature, we learn that the book of Ruth is to be read on the first day of Shavuot, and the Song of Songs is to be read on the last two nights of Pesach.[112] Additionally, a blessing is recited at the conclusion of the reading of the book of Esther. This practice has been retained today.

Later in the tractate, we learn what happens when Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah, or Purim coincides with Shabbat. If Rosh Chodesh or the first day of Chanukah falls on Shabbat, then seven readers perform the weekly Torah reading for that Shabbat, and the eighth reader reads the passage for either Rosh Chodesh or Chanukah.[113]

The coincidence of Purim with Shabbat might seem to be a strange matter to us. Since Saadia Gaon in the tenth century, Purim could not fall on Shabbat because the

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[109] s. 13:8.

[110] The blessing we use today originated in b. Berakhot 11b. It is also included in Maimonides, Mishneh Torah Hilkhot T'filah 12:5.

[111] s. 13:8.

[112] s. 14:18.

[113] s. 17:3. It is not specified whether two Sifrei Torah are being employed or only one. This is probably because different communities had different opportunities at their disposal.

observance of the festival might lead someone to carry the megillah scroll into public domain, violating the laws of the Sabbath.[114] However, it was quite possible in the time of *Masekhet Soferim* that Purim could fall on Shabbat. If this was the case, seven readers would read the weekly portion, and the eighth would conclude with the Purim reading (Exodus 17:8-16).[115]

At the conclusion of this chapter, *Masekhet Soferim* focuses on the lectionary. Many of the practices reported in the Talmud are included here. The only significant variation appears in regard to Tisha B'Av. The Rabbis indicate that blessings and curses may be recited, or the community may read from Exodus 33:11-14 and Exodus 34:1-10. Additionally, a Haftarah from Isaiah 55 & 56 is to be read.[116]

The final area of concern in *Masekhet Soferim* is that of the laws of the *arba'ah parashiyot*. Strangely, this topic, which has been at the forefront of other rabbinic documents has been relegated to the rear of the tractate, appearing in the twenty-first chapter. Appropriately, nothing has changed. The development of the *arba'ah parashiyot* has taken so many centuries to construct. It is almost refreshing to see the established practices remain constant for some time![117]

The Geonic Period (*Seder Rav Amram Gaon* and *Siddur Saadia Gaon*)

The 9th-century *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* is the oldest known order of Jewish prayers. Thus, it is also the first text to integrate rules and customs pertaining to the Torah reading into a larger liturgical framework. Regarding material pertinent to our

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[114] Tur, Orach Chayyim 428. See p. 54 below for references to Saadia's discussion of this matter.
[115] s. 17:4.
[116] s. 17:6-7.
[117] s. 21.

study, Amram divides his discussion into weekdays when the Torah is read, and prevailing Sabbath customs.

Amram's text opens with an analysis of the length of weekday Torah portions. Like many of his predecessors, Amram believes that three people read from the Torah on weekdays—a priest, a Levi, and a Yisrael.[118] No less than ten verses should be read. The priest begins by reading three verses, then the Levi reads three verses, and the Yisrael concludes by reading four verses. It is possible to add to this number of verses, adding to the sanctity of the occasion, but the congregation is forbidden to subtract from the minimum number of ten verses.[119]

Because Amram's commentary and references to biblical and rabbinic sources are interspersed amidst the liturgical text, he addresses particular areas of concern when they arise in the service. Thus, the recitation of the Kaddish is next on Amram's agenda. Should the Kaddish[120] be recited at the conclusion of the Torah reading or after the scroll is returned to the ark? Amram suggests that it is more logical to recite Kaddish[121] at the conclusion of the Torah reading because after the community returns the Torah to the ark, they will recite Ashrei.[122]

More information pertaining to weekday practice is included in the section on Shabbat morning Torah reading.[123] Referring to the Talmud, Amram mentions that the ten verses read on weekdays symbolize the ten men who are free from obligation to

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[118] Daniel Shlomo Goldschmidt, Seder Rav Amram Gaon (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1971) 59. The translations of David Hedegärd and Tryggve Kronholm (see bibliography for full reference) were helpful aids.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Likely refers to the *chatzi Kaddish*, a doxological praise of God used to separate various portions of the worship service from one another.

[121] Goldschmidt 60.

[122] A compilation of Psalms 84, 114, 145, and 115.

[123] Goldschmidt 73.

attend synagogue, the Ten Commandments spoken to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the ten divine orders by which the world was created. Amram reiterates that reading more than ten verses should be considered praiseworthy.[124]

Next, Amram addresses the issue of reciting a blessing before and after the reading of the Torah. Amram cites the Talmud, indicating that "for the sake of those who enter, and for the sake of those who leave," blessings are recited over the scroll before and after each reading.[125] Kronholm comments in his edition:

> [P]robably this means that the enactment was given in order that late-comers, arriving after the first reader had recited the introductory Benediction, might not think that there is no need for a Benediction before a Scripture reading. And further that those who had to leave early, being unable to hear the last reader's concluding Benediction, might not think that a Benediction after a Scripture is an unnecessary thing. Therefore, in order to avoid such misunderstandings, each reader should begin and close with a Benediction.[126]

Amram then proceeds to discuss how many readers will be called to the Torah on specific days. As we have studied above, three people were called on weekday mornings, fast days, Chanukah, and Purim. Four people were called on intermediate days of festivals and Rosh Chodesh. On festivals, five were called, on Yom Kippur six, and on Shabbat seven. On festivals, Yom Kippur, and Shabbat, it was considered possible to add to the number of readers. Furthermore, on festivals, Yom Kippur, and Shabbat, the reading of the Torah would conclude with a reading of the Haftarah. The reader of prophetic literature was not counted among the number called to the Torah. Additionally, the congregation read from the Torah first in order to show their respect for the Torah.

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Cf. b. Megillah 21b, s. 13:5 and ht. 8:4.

[126] Tryggve Kronholm, trans., Seder R. Amram Gaon Part II: The Order of Sabbath Prayer;Text Edition with an Annotated English Translation and Introduction, (Sweden: CWK Gleerup Lund, 1974) 93.

By Amram's time, these numbers had clearly been standardized among the Jewish community.[127]

Amram discusses the cycle of Torah readings briefly. He notes that it is necessary to interrupt the cycle of readings if a festival observance should happen to fall on Monday or Thursday mornings. Thus, on Chanukah, Purim, and fast days, the festival reading will trump the weekday reading. The practice on Shabbat is slightly different. On pilgrimage festivals, the festival reading is read instead of the regular weekly reading. On Chanukah, the festival reading is appended to the weekly reading.[128]

Amram also addresses issues of translation. He believes, in accordance with the Mishnah and other sources that one person should read from the law and one should translate it. Neither person should raise their voice over the other. He also indicates that an additional person—whom we would call a gabbai—should assist the reader in fulfilling his duties. The translator should not begin until after the reader has completed the verse. Additionally, the reader should make the translator's job easier, offering him only one verse at a time to translate.[129]

In subsequent pages, Amram addresses the nature of a Shabbat afternoon Torah reading when a festival is imminent. For example, if Rosh Hashanah falls on Monday, we know that we will read the festival portion for Rosh Hashanah on Monday morning. But what will happen on the preceding Shabbat afternoon? Amram indicates that the congregation should continue the weekly cycle and read the next week's portion, even though the festival will be observed on Monday.[130]

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[127] Goldschmidt 74.
[128] Goldschmidt 74-75 & cf. 128.
[129] Goldschmidt 76-77.
[130] Goldschmidt 128.

In contrast to Amram's "interspersed" work, the 10th-century *Siddur* of Saadia Gaon is organized in a much more linear and logical fashion. For example, at the beginning of his analysis, Saadia divides the reading of the Torah into five distinct sections—(1) weekdays, (2) Chol Ha-Moed and Rosh Chodesh, (3) festivals, (4) Yom Kippur, and (5) Shabbat. He reminds his reader that on festivals, Yom Kippur, and Shabbat, the reading of the Torah concludes with a reading from the prophets. The only time that a Haftarah passage is read in the afternoon is on Tisha B'av.[131]

Saadia also includes other information with which we are familiar. Like many of his predecessors, the minimum number of verses the congregation reads from the Torah (three) is important to him. Saadia notes that on Rosh Chodesh there is a possibility of one section only being two verses. In this case, that reading is combined with the subsequent reading of five verses, requiring the reading of seven verses.[132] Additionally, Saadia addresses the issue of the reader's identity. He abides by the categories of priest, Levi, and Yisrael. Saadia acknowledges that additional readers (specifically the *r'vi'ii aliyah* on Rosh Chodesh) can be of any status. If no priests are present, then all readers may be of Yisrael status.[133]

The Torah reading cycle is Saadia's foremost concern. Like Amram before him, Saadia articulates that the weekly Torah reading cycle is only interrupted if a festival or special observance should fall on a Monday or Thursday. If a festival day (*Yom Tov*) should occur on Shabbat, then the reading of the festival portion trumps the reading of the Sabbath portion. Furthermore, on the Shabbat afternoon and Monday/Thursday mornings

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[131] S. Assaf, I. Davidson, and B. I. Joel, eds., Siddur R. Saadja Gaon (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1941) 361-362. The editors translate Saadia's Judeo-Arabic into modern Hebrew. The English translation and interpretation are my own.

[132] Ibid 362.

preceding the festival, the weekly portion of the following week is read, and not the beginning of the festival Torah portion.[134] For example,[135] if Rosh Hashanah is to be celebrated on Tuesday morning, then *Nitzavim*[136] will be read on the Shabbat morning before the festival. On that afternoon and subsequent Monday morning, the community will read the beginning of *Vayelech*[137] and not the beginning of the Rosh Hashanah portion.

In continuing his explication of the Torah reading cycle, Saadia becomes considerably more detailed. In Saadia's community, eight different Torah portions were combined and read over the span of four weeks—*Vayakhel/Pekudei*, *Tazria/Metzora*, *Acharei Mot/Kedoshim*, and *Behar Sinai/Bechukkotai*. Additionally, the three portions *Korach/Chukat/Balak* were combined and read over the span of two weeks, one and a half portions each week. The nature of the calendar determined the reading of *Atem Nitzavim* and *Vayelech*. Ordinarily, these two brief readings would be combined. But if a Shabbat would separate Yom Kippur from Sukkot, then *Nitzavim* would be read prior to Rosh Hashanah, *Vayelech* would be read on the Sabbath between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and *Ha'azinu* would be read on the Sabbath between Yom Kippur and Sukkot.[138]

Saadia indicates that the cycle for the reading of the Torah[139] begins on the 24th of Tishrei, the day after the second day of Shemini Atzeret.[140] This day will only fall on

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[133] Ibid 362-3.
[134] Ibid 363.
[135] This is my own example. It is not included in Saadia's text.
[136] Deuteronomy 29:9.
[137] Deuteronomy 31.
[138] Ibid 364-365.
[139] Saadia's calendar predates Jacob ben Asher's calendar and chart of Torah readings in Tur, Orach Chayyim 428.
[140] There is no indication that the second day of Shemini Atzeret was Simchat Torah by this point.

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Shabbat. Then, it is necessary to determine if the year will be a regular year or a leap year. Thus, there will be eight possible combinations to the Torah reading cycle.[141]

The importance of such a calendar is repeated when Saadia addresses the *arba'ah parashiyot*. By this time, the calendar had been adapted so that Purim would not fall on Shabbat and those attending synagogue would not have to worry about carrying the megillah to services. By Saadia's calculations, Rosh Chodesh Adar could only fall on Shabbat, Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. If Rosh Chodesh happened on Monday, then Shabbat Shekalim would occur on the previous Shabbat, the 28th of Shevat. To insure that Zachor would be read prior to Purim, the passage would be read on the 13th of Adar, leaving the 6th of Adar as a regular weekly Torah reading. Only two Sabbaths remained in the month of Adar—the 20th for Parah, and the 27th for HaChodesh.[142] In his work, Saadia appears to standardize the subject of centuries of rabbinic discussion and disagreement. His explanation is clear, and his decision to base the cycle of readings on the starting point of the Torah reading cycle (the 24th of Tishrei) is a logical decision.

Saadia also provides a detailed list of the Torah readings on each festival. He proceeds festival by festival—Pesach, Shavuot, Tisha B'av, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Chanukah, outlining the Torah and Haftarah passages to be read on each day of the festival.[143] He also mentions that the Haftarah for each Torah reading in the weekly cycle is known.[144]

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[141] Assaf, et al., 365-7.
[142] Ibid 373-4.
[143] Ibid 367-373.
[144] Ibid 367.

The Development of *Ta'amei Ha-Mikra*

In the tenth century, when *'a'amei ha-mikra* were added to the Torah, the public reading of the Torah underwent rather significant changes. These symbols had been significant for many generations, but never before published or printed in the text of the Tanakh. Eric Werner stresses:

> The Masoretic accents, called *ta'amei ha-mikra*, are not a kind of primitive musical notation. They were created by succeeding generations of grammarians in Babylonia and Palestine, and their evolution took several centuries. They provide an exact system of minute signs that govern the structure and punctuation of each biblical sentence. In a wider sense they represent the result of magnificent and punctilious philological examination of the Scriptural text.[145]

Ely Simon adds to this explanation, saying that the Aleppo Codex, "annotated with the masorah by Aaron Ben Asher (c. 900-950 CE) was the first complete Tanakh to be punctuated with the *ta'amei ha-mikra*."[146] Ben Asher's manuscript of the Bible took years to prepare, and included all the marks of vocalization and cantillation.[147] Rabbi Simchah Roth explains that the majority of the work by the masoretes likely occurred prior to the 10th century CE. He remarks:

> To this end, they invented a system of diacritical signs that could be added above and below the existing text in order to indicate how the vowels were to be correctly pronounced. They also invented another system of diacritical signs whose purpose was to indicate the correct relationship of the words of a sentence to each other. The former system we now recognize as nekudot – the vowel-signs by which we read the text – and the latter system is what we call *ta'amei ha'mikra* and they are the signs

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[145] Eric Werner, A Voice Still Heard...:The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazic Jews (London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976) 1.

[146] Ely Simon, The Complete Torah Reading Handbook (New York: The Judaica Press, Inc., 1996) 1.

[147] Ronald H. Isaacs, Jewish Music: Its History, People, and Song (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997) 118.

> which now serve to indicate how the biblical text is to be chanted in public.[148]

It is important to remember that there were several different systems of *ta'amei ha'mikra*—among them the Tiberian system and the Babylonian system. Vocalization was noted predominantly below or above the letters.

Additionally, the *ta'amei ha-mikra* became associated with another seemingly unrelated function—that of the cantillation of the text. According to Eric Werner, "The cantillation of Scripture antedates the establishment of the *ta'amei ha-mikra* by at least nine centuries."[149] Scripture was always declaimed with some kind of varied intonation because that is how texts were rendered out loud in public in the ancient Near East. While the Talmud and other rabbinic documents do not detail a particular method of cantillation, the practice of chironomy (mnemonic hand movements) is recognized. Eventually, these hand movements came to be replaced by the written *ta'amei ha-mikra*.[150] At the outset, it is likely that *ta'amei ha-mikra* functioned as the markings for cantillation, since these philological signs served to delineate and assist with phrasing, pronunciation and emphasis, all three of which are crucial to proper singing of the text. Amnon Shiloah supports this point when he writes, "The prime importance of cantillation is the role it plays in enhancing the words of the prayers as well as those of other basic texts not included in the liturgy."[151]

But throughout the years, cantillation of Scripture came to yield both positive and negative results. In his work *Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Art of Cantillation*, Joshua

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[148] "Rules of Torah Reading," Bet Midrash Virtuali of the Rabbinical Assembly in Israel: Halakhah Study Group (Study of Halakhah in the Religious Climate of Masorti (Conservative) Judaism. Ed. Rabbi Simchah Roth. 16 December 2003. http://www.bmv.org.il

[149] Werner 65.

[150] Ibid. 65-66.

Jacobson offers several reasons why Scripture ought to be chanted. First, he notes that the Babylonian Talmud, in Megillah 32a, as we mentioned above, indicates that Scripture ought to be chanted by one with "a pleasing voice." Evidently, there is halakhic foundation for this practice.[152] Additionally, cantillation represents *hiddur mitzvah*, the beautification of the sacred act of reading from the Torah. Music adds drama to the text, helps amplify the voice of a reader throughout a large audience, makes the text easier to remember, differentiates liturgical reading from secular reading, and serves as a means of communicating with God.[153]

Although cantillation beautified and enhanced the Scriptural reading, it distanced many congregants from the possibility to read. We have already discussed the ancient practice of having each congregant called to the Torah read his own selection of verses. And we have already mentioned how this custom seemed to exist in perpetual decline. Already by the time of the Babylonian Talmud, each congregant was reciting blessings over the scroll, rather than reading from it. With the advent of fixed cantillation signs, reading from the Torah became an even more challenging undertaking. Ismar Elbogen explains:

> But in the course of time the knowledge of the Torah diminished while the readings got longer, and at the same time a particular melody of recitation came to be required; thus, it became difficult to find people who knew how to read their portion. In Babylonia, they therefore turned to the precentor to help the reader, at first in an undertone, later louder, particularly for the sake of melody. Eventually he replaced the congregant completely, and from then on the precentor or a reader specially appointed for this purpose would read alone, while the person called would stand by him in silence.[154]

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[151] Amnon Shiloah, Jewish Musical Traditions (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992) 87.
[152] Joshua R. Jacobson 6.
[153] Joshua R. Jacobson 6-11.
[154] Elbogen 140. Elbogen notes further that cantillation did not seem to impede congregant-based Torah reading in Palestine, the Balkans, and Italy. Congregations in these areas still had congregants

Cantillation was one of the forces that made it more difficult for many people to participate in the public reading of Scripture.

The Mishneh Torah

By the time of Maimonides' monumental halakhic compendium, the *Mishneh Torah*, practices related to the public reading of Torah appear to be more clearly delineated. Maimonides' primary goal in composing the *Mishneh Torah*, stated explicitly in his introduction to the work, was to simplify the presentation of halakhah that had been established over the course of many centuries, providing a singular opinion on recommended and required Jewish practice. Regarding the reading of Torah, Maimonides codifies the majority of his comments in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of *Hilkhot T'filah*: The Laws of Prayer.

Much of the information in the early portion of *Hilkhot T'filah* 12 is information we have already encountered in other sources. Like *Masekhet Soferim* before him, Maimonides attributes the reading of Torah to Moses and Ezra and reiterates the times and seasons when Torah is to be read.[155] Maimonides emphasizes the minimum number of people who must be present for a public Torah reading as well as the minimum number of verses that must be read. In both cases, this number is ten.[156] In *Hilkhot T'filah* 12:5, Maimonides offers us the blessings to be recited before and after the reading

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reading from the scroll as late as the twelfth century. And to this date, many Middle Eastern communities do not use the trope signs for cantillation. Contrarily, by the thirteenth century in Germany, Bohemia, Spain, and France, the precenter had massumed responsibility of reading from the Torah.

[155] Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot T'filah 12:1-2. All further sources from Hilkhot T'filah of Maimonides' Mishneh Torah will be abbreviated in the form <ht. chapter:halakhah>. The Hebrew version of the Mishneh Torah used in this research paper was Mishneh Torah Hu HaYad HaChazakah L'Rabbenu Moshe bar Maimon (New York: Schulsinger, 1946). Eliyahu Touger's translation (see bibliography for full reference) was a helpful aid.

[156] ht. 12:3.

of the Torah. This form deviates from that form established in *Masekhet Soferim*, and mirrors the blessing that congregations around the world use today.[157]

In *Hilkhot T'filah* 12:9, Maimonides addresses issues of decorum.[158] Maimonides quotes Nehemiah 8:3, "The ears of all the people were attentive to the Torah scroll."[159] Using this verse as his prooftext, he is able to claim that congregants should not talk while the Torah is being read. Maimonides regards such behavior as disrespectful. Additionally, one ought not to leave the synagogue while the reader is reading from the Torah, but should endeavor only to depart between *aliyot*.[160]

Next, Maimonides devotes attention to the topic of translation. He attributes the origins of translations to Ezra and claims that translation helps the people understand the words of the Torah.[161] Maimonides recommends time-honored practices of reading the Torah one verse at a time, allowing a translator sufficient time to render translation and interpretation of the specific verse. The translator may not begin until the reader has completed the verse, and the reader may not begin a new verse until the translator finishes his assigned task.[162] The reader may not assist the translator, lest the people believe that the Torah has already been written with a translation.[163] Additionally, as we learned in sources above, certain passages are only to be read and not translated.[164]

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[157] ht. 12:5. This blessing originates in b. Berakhot 11b.
[158] Following the practice of *Seder Rav Amram* before him.
[159] Nehemiah 8:3.
[160] ht. 12:9.
[161] ht. 12:10.
[162] ht. 12:11.
[163] ht. 12:11.
[164] ht. 12:12.

Near the conclusion of *Hilkhot T'filah* 12, Maimonides provides examples of how the reading of the Torah should be incorporated into worship services.[165] Maimonides addresses the order of prayer when there is Musaf, when there is a Haftarah reading and Musaf, at Mincha, and the order of prayer without Musaf. In providing such an analysis, Maimonides mirrors the practice of *Seder Rav Amram*, articulating that the reading of the Torah is an integral part of the larger worship service. Earlier in Jewish tradition, Torah reading was the only aspect of the worship service. By the twelfth century, the recitation of prayer had encapsulated the reading of the Torah, making Torah reading a mere part of the service, rather than the service itself.[166]

Proceeding to *Hilkhot T'filah* 13, Maimonides provides an extensive scriptural calendar for us to consider. To this point in our chronological survey, we have learned about the various Torah readings for particular holidays and fast days. Maimonides takes a different approach, explaining that custom in Israel is to read the Torah in one year.[167] Thus, he establishes the shape of the annual cycle.

The cycle of Torah readings commences on the Sabbath after Sukkot with *Bereshit*.[168] On subsequent Sabbaths, the reading continues with *Eileh Toldot Noah*[169] and *Vayomer Adonai El Avram Lech Lecha*.[170] Maimonides learns from Ezra that it is appropriate to read the curses of Leviticus (*Parashat Bechukotai*) on the Shabbat before the festival of Shavuot, and it is appropriate to read the curses of Deuteronomy (*Parashat*

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[165] It is worth noting that ht. 12:16 explores the number of readers called to the Torah. Maimonides retains the traditionally established numbers of *aliyot*.

[166] ht. 12:20-22.

[167] ht. 13:1. He also notes that some communities still practice the three-year cycle, but this is not a widespread custom.

[168] Genesis 1:1.

[169] Genesis 6:9.

[170] Genesis 12:1

Ki Tavo) on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah.[171] Nevertheless, the prevailing custom is to read *Parashat Bemidbar Sinai*[172] on the Sabbath before Shavuot, *Parashat Va'etchanan*[173] on the Sabbath after Tisha B'Av, and *Parashat Atem Nitzavim*[174] on the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah. Additionally, in an ordinary year that is not a leap year, *Parashat Tzav et Aharon*[175] is read on the Sabbath immediately preceding Pesach.[176] The rest of the calendar is quite pliable and is adjusted for festival readings as needed. In certain cases, sections of the Torah may be combined. The pericopes falling into this category include *Vayakhel & Pekudei*, *Tazria & Metzora*, *Acharei & Kedoshim*, *Behar & Behukkotai*, *Chukkat & Balak*, *Matot & Masei*, and *Nitzavim & Vayelech*.[177]

Maimonides' remarks in these brief teachings reveal great changes in the practice of weekly Torah reading. Over the course of many centuries, Torah reading has come to occupy a significant place in the synagogue worship service. By Maimonides' time, the reading of the Torah had been divided into weekly segments, and many communities completed the reading of the scroll in one full year. By establishing a rigid but flexible structure, the calendar of readings could be easily adjusted, depending on whether the year was normal or leap. And thus, the reading of the Torah could be completed in one calendar year.

In *Hilkhot T'filah* 13:3 Maimonides clarifies the discussion about which portions of Torah are read on Monday and Thursday mornings and Shabbat afternoon. Maimonides is the only writer to provide his readers with an example. If the reader

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[171] ht. 13:2.
[172] Numbers 1:1.
[173] Deuteronomy 3:23.
[174] Deuteornomy 29:9.
[175] Leviticus 6:1.
[176] ht. 13:2.
[177] Ibid.

concluded *Parashat Bereshit* on Shabbat morning, then on Shabbat afternoon, Monday and Thursday morning, and the following Shabbat morning, the reader will begin with the first (approximately) ten verses of *Parashat Noach.*[178]

Next, Maimonides addresses concerns regarding Rosh Chodesh. While the nature of the four Torah readings has already been established, Maimonides mentions that on Rosh Chodesh that is also Shabbat, one should read from two separate Torah scrolls. The reader will read the Parashah of the week for Shabbat from the first scroll, and the reading for Rosh Chodesh from the second scroll.[179] Maimonides clarifies this practice when he says, "Two Torah scrolls are removed for every festival. The second scroll always relates to the ancient sacrificial offering."[180] In this case, since Rosh Chodesh involved an additional sacrifice, when it coincides with Shabbat, a second scroll is removed. According to Maimonides, Isaiah 66:1-24 serves as haftarah on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh. When Rosh Chodesh Av coincides with Shabbat, Isaiah 1:14-31 is used. When Rosh Chodesh falls on a Sunday, then the Machar Chodesh Haftarah, from I Samuel 20:18-42 is used.[181]

Concerning the festivals, Maimonides clearly articulates that festival readings interrupt the regular cycle of weekly Torah readings.[182] Maimonides retains most of the reading customs previously established by the Babylonian Talmud and *Masekhet Soferim.*[183]

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[178] ht. 13:3.
[179] ht. 13:4.
[180] ht. 13:14.
[181] ht. 13:4.
[182] ht. 13:8.
[183] Where Maimonides retains a previously established custom, it is not necessary to list the verses recited. This section of the chapter only includes Maimonides' changes to the scriptural calendar.

Maimonides also records new customs. First, regarding the first day of Pesach, it is customary to read Leviticus 23:4-44, but Maimonides, drawing on *Seder Rav Amram*, reveals that some communities read Exodus 12:21-51.[184] Second, regarding Rosh Hashanah, Maimonides establishes the first day Torah reading as Genesis 21:1-33 and the first day Haftarah as I Samuel 1. The haftarah of Jeremiah 31 has been moved to the second day.[185]

Maimonides explains additional practices regarding Tisha B'av. The Torah reading for the morning is Deuteronomy 4:25-40 with a haftarah from Jeremiah 8:13-9:23. The readings from Exodus 32 and 34, established in Masekhet Soferim have been moved to the afternoon.[186]

Consequently, drawing from *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* in the 4th/5th centuries, Maimonides records the custom of reciting different haftarot on the three Sabbaths before Tisha B'av and the seven Sabbaths following Tisha B'Av. On these three Sabbaths, communities read Jeremiah 1:1-2:3 the first week, 2:4-28 the second week, and Isaiah 1 the third week. These Sabbaths are known as three Sabbaths of rebuke. Following Tisha B'av, the mood of the calendar shifts to comfort. In the seven weeks between Tisha B'av and Rosh Hashanah, haftarot related to comfort are recited, beginning with *Nachamu* (Isaiah 40:1-26).[187] Like *Masekhet Soferim* before him, Maimonides retains the established customs regarding the *arba'ah parashiyot*.[188]

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[184] ht. 13:8. This also appears in Seder Rav Amram.
[185] ht. 13:10.
[186] ht. 13:18.
[187] ht. 13:19.

The Tur

Following Maimonides' monumental *Mishneh Torah*, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher composed the *Arba'ah Turim*, also known as the Tur, in the 14th century. Rabbi Jacob arranged his material topically into four large divisions. The most important division for our purposes is *Orach Chayyim*, a section which includes, among other things, Rabbi Jacob's focus upon worship practices.[189]

Regarding the reading of Torah in the synagogue, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher's information is arranged differently than his predecessors. Instead of focusing his discussion about Torah reading in one particular section, material is scattered throughout a number of different chapters. For example, in *Orach Chayyim* 575, Rabbi Jacob explains the practices related to the reading of the Torah on Rosh Hashanah. In this section, we learn that five people will read (in accordance with the custom of calling five people to the Torah on a festival day), and that two Torah scrolls will be used. The portion will be taken from *Parashat Vayera* on both days of the observance. The first reading will come from the verses beginning with the words *V'adonai pakad et Sarah*[190] and the second day's reading will come from the verses beginning with the words *Vayehi achar ha-d'varim.*[191] In the case that Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, the portion is divided among the seven people who are called to the Torah. Whether Rosh Hashanah falls on a weekday or on Shabbat, the second Torah scroll is always used to read about the schedule of ancient sacrificial offerings[192] in the book of Numbers.[193] Rabbi Jacob

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[188] ht. 13:20.

[189] http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/TalmudMap/Tur.html#Tur. Cf. Menachem Elon, Ha-Mishpat Ha-Ivri Volumes 1-4 [Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles Trans. Bernard Auerbach and Melvin J. Sykes] (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994).

[190] Genesis 21:1.

[191] Genesis 22:1.

[192] Tur Orach Chayyim 575.

ben Asher's practice of arranging the laws regarding the reading of Torah according to the appropriate festival is continued throughout his work. For example, laws relating to the reading of the Torah on Purim are included in his section discussing the laws of Purim observance.[194]

Rabbi Jacob is also concerned about the nature of the Haftarah reading. Like Maimonides before him, Rabbi Jacob organizes the Haftarah calendar according to the three weeks of rebuke prior to Tisha B'av, and the seven weeks of comfort following it. Haftarot related to these themes must occur on these Sabbaths. On other Sabbaths, Rabbi Jacob asserts that the overarching theme of the Haftarah must be in accord with a theme from the weekly or festival Torah reading.[195]

But perhaps Rabbi Jacob's most significant contribution to Torah reading is the calendar that he offers in *Orach Chayyim* 428. Step by step, Rabbi Jacob analyzes every possible combination for the Jewish calendar, down to the number of days in the month and how this affects the days of the week on which various festivals will fall. He claims that the month of Tishrei is always *malei* and has thirty days. The month of Tevet is always *chaser* and has twenty-nine days. In most cases, all of the rest of the months alternate accordingly *malei-chaser-malei-chaser*. Furthermore, certain festivals may only occur on particular days of the week. For example, Rosh Hashanah may only fall on a Shabbat, Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday.[196]

Knowing this information, and the cycle of readings established by Maimonides and the ancient Rabbis before him, it is possible to construct a calendar of readings. We

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[193] Numbers 29.
[194] Tur Orach Chayyim 691.
[195] Tur Orach Chayyim 428.
[196] Ibid.

know that in one example of a non-leap year,[197] when Rosh Hashanah falls on a Monday, the Fast of Gedaliah and Yom Kippur will fall on subsequent Wednesdays. Consequently, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret will begin on Mondays. The celebration of Rosh Chodesh Marcheshvan will begin on a Tuesday and Wednesday.

If we follow this calendar accordingly, *Shabbat Shekalim*, the first of the *arba'ah parashiyot*, will fall on the twenty-ninth day of Shevat. This day is significant to our study. We know from the "rule of alternating months" above, that Shevat is considered *malei* and thus has thirty days. Therefore, the twenty-ninth day is not considered Rosh Chodesh Adar. Since *Shabbat Shekalim* and Rosh Chodesh Adar do not coincide, only two Torah scrolls (one for the weekly portion and one for *Shekalim*) will be removed. There will be a break of a week before *Parashat Zachor* is read on the thirteenth day of Adar. This is the Shabbat closest to Purim, not the sixth day that falls in the preceding week. Thus there will be no separation between the third and fourth weeks, *Parashat Parah*, and *Parashat HaChodesh*.

Continuing in our study, we know of the rules regarding which *parashiot* must be read on which Sabbaths. We can therefore complete our calendar according to the limited information that Rabbi Jacob ben Asher provides for us. In each of his calendrical combinations relating to leap years and non-leap years, he also explains which of the *parashiot* are to be combined and which are to be read individually.[198] As an example, in the calendar arrangement that we have just briefly studied, all of the seven

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[197] A year with only twelve months.

[198] Ibid. See Maimonides' remarks above about the fourteen parashiyot that may be combined as seven or read individually depending on the structure of a given year.

parashiot are read jointly, with the exception of *Chukkat* and *Balak* which are read on separate weeks.[199]

Rabbi Jacob ben Asher's detailed calendar is clearly a significant contribution to our understanding of the table of scriptural readings. One may even understand its usage today. The calendar for 5765, corresponding to our years 2004-2005 is in the fourth column relating to leap-years. Rosh Hashanah fell on Thursday, *Parashat Zachor* was read on the eighth day of Adar Sheni, Tisha B'av fell on a Sunday, and all Torah readings that could have been read together were read separately, on different Sabbaths.[200]

The Shulkhan Arukh

In the 16th century, Rabbi Joseph Karo took the work of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher's *Tur* even further, in authoring the *Shulkhan Arukh*. Karo's work was based on his commentary to the *Tur*, known as the *Beit Yosef*. This commentary was eventually printed in the margins of the *Tur*. Karo maintained the structure of the *Tur*, but divided each section into numbered paragraphs, creating easier opportunities for reading. His final opinions were based on the 11th-century Rif (Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi), Maimonides, and Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel (the Rosh), the father of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher. Over time, Karo's *Shulkhan Arukh* became recognized as the authoritative halakhic compendium.[201]

Karo follows the structure established by Rabbi Jacob ben Asher. Hence, *Orach Chayyim* 685, referring to the laws of the *arba'ah parashiyot* in the *Tur*, is also *Orach Chayyim* 685, the laws of *arba'ah parashiyot* in the *Shulkhan Arukh*. Karo explores much of the same information that we have already studied, explaining the construction

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[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.

of the calendar around *Parashat Shekalim, Parashat Zachor, Parashat Parah,* and *Parashat HaChodesh.* The practice of removing two Torah scrolls on these days, as well as reciting a Haftarah portion related to their theme, has become customary.[202]

Even though particular practices related to the reading of the Torah have been relegated to their appropriate holidays,[203] Karo's section on the laws of Torah reading in the synagogue are also of great significance.[204] It is in these chapters that Karo discusses the rules for the reading of Torah specifically, not necessarily as they relate to festival observance. For example, in *Shulkhan Arukh Orach Chayyim* 135:2, Karo codifies the decision explicated by Maimonides above. Where the Torah reading ends on Shabbat morning, the reader will begin on Shabbat afternoon, and the subsequent Monday, Thursday, and Shabbat mornings. This ruling can be dated to the controversy present in the Tosefta, approximately thirteen hundred years before Karo's time. Thus we note that Karo's rulings were based on practices that had been debated and tinkered with for many generations.[205]

In *Shulkhan Arukh* 139:2, Karo explores the medieval difficulty in permitting community members to read from the Torah. Karo believes that anyone who does not know how to read should not ascend to the Sefer Torah and read from it.[206] And clearly, rehearsing a portion beforehand was of great importance! But as we have seen throughout this chronological survey, ability relating to Torah reading diminished as a result of lessened proficiency in Hebrew reading and the requirement of scriptural

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[201] http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/TalmudMap/ShA.html

[202] Shulkhan Arukh Orach Chayyim 685.

[203] For example, see Orach Chayyim 684 for Torah reading on Hanukkah, Orach Chayyim 621 for Torah reading on Yom Kippur and Orach Chayyim 566 for Torah reading on a public fast day.

[204] Shulkhan Arukh Orach Chayyim 135-148.

[205] Ibid 135:2.

[206] Ibid 139:2.

cantillation. Rabbi Simchah Roth argues, "As we move into the high Middle Ages, we find that this situation [having community members read their own portion] no longer prevails. Because most people would not have been capable of reading accurately from the Torah it became the custom for a Torah reader to read the lectionary on behalf of the honorees."[207] Thus, it was regular practice for the person or people called to the Torah to recite blessings over the scroll. Elbogen teaches that the importance of these blessings became paramount.[208]

Whereas the earliest rabbinic texts explore the notion that blessings were only recited prior to the reading and after the completed reading of the Torah, Karo offers a different opinion. By the sixteenth century, reciting blessings over each individual section of the reading was commonplace. As Karo notes, "All the readers recite a blessing before and after the reading."[209] As noted in the preceding paragraph, blessings over the Torah came to replace the honor of being called to the Torah to read directly from the scroll.

Karo also offers some opinions regarding translation. In the time of the Gemara, Karo recognizes that Aramaic translation was an important practice, providing a means by which the people could understand what they were hearing. Nowadays, Karo indicates that Aramaic translation of the text is no longer customary.[210] It would be beneficial to create a translation in a vernacular that congregants might appreciate.

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[207] http://www.bmv.masorti.org.il. 22 July 2003.
[208] Elbogen 141.
[209] Shulkhan Arukh Orach Chayyim 139:4.
[210] Shulkhan Arukh Orach Chayyim 145:3

However, Rabbi Simchah Roth disagrees with this analysis, commenting that translating the full Torah portion would double the length of the Torah reading.[211]

From this analysis, we glean the later (and current) practice of distributing *chumashim* printed with translations to synagogue attendees. *Chumashim* enabled congregants to follow along in their native language, while the reading of the Torah was read in Hebrew, according to traditionally established guidelines.

Concluding Thoughts

Our study of Bible, Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, *Masekhet Soferim*, *Seder Rav Amram*, *Siddur Saadia*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Tur*, and *Shulkhan Arukh* has enabled us to see the two thousand-year evolution of Torah reading in the synagogue. Our research has shown the development of many customs relating to the calendar of Torah readings including, the establishment of practices for the *arba'ah parashiyot*, the difference between reciting the blessing over individual portions versus reciting the blessing over the whole Torah reading, and the ways in which the advent of systems of cantillations signs affected the public declamation of Scripture. While many original practices were retained for centuries, new customs developed with the passing of time. The reading of the Torah was never stagnant or entirely the same from generation to generation. In the next chapter, we will examine the next step in these changes—addressing the ways in which Judaism's Reform movement adapted the reading of the Torah to suit the needs of their community.

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[211] http://www.bmv.masorti.org.il. 9 March 2004.

Chapter 2:
Two Hundred Years of Change and Inconsistency

In the previous chapter, our studies of selected traditional sources revealed a number of remarkable trends in the public reading of the Torah. Whereas one might surmise that the reading of the Torah remained constant and unchanged for thousands of years, our research proves that this is not entirely the case. Many customs that originated in rabbinic times are still observed today. But over the course of two thousand years, the reading of the Torah in "traditional" synagogues changed. New customs for the *arba'ah parashiyot* emerged. Cantillation affected the public declamation of Scripture. The honor of being called to read from the Torah became redefined as an honor of being called to recite blessings over the scroll. Even the cycle of readings for various calendar days underwent development.

This evolutionary process did not cease with the writing of the *Shulkhan Arukh* in the sixteenth century. Just as Torah reading experienced change for two thousand years, so too would a dynamic development continue into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and America.

In general, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries bore witness to the most dramatic and wide-reaching attempts at Reform. For some, the title "Reform Judaism" might be a misnomer because Judaism experienced numerous "reforms" throughout its history. For others, the title "Reform Judaism" might simply indicate that its adherents were influenced by the example of a Reformation in Christianity. Nevertheless, as rabbis and congregants questioned the reasoning behind many customs and observances that

appeared to have lost their relevance, Judaism adapted to contemporary societal needs and norms.

Many factors contributed to the need for change in the Jewish community. In this highly rationalist and enlightened age, Jews were, for the most part, quite miserable. Their religious practices secluded them from the Christian European population, and required that they adhere to what their neighbors deemed to be antiquated and outdated customs.[1] Thus, when the Jews themselves came to perceive a need for religious reform, they sought to adopt the practices and religious aesthetics of their Christian neighbors as a way of blending in with the larger community of which they were now significant members. In these Christian societies, the length of Jewish religious services and the inaccessible nature of much of Jewish tradition presented enormous challenges for rabbis and their congregants. For many prominent businessmen, it was no longer profitable to remain in synagogue at length on Shabbat and other days of the week. Hebrew also presented tremendous challenges.

With all of these factors in view, the reading of the Torah in the synagogue continued to undergo remarkable changes. Our chronological study in this chapter will highlight many of the significant debates and struggles that perplexed nineteenth and twentieth-century reformers. By the time our research arrives at the present day, we will be hard-pressed to find any semblance of continuity in Torah reading practices in Reform Judaism.

The earliest written evidence of change to the reading of the Torah appears in 1810 at Israel Jacobson's congregation in Seesen in the Kingdom of Westphalia.

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[1] A.Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Music in Its Historical Development (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929) 233.

Jacobson offered three significant changes to the reading of the Torah. First, he eliminated the chanting of Torah and Prophets, because the lesson from Scripture in Protestant churches was read, not chanted.[2] Second, Jacobson redesigned the manner in which people were called to bless over the scroll of the Torah. Traditionally, the formula for calling someone to the Torah involved addressing him as "so-and-so" the son of "so-and-so." Because the emancipation of the Jewish people in Westphalia was "contingent upon the adoption" of surnames, Jacobson abolished the announcement of the father's name, and announced instead a family name.[3] Jacobson was so determined to require this practice that only congregants who had selected a family name would be called to the Torah.[4] Third, Jacobson addressed the ruckus created on the evening of *Simchat Torah*, the Festival of Rejoicing in the Law. *Hakafot*, the series of processions with the scroll, were banned. Additionally, even though this was the only night of the year on which Torah could be read, no reading was held.[5]

Jacobson's alterations appear expressly concerned with decorum, propriety and assimilation. Ismar Elbogen also asserts, "Jacobson based his decisions on the fact that knowledge of the Hebrew language was in decline."[6] Furthermore, by 1810, the synagogue service sought to imitate, in some capacity, the church service. Dancing with the Torah scroll and being called to the Torah by anything but a family name would be

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[2] Idelsohn 236.

[3] Robert Chazan, "Names," Encyclopaedia Judaica Volume 12: Min-O (Jerusalem: Macmillan Company, 1971) 803-814.

[4] Jakob J. Petuchowski, Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism (New York: The World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1968) 109-110.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ismar Elbogen, Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993) 300. Elbogen's source is: H. Auerbach, Geschichte der Israelitischen Gemeinde Halberstadt (Halberstadt: H. Meier, 1860) 216.

deemed as inappropriate, highly unbourgeois behavior, perhaps even causing the ire of the community-at-large.

Concerning the subject of cantillation, Jacobson's community was not the only congregation to abolish chanting from the Torah. A few years later, the new Reform temples in both Berlin and Hamburg abolished cantillation.[7] In 1818, Eliezer Lieberman's pamphlet entitled *Or Nogah* fully supported this decision. Lieberman claimed that no one could imagine Moses commanding the Torah be sung aloud. Besides, every country reads from the Torah in different melodies and musical modes. And at different festival seasons, the reader chanted the text in a manner special to that observance, like on Rosh Hashanah or Tisha B'Av. Lieberman wondered why the reading of the text should be limited to a particular chant, or how the requirement for cantillation came about.[8] Clearly, the practice of chanting from the Torah scroll experienced significant decline in the early nineteenth century.

Problems with the Torah service were not limited to chanting. Length of *parashiyyot* in the weekly calendar created great concern among the leadership and laity. As Lawrence Hoffman expresses, "Reform Jews in Germany found the lengthy readings ponderous and unspirited, since the only way to get through them was to read or chant them at breakneck speed without attending to the details of what the words say."[9] Thus, in 1819, we find the first recorded attempt to adopt the ancient Palestinian custom of

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[7] Idelsohn 240 & Petuchowski 85. According to Idelsohn, Hamburg abolished chanting in 1817 and, according to Petuchowski, Berlin adapted the custom of reading from the Torah, instead of chanting from the Torah between 1815 and 1818.

[8] Alexander Guttman, The Struggle Over Reform in Rabbinic Literature During the Last Century and a Half (New York: The World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1977) 17.

[9] Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Introduction to the Liturgy: The Reading of Torah—Retelling the Jewish Story in the Shadow of Sinai," My People's Prayer Book: Traditional Prayers, Modern Commentaries Volume 4: Seder K'riat HaTorah (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000) 9.

reading from the Torah according to a triennial cycle.[10] Through this practice, the reading of the Torah would be completed in three or three and one-half years, rather than chanted quickly and without meaning in one calendar year. The triennial cycle remained a topic of concern throughout the nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, debates on many other subjects continued. In 1837, a newspaper article explained a Judenordnung (a ruling for the Jews) issued to the Saxe-Weimar community at the beginning of 1823. This particular memorandum addressed the need for translation, stressing that the Jewish worship service must be conducted in German. As we noted in the previous chapter, Hebrew literacy declined throughout the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, even with a great push for liturgy recited in the vernacular, the Judenordnung argued that during worship services, the Torah and Haftarah should be recited in Hebrew. Consequently, a German translation should follow.

As in earlier sources, the need for translation was not comprehensive. Certain chapters and verses, including Genesis 19:31-37, 35:22, 35:28, Exodus 32:21-34, Leviticus 18:6, 18:19, Numbers 5:11-31, 6:1, 6:22-27, 25:6-8, and Deuteronomy 27 and 28 were not translated to the public. Many of these verses relate to more of the racy scenes in the Torah. Congregational leadership did not deem their translation to be in keeping with the norms of bourgeois propriety.

Additionally, the Judenordnung permitted Hebrew in other areas of the synagogue service too. Particularly, the leadership allowed Hebrew in the benedictions before and after the reading of the Torah, the removing of the Torah from the Ark, the blowing of the shofar, and the recitation of the priestly benediction.[11]

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[10] Elbogen 303.
[11] Petuchowski 124-125.

Clearly, from one synagogue to the next, a variety of issues arose. For many years, decorum during the reading of the Torah remained a serious concern. In 1838, the synagogues of Wuerttemberg issued a declaration prohibiting processions with the Torah on the eve of Simchat Torah. Much like Jacobson's congregation in Westphalia, nearly thirty years earlier, the Wuerttemberg community believed *hakafot* to be "...offensive to the decorum and dignity of the worship service."[12]

Evidently, a significant aspect involving decorum related to the timing and length of the worship service. Longer, meaningless services caused a decline in attention span. Congregants desired worship that would offer spiritual fulfillment without occupying too much of their time. And in 1844, the community in Frankfurt am Main hired Rabbi Leopold Stein to solve these problems. Stein employed the triennial cycle of Torah readings, and instituted a German exposition of the Torah on Sabbaths when he abstained from preaching a more formal sermon. When Stein delivered a sermon, the service lasted approximately 1 3/4 hours on Shabbat. On days when Stein did not sermonize, services lasted approximately 1 1/2 hours. The length of these services created an opportunity for considerable devotion and order in the synagogue.[13]

But even though Stein managed to address the issue of decorum in his community, the subject remained a concern for many other congregations. A series of rabbinical conferences between 1844 and 1846 discussed decorum as a significant portion of their agenda. In 1844, at the Brunswick Rabbinical Conference, Joseph Maier argued:

> In addition, there are long and unintelligible disquisitions which of necessity cause boredom, encourage talking and conversation with

[12] Petuchowski 114.
[13] Petuchowski 155-156.

> neighbors, interfere with order and quiet, and contribute nothing to the dignity of the house of God or of the worship service. The calling up to the Torah, the *teki'at shofar*, and the *n'tilat lulav* are customs of which no one would claim that in their present manner of practice they encourage meditation and edification.[14]

That decorum related to any aspect of the Torah service would create a problem revealed a serious disconnect between the people and the time-honored significance of the public declamation of Scripture. Were Torah and Hebrew unfamiliar and outdated? And how could the community address the congregational murmuring related to these subjects?

The Frankfort Rabbinical Conference in 1845 represents a watershed in the discussion of these subjects and many others. Although individual communities still experienced significant difficulty after 1845, many rabbis attempted to debate, and perhaps resolve, a plethora of conflicts.

Conversations pertaining to the reading of the Torah engendered diverse responses from participants. Gunther Plaut remarks, "The first public debate on this subject of reading from the Torah is very interesting in the light of what has taken place since. The question of reading from the Torah has been debated time and time again and the religious leaders are still divided in opinion."[15] These interesting debates addressed the language in which the reading of the Torah was to be conducted, the celebration of Simchat Torah, the need for translation, and the abolition of the *Aufrufen* (when a man is called to recite blessings over the Torah). Resolution did not come easily.

Regarding the language of declamation, some rabbis supported reading from the Torah in Hebrew. Levi Herzfeld believed that Hebrew contained a necessary "mystical

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[14] Gunther W. Plaut, The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of its European Origins (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1963) 155.

[15] David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism: New and Revised Edition (New York: Macmillan Company, 1931) footnote 85, 462.

element," a feature important to public declamation of Scripture.[16] Samuel Hirsch agreed with Herzfeld, arguing that Hebrew was the language of the Torah. Nevertheless, he favored an abbreviated reading from the Torah.[17] Gotthold Salomon believed in abbreviation too. He supported reading from the Torah without translation. Furthermore, a triennial Torah reading and an abnegation of translation would significantly diminish the length of worship services.[18] Even Samuel Holdheim, often regarded by historians as a truly radical reformer, assented to the idea that the Torah should be read in Hebrew for the benefit of children. Young people needed to hear the Pentateuch declaimed in its original language. Holdheim only supported reading portions in German that would benefit women in the congregation.[19]

Other rabbis believed the reading ought to be conducted in German. Bernhard Wechsler presented one of the strongest statements of this position. He argued that the purpose of reading from the Torah was to learn the meaning, not to demonstrate one's linguistic proficiency. Thus, he supported readings conducted in German. Only passages that could not be rendered in German should be read in Hebrew. Wechsler clearly regarded reading from the Torah in Hebrew as a last resort.[20] Additionally, Heymann Jolowicz maintained, "[The] reading should be in German."[21] Jolowicz continued, "No passage is objectionable to him who comes into the house of God with a pure heart."[22] Clearly, the attendees presented a number of different opinions. Consensus would be difficult to achieve.

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[16] Philipson 173.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Philipson 172.
[21] Philipson 173.
[22] Ibid.

The rabbis attempted to strike a balance regarding the question of translation. Ludwig Phillipson supported the importance of Hebrew as a necessary element in the worship service. He argued, "Hebrew also is a means of teaching through reading from the Torah. This must not be eliminated because otherwise the Bible would be entirely removed from the eyes of the people. The sermon further compliments the teaching."[23] At first glance, Philippson's commentary seems partially obtuse. What he appears to suggest is that a rabbi may read from the Torah in Hebrew and then offer a commentary in German on the meaning of the rendered scriptural verses. Later in the worship service, a sermon may emphasize and amplify the message that the rabbi read from the Torah. As Ismar Elbogen comments, "Reading the Torah in the vernacular[24] was not enough to achieve the purpose of ensuring thorough knowledge of the Scripture's contents and disseminating its interpretation; its contents had also to be explained and synthesized."[25]

The subject of *Aufrufen* carried significant weight in the rabbinic discussion. Throughout history, the honor of being called to read from the Torah came to be replaced by the honor of being called to recite blessings over the scroll. But many rabbis disagreed regarding the importance of this "honor." Calling gentleman after gentleman to the Torah greatly lengthened the service, distracting attendees from their worship, and ruining synagogue decorum. But J. Gosen supported retention of the *Aufrufen.* He argued that when a Jew is called to the Torah, he regards this honor as a confession of faith. Holdheim quickly shot him down. He believed that *Aufrufen* should be abolished, simply because recitation of these words failed to demonstrate a confession of faith.

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[23] Plaut 165.

[24] Clarification: Here Elbogen refers to the practice of reading the Torah in Hebrew and following this reading with a translation in the vernacular.

[25] Elbogen 156.

Abraham Adler attacked this subject from a different perspective. Adler clearly sensitized himself and his community to the manner in which calling men to the Torah created a disparity between the sexes. In the community where Adler preached and desired equality, he could not support a ritual practice that only welcomed the participation of men. Furthermore, he suggested that an elimination of *Aufrufen* would shorten the worship service, thereby heightening congregational interest.[26]

By the conclusion of the conference, the attending rabbis reached a number of agreements. A majority[27] of rabbis agreed that Hebrew ought to be retained in many aspects of the service. Their list included the *Barekhu*, the *Shema*, the first and last three benediction of the *T'filah*, and the reading of the Torah.[28] All other sections of the service could be rendered in German.[29] All but five participants voted in favor of instituting a triennial Torah reading cycle.[30] Every rabbi supported translation of the Torah reading. But Gunther Plaut indicates, "the only difference of opinion arose from the consideration of the best manner of carrying this out; many felt that this translation or explanation should take place only when there was no sermon."[31] Simchat Torah would be celebrated every three years.[32] The Rabbis voted to retain the *Aufrufen*, even though some colleagues disagreed regarding their place in the worship service.[33]

The effects of the decision of the Frankfort Rabbinical Conference to adopt the triennial cycle of Torah reading were widespread. Numerous congregations affirmed this decision, believing that the triennial cycle significantly shortened the length of worship

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[26] Philipson 182.
[27] The vote was eighteen to twelve. Philipson 173.
[28] Petuchowski 193.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Philipson 181.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

services.[34] In 1845, in the second edition of the congregation's prayer book, the Hamburg Temple published "a chart describing the division of the Torah according to this principle."[35] This chart marks a significant departure from the traditional reading of the Torah, mirroring the ancient Palestinian custom of completing the reading of the Torah over a period of three years. The table structures the reading of the Torah over a period of 154 weeks—forty-three for Genesis, thirty-two for Exodus, twenty-four for Leviticus, thirty-one for Numbers, and twenty-four for Deuteronomy.[36] The chart also provides the opening verse of each new triennial *parashah*. For example, on the first week of the cycle, the congregation would begin with *bereshit bara elohim* (Genesis 1:1) and continue through Genesis 2:3. On the second week, they would begin at *eileh tol'dot hashamayim* (Genesis 2:4) and stop at Genesis 3:21.[37] This table makes no mention of appropriate *haftarot* to be read—either from the Prophets or the Writings.

The Hamburg community was not the only one to embrace the triennial reading of the Torah. In 1854, Abraham Geiger's prayer book included a lectionary of Scripture, rendered according to a three-year Torah reading cycle.[38] Geiger's lectionary is divided into three columns, one for each of the triennial cycle. The leftmost column indicates the readings for the first year, the middle column stands for the second year, and the rightmost column offers the readings for the third year. Additionally, Geiger recognized a need to clarify his community's stance in relation to those communities retaining the annual cycle of Torah readings. He not only provides a three-year calendar, but also

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[33] Philipson 182.
[34] Elbogen 133.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Seder Ha-Avodah: Gebetbuch für die offentliche und hausliche Andacht der Israeliten, nach dem Gebruach des Neuen Israelitischen Tempels in Hamburg (Hamburg: B.G. Berendfohn, 1845) 431-433.
[37] Seder Ha-Avodah 431.
[38] Elbogen 318 and Petuchowski 149.

indicates the corresponding *parashah* in the annual cycle. For example, on *Shabbat Bereshit* in year one, the traditional community would read *Parashat Bereshit* while Geiger's community would read Genesis 1:1-2:3 like Hamburg. On *Shabbat Bereshit* in year two, the traditional community would read *Parashat Bereshit* while Geiger's community would read Exodus 12:29-12:51. In the third year, the traditional community would again read *Parashat Bereshit* while Geiger's community would read Numbers 2:1-2:34.[39] Furthermore, Geiger recognizes that certain *parashiyyot* may be combined at various times throughout the calendar. He indicates these selections in his table.[40] Again, no mention is made of effects on the cycle of Haftarot.

A few years later, in 1858, Rabbi David Einhorn addressed the need for an alternative cycle of Haftarot in his prayer book *Olat Tamid.* Einhorn's lectionary adapted the reading of the Haftarah portions to match the theme of the selection from the Torah. For example, on the first week of the cycle, the reading from the Torah will be Genesis 1:1-2:3. The Haftarah for this week is Psalm 148. This cycle connects the episode of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 with the creation-based language from this particular Psalm.[41] On the second week of the cycle,[42] the reading from the Torah will be Genesis 2:4-25. The Haftarah associated with this reading is from Proverbs 31:10-31. Since the Torah

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[39] Abraham Geiger, Seder t'filah d'var yom b'yomo: Israelitische Gebetbuch für den öffentlichen Gottesdienst im ganzen Jahre, mit Einschluss der Sabbathe und sämmtlicher Feier-und festtage (Breslau: Berlag von Julius Hanauer [sic], 1854) 115.

[40] The eight *parashiyyot* are *Terumah-T'tzaveh, Vayakhel-Pekudei, Tazria-Metzora, Acharei Mot-Kedoshim, B'har-Bchukkotai, Chukat-Balak, Matot-Massei,* and *Nitzavim-Vayelech.* Geiger deviates from traditional norm by including *Terumah-T'tzaveh* in this list. Traditionally, only the other seven combinations are recognized.

[41] David Einhorn, Olath Tamid: Gebetbuch fuer Israelitische Reform-Gemeinde, "Dreijäehriger Cyclus der Thora-Vorlesungen nebst den haftaroth [sic]" (Baltimore: 1848), 487.

[42] The week which corresponds to *Parashat Noach* in the annual cycle.

portion mentions the creation of woman, the appropriate Haftarah discusses the *eishet chayil*, the woman of valor.[43]

This cycle continues in this manner for three years. The community reads shortened portions and Haftarot, all deviating from the traditionally established annual cycle. By the conclusion of the first year, the community will read through Exodus 12:28.[44] By the conclusion of the second year, the community will read through the end of the first chapter of Numbers.[45] And at the conclusion of the third year, the community will conclude the Torah.[46] This particular triennial cycle does not include the reading of *Zot Habracha*[47] which, according to the decision of the Frankfort Rabbinical Conference, will be read at the triennial celebration of Simchat Torah.

Similarly, a few years later in 1861, Joseph von Maier's Stuttgart prayer book noted that the congregation should read Torah according to a triennial cycle. Such an abbreviated reading would leave more time for the delivery of an edifying sermon.[48]

Yet the triennial cycle also met with significant controversy. At the 1869 Synod of Augsburg, rabbis in attendance debated the manners in which Scripture was publicly declaimed. At the forefront of these discussions was Salomon Sulzer who, "...further urged the abolition of the chanting of the Pentateuch, the adoption of the three-year cycle of Torah reading, and the introduction of the modern declamation [in the vernacular]...."[49] But those rabbis in attendance at the conference disagreed. Ultimately,

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[43] Einhorn 487. It is worth noting that this calendar, which indicates *haftarot* from the Writings, marks a significant departure from the original purposes of the *haftarah*—to conclude the reading of the Torah with a reading from the Prophets (cf. m. Megillah 4:2-3).

[44] Einhorn 488.

[45] Einhorn 490.

[46] Einhorn 492.

[47] Deuteronomy 33 & 34.

[48] Petuchowski 162.

[49] Idelsohn 252.

they voted to retain the reading of the Torah in Hebrew and shorten the length of the readings, while employing the annual cycle.[50] Hence, in 1869, we witness the first attempts of the early Reformers to "pick-and-choose" selections from the lectionary cycle. The Torah would still be read according to the annual cycle, but only a portion of *Bereshit* would be read on *Shabbat Bereshit*. Unlike the decision of the 1845 Frankfurt Rabbinical Conference, reading the entirety of the Torah was not nearly a priority. The Reformers at the Augsburg Synod in 1869 believed that the scriptural calendar should adhere to the traditional norm, upholding the cherished sequence of the larger Jewish community.

Meanwhile, rabbis at a conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania addressed the nature of the Torah reading in the United States. Many of the issues discussed at this conference pertained to the use of Hebrew during the reading of the Torah, the translation of the Torah into the vernacular, and the length and inclusion of certain portions.[51]

The use of Hebrew during the reading of Torah was hotly contested during the Philadelphia Conference in 1869. Samuel Adler suggested that the Torah should always be read in Hebrew.[52] Samuel Hirsch assented. He argued that, "Knowledge of Hebrew was essential for Jews."[53] But many rabbis disagreed with the importance of the Hebrew language. Isaac Chronik remarked that the congregation's complete lack of comprehension regarding Hebrew made the language unacceptable as a medium through which to pray to God.[54] David Einhorn also commented about the incomprehensibility of

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[50] Elbogen 318.

[51] Sefton D. Temkin, The New World of Reform: Containing the Proceedings of the Conference of Reform Rabbis Held in Philadelphia in November 1869 (Bridgeport: Hartmore House, 1974).

[52] Temkin 45.

[53] Temkin 46.

[54] Ibid.

Hebrew, stressing that the rabbi need not render the reading of Torah in Hebrew at every single service.[55]

The indecision regarding usage of the Hebrew language correlated directly with the introduction of the vernacular into services. The rabbis in attendance at the Philadelphia Conference wondered, "Should Hebrew be translated for the masses?" S. Deutsch decided negatively. Arguing that not everything should be translated, he also reminded other rabbis in attendance that no "adequate" translation exists. Translation lengthens worship services and heightens the ever-present fatigue of the congregation, the sermon addresses the message of the Torah portion anyway, and reading in the original, ancient language of the scroll "...affects the heart in a moving, mystical fashion."[56] Solomon H. Sonnenschein agreed with Deutsch. He believed translation to be superfluous and affirmed the preacher's role in "bringing the contents of the Bible to the people's awareness."[57] For Samuel Adler, translation was not only superfluous but also "unsuitable." The sermon came to function in much the same role as the ancient *meturgeman*, who would translate the portion for the assembled masses. Translation was no longer needed because the rabbi discerned the important lessons of Torah for his people.[58] Adding to his commentary on the incomprehensibility of Hebrew, Isaac Chronik remarked that "Hebrew is a dead language."[59]

But not every rabbi sided with the seemingly omnipresent diffidence regarding Hebrew. Jacob Mayer believed that the rabbi ought to render the reading of the Torah in Hebrew and then connect the sermon with the message of that Hebrew passage. And

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[55] Temkin 45.
[56] Temkin 48.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Moses Mielziner stressed the retention of Hebrew too. He presented a need for balance between two seemingly extreme perspectives. After the reading of the Torah portion in Hebrew, Mielziner suggested, a part of the Torah portion, or a piece from another portion in the Bbile, could be read in the vernacular. In this manner, Hebrew could be retained as an inherent value, while the congregation gained full access to the message contained in its ancient, seemingly inaccessible words.[60]

Additionally, the question of what *parashiyot* rabbis would read arose. Again, Isaac Chronik found himself in the heat of controversy. He suggested that a passage like the *Parah Adumah*[61] offered no instruction for contemporary behavior. The rabbi need only read selected passages from the Pentateuch to his congregation.[62] Both Samuel Hirsch and Kaufman Kohler agreed, noting that the Torah includes many passages that may be removed from readings. A rabbi needed to exercise his best judgment in his selectivity.[63] David Einhorn offered the most searing remark, commenting that, "The Torah offends sensibilities of the present time."[64]

Naturally, great disagreement met these remarks as well. Bernhard Felsenthal stressed that the Bible was not intended to be a "...popular book."[65] Reading the whole Torah in the synagogue demonstrated the ancient value of "...preserving the Bible."[66] S. Deutsch agreed, stressing that Rabbis ought to read the whole Torah.[67]

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Temkin 50.
[61] Numbers 19:1-22.
[62] Temkin 48.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

Given the amount of discord and disagreement that we have uncovered in our account of the 1869 Philadelphia Conference, it should come as no surprise that many motions regarding worship were eventually tabled when no agreement could be reached.[68] Ultimately, the rabbis issued, among their Philadelphia Principles, two descriptive articles regarding the majority of rabbinic opinion at their conference. In Article 7, discussing prayer specifically, the rabbis admit that although Hebrew is the language in which "...the treasures of divine revelation are handed down to us...it has in fact become unintelligible to the vast majority of our present day co-religionists. Therefore, in prayer, which, without comprehension, is a body without a soul, Hebrew must yield to the vernacular."[69] Furthermore, in Article 8, the attending rabbis present their impressions of the modern-day public declamation of the Torah. It appears as if, in the end, the importance of the vernacular trumped the reading of the Torah in Hebrew. Their decision states:

> The didactic part of divine service consists of the reading of a portion from Holy Scripture, from the Torah as well as from the Prophets or the *Hagiographa*, with which the interpretive discourse or the sermon of the rabbi or teacher is connected. The object of this part of the service is to instruct the congregation in the sources of their religion, is to be accomplished in part by reading directly in the vernacular each portion to be expounded, as has already been introduced in many cases with the Haftarah, and in part by translating it into the vernacular, as took place with the reading of the Torah in the Babylonian-Palestinian congregations of old through the institution of the *meturgeman*.[70]

Clearly, teaching the message of the Torah overshadowed the importance of reading from the Torah. The inclusion of the triennial cycle, which lessened the amount of Torah

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[68] Temkin 50.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Temkin 48.

being read, and the enhancement of messages and prayers delivered in the vernacular revealed intensely significant changes in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Leaving the United States and returning to Europe, we discover that controversy remained unresolved at the Leipzig Synod of 1871. In his work *The Rise of Reform Judaism*, Gunther Plaut suggests that attending rabbis once again sought to address a number of distressing issues. Plaut notes:

> Various remedies were proposed: introduction of a triennial instead of the annual cycle; shortening the readings and maintaining the annual cycle; partial or full translation of the portion; meaningful reading instead of chanting; omitting the procession of persons called up to the reading; abandonment of the practice of saying a special personal blessing (*mi sheberakh*) in behalf of those we call up."[71]

In many regards, the rabbinic attendees at the conference at Leipzig seemed calmer than their counterparts who participated at Philadelphia two years earlier. Two of the more impassioned comments came from the mouths of Manuel Joel and Gustav Gottheil. Like other rabbis, Joel believed that the shortening of the reading of the Torah was not a rabbinic but a communal need.[72] Nevertheless, he supported the retention of the annual cycle of Torah readings because such a decision "...has the side effect of retaining the names of the Sabbath days and of the Jewish calendar."[73] Ultimately, it would be possible to employ the annual cycle in an abbreviated fashion. Switching to a triennial cycle would mean that *Parashat Bereshit* would be read over the course of five Sabbaths, a practice Joel wished to avoid. Gottheil assented with Joel for a different reason. He said, "I am against the three-year cycle already for the reason that the bond of unity will thereby be broken. I did not get the full impression of this until some weeks

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[71] Plaut 180-181.
[72] Plaut 182.
[73] Ibid.

ago I listened to the Torah reading in Hamburg. I thought, 'There is a breach in Israel.'"[74] Clearly, many rabbis, like Gottheil, disagreed with the triennial system that had been so widely embraced throughout many congregations in Europe. *K'lal Yisrael*, the unity of the Jewish people, represented an important value for the rabbis attending the Leipzig Synod. Gottheil also voiced concern that everyone in attendance should understand the message of Torah being proudly declaimed from the pulpit. It served no purpose to present an unintelligible, incomprehensible lesson.[75]

Ultimately, the conference issued many resolutions. They supported the retention of the annual cycle of Torah readings in Hebrew.[76] Furthermore, the synod introduced a change in the scriptural calendar. On the afternoon of the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 19 would be read, in place of the sexual offenses included in Leviticus 18.[77] Additionally, the Torah would be read in Hebrew, not chanted "unintelligibly."[78]

Other changes surrounding the issue of decorum presented themselves to the community in Frankfurt am Main in 1874. As a means of creating dignified worship services, the congregation abandoned communal singing during the cantor's recitation of the prayers and his reading of the Torah portion.' According to the *Synagogen-Ordnung für die Synagoge der Israelitischen Religionsgesellschaft* in Frankfurt, "Everybody must refrain from accompanying the recitation or the reading with his own singing or reading."[79]

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Philipson 302.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Petuchowski 123.

This late nineteenth-century decision revealed the vastness of the changes in the public reading of the Torah. Whereas the original model, described by the Mishnah, portrayed individual congregants approaching the Torah and reading from it, the 1874 model in Frankfurt limited the reading of Torah to clergy. So important was the clergyman's recitation of the Torah that nobody from the congregation could participate or sing along with the reading. Evidently, the reading of the Torah had become completely and entirely a rabbinic function.

But even as the Frankfurt community resolved the issue in this way, other communities experienced change of a different kind. Clearly, the only constant involved in the struggle surrounding the reading of the Torah was change. This comment rang true in 1879 in Hamburg. A. Z. Idelsohn comments, "It is most interesting to note in the movements of Judaism, that, while on the one hand the extreme Hamburg reform, having gone too far away, started moving back, gradually, reintroducing Hebrew prayers, until finally in 1879 it again adopted the chanting of the Pentateuch."[80] Cantor M. Henle "reintroduced the chanting according to the Biblical modes."[81] The Hamburg experience teaches us that even though a community might side with particular reforms for a certain amount of time, their decisions are by no means final. Their decision to return to the ancient chant of the Torah demonstrates a flexibility of great importance that we will return to later in our analysis.

At this point in our discussion, with the Reform movement establishing solid ground in the United States, the focal point of our analysis shifts solely to American Reform congregations. Truthfully, changes related to the reading of the Torah originated

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[80] Idelsohn 240.
[81] Ibid.

many centuries ago and emerged yet again throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. Additionally, flexibility of practice spread into the theological realm in the late nineteenth century in America.

Up until this point, it appeared that most changes surrounding the reading of the Torah were instituted because of issues related to decorum, congregational knowledge, or length of services. But particular rabbis also voiced radical opinions pertaining to what they believed to be the human origin of Scripture. Bernhard Felsenthal even went so far as to suggest, "The Bible is not—and we print this sentence in bold letters and wish that our readers would take it well to heart and remember it permanently—the Bible is not the source of Judaism."[82] Siding with Felsenthal, Milton Steinberg dismissed the divine origin of the Bible. Rather, Steinberg believed the Bible to be "the record left by a particular people of its pilgrimage out of darkness to clarity and compassion."[83] Change in beliefs about the origin of Scripture led to changes in the public declamation of Torah, Prophets, and Writings. For if Scripture did not originate from a divine source, and was penned by human hands, then later human beings, recognizing its human and contextualized origins, could alter previously sacrosanct customs. In short, the rabbis of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries finally realized what we have concluded throughout our analysis. The Torah and its accompanying reading changed dramatically over the course of nearly two thousand years. Each of these innovations was human in nature. The first rabbis radical and daring enough to regard themselves as "reformers" simply continued the line of change begun millennia earlier. Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof best summarizes this principle of, and need for, change when he states, "Our liberty gives

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[82] Gunther W. Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism: American and European Sources Until 1948 (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1965) 225.

us our opportunity and our obligation. The content of Torah must be built up through *minhag* and we are the ones who are free, creative and confident enough to do it, not only for ourselves but for all Israel."[84] While our first impression of Freehof's comment might be one of *chutzpah*, ultimately, we must recognize that he and his colleagues merely continued a practice that originated in ancient history. For many centuries, the Jewish community had already witnessed significant reforms in practices surrounding the reading of the Torah.

At this point in history, customs surrounding the reading of the Torah by children became especially important. With all of the changes to the public declamation of Scripture, rabbis concerned themselves additionally with the issue of readings rendered by celebrants at a *Bar Mitzvah*. Kaufmann Kohler brought the topic to the forefront of rabbinic discussion. He wondered if the practice of having a thirteen-year-old read from the Torah should remain an important custom in the Reform synagogue.[85] Like many previous discussions, finding and establishing common ground proved impossible. On one hand, the *Bar Mitzvah* often studied for long hours and was "amply conversant" with his "*Parashah*."[86] On the other hand, many rabbis believed this practice to be outdated. Congregants in Reform congregations were no longer called to read from the Torah. In that vein, why should an immature thirteen-year-old approach the scroll and perform a reading now reserved for one significantly more qualified than he? Rabbis suggested that

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[83] Plaut, Growth 233.
[84] Plaut, Growth 240.
[85] Plaut, Growth 311.
[86] Plaut, Growth 312.

the only possible place for a thirteen-year-old to read from the Torah could be at a youth service.[87] Kohler even argued:

> Disregarding altogether the false claim of mental maturity of the thirteen-year-old boy for a true realization of life's sacred obligations, I maintain that the Bar Mitzvah rite ought not to be encouraged by any Reform rabbi, as it is a survival of orientalism like the covering of the head during the service, whereas the Confirmation—when made as it should, by the rabbi, an impressive appeal to the holiest emotions of the soul and a personal vow of fealty to the ancient faith—is a source of regeneration of Judaism each year, the value of which none who has the spiritual welfare of Israel at heart can afford to underrate or ignore.[88]

Widespread changes continued to affect the public reading of Torah in synagogues throughout the United States. The publication of the first *Union Prayer Book* in 1894-95 included a scriptural calendar that attached completely new *haftarot* to traditionally established Torah readings.[89] Ten years later, Elbogen indicates that the Torah reading was quite short and translated into English.[90]

The year 1904 marked a watershed for the scriptural calendar in the Reform movement. At a convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Maurice H. Harris presented a paper where he expressed concern with the lectionary cycle included in the 1895 edition of the *Union Prayer Book*. Harris advocated abandoning the widely embraced triennial cycle "in favor of a modified form of the annual cycle."[91] With the hope that the adoption of an annual cycle of Torah readings would help the Reform movement to remain dedicated to *k'lal Yisrael*, the CCAR accepted his proposal.[92] Eric

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Elbogen 323-4.
[90] Elbogen 324.
[91] Philipson, footnote 85, 462. Cf. "Discussion on 'A Proposed Change in the Selection of Weekly Portions of Scriptures,'" Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis: Volume XIV, Ed. Adolf Guttmacher and William Rosenau (Baltimore: Lord Baltimore Press, 1904) 74-80.
[92] Eric Lewis Friedland, The Historical and Theological Development of the Non-Orthodox Prayerbooks in the United States: A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts

Friedland informs us that in later editions of the *Union Prayer Book*, the triennial cycle is abandoned in favor of the traditional cycle of reading fifty-four weekly *parashiot*.[93] Regarding the listing of *Haftarot* in the 1924 *Union Prayer Book*, which as we recall were greatly altered in the 1895 edition, Friedland mentions, "twenty-one selections are the same as the Orthodox list, three of them Sephardic variants."[94]

In 1936, with the influence of Zionism in the background, Hebrew returned to the forefront of rabbinic discussion. Speaking before the CCAR, Emanuel Gamoran, stressed the need for more Hebrew in the Reform congregation. He argued:

> As sensible people we would contend that music must justify itself ultimately because of those people who are not deaf and are able to appreciate the beauty of sound. So Hebrew must be justified in terms of those who know it and appreciate it, and it is the function of the rabbi and the teacher to convince the men and women in his congregation that there are some questions in Jewish life with reference to which the parents of our children today are not in a position to pass intelligent judgment.[95]

While it is unclear whether or not Gamoran's remarks influenced the reading of the Torah specifically, the push for Hebrew in the service marked a significant departure from the opinion of many Reformers. Fifty years earlier, rabbinic leaders could not wait to dismiss the ancient, unfamiliar language from their service. Again, we note the ever-shifting customs in the Reform synagogue, and the ever-present notion of change.

Concerning the scriptural calendar included in the 1924 edition of the *Union Prayer Book*, it is safe to argue that "suggestions" were offered. With Maurice Harris' suggestion to abandon the triennial cycle in 1904, this edition of the prayer book presents

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and Sciences, Ph. D. Dissertation, (Brandeis University, Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, 1967) 130.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Friedland 131.

[95] Plaut, Growth 322.

an abbreviated annual cycle with "options." The following chart indicates the options available to the community on *Shabbat Bereshit*:[96]

Shabbat Bereshit	Torah Reading	Haftarah Reading
A	Genesis 1:1-2:3	Psalm 148 or Job 38
B	Genesis 2:4-25	Psalm 104 or Psalm 8
C	Genesis 3:1-24	Psalm 139 or Job 35:2-14
D	Genesis 4:1-16	Psalm 11 or Psalm 36

In traditional circles, *Parashat Bereshit* comprises Genesis 1:1-6:8. Yet this particular scriptural calendar from 1924 only includes Genesis 1:1-4:16. Genesis 5, containing abnormally long lists of genealogy and Genesis 6, which relates that the people became corrupt and worthy of destruction, were not included in the lectionary cycle. Additionally, when reading the complete *parashah*, selections from the Isaiah 42 and 43 function as the traditional reading for the *Haftarah*. This cycle may be clearly defined as an "abbreviated yearly cycle." The flexibility of selections offers the rabbi or spiritual leader many options in reading a significantly reduced number of verses, while reading the same *parashah* as other Jewish communities.

On some occasions, the number of potential readings is significantly less. For example, the *siddur* lists only one or two selections to be read from each of the *parashiot* in Leviticus.[97] Additionally, the only reading for *Parashat Bemidbar* mentioned is Numbers 2:1-17.[98]

The final page of the 1924 scriptural calendar from the *Union Prayer Book* also includes additional *Haftarot* to be recited on the Sabbath of Hanukkah, the Sabbath

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[96] Central Conference of American Rabbis, ed., Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship Part 1 (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1924), 399.

[97] Union Prayer Book, 1924, 402-403.

[98] Ibid.

preceding Purim, the Sabbath during Passover, and the Sabbath during Tabernacles.[99] Although the Haftarah reading for Hanukkah is highly abbreviated, the editors of this prayer book retained the framework of the original selection, namely that of Zechariah 4. The Haftarah reading on *Shabbat Zachor* is slightly different. Rather than read the dramatic slaughtering of the Amalekites in I Samuel, the editors propose reading a selection from Esther 7, 8, or 9. Such a practice acts in accordance with the belief of other nineteenth and twentieth-century reform rabbis that appropriate Haftarot need not be limited to the works of the Prophets but could also be extracted from the Writings. Finally, the 1924 scriptural calendar reestablishes a custom dating from the 7th-century tractate *Masekhet Soferim* which we analyzed in our first chapter. On Shabbat Chol HaMoed Pesach a reading from the Song of Songs is offered, and Shabbat Chol HaMoed Sukkot a reading from Ecclesiastes is rendered.[100]

Consequently, the 1940 newly revised edition of the *Union Prayer Book* notes other significant changes.[101] First, all of the names of the *parashiyot* are rendered in Ashkenazic pronunciation, such as *Bereshis* instead of *Bereshit*.[102] If an entire prayer book includes Ashkenazic pronunciation for titles of *parashiyot*, we may only assume that Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew was not necessarily so widespread a practice. Second, unlike the 1924 edition which included only one or two readings for *parashiyot* in Leviticus, three different readings are offered for each *parashah*.[103] Third, on Shabbat Chol HaMoed Pesach and Shabbat Chol HaMoed Sukkot the lectionary permits the

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[99] Union Prayer Book, 1924, 406.
[100] Ibid.
[101] This calendar is also reprinted in Gunther Plaut, Tadrich L'Shabbat: A Shabbat Manual (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972), 81-89.
[102] Central Conference of American Rabbis ed., The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship: Newly Revised Edition Part 1 (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1940) 387.
[103] Ibid., 387-394.

congregations to read either the appropriate *megillah* (i.e. Song of Songs on Pesach and Ecclesiastes on Sukkot) or a portion of the traditional *haftarah* for this day from the book of Ezekiel. It is interesting to note that the practice of reading from a *megillah* on *Shabbat Chol HaMoed* is not differentiated from the reading of the *haftarah.*[104]

There are other dramatic changes pertaining to this scriptural calendar—most notably in its triennial nature and its drastic alteration of *haftarot*. Because it is beyond the scope of this essay to analyze each and every difference contained in the 1940 scriptural calendar, we will use *Parashat Bereshit* (in this calendar *Bereshis*) as our example. First and foremost, this scriptural calendar appears to establish a triennial cycle of the reading of the Torah.[105] Such thinking is evidenced by the decision to include three distinct readings for each *parashah*. The reading for *Bereshis* is shortened from four readings to three, and the reading for passages in Leviticus and Numbers are increased from one or two to three. All of the *parashiyot* are given three separate readings.

But this triennial cycle is different from the ancient triennial cycle practiced in the land of Israel. Seeking to retain a connection with *k'lal Yisrael*, the Reform movement decided to read from the same *parashah* as other Jewish communities. Thus, every year on *Shabbat Bereshit*, the Reform movement would read a small selection (as close as possible to one-third of the *parashah*) from *Shabbat Bereshit*. Such a practice would occur on other Sabbaths throughout the year, preventing the Reform movement from

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[104] Ibid., 395.

[105] Tadrich L'Shabbat, printed in 1972, affirms this assertion. According to Gunther Plaut, "Alternative selections are provided on the principle of a triennial completion of reading the entire Torah" (Plaut, Tadrich 89).

reading from the book of *Bereshit* while the rest of the Jewish community was mired in Levitical sacrifice.

Different haftarot accompanied the reading of the Torah in the 1940 *Union Prayer Book* calendar. The following chart indicates the new introductions to the order of haftarot as compared to the options included in the 1924 calendar:[106]

Torah Reading	**Haftarah Reading 1924**	**Haftarah Reading 1940**
Genesis 1:1-2:3	Psalm 148 or Job 38	Isaiah 42:5-12
Genesis 2:4-25 or 3:1-24	Psalm 104 or Psalm 8, Psalm 139 or Job 35:2-14	Psalm 104 or Job 38
Genesis 4:1-16	Psalm 11 or Psalm 36	Psalm 139

The chart indicates some strange accompaniment. Isaiah 42:5-12 is an excerpt of the traditionally accepted haftarah for *Bereshit* and reintroduced here. Job 38, previously attached to Genesis 1:1-2:3, is now attached to Genesis 3:1-24. Psalm 139, functioning as the haftarah for Genesis 4, is a completely new introduction. Our research indicates that in each generation, the reading of the Torah evolved according to the standards of that generation's leadership. Truthfully, as we study more practices and scriptural calendars, we discover significantly less congruence.

According to Solomon Freehof, by the mid-1960s, other developments occurred regarding the Torah service in Reform congregations. As we noted above, some congregations opted for the abbreviated annual cycle of the 1924 *Union Prayer Book*, and some communities retained the abbreviated version of the Palestinian triennial cycle created by the 1940 newly revised edition of the *Union Prayer Book*.[107] Additionally, many Reform congregations had long established the practice of reading from the Torah

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[106] Ibid., 387.

[107] Solomon B. Freehof, Reform Jewish Practice and Its Rabbinic Background (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1963) 32.

on Friday nights because this was the time that most congregants attended worship services. Similarly, readings from the Torah on Shabbat afternoon, Monday and Thursday mornings had already fallen into disregard because it was not customary for Reform congregants to attend services at that time.[108]

A generation passed before the publication of the newest scriptural calendar. In 1975 the Central Conference of American Rabbis published *Gates of Prayer*, the so-called "New" Union Prayer Book. Two years later in 1977, a companion volume entitled *Gates of Understanding* attempted to clarify the organization of the *siddur*. The editors of this volume included a full scriptural calendar[109] as an appendix to their text. Unlike previous editions of the calendar, this version retains the full annual cycle of Torah readings. For example, Genesis 1:1-6:8 comprises *Shabbat Bereshit.*[110] Then, the traditional Haftarah is listed first[111] followed by a number of possible alternatives.[112] Additionally, the *Gates of Understanding* calendar mentions the weekday readings for Shabbat afternoon and Monday and Thursday mornings. Whereas Freehof noted that such practice had been abolished, it seems as if the goal of *Gates of Understanding* is to provide the fullest possible example of the scriptural calendar, retaining tradition, but also providing options.

Regarding the festivals and "special" Sabbaths, the 1977 scriptural calendar is the most complete to date. The calendar includes readings for all days of Sukkot (including the intermediate days), all days of Chanukah, the *arba'ah parashiyot*, Tisha B'av,

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[108] Freehof 34.

[109] Prepared by Rabbi Stanley A. Dreyfus, the chair of the CCAR Liturgy Committee.

[110] Lawrence A. Hoffman, ed., Gates of Understanding: A Companion Volume to Gates of Prayer (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis/Union of American Hebrew Congregations Press, 1977) 271-284.

[111] In this case, the Haftarah for Bereshit would be Isaiah 42:5-43:11.

[112] Understanding 272.

weekday Rosh Chodesh, Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, and Machar Chodesh.[113] Additionally, for remembrance of the Holocaust and celebration of the founding of the State of Israel, the *Gates of Understanding* scriptural calendar also assigns readings for Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and Yom HaAtzmaut (Israel Independence Day).[114]

Rabbi Chaim Stern published the most recent scriptural calendar in 1994.[115] Although this table of scriptural readings does not appear to be an "official" listing presented by the CCAR, the list provides an interesting perspective on the general composition of the Reform movement. Stern begins by offering the full weekly portion and the traditional accompanying Haftarah. Then, he provides the weekday and Shabbat afternoon reading. Finally, he incorporates the "alternate" readings selected by previous scriptural calendars. An interesting feature of this calendar not seen in others is the offering of a possible reading selection from other portions in the Torah. For example, on Shabbat Bo, Stern's calendar includes the traditional reading of Exodus 10:1-13:16, alternate distributions (Exodus 10:1-11 and 13:3-10) and then Deuteronomy 6:20-25![116] This practice raises an interesting controversy. It seems as if the Reform movement tried to cover as many different needs as possible. Some congregations would abide by the abbreviated annual cycle, some would adhere to the adapted triennial cycle, and some communities might read from Deuteronomy while other congregations were reading from Exodus.[117] Other congregations might even recognize the existence of these calendars,

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[113] Understanding 281-284.
[114] Understanding 283.
[115] Chaim Stern, ed., et al., On the Doorposts of Your House (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1994) 364-380.
[116] Doorposts 369.
[117] It is not known how many congregations actually did this!

and still read according to their own *minhag*. Any semblance of uniformity of practice in the Reform movement could not be found.

By the present day, we discover that Reform congregations are now reading segments of the weekly portion, some congregations are reading Torah on Friday night, and second days of festivals are not traditionally observed.[118] In terms of *aliyot*, we now find that the number of people called to recite blessings over the Torah does not match the traditionally established numbers.[119]

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Reform movement experienced great change in Europe and America. Clearly, Torah reading in 1810 at a small congregation in Westphalia bore little resemblance to the public declamation of Scripture as it is rendered today, in the twenty-first century. As we struggle to find similarities in the developing practices, so too do we wrestle with the notion of continuity throughout particular congregations. Dr. Michael Meyer remarks, "What, after all this history and contemporary divergence, binds the Reform movement together?...The answer must begin: in some respects very little."[120] In our next chapter we will have the opportunity to explore this "widespread divergence" even further, as we analyze the particular contemporary Torah reading practices of various Reform communities. From there, it

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[118] Mark Washofsky, Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice (New York: UAHC Press, 2001), 27-28.

[119] Washofsky 29.

[120] Michael A. Meyer, Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988) 385.

will be possible to offer some conclusions and suggestions concerning the future of Torah reading in Reform Judaism.

Chapter 3:
Contemporary Diversity

From our analysis, we have learned that the reading of the Torah has changed over time. The ever-changing nature of Torah reading throughout Jewish history leads us to believe that changes in Torah reading are also likely and possible in the future. As our ancestors made changes to the structure, content, and order of their reading, so may we in our generations, observe similar practices. Yet before we articulate proposals for the future of Torah reading in Reform Judaism, we must first direct our attention to the ways in which American Reform synagogues observe this communal ritual today.

The Union for Reform Judaism is comprised of more than nine hundred member congregations. It would be relatively impossible to analyze each congregation's Torah reading practice. Therefore, for the purposes of this project, we selected a sample of synagogues to offer us feedback. Between 1 September and 1 November 2005, the members of the Union for Reform Judaism's Joint Commission on Worship, Music, and Religious Living (JCWMRL) were invited to participate in a survey commenting on the Torah reading practices of the synagogue in which they lead as clergy or participate as members.[1] Seventy surveys were distributed to members of the commission.[2] Thirty surveys were returned, establishing a return rate of approximately 43%.

The surveys received represent a diverse sample of Reform congregations throughout America.[3] Congregations were divided according to their size:

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[1] The membership of the Joint Commission on Worship, Music, and Religious Living (JCWMRL) includes: faculty, governors, and students from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, rabbis who are members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, cantors who are members of the American Conference of Cantors, musicians affiliated with the Guild of Temple Musicians, board members from the Union for Reform Judaism and lay leaders from selected congregations.

[2] For a complete text of the survey, please review Appendix 1.

[3] Corresponds with "Congregational and Personal Information: Question 3."

A-size Congregation	0-299 families
B-size Congregation	300-599 families
C-size Congregation	600-999 families
D-size Congregation	>1000 families

Surveys were received from congregations of all sizes:

Size of Congregation	Percentage of Surveys Received
A-size Congregation (0-299 families)	17%
B-size Congregation (300-599 families)	27%
C-size Congregation (600-999 families)	13%
D-size Congregation (>1000 families)	43%[4]

Additionally, a wide variety of people participated in this survey:[5]

Role of Survey Participant	Percentage of Respondents
Rabbi	10/30 (33%)
Cantor	10/30 (33%)
Lay Leader	10/30 (33%)

If one demographic area of the survey were to be more heavily represented than another, we might hesitate to regard our results as an effective sampling. However, a widespread distribution shows that our survey reached a number of different congregations, and those participating in the survey offered a number of different perspectives.

The first section of the survey addressed the times when religious services are held on Shabbat and when the Torah is read during these services. Of the congregations surveyed, 100% indicated that they hold services on *Leil Shabbat*, Friday evening. However, only about one-half of these congregations read from the Torah on Friday

[4] A pictorial representation of all questions asked in the survey is available in the Appendix.
[5] Corresponds with "Congregational and Personal Information: Question 5."

evening. Approximately 30% of the congregations read from the Torah every *Leil Shabbat*, and 13% of congregations surveyed read from the Torah only when a Bar or Bat Mitzvah observance occurs on Friday night.[6]

Contrarily, on Shabbat morning, we observe a direct correlation between the times services are held and the times that the Torah is read. 87% of congregations indicated that they hold Shabbat morning worship services on every Shabbat. All of these congregations read from the Torah during those services. 13% of congregations only hold services when a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is being celebrated, and thus these congregations will read from the Torah at that time.[7]

Services on Shabbat afternoon (*Minchah*) are considerably less popular. 0% of congregations surveyed hold Shabbat afternoon worship on every Shabbat afternoon. After taking this result into consideration, we will once again notice a direct correlation between the times services are held and the times that the Torah is read. 37% of congregations will observe *Minchah* when there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah being celebrated, and the Bar or Bat Mitzvah will read from the Torah at that time. The remaining 63% of congregations surveyed do not hold services on Shabbat afternoon, and therefore, do not read from the Torah at that time.[8]

In the next section of the survey, we addressed the ways in which the professional leadership of the congregation participates in the reading of the Torah. In many congregations, professional leadership is highly involved in performing this ritual. In fact, many congregations employ more than one professional who is capable of reading from the Torah.

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[6] Corresponds with Questions A1 & A2.
[7] Corresponds with A3 and A4.

Regarding rabbis and cantors specifically, we discovered an overlap in our results. Twenty-eight congregations noted that their rabbi reads from the Torah, and twenty congregations indicated that their cantor performs the reading. Obviously, both the rabbi and the cantor do not read from the Torah at the same time. On a given week, we assume that ***either*** the rabbi ***or*** the cantor read from the Torah. Both professional leaders are capable of fulfilling this responsibility.

Other congregational employees also read from the Torah. In four congregations, the educator reads from the Torah. And in one or two congregations it is the responsibility of the rabbinic intern, cantorial intern, and/or Executive Director to read from the scroll.[9]

In question B2,[10] we identified the ways in which a congregational professional might perform the reading of the Torah. 13% of congregations surveyed indicated that the Torah is read, 37% indicated that the Torah is chanted. In the remaining 50% of the congregations surveyed, we learned that the decision to read or chant from the Torah remains the preference of the professional.

Next, we addressed the issue of translation. When translating the Torah for their congregants, different congregational professionals employ a variety of means. Again, because participants were invited to respond with more one answer, identifying each of the ways that the Torah might be translated for the congregation, there exists the potential for an overlap in our results.[11] The following chart indicates many possible manifestations of a Torah translation by a congregational professional and notes the

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[8] Corresponds with A5 and A6.
[9] Corresponds with B1.
[10] Corresponds with B2.
[11] Corresponds with B3.

number of congregations (out of thirty) that identified such a practice as common to their community:

Form of Translation by Professional	Number of Congregations Indicating this Practice
The ***professional*** translates directly from Torah	17 / 30 (57%)
The ***professional*** reads a translation from a *chumash* like *The Plaut Commentary*	4 / 30 (13%)
A ***congregant*** offers a translation directly from the Torah scroll	0 / 30 (0%)
A ***congregant*** reads a translation from a *chumash* like *The Plaut Commentary*	12 / 30 (40%)
Congregants follow along in a *chumash* and the professional leadership does not offer an additional translation	12 / 30 (40%)
Congregants do not follow along in a *chumash* and the professional leadership does not offer an additional translation	1 / 30 (3%)

The variety of responses to this question indicates the widespread practices observed by Reform congregations and their professional leaders.

Questions B4-B6 asked survey participants to indicate how many verses of Torah are read by congregational professionals at services on *Leil Shabbat*, Shabbat morning, and Shabbat afternoon.[12] We will recall that only 50% of Reform congregations surveyed read from the Torah on Friday night. Of this 50% (fifteen congregations), we found four congregations where the congregational professional reads approximately 3-5 verses of the Torah portion, six congregations where 6-10 verses are read, and five congregations where 11-20 verses are read.

[12] Corresponds with B4-B6.

When the Torah is read on Shabbat morning, we observe an increase in the number of verses read. Professionals in four congregations read 3-5 verses, nine congregations read 6-10 verses, and nine congregations read 11-20 verses. Three congregations indicated that they read more than twenty verses, and two congregations indicated that they read from the Torah according to the triennial cycle. In three congregations, the congregational professional does not read; the responsibility of reading from the Torah is reserved for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

On Shabbat afternoon, we find that congregations generally read between 11 and 20 verses. The vast majority of congregations, as we have indicated above, reserve the responsibility of reading from the Torah for the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The number of verses read by a typical Bar or Bat Mitzvah will be addressed below.

Although the first portion of this survey identified the role of the congregational professional in the reading of the Torah in the Reform synagogue, our proposals in the subsequent chapter will be concerned with encouraging ***congregants*** to read from the Torah. Thus, Section C of our survey addressed the means by which our congregations educate their membership. The following chart reveals that many congregations offer a variety of educational opportunities for their members and some programs run concurrently:[13]

Educational Opportunity	**Number of Congregations That Offer**
Reading & Decoding Hebrew	26 / 30 (87%)
Learning Hebrew prayer and liturgy	21 / 30 (70%)
Learning Biblical Hebrew	10 / 30 (33%)
Learning Cantillation/Torah Reading	17 / 30 (57%)
Torah Study/*Parashat Ha'Shavua*	28 / 30 (93%)
Adult *B'nei Mitzvah*	29 / 30 (97%)

In general, the frequency of these educational opportunities varies considerably throughout congregations. For example, Torah study occurs weekly in congregations, but most Adult *B'nei Mitzvah* programs begin biennially. 27% of responding congregations indicated such a response, noting that the length of educational programs varies depending on the course. 43% of respondents noted that, on average, courses begin or are repeated every twelve to eighteen months.[14]

Finally, in Section D of the survey, we addressed the nature of ***congregational*** participation in the reading of the Torah. In question D1, where we asked congregations to identify the ways in which their members participate in the Torah service, we received an overwhelmingly positive response. Again, the potential for overlap exists; congregants may participate in the Torah reading in more than one way. The following chart[15] indicates our results:

Participation by a Congregant	**Participation Encouraged in...**
Reciting blessings over the Torah	27 / 30 (90%)
Carrying the Torah	18 / 30 (60%)
Reading or chanting from the Torah	25 / 30 (83%)
Serving as *gabbai*	8 / 30 (27%)
Opening & Closing the Ark	27 / 30 (90%)
Delivering a *d'var Torah*	19 / 30 (63%)
Reading a translation of the Torah portion	12 / 30 (40%)
Performing *hagbaha* or *g'lila*	25 / 30 (83%)

Questions D2 through D4[16] addressed practices involving the Adult *b'nei mitzvah* program. On an annual or biennial basis, eight congregations celebrate between zero and five adult *b'nei mitzvah*, nine congregations celebrate between six and ten adult *b'nei mitzvah*, and nine congregations celebrate more than ten adult *b'nei mitzvah*. Four

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[13] Corresponds with C1.
[14] Corresponds with C3.
[15] Corresponds with D1.

congregations indicated that, on average, they observe more than five adult *b'nei mitzvah* every two years. In 59% of these congregations, the adult celebrating Bar or Bat Mitzvah is granted the preference to either read or chant from the Torah. In the remaining 41% of congregations, 38% require that the adult chant and 3% allow for the practice of reading from the Torah.

Generally, the number of verses an adult member reads is considerably less than the number that the congregational professional renders. 55% of responding congregations indicated that adult *b'nei mitzvah* read 3-5 verses, and 28% read 6-10 verses. In only 3% of surveyed congregations would an adult read more than twenty verses of the Torah portion.

Following our questions regarding adult *b'nei mitzvah*, our survey addressed practices regarding teenage *b'nei mitzvah*. All congregations surveyed observe teenage *b'nei mitzvah*. The distribution is fairly equal between congregations, with the largest number of congregations celebrating between zero and thirty *b'nei mitzvah* in a given year.[17] When teenage *b'nei mitzvah* are celebrated, it is the practice in 70% of our congregations for the teenager to chant the portion from the Torah. In the remaining 30% of the congregations surveyed, the teenager chooses to read or chant from the Torah.[18]

Teenagers are highly capable of reading from the Torah. Hoping to identify the number of verses teenagers are likely to read or chant, we learned that the number was either equivalent to or ***greater than*** the number of verses read by the congregational

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[16] Corresponds with D2-D4.
[17] Corresponds with D5.
[18] Corresponds with D6.

professional! In 87% of congregations surveyed, teenagers read either 11-20 verses of Torah or more than 20 verses of Torah.[19]

Generally, congregations encourage their congregants to read from the Torah. Reading from the Torah is not specifically limited to *b'nei mitzvah* or congregational professionals. 93% of surveyed congregations indicate that they encourage their congregants to read from the Torah.[20] Generally, congregants will chant from the Torah (53% of surveyed congregations) or will abide by personal preference to read or chant (43% of surveyed congregations).[21] However, the number of verses that non-*b'nei mitzvah* candidates render is slightly less than *b'nei mitzvah* and congregational professionals. 78% of surveyed congregations indicated that congregants read either 3-5 or 6-10 verses of Torah.[22]

Next, congregations were asked to estimate the number of proficient lay Torah readers in their congregation. Here we find somewhat startling results. Notwithstanding the number of *b'nei mitzvah* occurring in our congregations, only 33% of surveyed congregations would classify more than twenty members as proficient Torah readers. 2/3 of the congregations surveyed mentioned that their congregation includes between zero and twenty proficient Torah readers. These results will be explored more fully in the following chapter.[23]

In Questions D12 through D15, we directed our attention to the blessings recited over the Torah scroll. Question D12 informed us that in 93% of the congregations

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[19] Corresponds with D7.
[20] Corresponds with D8.
[21] Corresponds with D9.
[22] Corresponds with D10.
[23] Corresponds with D11.

surveyed, congregants are invited to recite blessings.[24] Then, in questions D13 through D15, we learned how many congregants participate in this ritual on *Leil Shabbat*, Shabbat morning, and Shabbat afternoon. Truly, the number of congregants called to recite blessings over the Torah varies according to the community. Additionally, some congregations indicate that their practices depend upon whether or not a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is being celebrated. Here we also note that Reform congregations do not necessarily follow the practices established in traditional Jewish sources regarding the number of people called to recite blessings prior to the reading of the Torah.[25]

Our final three questions (D16-D18) addressed three areas of significant import in our forthcoming proposal. Question D16 informs us that 87% of congregations surveyed encourage *b'nei mitzvah* students to read from the Torah following their *b'nei mitzvah*.[26] In Question D17, we learned that in 60% of congregations surveyed, *b'nei mitzvah* students do not read from the Torah on the anniversary of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Only 27% of surveyed congregations allow for such a practice. In the remaining 13% of congregations surveyed, we find a variance in custom.[27] Finally, in Question D18, we discovered that in 80% of congregations surveyed, parents do not read from the Torah when their child becomes Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Our survey of the Joint Commission of Worship, Music, and Religious Living provided us with a window into the contemporary diversity surrounding the reading of the Torah in the American Reform synagogue. Having gathered and presented this data, we now turn our attention to the future of Torah reading in Reform Judaism.

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[24] Corresponds with D12.
[25] Corresponds with D13-D15.
[26] Corresponds with D16.
[27] Corresponds with D17.

Recognizing that the reading of the Torah changed throughout our people's past enables us to realize that this important, communal ritual will continue to evolve.

Chapter 4:
Visions for the Future of Torah Reading in Reform Judaism

In the previous chapter, our survey of members of the Union for Reform Judaism's Joint Commission on Worship, Music, and Religious Living (JCWMRL) indicated that there is great diversity among contemporary Torah reading practices in congregations throughout our movement. In this chapter we will examine these differences alongside the myriad of changes and developments that we have already identified regarding the evolution of Torah reading.[1]

In our quest to offer conclusions, we are faced with a number of questions. How should we react to the notion that Torah reading has undergone a relatively unstable evolution? How should we treat the idea that different communities fulfill the commandment of reading from the Torah in a number of ways? Should these realizations relegate our Reform Jewish community to potentially unstable ground? Are the decline in number of verses being read and the manner of text translation truly debilitating concerns from which our community cannot recover?

But change and inconsistency are nothing new to us. Rabbi Simchah Roth indicates that even in ancient synagogues, little consistency could be found. He writes, "Since for all practical purposes each [congregation] had read as much or as little as they wanted it follows that what was read in one synagogue on any given Shabbat was not the same as what was read in another synagogue. Indeed, we can be reasonably certain that

[1] We explored this notion in Chapters 1 and 2 where we highlighted developments in translation, the amount of Torah being read, the identity of the Torah reader, and the nature of the blessings over the Torah scroll. Each of these areas underwent significant change since the inception of Torah reading in the synagogue.

no two synagogues were reading the same material from the Torah on any particular Shabbat."[2]

Roth's comment is very important to our study. As Reform Jews, we define our Jewish identity by recognizing that each of us must be conversant with the history and traditions of our people. At the same time, we accept that each Reform Jew will select and choose personal and communal observances in a meaningful manner. Like our predecessors in the ancient synagogue, diversity continues to characterize our individual and communal Reform Jewish identity.

However, one problem dominating the Reform Jewish community is our tendency to continually measure ourselves against the practices of Orthodox Jewry. We tend to regard Orthodoxy as authentic. Regarding the reading of the Torah in the synagogue, this concern is especially problematic. The November 2005 Biennial of the Union for Reform Judaism functions as an appropriate example. Because the rest of the Jewish world (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Sephardic Jews) read from *Parashat Vayera* on 19 November 2005 so too did our Reform movement, at its biennial, read from *Parashat Vayera*. Why should this be the case? Why does Reform Judaism, which separated itself from the rigid bonds of traditional Jewish life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, continue to define its Torah reading according to "the traditional calendar of Torah readings?"

Many options are available to us. As Reform Jews, we possess the freedom to depart from the crystallized forms of traditional Jewish existence. Recognizing that change is a true constant in the ever-evolving traditions of our people, we are empowered

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[2] Bet Midrash Virtuali of the Rabbinical Assembly in Israel: Halakhah Study Group (Study of Halakhah in the Religious Climate of Masorti Judaism), ed. Rabbi Simchah Roth, 24 June 2003

to create communal worship experiences characterized not only with creative, contemporary innovation, but also with the beauty and glory of our ancestors' observances.

Blindly accepting *halakhah* and reneging on reason as mere *ba'alei t'shuvah* will only signify a return to the oppressing and unflinching religiosity of traditional Jewish life. Such actions constitute regression, not religious evolution. Recognizing the beauty of our heritage while affirming change as an authentic foundation of Judaism would help us to proceed along a more appropriate path for our movement and its constituents.

Our movement and our member congregations accept the notion that "Reform is a verb."[3] We are constantly reforming our religion with respect to and acknowledgment of our tradition. We recognize from whence we came, and use the messages and historical values of our tradition to guide us, but not necessarily govern us for the future. Thus, having analyzed the ways in which the reading of the Torah has formed and matured throughout the generations, and understood the present state of Torah reading in the Reform movement, it is worthwhile to articulate a unique vision for the future of Torah reading in Reform Judaism.

Assessing the Need

At the outset, one might argue, "Why would Reform congregations need a vision for the future of the reading of the Torah?" The public declamation of Scripture in the synagogue has changed and current practices throughout our movement appear

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http://www.bmv.org.il/shiruim/HSG/hsg012.html.

[3] Leonard J. Fein, et al., Reform is a Verb: Notes on Reform and Reforming Jews: Pilot Project for Synagogue Change (New York: Long Range Planning Committee of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972).

inconsistent. What sense would stabilizing Torah readings throughout the Reform movement make if we as Reform Jews need to affirm the religiously autonomous choices of individuals and their communities? How would an initiative directed towards congregational Torah reading benefit our movement?

The answer to these pressing questions begins in 1972. In this year, a study by the Long Range Planning Committee of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations noted, "We have moved, it seems, from a chaotic Judaism to an inchoate Judaism, to a generation of Jews whose ties to Judaism, whether as faith or as peoplehood or as both, may be no weaker than the ties of their parents or grandparents, but whose 'competence' as Jews is very shaky indeed."[4]

This was thirty-three years ago. More than a full generation has passed. These "competence-lacking" Jews are now older and have passed their Jewish knowledge (or lack thereof) to their children. In turn, they continued the commandment of *v'shinantam l'vanecha* (teach them faithfully to your children),[5] rather absently. For if parents do not clearly understand and wrestle with the teachings of Judaism, cannot augment their child's learning at two-hour-a-week Hebrew school, and associate temple with the brownies they readily consume at the *oneg Shabbat*, their children cannot be expected to practice in a devoted manner either. Jewish education needed to be raised on the list of priorities. Thus, the study concluded, "In our judgment, the single best way for the temple to turn towards community would be for it to provide its members richer

[4] Fein 142.
[5] Reference to Deuteronomy 6:7.

opportunities in...the areas of intellectual, or cognitive, Judaism, and the area of experiential, or affective Judaism."[6]

Unfortunately, while much has changed in thirty-three years, the reading of the Torah in the synagogue has remained rather static. In the recent survey of the JCWMRL, we received a letter from commission member Mr. Daniel S. Schechter of Glencoe, Illinois. A former synagogue president, Schechter chaired the UAHC/CCAR Task Force on Religious Commitment in the 1980s and directed a recent study by the CCAR entitled, "What Congregants Want in Worship: Perceptions from a CCAR Study." Although this study has not yet been published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Schechter provided the congregants' response regarding the reading of the Torah. He quoted the study, saying:

> The study participants wanted more from services than a symbolic encounter with tradition; they valued the intellectual challenges of the Torah. The reading of the Torah must be done in such a way that what is read can be understood and provide a meaningful lesson. The mere pro forma reading of a few verses is insufficient. Most participants would have agreed with the one who wrote, 'Torah and teaching in the broadest sense should be part of the service.'"[7]

And so we have come full circle. In 2005, like in 1972, congregants wanted more from their synagogue experience, specifically regarding the reading of the Torah.

Such a desire reminds us of one original reason for the institution of Torah reading on Mondays, Thursdays, and Shabbat. Communities read from the Torah so that the people would not go more than three days without hearing our sacred words. Our Rabbis likened this rule to verses in the early exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The Israelites needed to pause every three days for water. As water sustains life, so Torah

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[6] Fein 148.
[7] Daniel S. Schechter, letter to the author, 30 September 2005.

sustains the Jewish people. Even today, Reform Jews want their desire for more Torah to be quenched in the congregational setting. Our people are still thirsty.

Therefore, our movement might benefit from more clearly established principles regarding the declamation of Scripture in the synagogue. Those of us among the clergy who believe that we have entered the rabbinate and cantorate in sacred service to the Jewish community would do well to listen to the needs and requests of our congregants. We will not become "authentic" simply by deferring to Orthodoxy as the tried and true foundation of Jewish practice. We will only become "authentic" if we are willing to do serious and intensive learning, actively seek the ancient words and teachings of our ancestors and recognize the potential for change. It is time for us to return to the scroll.

Our Proposal

Our proposal focuses upon four primary areas of concern: (1) the length and cycle of Torah reading, (2) the number and identity of the Torah readers, (3) the number of blessings recited over the Torah, and (4) the manner by which translation occurs. We will now explore each of these areas in detail.

I. Length and Cycle of Torah Reading

The vast majority of congregations that we surveyed indicated that they read between three and twenty verses of Torah on any given Shabbat.[8] The problem is that our communities pick and choose what section of the weekly *parashah* "speaks to them." Thus it is possible, for the congregation to read the first few verses of creation from *Parashat Bereshit*, and then continue the following week with verses pertaining to the

Tower of Babel as told in the later chapters of *Parashat Noach*. Our community misses the Garden of Eden, the relationship between Cain and Abel, the genealogies, the story of Noah's Ark and the great flood, among other things. And unfortunately, we cannot expect or assume that everyone in our community is going home to read what they missed.

Yet three verses seems insignificant when paired alongside the length of a given *parashah*. If we, as rabbis and leaders of the Reform movement, continue to decide according to our own, individual ideological preferences, what is important for our congregants to hear, we close the door on their own growth process as Jews.

Why not offer them the whole of Torah? In our communities, we should endeavor to read the Torah from beginning to end. Such a practice will not only allow us to truly celebrate finishing the reading of the Torah and beginning it again on *Simchat Torah*, but also, more importantly, expose our congregants to the fullness of the stories and concepts present in our cherished scroll. Within the hallowed space of our sanctuaries, we will affirm the value of Torah study and intensive Jewish education. Proclaiming such values from the pulpit may promote further learning in other places too.

Nevertheless, reading the Torah in one year seems to be an enormous, unachievable, and undesired challenge for our communities. Reading the traditionally established *parashah*, divided into seven smaller portions, every Shabbat morning would undoubtedly alienate and bore the vast majority of our constituents. But ***less can be more***. If we strove to read according to Rabbi David Einhorn's 1858 triennial calendar of

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[8] See survey results for B4, B5, B6, D4, D7 and D10.

Torah readings,[9] or even to design our own contemporary *luach*, we might create a more manageable guide for the cycle of Torah readings in Reform Judaism.

Accepting the triennial system employed by some congregations in the Conservative Movement is not recommended. At present, their triennial system divides each *parashah* into thirds. They read the first third of the *parashah* the first year, the second third the second year, and the third portion the third year. While these communities complete the reading of the Torah in three years, they nonetheless read out of context and skip around in the scroll.

Our communities ought to read through the scroll in a linear fashion, without specific concern for completing the reading of the Torah in one year. Since there is historical and traditional backing for a triennial reading, this is what we recommend. We know that such a triennial cycle even existed in the land of Israel and neighboring communities until at least the twelfth century and reemerged in nineteenth century Europe.[10]

Regarding the number of verses being read on each Shabbat, we value the mishnaic principle of allowing a fixed number of readers to ***participate in the reading***.[11] As we will explore below, each reader would read between three and five verses. Hopefully, the reading itself would become paramount to the blessings recited over the scroll.

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[9] See Chapter 2.

[10] Norman A. Bloom, "The Torah Reading Cycle Past and Present," Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy: Volume XVIII:1995-1996, Ed. Macy Nulman, (New York: Cantorial Council of America, 1996) 38.

[11] Eventually, these readers were honored with an opportunity to recite blessings over the Torah scroll because they could not adequately prepare to read from the scroll.

We cannot simply complete, as Schechter noted, a "pro forma" reading of the Torah. And as we explore the three consequent areas of this developing project, we will note areas for the involvement of congregants, and the discussion (rather than the preaching) of important ideas from Sabbath to Sabbath. In this regard, the number of verses that we read, and the benefit of a triennial instead of an annual cycle will function as an advantage to Reform Judaism, rather than a detriment.

II. Number of Torah Readers

The Mishnah teaches us that a predetermined number of people would read from the Torah on any given day. For example, three people read on weekday mornings and Shabbat afternoon, four on *Rosh Chodesh* and *Chol HaMoed*, five on festivals, six on Yom Kippur, and seven on Shabbat morning.[12] We suggest employing this traditionally established norm in Reform congregations.

But a further adaptation of this concept is also recommended. According to our research, congregations are reading between three and twenty verses of Torah on any given Shabbat. We must remember that one person is responsible for fulfilling this duty. Sometimes it is a rabbi, or a cantor, or the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

But Torah reading could involve many congregants at once. Because of *b'nei mitzvah* preparation and adult studies classes in congregations, these congregants have learned how to read from the Torah and already know how to read at least three verses from the scroll. With advance preparation, we might encourage our congregants to participate more actively and more often in our reading from the Torah. The process of completing the scroll becomes one that they can own. As we read in Deuteronomy, the

Torah is not in the heavens or across the sea, but in our hearts and our mouths for us to observe and learn from its words.[13] Similarly, the reading of the Torah is not reserved for the rabbi or cantor, but all congregants who have achieved Bar or Bat Mitzvah age might be invited to participate on a routine basis.

Our survey reveals that we do not employ the services of congregants capable of reading from the Torah. 87% of surveyed congregations indicate that *b'nei mitzvah* students are called upon to read from the Torah after becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah. We should endeavor to build congregations where the reading of Torah is not a one-time event, but one of lifelong participation.[14]

Only 27% of congregations indicated that students read on the anniversary of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. But if we train students in reading and understanding Hebrew, they can read at other points during the year, not just from one particular *parashah.*[15] The more opportunities we provide our students with for reading from the scroll, in essence owning their Judaism and religious responsibility, the more chances they have for learning and growth. Eventually, students will want to know more about language, about Hebrew words, and will recognize that there is a vast liturgy and literature from which to study and grow. This is our sincere hope.

We need to encourage parental participation too.[16] 80% of our congregations do not allow for parents to read at their child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah service. In some communities, this is an issue of time. In other communities, this is an issue of knowledge. Imagine the positive message sent for parents to read Torah at their child's

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[12] m. *Megillah* 4:1 & 4:2.
[13] Reference to Deuteronomy 30:11-14.
[14] Survey D16.
[15] Survey D17.

Bar or Bat Mitzvah observance. This would be a true embodiment of the message, "You shall teach them faithfully to your children."[17] Children learn from the actions of their parents. If the reading of the Torah is a value that is important to parents, and parents demonstrate this through active reading and participation in synagogue life, we would potentially be able to retain their children in synagogue activities beyond those of our youth groups.

Our communities already welcome the participation of congregants in other facets of the Torah service. In our survey, we learned that congregants participate by opening and closing the ark, reading a translation, reciting blessings over the Torah, carrying the Torah, and performing *hagbahah and g'lila*.[18] We also learned that 93% of congregations teach their communities how to read from the Torah—whether this learning occurs through Bar and Bat Mitzvah study or in a Torah reading/cantillation class.[19] Our congregations already have the resources to use multiple congregants as readers of the weekly Torah portion, if only we would challenge our constituents and invite their ongoing participation in ritual and worship.

Inviting congregational participation encourages other congregants through a ripple effect. If Kathy sees that Joe can read from the Torah, then Kathy recognizes that, perhaps, this process will not be too difficult for her. If we teach our community that Torah is accessible to them, and provide them with opportunities to learn and practice for themselves, coming down from the bully pulpit to teach and inspire Jewish growth, we will create more participatory and knowledgeable Reform Jewish communities.

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[16] Survey D18.
[17] Deuteronomy 6:7.
[18] Survey D1.
[19] Survey D8.

III. Number of Torah Blessings

Questions D13 through D15 of our survey revealed that different congregations invite a variety of people to participate in services by reciting blessings over the Torah portion.[20] As our research indicated, in mishnaic times, only two blessings would actually be recited—one before the reading began, and one after the reading concluded.[21] But now, with the decline in Hebrew reading abilities, less Torah is read in favor of performing more blessings. Congregants are capable of reading the Hebrew for an *aliyah*, but do not receive the chance to read from the scroll itself.

Mishnah Megillah 4:1 serves as a basis for additional guidelines. Instead of separating the Torah reading into seven long portions, waiting for Grandpa Dick and Grandma Jane to reach the pulpit, and instead of honoring people through the aliyah to the Torah, honor them by allowing them to read from the scroll itself. This honor is not reserved for clergy or celebrant, but should be open to the whole community. Thus, when a congregational reader concludes his or her reading, he or she would simply pass the *yad* to the next person. Seven congregants, reading three to five verses on any given Shabbat allows our communities to read somewhere between twenty-one and thirty-five verses of Torah each Shabbat. Plus, the service would flow more easily and would provide more time for discussion and translation (to be explored below). Congregational participation in the reading, and restriction on the number of blessings, would redirect our focus towards the text itself, rather than the drawn-out process of calling family members to recite the same blessings *ad nauseam*.

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[20] Survey D13-D15.
[21] m. *Megillah* 4:1.

IV. Translation and Discussion of the Torah Reading

Instituting a verse-by-verse translation of the Torah portion is suggested. Such a practice would mirror the role of the *meturgeman* (translator) among mishnaic Jewry. We know from Mishnah Megillah that the *meturgeman* would translate each verse as the reader offered it. The Mishnah also warns us not to provide our translator with more than s/he can handle at any given time.[22]

From my own personal experience as a student rabbi in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, translation is an invaluable element of the reading of the Torah. While congregants at Mt. Zion Temple had access to *chumashim*, and sometimes I chose to read that translation, the community offered numerous compliments regarding my ability to translate right from the scroll. While this translation was my own interpretation of the text, I highlighted different meanings and interpretations of Hebrew words, roots, and identified the link between words that we saw in one *parashah* with words that we saw in another *parashah*. I used translation as a means of teaching Hebrew and inspiring congregants to learn the text in the original language.

The goal of "live translation" is not to eliminate or downgrade in any way the use of *chumashim* by the congregation. Rather, "live translation" highlights the more cognitively performative aspects of Torah reading in the synagogue. "Live translation" differentiates *k'riat ha-Torah* (the reading of the Torah) from *talmud Torah* (the study of Torah).

Additionally, while all forms of translation suffer from the limits of personal interpretation, critical engagement with the text yielded positive results. We need to make the text accessible to our congregational communities, and live translation makes

that possible. In our survey we learned that, most often, the congregational professional will offer a translation directly from the Torah scroll.[23] Such a practice is to be commended. And other communities need to recognize the value of this practice.

Reading from the Torah creates truly teachable moments. Reform Jews are yearning to understand the messages of their sacred texts. Such messages need not be limited to what we preach in our sermons or *divrei torah*, but may also derive from our public reading of cherished Scripture. Translating directly from the Torah scroll allows us to teach textual nuances, intricacies of language, and encourage a deeper understanding of our people's literature.

Once such translation takes place, it is important that we encourage discussion. By eliminating the blessings in between each segment of the Torah reading, we create continuity during the reading. We also add time to our service. We suggest using this time for discussion. Reform Jews' thirst will not continue to be quenched by Rabbis' sermons. Jews need to be given the opportunity to think, wrestle, and actively engage with the words of Torah. After translation of the Torah portion, services might include moments for discussion of the *parashah*, where congregations would allow space for introspection and inquisitiveness.

Almost all of our congregations surveyed offered *Parashat HaShavua*, weekly Torah study.[24] We suggest expanding and improving upon that successful model. We would endeavor to include Torah study as a portion of Shabbat morning worship. Such a model would include gathering together as a community for prayer, reading or chanting from the Torah, and studying its words as a community. The reading and study of Torah

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[22] m. *Megillah* 4:4.
[23] Survey B3.

would regain its central place in our worship service. Rather than worry about completing a seemingly meaningless Torah service in fifteen to twenty minutes, we would participate actively in worship, song, and study.

V. Concluding Thoughts

As leaders of the Jewish community, we are entrusted with the responsibility of drawing our congregations closer to the sacred words of our ancient tradition. But if participation in services, or in the reading of Torah is reserved solely for rabbis, cantors, and lay leaders, we cannot claim success. Permitting participation of congregants in the reading of the Torah is critical to the future of Reform Judaism.

We are already training them for Bar and Bat Mitzvah. We have teenagers, adults of all ages, and children in our religious schools who are learning to read Hebrew and who are studying. But they read once or twice from the Torah scroll and never read again. We need to encourage them diligently—to bring them to the scroll, instilling greater confidence in their Jewish identity. Active participation is one possible solution.

It is no longer enough to simply invigorate and inspire the Jewish people about the necessity of social action. *Tikkun olam* is not enough to fuel one's Jewish identity. By teaching and allowing our congregants to connect with Torah, to connect with sacred words that are uniquely Jewish, we will foster a stronger identity and community as Jews. Teaching them to understand the Hebrew they read, bringing them to the Torah scroll, and engaging in thought-provoking discussions is an absolute necessity.

This thesis has proven that the reading of the Torah changed somewhat in each period from inception to present. Clearly, change is nothing new to us. And so we

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[24] Survey C1.

remember the words of Rabbi Tarfon who said, "It is not incumbent upon thee to finish the work, but neither are you free to refrain from it."[25] It is in our power to consider a paradigm shift in the way we approach the reading of the Torah in our synagogues. And it is our responsibility to provide our congregants with the means by which they might quench their thirst, and satiate their appetites for spiritual sustenance.

[25] m. *Avot* 2:16.

APPENDIX:
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY SUBMITTED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM'S JOINT COMMISSION ON WORSHIP, MUSIC, AND RELIGIOUS LIVING (SEPTEMBER 1 – NOVEMBER 1, 2005)

Focus

This survey is focused specifically upon the reading of the Torah as it occurs in Reform congregations on Shabbat.

A Word about Terminology

Some questions will ask the surveyed party to describe how Torah is "read" in your community. The term "read" refers to "the manner in which Torah is presented to the congregation." This may include "reading," "translating," "chanting," and any combination thereof.

Length

This survey will take you approximately fifteen (15) minutes to complete.

Congregational and Personal Information

(1) Name of Congregation:

_____

(2) Location of Congregation (City & State):

_____

(3) Size of Congregation:

___ (0-299 member units) ___ (300-599 member units)
___ (600-999 member units) ___ (More than 1000 member units)

(4) Your Name:

_____

(5) Your Position in this Congregation:

___ Rabbi ___ Cantor
___ Educator ___ Lay Leader
___ Other (please specify):_____

(6) Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?

___ Yes [Telephone Number: (___)_____]
___ No

A. When does your community read from the Torah?

(1) Does your community hold worship services on *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night)?

___ Yes, every Shabbat
___ Occasionally (i.e. once or twice a month)
___ No

(2) Does your community read from the Torah at worship services on *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night)?

___ Yes, we read from the Torah at every *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night) service.
___ Occasionally, such as when we celebrate a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah.*
___ No, we do not read from the Torah on *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night).

(3) Does your community hold worship services on Shabbat morning?

___ Yes, every Shabbat
___ Occasionally, such as when we celebrate a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah.*
___ No

(4) Does your community read from the Torah at worship services on Shabbat morning?

___ Yes, we read from the Torah at every Shabbat morning service.
___ Occasionally, such as when we celebrate a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah.*
___ No, we do not read from the Torah at Shabbat morning services.

(5) Does your community hold worship services on Shabbat afternoon?

___ Yes, every Shabbat
___ Occasionally, such as when we celebrate a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah.*
___ No

(6) Does your community read from the Torah at worship services on Shabbat afternoon?

___ Yes, we read from the Torah at every Shabbat afternoon service.
___ Occasionally, such as when we celebrate a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah.*
___ No, we do not read from the Torah at Shabbat afternoon services.

B. Torah Reading by the Professional Leadership of the Congregation

(1) Within the professional leadership of your congregation, who reads from the Torah? (Check all that apply.)

___ Cantor
___ Educator
___ Rabbi
___ Other (please explain:_____)

(2) When the professional leadership of your congregation participates in the reading of the Torah, is the Torah read or chanted?

___ Read
___ Chanted
___ Preference of the Professional

(3) When the professional leadership of your congregation participates in the reading of the Torah, is the Torah translated for congregants? (Check all that apply.)

___ Yes, the "reader/chanter" offers a translation directly from the Torah scroll.
___ Yes, the "reader/chanter" offers a translation from a printed text such as the *Plaut Commentary* or *JPS Tanakh.*
___ Yes, a congregant offers a translation from the Torah scroll.
___ Yes, a congregant offers a translation from a printed text such as the Plaut Commentary or JPS Tanakh.
___ No, our congregants have *chumashim* at their seats and we choose not to offer an additional translation.
___ No, our congregants do not have *chumashim* and we do not offer a translation of the Torah text.

(4) At a given *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night) service, when the professional leadership reads/chants from the Torah, how many verses do they read/chant?

___ 3-5 verses
___ 6-10 verses
___ 11-20 verses
___ More than 20 verses
___ Our congregation follows the Triennial System, reading 1/3 of any given *parashah.*
___ Our congregation reads the full weekly *parashah.*
___ Our congregation does not read from the Torah on *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night).

(5) At a given Shabbat morning service, when the professional leadership reads/chants from the Torah, how many verses do they read/chant?

___ 3-5 verses
___ 6-10 verses
___ 11-20 verses
___ More than 20 verses
___ Our congregation follows the Triennial System, reading 1/3 of any given *parashah.*
___ Our congregation reads the full weekly *parashah.*
___ Our congregation does not read from the Torah on Shabbat morning.

(6) At a given Shabbat afternoon service, when the professional leadership reads/chants from the Torah, how many verses do they read/chant?

___ 3-5 verses
___ 6-10 verses
___ 11-20 verses
___ More than 20 verses
___ Our congregation does not read from the Torah on Shabbat afternoon.

C. Educational Opportunities

(1) Which of the following adult education opportunities does your community offer and how many congregants participate in each program?

(check all that apply)	# of Participants
___ Reading and decoding Hebrew	___
___ Understanding Hebrew prayer and liturgy	___
___ Reading/learning Biblical Hebrew	___
___ Learning cantillation/Reading Torah	___
___ *Parashat Ha-Shavua*/Torah Study	___
___ Adult *B'nei Mitzvah*	___

(2) Please provide a brief description of the learning opportunities that your congregation offers.

_____
_____
_____
_____

(3) How often are the above courses taught?

___ Every three months.
___ Every six months.
___ Every twelve to eighteen months.
___ Every two years.

D. Congregational Participation in the Reading of the Torah

(1) In your community, how do congregants participate in the reading of the Torah? (check all that apply)

___ Blessing over the Torah
___ Carrying the Torah
___ Read/Chant from Torah
___ Serving as Gabbai
___ Other (please explain):_____
___ Opening/Closing Ark
___ Delivering D'var Torah
___ Reading Translation
___ Lifting/Dressing Torah

(2) On the average, how many Adult *B'nei Mitzvah* does your community celebrate in a given year?

___ 0-5
___ 6-10
___ More than 10

(3) When an adult celebrating his/her *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is called to the Torah, does he/she read or chant the portion?

___ Read
___ Chant
___ He/she can choose to read or chant from the Torah.

(4) When an adult celebrating his/her *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is called to read/chant from the Torah, approximately how many verses are rendered?

___ 3-5 verses
___ 6-10 verses
___ 11-20 verses
___ More than 20 verses

(5) On the average, how many teenager *B'nei Mitzvah* does your congregation celebrate in a given year?

___ 0-10 ___ 11-20 ___ 21-30
___ 31-40 ___ 41-50 ___ 51-60
___ 61-70 ___ 71-80 ___ 81-90
___ 91-100 ___ More than 100

(6) When a teenager celebrating his/her *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is called to the Torah, does he/she read or chant the portion?

___ Read
___ Chant
___ He/she can choose to read or chant from the Torah.

(7) When a teenager celebrating his/her *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is called to read/chant from the Torah, approximately how many verses are rendered?

___ 3-5 verses
___ 6-10 verses
___ 11-20 verses
___ More than 20 verses

(8) Excluding B*'nei mitzvah* and Adult *B'nei Mitzvah*, do you train and encourage members of your congregation to read/chant from the Torah?

___ Yes, our community trains and encourages congregants to read from the Torah. (Go to question 9.)
___ No, our community believes that this responsibility should be reserved for the professional leadership of the congregation. (Go to question 12.)

(9) Generally speaking, when a congregant not celebrating his/her *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* reads from the Torah, does he/she read or chant?

___ Read
___ Chanted
___ He/she may choose to read or chant from the Torah.

(10) When a congregant not celebrating his/her *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* reads/chants from the Torah, how many verses are rendered?

___ 3-5 verses
___ 6-10 verses
___ 11-20 verses
___ More than 20 verses

(11) Excluding B*'nei Mitzvah* and Adult *B'nei Mitzvah*, how many members of your community would you classify as proficient Torah readers/chanters?

___ 0-5 members
___ 6-10 members
___ 11-20 members
___ More than 20 members

(12) Are members of your congregation invited to recite the blessings over the Torah?

___ Yes (Go to question 13.)
___ No (Go to question 16.)

(13) At a given *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night) service, how many people recite blessings over the Torah?

___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4
___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ More than 7
___ Our community recites the blessings over the Torah together.
___ Our community does not read from the Torah on *Leil Shabbat* (Friday night).

(14) At a given Shabbat morning service, how many people recite blessings over the Torah?

___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4
___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ More than 7
___ Our community recites the blessings over the Torah together.
___ Our community does not read from the Torah on Shabbat morning.

(15) At a given Shabbat afternoon service, how many people recite blessings over the Torah?

___ 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4
___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ More than 7
___ Our community recites the blessings over the Torah together.
___ Our community does not read from the Torah on Shabbat afternoon.

(16) Are *B'nei Mitzvah* students (teenagers and adults) encouraged to read from the Torah on additional occasions following their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?

___ Yes
___ No

(17) Do post *B'nei Mitzvah* students (teenagers and adults) read from the Torah on the anniversary of their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?

___ Yes
___ No

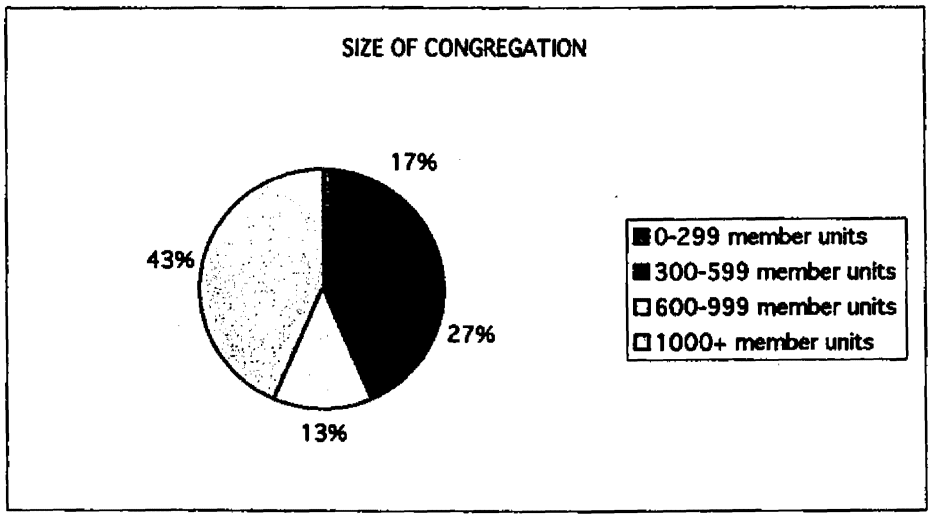
(18) Are parents of *B'nei Mitzvah* encouraged to read from the Torah as their child becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?

___ Yes
___ No

☺ THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY ☺

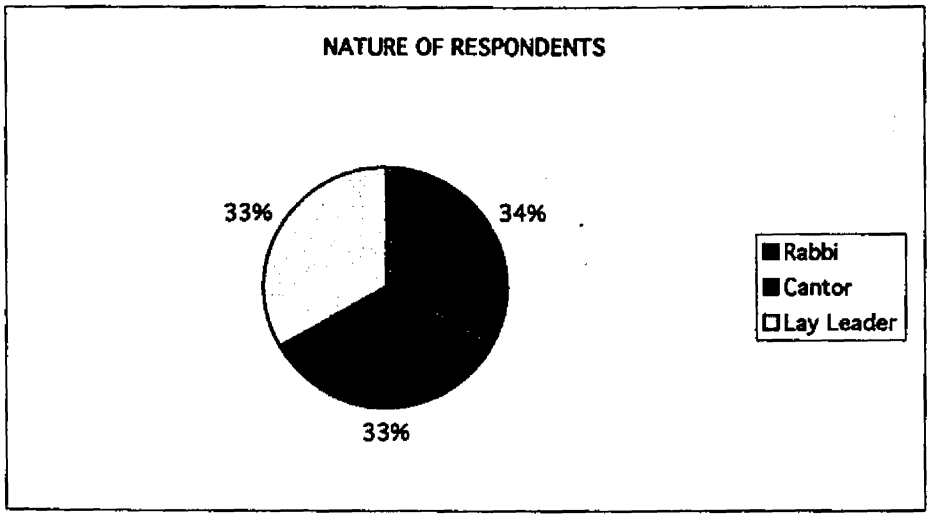
Introduction, Question 3
SIZE OF CONGREGATION

0-299 member units	5
300-599 member units	8
600-999 member units	4
1000+ member units	13



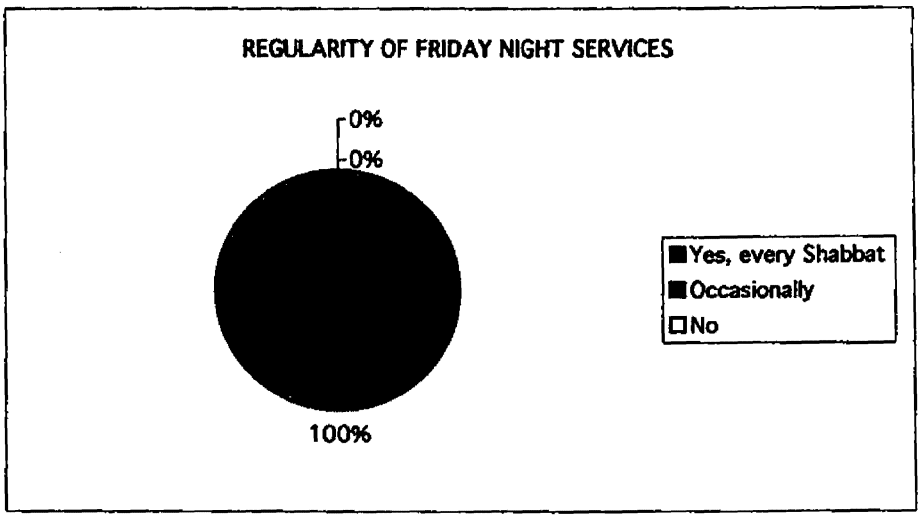
Introduction, Question 5
NATURE OF RESPONDENTS

Rabbi	10
Cantor	10
Lay Leader	10



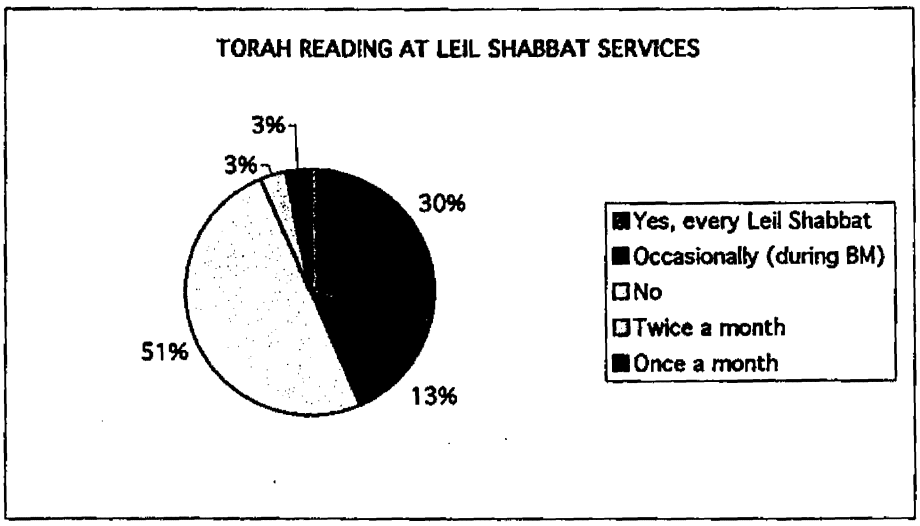
A1
DOES YOUR COMMUNITY HOLD WORSHIP SERVICES ON LEIL SHABBAT?

Yes, every Shabbat	30
Occasionally	0
No	0



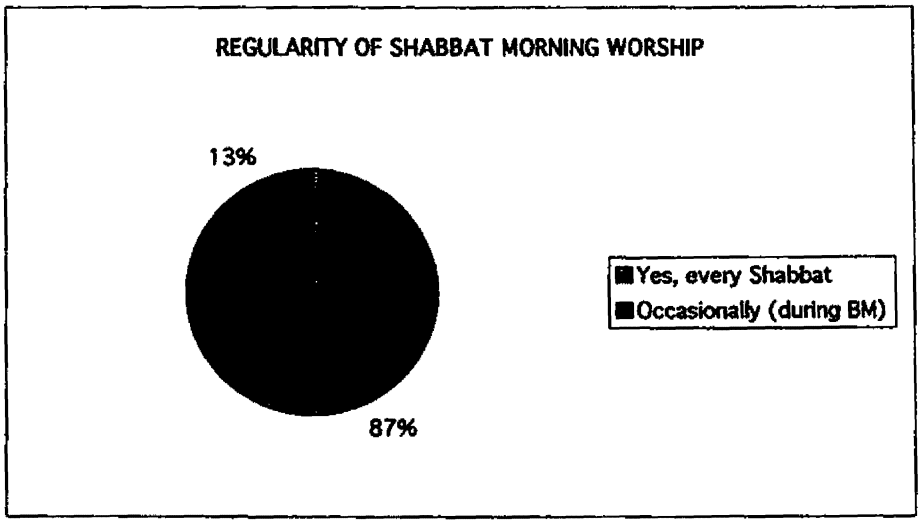
A2
DOES YOUR COMMUNITY READ FROM THE TORAH AT WORSHIP SERVICES ON LEIL SHABBAT?

Yes, every Leil Shabbat	9
Occasionally (during BM)	4
No	15
Twice a month	1
Once a month	1



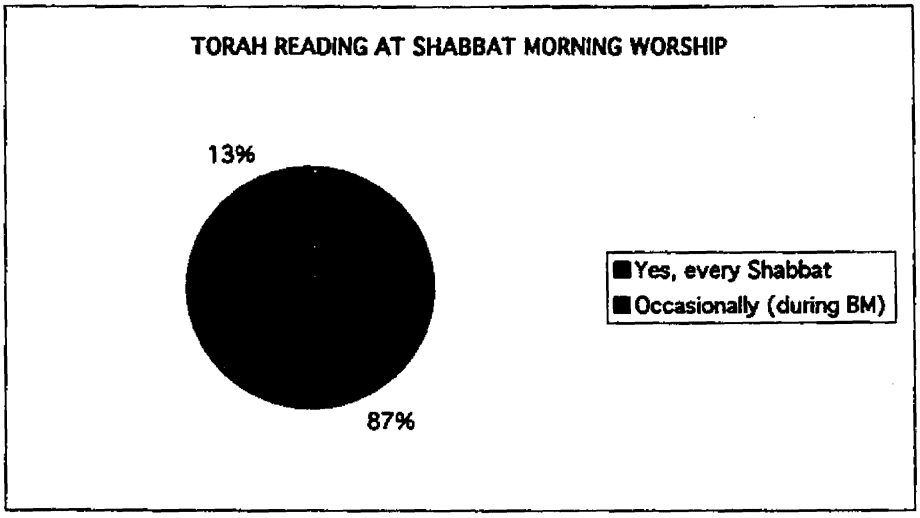
A3
DOES YOUR COMMUNITY HOLD WORSHIP SERVICES ON SHABBAT MORNING?

Yes, every Shabbat	26
Occasionally (during BM)	4



A4
DOES YOUR COMMUNITY READ FROM THE TORAH AT WORSHIP SERVICES ON SHABBAT MORNING?

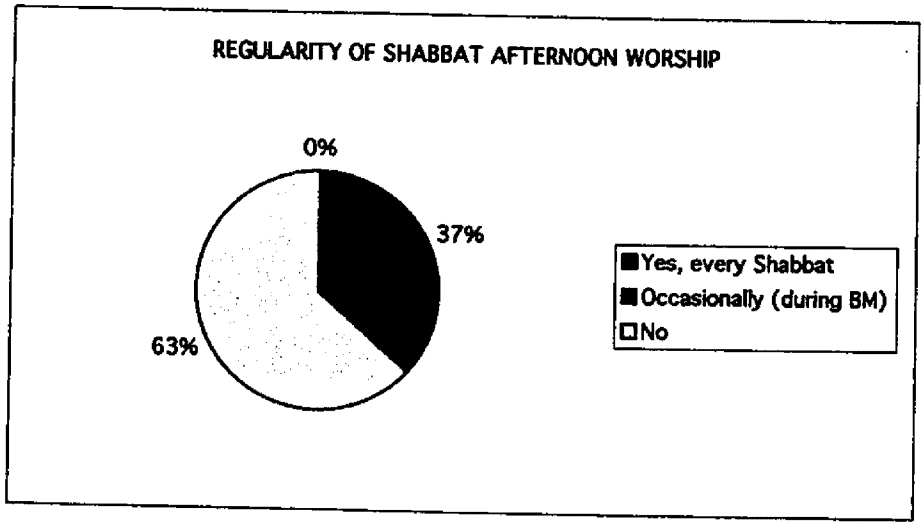
Yes, every Shabbat	26
Occasionally (during BM)	4



A5

DOES YOUR COMMUNITY HOLD WORSHIP SERVICES ON SHABBAT AFTERNOON?

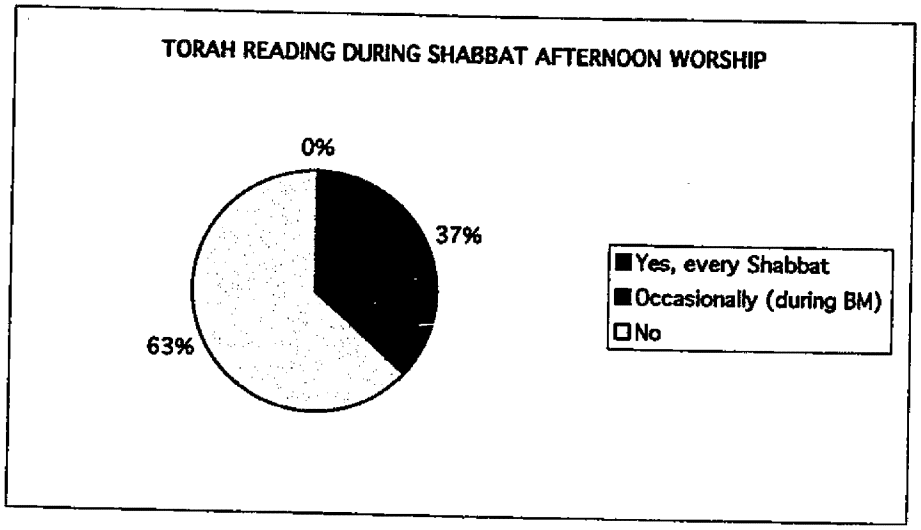
Yes, every Shabbat	0
Occasionally (during BM)	11
No	19



A6

DOES YOUR COMMUNITY READ FROM THE TORAH AT WORSHIP SERVICES ON SHABBAT AFTERNOON?

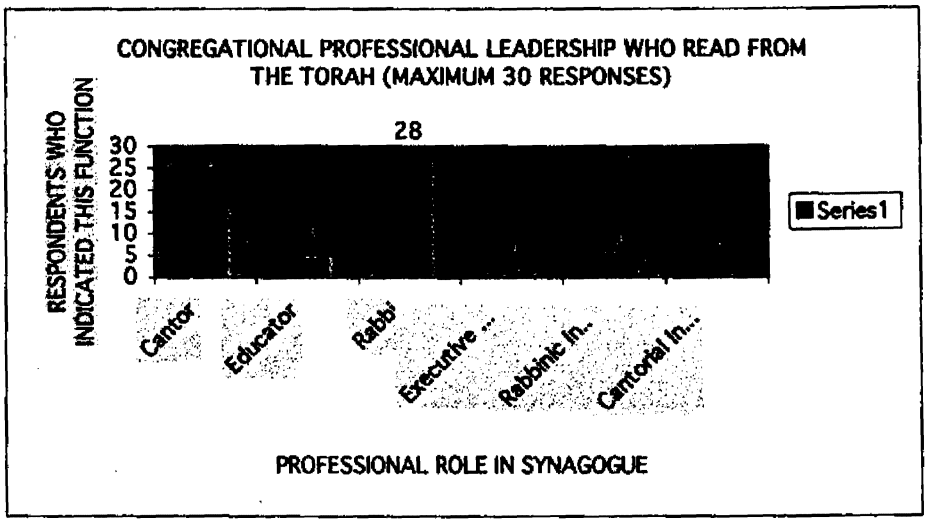
Yes, every Shabbat	0
Occasionally (during BM)	11
No	19



B1

CONGREGATIONAL PROFESSIONAL LEADERS WHO READ FROM THE TORAH

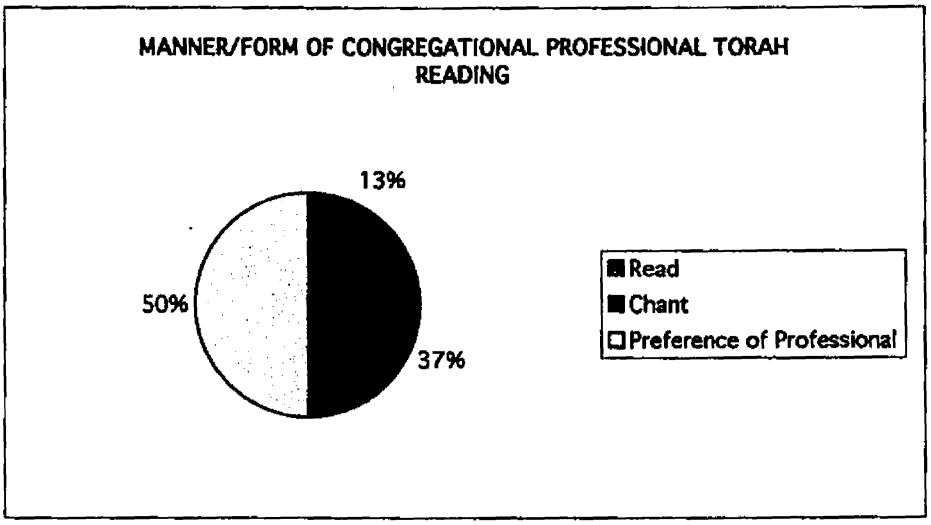
Cantor	20
Educator	4
Rabbi	28
Executive Director	1
Rabbinic Intern	2
Cantorial Intern	1



B2

DO CONGREGATIONAL PROFESSIONAL LEADERS READ OR CHANT FROM THE TORAH?

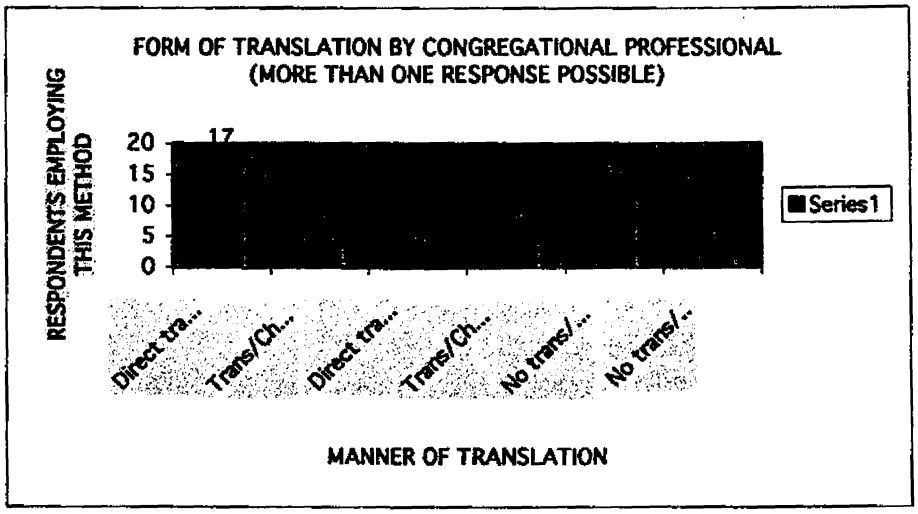
Read	4
Chant	11
Preference of Professional	15



B3

FORM OF TRANSLATION BY CONGREGATIONAL PROFESSIONAL

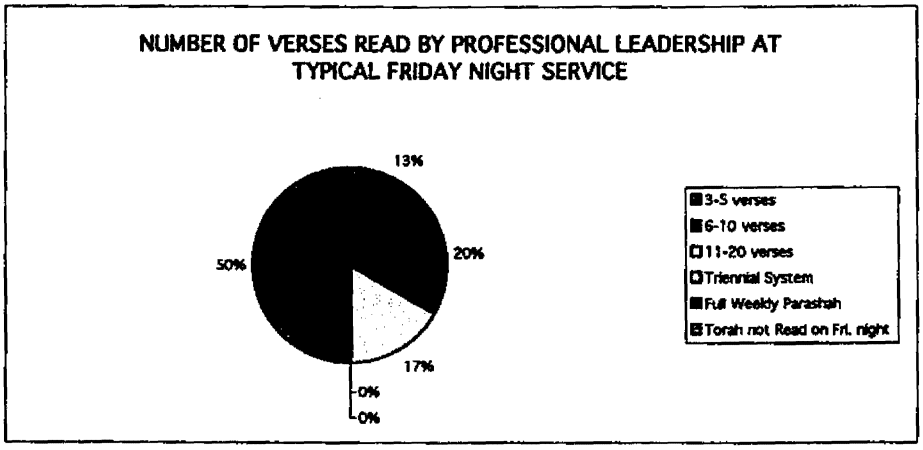
Direct trans/Prof.	17
Trans/Chumash/Prof.	4
Direct trans/Cong.	0
Trans/Chumash/Cong.	4
No trans/Chumash at seat	12
No trans/No chumash	1



B4

NUMBER OF VERSES READ ON FRIDAY NIGHT

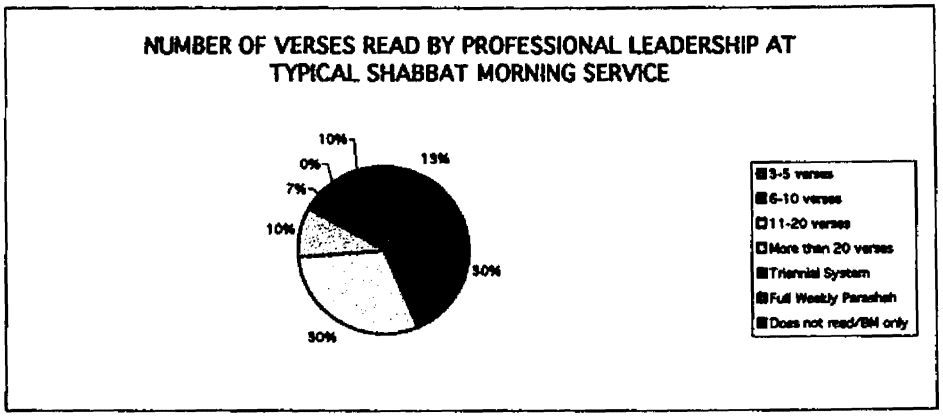
3-5 verses	4
6-10 verses	6
11-20 verses	5
Triennial System	0
Full Weekly Parashah	0
Torah not Read on Fri. night	15



B5

NUMBER OF VERSES READ ON SHABBAT MORNING

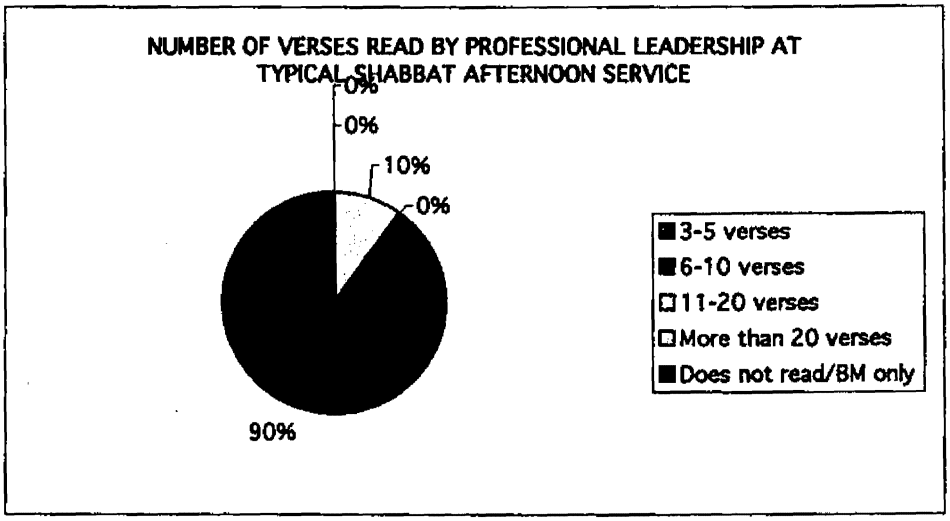
3-5 verses	4
6-10 verses	9
11-20 verses	9
More than 20 verses	3
Triennial System	2
Full Weekly Parashah	0
Does not read/BM only	3



B6

NUMBER OF VERSES READ ON SHABBAT AFTERNOON

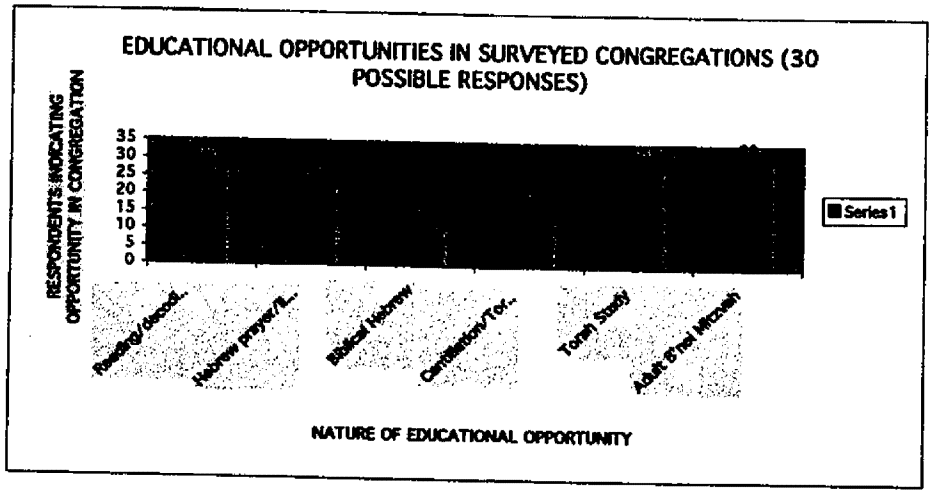
3-5 verses	0
6-10 verses	0
11-20 verses	3
More than 20 verses	0
Does not read/BM only	27



C1

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN SURVEYED CONGREGATIONS

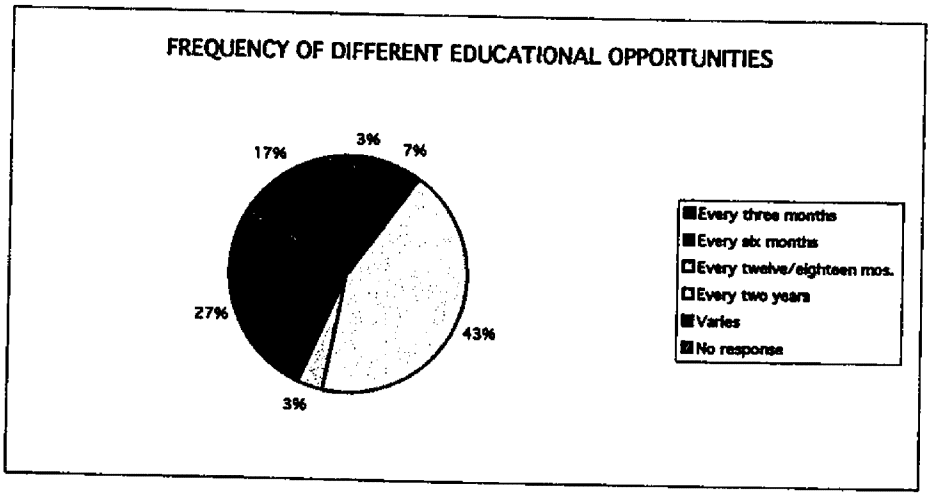
Reading/decoding Hebrew	26
Hebrew prayer/liturgy	21
Biblical Hebrew	10
Cantillation/Torah Reading	17
Torah Study	28
Adult B'nei Mitzvah	29



C3

FREQUENCY OF DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

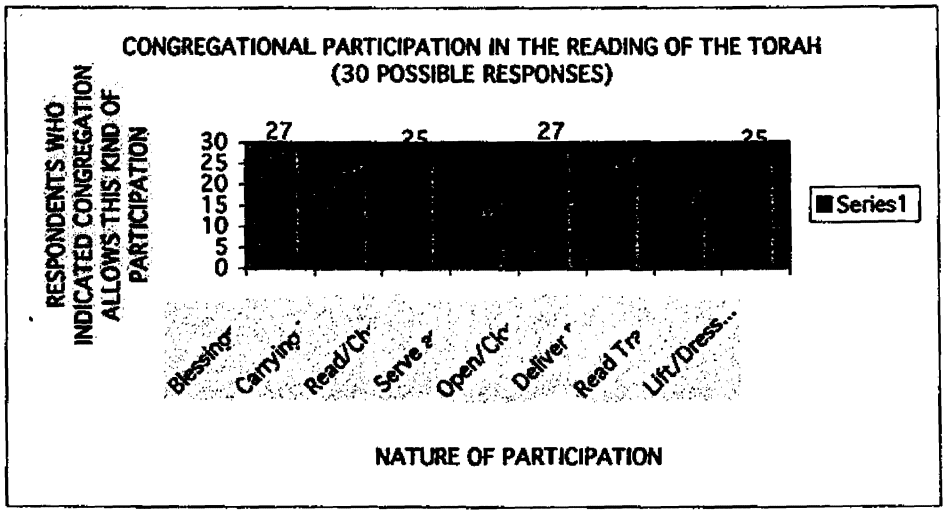
Every three months	1
Every six months	2
Every twelve/eighteen mos.	13
Every two years	1
Varies	8
No response	5



D1

CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN THE READING OF THE TORAH

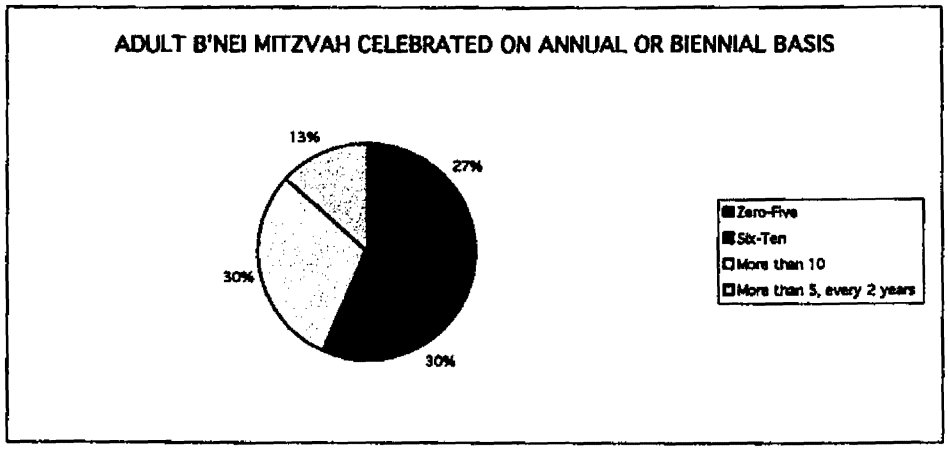
Blessings over Torah	27
Carrying Torah	18
Read/Chant from Torah	25
Serve as Gabbai	8
Open/Close Ark	27
Deliver D'var Torah	19
Read Translation	12
Lift/Dress Torah	25



D2

ADULT B'NEI MITZVAH CELEBRATED IN A GIVEN YEAR

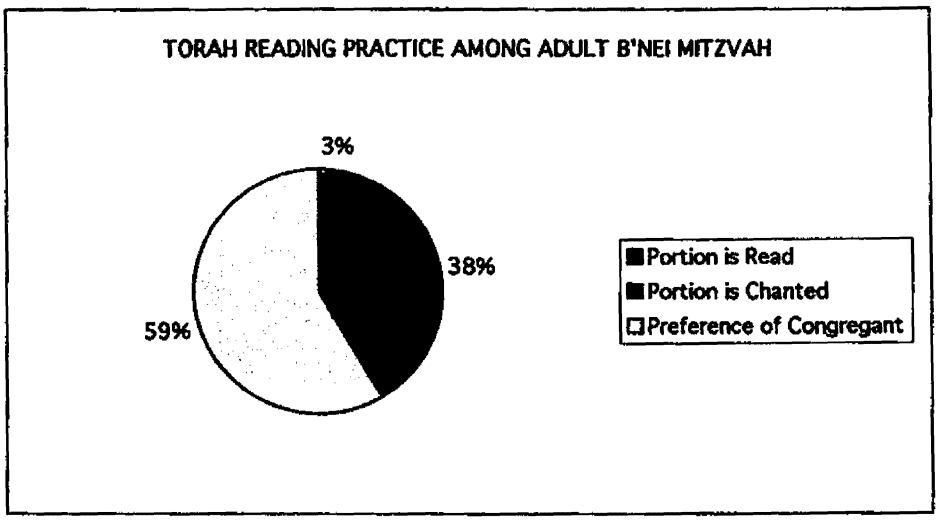
Zero-Five	8
Six-Ten	9
More than 10	9
More than 5, every 2 years	4



D3

TORAH READING PRACTICE AMONG ADULT B'NEI MITZVAH

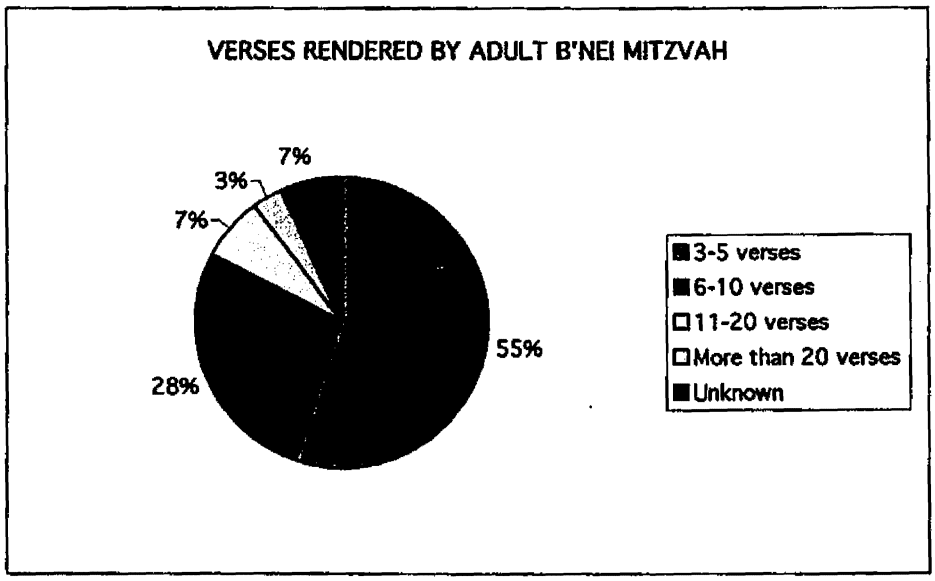
Portion is Read	1
Portion is Chanted	11
Preference of Congregant	17



D4

VERSES RENDERED BY ADULT B'NEI MITZVAH

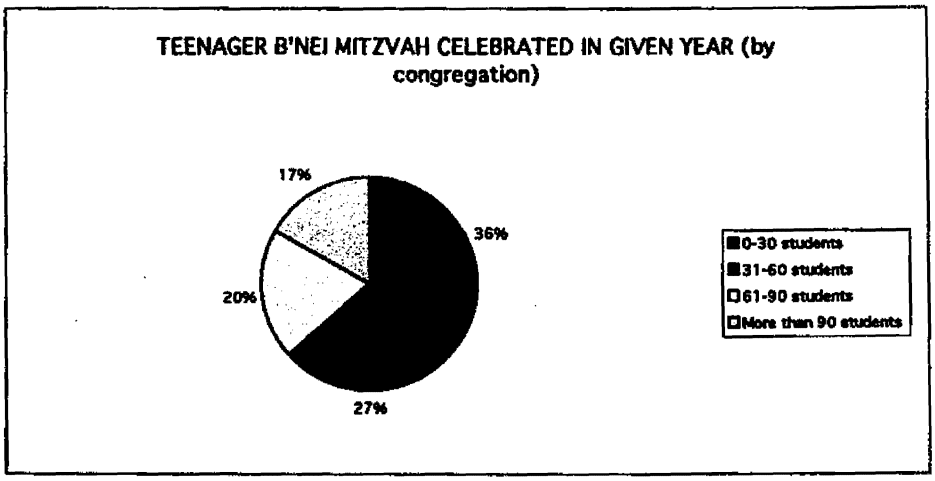
3-5 verses	16
6-10 verses	8
11-20 verses	2
More than 20 verses	1
Unknown	2



D5

TEENAGER B'NEI MITZVAH CELEBRATED IN GIVEN YEAR (by congregation)

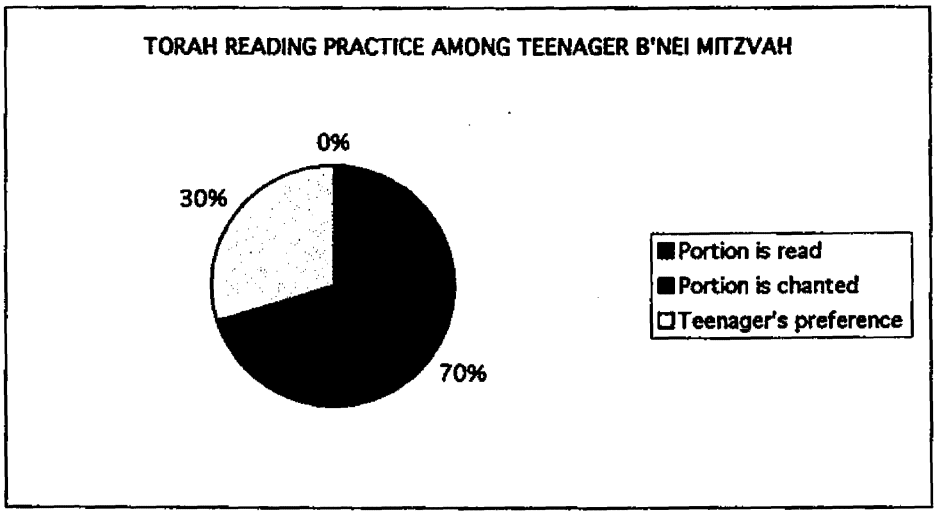
0-30 students	11
31-60 students	8
61-90 students	6
More than 90 students	5



D6

TORAH READING PRACTICE AMONG TEENAGER B'NEI MITZVAH

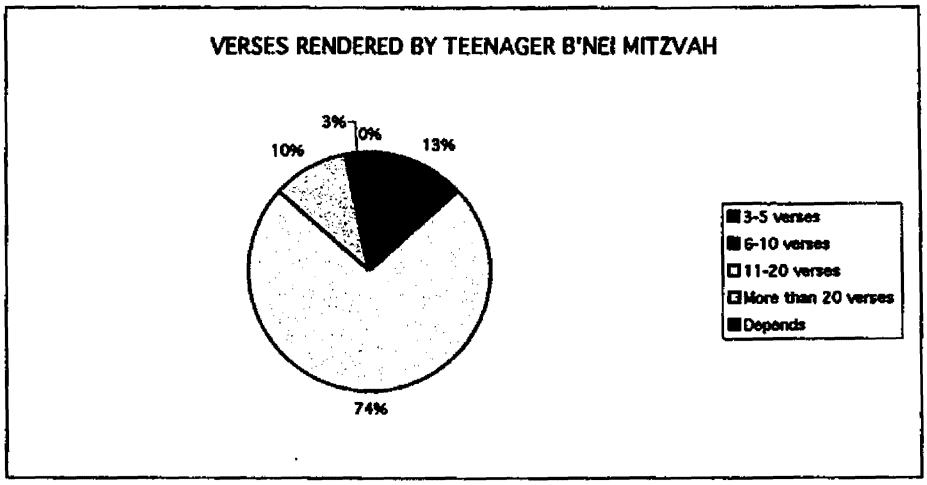
Portion is read	0
Portion is chanted	21
Teenager's preference	9



D7

VERSES RENDERED BY TEENAGER B'NEI MITZVAH

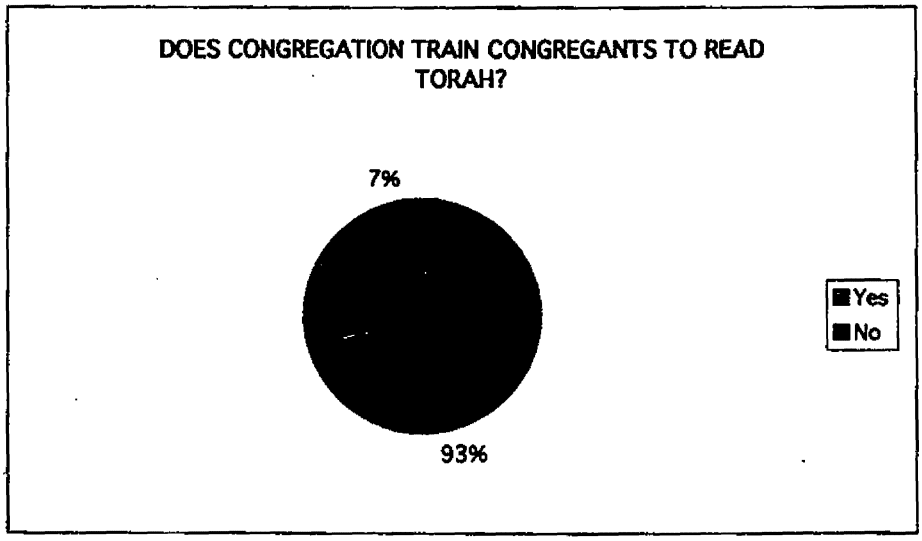
3-5 verses	0
6-10 verses	4
11-20 verses	22
More than 20 verses	3
Depends	1



D8

DOES CONGREGATION ENCOURAGE/TRAIN CONGREGANTS TO READ TORAH?

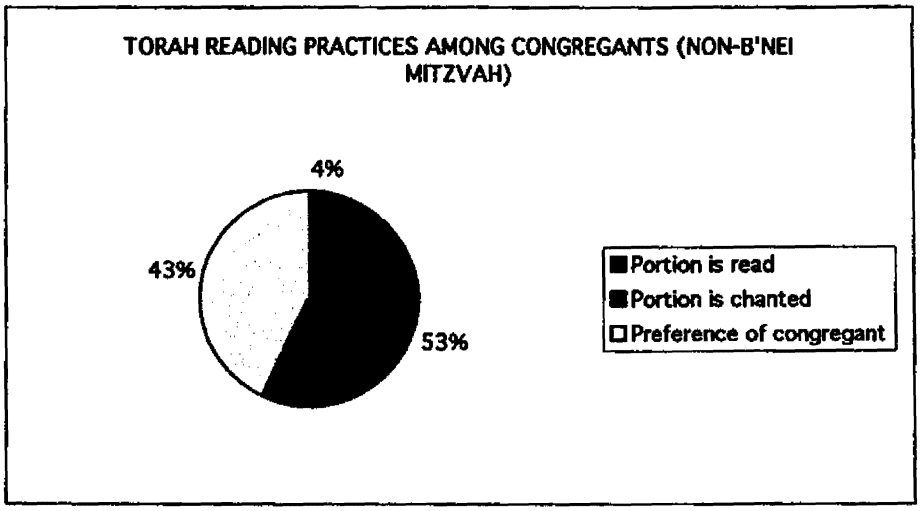
Yes	28
No	2



D9

READING PRACTICES AMONG CONGREGANTS (NON-B'NEI MITZVAH)

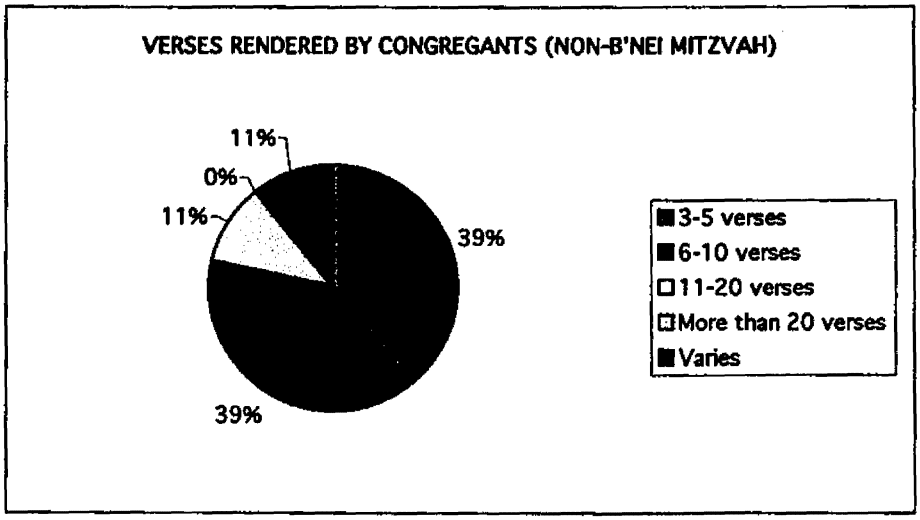
Portion is read	1
Portion is chanted	15
Preference of congregant	12



D10

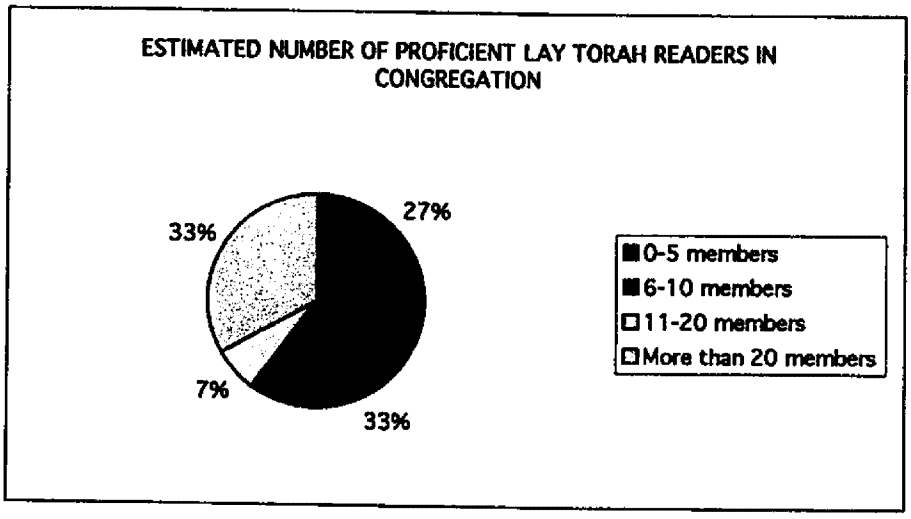
VERSES RENDERED BY CONGREGANTS (NON-B'NEI MITZVAH)

3-5 verses	11
6-10 verses	11
11-20 verses	3
More than 20 verses	0
Varies	3



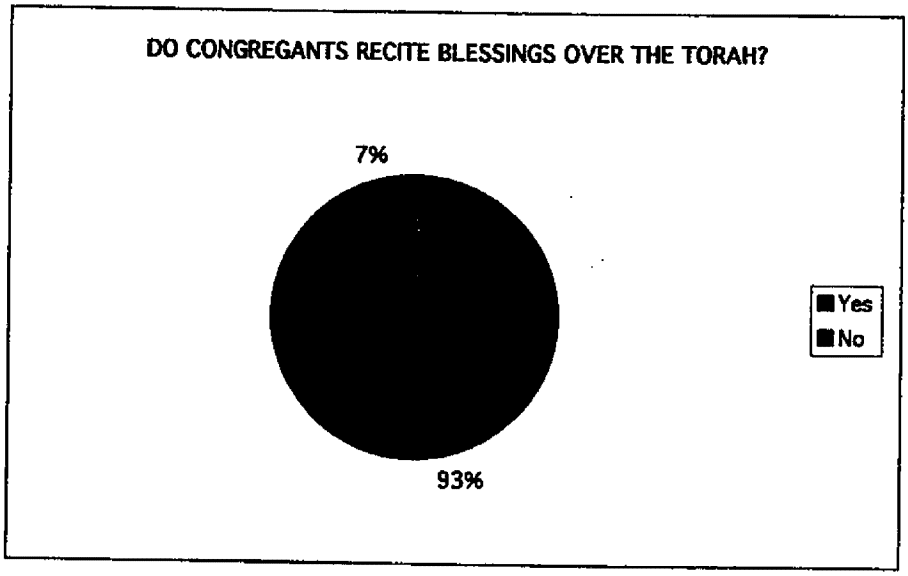
D11
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PROFICIENT LAY TORAH READERS IN CONGREGATION

0-5 members	8
6-10 members	10
11-20 members	2
More than 20 members	10



D12
DO CONGREGANTS RECITE BLESSINGS OVER THE TORAH?

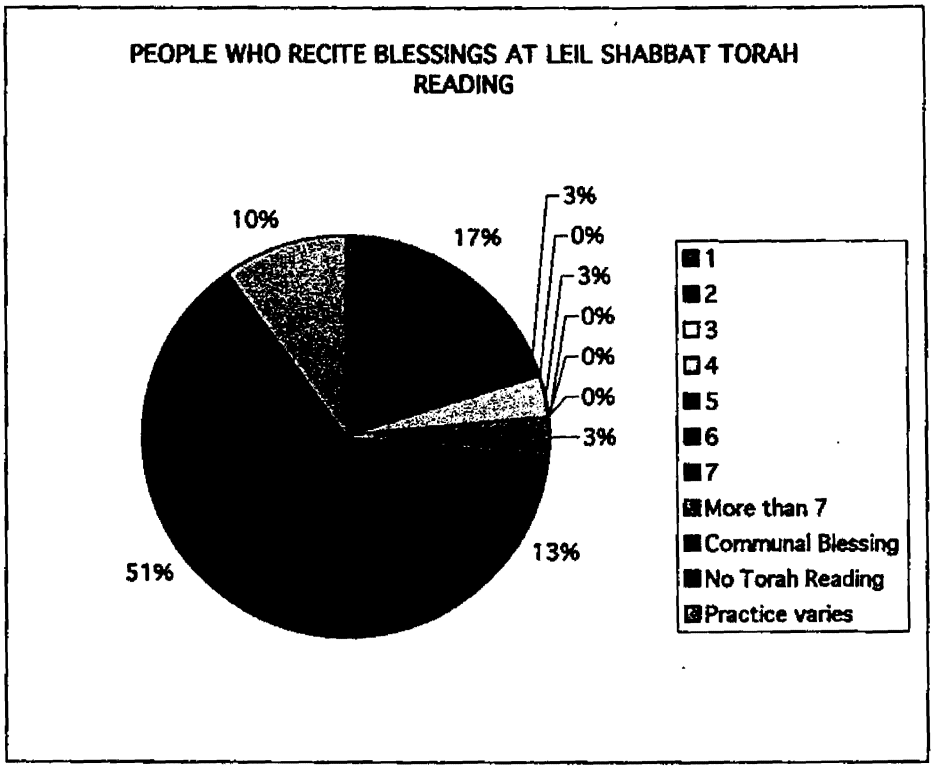
Yes	28
No	2



D13

PEOPLE WHO RECITE BLESSINGS AT LEIL SHABBAT TORAH READING

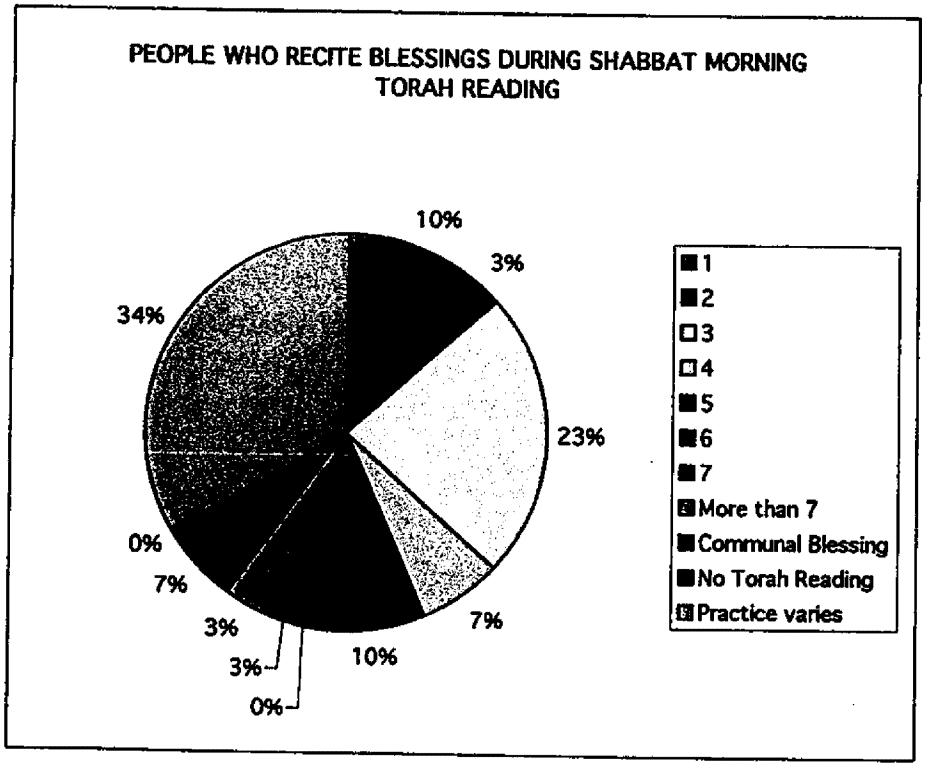
1	5
2	1
3	0
4	1
5	0
6	0
7	0
More than 7	1
Communal Blessing	4
No Torah Reading	15
Practice varies	3



D14

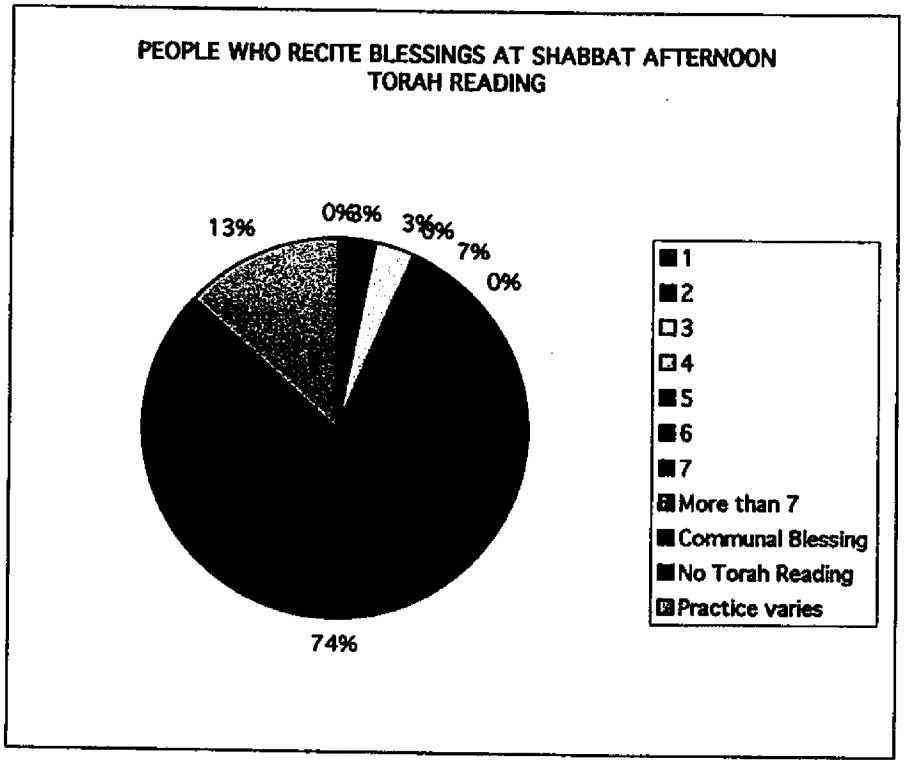
PEOPLE WHO RECITE BLESSINGS AT SHABBAT MORNING WORSHIP

1	3
2	1
3	7
4	2
5	3
6	0
7	1
More than 7	1
Communal Blessing	2
No Torah Reading	0
Practice varies	10



D15

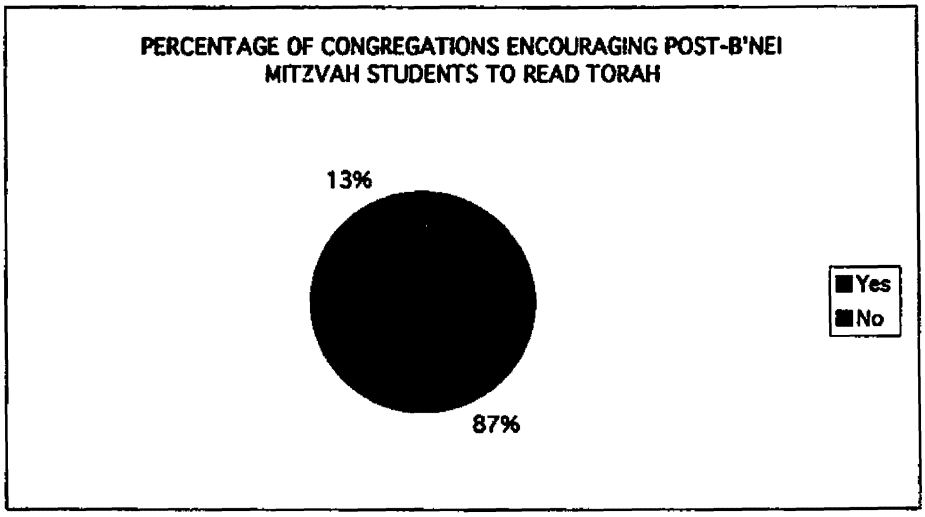
PEOPLE WHO RECITE BLESSINGS AT SHABBAT AFTERNOON TORAH READING	
1	0
2	1
3	1
4	0
5	2
6	0
7	0
More than 7	0
Communal Blessing	0
No Torah Reading	22
Practice varies	4



D16

DO B'NEI MITZVAH STUDENTS READ TORAH AFTER B'NEI MITZVAH

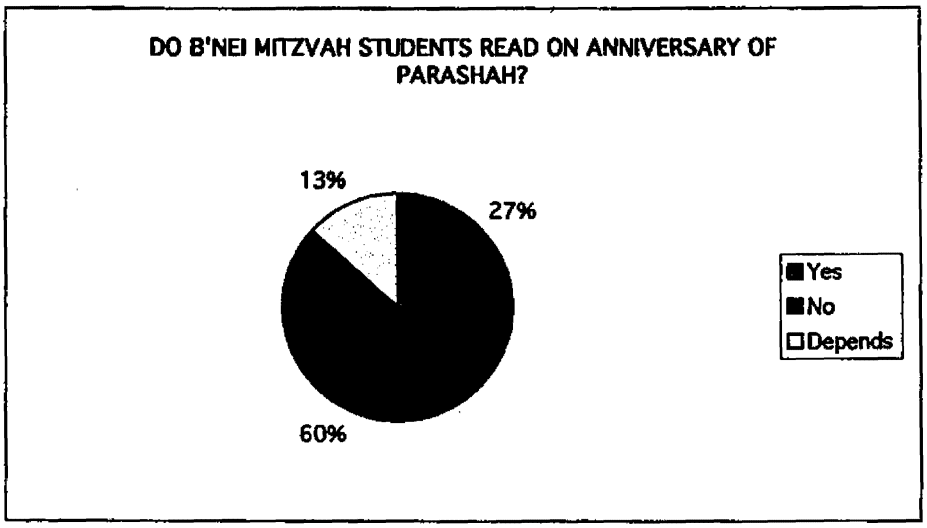
Yes	26
No	4



D17

DO B'NEI MITZVAH STUDENTS READ ON ANNIVERSARY OF PARASHAH?

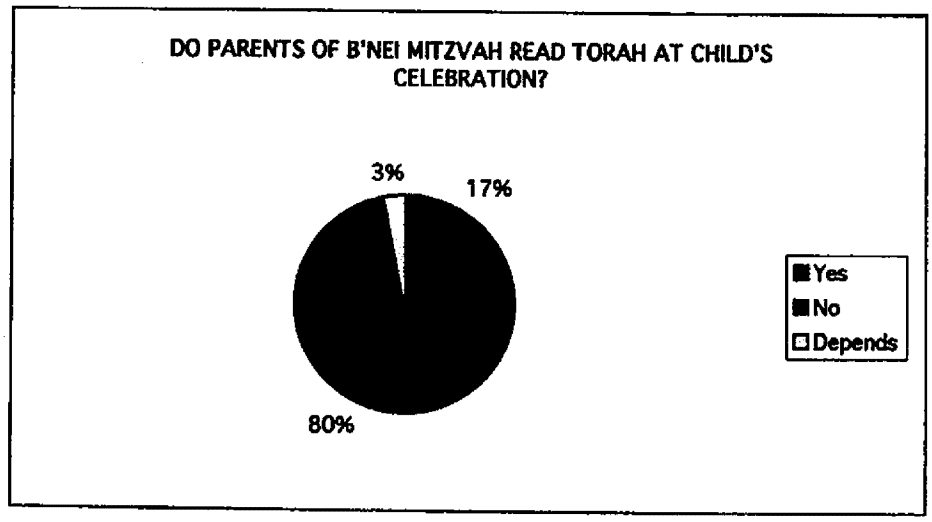
Yes	8
No	18
Depends	4



D18

DO PARENTS OF B'NEI MITZVAH READ TORAH AT CHILD'S CELEBRATION?

Yes	5
No	24
Depends	1



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