



B'NAI DAVID-JUDEA

Shabbat Shorts

When the grim faces conclude that the situation is one in which the Torah scroll can no longer be read in its present condition, what next?

What's fascinating here is that the Shulchan Aruch considers the two Halachic schools of thought on this question, and instead of choosing between them bowls the halachic ball right down the middle, right between the schools.

On the one hand you have the "stringent" school which holds that once the flaw is found, all of the reading that had been done up to that point that morning has to be re-read. In other words, a new Sefer Torah must be brought out, and the *leining* must be started again from the beginning as if the prior reading had never happened at all. On the other hand there is the "lenient" (and minority) school which actually has a much higher tolerance altogether for flaws in a Torah scroll, much higher than we described in the previous Shabbat Short. This school would simply allow the *leining* to continue until the end, as scheduled.

The Shulchan Aruch, following his own teacher, rules that in this post facto (בדיעבד) situation, we can rely upon the lenient opinion in that we need not go back and start from the beginning, but at the same time, in accordance with the more stringent school, we should also not continue forward, knowing what we now know about the flaw. A second Torah should be brought out immediately, and the reading should continue from there.

Rama, in his gloss, disagrees with the Shulchan Aruch in only one detail. He rules that if at least three verses of the Aliya had been read before the flaw was discovered, (three being the minimal number of verses to qualify for an Aliyah), then the concluding bracha should be recited. Only after that should the new Torah be summoned, and the next Aliyah should begin from that spot. (There are exceptions to Rama's ruling. Email "Gabbai Geek" to me, and I'll explain them :)

And finally, the question as to what to do if you are in this situation, and there is no other Sefer Torah available (in camp, at a retreat...).

Mishna Brurah (143:29) discusses this situation and cites two opinions. One is that given the complete lack of alternative, the Torah reading should simply be completed in the ordinary way. The other opinion is troubled by the number of brachot that would thus knowingly be recited over a flawed scroll and offers a creative solution that would still allow the parasha to be completed. Let's say, for example, that the flaw is discovered in the fourth Aliyah. The reader should then read till the end of that Aliyah, but the "oleh" should NOT recite the closing bracha. Instead he should remain at the *shulchan* (off to the side slightly) while the fifth and sixth and seventh "olim" are called. NONE OF THE LATTER SHOULD RECITE BRACHOT AT ALL. At the end of the seventh Aliyah, the "oleh" from the fourth Aliya recites the closing bracha on behalf of them all. Interesting solution.

(Opinions vary as to whether the brachot for the Haftarah should be recited under these circumstances.)

If you are planning a camp-type get away, and what to review these Halachot, I'm always happy to do so!

I love feedback!
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