

May a Pre-Bar Mitzvah Boy Read from the Torah?

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This paper was adopted as the Minority Opinion on January 13, 1982 by a vote of 6-6. Members voting in favor: Rabbis Salamon Faber, Edward M. Gershfield, David H. Lincoln, David Novak, Israel N. Silverman and Henry A. Sosland. Members in opposition: Rabbis Kassel Abelson, Ben Zion Bokser, Mayer Rabinowitz, Joel Roth, Morris M. Shapiro and Harry Z. Sky.

Note: "May a Minor Read from the Torah?," a paper by Rabbi Joel Roth, was adopted as the Majority Opinion on January 13, 1982 by a vote of 8-4.

SHE'ELAH

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TESHUVAH

There are many references to this particular problem, some of which I mention below.

Were we to permit such an occurrence, there are sources upon which we could rely. However, certain difficulties should be borne in mind:

- (1) Distinctions were made regarding an *aliyyah* and actual reading.
- (2) Differences arise as to which part of the reading a minor can intone (e.g., only from *shelishi*, etc.).
- (3) The overwhelming majority of sources discourage such practice.

The Mishnah (*Megillah* 4:6) says "*katan korei baTorah umetargem vekhule...*" as does the *perush* of the Rambam on the same Mishnah. Once again, the commentaries on those passages express certain reservations. Furthermore, the *Pri Megadim Mishbetzot Zahav*, O.H. 282:6 seems to be in contradiction with the *Pri Megadim Eshel Avraham* 282:6.

It does seem clear, however, that the Taz, in at least two places (*Orah Hayyim* 282, *Hilkhos Arba Parshiyot* 685) allows a *katan* to read Torah.

Those who do not allow are numerous and once again I mention a few:

- (1) The Shulhan Arukh, *Orah Hayyim* 282 of the "Rav" (Lubavitch).

- (2) Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik (*Mibeit Midrasho Shel Harav*) in the *Shiurim*, p. 31. He deals with the matter and concludes that it is forbidden.
- (3) Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe, Orach Hayyim II:72*). This is in regard to a Bar Mitzvah learning an "earlier *sidra* by mistake."
- (4) לבושי שרד א"ח רפ"ב . . . דאין מוציא הציבור וכו'.
- (5) ערוך השולחן א"ח רפ"ב.
- (6) שערי אפרים: אם אין שם גדול שיודע לקרות רק קטן, מוטב שלא להניח הקטן לקרות וכו' . . .

CONCLUSION

Once again, I personally would discourage a pre-Bar Mitzvah boy from reading Torah. Bar Mitzvah for our youngsters means: Now I can be called to the Torah! Now I can read Torah! To permit those younger than age thirteen could lead to ten and eleven year olds celebrating with a reading, never to be seen in the synagogue or Hebrew School again. The situation with post - B'nai Mitzvah is bad enough.

Of course, the answer to both questions in cases of difficulty is very simple. Everyone agrees that *Maftir, Haftarah* (including the *aliyyah*) and recitation of the blessings for those mitzvot, can be said and read by a *katan*.

III.

BRIT MILAH

