

OH 137.2020a

Modification of the Triennial Cycle Readings for Combined Parashot in Certain Years

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Approved on November 16, 2020, by a vote of 14-1-2. Voting in favor: Rabbis Aaron Alexander, Jaymee Alpert, Pamela Barmash, Suzanne Brody, Nate Crane, Elliot Dorff, Judith Hauptman, Joshua Heller, Steven Kane, Jan Kaufman, Daniel Nevins, Robert Scheinberg, Deborah Silver, and Iscah Waldman. Voting Against: Rabbi David Fine. Abstaining: Rabbis Avram Reisner and Ariel Stofenmacher.

The Anomaly

There is an anomaly in year 3 of the current triennial cycle in a year when parashah pairs that are usually read together are instead read separately.

The anomalous parashah pairs are:

ויקהל + פקודי (pg. 395)

תזריע + מצרע (pg. 399)

אחרי מות + קדשים (pg. 400)

בהר + בחקתי (pg. 403)

חקת + בלק (pg. 406)

מטות + מסעי (pg. 410)

(ויילך + נצבים) does not exhibit the anomaly.)

Page numbers refer to the CJLS teshuvah “A Complete Triennial System for Reading the Torah” by Rabbi Richard Eisenberg and modified by Rabbi Judah Kogen, which can be found at https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/19861990/eisenberg_triennial.pdf.

For the first parashah of each of the anomalous pairs, the reading for variation A (together–separate) for year 3 is the *first* section of the parashah. This is counterintuitive, as one would expect the reading for year 3 to be the *third* section of the parashah. (In fact, the reading for the second parashah of each pair *is* the third section of the parashah.)

It should be noted that the reading for year 3 of the together–separate–separate variation, where present, *is* the third section of the parashah, as is expected. Similarly, the reading for year 3 of the separate–together–separate variation, where present, *is* the third section of the parashah.

The Practical Problem

Aside from the obvious conceptual difficulty of reading the beginning of the parashah in the third year of the cycle, a serious practical problem exists. Each year in which this anomaly occurs, many who implement the triennial cycle are confused and puzzled. They have written to me, suggesting that the reading published in my *Luah Hashanah* must be in error. Some have written to report the “error” but have assured me that they “corrected” it. Others surely have made changes without communicating with me. The standardized triennial cycle—designed to eliminate the then-prevalent chaotic variation in shortened Torah readings—is itself leading to additional variations.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly provides guidance in matters of halakhah for the Conservative movement. Individual rabbis, however, are authorized to interpret and apply halakhah for their communities.

I have spent many hours attempting, unsuccessfully, to infer the rationale for this anomaly. In conversations with the authors of the triennial-cycle teshuvah, they could offer no explanation for it.

The Modifications

1. For variation A of year 3 for the first parashah of each anomalous parashah pair, change the reading to the intuitive *third* section rather than the first:

ויקהל (p. 395)	36:20–38:20
תזריע (p. 399)	13:29–13:59
אחרי מות (p. 400)	17:1–18:30
בהר (p. 403)	25:29–26:2
חקת (p. 406)	20:22–22:1
מטות (p. 410)	32:1–32:42

2. If in time these changes lead to new problems or reveal the superior logic of the original variations A, the original readings should be restored.

3. In addition, the adjustments described below should be implemented. They address minor problems in the aliyah divisions. In no case do these affect the boundaries of the triennial readings.

(These adjustments have appeared in my *Luah Hashanah* for many years. Because the aliyah divisions commonly used in the annual reading do not have halakhic status, I reasoned that the aliyah divisions in the triennial cycle do not either. Hence, they could be adjusted without permission of the CJLS. I did confer with Rabbi Joel Roth before making the adjustments.)

Minor Adjustments

מקץ

(p. 391) Year 3 maftir adjusted to start at 44:14.

This now matches *Etz Hayim*, *Tikkun Horev*, *Tikkun Koren*, and the sense of the passage.

אחרי מות + קדשים

(p. 401, II. Combined) Year 2 aliyah 6 adjusted to 19:1–19:4.

(p. 401, II. Combined) Year 2 aliyah 7 adjusted to 19:5–14.

The above now conform to the קדשים B.2 divisions (p. 401).

The above also now match the weekday divisions in *Weekday Sim Shalom*, *Koren Sacks Siddur*, *Tikkun Horev*, *Tikkun Koren*, and the sense of the passage.

מטות + מסעי

(p. 410, II. Combined) Year 2 aliyah 5 adjusted to 33:1–6.

(p. 410, II. Combined) Year 2 aliyah 6 adjusted to 33:7–36.

The above accommodates the traditional “desert traveling melody” cantillation, which groups verses as pairs and treats 33:10 and 33:11 as a pair.