Is there an Authentic Triennial Cycle of Torah Readings?

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This paper is an appendix to the paper “Annual and Triennial Systems For Reading The Torah” by Rabbi Elliot Dorff, and was approved together with it on April 29, 1987 by a vote of seven in favor, four opposed, and two abstaining. Members voting in favor: Rabbis Isidoro Aizenberg, Ben Zion Bergman, Elliot N. Dorff, Richard L. Eisenberg, Mayer E. Rabinowitz, Seymour Siegel and Gordon Tucker. Members voting in opposition: Rabbis David H. Lincoln, Lionel E. Moses, Joel Roth and Steven Saltzman. Members abstaining: Rabbis David M. Feldman and George Pollak.

Abstract

In light of questions addressed to the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards from as early as 1961 and the preliminary answers given to these queries by the committee (Section I), this paper endeavors to review the sources (Section II), both talmudic and post-talmudic (Section IIa) and manuscript lists of sedarim (Section IIb) to set the triennial cycle in its historical perspective. Section III of the paper establishes a list of seven halakhic parameters, based on Mishnah and Tosefta, for the reading of the Torah. The parameters are limited to these two authentically Palestinian sources because all data for a triennial cycle is Palestinian in origin and predates even the earliest post-Geonic law codices. It would thus be unfair, to say nothing of impossible, to try to fit a Palestinian triennial reading cycle to halakhic parameters which were both later in origin and developed outside its geographical sphere of influence. Finally in Section IV, six questions are asked regarding the institution of a triennial cycle in our day and in a short postscript, several desiderata are listed in order to put such a cycle into practice today.
שאלוה

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Section I: Previous Opinions of the CJLS

תשובה

As early as 1961, two members of the Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbis Manuel Greenstein and Theodore Steinberg, wrote to the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards requesting information about the triennial cycle of reading the Torah. Specifically, both rabbis asked if there was any pattern among Conservative congregations which utilized the triennial cycle and what, in principle, was the CJLS's attitude to such a practice.

In answer to the latter question, Rabbi Jules Harlow, acting as Secretary of the CJLS, responded that “the abbreviation of the Torah reading may be allowed in congregations where the change is deemed essential after careful consideration.” Thereby was established the halakhic permissibility of abbreviated Torah readings, sadly without reference to precedent in the classical literature.

With respect to the former question regarding the pattern of such abbreviated Torah readings, Rabbi Harlow responded that “there seems to be no pattern among our congregations in this area.” Rabbi Harlow then continued by citing two possible procedures used by a number of congregations:

(1) a triennial system; and

(2) a system wherein the כלתעלית, מנחת, is read at Shabbat, the כלתעלית is read on Monday morning, הרתי on Thursday and שליחת on Shabbat morning.

Rabbi Harlow then added that those using the triennial cycle should remember:

(1) that no less than three verses must be read for each כלתעלית.

(2) the entire portion read must contain no less than 10 verses.

(3) that on Shabbat morning, at least seven men be called to the Torah.

Two issues should be noted regarding Rabbi Harlow’s judicious response of December 20, 1961:

(1) He does not in any way define or outline what the CJLS means by triennial cycle.

(2) De facto, he accepts the legitimacy of the custom of a number of Conservative congregations wherein they abbreviate the Shabbat morning Torah selection by reading the first three כלתעלית at Shabbat
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This latter point is important because twelve years later the CJLS apparently had a change of heart regarding the legitimacy of this approach. Responding to a question of Rabbi Charles Sherman, who cited the latter approach as the one currently in practice in his congregation and requested “as much information as is available” on “an authentic Tri-annual (sic.) Reading,” Rabbi Mayer Rabinowitz, then serving as the Secretary of the CJLS, stated that “the committee has never stated what the authentic triennial reading is” and further noted, in agreement with Rabbi Sherman that “the present system you use is ‘distorted.’”

A further request for information on a triennial cycle came from Rabbi Joseph Hirsch, who asked the CJLS if there were any plans to produce a triennial Torah reading that is consecutive, like the ancient practice of מלאכום. Rabbi Hirsch also asked that appropriate הפרשיות be indicated and noted that “the creation of (such) a consecutive lectionary would be a very positive and helpful step ...” In his response of June 17, 1977, Rabbi Rabinowitz again noted that the CJLS has agreed in principle with the triennial cycle, but has felt that “the question is best left to the individual rabbi as the נאזר של הכנסייה of the community.”

Two other pieces are currently on file regarding the triennial cycle. The first, written by Rabbi Edward Sandrow, comes from the R.A. Program Notes, 1967. The second was written by Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner in 1980. Rabbi Sandrow’s article divides each of the traditional הפרשיות into three sections, according to the seven traditional עליתות. In each of the three years, the first עלית (כון), which is read on Shabbat afternoon and Monday and Thursday morning, is read on Shabbat morning as well. Thereafter, the remaining six עליתות are divided over the three year cycle with adjustments being made for very short הפרשיות, double הפרשיות (תניא-preceding, חקוקת-פָּקֶד), and for the inclusion of portions with special significance (תניא כהן, שִׁירָה, etc.).

Rabbi Lerner’s article is based on that of Rabbi Sandrow. It has the one added feature that in places he begins to attempt to divide the particular readings into עליתות, although the עליתות have not been worked out exhaustively for the entire cycle. Rabbi Lerner further notes that he has followed the traditional custom of having עליתות begin and end on a good note rather than a sad one.

While Rabbi Sandrow and Rabbi Lerner have produced a triennial cycle for reading the Torah that is reasonable and practical, one in which the entire Torah is read over the three year period, two issues are worthy of note:

(1) One עלית, that of הכוהן, is consistently read in each of the three years, so that in effect, preference appears to be given to one section of

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The text is in Hebrew and English. The English part discusses the triennial cycle of Torah readings and responses from the CJLS regarding its legitimacy. It also mentions additional pieces on the subject, including articles by Rabbi Edward Sandrow and Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner. The English text is a translation or summary of the Hebrew content.
the Torah. The same might be said with regard to individual m'tv,tl which, because of their size and not because of their liturgical significance, are read into each year of the triennial cycle.

(2) The very premise of these two cycles automatically undermines the principle "אֵין מַדְלִין בַּהוֹדַח" [one should not skip about the Torah].

Of secondary relevance is the fact that such an arbitrary division of the traditional 45 Babylonian m'tv,tl ignores the fact that the traditional Babylonian, תְּפָרְשָׁתֵיהֶם were often chosen because they correspond to one verse or one idea in the m'tv,tl. By arbitrarily dividing the without considering the תְּפָרְשָׁתֵיהֶם the recited may bear no relation to those sections of the Torah read in a given year of the cycle.

Section II: Sources for the Triennial Cycle

The commonly acknowledged source for reading the Torah according to a so-called triennial cycle is the Palestinian custom which divided the Torah in to סדרים to be read consecutively from week to week and which would be completed in approximately three years. The sources for this custom fall into two categories:

(1) talmudic and post-talmudic sources which refer generally to the completion of the reading of the Torah in אָרָי ישראל in three or three and one half years;

(2) sources which specify the exact number of these סדרים and give us detailed lists of the סדרים and thereby allow us to determine the required time to complete such a triennial cycle.

We will review each category of sources in turn, but it is crucial to point out that we in fact have not one list of סדרים but three: one containing 141 סדרים, one containing 154 סדרים, and one containing 167. The variation in the number of סדרים is further complicated by the fact that we do not know on which of the three to rely. Furthermore, as Heinemann notes, the number of שבתות on which the consecutive סדרים were read does not correspond from year to year, since the consecutive reading was interrupted when festivals and special readings (like מִסְרָיִם, etc.) occurred on Shabbat. Thus, we do not even know if a given list had sufficient סדרים (or for that matter, too many סדרים) for the cycle to be completed in precisely three years.

Section IIa: Talmudic and Post-Talmudic Sources

The Babylonian Talmud makes only one oblique reference to the triennial cycle: “The people of the west (i.e. the Jews of ארץ ישראל) who complete [the reading] of the Torah in three years.” No further amplification of this text is given and the context in which it is embedded
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adds nothing to our understanding of the problem. All that we learn from the Bavli is that by the fourth or fifth century the Jews of Babylonia were reading the Torah on an annual cycle, that this cycle differed from the triennial cycle used in אָרֵי שָׁרוֹאֲל, and that the Babylonian Jews were aware of the difference in custom.

Among the post-talmudic sources that make reference to the triennial cycle is the Mishneh Torah:

המגונת הפושט בכל יسرائيل שמשלש מין את התורה בשנה אחת...רש מ"ה

The widespread practice in all of Israel is to complete the Torah in one year. There are some who complete the Torah in three years, but this is not a widespread practice.

The key word is obviously פושט, which apparently means “widespread.” This understanding of פושט is consistent with the scholarly opinion that the triennial cycle was no longer in use anywhere after the thirteenth century. Note that it does not even specify which communities follow the triennial cycle.

Another post-talmudic source that again provides precious little information about the triennial cycle is a passing reference in the Travels of Benjamin of Tudela. After traveling as far east as Persia and then south though Arabia and Yemen, Benjamin arrived at Aswan in Upper Egypt. He then traveled north, finally reaching Fayum which he identified as the biblical Pithom.

Four days from thence [i.e. Fayum] brings us to אל-נויל, or Memphis, commonly called Old Cairo. This large city stands on the banks of the Nile called Al-Nil, and contains about two thousand Jews. Here are two synagogues, one of the congregation of Palestine called the Syrian, and the other of Babylonian Jews, or those of Iraq. They follow different customs regarding the division of the Pentateuch into פרשות and סדרים פרשות. The Babylonians read one פרשה every week, as is the custom throughout Spain and finish the whole of the Pentateuch every year, whereas the Syrians have the custom of dividing every פרשה into three סדרים פרשות, concluding the lecture of the whole once in three years. They keep, however, the long-established custom of assembling both congregations to perform public service together, as well as on the day of the joy of the law [i.e. Simhat Torah] as on that of the dispensation of the law [i.e. Shavuot].

Benjamin lived in the twelfth century and traveled in the east between 1160 and 1173, thus placing him in Egypt about the time that Maimonides arrived there, although he makes no reference to him.
His information about the triennial cycle is again imprecise; he does, however, add the interesting detail that the Jews of the Palestinian congregation joined those of the Babylonian congregation for the annual celebration of \textit{Simhah Torah}. As we shall see further on, this is an example of the intrusiveness of the Babylonian customary on the Palestinian, at a time when it became increasingly difficult for the Palestinian Jews to resist the encroachments of the all-pervasive Babylonian rabbinate.\footnote{9}

Whereas \textit{Megillah} 29b and Benjamin of Tudela both speak of a Palestinian cycle of readings complete in three years, one other source called \textit{Aram Tzvi} \footnote{10} specifies three and half years for the completion of the \textit{Torah} reading cycle. The two paragraphs that make specific reference to the triennial cycle are paragraphs 47 and 48.\footnote{11}

Margulies proceeds to explain \textit{Hilluk} 47 by saying that in Babylonia everyone reads the entire \textit{Torah} in the synagogue and the precentor in the synagogue and the people at home, who read the \textit{Torah} once in Hebrew and once in the Aramaic \textit{Targum}. In \textit{Aram Tzvi}, the precentor reads a \textit{Torah} in the synagogue, but the people, influenced by Babylonian custom, read the entire \textit{Torah} at home.\footnote{12}

Two other sources refer obliquely to the triennial cycle by stating the number of \textit{parshiot} in the reading of the \textit{Torah}. \textit{Midrash Esther Rabbah}, commenting on Deuteronomy 28:68b,\footnote{13} includes the following exegetical comment:

\begin{quote}
רב אומר \textit{כון קהנה בכרית ש onActivityResult בכה מיהו רבי חמא אבשלום ספורי והוה מנה של קונה
\end{quote}

This exegesis fixes the number at 145. Alternately \textit{Massekhet Soferim}\footnote{14} fixes the number of \textit{parshiot} at 175:

\begin{quote}
הלכל קוביע קיעה \textit{קורים בתורה} בכל שנה ושבהם אולית המידה
\end{quote}

\section*{Section IIb: Lists of \textit{Sdr}im}

Attempts to establish lists of the official \textit{אך ישראל סדרים} begin with Buchler in an important article that begins all research into the triennial cycle.\footnote{16} Buchler made use of Genizah material then available but began with the untenable hypothesis that the triennial cycle began in Nissan.\footnote{17}
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It is interesting to note that Buchler rejects the number of סדרים fixed by Massekhet Soferim at 175 since his thesis required the cycle to begin every third year in Nissan. To date, no list has been found which has more than 167 סדרים.

Research in the lists of סדרים was moved dramatically forward in 1940 when Jacob Mann published his classic study, The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue. In his Prolegomena, Mann noted that the lists of סדרים, with all their variants, preserved by the Masoretes, constituted the final stage in the fixation of the triennial cycle. The midrashic literature, especially the Tanhuma versions of Genesis and Leviticus Rabbah, reveal the existence of many different סדרים, showing that numerous shiftings had taken place. Like Buchler before him, Mann also became involved in an untenable thesis that proposed סדרים that even more than the midrashic selections were developed around and based on the Palestinian סדרים, they were dependent on the respective משנה to the latter. Mann's work was never completed; Numbers 6:1 was as far as Mann was able to proceed before his death. Yet, he identified 105 סדרים and over 50 sub-סדרים, some of which, Wacholder argues, never existed. In spite of the criticisms leveled against Mann, it was he who identified most of the Genizah fragments of the triennial cycle and laid the ground work upon which the students of Midrash and Masoretic Studies could later build.

Mann also drew a connection between the קיות (liturgical poems) of the sixth century Palestinian paytan Yannai and the סדרים and המשנה of the triennial cycle. Significantly, Mann realized that while the קיות corresponded, on the whole, to the evidence from the Genizah fragments, they were written before the triennial cycle became fixed and hence reveal different commencements of the Torah readings and prophetic readings. We shall return later to Mann's observations regarding the characteristics of the סדרים and their respective המשנה in connection with their practical halakhic implications.

In 1963, Issachar Joel published a כתר from a Bible manuscript written in 1290 and acquired by the National Library in Israel from Damascus. Like other Bible mss., the weekly פרשיתות (according to the annual cycle) and the weekly סדרים (according to the triennial cycle) were marked, although the markings came from a later hand. This כתר presents a third option by listing 141 סדרים, a number previously unknown for the division of סדרים in the triennial cycle. Joel rejects the possibility that this listing of 141 סדרים was merely intended for the private use of the reader and concludes instead that the scribe who added the notations actually had in his possession an entirely different tradition from the one listing 154 סדרים at the end of the Torah text. Nonetheless, a comparison of the three possible arrangements of סדרים (for details see footnote 24)
shows that there are not really any fundamental differences among them; rather extra reading were created by the subdivision of long reading in the shorter lists into shorter reading or by the combination of shorter reading in the longer list into larger units.

Joel assumes the division of the Torah reading into 154 reading to be the standard division and argued that it would provide sufficient reading for a triennial cycle in which two of the three years were intercalated. This would occur twice in fifty-seven years and Joel assumed that in the seventeen other three-year cycles various reading would be combined, much as we do in the annual cycle.25

Joel argues that the shorter list of 141 reading is best explained by the Bavli’s two possible explanations of M. Megillah 3:4. This Mishnah presents the appropriate Torah readings for each of the four special Shabbatot in Adar and then says תבנית חומש ל’כדרות. This portion of the Mishnah is explained in two ways by two Palestinian Amoraim, R. Jeremiah and R. Ami:26 Rav Jeremiah says והורים לטרד בתפשות, while Rav Ami says והורים לטרד מתפשות. According to R. Jeremiah on these four special Sabbaths, only the regular cycle of prophetic readings is interrupted, but the weekly reading is read in addition to the special Torah reading. According to R. Ami, the regular cycle of Torah readings is interrupted; on these four Shabbatot only the special Torah reading is read and only on the fifth Shabbat do we return to the regular cycle of Torah readings. According to Joel’s argument, which appears tenuous at the very least,27 those congregations which followed R. Ami’s explanation and stopped the regular cycle of reading on the four special Shabbatot in Adar would have to complete the triennial reading in 12 less Shabbatot over the three year period. Thus, Joel concludes, the division into 141 reading reflects the actual divisions of the Torah for a community that interpreted M. Megillah 3:4 according to R. Ami.28 Joel carries his thesis one step further by suggesting that the difference between the arrangement with 141 reading and that with 167 reading is 26 weeks of half a solar year. Since Massekhet Soferim refers to a Palestinian tradition of completing the Torah reading in three and a half years, Joel concludes that 167 reading is the requisite number of Torah readings for those who follow this latter custom and also interpreted M. Megillah 3:4 according to R. Ami.29

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Joel was his collation of the various reading found both in the list at the end of the חכרה reading and marked in the body of the חכרה.30 This collation of lists of reading and their corresponding תפלות was expanded by Ben Zion Wacholder and is currently the most comprehensive list available.31 Wacholder designates a total of 154 different reading (see Appendix I below). Wacholder follows Joel in assuming that the recorded variations in the number of reading
reflected local custom, although he is less dogmatic in attempting to provide an explanation. Furthermore, he agrees that 154 became the standard number of סדרים, because the number appears again and again in the mss. and because it harmonizes with the divisions of the fragments of the triennial cycle, as well as with the קרובה of Yannai.

Before proceeding with some of the halakhic problems engendered by establishing a new triennial cycle, it is important to draw some conclusions about the triennial cycle as it existed in ארץ ישראל סדרים.

(1) Until the fifth century at the earliest, there was probably no standardized division of the Torah into סדרים.

(2) The designations of both Bavli Megillah 29b on the one hand, and Tractate Soferim on the other, that the Jews of ארץ ישראל completed the reading of the Torah in three years and three and a half years respectively are only approximations, although Wachholder believes that three and a half years comes closer to reality, at least in the Geonic period.32

(3) The impulse toward the standardization of both the number of סדרים and their initial verses was probably the result of Babylonian influence and that resulted in 154 סדרים becoming the most widespread number.

(4) סימן תורה in ארץ ישראל was not the last day of Sukkot, as was the custom for those who followed the annual cycle, but occurred on whatever Shabbat the cycle of readings was completed in a given locale and could occur both in the winter and in the summer.33

Section III: The Halakhic Parameters for Reading the Torah

Before we attempt to apply the data regarding the so-called triennial cycle to the contemporary situation, we must briefly review the halakhic requirements for reading the Torah on Shabbat.

(1) M. Megillah 4:3 teaches us that on Shabbat at least seven people must be called to the Torah.34

(2) T. Megillah 3:11 expands M. Megillah 4:2 and establishes a dispute between R. Akiba and R. Yishmael.35

ביום טוב המושה בימותatories שמע זכה בשעה ואמר אכ רד ליוספי פליש

רבב יי משלך. יבקע רד טוב המושה בימותatories שמע

ובשת נשמה ואמר רד ליוספי פליש.

On Yom Tov there were 5עלית, on Yom Kippur 6, on Shabbat 7, and they may not add, these are words of R. Yishmael. R. Akiba says on Yom Tov 5, on Yom Kippur 7, on Shabbat 6, and they may addעלית.
(3) M. Megillah 4:4 sets the minimum number of verses read by each reader at three: הקדרה בחרה לא מפתוח משליישップ ספסים.

(4) Tosefta Megillah 3:17 adds a number of other rulings to the ruling that requires a minimum of three verses to be read by each reader:

(a) עמ הפארת של ארבעה של תומש עד הר הז קורא את כלهة
If the paragraph in the Torah contains only 4 or 5 verses, one reader must read it in its entirety.

(b) עמ הפארת של תומש קורא שלשה ויהיה א웠ו ותפומ אוחרי כלוה
If the paragraph in the Torah contains five verses, and the first reader read only three and left two, the subsequent reader must read these two and then read at least three more from the succeeding paragraph.

(5) Mishnah 4:4 also reestablishes the principle of not skipping around in the Torah.

The correct understanding of this principle has serious ramifications for a triennial cycle. Ovadiah MeBartenura explains we must not skip from one issue to another in reading the Torah, but we may skip within one issue, just as the High Priest on Yom Kippur skipped from אוחרי מות (Leviticus 16:1-34) to נלעשת (Leviticus 16:35) and to נלעשת (Leviticus 16:34) to נלעשת (Leviticus 16:34), all of which concerns God’s forgiving Israel for the sin of the golden calf. The Tifereth Yisrael explains the reason for not allowing skipping from one issue to another as שמא י.setBorder (lest it be confusing). Such an understanding of the Mishnah gives credence to those congregations that currently have adapted what I will call an American triennial cycle and each year read the כלוה of the annual cycle and then skip, if necessary, to later להורי in order to complete the reading of the Torah in three years.

Yerushalmi Megillah 4:5 however, seems to understand the Mishnah more literally.

We do not skip in the Torah reading. R. Yirmiya in the name of R. Shimon ben Lakish says it is because we do not roll the Torah before the congregation. R. Yosi asked, “And if it was a short פרשת?” They answered, “So that Israel will hear the Torah read in order.”

While the prima facie reason for not skipping in the Torah appears to be to prevent (burdening the congregation) while the Torah is being rolled, the underlying thesis appears to be the assurance of the
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orderly teaching of Torah to Israel. The two examples cited above where skipping is permitted are exceptional, since they are both special readings and deal explicitly with the צדני תרזה. Even so we are only allowed to skip because the two sections are close together and the time required to roll the Torah was less than that required by the Meturgeman to render the verse into Aramaic.

While it is true that the opinion of R. Jeremiah is not פסק הלכה, it does however, add to our body of knowledge about the triennial cycle in ישראל, confirming independently that the Torah was read in order. There is then much to commend the so-called Palestinian system of reading the Torah over current praxis in Conservative synagogues.

(6) Tosefta Megillah 3:17 adds two other instructive rulings regarding the reading of the Torah which gain significance with regard to establishing a triennial cycle.

(a) ак משיירית בכות חפס אלא כרי שקריא שבעה. שירי כרי שקריא שבעה קרואין אתיה שושה וודר שבעה בוחוס אנור.

In establishing the weekly סדרים, one must leave sufficient verses at the end of each book of the Torah that seven people can be called to the Torah (i.e. at least 21 verses). If one left only enough verses for six readers, these six readers read the requisite verses and then seven additional readers read from the succeeding book of the Torah.41

(b) אק משיירית בכות התוהח אלא כרי שקריא שבעה. שירי כרי שקריא שבעה

At the end of the Torah, one must leave sufficient verses for seven people to be called to the Torah; if enough verses were left for seven people to be called, but only six read, one returns to the beginning of the section and seven people read.42

It is interesting to note how the Palestinian סדרים incorporated these two halakhot. The last סדר of Genesis (49:27-50:26) has 33 verses; the last סדר of Exodus (39:33-40:38) has 49 verses; the last סדר of Leviticus (27:1-34) has 34 verses; the last סדר of Numbers (35:9-36:13) has 39 verses; and the last סדר of Deuteronomy (33:1-34:12) has 41 verses.

(7) Tosefta Megillah 3:10 appears to provide the precedent for those of our congregations which follow a modified cycle:

ממוקסسفסיק שבת בשחרית, שב מתחילה במנחה. ממוחזר, מס מתחילה בברכה.\\n\\nבש pll. בברכה, מס מתחילה בברכה. ממוחזר, מס מתחילה בברכה המבואה.

At the place we finished reading Shabbat שבחרית, we begin at Shabbat שבחרית, where we stopped at מנוחה, we begin Monday at מנוחה שבחרית. Where we ended Monday, we begin Thursday morning. And at the point we ended on Thursday, we begin on Shabbat morning.
The *baraita* is stated anonymously in *Tosefta*, but is cited in the name of R. Meir in the Bavli (B. *Megillah* 31b). This *baraita* comes to explain the ambiguous statement in the Mishnah.43

![Translation](image)

On Monday, Thursday, and Shabbat we read in order, and these do not count.

The *ra‘sha* of R. Meir’s statement clearly explains in Mishnah but the *sifra* is a direct contradiction of the second part of the Mishnah’s view, *RA‘A YO‘EL UMEM OT HEM HEMOTZEH*. No wonder then that *Tosefta* continues with the view of R. Yehudah.

The law is that where we stopped Shabbat morning, there we begin reading at Shabbat, and Monday and Thursday mornings, and the following Shabbat morning.

Section IV – Instituting A Triennial Cycle Today

In light of the data adduced regarding both the existence and the nature of the so-called triennial cycle and the halakhic requirements for the reading of the Torah, a number of questions exist regarding the institution of such a cycle in our day:

1. Can a legitimate triennial cycle be introduced today, in light of the universal practice of an annual cycle since the thirteenth century?
2. Is there an authentic triennial cycle that should be preferred or mandated for use in our congregations?
3. Can the halakhic requirements, especially those of the Mishnah and *Tosefta*, successfully be applied to such a triennial cycle, and if so, how?
4. Do any of the current practices in Conservative congregations have a degree of halakhic legitimacy, in light of the halakhic data analyzed above?
Two additional questions arise as corollaries of the above stated questions:

1. What should the prophetic selections used for the megillah be for a triennial cycle?

2. Should Simhat Torah be celebrated annually by those who complete the reading of the Torah in three or more years or only when each cycle of the Torah reading is completed?

We will respond to each of these questions in order.

Can a Legitimate Triennial Cycle be Introduced Today?

We might begin to answer this question by saying that it has already been answered by the Law Committee. Having observed that many of our congregations were already abbreviating the weekly portions, the Law Committee voted in 1977 to accept a triennial reading of the Torah in principle. While the Committee followed the principle of pisqah halakhah (consult common practice) in legitimizing the triennial cycle, the Committee also followed another principle of din ha'am, which has been a guiding principle of the Committee since its inception, namely the use of precedent. In using precedent as a principle for accepting a given practice, the Committee has often times used precedents that were even the din ha'am, the position of the individual, even where the din ha'am was not codified as normative.

We may, however, find further justification for abbreviating the weekly Torah lection by seeing the motivation under which the Jews of Eretz Israel shortened their weekly reading. Mann already noted that R. Yohanan ben Nappaha directed the shortening of the megillah to ten verses whenever there was an official meturgeman or an accompanying sermon, apparently in order not to weary the congregation by too prolonged a service. Margulies, in fact, assumes that the custom of lengthy weekly sermons in Eretz Israel was the motivation for shortening the Torah reading as well. Since the ostensible purpose of reading the Torah in the first place was pedagogic and since currently the purpose of the sermon ideally should be to teach Torah and make its message more understandable, there seems to be additional justification for abbreviating the formal reading of the Torah to allow ample time for its amplification. Moreover, wearying the congregation by prolonging the service may take away from the aesthetic appeal of the service and thereby discourage people from participating regularly in public worship.

The only impediment to abbreviating the Torah reading might be sought in a baraita in the name of Shimon ben Elazar:
R. Shimon ben Elazar says that Ezra decreed that Israel should read the “curses” found in *Torat Kohanim* (Lev. 26-27) before the Atzeret (closing day of Passover) and those in the *Mishna Torah* (Deut. 28) before Rosh Hashana.

This arrangement of the Torah reading presupposes an annual cycle and caused R. Zvi Chajes to question in his Novellae how it was possible to square this *baraita* with the Palestinian triennial cycle.

Mann resolves the problem by noting that the *baraita* is found only in the Bavli and questions whether it was ever regarded as authentic in *ארץ ישראל*. Wacholder resolves the problem by suggesting that both the annual cycle and the triennial cycle originated in *ארץ ישראל*. Given the diversity of *ארץ ישראל* in מנהיגים, it is possible that R. Shimon ben Elazar’s reference to the annual cycle and its antiquity reflected a local Palestinian custom, in contrast to that of Galilee where the divisions of the triennial cycle prevailed. In support of his supposition, he points to the interdependence of the two cycles where 43 of the 54 periscopes of the annual cycle happen to be identical to the beginnings of סדרים in the triennial cycle.

Is There an Authentic Triennial Cycle that Should Be Preferred or Mandated in Our Congregations Today?

In light of the research which was summarized above and the universal halakhic requirements for reading the Torah, the preferred triennial cycle must be the Palestinian cycle. This cycle, according to the textual evidence divides the Torah into 141, 154, or 167 consecutive סדרים, the variations reflecting local customs in *ארץ ישראל*.

This ancient triennial cycle has several practical advantages, besides its authenticity. The textual sources provide us with appropriate מפרשים for each of the סדרים. Furthermore, the classical *midrashim*, including *Genesis Rabbah*, *Leviticus Rabbah*, the *midrashim* based on *Tanḥuma* (Exodus Rabbah, Deuteronomy Rabbah, *Tanḥuma* [standard], *Tanḥuma* [Buber]), were all developed around this Palestinian triennial cycle and not around the annual cycle, which was preferred and made universal by the Babylonian Gaonate. Finally, for the innovative preacher and teacher, there is the entire body of קורבנות written by Yannai that provide a wealth of homiletical material focused on the Palestinian cycle of Torah readings and מפרשים.
Can the Halakhic Requirements, Especially Those of Mishnah and Tosefta, Successfully Be Applied to Such a Triennial Cycle and If So, How?

In the preceding section of this paper, several halakhic requirements for reading the Torah on Shabbat were analyzed and discussed:

1. A minimum of seven persons must be called to the Torah.
2. It is permissible to call more than this minimum number of persons.
3. Each person called to the Torah must read at least three verses.
4. If a paragraph contains only four or five verses, one reader must read it in its entirety. A corollary of this ruling is that if one reader read only three verses, the next reader must read the succeeding two verses and three verses from the next paragraph.
5. The Torah must be read in order; hence we may not skip around in the Torah.
6. The last section of each book must provide sufficient verses for at least seven persons to be called to the Torah.
7. The sections read on Shabbat, Monday and Thursday, are repeated on the following Shabbat.

For seven people to be called to the Torah, with each person reading a minimum of three verses, each סדר must ideally contain at least 21 verses. Of the standard 154 סדרים found in the Bomberg Bible, only 11 fall short of the minimum. The number of verses in these very short סדרים range from a minimum of 7 (Numbers 11:16-22) up to 18 (Genesis 20:1-18 and Genesis 25:1-18). Similarly, only 12 סדרים have 60 or more verses, the maximum for one סדר being 82 verses (Exodus 34:27 – 36:38).

There are three possible solutions to meeting the minimum requirement of seven readers, each one reading a minimum of three verses of the Torah:

1. repetition of sufficient verses in order to make up the requisite minimum;
2. combination of a short סדר either with the preceding סדר or the succeeding סדר;
3. continuing the reading from a short סדר into the succeeding סדר, but returning to the beginning of the second סדר on the succeeding week.

Each of these solutions has its own obvious advantages and disadvantages. Nor is it here suggested that any one solution must or should be used exclusively. Rather, a combination of solutions to meet the specific needs of the given congregation is possible. While this may detract from uniformity of practice among those congregations using a triennial cycle, we must remember that in אתי ישראל each village and
town apparently followed a slightly different pattern of reading, even after the division of סדרים was standardized.58

Even a סדר of 21 verses would be too short to meet the minimum requirement of seven עליות, each consisting of at least three verses, if the סדר contained one or more masoretic paragraphs with four or five verses, since according to the Tosefta such a paragraph must be read in its entirety by one reader. Table II provides an analysis of all the סדרים that contained from 21 to 30 verses to determine if the Tosefta's ruling provides more than a theoretical difficulty in dividing a סדר into 7 עליות.

A review of Table II shows that 36 of the 154 סדרים listed in the Bomberg Bible (that is slightly more than 25%) have between 21 and 30 verses. Of these, 20 are divided into either one or two masoretic paragraphs indicated either as open paragraph (מסהר פנות) or closed paragraphs (מסהר תבfromJson).59 Of the remaining 16 סדרים, 8 are divided into 3 masoretic paragraphs, 3 are divided into 4 masoretic paragraphs and one each into 5, 8, 11, 12 and 13 masoretic paragraphs respectively.

Of the eight סדרים divided into 3 masoretic paragraphs, only two סדרים (93 and 122) have paragraphs with four verses, and only, one סדר (55) has a paragraph with five verses. In the remaining five סדרים, it is possible to divide the verses into seven עליות, each with a minimum of three verses without repeating a verse. The same is true of סדר 122, where the first paragraph of 12 verses can be divided into 4 עליות, the second paragraph with 8 verses can be divided into two עליות and the last paragraph with four verses can be read as a unit.

In סדר 55, the first paragraph has two verses and the second five verses. The two paragraphs constitute two עליות, which can be divided in one of two ways:

(1) First עליות  Exodus 16:4-8  2 & 3 verses
    Second עליות  Exodus 16:8-10  3 verses
or perhaps preferably:

(1) First עליות  Exodus 16:4-8  2 & 3 verses
    Second עליות  Exodus 16:6-10  5 verses

In סדר 93, the first paragraph has 4 verses, the second paragraph has 8 verses and the third 11 verses. These 23 verses are best divided as follows:

(1) First עליות  Leviticus 25:35-38  4 verses
(2) Second עליות  Leviticus 25:39-43  5 verses
(3) Third עליות  Leviticus 25:44-46  3 verses
(4) Fourth עליות  Leviticus 25:47-49  3 verses
(5) Fifth עליות  Leviticus 25:50-52  3 verses
(6) Sixth עליות  Leviticus 25:53-55  3 verses
(7) Seventh עליות  Leviticus 25:56-26:2  3 verses

Of the three סדרים divided into 4 masoretic paragraphs, none has paragraphs with four or five verses. סדר 52, does however, have a
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paragraph with only one verse. While the first two paragraphs can each
be divided into two \( \text{עלית} \) (4 + 4 verses and 3 + 3 verses), the last two
paragraphs require some repetition of verses for the appropriate
distribution of verses by content.

1. Fifth \( \text{עלית} \) Exodus 12:43-47 5 verses
2. Sixth \( \text{עלית} \) Exodus 12:48-50 3 verses
3. Seventh \( \text{עלית} \) Exodus 12:48-51 4 verses

\( \text{ căדר} \) 118, which contains five masoretic paragraphs, includes two with five
verses each. However, the second paragraph has 9 verses and can be
divided into three \( \text{עלית} \), each with 3 verses, the fourth paragraph has six
verses and can be divided into two \( \text{עלית} \), again each with 3 verses and the
last paragraph has 3 verses which constitutes one \( \text{עלית} \).

\( \text{ căדר} \) 147 consists of 23 verses divided into eight masoretic paragraphs.
One of these paragraphs has only one verse, 3 have two verses each, two
have three verses each, one, four verses and one six verses. It is clear that
some repetition will be necessary in order to divide the \( \text{承德} \) into seven
\( \text{עלית} \). The following division is suggested:

1. First \( \text{עלית} \) Deuteronomy 24:19-22 4 verses
2. Second \( \text{עלית} \) Deuteronomy 25:1-3 3 verses
3. Third \( \text{עלית} \) Deuteronomy 25:4-7 4 verses
4. Fourth \( \text{עלית} \) Deuteronomy 25:8-10 3 verses
5. Fifth \( \text{עלית} \) Deuteronomy 25:11-16 6 verses
6. Sixth \( \text{עלית} \) Deuteronomy 25:13-16 4 verses
7. Seventh \( \text{עלית} \) Deuteronomy 25:17-19 3 verses

\( \text{承德} \) 42, the blessing of Jacob, consists of 27 verses divided into eleven
masoretic paragraphs. Five of these paragraphs have only one verse
each, 2 paragraphs gave 3 verses each, 3 paragraphs 5 verses each, while
the remaining 2 paragraphs have two and four verses respectively. The
\( \text{עלית} \) should be divided as follows:

1. First \( \text{עלית} \) Genesis 49:1-4 4 verses
2. Second \( \text{עלית} \) Genesis 49:5-7 3 verses
3. Third \( \text{עלית} \) Genesis 49:8-12 5 verses
4. Fourth \( \text{עלית} \) Genesis 49:13-15 3 verses
5. Fifth \( \text{עלית} \) Genesis 49:16-18 3 verses
6. Sixth \( \text{עלית} \) Genesis 49:19-21 3 verses
7. Seventh \( \text{עלית} \) Genesis 49:22-27 6 verses

\( \text{承德} \) 86, the laws of illicit sexual relations (\( \text{rawer} \)), includes 11 paragraphs
each with one verse, one paragraph with 5 verses and one with fourteen.
The content of this \( \text{承德} \) may appear offensive to our sensitivities since it
deals entirely with incest, bestiality, human sacrifice to Molekh and the
concomitant punishment for violation of these prohibitions. None­
theless, if our sensitivities are set aside, there is no inherent difficulty in
dividing these 30 verses into seven \( \text{עלית} \).
A series of miscellaneous laws from Deuteronomy, consists of 23 verses divided into twelve paragraphs. Six of these paragraphs consist of only one verse, three paragraphs each have two verses, one has three verses and two paragraphs again each have four verses. Here again the division of these verses into seven "עליתות" will require a certain amount of repetition.

1. First "עלית" Deuteronomy 23:22-24 3 verses
3. Third "עלית" Deuteronomy 24:5-8 4 verses
4. Fourth "עלית" Deuteronomy 24:9-13 5 verses
5. Fifth "עלית" Deuteronomy 24:10-13 4 verses
6. Sixth "עלית" Deuteronomy 24:14-16 3 verses
7. Seventh "עלית" Deuteronomy 24:16-18 3 verses

From the above discussion a number of conclusions appear obvious. First, there was a conscientious effort on the part of those who established the סדרים to limit the number of short סדרים (only 11 have fewer than 21 verses; only 36 have from 21 to 30 verses). Second, those סדרים with 21 to 30 verses are made predominantly of one or two masoretic paragraphs. Furthermore, of those short סדרים made up of three or more paragraphs, 10 of the sixteen can be divided into seven "עליתות" without repeating verses and without dividing paragraphs of four or five verses. Of the six סדרים that do require repetition of verses to constitute seven "עליתות", one (סדר 93) repeats only one verse, a second (סדר 92) repeats two verses, two others (סדרים 52 and 55) each repeat three verses, סדר 147 repeats 4 verses and סדר 146 repeats a maximum of five verses. Finally, it should be realized that if one wished to make additional "עליתות", especially in those סדרים with less than 30 verses, wholesale repetition of סדרים would almost undoubtedly be necessary.

The other three halakhic requirements summarized above on page 10 are also equally well met by the Palestinian triennial cycle. The Torah is read and taught in order from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy. Only the festivals, fast days, New Moon and special Shabbatot depart from the order, a departure mandated by the Mishnah and the Tosefta. The סדר read at Shabbat מהות, and on Monday and Thursday constitute the first three סדר for the following Shabbat morning. And finally, the last סדר for each of the five books of the Torah provide sufficient verses to constitute seven "עליתות":

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>סדר</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leviticus</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Is there an Authentic Triennial Cycle of Torah Readings?

One last halakhic criterion must be considered before concluding a discussion on the virtues of the Palestinian triennial cycle. This criterion is the desideratum of following the מנהג of beginning and ending each reading on a good note. Rambam applies the מנהג to the beginning and ending of each ליהו.

The Rama is more vague in his application of the מנהג.

While it is probable the Rama intends the מנהג to be applied for each and every ליהו, it is possible that the intention is that it be applied only to the beginning and ending of a complete Shabbat or festival lection.

In applying this particular customary halakhic criterion to the Palestinian triennial cycle, we must remember that the earliest reference to beginning and ending on a positive note is 51. There is thus no reason to assume that such a custom was applied rigidly in the Palestinian triennial cycle. Moreover, what constitutes a good note or bad note is clearly a subjective decision.

Realizing the subjectivity of what constitutes a good note or a bad note, Table III attempts to evaluate whether the Palestinian סדרים were divided with this subjective criterion in mind. The Table rates opening and closing verses of a סדר on the following scale:

1. Positive
2. Neutral +
3. Neutral
4. Neutral –
5. Negative

Moreover, it indicates by a Yes or a No whether the last verse of a סדר corresponds to the closing verse of an ליהו from the annual reading of the Torah.

Of the 154 סדרים, 100 end at the closing verse of an ליהו from the annual cycle and two more end at the closing verse of an ליהו from the Shabbat מנהג reading. Of the 100 סדרים that begin at the first verse of an ליהו of the annual cycle, 65 begin on a positive note, while only five begin on a distinctly negative note. The other 30 are neutral, with only four of these 30 being on the negative side of neutral. Similarly, of the 100 סדרים whose last verse corresponds to the last verse of an ליהו of the annual cycle, 69 end on a distinctly positive note, while again only 5 end on a distinctly negative note. The other 26 are neutral, with only 5 being rated on the negative side of neutral.

Of the 54 סדרים whose first verse does not correspond to the first verse of an ליהו from the annual cycle, 34 begin on a distinctly positive note,
while 5 begin on a distinctly negative note. The other 15 are neutral, with four of these fifteen being on the negative side of neutral. The positive first verses account for 63% of all the first verses in these 54 סדרים, which corresponds quite well with the 65% of positive opening verses, where the opening verses are identical to the first verse of an עליה from the annual cycle. The negative first verses account for 9.25% of all the first verses in these 54 סדרים, almost twice as many as negative first verses where the first verse is identical to the first verse of an עליה of the annual cycle.

Of the 54 סדרים whose last verse does not correspond to the last verse of an עליה from the annual cycle, only 19 end on a distinctly positive note, while 15 end on a distinctly negative note. The other 20 are neutral, with four of these twenty being on the negative side of neutral. The positive verses account for only 35% of all concluding verses in these 54 סדרים compared with 69% of positive concluding verses, where the concluding verses are identical to the concluding verse of an עליה from the annual cycle. The negative concluding verses account for 27.75% of all concluding verses, better than five times the number of negative concluding verses when the concluding verse of a סדר is identical to the concluding verse of an עליה from the annual cycle.

While the above analysis makes it clear that those who divided the Torah into סדרים and פרשיות for the annual cycle attempted to adhere to the principle of beginning and ending each עליה on a positive note and to abjure from beginning and ending of a negative note, those who divided the Torah into סדרים, to the extent that the principle of a good note existed at all, were much more conscientious about beginning a סדר on a good note than ending on a good note. By extrapolation, since we have no record of how the סדרים were divided into עליות, we might posit that where possible the preference should be given to beginning an עליה on a positive note over ending an עליה on a positive note. Given the number of סדרים with less than 30 verses, this preference for beginning עליה on a positive note may in fact be no more than an ideal to be strived for but all too often impossible to achieve.

Do Either of the Current Practices in Conservative Congregations Have a Degree of Halakhic Legitimacy, in Light of the Halakhic Data Analyzed Above?

1) Modified Annual Cycle

At the beginning of this paper, I outlined what appear to be two current practices of our congregations regarding abbreviating the weekly Torah
Is there an Authentic Triennial Cycle of Torah Readings?

One, wherein the קרבּוּ תָוּרָה is read at Shabbat вечер, on Monday mornings, and the balance of the קרבּוּ תָוּרָה is read on Shabbat morning is in reality not a triennial cycle at all, but a modified annual cycle. In spite of the fact that this modified annual cycle is referred to in the CJLS archives as “distorted,” it in fact has a basis in the classical literature. *Tosefta Megillah* 3:10 in fact actually proposes such a procedure for reading the Torah (see above page 8). This section of the בָּרָאִיתָה is actually stated anonymously in the *Tosefta* but is cited in the name of R. Meir in the Bavli. The Bavli goes on to reject this procedure and R. Zera codifies the procedure stated in the name of R. Yehudah in the same *Tosefta*, which is the procedure for reading the Torah according to a pure annual cycle still in use today.

What is significant is that the anonymous מְשִׁית of the *Tosefta* is an unimpeachable tannaitic source. Lieberman, in his edition of *Tosefta Moed*, gives no significant variants in the critical apparatus. Since many of our decisions on the Committee of Jewish Law and Standards are based on individual opinions (ר'אוע) which were never incorporated into standard bodies of halakhah and in some cases explicitly rejected in the standard bodies of halakhah (e.g., women in a מִנְיָן, לְכָלָה for women), it seems wise to accept the modified annual cycle as a legitimate alternative for those congregations who wish to abbreviate the Shabbat morning Torah lection, yet wish to complete the reading of the Torah in one year. This option presupposes that such congregations conduct a מִנְיָן at Shabbat вечер and Monday and Thursday mornings and that if Monday or Thursday happen to be ראש מַחָשָׁבָה, the additional קרבּוּ תָוּרָה not read during the week would be read on Shabbat morning. Moreover, such a modified cycle need not be applied rigidly. Thus, if the קרבּוּ תָוּרָה is especially long, it could be divided between the Monday and Thursday readings. Such decisions are appropriately left to the מַרְאָא דַ'אַתָּา, provided, as Rabbi Harlow pointed out in his correspondence from 1961, that (a) three people are called to the Torah on Shabbat вечер, Monday and Thursday mornings; (b) each person reads at least three verses; (c) a total of at least ten verses are read; and equally importantly, that the reading continue sequentially from Shabbat вечер to Monday morning and from Monday to Thursday morning and from Thursday morning to Shabbat שָׁלֹאְרִית, as stipulated by the *Tosefta*.

The second practice, the first proposed by Rabbi Edward Sandrow and later modified and expanded by Rabbi Barry Dov Lerner, does not, on the other hand, meet one significant halakhic requirement. *Mishnah Megillah* 4:4 states emphatically “יִאֶהֶר מַלְכָּלִים חוֹדוֹת ר' אִזֶּהוּ". While this phrase was understood by the Bavli, the commentators on Mishnah and Talmud and by the poskim to mean skipping from one issue to another, either to
avoid confusing the reader or to avoid troubling the congregation (דברתorra) while the Torah is being rolled, (see above, page 7), Yerushalmi Megillah 4:5 provides a more literal and I believe sensible reason for not skipping around in the Torah. Moreover, the reason is pedagogically sound when it argues that the intention is to assure the orderly teaching of the Torah to Israel (כדי שישמעו אתה ישראל התורה על המסורה).

2) Modified Triennial Cycle

A Torah reading cycle that divides an annual פרשה over three years not only interrupts the orderly teaching of Torah, but fragmentizes such lengthy narratives as the Joseph story, the Exodus, the building of the Tabernacle, to name but a few, into meaningless literary units, isolated from their context for a period of twelve months. Its only dubious advantage is that all synagogues will be reading from the same annual פרשה on the same week and the cycle of readings will arbitrarily be completed in three years. Considering its pedagogical and literary disadvantages, this well-intentioned but truly distorted and misguided system should be phased out or eliminated outright from the liturgical practices of our congregations.

One disadvantage of all abbreviated Torah readings is that synagogue guests will be surprised by what is being read or not read. Furthermore, those synagogues that adopt a modified annual cycle have the additional disadvantage that the vast majority of the congregation of regular Shabbat worshippers will never hear the first three פרשת read earlier in the week. While these disadvantages might be factors which discourage congregations from using either the Palestinian triennial cycle or the modified annual cycle, they can be overcome and remedied. Rabbis choosing the modified annual cycle should encourage their members to read the Torah lection for the week privately at home as required by the Bavli:

לولات ישמעו אדום פרישותינו עם הצבור שנני מקריא ואודה תורה

A person should complete the Parasha of the week read by the community twice in Hebrew and once in targum (translation).

As for those guests visiting a synagogue using the Palestinian triennial cycle, they should publicly follow the reading of the synagogue and privately read the appropriate פרשת of the annual cycle.
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What Prophetic Selections Should We Use for the Haftarot of a Triennial Cycle?

Adolph Buchler, in his seminal articles in *J.Q.R.* was the first to publish a list of triennial Haftarot, based on the Genizah fragments. The list, republished by Mann, includes all the Haftarot from Genesis 5:2 to Leviticus 6:12 and indicates both the initial and concluding verse of each prophetic selection.

In preparing his list of Palestinian Haftarot, Mann had at his disposal several additional Genizah fragments than the one available to Buchler. These fragments indicated the Haftarot for the first three Haftarot of Genesis (Genesis 1:1-4:26), as well as Haftarot for Numbers 17:16-20:13 and for Numbers 130 through 136 (Deuteronomy 2:2-11:9). In addition, Mann had at his disposal the Haftarot of Yannai published by Zulay. These Haftarot quote the first verse of the Palestinian Haftarot.

Wacholder informs us of the incompleteness of Mann’s study, because of the latter’s untimely death. While there are still scholarly desiderata in identifying triennial Haftarot from Genizah fragments still in the collections of Oxford, Cambridge and Leningrad, Wacholder published an almost complete list of Haftarot for the triennial cycle. The list collates all the sources of data available to Wacholder – Genizah fragments, and shows where the Palestinian Haftarot correspond to those of Roumanian, Karaite, Ashkenazic and Sephardic rites respectively. The weakness with Wacholder’s chart is that it only indicates the first verse of each Haftorah. Moreover, many of the Haftarot, especially those for Numbers and Deuteronomy where appropriate Genizah fragments have not been found are simply the product of “scholarly speculation.” Since Wacholder never discusses the sources for these Haftarot or the principles by which he selects them, we are left to conclude that they have no more validity than the imagination that produced them.

Even those Haftarot discussed in some detail by Mann are subject to some skepticism. Mann operated from the premise that “as a rule the prophetic lection consisted of 10 verses, though sometimes 11 verses are given or 9 or 8.” Mann also noted the interesting feature of skipping verses in the triennial cycle, in order to conclude the Haftorah on a “happy note.” Thus the tenth verse, according to Mann, is sometimes added after leaving out an intervening prophetic portion, in consonance with the Mishnah’s ruling, מירלה נובא. Mann observed that very frequently the biblical codices contain the siglum $S = ספ$ either at the verse where the Haftorah begins or where it ends; moreover, the concluding verse with the “happy ending” added after the skipping, often coincides with the verse having the siglum.
While it is true that the Genizah fragments do in fact indicate of only 10 verses and do indicate skipping, that is, omitting an intermediate section in order to end on a positive note, it is also true that the Genizah fragments indicate with more than ten verses and without skipping. Mann, however, applied his premises rigidly and thus invented wholesale skipping of verses in order to reduce a longer to 10 or 11 verses.

One observation by Mann is, however, more accurately born out by the hard data. Mann observed that in the choice of a particular for a given Torah selection, the principle of tallying was predominantly operative; that is, there had to be either linguistic affinity or some intrinsic contextual connection between the initial verses of the and the verses of the . Wacholder noted that the Palestinian were strikingly eschatological in content, which he conjectures may mean that the served as a sort of peroration in the same way as did the later midrashic , which also conclude with messianic allusions. Wacholder argues that the messianic message was the most important feature of the Palestinian which alone accounts for the excessive brevity (sometimes as short as two or three verses). This principle he claims also accounts for the observation that more than 75% of the Palestinian are chosen from Isaiah (especially chapters 40 to 66) and the apocalyptic portions of the Minor Prophets, where prophecies of consolation containing messianic messages predominate.

What is obvious is that our knowledge of Palestinian is more fragmentary than that of the Palestinian . Undoubtedly, there is good hard data available about the initial and concluding verses for the of many Palestinian . What must be considered in more detail is whether skipping was the rule or only a liberally used option. Since lists of are based on numerous Genizah fragments, the available fragments must be studied by specialists to determine which, if any, are related to each other and if the principle of skipping verses is characteristic of a family of manuscripts or endemic to all the fragments or limited to only one or two fragments. Moreover, since more than a third of the listed by Wacholder are the product of “scholarly speculation,” additional research will be necessary to identify other Genizah fragments that supply the missing data. A forthcoming new edition of edited by Z.W. Rabinowitz may provide additional data on at least the first verses of for the in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Since a responsum is supposed to be at least as pragmatic as it is scholarly, we must address the question of which prophetic selection should be used. Where the data is hard, there is of course no difficulty in determining where a begins and where it ends. Unless, the sources
explicitly indicate that certain verses are to be skipped, the entire passage (usually not more than twenty or twenty-one verses) should be recited. Where no hard data exists, and the initial verses of the תקן are the product apparently of Wacholder’s scholarly speculation, the passage should be checked to determine:

1. if there is linguistic or contextual tallying between the Torah lection and the proposed תקן;
2. if the proposed תקן is eschatological-desirable but not necessary;
3. if the תקן can end on a positive note after a minimum of 10 verses and a maximum of 20 to 25 verses.

If such an arbitrary תקן meets the above criteria, then it could be used until such time as the scholarly world discovers the necessary hard data.

Should Simḥat Torah be Celebrated Annually by those who Complete the Reading of the Torah on a Triennial Cycle or Only When the Torah Reading is Completed?

It is almost universally accepted that Simḥat Torah is a gaonic festival of Babylonian provenience. No reference is made to such a festival in the Babylonian Talmud and the earliest references are in the responsa of the Babylonian Geonim.81 As we noted in an earlier part of this paper (see above page 4), the חילוקים indicate that while Babylonian Jewry celebrates Simḥat Torah annually, the Palestinian Jews celebrate it every three and a half years.82 On the other hand, a much later and perhaps less reliable source than the חילוקים, namely Benjamin of Tuleda, claims that those who worshipped in the Palestinian synagogue in Fustat joined those who worshipped in the Babylonian synagogue for the annual celebration of Simḥat Torah.83 That is almost all we know about the celebration of Simḥat Torah among Palestinian Jewry.

Simḥat Torah, among those who read a triennial cycle of Torah readings, accordingly occurred on whatever particular Shabbat coincided with the reading of תקן. According to Kohelet Rabh, beginning of Chapter I, R. Isaac taught that one makes a סעודת חיל, a festal meal, when one finishes reading the Torah. Margulies interprets this passage to mean simply that Palestinian Jews prepared a סעודת סע in much the same manner as we do when we finish a tractate of Talmud.84

We also noted above (see page 6 and footnotes 32 and 33) that Joseph Heinemann postulated that there is no possibility to assume that the triennial cycle of reading began and concluded at a fixed season.85 Using a "the Sabbath תקן of תקן" found in a manuscript from the Taylor Schechter Collection H12/11, Ezra Fleisher confirmed...
Proceedings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards / 1986-1990

Heinemann’s postulate. The פָּסָח, a shivata, follows directly a list of laws and פָּסָח for both the evening and morning service of Simḥat Torah. On the basis of the juxtaposition of Simḥat Torah with the ראית ישראל of אתא ברכה, Fleischer concludes that the two terms are parallel. Fleischer further concludes that this Shabbat was not fixed with regard to its position in the calendar and it was equally possible for it to occur in winter as in summer. This פָּסָח adds further proof to the authenticity of the midrash collection to אתא ברכה in Pesikta de Rav Kahana. Just as the Shabbat for concluding the Torah was worthy of special ornamentation through special פָּסָח, it also occasioned special homilies. Fleischer argues that the fact that these homilies occur at the end of the midrash collection indicates that they are intended for a Shabbat that occurs only one in three or so years whose date is not fixed. Even the content of the homilies, the death of Moses and the absence of any reference to the festival of Simḥat Torah as it was celebrated in the Diaspora, further indicates that the homilies were intended for a Shabbat whose date was not fixed.

With all this data, limited as it may be, we must draw some practical conclusions. As questionable as Benjamin of Tudela may be as an accurate and factual observer for history, to say nothing of halakhah, his observation that the Jews of the Palestinian synagogue joined those of the Babylonian on Simḥat Torah bears some importance. Since most Diaspora Conservative congregations observe מִשְׁמַעְתָּה, it seems appropriate that the second day of שֵׁנֶּמֶנָּה בָּתֵּר עַזְרֶה be observed as Simḥat Torah even by those synagogues following a triennial cycle of readings. The distinctive reading for this מִשְׁמַעְתָּה would remain Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12 (אתא ברכה), Numbers 29:35-40 (מספֶּר שַׁמֵּרִים בְּרֹאשׁ הַיּוֹם), and the הפֶּדוּת הַיּוֹם, Joshua 1:1-18. The only distinction for congregations following a triennial cycle would be the omission of the קָנָן הַבָּשָׂית, since the reading on the Shabbat following Simḥat Torah would rarely, if ever be Genesis 1:1 ff. The purpose of this celebration of Simḥat Torah in those synagogues following the triennial cycle would be to rejoice with the Torah, to express our delight in our unique heritage, through song and dance and the annualized opportunity for every member of the congregation to receive an אַהֲבָה קָדוֹשָׁה.

Additionally, congregations adopting the triennial cycle, should give special significance to the Shabbat on which they in fact finish reading the Torah. Minimally, as Margulies suggests, there should be a special meal or קְרֵאת. More elaborate celebrations might include adapting some of the distinctive aspects of the Babylonian Simḥat Torah, including the designation of a קָנָן הַבָּשָׂית and a קָנָן בְּרֹאשָׁה, the use of the lengthy פָּסָח to call those honorees to the Torah and even the introduction of the expanded service for removing the Torah (אתא ברכה).
Is there an Authentic Triennial Cycle of Torah Readings?

and the seven קפתיות and the attendant dancing. While the minimalist approach would certainly fulfill the traditional customary requirements, the author favors the maximalist approach, there being far too few opportunities for communal celebration and rejoicing.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been an attempt to set a liturgical innovation of our movement in a halakhic framework. I believe that it at once retains the initial thrust of those communities who, more than 1000 years ago, read the Torah over a three year period, while retaining the desire of our colleagues and their congregants to read shorter, but intelligent literary units of the Torah on each Shabbat. There are still several practical decisions that must be undertaken:

(1) the division of each of the 154 סדרים into seven עליית קפתיות which are also intelligible literary units.

(2) the assigning of a distinct prophetic portion or ספר התנאים to each ספר.

(3) the development of an extended calendar of up to 100 years on which the individual סדרים are read.

And at a scholarly level, there is still the need to comb the literally tens of thousands of unpublished Genizah fragments for more solid data regarding the original ספר התנאים which were attached to the ספרים in much of the book of Numbers and most of Deuteronomy.

Above all, it is the hope of the author that the practical result of the adoption of this triennial cycle will be חלון חורף למאוריעה, to magnify the Torah and to make it more honored.

TABLE I

Summary of the Number of verses in סדרים

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<tr>
<th>Seder</th>
<th>Summary</th>
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<td>Seder 1</td>
<td>Gen. 1:1 – 2:3</td>
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<td>Seder 2</td>
<td>Gen. 2:4 – 3:21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seder 3</td>
<td>Gen. 3:22 – 4:26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seder 4</td>
<td>Gen. 5:1 – 6:8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seder 5</td>
<td>Gen. 6:9 – 8:14</td>
<td>52 verses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variations:

| Seder 5a  | Gen. 6:9 – 7:24                   | 38 verses|
| Seder 5b  | Gen. 8:1 – 8:14                   | 14 verses|
| Seder 6   | Gen. 8:15 – 9:17                  | 25 verses|

Variation:

| Seder 6a  | Gen. 8:1 – 9:17                   | 38 verses|
| Seder 7   | Gen. 9:18 – 11:32                 | 76 verses|
### Variations:

**Seder 7a**  
Gen. 9:18 – 10:32  
44 verses

**Seder 7b**  
Gen. 11:1 – 12:9  
41 verses

**Seder 8**  
Gen. 12:1 – 9  
9 verses

**Variation:**

**Seder 8a**  
Gen. 12:1 – 13:18  
38 verses

**Seder 9**  
Gen. 12:10 – 13:18  
39 verses

**Seder 10**  
Gen. 14:1 – 24  
24 verses

**Seder 11**  
Gen. 15:1 – 21  
21 verses

**Seder 12**  
Gen. 16:1 – 16  
16 verses

**Seder 13**  
Gen. 17:1 – 27  
27 verses

**Seder 14**  
Gen. 18:1 – 33  
33 verses

**Seder 15**  
Gen. 19:1 – 38  
38 verses

**Seder 16**  
Gen. 20:1 – 18  
18 verses

**Seder 17**  
Gen. 21:1 – 33  
33 verses

**Seder 18**  
Gen. 22:1 – 23:20  
44 verses

**Seder 19**  
Gen. 24:1 – 41  
41 verses

**Seder 20**  
Gen. 24:42 – 67  
26 verses

**Seder 21**  
Gen. 25:1 – 18  
18 verses

**Seder 22**  
Gen. 25:19 – 26:35  
51 verses

**Variations:**

**Seder 22a**  
Gen. 26:12 – 35  
24 verses

**Seder 23**  
Gen. 27:1 – 27  
27 verses

**Seder 24**  
Gen. 27:28 – 28:9  
28 verses

**Seder 25**  
Gen. 28:10 – 29:30  
43 verses

**Seder 26**  
Gen. 29:31 – 30:21  
26 verses

**Seder 27**  
Gen. 30:22 – 31:2  
24 verses

**Seder 28**  
Gen. 31:3 – 32:3  
55 verses

**Seder 29**  
Gen. 32:4 – 33:17  
47 verses

**Seder 30**  
Gen. 33:18 – 35:8  
42 verses

**Seder 31**  
Gen. 35:9 – 36:43  
64 verses

**Seder 32**  
Gen. 37:1 – 36  
36 verses

**Seder 33**  
Gen. 38:1 – 30  
30 verses

**Seder 34**  
Gen. 39:1 – 40:23  
46 verses

**Variations:**

**Seder 34a**  
Gen. 39:1 – 23  
23 verses

**Seder 34b**  
Gen. 40:1 – 23  
23 verses

**Seder 35**  
Gen. 41:1 – 37  
37 verses

**Variations:**

**Seder 35a**  
Gen. 40:1 – 41:37  
60 verses

**Seder 36**  
Gen. 41:38 – 42:17  
37 verses

**Variations:**

**Seder 36a**  
Gen. 42:1 – 17  
17 verses

358
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Is there an Authentic Triennial Cycle of Torah Readings?

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Variations:

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Variations:

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TABLE II
Analysis of סדרות With Under 30 Verses

Sigla:
Roman numerals indicate the number of masoretic paragraphs in the seder.

P = פ違反ה פטרה
S = פ違反ה סטרה
X = indicates that the seder either begins or ends in the middle of a Masoretic paragraph.

For example, Seder 10/Gen. 14:1-24/I P 14:1-24 S/24 verses, means that Seder 10 consists of one masoretic paragraph, with Genesis 14:1 starting anew פ違反ה פטרה, and verses 24 completing a masoretic paragraph followed by a פ違反ה סטרה. After each masoretic paragraph, we include the number of verses in the paragraph, as an aid to dividing each paragraph and the total seder into 7 עלית.

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<td>Num. 31:25 – 54</td>
<td>30 verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>Deut. 2:2 – 30</td>
<td>15 verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Deut. 2:31 – 3:22</td>
<td>14 verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Deut. 9:1 – 29</td>
<td>29 verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Deut. 23:22 – 24:18</td>
<td>23 verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Deut. 24:19 – 25:19</td>
<td>23 verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Deut. 29:9 – 30:10</td>
<td>30 verses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>Deut. 30:11 – 31:13</td>
<td>23 verses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table above lists the sections and their corresponding scriptures along with the number of verses in each section.*
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TABLE III

Analysis of Whether סדרים Begin or End on a Positive Note

Sigla:
P = Verse introduces a Positive Theme.
N = Verse introduces a Negative Theme
Neutral = Verse introduces a Neutral Theme.
Neutral + = Verse introduces a Neutral theme which provides no morally positive or negative quality.
Neutral − = Verse introduces a Neutral theme which provides factual information with a somewhat negative quality.
Yes = The last verse of the seder corresponds to the last verse of an עליה in the annual cycle.
No = The last verse of the seder does not correspond to the last verse of an עליה in the annual cycle.
Y for S.M. = The last verse of the seder corresponds to the last verse of either the first or second עליה read at Shabbat מנחה in the annual cycle.

NOTES

4. The context of the Gemara is a discussion on why Shekalim must be announced on Rosh Hodesh Adar. After determining that the announcement of Shekalim on Rosh Hodesh Adar even corresponds to the opinion of R. Shimon ben Gamlil, the Gemara attempts to determine what section of the Torah is read to announce that the Shekalim must be paid (מאות שקליים). Two possibilities are offered. According to Rav, מאות שקליים is Number 28:1 ff. (אלהים כלים אף...לאשה), while according to Samuel it is Exodus 30:11 ff. (כיאה אש Affairs). The Gemara then continues to show why each of the suggested Torah readings is appropriate. The Gemara then asks, since Numbers 28:1 is read on each and every Rosh Hodesh, how is Rosh Hodesh Adar to be distinguished from all the others; that is, how would we know from reading Numbers 28:1 ff. that
we are also reminded to bring the half שקל during the month of Adar. The answer is that on all other קראות, the first six persons called to the Torah read from the regular פרשה (נביאים), and one person reads from Numbers 28:1 ff., whereas on רושה הנש, all the בלבול would be read from Numbers 28:1 ff.

It is significant to note that the opinion that פרשה is Numbers 28:1 ff. corresponds to the opinion of ר. תאבי, a third generation Palestinian אמורא. Based on the explanation of the גמרא, it can be deduced that in קראות, the regular cycle of Torah reading was interrupted on special שבתות like שבת שקהלין, since the גמרא says explicitly that everyone would read from Numbers 28:1 ff. on רושה הנש (アイ社会发展 עלול בדעת חכמים). This conclusion is also stated explicitly in Mishnah מגילה 4:4 (בחומש תומך לקסמים). On the fifth week we return to the regular order of סדרים.

The גמרא now tries to justify the opinion that פרשה is Numbers 28:1 ff with the Babylonian custom where the regular order of קראות is not interrupted on special שבתות. In such a situation, how would רושה הנש be distinguished from all other קראות? The answer is that on all other קראות ישו six people would read from the regular פרשה and one person would read from Numbers 28:1 ff., whereas on רושה הנש only 3 people would read from the regular פרשה and four people would read from Numbers 28:1ff.

An objection is raised to the possibility that Numbers 28:1 ff. was the distinctive Torah reading for פרשה. The objection is based on תוספות מגילה 3:1, which sets the prophetic reading for פרשה as II Kings 12:1-17 (the incident of how Yehoyada the High Priest raised the money for repairs for the Temple). This has an oblique reference to the collection of the half-שקל (II Kings 12:5 תpany נפש, the money a man may pay as the money equivalent of persons). Although the reference is really to עונדים (human relations cf. Leviticus 27:21-28), since the text continues to refer toRepair the breaches in the Temple, the passage was interpreted to refer to the half-שקל which was used for such repairs. Since II Kings 12:1-17 is the פרשה for פרשה and the above mentioned phrase is taken as referring to the collection of the half-שקל, this seems to correspond to the opinion that פרשה itself is Exodus 30:11. The גמרא then asks how this is appropriate if פרשה is Numbers 28:1 ff. The גמרא responds that the פרשה still corresponds to the opinion of ר. תאבי who says that the phrase והם עלולחרש 보ודיש לדונים השנה (Numbers 28:14) refers to the donative of the half-שקל.

A second objection is raised to the possibility that Numbers 28:1 ff was the distinctive Torah reading for פרשה. This objection is based on תוספות מגילה 3:4. What if רושה הנש falls during the weekly
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Torah portion next to פרשת תשרי, either before it or after it? R. Hananel explains the objection by asking how it is possible for פרשת תשרי (Numbers 28:1 ff.) to occur on Rosh Ḥodesh Dr. Lieberman (Tosefta Kifshuta Moed, p. 1165) explains that the objection raised from this beraita refers to the opinion of Rav who explained that פרשת תשרי is Numbers 28:1 ff. If this is so, how is it possible that Rosh Ḥodesh Adar could occur during the week preceding or following Shabbat Shekalim? From this objection the Gemara deduces that פרשת תשרי must be Ex. 30:11 ff. and Rosh Ḥodesh Adar can periodically occur during the week preceding or following פרשת תשרי and in this manner we read from פרשת תשרי (Ex. 30:11) twice in two consecutive weeks. Lieberman explains that the objections to this beraita was resolved by explaining that the beraita refers to the custom of ארץ ישראל in which the Torah reading cycle was completed in three years וслиוק מצורה מקסמר לאירוחיהו בצלח. According to this custom, it is possible that Rosh Ḥodesh Adar could fall on the Sabbath next to the regular reading of פרשת חנון (Numbers 28:1 ff) and hence פרשת חנון could in fact be read on two consecutive weeks.


6. It is less likely that פרשת means “simple” since there is no reason for assuming that the triennial cycle was any more difficult to follow than the annual cycle. If it was in fact more complicated, it was only that the cycle allowed for more freedom and variation than the annual cycle, with different congregations reading different sedarim all on the same week. See infra. pp. 5-6.

7. Significantly, none of the standard commentaries on Mishneh Torah offer an explanation of this passage, indicating first, that their concerns were different from merely explicating and perhaps as well, that they could add little or nothing to what said.


10. The הליליאם have been published in numerous editions, the earliest being that prepared by the Meharshel in his Yam shel Shlomo at the end of tractate Bava Kama (Prague, 1616). The most comprehensive critical edition was published in 1938 by Mordecai Margulies. As his base text he used the manuscript from Jews College, London (Codex Montefiore No. 49, p. 81) which had earlier been used by Dr. Joel Mueller, who had published the תדוקה רדיר הליליאם in 1878. Margulies reproduces the text with a critical apparatus based on four previously
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printed editions and four hitherto unpublished manuscripts. There is a lengthy introduction wherein Margulies attempts to determine the author, date and place of origin of the text, as well as discuss its later use by the Geonim, Poskim and Karaites. The text is followed by notes that attempt to explain the

Four years after the appearance of the critical edition by Margulies, B.M. Levin published the text under the title: אוצר חלוקים מהכתבים (Jerusalem, 1942). Levin used as his base text a conflated text based on a Vatican manuscript (Vat Ebraico 320), a Paris manuscript (Bibliothèque Nationale Heb. 390) and a number of other traditions. In small letters he brings the manuscript used by Margulies which he (Levin) ascribes to a Karaite source.

The most startling difference between the two editions is the virtual comprehensiveness of the Margulies base text which includes fifty-one of the fifty-five recorded differences and the fact that Margulies chooses a text that he believes stems from אַרְכָּה יְשָׁעֵאל (and is hence closest to the original), whereas Levin constructs his text based on sources that appear to make the text originate in Babylonia. I have chosen the Margulies edition as the more authentic, even though the majority of manuscripts are closer in form to the Levin text, in large part because the majority of texts appear to be rewritten under the influence of the prevailing Babylonian school.

11. Mordecai Margulies, ed., HaHilulim, p.88 lines 123-126. Of the nine editions and manuscripts Margulies compared with his base-manuscript, only two, the text printed by Mueller as Hilluk 47 and Yam Shel Shelomo of the Meharshal, had Hilluk 47, while Hilluk 48 was included in these two texts as well as in a manuscript found in Jews College, London (catalogue #211) which appears to be a late reworking of the manuscript underlying the text of the

Levin, in his אוצר חלוקים המכתבים, p. 96, bases his text for Hilluk 47 on Yam Shel Shelomo

The inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael, the people read the Parashah, and the шлия́х т́и́бу́р reads the се́дары́. The inhabitants of Babylonia, the шлия́х т́и́бу́р reads the Parashah and the people stand and listen word for word.

Similarly, Levin’s text for Hilluk 48 is based on Yam Shel Shelomo

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The inhabitants of Babylonia observe Simhát Torah annually on Sukkot, and every country and city read the same. The inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael celebrate Simhát Torah only every three and a half years on the day they finish (reading the Torah). The Parashah read in this province is not (necessarily) read elsewhere.

12. Margulies, Hillukim, p. 88. If Margulies is correct, herein lies some evidence both for a later date of the הילוקים when Palestinian Jews found it difficult to resist Babylonian influences and perhaps, with Levin and others for a Babylonian origin for the text.

13. Esther Rabbah, Petihta 3. The Ein Hínukh comments on the exegesis and explains that the Gematria of ויהי המื่א is 155, equal to the number of sedarim. The fact that the number of sedarim is fixed at 154 poses no problem since, as the Beit Yosef points out (Orah Hayyim 582 sub voce מ"ה ויהי המื่א סדרים אוחודים), we are not precise in the use of Gematria if the number differs by one.

14. 16:8.

15. Margulies, Hillukim, p. 169 notes that according to the former number (154), the Torah reading cycle was finished in three years, while according to the latter number (175), it was completed in three and a half years. Cf. the discussion of Michael Rigger in his introduction to Massekhet Soferim, pages 25-27. Higger notes on pages 291-292 that the original exegesis of R. Yehoshua ben Levi (Soferim 16:8 and parallels) refers to the number of פרשיות in the Torah that refer to direct speech to Moses (דיבורים או אמירות או מצוות). The connection of the number 175 from R. Yehoshua's exegeses to the number of sedarim in the triennial cycle is an addition of the editor of Massekhet Soferim.


18. Jacob Mann, The Bible as Read, p.6.

19. Mann, op. cit, p.7; cf. Ben Zion Wacholder’s Prolegomenon to the reissue of Mann’s The Bible as Read, pp. XII-XIII.

20. Wacholder, op. cit., p. XIII.

21. The Kerobot were first edited by Menahen Zulay Piyyut Rabbi Yannai (Berlin, 1938). They are now being reissued and re-edited by Z. M. Rabinowitz Maḥzor Piyyute Rabbi Yannai (Tel Aviv, 1981). So far, Volume I has appeared, which includes an Introduction and the Kerobot for Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus.


24. Joel, op. cit., pp. 124-125. The sedarim, together with other typical masoretic information, is listed in 4 columns that precede the text of the Torah and 3 1/2 columns that follow. In these lists the number of sedarim is given as 154. Furthermore, within the text of the Torah, the sedarim are marked in a style that is far more pronounced that the way the mishvah of the annual cycle are marked. This latter marking of the sedarim both reduces the number to 141 and occasionally even changes the beginning of a seder. The number of sedarim in the lists and in the body of the Text can be compared as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List</th>
<th>Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leviticus</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joel (op. cit. pp. 126-127) compares this new arrangement of sedarim with the previously designated list found in the third edition of Kittel’s Biblia Hebraica (Leipzig, 1929) and in C.D. Ginsburg’s Masoretic-critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible (London, 1894) both of which designate 167 sedarim and also with the list of 154 sedarim first published by Jacob ben Ḥayyim in the so called Bomberg Bible (Venice 1524).

The Kittel text is based on the Leningrad ms. and is the oldest known source which designates 167 sedarim. Ginsburg’s list of sedarim is based primarily on the list included in the so-called Tigeain Notebook, first published by Joseph Derenbourg as Manuel du lecteur (Paris, 1871), pp. 111-125. This latter list is almost identical to the list in the Leningrad ms., showing in fact only two small differences:

Leningrad ms. begins a new seder at: רות אברם בן משה שנא גנ. 17:1

Whereas the list in the Manuel starts a new seder at: יגר אברם לאמר: והנה ליזלח ולב א喙 גנ. 22:20

With regard to the arrangement of 154 sedarim, the source for Jacob ben Ḥayyim is unknown. Besides its late appearance in the Bomberg Bible and in the list at the end of the Keter from 1290 published by Joel, this list occurs in a number of other manuscripts.

(1) an Ashenazic ms. from 1294 now in the New York Public Library and catalogued in The People and the Book New York, 1954 No. 3.

(2) a 13th century Ashkenazic ms. described by Schwartz in a catalogue of mss. in Austra No.1.
(3) a 14th century Sephardic ms. in the National Library in Vienna catalogued by Schwartz as No.2.

(4) an Italo-Shephardic ms. from 1448 catalogued by Margoliot as No. 2. Sadly the so-called Aleppo codex, the oldest known masoretic ms. begins with Deuteronomy 26:1 and lacks a masoretic list of Sedarim at the end of the extant part of the Torah.


26. B. Megillah 30b.

27. R. Ami’s interpretation, which is rejected by the Bavli, is hard to square even with the Palestinian model. We have no reason to believe that the Palestinian custom did not require seven individuals to read from the Torah on Shabbat, each reading a minimum of three verses. If the regular seder of Torah readings were interrupted on Shabbat Zakhor, it would appear that all seven individuals would read the same three verses from Deuteronomy 25:17-19. While this is possible, it is also quite unlikely. We must therefore conclude against Joel that even in the accepted practice was that of R. Jeremiah leseder hahafarot hozrin.

28. As we shall see, Joel’s entire thesis is further weakened by his supposition that the division into 145 sedarim reflects a triennial cycle in which two of the three years are intercalated, a situation which Joel himself notes occurs only twice in 57 years. Such an unusual occurrence is hardly likely to give rise to the “standard” number of sedarim. For an alternate explanation, see the explanations of Heinemann and Fleischer to be discussed below.

29. Here again Joel’s thesis is flawed since in one three and a half year cycle, Adar will occur four times and in the other only three times. Does 167 sedarim correspond to the former, in which case four sedarim must be combined in the latter, or does this division correspond to the latter situation, in which case 171 sedarim would be necessary when Adar occurs four times in the cycle?


31. Wacholder, Prolegomenon, Appendix I, pp. LI to LXVII.


34. The Mishnah continues with the clause, אֶלֶף הָמוֹסִפִּין, בָּאָל מָזוֹסִיפִּין עֲלֵיהֶם מַמסִיּוֹת בֻּבָּאָה. As the Tosafot Yom Tov indicates, this clause has an ambiguous referend. He explains בָּאָל מָזוֹסִיפִּין עֲלֵיהֶם as referring to all the items in the Mishnah’s list of the number of people who read from the Torah (אֶלֶף הָמוֹסִיפִּין), but then adds that others explain the Mishnah that only the words בָּאָל מָזוֹסִיפִּין refers to the entire list, but the phrase אֶלֶף הָמוֹסִיפִּין refers only to Shabbat. In the notes of R. Akiba Eiger, he ascribes
this last opinion and its explanation to the Ran, who says we may make מזון on Shabbat because there is no day that is more special than Shabbat.

35. According to this Tosefta, the phrase אבכ מוסיפים עליה in Mishnah Megillah 4:2 refers to the entire list. B. Megillah 23a presents the beraita differently and leads the Gemara to question who the author of M. Megillah 4:2 was.

שכובית מני? לא, ‘ישמעאל ולא, ‘תקיבא תheten בו’ת המשה ‘וה’ שמע השבשה את פותר מן מקן את מוסיפים עליהו. בר ו‘ישמעאל ר’ אرار

Who was the author of the Mishnah? Neither R. Yishmael nor R. Akiba. As we learned on Yom Tov five, on Yom Kippur six, on Shabbat seven, we do not lessen or increase the number – this is the opinion of R. Yishmael. R. Akiba says on Yom Tov five, on Yom Kippur seven, and on Shabbat six. We do not lessen (the number), but we do increase (the number).

The Gemara resolves the problem by quoting Tosefta and concluding that there were two authentic, but conflicting opinions ascribed to R. Ishmael. Parenthetically, the Gemara manages to make the Mishnah fit the opinion of R. Akiva, as well as that of R. Ishmael.

36. Tosefta Megillah 4:17 why do read fewer than three verses in one bundle. cf. B. Megillah 25a, B Ta’anit 27b Tanhuma Ki Tissa Para. 28, Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:8 (p. 111), and Soferim 11:1.

The debate in B. Ta’anit 27b is interesting and instructive. Mishnah Ta’anit 4:3 refers to the appropriate Torah readings on each of four fast days observed by the priestly ma’amadot or posts. The reading on the first day was Genesis 1:1-18, which in the Torah is broken up into two paragraphs of five and three verses respectively. If the first paragraph is assigned to two readers, it is impossible for each of them to read three verses as required by Mishnah. The Gemara continues:

בשם יוי רקיע בצוה, תלהו פסוקי הנה אלא בראותהبعיסו? מ פסוק

One reader can read, “Let there be an expanse…” for this section has three verses, but “In the beginning…” has only two, (altogether) there are five. And we learned, ‘One who reads in the Torah should not read less than three verses.’ Rav explained, the reader doleg, and Shmuel says posek.
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Here *doleg* does not mean to skip, but as Rashi explains, it means to repeat. The first reader reads three verses and the second reader repeats the last verse of the former reader and then completes the reading by adding two more. On the other hand, *posek* means to divide and as Rashi explains, each reader reads two and a half verses, possibly indicating the still fluid nature of the verse divisions in the third century. Such an approach to verse division may help to explain how exceptionally short Palestinian *sedarim* with as few as fourteen verses (e.g., Gen. 8:1-14) could constitute the entire Torah reading for a Shabbat morning, when a minimum of 21 verses had to be read to meet the double demand of Mishnah that no fewer than seven people read the Torah and that each read no fewer than three verses.

37. Cf. Yerushalmi *Megillah* 4:5 (75b); B. *Megillah* 25a. Lieberman (*Tosefta Kifshuta, Seder Moed* p. 1190) explains the ruling according to the *Bavli* as a restrictive ruling (*gezerah*) imposed on account of those who leave the synagogue in the interim and who might think that if the first person does not complete the paragraph, the subsequent reader would only read two verses.

38. Cf. Yerushalmi *Megillah* 4:5 (75b); B. *Megillah* 25a, B. *Ta'anit* 27b. Lieberman (*op. cit.* p. 1190) explains the ruling according to the *Bavli* as a restrictive ruling (*gezerah*) imposed on account of those who enter the synagogue late and who, seeing the second person read fewer than three verses from the succeeding paragraph, might conclude that the reader began from the beginning of the succeeding paragraph and hence read less than the three required verses. This ruling is given in the *Bavli* in the name of *yesh omrim*. A second *beraita*, however, opines that the second reader only reads one verse from the subsequent paragraph and that we pay no attention to late-comers, that is the one who comes in late and wonders how the reader could read fewer than three verses would ask those already present and they would explain the circumstances.


40. Cf parallels Yerushalmi *Yoma* 7:1 (44b) Yerushalmi *Sotah* 7:6 (22a). *Soferim* 11:3 records the explanation differently from the Yerushalmi:

We skip in the *Navi* (prophets) but not in the Torah, because we can roll the *Navi* (scroll) publicly, but we do not roll the Torah (scroll) publicly. And this is what R. Yirmiyah said, ‘We do not roll the
Torah (scroll) publicly.' R. Yosi explained in the name of R. Shimon ben Lakish, this refers to a short Parashah, so that all Israel will hear the Torah (read) in order.

cf. Responsa Terumat HaDeshen #20; Sefer HaRavya Part 2 para. 586.

41. Lieberman (op. cit. p. 1192) points out that the Ḥasdei David on Tosefta Megillah notes that this halakhah is not brought in either the Bavli or Yerushalmi and Lieberman himself notes that it is not brought by any of the posekim, either. However, with the recent publication of Sefer Halitit (para. 185, p. 275 ff.), this ruling is quoted. The implication of the ruling, as deduced by Maharam Mintz in his Responsa (#85) is that we do not read continuously from one book of the Torah to another on a single Shabbat. (Simḥat Torah according to the annual cycle is exceptional.) The corollary is that if only six people read from the concluding section of a given book, we do not add an additional aliyyah from the succeeding book, but rather seven people must read from the succeeding book as if we begin the Torah reading de novo.

42. Cf. Sefer Ittim, para. 185. p. 275ff.; Tashbez Part II, para. 70, end of p. 17a ff. This law is deduced a fortiori from the first ruling. This second ruling follows the custom of 'בי נין אדריא עדיאלי who did not complete the Torah on Simḥat Torah but on a regular Shabbat. Lieberman (op. cit. p. 1193, footnote 82) discusses a difference of opinion between R. Saadya Gaon and R. Hai Gaon. He concludes that both are of the opinion that one does not read from two books of the Torah on a single Shabbat (the implication of our Tosefta), but that R. Saadya follows the Tosefta consistently and holds that if only six read from the concluding section of one book, seven must be called to read from the succeeding book (df. Siddur Rav Saadya, p. 362) – whereas R. Hai permits the seventh person to reread what has already been read and does not require seven additional readers to read in the succeeding book.


44. B. Megillah 31b.

45. Lieberman (Tosefta Kifshuta, p. 1174) raises a question of the Rishonim regarding our sugya. If the literal understanding of the Mishnah is according to the explanation of R. Yehuda in Tosefta, why did the Bavli simply not say halakhah kematin. The Rishonim (cf. Rashba, Ritba, Ran, ad. loc.) explained that the Mishnah is ambiguous regarding what is read on Shabbat minḥah, Monday and Thursday, and only indicates that what is read on these three occasions is repeated on the following Shabbat. It is thus possible to explain that what we read on Monday continues from where we stopped reading on a Shabbat minḥah and that what we read on Thursday continues from where we stopped reading on Monday, but that on the following Shabbat we repeat what
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had been read in the interim. This, as I indicated in the text, is a possible explanation of R. Yehudah in the Tosefta (i.e., he does not contradict the view of R. Meir in the reisha, but only in the seifa). Thus, the beraita is reformulated in the Bavli to adjust R. Yehudah’s view with what was apparently Babylonian practice.

R. Yehudah says at the place we end at Shabbat morning, there we read at (Shabbat) Minḥah, Monday and Thursday mornings, and (begin) the following Shabbat morning.

46. Most recently this has been the philosophic underpinning of our decision regarding the use of Gentile wine where the nonnormative precedent of the Noda Beyehuda was extended far beyond its original intention (cf. the paper of Rabbi Elliot Dorff, “Are All Wines Kosher?”). For a full discussion of this principle, see Seymour Siegel, Conservative Judaism and Jewish Law, pp. xiii-xxvi, especially p.xxii.

47. Mann, The Bible as Read; cf. B. Megillah 23 b, but in Y. Megillah 75a the number of verses was reduced to three.

48. Margulies, Hahillukim, p. 169. We should recall that the custom in Babylonia was to limit sermons to Shabbat Shuvah and Shabbat Haggadol, both of which fell in the yarḥe dekala.

49. The converse is not necessarily true, i.e., by abbreviating the service we will attract more people to the synagogue. But those who do attend should not be fatigued by a service that values completeness and haste above inherent beauty and real Torah study. cf. Gilbert Rosenthal, “Prayer and the Conservative Jew,” Conservative Judaism 37 (1984), 24-27.

50. Zvi Chajes, Hiddusehi Harav Zvi Chajes al Massekhet Megillah, to B. Megillah 31b

51. Mann, The Bible as Read, p.5.

52. Wacholder, Prolegomenon p. XXIII.

53. See infra pages 15-17 for a complete discussion of our knowledge of the Palestinian haftarot.

54. Theodor was the first to recognize the relationship between the midrashic selections and the triennial cycle (cf. “Die Midrashim zum Pentateuch und der dreijährige pal. Cyclus,” M.G.W.J., vol. 34-36, 1885-1887). Mann (The Bible as Read, pp. 11-15) and Wacholder (Prolegomenon, pp. XXXIV-XXXVIII and the bibliography cited in footnotes 53-60) develop the connection still further.
Mann proposed the theory, which has proven to be erroneous, that verses used to introduce the _petihtot_, especially of Genesis and Leviticus Rabbah, were chosen because they "tallied linguistically with a verse found within the compass of the _Talmud_. Often the whole trend of the _aggadah_ developed in the _Petihta_ can be accounted for only by turning to the _Talmud_ which gave the homilist his starting point... Thus, the _Talmud_ formed the bridge that joined the Torah _Seder_ with the _Petihta_ verse which as a rule was chosen from the Hagiographa... In this manner, the preacher demonstrated to his audience the _union of the three divisions of the Bible_." (Mann, _The Bible as Read_, p. 12). Mann exemplified this thesis by further arguing that the choice of a particular halakhah to introduce a _Yelamdenu Rabbenu_ style _midrash_ was also predicated by a suggestion given the homilist by a given verse in the _Talmud_. In this manner, the homilist also demonstrated "the _union of the Written Law with the Oral..._" Mann's error lay in assuming that the midrashic selections were based on different _haftarot_ from the ones found in the Genizahh lists and alluded to in Yannai's _Piyyutim, haftarot_ which he concluded were late.

55. The first to recognize the relation between the _Qerobot_ written by Yannai was Menahem Zulay, who published an edition of his _Piyyutim_ in 1938. These _Piyyutim_ have recently been reissued in a critical edition with extensive scholarly notes and cross references by Z.M. Rabinowitz. Wacholder (Prolegomenon, p. XL) points out that Yannai wrote at least one _Qeroba_ for each of the 154 _sedarim_, as well as others for festivals and special occasions. These _qerobot_ were either _kedushtot_ or _shebatot_, the former being written to introduce the _Kedushah_, the later being used to embellish all seven blessings of the _Amidah_. The _kedusha_ is a highly stylized poem of 9 stanzas whose content was gleaned from the _halakhah_ and _aggadah_ of the weekly _seder_. The first stanza of the _kedusha_ concludes with the opening verse of the weekly _seder_. The second stanza cites the second verse and the third stanza concludes with the first verse of the triennial _Haggadah_.

56. I have used the so-called Bomberg edition of the rabbinic Bible as the standard for the division of _sedarim_. In all but two instances it corresponds to the _Keter_ of the biblical manuscript from Damascus, dated 1290, which was collated by Issakhar Joel. Joel considers the list at the end of each book to be original (_Keter_, p. 125), while the reduced number of _sedarim_ included in the body of each book was secondary and added by a later hand. Moreover, Joel argues that the standard number of _sedarim_ was recognized even in the east as 154, as evidenced by the Yemenite codices called _Mahberet Tigeian_. While these codices divide the Torah internally into 167 _sedarim_ and hence formed the basis of Kittel's _Biblia Hebraica_ and C.D. Ginsberg’s Massoretic Bible, nonetheless the _Mahberet Tigeian_ ends with the sentence:
The number of sedarim of the Torah are 154, corresponding to the numerical value of the word klitah (154).

57. The advantages of the first solution are threefold. First, it allows us to follow a triennial cycle of 154 sedarim without exception. Second, we are familiar with the procedure of repeating verses in order to make up the requisite number of verses.

(1) On Rosh Hodesh, Numbers 28:3 is repeated as the first verse of the second aliyah.

(2) On Simhat Torah, the first five עליות of Vezot Haberakhah are repeated again and again until each member of the congregation has received an aliyah.

Finally, according to our understanding of M. Megillah 3:4 where the Palestinian cycle of Torah readings was interrupted for the four special readings of Adar, Deuteronomy 25:17-19 constituted the entire Torah reading for Shabbat Zakhor. This could only have been possible if the three verses were repeated seven times.

The obvious disadvantage of this solution is its repetitious character. Only one of the exceptionally short sedarim has content that we might subjectively consider worthy of repetition (Genesis 12:1-9, the command to Abram to set out for Canaan) and at least one of the sedarim (Numbers 25:1-9, the Israelite apostasy with the Midianite women at Baal Peor), has content which our members, again subjectively, might consider offensive (although a little added emphasis on promiscuity and adultery might not be all that bad in our age).

Combination of short sedarim with either the preceding or succeeding seder has the obvious advantage of avoiding monotonous repetition, but the questionable disadvantage of reducing the number of sedarim from 154 to 143. Since we are aware from the biblical manuscript described by Joel the Torah lections were divided into as few as 141 sedarim, usually by the combination of short sedarim, such a combination of sedarim is indeed possible. Joel points out that while the manuscript divides the Torah internally into only 141 sedarim, at the end of each book it lists the standard number of sedarim, which add up to 154. Thus, the internal division reflected a practical guide to local usage in one specific community, even while it acknowledged the “universal” standard of 154 sedarim. The possibility of returning to the universal standard of 154 sedarim by subdividing some of the longer sedarim, as was done in the Leningrad manuscript, published by Kittel as Biblia Hebraica, has the dubious advantage of retaining an arbitrary number of sedarim that are in fact a conflation of sedarim in three otherwise autonomous systems.
The third solution, that of continuing the reading of a short seder into the reading of the succeeding week and then returning to the beginning of the seder on the succeeding week, has the double advantage of not repeating verses on any one specific week and of keeping the standard 154 sedarim. Indeed, some scholars have argued that since the list of sedarim only give the initial verse of each seder, there is no reason to conclude that one seder ended exactly where the next one began. This thesis, however, directly contradicts Tosefta Megillah 3:10, where according to Rabbi Yehudah, the place where we stop reading on one Shabbat is precisely where we begin on the subsequent Shabbat, not to mention Shabbat Minḥah, Monday and Thursday.

It should be clear then that in order to meet the halakhic criteria of the Mishnah and Tosefta, only the first two solutions to the problem of short sedarim, either used in isolation or in tandem, are legitimate options.

58. Cf. in the period before standardization, Leviticus Rabbah 3:6, where R. Hanina bar Abba visited a given city and found that to his surprise a seder began with Leviticus 2:10, and in the period after standardization, cf. the Hilukim bein Anshei Mizraḥ veAnshe Ma’arav, number 48 in the critical apparatus.

59. Three of the sedarim actually begin in the middle of a masoretic paragraph, indicated in the table by the letter X (Sedarim 20, 24 and 92), one ends in the middle of a masoretic paragraph (Seder 23) and two begin and end in the middle of a masoretic paragraph (Sedarim 26 and 27).

60. Hilkhot Tefillah 13:5.


62. Positive verses would indicate God’s blessing (Genesis 2:3), a positive act by a biblical character (Genesis 4:26, זַע הוּדוֹל לָכַר הָבָשָׁם הָשָׁם), a positive attribute of a biblical character (Genesis 6:8, נַהֲמָה מִצְאָר תּוֺבָע), a positive act by God (Genesis 9:17, יָרָא אֶלֹהִים וְהָאָדָם אֲלֵיהֶם), or the birth of a secondary biblical character (38:30, the birth of Zerah, son of Judah and Tamar). Neutral verses indicate factual activities about biblical characters which have no morally positive or negative quality (Genesis 33:17, where Jacob builds a house at Sukkot) or announce the birth of a secondary biblical character (38:30, the birth of Zerah, son of Judah and Tamar). Neutral verses indicate genealogical information (Gen. 9:18, יִרְדֵּה בַּיָּמִים הָאֲשֶׁר נָתַנִּים אֶלְוָהִים לְוַיָּם וָיוָם) or the death of minor biblical characters (Genesis 11:32, the death of Terah). Neutral verses indicate factual activities about biblical characters that have a somewhat negative quality (Genesis 20:1, Abram settles in Gerar), or genealogical information about negative biblical characters (Genesis 25:18, the genealogy of Ishmael). Negative verses indicate sad or negative features of major biblical characters (Genesis 26:35, וַתְּהִי מַתָּה הָתָלַת לְתָלַת לָבָשָׁה), referring
to the marriage of Esau; Genesis 12:10, Abram’s departure from Cannan to Egypt; Genesis 40:23, or punishment for transgression of a law, Exodus 30:38, or warnings of punishment, Leviticus 10:7, and the expulsion from the garden.

63. Genesis 3:22 Numbers 5:12 Numbers 13:1 Numbers 16:1 Leviticus 17:1  
64. Genesis 40:23 Genesis 44:17 Leviticus 20:27  
67. B. Megillah 31b.
68. page 355.
69. B. Berakhot 8a.
70. We offer as an analogy the Mishnah’s dictum (M. Pesahim 4:1):

72. Mann, The Bible as Read, pp. 561-574.
74. Wacholder, Prolegomenon, pp. XXIX – XXX.
75. Ibid., pp. LI – LXVII.
76. Mann, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
77. cf. Mann, op. cit., pp. 78, 85, 134 etc.
78. Thus Bodleian 2727 lists Isaiah 42:7-21 as the הפרדה for Genesis 8:15-9:17 (Seder 6), which Mann reduces to Isaiah 42:7-15 & 21, here with the support of two other Oxford mss. (Bodl. 2822 and 2828); on the other hand, Bodleian 2727 lists Isaiah 49:9-14 (6 verses) as the הפרדה for Genesis 9:18 – 11:22, but the two other Oxford mss. (Bodl. 2822 and 2828) give Isaiah 49:9-23 (15 verses). From this data, Mann creates a 10 verse הפרדה, Isaiah 49:9-17 & 23.
79. Mann, op. cit., p.11.
80. Wacholder, Prolegomenon, pp. XXXI – XXXIII.
81. Shaare Teshuvah #214.
82. Marguilies, Hillukim, #48 p.88.
83. Quoted in Contemporaries of Marco Polo, edited by Manuel Kamroff, pp. 313-314.
84. Marguilies, op. cit., p. 173.
87. Ibid., pp. 214-215.
88. Ibid., pp. 214-215.