

## What are Torah Portions?

Parsha or Parshah or Parashah, אֲשֶׁר?

All those words mean "Portion" in Hebrew, and together with the word Torah they refer to the weekly Torah reading text selection. It is also known as the Parshat HaShavuah ("Weekly Portion") or the Sidra. Each Parsha usually takes its name from the first unique word or words in the Hebrew text.

What is Torah Reading?

Torah reading (in Hebrew: Kriat HaTorah or "Reading [of] the Torah") has followed a steady pattern for the past two thousand years following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and is still practiced today:

As a part of the morning or afternoon prayer services on certain days, a section of the 5 books of the Hebrew Bible is read from a Torah scroll. On Shabbat (Saturday) mornings, a weekly section (Parasha) is read, selected so that the entire Pentateuch is read consecutively each year.

What is done?

Most people use the term "Torah reading" to refer to the entire ceremony of taking the Torah scroll (or scrolls) out of its (holy) ark (an elaborate closet), a synagogue official, then calls people, in turn, to be honored with an aliyah, wherein they read the Torah for the congregation, and then the Torah scroll are put back.

What is read?

The Torah was divided into 54 weekly Torah portions. They are usually read in an annual cycle, beginning and ending on the Holiday of Simchat Torah. The lunisolar Hebrew calendar contains up to 54 weeks, the exact number varying between leap years and regular years. In years with less than 54 weeks, some readings are combined to achieve the needed number of weekly readings.

Every Parasha is divided into several aliyot (single: aliya). When someone reads the Torah they are "making aliyah", or "going up" (spiritually and literally, as usually the reading stage is raised.). Each reads a section of the day's reading.

Why is reading Torah significant to celebrating Bar/Bat Mitzvah?

Traditionally, boys at the age of 13 are considered by the "Halacha" (The Jewish law) as adult. And as such they are allowed to read from the Torah. This is why reading the portion that falls on or shortly after their 13th birthday is part of the celebration of their Bar Mitzvah event, though this is not a requirement. Many Conservative and Reform congregations extended this practice to girls, who reach religious maturity, and celebrate their Bat Mitzvah.

Bottom line

Reading from the Torah is an honor. People, who celebrate special occasions, like boys and girls who reached religious maturity at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or newlywed grooms, are honored by being called for an aliya, which is reading one part of the weekly Torah Portion.

We hope that you enjoyed reading this, and that your necklace of knowledge is one bead longer than it was before you read this page. If you would like you could take a peek at our other beads .

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