

וְהָיָה לְאַחֲרָיו, לְאַחֲרָיו וְהָיָה לְפָנָיו – הַזֹּאתוּ
 פְּסוּלָה; לְפָנָיו וְהָיָה עַל צְדָדִין שֶׁבְּפָנָיו –
 הַזֹּאתוּ בְּשֵׁרָה.

and instead he sprinkled it backward,^H or if he intended to sprinkle the water backward and instead he sprinkled it forward, even if the water lands on vessels that require purification, his sprinkling is invalid. However, if one intended to sprinkle the water forward and instead he sprinkled it forward to the sides,^N his sprinkling is valid. It is derived from here that one's sides are considered as though they were in front of him.

HALAKHA

If one intended to sprinkle water forward and instead he sprinkled it backward, etc. – גְּתִבּוֹן לְהֹזֹת לְפָנָיו וְהָיָה לְאַחֲרָיו וכו' – One who sprinkles the waters of purification must intend to sprinkle it upon the person who is ritually impure in order to purify him. If one sprinkles the water without this intention, his action is invalid. The Ra'avad maintains that one's intention must be to sprinkle that particular person, but there is no requirement that one intend to

purify him. If one intended to sprinkle forward and instead he sprinkled backward, or if he intended to sprinkle backward and instead sprinkled forward, his action is invalid. However, if one intended to sprinkle forward and instead he sprinkled the water to the side of where he was facing, his action is valid (Rambam *Sefer Tahara, Hilkhoh Para Aduma* 10:7).

NOTES

Sides – צְדָדִין: The reason that one's sides are considered like his front is that a person naturally has peripheral vision. Furthermore, according to the principle that the Priestly Benediction must be recited face-to-face, as one would converse with another, standing to the sides of the priests is also permitted, as people sometimes speak to one another while facing each other's sides (see *Devar Shaul*).

It is prohibited to converse even about a matter of *halakha* – אסור לספר אפילו בדבר הלכה – *Tosafot* and many other early commentaries, later commentaries, and halakhic authorities discuss the apparent contradiction between this *halakha* and the Gemara's story about Rav Sheshet, who would turn away from the Torah scroll and study. He reasoned: We are engaged in ours, the study of the Oral Torah, and they are engaged in theirs, listening to the Written Torah. The Rashbam explains that since Rav Sheshet turned away from the Torah scroll, he demonstrated that he was involved in something else and was therefore not subject to the prohibition against discussing other matters. Other commentaries explain that since Rav Sheshet was blind, he was exempt from participating in the public Torah reading and was permitted to be engaged with other matters. According to others, it is permitted to speak in a whisper (*Tosefot HaRosh; Sefer HaAgudat*). Alternatively, this prohibition applies only when there are not ten other men present who are listening to the reading (*Ba'al Halakhot Gedolot*). Another explanation is that this prohibition applies only where the custom is that the reader recites a blessing only at the beginning and at the end of the reading, as there is a concern that one who is talking will not hear the blessing after the reading (*Meiri on Berakhot*). However, according to most halakhic authorities, only someone who is constantly engaged in Torah study is permitted to do this, while it is prohibited for everyone else to do so.

To bless His people, Israel, with love – לברך את עמו – *Be'er Sheva*: The question is raised in the *Be'er Sheva*: Where in the Torah is it taught that the benediction must be recited with love? The answer, based on the midrash, is that it is derived from the fact that the word “say” in the phrase: “Say to them” (Numbers 6:23), is written in full, including the letter *vav*. This teaches that the Priestly Benediction must not be recited haphazardly or in a rush; rather, it must be a full-hearted blessing. This is what is meant by the expression: With love.

LANGUAGE

Shortcut [*kappendarya*] – קפנדריא: The origin of this word appears to be the Latin term *compendaria*, meaning shortcut, as in a shortcut through a courtyard or a house.

אמר רבא בר רב הונא: כיון שנפתח ספר תורה – אסור לספר אפילו בדבר הלכה, שנאמר: “ובפתחו עמדם כל העם”, ואין עמידה אלא שתיקה, שנאמר: “והוחלתו כי לא ידברו בי עמדם לא ענו עוד”. רבי ירמיה אמר רב חסדא, מהכא: “ואזני כל העם אל ספר התורה”.

ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: כל כהן שלא נטל ידיו לא ישא את כפיו, שנאמר: “שאו ידכם קדש וברכו את ה'”.

שאלו תלמידיו את רבי אלעזר בן שמוע: במה הארכת ימים? אמר להן: מימי לא עשיתי בית הכנסת קפנדריא, ולא פסעתי על ראשי עם קודש, ולא נשאתי כפי בלא ברכה.

מאי מברך? אמר רבי ירמיה אמר רב חסדא: “אשר קדשנו בקדושתו של אהרן וצונו לברך את עמו ישראל באהבה”.

Rava bar Rav Huna says: Once a Torah scroll has been opened,^H it is prohibited to converse, even about a matter of *halakha*.^N As it is stated: “And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and when he opened it, all the people stood up” (Nehemiah 8:5), and standing is referring to nothing other than silence, as it is stated: “And shall I wait, because they do not speak, because they stand still, and answer no more?” (Job 32:16). Rabbi Zeira said that Rav Hisda said: The prohibition against conversing is derived from here: “And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law” (Nehemiah 8:3). They were not listening to any other voice.

And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: Any priest who did not first wash his hands^H may not lift his hands to recite the Priestly Benediction; as it is stated: “Lift up [*se'u*] your hands in sanctity and bless the Lord” (Psalms 134:2), which teaches that before reciting the benediction one must sanctify his hands by washing them.

Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua was once asked by his disciples: To what do you attribute your longevity? He said to them: In all my days, I never made a shortcut [*kappendarya*]^L through a synagogue.^H Nor did I ever stride over the heads of the sacred people, i.e., I never stepped over people sitting in the study hall in order to reach my place, so as not to appear scornful of them. And I never lifted my hands for the Priestly Benediction without first reciting a blessing.

The Gemara asks: What blessing does the priests recite^H before the benediction? Rabbi Zeira says that Rav Hisda says: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with the sanctity of Aaron and commanded us to bless His people, Israel, with love.^N

HALAKHA

Once a Torah scroll has been opened, etc. – כיון שנפתח ספר תורה וכו': Once the reader has begun reading from a Torah scroll, it is prohibited to speak, even about matters of Torah. According to the Rema and the Vilna Gaon, this is the *halakha* from the time the scroll has been opened, although the reading has not yet begun. One is permitted to speak in order to prevent a prohibition from being violated if this cannot be accomplished in any other way. There are authorities who permit quietly studying Torah, and others who permit this only to those who engage in Torah study all the time. According to the *Eliya Rabba*, with regard to this *halakha*, nobody nowadays is considered as having this status. However, one should not reprimand people who study by themselves during the reading.

During the public Torah reading, it is permitted for one to fulfill the requirement to read the Torah text of the weekly portion twice and the translation once. Some authorities maintain that even this is prohibited, as it is prohibited to engage in any activity during the Torah reading other than listening to it (*Peri Hadash*), unless one reads along with the reader word for word, so that he will still hear his reading (*Mishna Berura*). It is prohibited to speak even between the different sections of the reading, though the *Bah* rules leniently in this regard. So long as the Torah scroll is still open, one may not speak even after the reading has been completed (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla* 12:9; *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 146:1–2).

Any priest who did not wash his hands, etc. – כל כהן שלא נטל ידיו וכו': A priest may not recite the Priestly Benediction without washing his hands, even if he already washed his hands upon getting up in the morning (*Shulhan Arukh*). He must wash his entire hand with water up to the wrist, as is required before serving in the Temple (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla* 15:5; *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 128:6).

I never made a shortcut through a synagogue – לא עשיתי בית הכנסת קפנדריא: It is prohibited to use a synagogue as a shortcut for getting from one place to another. If one needs to cut through a synagogue, he should sit for a short while in the synagogue and recite a verse or a *halakha*. It is permitted to pass through the synagogue without stopping to go to its courtyard (*Arukh HaShulhan*). It is praiseworthy for one who enters a synagogue to pray to exit through an entrance other than the one he entered (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla* 11:8; *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 151:5).

What blessing does the priest recite – מאי מברך – When the priests face the congregation to bless them, they first recite the following blessing: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with the sanctity of Aaron and commanded us to bless His people, Israel, with love (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla* 14:12; *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* 128:11).

When the priest begins walking, etc. – **כִּי יֵקֵר כְּרַעֲיָה וְכוּ** – When the priests begin walking to ascend the platform, they say: May it be Your will, Lord our God, that this blessing with which You have commanded us to bless Your people, Israel, shall be a complete blessing, and shall not contain any stumbling block or iniquity from now and forever.

They prolong their recitation until the end of the blessing of the Temple service, so that the congregation answers amen to it along with the blessing (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla* 14:12; *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 128:9).

When he turns his face away from the congregation – **כִּי מֵהַדָּר אֵפִיָּה מְצִיבֹרָא**: After the priests finish reciting the Priestly Benediction, the prayer leader continues with the blessing of: Grant peace. At this point, the priests turn away from the congregation toward the ark and pray: Master of the Universe, we have performed that which You decreed upon us; do unto us as You have promised. Look down from Your sacred holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people, Israel.

They prolong their recitation until the prayer leader finishes the blessing of: Grant peace, so that the congregation can answer amen to their prayer along with the blessing (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla* 14:12; *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 128:15, and in the comment of Rema).

The Gemara continues: When the priest begins walking^h to the platform to recite the benediction, **what does he say?** The Gemara answers: **May it be Your will, Lord our God, that this blessing with which You have commanded us to bless Your people, Israel, shall not contain any stumbling block or iniquity.ⁿ And when the benediction has been completed, when he turns his face away from the congregation,^h what does he say?** Rav Hisda instructed Rav Ukva and taught him that this is what he would say: **Master of the Universe, we have performed that which You decreed upon us. Do unto us**

NOTES

Stumbling block or iniquity – **מְכֻשׁוֹל וְעוֹן**: This expression seems to be out of place, as the priest recites the benediction in the exact wording that is required and says only positive words. Some commentaries explain that since the benediction is interpreted as a blessing of wealth, a person for whom this blessing is fulfilled might find that his newfound wealth brings

with it spiritual trials (*Torat HaKenaot*). Others explain, based on the *Zohar*, that if there is a person in the congregation whom the priest hates, if he blesses him he may endanger himself. For this reason, the priest must pray that his blessing will not produce any stumbling block or iniquity (*Minha Hareva*).

Perek VII
Daf 39 Amud b

מה שהבטחתנו, השקיפה ממעון קדשך מן השמים וגו'.

as You have promised us, namely: “So shall they put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:27). **“Look forth from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people, Israel”** (Deuteronomy 26:15).

אמר רב חסדא: אין הבהנים רשאים לכוף קישרי אצבעותיהן עד שיחזרו פניהם מן הצבור. אמר רבי זירא אמר רב חסדא: אין הקורא רשאי לקרות בבהנים עד שיבילה אמן מפיה הצבור;

Rav Hisda says: The priests who spread their hands open during the benediction are not permitted to bend the joints of their fingers^{NH} until they turn their faces away from the congregation once they have completed the benediction. **Rabbi Zeira says that Rav Hisda says:** The one who calls the priests forward is not permitted^h to call out: Priests, until the response amen to the blessing of thanksgiving concludes from the mouths of the congregation, in order to ensure that everyone will hear the voices of the priests.

HALAKHA

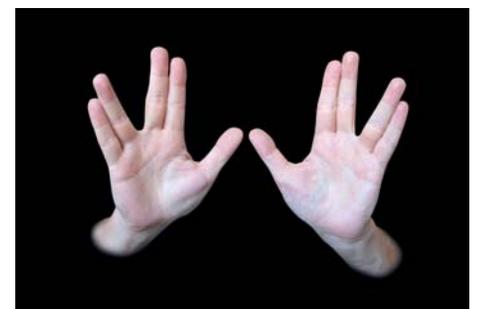
The priests are not permitted to bend the joints of their fingers – **אין הבהנים רשאים לכוף קישרי אצבעותיהן**: It is prohibited for the priests to bend their fingers while reciting the Priestly Benediction. Their fingers must be spread until they turn around to face the ark (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 14:6; *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 128:16).

The one who calls the priests is not permitted, etc. – אין הקורא: The one who calls the priests forward is not permitted to call out: Priests, until the congregation finishes answering

amen to the blessing of thanksgiving. The priests are not permitted to begin their blessing until the caller finishes calling out: Priests. During the blessing itself, the congregation must wait for the priests to finish each verse before answering amen, and the priests must likewise wait for the congregation to finish answering amen before beginning the next verse. There is a discussion in the *Mishna Berura* concerning whether it is necessary to wait for the entire congregation or only for the majority to finish answering amen (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 14:5; *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 128:18).

NOTES

To bend the joints of their fingers – **לכוף קישרי אצבעותיו**: This is the source for the *halakha* that the priests' fingers must be spread out while they are reciting the Priestly Benediction. Some of the *ge'onim* explain that the purpose is so that they appear to be shuddering in awe due to the Divine Presence that is resting upon them at this time. Another reason is that the priests would make a sign with their fingers to keep track of where they were in the blessing. The midrash and the *Pesikta deRav Kahana* teach that the priests create five spaces between their fingers, one space between the first two fingers and the second two fingers on each hand, one space between the thumb and first two fingers on each hand, and the space between the two thumbs, to allude to the revelation of the Divine Presence, as is expressed in the phrase in the verse (Song of Songs 2:9): “Peering through the lattice” (see *Tosefot HaRosh* and *Abudirham*).



Position of the priests' hands during the Priestly Benediction

Until the statement of the caller concludes from his mouth – שִׁבְלָה דִּיבּוּר מִפִּי הַקּוֹרֵא – Rashi explains that this is referring to the prayer leader or someone else who calls out: Priests. Others explain that it is referring to the person who reads out loud the words of the Priestly Benediction for the priests to repeat. Accordingly, the Gemara states that the priests may not begin saying a word until this person finishes reading it to them (*Be'er Sheva*).

Must first read from the Torah – עֲרִיךְ שִׁיקְרָא בְּתוֹרָה תְּחִילָה – The Gemara in tractate *Megilla* explains that the one who concludes with a reading from the Prophets must first read several verses from the Torah out of respect for the Torah, so that is clear that there is nothing that is as important as the Torah itself.

Until the Torah scroll is furled – עַד שֶׁאֵגַלֵּל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה – Rashi explains that this is so the person who is furling the scroll can also pay attention to the reading of the Prophets. An alternative explanation is that this is out of respect for the Torah, because if everyone listens immediately to the reading of the Prophets, the Torah scroll might be forgotten and left unfurled. Another reason that the Torah scroll must first be furled is so that the person reading from the Prophets does not appear to reciting a blessing over the Torah (*Be'er Sheva*).

BACKGROUND

Translation – תְּרַגְמוּ: During the times of the Gemara and for many generations that followed, the custom was for an appointed translator to translate the Torah reading in the synagogue into Aramaic, verse by verse. The translation that was used was *Targum Onkelos*. Some early authorities insisted that this custom be continued even once most people no longer understood Aramaic. Nowadays, no congregation retains this custom, with the exception of the Yemenite Jews, who still translate the Torah reading into Aramaic.

וְאִין הַכֹּהֲנִים רְשָׁאִין לְהַתְּחִיל בְּבִרְכָּה עַד שֶׁיְבָרַךְ דִּיבּוּר מִפִּי הַקּוֹרֵא; וְאִין הַצְּבּוּר רְשָׁאִין לְעֲנוֹת "אָמֵן" עַד שֶׁתְּבָרַךְ בְּרִכָּה מִפִּי הַכֹּהֲנִים; וְאִין הַכֹּהֲנִים רְשָׁאִין לְהַתְּחִיל בְּבִרְכָּה אַחֲרַת עַד שֶׁיְבָרַךְ "אָמֵן" מִפִּי הַצְּבּוּר.

וְאָמַר רַבִּי זְעִירָא אָמַר רַב חֲסָדָא: אִין הַכֹּהֲנִים רְשָׁאִין לְהַחְזִיר פְּנֵיהֶם מִן הַצְּבּוּר עַד שֶׁיַּתְּחִיל שְׁלִיחַ צְבוּר בְּ"שִׁים שְׁלוֹם"; וְאִינוּ רְשָׁאִין לְעַקּוֹר רַגְלֵיהֶם וְלִילֶךְ עַד שֶׁיִּגְמְרוּ שְׁלִיחַ צְבוּר "שִׁים שְׁלוֹם".

וְאָמַר רַבִּי זְעִירָא אָמַר רַב חֲסָדָא: אִין הַצְּבּוּר רְשָׁאִין לְעֲנוֹת "אָמֵן" עַד שֶׁתְּבָרַךְ בְּרִכָּה מִפִּי הַקּוֹרֵא; וְאִין הַקּוֹרֵא רְשָׁאִי לְקֹרֵת בְּתוֹרָה עַד שֶׁיְבָרַךְ "אָמֵן" מִפִּי הַצְּבּוּר; וְאִין הַמְּתַרְגֵּם רְשָׁאִי לְהַתְּחִיל בְּתַרְגוּם עַד שֶׁיְבָרַךְ פְּסוּק מִפִּי הַקּוֹרֵא; וְאִין הַקּוֹרֵא רְשָׁאִי לְהַתְּחִיל בְּפֶסוּק אַחַר עַד שֶׁיְבָרַךְ תְּרַגוּם מִפִּי הַמְּתַרְגֵּם.

אָמַר רַבִּי תַנְחוּם אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי: הַמְּפָטֵיר בְּנִבְיָא – עֲרִיךְ שִׁיקְרָא בְּתוֹרָה תְּחִילָה. וְאָמַר רַבִּי תַנְחוּם אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי: אִין הַמְּפָטֵיר רְשָׁאִי לְהַפְטִיר בְּנִבְיָא עַד שֶׁאֵגַלֵּל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה.

וְאָמַר רַבִּי תַנְחוּם אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי: אִין שְׁלִיחַ צְבוּר רְשָׁאִי לְהַפְשִׁיט אֶת הַתִּיבָה בְּצְבוּר, מִפְּנֵי כְבוֹד צְבוּר.

And for the same reason, the priests are not permitted to begin reciting the benediction until the statement of the caller, i.e., his announcement: Priests, concludes from his mouth.^N And the congregation is not permitted to answer amen until the blessing concludes from the mouths of the priests. And the priests are not permitted to begin reciting another blessing until the response amen to the previous blessing concludes from the mouths of the congregation.

And Rabbi Zeira says that Rav H̄isda says: The priests are not permitted to turn away^H from the congregation after they have completed the benediction until the prayer leader begins saying the blessing of: Grant peace. And they are not permitted to uproot their feet and walk away from the platform until the prayer leader finishes saying the blessing of: Grant peace.

And in a similar vein, Rabbi Zeira says that Rav H̄isda says: The congregation is not permitted to answer amen to the blessing recited over the Torah reading until the blessing of the one reading from the Torah concludes from his mouth.^H And the reader is not permitted to begin reading from the Torah until the response amen to the preceding blessing concludes from the mouths of the congregation. And the translator is not permitted^H to begin the translation^B of the Torah reading until the reading of the verse from the Torah concludes from the mouth of the reader. And the reader is not permitted to begin reading another verse until the translation concludes from the mouth of the translator.

Rabbi Tanḥum says that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: The one who concludes with a reading from the Prophets [*haftara*]^H must first read several verses from the Torah.^N And Rabbi Tanḥum says that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: The one who concludes is not permitted to conclude with a reading from the Prophets until the Torah scroll is furled.^{NH}

And Rabbi Tanḥum says that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: The prayer leader is not permitted to uncover the decorative covering^H of the ark in public, out of respect for the congregation. It is inappropriate to have the congregation wait while doing this.

HALAKHA

The priests are not permitted to turn away, etc. – אִין הַכֹּהֲנִים רְשָׁאִין לְהַחְזִיר פְּנֵיהֶם וְכוּ: The priests are not permitted to turn and face the ark until the prayer leader begins reciting the blessing of: Grant peace. They must stand in place without uprooting their feet until the prayer leader concludes this blessing. Some say that they must wait until the congregation has finished answering amen after this blessing. The Rema writes that this is the custom (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 14:6; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 128:16).

Until the blessing of the one reading concludes from his mouth – עַד שֶׁתְּבָרַךְ בְּרִכָּה מִפִּי הַקּוֹרֵא – The congregation may not answer amen until the person reading from the Torah finishes his blessing, and he in turn may not begin reading from the Torah until the congregation has finished answering amen (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 12:6; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 141:5).

The translator is not permitted – אִין הַמְּתַרְגֵּם רְשָׁאִי: The person who translates the Torah in the synagogue may not begin translating a verse until the reader finishes reading it, and the reader in turn must wait for the translator to finish before beginning the next verse (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 12:11; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 145:1).

The one who concludes with a reading from the Prophets – הַמְּפָטֵיר בְּנִבְיָא: The person who is called up to read from the Prophets must first read from the Torah. It is enough for him to read only three verses. Usually he reads the last few verses of the Torah portion that was just read (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 12:13; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 282:4).

Until the Torah scroll is furled – עַד שֶׁאֵגַלֵּל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה: The person who is called up to read from the Prophets may not begin reciting the blessing on the *haftara* until the Torah scroll has been completely furled, so that the one who is furling the Torah scroll can listen attentively to the reading of the *haftara*. The custom is to wait until the covering has been placed over the Torah scroll (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhhot Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 12:13; *Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 147:7, 284:6; see *Peri Megadim*).

The prayer leader is not permitted to uncover the covering – אִין שְׁלִיחַ צְבוּר רְשָׁאִי לְהַפְשִׁיט: The prayer leader may not remove the decorative covering of the ark as long as the congregation is in the synagogue (*Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 148:1).

The congregation is not permitted to leave, etc. – אין – הַעֲבוּר רִשְׁאִין לְצֵאת וְכוּ: The congregation may not leave the synagogue until the Torah scroll has been put away. However, an individual may leave as long as the majority of the congregation is present (Rema). When the Torah scroll is housed in another building, if the synagogue has only one exit, the congregation must wait until it is taken out and escort the Torah scroll to the place where it is kept. If there are two exits, it is permitted to leave the synagogue through the exit through which the Torah scroll will not be taken out. However, the congregation must still escort the Torah scroll to the place where it is kept. The Rema adds that when the Torah scroll is being carried to the ark, everyone in its path must escort it until it is returned to the ark (Rambam *Sefer Ahava, Hilkhos Tefilla UVirkat Kohanim* 12:24; *Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim* 149:1).

NOTES

עד שִׁינָטֵל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה – Until the Torah scroll has been taken – The Rif quotes the opinion of the *ge'onim* that this is also the *halakha* when the Torah scroll remains in the synagogue. In any event, it is not respectful to the Torah scroll to leave the synagogue before it has been returned to its proper place.

אַחֲרֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – After the Lord your God you shall walk – תּלְכוּ: Because of this verse, several *ge'onim* maintain that one should move a bit from one's place to escort the Torah scroll as it is being carried away from the platform and returned to its place (Meiri; *Kiryat Sefer*).

And Rabbi Tanḥum says that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: The congregation is not permitted to leave¹¹ the synagogue after the Torah reading until the Torah scroll has been taken¹² and prepared to be returned to its place, as the Torah scroll used to be stored near the synagogue. And Shmuel said: They may not leave until the Torah scroll is actually taken out of the synagogue, out of respect for the Torah scroll.

The Gemara comments: And they do not disagree about the *halakha*. Rather, they were discussing different situations. This statement of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi is referring to a case where there is another exit. When the Torah scroll is being taken out of one exit, people may leave through the other exit. However, that statement of Shmuel is referring to a case where there is no other exit, and therefore the congregation must wait until the Torah is carried out. Rava said: The Sage bar Ahina explained to me that this *halakha* is derived from the verse: “After the Lord your God you shall walk” (Deuteronomy 13:5),¹³ meaning that one must walk after the Torah scroll and not in front of it.

S The Gemara continues to discuss the Priestly Benediction. When the priests are blessing the people, what do the people say? Rabbi Zeira says that Rav Ḥisda says: For each blessing that the priests recite, they respond with a blessing from Bible: “Bless the Lord, His angels, mighty in strength that fulfill His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psalms 103:20), “Bless the Lord, all of His hosts, His ministers that do His pleasure” (Psalms 103:21), and “Bless the Lord, all of His works, in all places of His dominion, bless the Lord, O my soul” (Psalms 103:22).

When the priests ascend a second time to bless the congregation during the additional prayer of Shabbat, what do the people say? It is not appropriate for them to repeat the same verses of praise that they recited previously. Rabbi Asi said: They say: “A song of ascents. Behold, bless you the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, that stand in the house of the Lord in the night seasons” (Psalms 134:1), “Lift up your hands in sanctity and bless the Lord” (Psalms 134:2), and “Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, Who dwells at Jerusalem. Hallelujah” (Psalms 135:21).

The Gemara asks: And let them also say the third verse that appears right after the first two blessings: “The Lord shall bless you out of Zion” (Psalms 134:3), as it is written in that same matter. Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, says: Since they began with blessings of the Holy One, Blessed be He, they must end with a blessing of the Holy One, Blessed be He, rather than reciting this verse, which is a blessing for the Jewish people.

The Gemara asks: When the priests ascend to recite the Priestly Benediction during the afternoon prayer of a fast day, what do the people say? Rav Aḥa bar Ya'akov said: They say: “Though our iniquities testify against us, O Lord, work for Your name's sake” (Jeremiah 14:7), “The Hope of Israel, its savior in times of trouble, why should You be a stranger in the land and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night?” (Jeremiah 14:8), and “Why should You be like a man overcome, as a mighty man who cannot save? Yet You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and Your name is called upon us; leave us not” (Jeremiah 14:9).

BACKGROUND

עד שִׁינָטֵל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה – Until the Torah scroll has been taken – It seems from several discussions in the Gemara that often-times, and especially in villages, the synagogue was located at a significant distance from the city. In these cases, the Torah scroll was not kept in the synagogue's ark. Rather, for security, it was kept in a specially designated, closed room somewhat

near the synagogue. Perhaps this was necessary because the synagogue was often kept open, with people coming in and out of it throughout the day, or because it was also used as a house of study or a school for children. Therefore, there was concern that someone would enter and steal the Torah scroll.

וְאָמַר רַבִּי תַנְחוּם אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי: אֵין הַעֲבוּר רִשְׁאִין לְצֵאת עַד שִׁינָטֵל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה וְיַנִּיחַ בְּמִקְוָמוֹ; וּשְׂמוּאֵל אָמַר: עַד שִׁינָצֵא.

וְלֵאמֹר פְּלִיגִי: הָא דְאִיכָא פִּיתְחָא אַחֲרֵינָא, הָא דְלִיכָא פִּיתְחָא אַחֲרֵינָא. אָמַר רַבָּא, בַּר אֵהִינָא אֶסְבְּרָה לִי: “אַחֲרֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם תֵּלְכוּ”.

בְּזִמְן שֶׁהַכֹּהֲנִים מְבָרְכִים אֶת הָעָם, מַה הֵן אוֹמְרִים? אָמַר רַבִּי זִירָא אָמַר רַב חֲסֵדָא: “בְּרַכּוּ ה' מְלֹאכֵינוּ גְבֻרֵי כֹחַ וְגו', בְּרַכּוּ ה' כָּל צְבָאֵינוּ מִשְׁרֵתֵינוּ עוֹשֵׂי רְצוֹנוֹ, בְּרַכּוּ ה' כָּל מַעֲשָׂיו בְּכָל מְקוֹמוֹת מְמִשְׁלֹתוֹ בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֶת ה'”.

בְּמוֹסְפֵי דְשַׁבְּתָא מַה הֵן אוֹמְרִים? אָמַר רַבִּי אֲסִי: “שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת הִנֵּה בְּרַכּוּ אֶת ה' כָּל עַבְדֵי ה' וְגו', “שְׂאוּ יְדֵיכֶם קִדְשׁ וּבְרַכּוּ אֶת ה'”, “בְּרוּךְ ה' מִצִּיּוֹן שׁוֹכֵן יְרוּשָׁלַם הַלְלוּהָ”.

וְלִימָא נְמִי: “וּבְרַכֵּךְ ה' מִצִּיּוֹן”, דְכָתִיב בְּהָהוּא עֲנִינָא! אָמַר יְהוּדָה בְּרִיהַ דְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן פִּזִי: מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁהַתְּחִיל בְּבְרֻכּוֹתָיו שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, מִסִּיּים בְּבְרֻכּוֹתָיו שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

בְּמִנְחָתָא דְתַעֲנִיתָא מַאי אָמְרִי? אָמַר רַב אֲחָא בְרִי יַעֲקֹב: “אִם עֲוִינוּ עָנּוּ בְנוּ ה' עֲשֵׂה לָמַעַן שְׂמִיךְ”, “מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעוֹ בְּעַת צָרָה לָמָּה תִהְיֶה כְּגֵר בְּאַרְצֶךָ” וְגו', “לָמָּה תִהְיֶה כְּאִישׁ נִדְהָם כְּגַבּוֹר לֹא יוּכַל לְהוֹשִׁיעַ” וְגו'.