

## הוצאת התורה THE HISTORY OF

Tracing the history of הוצאת התורה leaves many unanswered questions. Some questions concern the layout of ancient synagogues. Where was the ספר תורה situated when it was removed for קריאת התורה? Where was the ספר תורה taken to be read? Some questions concern the service. What was recited as the תורה was carried? Did the congregation sit or stand? The גמרא refers to a תיבה and not to an ארון קודש. Do the two terms describe the same object? סדר רב עמרם גאון provides little guidance because he refers to both an ארון and to a תיבה. He does not describe where the שליח ציבור took the ספר תורה nor does he indicate whether the congregation stood or remained seated:

סדר רב עמרם גאון סדר שני וחמישי ד"ה ופותחין הארון-ופותחין הארון ואומר כי גדול אתה ועושה נפלאות אתה א-להים לבדך. אחד א-להינו גדול אדונינו קדוש ונורא שמו. ונוטל ספר תורה מן התיבה ואומר גדלו לה' אתי ונרוממה שמו יחדו. ועונין הצבור: רוממו ה' א-להינו והשתחוו להר קדשו כי קדוש ה' א-להינו. ה' הושיעה המלך יעננו ביום קראנו. ואומר שליח צבור: כי שם ה' אקרא הבו גדל לא-להינו. יהי שם ה' מבורך מעתה ועד עולם. ממזרח שמש ועד מבואו מהולל שם ה'. מהולל אקרא ה' ומאויבי אושע. ויאמר: מסוף העולם ועד סופו ה' א-להינו א-להי ישראל מלך, ומלכותו בכל משלה. הוא ימלוך עלינו לעולם, ואמרו כל העם אמן. הכל הבו גודל לאלהינו ותנו כבוד לתורה. כהן קרב, כהן פלוני בר פלוני הכהן. ואם אין שם כהן אומר: ישראל קרב, ישראל. ועונין הצבור. תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש. עדות ה' נאמנה מחכימת פתי. פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב. מצות ה' ברה מאירת עינים. ה' אחד א-להים לישראל. ה' עז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום.

The מחזור ויטרי is equally inconclusive:

מחזור ויטרי סימן צג' ד"ה בשיני ובחמישי-ופותח התיבה ונוטל ספר תורה. ואומר פסוק זה ויש בו ו' תיבות כנגד ו' צעדים שצעדו נושאי ארון ברית י-י שנאמר: ויהי כי צעדו נושאי ארון י-י ששה צעדים ויזבח שור ומריא. כך מצינו: גדלו לי-י אתי ונרוממה שמו יחדיו: ועונין הציבור שני מקראות הללו: רוממו י-י א-להינו והשתחוו להר קדשו כי קדוש י-י א-להינו. ונושא ס"ת על מגדל עין העשוי לכך. ומגלה ס"ת ואומר: תגלה ותראה מלכותו עלינו במהרה ובזמן קרוב וירחם פליטתינו ופליטת כל עמו בית ישראל לחן לחסד ולרחמים ואמרו כל העם אמן. ופותח ס"ת ואומר: הכל הבו גודל לא-להינו ותנו כבוד לתורה כהן קרב עמוד ר' פלוני בר' פלוני הכהן. ואם אין שם כהן אומר: אין כהן, ישראל קרב עמוד ר' פלוני בר' פלוני במקום כהן. והציבור עונין: ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל בקדושתו: תורת י-י תמימה משיבת נפש עדות י-י נאמנה מחכימת פתי פיקודי י-י ישרים משמחי לב מצות י-י

ברה מאירת עינים: י-י עוז לעמו יתן י-י יברך את עמו בשלום: הא-ל תמים דרכו אמרת י-י צרופה מגן הוא לכל החוסים בו: אורך ימים בימינה בשמאלה עושר וכבוד: דרכיה דרכי נועם וכל נתיבותיה שלום: עץ חיים למחזיקים בה ותומכיה מאושר: ואומר כי בי ירבו ימך ויוסיפו לך שנות חיים: ואתם הדביקים בי-י א-להיכם חיים כולכם היום: וקורא כהן . . .

The *מחזור ויטרי* does provide some additional details. The *ספר תורה* was kept in a *תיבה*. The *ספר תורה* was then removed from the *תיבה* and carried to a *מגדל עץ העשוי לכך*; a wooden platform made for that purpose. The *ספר תורה* was then revealed: *ומגלה ס"ת* and the congregation responded by reciting verses. The *ספר תורה* was then opened; *הכל הבו גודל לא-להינו ותנו כבוד*. The following was then recited: *ופותח ס"ת ואומר*. The *מחזור ויטרי* does not disclose whether the congregation sat or stood during this ceremony. If both the *תיבה* and the *מגדל עץ* were in an area separate from the congregation, the congregation would not need to stand: *שולחן ערוך יורה דעה סימן רמב' סעיף יח'-אם קראו לרבו לקרות בתורה בצבור, אינו צריך לעמוד כל זמן שרבו עומד. הגה: וכן כשהרב עומד למעלה בבית, והתלמיד על הקרקע, אין צריך לעמוד לפניו. אפילו כשהספר תורה על הבימה, אין צבור שבבהכ"נ צריכים לעמוד, דהספר ברשות אחרת (ב"י בשם תשובת הרשב"א).*

It is only when the *ספר תורה* is moving through the congregation that the congregation must stand:

*שולחן ערוך יורה דעה סימן רפב סעיף ב-הרואה ספר תורה כשהוא מהלך, חייב לעמוד לפניו, ויהיו הכל עומדים עד שיעמוד זה שמוליכו ויגיענו למקומו, או עד שיתכסה מעיניהם.*

Adding to the uncertainty is the following:

*ספר החילוקים בין בני מזרח ומערב סימן מט'-אנשי מזרח מכבדין את התורה בכניסה, ובני ארץ ישראל בכניסה ויציאה, כתורה וכהלכה, שנאמר: ויפתח עזרא הספר לעיני כל העם וכפתחו עמדו כל העם (נחמיה ח', ה').*

Professor Mordechai Margulies in his book on *ספר החילוקים בין בני מזרח ומערב* defines the term: *מכבדין את התורה* as "standing." In *ארץ ישראל* it was the custom to stand both when the *ספר תורה* was removed from the *ארון* and when it was replaced, based on the words in the verse: *וכפתחו עמדו כל העם*. In *בבל* the *פסוק* was interpreted differently: *תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף לט' עמ' א'-אמר רבא בר רב הונא: כיון שנפתח ספר תורה, אסור לספר אפילו בדבר הלכה, שנאמר: (נחמיה ח', ה') וכפתחו עמדו כל העם, ואין עמידה אלא שתיקה, שנאמר: (איוב לב) והוחלתי כי לא ידברו כי עמדו לא ענו עוד. ר' זירא אמר רב חסדא, מהכא: (נחמיה ח) ואזני כל העם אל ספר התורה.*

We will close with a question for Professor Margulies. Given his interpretation, why in *בבל* did the congregation stand when the *ספר התורה* was returned to the *ארון*?

## TRANSLATION OF SOURCES

ן-They open the Oron and say: Ki Gadol Ata . . . Echad Elokeinu . . . He takes the Torah scroll from within the Oron and says: Gadlu La'Ashem Iti . . . and the congregation answers: Romimu Hashem Elokeinu . . . Hashem Hoshi'Ah Ha'Melech . . . And the Prayer Leader says: Ki Shem Hashem . . . Yihei Shem Hashem Mivorach . . . Mi'Mizrach Shemesh V'Ad . . . Mihullal Ekra La'Shem . . . and he says: Mi'Sof Ha'Olam V'Ad . . . Hu Yimloch Aleinu . . . Ha'Kol Havu Godel . . . Kohan Krav . . . If there is no Kohain present, he calls out: Yisroel come, Yisroel. The congregation responds: Toras Hashem Temimia . . . Eidus Hashem Ne'Emana . . . Pikudei Hashem Yisharim . . . Miztvas Hashem Barah . . . Hashem Echad Elokim . . . Hashem Oz L'Amo . . .

-He opens the Ark and removes the Sefer Torah. He then says the following verse. The verse contains six words to commemorate the six steps taken by those who were carrying the Tabernacle of G-d as it is written: And as the carriers of the Tabernacle finished walking six steps, they brought sacrifices of bulls and fat cows (Shmuel 2, 6, 13). The verse containing six words is the following: Gadlu L'Ashem Iti . . .and the congregation answers with the following two verses: Romimu Hashem Elokeinu . . . He then carries the Sefer Torah on a wood platform made for that purpose. He then reveals the Sefer Torah and says: S'Galeh V'Sai'Ra'Eh Malchuso . . . He then opens the Sefer Torah and says: Ha'Kol Havu Godel . . . Kohain Krav . . . and if no Kohain is present he says: Ain Kohain, Krav Amod, Rav Ploni . . . The congregation answers: Baruch Sh'Nasan Torah . . . Toras Hashem Temima . . . Hashem Oz L'Amo . . . Ha'Ail Tamimim Darko . . . Orech Yamim B'Yimino . . . Dra'Checha Darchei No'Am . . . Eitz Chaim La'Machazikim Bah . . .V'Omer Ki Bi . . . V'Atem Hadbeikim B'Ashem . . . and Calls: Kohain.

-If a person's teacher is called for an aliya, he does not have to stand for as long as his teacher stands. Ramah: The same rule applies if the teacher is standing on an upper level and the student is on the ground floor, the student does not have to stand while the teacher is standing. Even when a Sefer Torah is on the Bimah, the congregation in the synagogue is not required to stand because the Sefer Torah is in its own area.

-If one sees a Sefer Torah that is being transported, one must stand opposite it. All should remain standing until it is no longer being transported and until it reaches its destination or until it is no longer visible to him.

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'מט' ספר החילוקים בין בני מזרח ומערב סימן מט' -The people living in Babylonia honor the Torah when it is being returned to its place. The people living in Israel honor the Torah when it is being returned to its place and when it is removed from its place. They do so following the Torah and Halacha, as it is written: Ezra opened the Torah Scroll in front of the Jewish people. As he opened it, those who were congregated stood.

'א' תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף למ' עמ' א' -Rava son of Rav Huna said: Once a Sefer Torah is opened, it is not permitted to speak, even matters of Halacha as it is written: (Nehemia 8, 5) As he opened the Sefer Torah, the people stood. The word: stood in that context means: were silent, as it is written: (Job 32, 16) And shall I wait because they do not speak, because they stand there and answer no more. Rav Zeira said in the name of Rav Chisdah, said: from here: (Nehemiah 8) the ears of all the people were focused on the Sefer Torah.

## SUPPLEMENT

### The Furnishing of the Synagogue

*An Excerpt from Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History by Ismar Elbogen  
pages 359-362*

#### § 50 The Furnishing of the Synagogue

(1) The inner furnishings of the synagogue were at first very simple, consisting only of a single object: the shrine containing the Torah scrolls. Like Noah's ark, this is called **תיבה** ( M. Ta. 2:1, Meg. 3:1), more fully **תיבה של ספרים** ( T. Yad. 2:12), Aramaic **תיבותא** (Y. Ber. 5:4, 9c), Greek **βιβλιοθήκη** ( LXX Gen. 6:14). The ark was made of wood; when it wore out, a new one was built out of the undamaged remains ( *B. Meg. 26b*). It was portable, and was carried out to the marketplace for prayer assemblies on fast days ( M. Ta. 2:1). It probably stood in place in the synagogues only during the service, and at other times behind a curtain in a side room. The most ancient synagogues did not have a "sanctuary," but the direction of prayer was determined by the place where the ark stood. The precentor stood before it (§53), and the biblical scrolls lay on it when being read. The word **תיבה** later came to mean the place where the precentor stood, but it continued long in use as the term for the shrine, especially in Babylonia. Thus we find it in Amram, and from there it was taken over into *Vitry*. [353] In the Tosefta ( Meg. 4:21), the place where the Scriptures are kept is called **קדש**, "Sanctuary." It may be that this term already denotes the niche in the wall known in the church as *apse* and in the mosque as *mibrab*, and which is found in the ruins of Khorazin and Hammam-Lif. Or perhaps **קדש** is merely short for **ארון הקדש**, as the ark is called to this day. **ארון** is the biblical name for the ark of the covenant; hence, in popular usage, the ark was called **ארנא**. At the end of the second century the use of this designation was declared a capital sin ( *B. Shab. 32a*), but this did not prevent the Palestinian Talmud from regularly calling the ark **ארונא** (without qualification). The expression **ארון** continued in later usage among Italian, French, and German Jews, to some extent alongside **תיבה**, while among Spanish and Oriental Jews the usual word was **היכל**, which in the Solomonic Temple designated the sanctuary.

In the oldest Roman synagogues of Germany, the ark was still in the form of a niche built into the wall. Because the Torah scrolls were damaged by the moistness of the walls, wooden boxes were introduced, and these came to be so customary that by 1200 the ark

built into the wall was no longer known. Later the ark was also made of marble. The "Holy Ark" stood by the wall facing Jerusalem and it determined the orientation of the synagogue. But in some synagogues in the East -- for example, in Constantinople -- the ark was set on the south or north side, and therefore the eastward orientation was not adhered to even during prayer. Later, the emigre rabbis from Spain decided to place the precentor's desk on the eastern side, so that the congregation no longer faced the ark during prayer. In general, however, the ark continued to stand on the eastern side, and only in modern times can a few rare exceptions be cited.

The ark was, according to the Talmud, sheltered by a baldachin (כילה, *Y. Meg. 3:1, 73d*) or a curtain (פריסא *B. Meg. 26b*); the latter was taken down and used as a mat under the scroll when it was laid on the reading desk (לווחין *Y. Meg. 3:1, 73d* or לווחות, *B. Meg. 32a*). The ark was elevated, so that one had to ascend to it by a few steps; the Zohar even saw to it that their number was stipulated. The greatest care was expended on the architectural execution of the ark from earliest times. On some ancient glass vessels and in Roman catacombs one may see depictions of an ark with additional decorations and the doors standing open, with the interior divided by boards into compartments in which the scrolls lie. Sometimes only some of the compartments were used for biblical texts, while the other spaces were used for other things. Already in antiquity arks with figurative decorations can be found, flanked by doves bearing olive branches, or by lions; the decorative use of lions was long-lived. Even later the ark was the most highly decorated furnishing of the synagogue. Even in simple buildings, arks outstanding in their artistic execution are found. In famous buildings, like the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam or the synagogue of Florence, masterworks of architecture or cabinet-making were fashioned (see the illustrations in *J.E. 2:110f.*). For the decoration of the Holy Ark, some typical characteristics emerged. As a rule the upper part shows the two tablets of the Law, which, however, is not attested before the seventeenth century. The ark itself is covered with a curtain (פרכת), which in Ashkenazic congregations is found in front of the doors, and in Sephardic congregations, behind them. The curtains are artistically woven and embroidered, often with figurative representations, especially of lions. The permissibility of these gave rise to frequent halakhic discussion and debate.

**(2)** In the ark are found the Holy Scriptures. In ancient times, this meant scrolls of the Torah and Prophets, later of Torah scrolls alone. The Torah must be complete. In antiquity it was permitted to read even from a defective copy, but later this was prohibited as an inducement to the congregation to expedite the restoration of scrolls destroyed by violence or damaged through use. In antiquity the scrolls were wrapped in cloths (מטפהות) and placed in a bag (ziw); the cloths were often colorful ones, decorated with little bells. On the Joy of the Torah, it was customary to dress the Torah splendidly and to deck it out like a bride. In Babylonia crowns of gold, silver, or myrtle leaves were set on the scrolls, while in Spain and southern France they were adorned with elegant veils and women's ornaments. From these gradually developed the dressing of the Torah in decorative pieces (כלי קדש),

which is encountered with minor variations everywhere since the Middle Ages [in Ashkenazic congregations]. Both ends of the Torah scrolls are attached to wooden columns (עץ היים) on which they may be rolled; the scroll is bound with a strip of cloth or wimple (מפה), and covered with a mantle (מעיל). On the mantle a breastplate (טס) is hung by a chain, after the manner of the breastplate of the high priest; it is usually adorned with figurative decorations and the tablets of the Law. Also hung on the scroll is a hand with outstretched index finger used to indicate the place to be read. On top of the wooden columns gleams a crown (כתר, עטרה) or a pair of pomegranates, which are mentioned in the Bible as decoration for the garments of the high priest. (תפוחים. also רמונים). Not always are all the Torah's adornments used, but they are graduated according to the solemnity of the day; most congregations possess Torah ornaments in simpler and more costly versions to distinguish between weekdays, Sabbath, and festivals. The manner of their execution depends on the available means and taste. The good will to engage the best craftsmen for this work was never lacking. Since attention has again been drawn to these antique ritual objects, outstanding artistic productions have come to light.

(3) The ancient basilica ended in an elevated platform on which the judges sat. This is reproduced in the ancient synagogue as well, for to the ark is attached a platform, called בימה. In the Mishnah, בימה: denotes the elevated platform that, for example, was erected for the king, when he would read Deuteronomy to the assembled people at the end of the Sabbatical year ( M. Sota 7:7); the Greek word corresponds to the Hebrew מגדל, from which Ezra read the book of the Torah ( Neh. 8:4). In the middle of the unusually big basilica in Alexandria there was a dais of this kind, from which the sexton signaled the congregation. This was why in many synagogues the dais for the reading of Scripture and the sermon was built in the middle. Maimonides, in fact, declares it a religious obligation to erect such a dais in the middle of the synagogue.

Others used the biblical מגדל for the place at which the reading was held, while yet others used the term employed in the Temple, דוכן; in each place a different term was used based on biblical or talmudic authority. In China the dais was called "the seat of Moses," for which the midrash offers the analogous קתדרת דמשה. For a German translation, Jacob Weil (ca. 1400) chose the church term altar (עלטאר). But the most widespread term, which is found already in Rashi's Talmud commentary, is *almemor* (*almemar*), a garbled form of the Arabic *al-minbar*, the speaker's platform in a mosque. On the dais there must be a table or desk for reading the Torah; this is called most simply שלהן or בסא, but often also תיבה. This last term was used with so many different meanings that scholars have difficulty distinguishing them; terminology fluctuated because synagogue construction varied. In the course of time we find several arrangements of the dais. The dais and precentor's desk may be separate, with the desk next to the steps leading up to the ark, and the dais next to the ark or in the middle of the room. Or they may be joined, with either both of them right next to the ark, or with the precentor's desk and the reading table in the middle of the

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room. The position in the center was especially appropriate when the synagogue was large or consisted of several adjoining spaces, for then the precentor could be heard in every direction. Joseph Caro knew from his own experience of numerous synagogues in which the dais was not in the center but at one end; he considered this very practical for smaller rooms, and therefore avoided setting a rule for this matter in the *Shulhan 'arukh*. His glossator Moses Iserles, however, added Maimonides' precept verbatim; therefore, in Germany and Poland it was universally seen as a religious duty to erect an almemor in the middle of the synagogue for the reading of the Torah and for the recitation of certain prayers.

For the eye, the almemor was and still is the cynosure of the synagogue. They were usually made with high craftsmanship, often out of precious materials. Already in antiquity the use of marble for this purpose is reported. Furthermore, the solemn procession from the ark to the almemor and back was a thrilling sight. On the other hand, the erection of the almemor also caused certain intolerable problems. The dais occupied a great deal of room, preventing those whose place was behind it from seeing and hearing. In order to eliminate both problems, most modern synagogues have no almemor in the middle; thus, more room for seating is available for worshipers, and everyone has an unobstructed view of the precentor's desk and the ark. The new arrangement came up against considerable opposition, and had to be justified by numerous rabbinical opinions, but in view of its practicality it has come in nearly everywhere. In America, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, synagogues are only rarely built with the almemor in the middle, but rather the dais is placed directly before the steps leading up to the ark. On it stand the precentor's desk (also called עמוד) and the reader's table, with the former facing the ark and the latter, the congregation. In a few rare exceptional cases these are the same. Another furnishing of the dais, since ancient times, is a chair (כסא) or bench on which the person sits who holds the Torah while it is being rolled and awaiting its return to the ark. In ancient times the sermon was delivered from the dais, and in the Greek synagogues the speaker used a special platform; in recent times the platform is situated directly before the ark or, in individual cases, on a pillar by one of the side walls.