

The Blessings for Public Reading of the Torah

The reading of the Torah is considered the high point of the Shabbat morning worship service. The doors of the ark open, and all eyes are fixed on the scrolls. The Torah is taken from the ark and carried through the sanctuary in a circuit called a *hakafah*. It is traditional, as a sign of respect, never to turn one's back to the Torah. As the scroll is processed around the sanctuary, the worshippers continually turn to face it.

The Torah then is placed on the reader's desk and opened up to the *parashah*, the section to be read for that Shabbat. Individuals are given the honor of an *aliyah* (literally going up) to bless the Torah. This "going up" has been compared to Moses going up to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah and to bring it down to the people. So it is on each Shabbat, this "going up to get the Torah" is reenacted in our sanctuaries. The person who has an *aliyah* is called an *oleh* (masculine) or an *olah* (feminine). A blessing is recited before and after the reading of each section of the *parashah*. These blessings thank God for giving Torah to the Jewish people.

The first line of the blessing is read or chanted by the *oleh/olah*:

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ.

Bar'chu et Adonai ham'vorach.
Praise Adonai, to whom our praise is due!

The congregation then responds:

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam va-ed.
Praised be Adonai, to whom our praise is due, now and forever!

The *oleh/olah* repeats the line:

בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam va-ed.
Praised be Adonai, to whom our praise is due, now and forever!

And then concludes with:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים
וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher bachar banu mikol ha-amim v'natan lanu et Torah'to. Baruch atah Adonai noten haTorah.

Blessed is Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has chosen us from all peoples by giving us the Torah. Blessed is Adonai, Giver of the Torah.

The section of the Torah is then read.

After the reading, the *oleh/olah* reads or chants:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,
וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נִטַּע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher natan lanu torat emet v'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu. Baruch atah Adonai, noten haTorah.

Blessed is Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us a teaching of truth, implanting within us eternal life. Blessed is Adonai, Giver of the Torah.