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Septennial (Shmita - שמיטה) Torah Cycle

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“The object of the whole Torah is that man should become a Torah himself.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

“Every living soul is a letter of the Torah, wherefore all souls taken together make up the Torah.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

# Introduction

If you are looking for a chart of the triennial readings, go here: <https://www.betemunah.org/tishri83.html>

The Triennial Torah cycle is a miraculous way of reading the Torah, in three and a half year, that provides a *prophetic* insight into the events that will happen during the week that it is read!

The Septennial (Shmita) Torah cycle is two, three and a half year periods. This seven year Torah reading schedule matches the Sabbatical cycle described in the Torah.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In this study I would like to examine the organization and the rules for the Shmita Torah reading cycle. The Hebrew word Shmita - שמיטה, literally *release*, is normally translated as *Sabbatical*. The Shmita, aka[[4]](#footnote-4) Sabbatical, cycle is a cycle of seven years, which HaShem commanded His people to observe.[[5]](#footnote-5) Additionally, I would like to examine the relationship between the Shmita cycle for maaser[[6]](#footnote-6) and release as it is reflected in the ancient synagogue Torah reading cycle.

Hakham Dr. Yosef ben Haggai, my beloved teacher, and I have been researching and studying the triennial Torah cycle for many years. Much of the detail of this study was learned from His Eminence or worked out in many study sessions. I am deeply indebted to my teacher for his piercing insights.

Every Sabbath, Jews all over the world will read a portion of the Torah and the Prophets as part of the normal synagogue service. Today, most Orthodox synagogues read a portion of the Torah, usually around five chapters, from a lectionary known as the Annual Torah reading.

During Temple times, however, most Orthodox Jews read through the Torah twice in seven years. The portion read on Shabbat, for this seven year cycle, is about a chapter in length. I will refer to this seven year Torah cycle as the Septennial[[7]](#footnote-7) cycle. Half of the Septennial cycle has become known as the triennial Torah cycle. **The triennial cycle is three and a half years long.**

As we shall see, the Nazarean Codicil[[8]](#footnote-8), which was written during and shortly after the second Temple, followed the ancient synagogue Torah reading cycle known as the Septennial cycle or Triennial cycle[[9]](#footnote-9). Thus, all of the Torah reference in the Nazarean Codicil have reference only to the Septennial cycle.

An interesting feature of the Septennial cycle is that it tends to put the Torah in chronological order. We will explore some of these chronological connections later in this paper.

**When do we start the Septennial Torah cycle?**

The three and a half year triennial cycle has a built-in way to determine what year we begin the cycle and therefore we can know for certain where in the cycle we are supposed to be, in any given year. We know this because two triennial (a septennial cycle) cycles exactly fit into one Sabbatical cycle (Shmita) of seven years, and the Torah reading cycle is always synchronized with the Sabbatical cycle.[[10]](#footnote-10)

To understand when the Septennial cycle begins, we need to first understand how to calculate when the Shmita, or Sabbatical, year begins. The Gaonim[[11]](#footnote-11) had a tradition of how the count of the Shmita was actually practiced. According to the Gaonim, any Anno Mundi[[12]](#footnote-12) year that is evenly divisible by seven, is a Shmita year. Thus Jews in Eretz Israel, the land of Israel, will observe certain agricultural restrictions during a Shmita year.

Let me use an example to illustrate how we calculate the start of a Shmita year:

The year **5768 A.M.** (2006-2007) was a Shmita year, according to the Gaonim,[[13]](#footnote-13) the Ran,[[14]](#footnote-14) and that of Tosafot.[[15]](#footnote-15) 5768 is evenly divisible by seven (5768 / 7 = 824 with no remainder), which gives us a quick and easy way to calculate the Shmita year. This is a halachic matter and the Rama,[[16]](#footnote-16) in Shulchan Aruch,[[17]](#footnote-17) rules like the Gaonim. Since the septennial cycle starts when the Shmita (Sabbatical) cycle starts, we know that the reading of the Torah, according to the septennial cycle, must start in Tishri 5769, as 5768 (5768 / 7 = 824 – a whole number with no remainder) was a Sabbatical year.

*Thus all Jewish calendar years[[18]](#footnote-18) which are evenly divisible by seven, are Shmita, or Sabbatical years*.

Our Sages teach us that we start the Tishri cycle on Simchat Torah and we start the Nisan cycle just before Pesach. Thus, once in seven years we finish with our brothers who follow the Annual cycle.

In Devarim (Deuteronomy) 31:9-13, we read about HaShem’s command, to His people, to observe a special time at the end of a Shmita cycle. This special time is used to read the Torah and is called Hakhel.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Thus we can see that the Shmita year has a calculated beginning which corresponds with the start of the reading of the Torah. It also has a defined ending that is demarcated by another special reading of the Torah by the King of Israel.

This coincides with the statement of Sefer Yetzirah, "the end is enwedged in the beginning."

***Sefer Yitzirah 3:1*** *Ten* ***Sefirot*** *out of nothing. Stop your mouth from speaking, stop your heart from thinking, and if your heart runs (to think) return to a place of which it is said "they ran and returned"; and concerning this thing the covenant was made; and they are ten in extent beyond limit. Their end is infused with their beginning, and their beginning with their end like a flame attached to a glowing ember. Know, think [reflect, meditate] and imagine that the Creator is One and there is nothing apart from Him, and before One what do you count?*

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 46:10*** *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*

If we start in Tishri, then the Septennial cycle fits exactly into the seven year Shmita (Sabbatical) cycle.

In this study I want to set forth the understanding and rules for the Septennial Torah[[20]](#footnote-20) cycle used in Israel during Temple times. This Torah lectionary resonates with the Shmita cycle. The Shmita year, the Sabbatical year, is each seventh year. The Shmita cycle refers to the seven years that lead up to and including the Shmita year.

This paper will detail the support Chazal,[[21]](#footnote-21) our Sages, bring for the Septennial cycle. I intend to show the relationship between the Septennial Torah lectionary cycle (Triennial Torah lectionary cycle) and the Shmita, or Sabbatical years, cycle. In order to accomplish this goal, we will also take a look at the Shmita cycle for tithing, slaves, and the land. We will explore the connections between the Shmita and the Septennial Torah cycle (Triennial Torah cycle).

I would also like to explore the relationship between the Septennial lectionary (Triennial lectionary) and the meaning of the number seven.

The Torah tells us that HaShem gave the laws of Shmita to Moshe on Mt. Sinai. Rashi cites the midrash which asks, “Why are the laws of Shmita, specifically, connected to Mt. Sinai?” The midrash answers that this connection was made in order to teach us that just as the laws of Shmita were in all their details were given at Sinai, so, too, were all the laws of the Torah given, with all their details, at Sinai. This shows us one of the connections between the Septennial reading (Triennial reading) of the Torah and the Shmita cycle.

The term: **Triennial Cycle,** applies to a practice of reading through the Torah in three and a half years (minhag Eretz Israel). This was the practice in Israel during Temple times, while the Jews in Babylon read the Torah in one year. This three and a half year reading custom divided the Torah into 157, or more, "sedarim," and correspondingly there were 157 Haftorot – three times the number that are read today in the annual cycle. With time the ancient custom of Eretz Yisrael was forgotten, and it only began to be recalled by individual scholars during the past few generations. The research of this custom was made possible in the wake of the large volume of material discovered in the Cairo Geniza, part of which reflects the custom of Eretz Yisrael from the period when it was still practiced.

Most Jews today read through the Torah is a year. This lectionary is called the annual lectionary cycle.

The **Septennial cycle** is composed of two Triennial cycles. The first Triennial cycle begins in Tishri[[22]](#footnote-22) and ends in Nisan[[23]](#footnote-23). The second Triennial cycle begins in Nisan and ends in Tishri. The Septennial, therefore, starts and ends in Tishri. Through out the rest of this paper we shall refer to these two Triennial cycles as the Tishri cycle and the Nisan cycle. When these two cycles are juxtaposed in a single table we learn a LOT of very interesting connections that Chazal have mentioned. I built such a chart and annotated it to expose some of the connections. This table is awesome! The table is named: Bimodal. I also wrote a paper that documents the bimodality or bifurcation of the year. The first six months of the year have a nearly identical structure to the last six months of the year. This paper is named: Rains.

The months of the year may be counted in two ways: starting from the month of Nisan, or from the month of Tishri. The Nisan year is the service of tzaddikim;[[24]](#footnote-24) the Tishri year is that of the Baalei teshuv.[[25]](#footnote-25) These two countings allude to the Septennial cycle. The Mishna gives us some details about these new years:

***Rosh HaShana 2a*** *MISHNA. THERE ARE FOUR NEW YEARS. ON THE FIRST OF NISAN IS NEW YEAR FOR KINGS AND FOR FESTIVALS. ON THE FIRST OF ELUL IS NEW YEAR FOR THE TITHE OF CATTLE. R. ELEAZAR AND R. SIMEON, HOWEVER, PLACE THIS ON THE FIRST OF TISHRI. ON THE FIRST OF TISHRI IS NEW YEAR FOR YEARS, FOR RELEASE AND JUBILEE YEARS, FOR PLANTATION AND FOR [TITHE OF] VEGETABLES. ON THE FIRST OF SHEBAT IS NEW YEAR FOR TREES, ACCORDING TO THE RULING OF BETH SHAMMAI; BETH HILLEL, HOWEVER, PLACE IT ON THE FIFTEENTH OF THAT MONTH.*

The following details the events of the Tishri new year:

**The Calendar for Gentile Kings**

The First Day of **Tishri** is Rosh HaShanah for the following five matters[[26]](#footnote-26):

1. **For Gentile Kings** - They count their reigns from the first of Tishri, such that even if a King began his reign at the end of Elul, once Nisan began, it would be considered as the second year of his reign.

2. **The Shmita (Sabbatical) cycle and the Yovel (Jubilee) cycle begin** – With the beginning of the month of Tishri in a Shmita or Yovel year, it is forbidden by the Torah to plow or plant in the land of Israel.

3. **Years[[27]](#footnote-27)** – The first of Tishri is regarded as the new year for counting years.

4. **For Planting Trees** – The produce of fruit trees is forbidden as orlah for the first three years after the tree is planted. If a tree is planted more than forty-four days before the first of Tishri, then the first of Tishri marks the beginning of the second year of the tree’s life.

5. **For Produce** – The first of Tishri is regarded as the beginning of the year as regards the separation of Terumot[[28]](#footnote-28) and Ma’asrot[[29]](#footnote-29) from produce.

The Nisan new year has the following associated events:

###### **The** FestivalCalendar **and for** Jewish **Kings**[[30]](#footnote-30)

The First Day of **Nisan** is Rosh HaShanah for the following five matters[[31]](#footnote-31):

1. **Kings of Israel** - They count their reigns from the first of Nisan, such that even if a King began his reign at the end of Adar, once Nisan began, it would be considered as the second year of his reign.

2. **Pilgrim Festivals** - The festival which occurs in Nisan, namely Pesach, is considered the first of the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot, and Succoth. This period is used to complete an oath.

3. **Months** - Nisan is considered the first of the months. The Torah refers to other months as second, third, …, twelfth with reference to Nisan.

4. **Leap Years** - The Court may proclaim a "Leap Year" only until the first of Nisan. Once that date has arrived, the time for "Leaping" has "Leapt".

5. **Donation of Shekalim[[32]](#footnote-32)** - All communal sacrifices brought from this day forward are paid from the Shekalim collected in the **current year**; last year's Shekalim are no longer used for this purpose.

Thus we can see that the Septennial cycle with its two Triennial cycles, mirrors the two major new years of our calendar.

A second allusion to the Septennial cycle found in the calendar is seen in the bi-modality of the months. The axioms, for this bi-modality, is that “Nisan is Like Tishri” and “the fall festivals are like the spring festivals”. So, just as Pesach[[33]](#footnote-33) is seven days in length (in Nisan), so too is Succoth seven days in length (in Tishri). I have written extensively on the bi-modal aspects of the calendar in my study titled: Rains.

Both the Annual and the Septennial Torah lectionaries are interrupted for a special Torah reading for the festivals. The festival lectionary supersedes both the Annual and the Septennial Torah reading cycles. This is a very important concept. Additionally, the Septennial cycle is also interrupted for Rosh Chodesh, the new moon.

# How does the Septennial cycle work?

There are some who interpret references to a Triennial cycle, as meaning *three years*.[[34]](#footnote-34) This presents a few problems. First, it means that there is no way to reconcile the sources which state explicitly that the cycle has a term of three and a half years. Second, it means that there is no way to determine what year of the cycle we are currently in. In other words, *we do not know when to start*, or end, a reading cycle. Third, a strict three year cycle fails to account for the festive nature of Rosh Chodesh. The Septennial cycle resolves these issues. As we shall see, the Septennial cycle has special readings for Rosh Chodesh which preserve its festive nature.

We will review the sources which show a Septennial cycle later in this paper. For now, we will examine how a three and a half year triennial cycle has a built-in way to determine what year we begin the cycle and therefore we can know for certain where in the cycle we are supposed to be, in any given year.

To understand when the Septennial cycle begins, we need to first understand how to calculate when the Shmita, or Sabbatical, year begins. The Gaonim[[35]](#footnote-35) had a tradition of how the count of the Shmita was actually practiced. The Rambam[[36]](#footnote-36), said that even though he did not understand the Gaonim's tradition we must follow it. His lack of understanding should not change halacha. According to the Gaonim, any Anno Mundi (A.M. – the year since the creation of the world) year that is evenly divisible by seven, is a Shmita year. Thus Jews in Eretz Israel, the land of Israel, will observe certain agricultural restrictions during a Shmita year.

The year **5761 A.M.** (2000-2001) was a Shmita year. 5761 is evenly divisible by seven (5761 / 7 = 823 with no remainder), which gives us a quick and easy way to calculate the Shmita year. This is a halachic matter and the Rama in Shulchan Aruch[[37]](#footnote-37), rules like the Gaonim.

Our Sages teach us that we start the Nisan cycle just before Pesach and we start the Tishri cycle on Simchat Torah. Thus, once in seven years we finish with our brothers who follow the Annual cycle:

The chart in appendix “A” is an attempt to understand which month, Nisan or Tishri, should be used to start the Septennial cycle Torah readings. I found that if we start in Nisan, then we overflow the seventh year by six months. Thus we must start the cycle in Tishri. If we start in Tishri, then the Septennial cycle fits exactly into the seven year Shmita cycle.

I have attempted to list an entire Shmita cycle starting with 5762, as 5761 (5761 / 7 = 823 – a whole number with no remainder) was a Sabbatical year. With this in mind, we can see that since we are currently in the year 5765 (2005) we need to begin a second Triennial cycle in Nisan (5762 (Tishri) + 3.5 years = 5766 in Nisan. The Septennial cycle will conclude in Tishri of 5769, at the very beginning of the first year of a Shmita cycle). Thus, the Septennial cycle will conclude in 5769 when we complete the two Triennial cycles of three and a half years.

# Septennial (Triennial) Sources

The reading of portions of the Torah was given to us by Moshe. The Midrash tells us this explicitly.

**Midrash Tanhuma Yelammedenu on Shemot (Exodus)  30:1-38** R. Simeon the son of Lakish, R. Akiba, and R. Simeon the son of Yohai said: His disciples do not permit him to sleep undisturbed in his grave, as it is said: *Moving gently the lips of those that are asleep* (Song 7:10). Hence, *The satiety of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.* Similarly, Moses taught the Torah to the Israelites, trained them in the observance of the Law, arranged the order of the chapters of the Torah, and **assigned the chapters to be read each Sabbath, on Rosh Chodesh, and on the holy days.** And they call him to mind as they read each Torah portion.

While this teaches us that there was a Torah lectionary it does not give us the detail. As we shall see, a critical clue to the detail will be given to us in the Talmud.

The earliest source we have on the Septennial cycle custom is the Nazarean Codicil.[[38]](#footnote-38) According to the narrative in Luqas (Luke) 4:16-21, Yeshua returns to his hometown, Nazareth and, on the Sabbath, he goes to the synagogue where he reads from the Torah. He is then given the Book of Yeshayahu (Isaiah). Yeshua opens the book and reads the passage that begins "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me" (Yeshayahu 61:1). Following the Ashlamata (the Haftara, a reading from the Prophets), he delivers a sermon in which he argues that in that reading, the verse was fulfilled in the ears of the congregants in other words, the prophet's words about a mortal anointed by HaShem are realized in the person of Yeshua. The Ashlamata from Yeshayahu 61:1 is a part of the Septennial cycle but is not a part of the Annual cycle. Thus the Nazarean Codicil speaks to the Septennial cycle, but not to the Annual cycle.

It is unclear, from this passage in Luqas, why the book is opened at this particular passage: Does Yeshua open it at that specific point or does the Chazzan (cantor), who was in charge at the synagogue, deliberately open it at this chapter? Christians often interpret this incident as a miracle whereas Jewish Torah scholars interested in the Jewish tradition of Ashlamatot (plural) will conclude that the reading of a passage from the Prophets after the Torah portion on the Sabbath was an accepted custom in Israel several decades before the destruction of the Second Temple, and that it's thus possible that the custom also existed elsewhere. Similar evidence can be found in II Luqas (Acts) 13:15, where the narrative refers to a Jewish community in Asia Minor.

The Septennial (two Triennial cycles) lectionary cycle is mentioned in the Talmud, in a section dealing with the laws governing the reading of the Torah on Shabbat:

***Megillah 29b*** *… There is a justification for the one who says that ‘When thou takest’ should be read, because he thus makes a difference between this New Moon and other New Moons. But the one who says that ‘Command the children of Israel’ should be read — what difference does he make? — He does make a difference, because on other New Moons six read in the portion of the day and one that of New Moon, whereas on this occasion all read in that of New Moon. This is a good answer for one who says that [when the Mishna says that the ‘REGULAR ORDER’ IS RESUMED it means] ‘the regular order of portions’; but according to the one who says that [what it means is that] the order of haftarahs[[39]](#footnote-39) is resumed [and the order of Pentateuch portions has not been interrupted], what difference is there [between this New Moon and others]? — There is a difference, because on other New Moons, six read in the portion of the day and one the special portion for New Moon, whereas on this occasion three read in the portion of the day and four in that of New Moon.*

*The following was then cited in objection: ‘If it [the New Moon of Adar] falls on the portion next to it [the portion of Shekalim], whether before or after, they read it and repeat it’. Now this creates no difficulty for one who holds that ‘When thou takest’ is read because [the regular portion containing this passage] falls about that time. But according to the one who says that ‘My food which is presented to ‘me’ is read — does [the portion containing that passage] fall about that time? —* ***Yes, for the people of Palestine, who complete the reading of the Pentateuch in three years.***

A very important but relatively unknown Gaonic work called ספר החילוקים בין אנשי מזרח ובני ארץ ישראל – The book that records difference in customs between Bavel and Eretz Yisrael, this three and a half year cycle is once again reported:

*The inhabitants of Babylonia observe Simchat Torah annually…The inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael celebrate Simchat Torah only every three and a half years…*[[40]](#footnote-40).

According to the Mishna[[41]](#footnote-41) the first portion of Bereshit (Genesis) was Bereshit 1:1 - 2:3. (This matches the Septennial cycle, but does not match the annual cycle)

But in a composition from the period of the Gaonim we read that there are differences between how the Easterners, from Babylonia, read the Torah and how the people of the land of Israel read the Torah. We find a slightly different testimony concerning the custom prevalent in the land of Israel[[42]](#footnote-42), in the work, "Chiluf Minhagim Bein Benei Eretz Israel U-vein Benei Bavel":

*"The easterners (communities of Babylonia) celebrate Simchat Torah every year, while the communities of Eretz**Israel celebrate it once in THREE AND A HALF YEARS."*

*The communities of Babylonia observe Simchat Torah each year on Succoth, and the communities of Israel celebrate Simchat Torah only once every three-and-a-half years.*

As late as 1170 CE we have reports that Jews in Egypt were still using the Septennial cycle having been forced out of Israel by the first crusade. Most of our Septennial cycle knowledge comes from Egypt which was the last major bastion of the Septennial cycle. Binyamin of Tudela penned the following words in his book *Itinerary:*

*There [in Cairo] were two synagogues, one for those from Israel and one for those from Babylonia… They observed different customs with regard to the reading of the portions in the Torah. The communities from Babylonia read a portion each week, as they do in Spain, thus completing the Torah each year. But the communities of Israel do not follow this practice. Rather, they divide each portion into three sections and finish the Torah every three years. There is among them a custom to join all together and pray on the day of Simchat Torah and on the day of Matan Torah.*

The Rambam[[43]](#footnote-43) briefly mentions the Septennial cycle in *Mishneh Torah Hilchot Tefilah[[44]](#footnote-44)* 13:1-5.

The Jewish Encyclopedia, under the heading “Triennial Cycle”, speaks about the number of sedarim:

*“The Masoretic divisions known as "sedarim" and variously indicated in the text, number 154 in the Pentateuch, [[45]](#footnote-45) and probably correspond, therefore, to the Sabbath lessons of the triennial system, as was first surmised by Rapoport ("Halikot Ḳedem," p. 11). The number varies, however, so that Menahem Me'iri reckoned 161 divisions, corresponding to the greatest number of Sabbaths possible in three years; the Yemen grammars and scrolls of the Pentateuch enumerate 167 and the tractate Soferim (xvi. 10) gives the number as 175 (comp. Yer. Shab. i. 1). It is possible that this last division corresponds to a further development by which the whole of the Pentateuch was read twice in seven years, or once in three and a half years.”*

Thus we see that the cycle followed in the land of Israel was to complete the Torah twice in each *Shmita* cycle (a Sabbatical cycle, a period of seven years) and therefore the cycle actually took seven years.

Piyutim[[46]](#footnote-46) – Liturgical Poetry

The classical payatanim wrote their compositions according to the Triennial cycle of Torah reading. “The first piyutim are followed by verse chains of which the first citation indicates the first and second verses of the Torah lection and the first verse of the Prophet reading respectively. Allusions to these verses are very often made by transitional words in the last lines of the closing strophes”[[47]](#footnote-47).

Midrashic[[48]](#footnote-48) Texts

The Septennial Torah reading model is also used by the various homiletical midrashim. This is particularly evident in the Tanchuma Yelamdenu and Vayikra Rabbah. These midrashim are organized according to the sedarim of the Septennial Torah cycle, and typically comment on the first verse of each sedra.[[49]](#footnote-49)

The Midrash Vayikra Rabbah consists mainly of a collection of homiletics surrounding the book of Vayikra (Leviticus). In all the Midrashim that preceded Vayikra Rabbah (such as the Mechilta[[50]](#footnote-50) on the book of Shemot or Midrash Bereshit Rabbah) homiletic writings were collected according to the verses of the biblical book, verse after verse, but this task was impossible with respect to the book of Vayikra, which is filled with laws and statutes, which leads to a dry and pointed involvement with matters of ritual law: forbidden foods, issues of sexual prohibitions, lists of festivals and other related issues. The editor solved this problem by dealing only with certain selected verses from the book of Vayikra based on the Triennial cycle.

The editor wrote down the verses at which it was customary to begin on the various Sabbaths the units of the book of Vayikra and around these verses he built his work, in which he dedicates to each verse a long and comprehensive discussion on a topic that arises from it. Sometimes the topic can be found explicitly in the language of the verse, such as dealing with wine and inebriation as a result of the verse “do not drink wine and intoxicating beverages”[[51]](#footnote-51), and sometimes the topic is linked indirectly to the verse, such as a discussion of lashon hara,[[52]](#footnote-52) on the verse “this is the law of the leper”[[53]](#footnote-53) by interpreting the Hebrew word for leper as two Hebrew words meaning “brings out bad [language/speaking]”. In the same vein the editor deals with the question of peace (shalom) and its importance when discussing the verse “this will be the law of the shelamim [peace offering]” (chapter 9).

Tanchuma Yelamdenu

The Tanchuma Yelamdenu is a group of Aggadic Midrashim complete or fragmentary, published or still in manuscript, attributed to Rabbi Tanchuma. It is homiletical Midrash, i.e., a Midrash divided according to the old Palestinian division of the reading of the Pentateuch in a Triennial cycle, and containing homiletical explanations *(derashot)* to the first verse (or sometimes to the first two of three verses) of each *sedra* of the triennial cycle. Many of its *sedarim* open with a distinctive halachic poem, using the formula: "*Yelamdenu Rabbenu*, etc...?" "May our teacher instruct us, etc”

On the whole Torah; its homilies often consist of a halachic introduction, followed by several poems, exposition of the opening verses, and the Messianic conclusion.

The Jewish Encyclopedia (Bereshit Rabbah, By : Marcus Jastrow J. Theodor) says:

“The principle of division followed in the parashiyot of the Bereshit Rabbah was evidently that of the Biblical text itself as fixed at the time of the compilation of this Midrash, in accordance with the "open" (Petuchot - פתוחות) and "closed" (Setumot - סתומות) paragraphs of Genesis. There are separate parashiyot, portions, in the Midrash to almost all these sections as they are still found in Genesis, with the exception of the genealogical passages. But there are parashiyot that bear evidences of relation to the pericopes ("sedarim") of the Palestinian triennial cycle, and a careful investigation of these may lead to the discovery of an arrangement of sedarim different from that heretofore known from old registers. However, there are parashiyot, as mentioned above, especially in the beginning of the Midrash, in which only one or a few verses at a time are expounded. The sedarim of the customary one-year cycle are not regarded at all in the divisions of the Bereshit Rabbah, neither are they marked in the best manuscripts or in the *editio princeps* of the Midrash; the parashiyot,[[54]](#footnote-54) therefore, can not be regarded as mere subdivisions of the sedarim, as which they appear in later editions of this Midrash.”

***Midrash Rabbah - Lamentations Prologue XXV*** *R. Jonathan said: Three and a half years3 the Shechinah abode upon the Mount of Olives hoping that Israel would repent, but they did not; while a Bath Kol[[55]](#footnote-55) issued announcing, ’Return, O backsliding children (Jer. III, 14), Return unto Me, and I will return unto you (Mal. III, 7).’ When they did not repent, it said, ’I will go and return to My place (Hos. V, 15).’ Concerning that time it is said, ’Give glory to the Lord your God, before it grow dark’ (Jer. XIII, 16): before it becomes dark to you for lack of words of Torah, before it becomes dark to you for lack of words of prophecy, ’and before your feet stumble upon the mountains of twilight.’ ' And while ye look for light,’ in Babylon, ’He turn it into the shadow of death,’ in Media, ’and make it gross darkness’ in Greece.*

# Tehillim - Psalms

The Septennial Torah cycle is also expounded by Tehillim, the Psalms, as we have written extensively elsewhere. As there are five books of the Torah, so there are five books of Tehillim. As the middle of the Torah is denoted by a large letter, so the middle of Tehillim is denoted by a large letter. There is also a verbal connection between Tehillim and Torah. From this we learn that Tehillim are meant to explain and clarify the Torah.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Psalms** | **Torah** | | **Megillot** |
| Tehillim  1-41 | (Book I) | Bereshit[[56]](#footnote-56) | Shir HaShirim[[57]](#footnote-57) |
| Tehillim  42-72 | (Book II) | Shemot[[58]](#footnote-58) | Ruth |
| Tehillim  73-89 | (Book III) | Vayikra[[59]](#footnote-59) | Eicha[[60]](#footnote-60) |
| Tehillim  90-106 | (Book IV) | Bamidbar[[61]](#footnote-61) | Kohelet[[62]](#footnote-62) |
| Tehillim  107-150 | (Book V) | Devarim[[63]](#footnote-63) | Esther |

Nearly every verse of every Psalm is a description of David’s life. In a sense, the Psalms are an autobiography of King David’s life. Since David was given his seventy year life span from Adam, and since Mashiach is the second Adam, then we understand that the Psalms also speak of Mashiach. Further, Mashiach is called “The Son of David”. This teaches us that the Psalms are, in a way, an unfolding of the life of Mashiach.

# The Shmita Cycle

The Shmita cycle is detailed in the Torah:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:1*** *And HaShem spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto HaShem. 3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;*

*4 But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for HaShem: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. 5 That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land. 6 And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, 7 And for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat.*

We always read the following Torah portion during the days of the counting of the Omer (in the annual cycle and during the first triennial cycle), the period of preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuot. This is no mere coincidence; the acceptance of the duty of observing the laws of *Shmita* is a significant part of this preparation process.

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:1-4*** *God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai saying: 'Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: "When you come in to the land that I give you, the land shall observe a Sabbath day for God..."'*

Rashi is puzzled by the fact that Mount Sinai is identified as the place where the commandment of Shmita was issued. *Shmita is the only Mitzvah of the 613 whose command-instruction is related to a specific venue*, be it Mt. Sinai or any other place. Rashi duly attempts to explain why *Shmita* was so honored. His answer is one of the best known of all Rashi's commentaries on the Chumash:

“What is the relationship between the law of *Shmita* and Mount Sinai? Surely, all of the laws of the Torah were given on Mount Sinai? To teach you that just as the *Shmita* laws were given on Sinai to the last detail, so were the details of the laws of all the commandments.”

Consider that by the end of six years we've accumulated a total of about 312 Shabbats upon which the earth has worked.  Leaving the land fallow for the seventh year, 'gives back' the six years-worth of Shabbats. If we add to that the approximately fifty-two Shabbats of that seventh year we get **312 + 52 = 364**or approximately one complete Sabbatical/**Shmita** year.

# Bi-modality

Chazal, our Sages, have a dispute, recorded in the Gemara, as to whether the world was created in Nisan or in Tishri:

***Rosh HaShana 10b*** *R. Johanan said: Both of them [R. Meir and R. Eleazar] based their views on the same verse, viz., And it came to pass in the one and six hundredth year, in the first month, on the first day of the month. R. Meir reasoned: Seeing that the year was only one day old and it is still called a year, we can conclude that one day in a year is reckoned as a year. What says the other to this? — [He says that] if it were written, ‘In the six hundred and first year’, then it would be as you say. Seeing, however, that it is written, ‘In the one and six hundredth year’, the word ‘year’ refers to ‘six hundred’, and as for the word ‘one’, this means ‘the beginning of one’. And what is R. Eleazar's reason? — Because it is written, ‘In the first month on the first day of the month. Seeing that the month was only one day old and it is yet called ‘month’, we can conclude that one day in a month is reckoned as a month; and since one day in a month is reckoned as a month, thirty days in a year are reckoned as a year, a month being reckoned by its unit and a year by its unit.*

*(We infer from what has just been said that both [R. Meir and R. Eleazar] were of opinion that the world was created in Nisan.)*

*It has been taught: R. Eliezer says: In Tishri the world was created; in Tishri the Patriarchs were born; in Tishri the Patriarchs died; on Passover Isaac was born; on New Year Sarah, Rachel and Hannah were visited; on New Year Joseph went forth from prison*

We know from such disputes that both positions are correct and that we need to study to understand *how* they are correct. In this case, we will see that this dispute is resolved by a proper understanding of the bimodality of the months. As a short way of explaining this dispute; let me say that one is talking about the conception of the world and one is speaking of the actual birth.

From this dispute we can begin to get a glimmer of the fact that the spring and fall are two sides of the same coin. This paper will demonstrate the truth of the bimodality of the months.

Like a sphere with two poles, the Jewish year has two “heads” or primary points of reference, each of which is equally its beginning. Our annual journey through time is actually two journeys: A Tishri-to-Elul journey, and a Nisan-to-Adar journey. Every day on the Jewish calendar can be experienced on two different levels, ***for it simultaneously exists within these two contexts***.

With this background we can begin to understand that when we consider the two triennial (three and a half years) cycles that make up the septennial (seven years) cycle, we must expect that the readings for Tishri in the first year ought to match, week-by-week, the readings for Nisan three and a half years later. Because each month may have a variable number of Sabbaths, we must occasionally double up readings – just to keep them synchronized.

For example, if there are are two regular readings in Adar of the first cycle and four Sabbaths in Elul of the second cycle, then we must read two Torah portions on both of the Sabbaths of Adar, to make a total of four readings, in order to synchronize the readings on a month-by-month basis. In this way we maintain the bi-modal aspects of the two cycles such that ‘Nisan (of the second triennial cycle) is like Tishri (of the first triennial cycle)’.

An interesting effect takes blace when we bi-modally synchronize the two cycles: *We need more readings than the total number of Sabbaths in any three and a half year cycle*. Further, the number of readings required will vary based on how much doubling up of the readings must be done to maintain synchronization. Thus we understand that the 141 - 175 Sedarim found in use in the ancient synagogues were used to maintain the bi-modality of the months.

# Hakhel (Assembly)

Hakhel, the reading from Devarim in the “eighth” year, the day after Succoth in the first year of the new Shmita cycle. This glorious celebration seems to be the focus and purpose of the Septennial Torah cycle according to Prof. Shlomo Naeh:

*The question arises: what is that fixed date when the seven year cycle of reading is meant to conclude? … The cycle of Torah reading taking seven years can have only one explanation, which is clear to us from the mitzva in the Torah, the mitzva of hakhel.*

*The date of Hakhel is after the last day of the festival of Succoth in the eighth year, following the Shmita year. The seven year reading cycle is therefore meant to conclude, like its one year counterpart, on the day after the festival of Succoth: the day of Simchat Torah. Both customs seem to arise from the same parasha in the Torah, in which Moshe commands that the entire Torah be read once every seven years. It is reasonable to assume that the Sages who adopted this model [a reading over the period of seven years] preferred to spread the reading over the entire seven-year period, in order to fulfill the command, 'In order that they will hear and in order that they will learn….' There is no point in dividing the Torah in such a way that it will be read in a single seven-year cycle, since the portions yielded by such a division are too short; therefore, they chose the system of two cycles that together make up seven years[[64]](#footnote-64).*

The fact that this cycle is geared towards Hakhel indicates its connection to that ancient Temple custom, and it is therefore proper that we consider the possibility that the source of the Eretz Israel reading cycle is extremely old, dating perhaps to the time of the Second Temple itself. If this is so, it seems that we may attribute it to the fact that the fulfillment of the mitzva of Hakhel in its literal sense, i.e., reading the entire Torah on a single day once every seven years ('You shall read this Torah…'), is not a simple matter. It is not far-fetched to suggest that for this reason, and in order to fulfill properly the learning purpose set down for this mitzva in the Torah, 'In order that they shall hear and in order that they shall learn... and observe to perform all the words of this Torah', there developed, alongside the one-time reading at the hakhel, a system of continuous Torah reading in regular doses. This system was naturally spread over the Shabbatot of the seven years between one hakhel and the next.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Once in every seven years, at the termination of the Sabbatical year (Shmita), there was a public reading of certain passages of the book of Devarim. This reading, known as Hakhel, is commanded in:

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 31:10-12*** *At the end of every seven years, in the time of the year of release, during the Feast of Tabernacles [Succoth] when all of Israel appears before the Lord your God in the place which He shall choose, you shall read this Torah before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble [Hakhel] the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and your stranger that is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this Torah."*

In ancient times, Hakhel was observed on the first day of Chol HaMoed Succoth (or on **“the day after the end of Succoth”**[[66]](#footnote-66)) during the day time. Members of the Jewish people would gather at the Ezrat Nashim, the Women's Courtyard, where they would hear portions of the Torah read by the King of Israel. After the High Priest brought the Torah out, the King would open the Torah, say a blessing and would read from the Book of Devarim from Chapter 1-6, verse 10, and later from Chapter 11 13:-22, and he would then conclude his recitation with Chapter 14, verse 22, until the end of Chapter 28. Afterward, the King would roll the Torah together, and he would add seven more blessings. {*Mishna Torah, Hilchot Chagigah Chapter 3*}.

According to the Kli Yakar, the purpose of Hakhel is to foster unity.

Hakhel also stresses the importance of welcoming the Ger Tzadik, the righteous "Jews by Choice" who have embraced the Jewish faith and community. All Jews are welcomed and nobody is asked to prove his Jewish credentials or lineage. Some authorities [Ibn Ezra's commentary to Devarim 31:10-12] say that even gentiles residing in Israel would be welcomed at the Hakhel ceremony.

The Shmita year prepares for the mitzva of Hakhel in the eighth year, when men, women and children gather in the Beit HaMikdash during the Holiday of Succoth. Shmita serves as a preparation for Hakhel very much like Friday prepares for Shabbat.

**Sotah 41a** MISHNAH. WHAT WAS THE PROCEDURE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PORTION READ BY THE KING? AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE FESTIVAL [OF TABERNACLES] IN THE EIGHTH, I.E., THE END OF THE SEVENTH, THEY ERECT A WOODEN DAIS IN THE TEMPLE COURT, UPON WHICH HE SITS; AS IT IS SAID, AT THE END OF EVERY SEVEN YEARS, IN THE SET TIME etc. THE SYNAGOGUE-ATTENDANT TAKES A TORAH-SCROLL AND HANDS IT TO THE SYNAGOGUE PRESIDENT, AND THE SYNAGOGUE-PRESIDENT HANDS IT TO THE [HIGH PRIEST'S] DEPUTY. HE HANDS IT TO THE HIGH PRIEST WHO HANDS IT TO THE KING. THE KING STANDS AND RECEIVES IT, BUT READS SITTING.

It is interesting to note that the Jerusalem Talmud in bringing the same Mishna has a different version. Instead of stating that the ceremony of the hakhel should be on the second day of the festival of Succoth, it writes that the hakhel was on **“the day after the end of Succoth”**[[67]](#footnote-67).

The purpose of Hakhel, in the words of the scriptures, is: "In order that you may hear and in order that you may learn to fear the Lord your God." This, too, is cited as the purpose of Matan Torah (see, e.g., Shemot 20:18), where the entire nation congregated to hear the words of HaShem.

In the Yovel year, this assumed greater significance, as all slaves were freed on Yom Kippur and were, thus, able to participate in the communal acceptance of the Torah that took place on Hakhel. Thus, the Sefirat HaYovel was in fact a countdown to the freedom from slavery and embracing of the Torah. By way of comparison, it follows that Sefirat HaOmer expresses the same idea.

Hakhel is the prime exception to the "rule" that women are exempt from time-related positive mitzvot. The reason is simple - The Torah states that the mitzva applies to women.

The completion of the reading of the Torah at the end of a Shmita year (in Tishri at the beginning of the first year of the Shmita cycle) is commanded in the Torah and really aimed towards a major public finale once in seven years - the Hakhel:

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 31:10-13*** *"And Moshe commanded them, saying: At the end of every seven years, after the sabbatical year, on the festival of Succoth, when all Israel comes to see the presence of the Lord your God in the place that I will choose, read this Torah before all of Israel to their ears. Assemble the entire nation: men, women, and children, and the strangers who dwell within your gates, in order that they hear, and in order that they learn to fear the Lord their God and keep the words of this Torah. And their children, who do not know, will listen and will learn to fear the Lord your God, all the days that you live upon the land which you are crossing the Jordan to inherit."*

The Hakhel is the finale to the seven year crescendo of Torah reading.

# Sedarim – Torah Portions

In the Annual cycle there are 54 parashiyot (the Torah portion read each Shabbat) read during the year.

In the triennial cycle there are 141 - 175[[68]](#footnote-68) Sedarim read during the three and a half year cycle. The 3 ½ year cycle places a premium on preserving the number of sections into which the Torah is actually divided. The annual cycle emphasizes the ending and starting dates of the cycle and places much less emphasis on preserving the identity of the Torah’s actual sections.

The Masoretic text used in all synagogues around the world shows the Torah divided into 154 - 167 portions corresponding to the number of Sabbaths in the triennial cycle!.[[69]](#footnote-69) The Talmud speaks of these Sedarim, these portions:

***Soferim, XVI, 10*** *“Rabbi Joshua b. Levi said: I have never looked into a book of aggadda except once when I looked and found written therein that the one hundred and seventy-five sections of the Torah, in which occurs any expression of speaking, saying or commanding, correspond to the number of years of our father Avraham (175 years – Genesis 25:7); for it is written, “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts (i.e. Torah at Mt. Sinai) for the sake of man (i.e. Avraham),” and it is also written: “The greatest man (i.e. Avraham) among the Anakim” (Joshua 14:15). On this account the Rabbis instituted one hundred and seventy-five orders (Sedarim) in the Torah to be read in public every Sabbath as regular as the continual burnt-offering.”*

***Yerushalmi Shabbat 16:10*** *Rebbi Joshua ben Levi said, I never looked into a book of sermon concepts, except that once I looked, and I found written there: The 175 paragraphs where in the Torah is written speech, saying, commandment,[[70]](#footnote-70) correspond to the years of our father Abraham, as it is written, you took gifts from Man,[[71]](#footnote-71) and it is written, the great Man among giants.[[72]](#footnote-72)*

The 175 division stems from the practice of completing the reading of the whole Pentateuch within a cycle of three and a half years (twice within seven years). The reading of each of the five books of the Pentateuch started on one of the New Years mentioned in the Mishna,[[73]](#footnote-73) as can be seen in the following list (p. 142):

Midrash Devarim Zuta knows the division of the Torah into weekly readings according to one of the triennial systems practiced in Eretz Israel – “175 portions in the Torah…” – and that may have been the custom practiced where it was composed. This system underlies the division of the midrash. Structural characteristics and parallels in content reflect Tanchuma literature. Within this literature the parallels between Devarim Zuta and Aggadat Bereshit are noteworthy.

His Eminence, Hakham Dr. Yosef ben Haggai, helps us understand one of the perplexing rules of the lexicon: *Concerning the difference in the citations and counting of Sedarim in the Torah of between 154 Sedarim in the Torah Scroll to the 175 Sedarim cited in Soferim, XVI, 8, that is, the difference between these two numbers amounting to around 21 Sedarim, may have an easy explanation. (Here is the cited passage)*

**Megillah 3:4**. IF THE NEW MOON OF ADAR FALLS ON SABBATH, THE PORTION OF SHEKALIM IS READ [ON THAT DAY]. IF IT FALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK, IT IS READ ON THE SABBATH BEFORE, AND ON THE NEXT SABBATH THERE IS A BREAK. ON THE SECOND [OF THE SPECIAL SABBATHS] ZAKOR IS READ, ON THE THIRD THE PORTION OF THE RED HEIFER, ON THE FOURTH THIS MONTH SHALL BE TO YOU.’ ON THE FIFTH THE REGULAR ORDER IS RESUMED. [THE REGULAR READING] IS INTERRUPTED FOR ANY SPECIAL OCCASION: FOR NEW MOONS, FOR HANUKKAH, FOR PURIM, FOR FASTS, FOR MA'AMADOTH, AND FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

If to the 154 Sedarim we add the special festival Sedarim that displace the regular Sedarim when these fall on a Sabbath that would give us on a three and half year cycle, about six Sabbaths per year reserved for festivals, and new moons. (Under the category of festivals we also should include special Sabbaths such as Shabbat Shekalim and Shabbat Parah, amongst others as well as Shabbats that are Chol HaMoed, intermediate Sabbaths of a Festival). That is, six special Sabbaths times three years plus three special Sabbaths of a half year, this brings us to the mysterious 21 Sedarim that when added to the regular 154 Sedarim produces 175 Sedarim mentioned in the text of Soferim. Thus, in our view the difference in numbers of Sedarim can be perfectly reconciled.

However, though this explanation seems elegant and simple at first sight, yet, reality does not conform to such simple explanations. Take for example the following readings:

**New moon falling on a Sabbath:**

Numbers 28:9-15 = 7 verses

**Shabbat Shekalim:**

Exodus 30:11-16 = 6 verses

**Shabbat Zakhor:**

Deut. 25:17-19 = 3 verses

**Shabbat Parah:**

Numbers 19:1-22 = 22 verses

**Shabbat HaChodesh:**

Exodus 12:1-20 = 20 verses

**Shabbat Hagadol**

None

As can be seen, it would be an extremely clumsy arrangement to have three verses as in the case of Shabbat Zakhor to be read by the seven readers for that Shabbat and then again by the Maftir. This would mean that these three verses would have been read repeatedly for eight times!

Some Triennial Cycle proponents side with the interpretation that the Rabbis, defending the use of the annual cycle, make of:

**Mishna Megillah 3:4** IF THE NEW MOON OF ADAR FALLS ON SABBATH, THE PORTION OF SHEKALIM IS READ [ON THAT DAY]. IF IT FALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK, IT IS READ ON THE SABBATH BEFORE, AND ON THE NEXT SABBATH THERE IS A BREAK. ON THE SECOND [OF THE SPECIAL SABBATHS] ZAKOR IS READ, ON THE THIRD THE PORTION OF THE RED HEIFER, ON THE FOURTH THIS MONTH SHALL BE TO YOU.’ ON THE FIFTH THE REGULAR ORDER IS RESUMED. [THE REGULAR READING] IS INTERRUPTED FOR ANY SPECIAL OCCASION: FOR NEW MOONS, FOR HANUKKAH, FOR PURIM, FOR FASTS, FOR MA'AMADOTH, AND FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

When the Ma’amadot fall on Monday or on Thursday, they do not read from the weekly Torah passage, but rather a passage related to the day

On theMa’amadot- the *Ma’amadot* assemblies of Israel, in which they would gather for prayer and Torahreading, when the public sacrifices were offered, they would read, in the creation, as listed in Tractate *Taanit* (4:2-3).

Dealing with the readings for the four special Shabbats in Adar, as “additional” prescribed readings, normally said by the Maftir. According to this scheme then, the twenty-one missing Sedarim must be found in the twenty-one Sedarim of the normal weekly cycle that consist of forty-two or more verses and can therefore admit each being split into two Sedarim as Mann[[74]](#footnote-74) shows.

Buechler,[[75]](#footnote-75) on the contrary opines that the reading of the annual cycle proponents of Megillah 3:4 is incorrect, and he further states that in Talmud:

***Megillah 29b*** *The following was then cited in objection: ‘If it [the New Moon of Adar] falls on the portion next to it [the portion of Shekalim], whether before or after, they read it and repeat it’. Now this creates no difficulty for one who holds that ‘When thou takest’ is read because [the regular portion containing this passage] falls about that time.[[76]](#footnote-76) But according to the one who says that ‘My food which is presented to ‘me’ is read — does [the portion containing that passage] fall about that time?[[77]](#footnote-77) —* ***Yes, for the people of Palestine, who complete the reading of the Pentateuch in three years.[[78]](#footnote-78)***

[In this passage] one of the Rabbis remarks that in Palestine, Numbers chapter 28, in the ordinary course of the Sabbath Sedarim, fell on Shabbat Shekalim, i.e. the first of Adar. On this account the Torah Sidra for Rosh Chodesh falling on Shabbat was not as the annual cycle proponents have it, as consisting of Numbers 28:9-15 (= 7 verses), but rather of Numbers 27:15 – 28:25. It appears then, that the readings for new moon falling on a Sabbath, according to Megillah 3:4 needs to contain numbers 28:9-15 but not limited to these verses alone! Rather that the whole Torah Sidra in which these verses were found was read in toto – i.e. Numbers 27:15 – 28:25!

In the Midrash of *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana*,[[79]](#footnote-79) in Pisqa Three, the Midrash treats not only the passage of Deut. 25:17-19, but also passages within the Torah Sidra of Deut. 24:19 – 25:19! In other words on the special Sabbath called “Shabbat Zakhor” the whole Torah Sidra in which we find Deut. 25:17-19 – i.e. Deut. 24:19 – 25:19, is fully read.

Now, according to this, for Shabbat Shekalim the Torah Sidra containing the prescribed verses by the Mishna (Exodus 30:11-16) is in fact Exodus 30:1-38 (38 verses); for Shabbat Zakhor the Torah Sidra containing the prescribed verses by the Mishna (Deut. 25:17-19) is in fact the Torah Sidra of Deuteronomy 24:19 – 25:19 (= 23 verses); for Shabbat Parah the Torah Sidra containing the prescribed verses (Numbers 19:1-22 ) is Numbers 19:1 – 20:13 (= 35 verses); and so on. **In other words, the Mishna is not telling us exactly what to read, but rather that we should read the whole Torah Sidra in which these prescribed verses appear**. If we then follow this scheme as suggested by Buechler, then the model that we started with, i.e. that twenty-one missing Sedarim are to be accounted by the formula: 6 x 3 + 3 =21, is not only practicable but elegant and parsimonious at the same time.

His Eminence is telling us again that when we see a small number of verses as the proposed reading, it is a “Pars Pro Toto”[[80]](#footnote-80) where the quoted small portion speaks to a larger portion. This is similar to saying to a child, “Please tell me your ABCs.” The child will immediately spit out the whole alphabet.

Earlier we mentioned that there were two Triennial Torah reading cycles in a single Shmita cycle, Prof. Shlomo Naeh ties this together with the number of sederim to help us understand the three and half year Triennial cycle:

In his article, "Sidrei Keriat ha-Torah be-Eretz Yisrael: Iyun Mechudash" (The Torah Reading Cycle in Early Palestine: A Re-Examination.[[81]](#footnote-81)), Prof. Shlomo Naeh proves that the picture painted by the scholars is inaccurate. The Eretz Israel reading custom was attached to fixed times in the calendar, and was comprised of two reading cycles that together made up seven years, a single Shmita cycle. Naeh writes:

"It appears that these divisions of the parashiyot do not present different systems of Torah reading, but rather different components of a single custom, adapted to the needs of different years… There could be only one purpose of such a system: to adapt the reading cycle to an event – or to events – in the calendar. In other words, the cycle is geared towards a certain point on the calendar, and in order to reach that point with precision, it was necessary in certain years to add to, or diminish from, the number of 'sedarim' to be read on Shabbatot."

Further on, Naeh presents us with the fact that there is a fixed ratio between the number of sedarim in each of the three reading systems: the different between 141 and 154, and between 154 and 167, is 13:

*"It seems, therefore, that these were not three separate systems, but rather just two (which were really one and the same): in one system a complete reading cycle comprised two sets of 154 readings, while in the other the greater cycle was composed of a set of 141 sedarim, in the first round, followed by a set of 167 sedarim in the second round."*

In Eretz Israel the custom was to interrupt the regular weekly readings not only on a festival that fell on Shabbat (which was customary in Babylon, too), but also on a Shabbat that was Rosh Chodesh, on the Shabbatot[[82]](#footnote-82) of Chanukah and Purim, and on the Shabbatot when the four special parashiyot were read. Naeh makes some calculations and discovers that "the total number of special Shabbatot that can fall in a single year is, at most, twelve, and, at least, eight" – according to the custom of Eretz Israel. According to his calculation: "It turns out that the numbers 154 and 141 are precisely suited to the maximal number and minimal number of 'sedarim' that may be read in two cycles within seven years… The obvious question, then, is where the system of 167 'sedarim' fits into this seven-year system…

Within the framework of seven years, it is difficult to know, in the first few years, how the coming years will fall and exactly how many 'sedarim' will fill them. This is a real problem where the calendar is not fixed and systematic, but rather based principally on sighting of the moon, and it becomes much more difficult if there is no way of predicting when leap years will fall… as was the case in the period of the Mishna and the Talmud… Since the only point to which the cycle as a whole was geared was the end of the seven years, the guiding principle was a pragmatic 'postponement of problems' wherever possible, or, in other words, to concentrate the greatest possible measure of flexibility towards the end of the cycle… Therefore, instead of two cycles of 154 'sedarim,' it was preferable that the first cycle consist of the smallest number of 'sedarim' – 141, with their reading following a completely continuous progression, with no divisions and no joining of 'sedarim,' leaving the possibilities that had not been used up in this round (i.e., dividing some of the 'sedarim' into two) to add to the second round. The second round, in which all the adjustments of the readings to the yearly calendar were made, would therefore have to consist of 167 'sedarim… The three types of cycles of 'sedarim'… therefore represent two possibilities for reading the entire Torah twice during seven complete years… This is an exact system that is intended to conclude with fixed regularity and at a known date. The cycle takes seven years… Despite the clear integrity of the system, it still allows for differing customs: some will read the Torah in two equal cycles of 154 'sedarim,' while others will read in unequal cycles – 141 'sedarim' the first time and 167 'sedarim' the next time. Clearly, then, the completion of the reading of the Torah after the first round will not take place at the same time for both types of communities, and the 'sedarim' read on each Shabbat will likewise not be the same… What we have here is a discrepancy in the internal arrangement of a single, fixed and universally observed cyclical regularity."

\* \* \*

The Shmita year was proclaimed on Rosh HaShanah, on the first day of the Jewish year.

Sefirat HaOmer, the count which leads to Shavuot, is like seven Shmita cycles count which leads to “Yovel," the Jubilee Year, the fiftieth year. As we count seven weeks and fifty days from Pesach to Shavuot, we also count seven sabbatical years and fifty years from one Jubilee to the next.

The link between the Yovel year and the Shmita year is made amply clear by a number of factors. The juxtaposition in the Torah, the idea of the land lying fallow, the concept of counting to seven, all of these indicate that there is a connection between the two. There is, however, another mitzva to which Yovel is clearly related, and that is the mitzva of Sefirat HaOmer. Both mitzvot are introduced with the word which means: "you will count". Both find us counting similar numbers, seven sets of seven, days and weeks in the case of Omer, years and Shmita cycles in the case of Yovel. The one difference in the description is between the difference between the plural form, of "you will count", in describing Omer and the singular in describing the Yovel.

As the Midrash Torat Kohanim[[83]](#footnote-83) points out, There is a mitzva to count the years between each Yovel, “in the court” (Sanhedrin). This is as opposed to Sefirat HaOmer, which we all count individually.

In the Land of Israel, all agricultural work is suspended on the seventh year and the land’s produce is declared free for the taking for all. Also suspended on the Shmita year are all private debts and the terms of servitude of indentured servants.

Why is Mount Sinai mentioned in connection with the commandment of the sabbatical year? The *K’li Yakar[[84]](#footnote-84)* notes several intentional parallels that the Torah draws between the laws of the Yovel and the revelation of the Torah:

1. Both occasions are preceded by a counting of seven sevens.

2. Both are proclaimed with lengthy blasts of the shofar.

3. As during a sabbatical, planting and grazing were forbidden on Mount Sinai from the time of the revelation.

Evidently, it wishes to draw our attention to the thematic connection between the giving of the Torah (which, according to the traditional calculation, occurred on Shabbat), as the fulfillment of a prolonged anticipation, and the Yovel. These two modes of religious time are entwined in the very essence of Torah.

The counting of the omer leads to Shavuot, the giving of the Torah. The Shmita year which is a time of being totally involved in Torah, is also a time of counting seven sevens. One of the reasons that we have the annual Torah readings is to make the best use of our extra hours during the Yovel year when we do not work the land. It is a time of working and studying Torah. Thus we find that the septennial / triennial cycle is used during the forty-nine years which are not Yovel years. During Yovel years (the fiftieth year) we use the annual Torah cycle.

\* \* \*

The 154 or 167 Sedarim of the triennial cycle are marked with an ornamental oversized samek in the Masorah:

sid.gif (925 bytes)

These ornamental samechs are printed is some versions of the Tanakh. I found them in the *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* and *The Jerusalem Bible* by Koren Publishers. Additionally, the Masorah also includes paragraph marks which are a single פ “pe” or a ס “samek” for petuah (open) or setumah (closed) type paragraphs. These are different from the samech which parks a Torah portion (parasha).

The list of the triennial sidrot (portions) is also found in a Yemen manuscript, as indicated in Ginsburg's Masoretic Bible. According to the Masorah[[85]](#footnote-85), these should number 154, or, according to the Masseket Soferim, 175; as a matter of fact they amount to 167. Rapoport[[86]](#footnote-86) suggests that the 175 readings covered three and one-half years, so that the Law was read through twice in a Shmita cycle of seven years.

Although there is no formal acknowledgement of the Sidra divisions, of the triennial cycle, in most printed Tanakhs[[87]](#footnote-87), those divisions underlie some of the Masoretic divisions into paragraphs, as well as the structure of most classical midrashic works from the Talmudic era.

The selection of Masoretic notes attached to the *Mikraot Gedolot* was compiled by Jacob ben Hayyim ibn Adoniyahu, a Spanish Jew who fled to Venice via Tunisia and was employed by the printer Daniel Bomberg. For the purposes of his research, Jacob ben Hayyim traveled in search of accurate manuscripts, and had to use his critical discretion in dealing with conflicting readings. Shortly after the completion of his work, Jacob ben Hayyim converted to Christianity.

# Timeliness

We have noted that the weekly parasha, for both the annual and the Triennial portions, and its latent messages relate and are integrally connected to the time of year during which the parasha is read. The Torah reading started on Tishri the first, which was regarded as the Jewish New Year; while the reading of each of the five books of the Torah started on one of the New Years mentioned in the Mishna,[[88]](#footnote-88) as can be seen in the following list: The reading of the book of:

*Bereshit (Genesis) started and ended on the 1st of Tishri in the first year of the cycle.* The new year for counting years.

*Bereshit (Genesis) started on the 1st of Nisan in the third year of the cycle.* The new year for counting months.

*Bereshit (Genesis) ended on Tu B’Shevat in the fourth year of the cycle.* The new year for trees.

*Shemot (Exodus) started on the 15th of Shevat (Tu B’Shevat) in the fifth year of the cycle.* The new year for trees.

*Shemot (Exodus) started on the 1st of Tishri in the third year of the cycle.* The new year for counting years.

*Vayikra (Leviticus) ended on Tu B’Shevat in the second year of the cycle.* The new year for trees.

*Bamidbar (Numbers) started on Tu B’Shevat in the third year of the cycle.* The new year for trees.

*Bamidbar (Numbers) ended on the 1st of Nisan in the fifth year of the cycle.* The new year for counting months.

*Devarim (Deuteronomy) started on the 1st of Elul in the third year of the cycle.* The new year for tithing cattle.

*Devarim (Deuteronomy) started on the 1st of Nisan in the seventh year of the cycle.* The new year for counting months.

The following example shows us this relationship:

In this grouping, I have juxtaposed the two triennial cycles to see if I can glean anything from this grouping. The red colored entries are those that are new years.

Bereshit = Tishri 1, 5769 till Tishri 1, 5770

Bereshit = Nisan 1, 5772 till Shevat 15, 5773

Shemot = Tishri 1, 5770 till Tammuz 15, 5770

Shemot = Shevat 15, 5773 till Kislev 1, 5774

Vayikra = Tammuz 15, 5770 till Shevat 15, 5771

Vayikra = Kislev 1, 5774 till Tammuz 1, 5774

Bamidbar = Shevat 15, 5771 till Elul 1, 5771

Bamidbar = Tammuz 1, 5774 till Nisan 1, 5775

Devarim = Elul 1, 5771 till Nisan 1, 5772

Devarim = Nisan 1, 5775 till Tishri 1, 5776

The cycle of readings was carefully planned. As a result, certain stories from the Torah landed regularly on specific dates:

(1) The story of creation was read in Nisan (in the first year of the cycle) because that was the time of creation.

(2) The story of Cain killing Abel (Bereshit 4) was always read on the third Sabbath in Nisan (Passover!). This led to the tradition (found in the Midrash Pirke D’Rebbi Eliezer) that Cain offered his sacrifice on Passover.

(3) In the first year of the three year cycle, the story of Rachel giving birth to Joseph (after having been barren for years... Bereshit. 30:22ff.), always landed at the beginning of Tishri. It is probably not coincidental that our sages suggested that Joseph was born on Rosh HaShanah.

(4) In the second year of the three year cycle, Shemot 12, the story of the Exodus from Egypt, landed in Nisan (second year), coinciding with the Passover festival.

(5) In the second year of the three year cycle, the reading of the Ten Commandments (Shemot 20:1–14) landed on the 6th of Sivan, Shavuot.

(6) In the second year of the three year cycle, the story of Moshe receiving the second set of tablets (Shemot 34) landed on the last Shabbat of Av. It is probably not coincidental that two traditions developed about the time of Moses' return with the second set of commandments. One tradition says that this happened on Yom Kippur; the other tradition maintains that he returned on... the 29th of Av.

(7) In the third year of the three year cycle, Bamidbar (6:22ff) landed at the beginning of Nisan. This corresponds to the Torah statement that Moses consecrated the Tabernacle in Nisan.

(8) In the third year of the three year cycle, the death of Moses, Devarim 34, landed at the beginning of Adar. There is a tradition that Moses died on the 7th of Adar.

(9) Parashat Miketz, in the Nisan cycle, is read on the Sabbath of Chanukah. In the Tishri cycle, of the triennial cycle, this sedra is read in early Kislev.

(10) We always read the Torah portion of Behar (Leviticus 25:1-26:2) during the days of the counting of the Omer, the period of preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuot. [**Tebet 4, Iyar 24**]

I have detailed MANY more of these date correspondences in the study titled: Bimodal.

Ezra the scribe instituted the public reading of the *Tochachah[[89]](#footnote-89)* in Vayikra (26:14-43) [**Tebet 18, Sivan 16**] before Shavuot, and that of Devarim (28:15-68) [**Shebat 11, Ab 23**] before Rosh HaShanah. Why is that? In order that the past year finish along with all of the curses associated with it.... Is Shavuot, then, a New Year's day? Yes, it is. As the Mishna[[90]](#footnote-90) states, "There are four periods when the world is judged; on Pesach... on Shavuot... on Rosh HaShanah... and on Succoth....":

***Megillah 31b*** *It has been taught: R. Simeon b. Eleazar says: Ezra made a regulation for Israel that they should read the curses in Leviticus before Pentecost and those in Deuteronomy before New Year. What is the reason? — Abaye — or you may also say Resh Lakish said: So that the year may end along with its curses. I grant you that in regard to the curses in Deuteronomy you can say, ‘so that the year should end along with its curses’. But as regards those In Leviticus — is Pentecost a New Year? — Yes; Pentecost is also a New Year, as we have learnt: ‘On Pentecost is the new year for [fruit of] the tree’.*

Our custom is to read a Parasha that does not mention Tochachah the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah [and to read the Tochachah ‘two’ weeks before Shavuot and Rosh HaShanah,] in order not to read Tochachah immediately prior to Rosh Hashanah.[[91]](#footnote-91)

(1) The Tochachah of Vayikra are associated with Shavuot and those of Devarim with Rosh HaShanah.

(2) Those who read the Torah according to the triennial cycle could also keep Ezra's institution. If the Tochachah,[[92]](#footnote-92) in such a cycle, was to be read shortly after a Rosh HaShanah, it would be pushed up and read earlier. Ezra made no institution bidding us to “arrange” to read the Tochachah before Shavuot or Rosh Hashanah!

# Eicha - Lamentations

It must be noted that it is our custom to read the Torah portion of Devarim always on the Sabbath before Tisha B’Av (the Ninth day of the month of Av) [**Elul 4, Adar 29**]. The three weeks before Tisha B’Av, and also the nine days from the start of Av until the fast day, are days of sadness and national stocktaking which at its basis is also self rebuke. In light of the constant connection between the Torah portion of Devarim and Tisha B’Av, and in light of the word “Eicha” in the Scroll of Lamentations and the Torah portion, can we assume that the understanding of the introduction to the Book of Devarim as words of rebuke and reprimand were born out of the atmosphere of the days on which they read this portion in the synagogues? In contrast to this captivating possibility, it must be stated that in the period of the Tannaic Midrashim the annual Torah reading cycle had not yet been established as a one year cycle and therefore the portion of Devarim did not always fall before Tisha B’Av.

# Yovel and Shmita

From the similarity of the wording of the commands for Shabbat and Yom tov (festival), and for Shmita and Yovel (it shall be for you), we learn the following relationship:

**Shmita is to Yovel as Shabbat is to Yom tov.**

Rashi had some interesting comments on the Shmita and the Yovel:

**Rashi’s Commentary for: ‎ Vayiqra (Leviticus) 26:35**

**whatever it had not rested on your sabbaticals** The seventy years of the Babylonian exile [i.e., between the destruction of the first Temple and the building of the second,] corresponded to the seventy years of Shemittah and Jubilee years that took place during the years that Israel angered the Omnipresent while in their Land, [a total of] 430 years. Three hundred and ninety years were the years of their sinning from when they entered the land until the Ten Tribes were exiled, and the people of Judah angered Him for forty more years from the time the Ten Tribes were exiled until the destruction of Jerusalem. This is what is referred to in Ezek. (4:4-5) [when God makes Ezekiel figuratively suffer one day for each year Israel sinned, in order to atone for their sins], "And you shall lie on your left side (symbolizing the house of Israel, i.e., the ten tribes)... [Now I have made for you the years of their iniquity by the number of days, three hundred and ninety days, and you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel]. And when you complete these, you shall lie on your right side a second time, and you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah: forty days [a day for a year, a day for a year, I have given it to you]." Now, this prophecy was stated to Ezekiel in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s exile. And [since the people of Judah] spent another six years [in the Land] until Zedekiah’s exile, totaling forty-six [sinful years of the house of Judah, and hence, of the 850 years the people of Israel spent from the time of their entry into the Land until their eventual exile from it after the destruction of the first Holy Temple, they sinned for a total of 436 years]. Now, you might object, saying that King Manasseh [who was born immediately after the ten tribes were exiled, and who] ruled for fifty-five years [and so, even without taking into account the sinful years during the reigns of all the other kings of Judah, fifty-five years alone is more than forty-six, so surely the calculation is incorrect]! [However,] Manasseh repented [his evil ways] for thirty- three [of the fifty-five] years [of his reign], and thus, his sinful years [amounted to] twenty-two years, as it is written, “and he made an *asherah* as Ahab, the king of Israel, had made” (II Kings 21: 3), and Ahab ruled for twenty-two [sinful] years, [so did Manasseh sin for twenty-two of his fifty- five year reign,] as is taught in the Aggadah of [the eleventh chapter of Tractate *Sanh.* (103a), entitled] *Cheilek*. [Thus, the number of years that the house of Judah sinned was: 22 years during the reign of Manasseh,] two during [the reign of] Amon, eleven during [the reign of] Jehoiakim and the same [i.e., another eleven] during [the reign of] Zedekiah [making a total of 46 years. The other kings of Judah are not included in the calculation, because during the righteous Josiah’s reign, Israel did not sin, while Jehoachaz and Jehoiachin each ruled for only three months. Let us now] go and calculate, for the [period of] 436 years [of sin], how many Shemittah and Jubilee years transpired during the years, at a rate of sixteen in every hundred years: 14 Shemittah years and two Jubilee years [totaling 16 sabbatical years]. Therefore, for 400 years, we have 64, and for the remaining 36 years, there are five [cycles of seven years and thus five] Shemittah years, making a total of [64 and 5 =] seventy minus one [i.e., 69 unobserved sabbatical years in that total of 436 sinful years in that period]. And [we must add to this calculation] an extra year—this extra year was the [last sinful] year [of the 436,] which began another Shemittah cycle [and God exiled Israel then and did not wait for the completion of that cycle for them to desecrate the seventieth Shemittah year—out of mercy for them, so that they would not have to endure the punishment of utter destruction, God forbid.] -[see Deut. 4:25 and Rashi there; *Sifthei Chachamim*] **[This extra year, nevertheless, is included in the calculation here, as though another sabbatical had gone by unobserved, thereby] completing the seventy [unobserved sabbatical years of that period]. And for these [unobserved sabbaticals], a full seventy years [of exile] were decreed. And thus is it stated in (II) Chron. (36:21), “until the Land was appeased regarding its Sabbaths; [for all the days of its desolation it rested,] until the completion of seventy years.” -[See *Sefer Hazikkaron* for the explanation of this *Rashi.*]**

# Tithes

The tithes of the septennial cycle are:

Year 1 - Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני - Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in Jerusalem.

Year 2 - Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני - Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in Jerusalem.

Year 3 - Maaser Ani - מעשר עני - Tithe to be given to the poor, doesn't have to be eaten in Jerusalem.

Year 4 - Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני - Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in Jerusalem.

Year 5 - Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני - Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in Jerusalem.

Year 6 - Maaser Ani - מעשר עני - Tithe to be given to the poor, doesn't have to be eaten in Jerusalem.

Year 7 - Shmita - No Terumah[[93]](#footnote-93) - תְּרוּמָה / No Maaser Rishon - מעשר ראשון / No Maaser Ani - מעשר עני or Sheni - מעשר שני / No Terumat Maaser - תרומות (Given by Levi to Kohen).

Twice every seven years, on the day before Pesach of the **fourth** and **seventh** years of every Shmita cycle, every crop owner must make sure that he has delivered all the tithes to their proper destination, and on the last day of Pesach of the **fourth** and **seventh** years, he recites the confession (viduy ma'asrot) found in Devarim (Deuteronomy) 26:13-15. This ceremony is called a "confession of tithes" and is preferable to take place at the Temple, but it may be recited anywhere.

In a typical year, the Jewish farmer in eretz Israel is required to divide his produce into four unequal shares. The first share, Rabbinically ordained to be 2% of the total crop, is given to a Kohen as "Terumah - תְּרוּמָה". The second share, 10% of the remainder (=9.8% of the total), is "Maaser" and is given to a Levi. The farmer them removes 10% of the new remainder (8.82% of the original total) for a purpose that will be described below, and the final share (79.38% of the original) is the owner's to do with as he pleases.

What becomes of the second tithe - מעשר שני (the 8.82%)? The answer to this question is not the same every year. Part of the Jewish calendar is the seven year Shmita cycle of which the first six years are set aside for agricultural pursuits, and the seventh for leaving the land fallow in recognition of the fact that it is HaShem, not our own labor, that is the true source of our sustenance. In the first, second, fourth, and fifth years of the cycle, the second tithe becomes "Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני" (second tithe) and is kept by its owner to be eaten when he next travels to Jerusalem. In the third and sixth years of the Shmita cycle, this tithe is given as charity and is therefore called "Maaser Ani - מעשר עני", the tithe for the poor. (In the seventh year, the Shmita year, since the land is not cultivated, no tithes are given.)

The Mishna speaks of these tithes and the penalty for not paying them:

***Avot 5:9*** *There are four time-periods when plagues increase: on the fourth and seventh years [of the sabbatical cycle], on the year following the seventh, and following the festivals of each year. On the fourth year, because of [the neglect of] the tithe to the poor that must be given on the third year; on the seventh, because of the tithe to the poor that must be given on the sixth; on the year after the seventh, because of the produce of the sabbatical year; and following each festival, because of the robbing of the poor of the gifts due to them.*

The Mishna, in Pirke Avot 5:9, states that neglecting to observe the Shmita year leads to the punishment of exile; the Gemara, in Shabbat 33a, adds that when the Jews are exiled for abandoning this mitzva, they are replaced in their land by others. This Mishna also indicates that the misuse of the produce of this year results in plagues and pestilence in the land.

PIRQE ABOT (Chapters of the Fathers)

Pereq Hei, Mishnah 5:9

By: Hakham Yitschaq ben Moshe Magriso

***In four periods the plague increases: in the fourth year, in the seventh year, after the seventh year, and after the [Sukkoth] festival each year. In the fourth year it is because of the poor man's tithe of the third. In the seventh year it is because of the poor man's tithe of the sixth. After the seventh year it is because of the fruits of the seventh year. After the [Sukkoth] festival each year it is because of robbery and gifts [designated] for the poor.***

*Before explaining this Mishnah, we must first understand the order in which the priestly offering (terumáh) and tithes (ma'asróth) were given. We will then know the significance of the third, fourth, sixth and seventh years.*

*God commanded that the fields may be sown and harvested during the first six years [of a seven year cycle], but that during the seventh year, they not be plowed or sown, and that no fruits be harvested. Dur­ing this seventh year, all the agricultural products are public property (hefkér) (Leviticus 25 :2-7).*

*In the first and second years of this seven year cycle, God com­manded that everyone separate 2% of the harvest for the Cohen-Priest. This is known as the "great offering" (terumáh gedoláh). From the rest, 10% must be taken for the Levite, and this is called "the first tithe" (ma’asér rishón). From what remains, another 10% is taken. The landowner may use this tithe himself, but it could only be eaten in Jerusalem. This is called "the second tithe" (ma'asér shení).*

*This was the way the tithes were separated in the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the cycle. In the third and sixth years of the cycle, however, there was a dif­ference. Instead of the second tithe, the landowner had to set aside 10% for the poor. This was called the "poor man's tithe" (ma'asér aní). During the seventh, Sabbatical Year (shemitáh) there was no need to set aside any of these gifts. All the fields were public, and the poor could take whatever they wanted.*

*Now the master tells us that when death came to the world because of the sins mentioned earlier, the plague was all the more intense during the fourth year of the cycle, during the seventh year, at the end of the seventh, and on Sukkoth of each and every year.*

*In the fourth year, the plague (magefáh) was intensified because people neglected to give the poor man's tithe that they 'were obligated to give in the third year. God had patience, and did not send the plague until the end of the third year and the beginning of the fourth, waiting to see if the people would repent and give the tithe. Once the fourth year came and the tithe was not given, the plague became more severe.*

*This was a fitting punishment. In not giving the tithe to the poor, the people acted as if they expected to live a very long time, and they would not have enough to eat if they gave any away. Providence therefore sent an epidemic to kill them, thus shortening their lives. The plague also intensified in the seventh, Sabbatical Year, because the people neglected to give the poor man's tithe that they were obligated to give in the sixth year.*

*At the end of the seventh year, the plague intensified because of the fruits of the seventh year which were not left in the field as public property for the poor, as God commanded. Instead, the people kept them for themselves.*

*Finally, after Succoth, the plague would also intensify. Succoth was the time when the harvest was gathered from the fields and brought home. It is because of this that Succoth is referred to as the "festival of ingathering" (chag ha-asif) (Exodus 23:16, 34:22).*

*When the produce was harvested, the people had an obligation to leave certain gifts for the poor (matnoth ani'im), as com­manded by God. These gifts. consisted of gleanings (leket), forgotten sheaves (shik'chah), and the corners of the field (peah). Not giving these gifts, then, is tantamount to stealing from the poor.*

Why Was The Tithe Of The Third Year

So Important?

By Hakham Dr Yosef ben Haggai

**Devarim (Deuteronomy) 26:11-12** *"And thou shalt rejoice in all the good which Ha-Shem thy G-d hath given unto thee, and unto they house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is in the midst of thee. When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithe of thine increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be satisfied."*

Note first, in verse 11, that the stranger, the *Ger Toshav* who is also known as the *B'ne Noach,* participated in the tithings and in the rejoicing in Jerusalem when the tithes were brought. In the third year all tithes were surrendered. Verse 12 says, *"when thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithe of thine increase in the third year, which is the year of (final) tithe."*

Why was the tithe of the *Third Year* so important? Why the *Third Year*? Does not everything in Judaism revolve around the number seven? Odd, is it not, that so much stress was laid of the Tithe of the Third Year? In normal counting you number 1-2-3-4-5-6-7. The middle of that counting would not be the third but the fourth. Why not the Tithe of the Fourth Year instead of the third year? It seems out of balance, tilted somewhat heavily toward the end one, two, three and then four, five, six, and seven. So what is the mystery of the Third Year?

Six days shalt thou work and on the seventh day shall be Shabbat, yes?

Seven Sabbaths are between Pesach (Passover) and Shabuot (Pentecost), true?

Counting from Tishri, the month of the High Holy Day to Passover are seven months, right?

Or counting from Nisan (Passover) to the High Holy Days in Tishri are also seven months.

Are there not seven years in the Sabbatical Year?

Are there not seven Sabbatical Years in a Shabbaton or Jubilee on the fiftieth year?

Did not Daniel the Apocalyptic Prophet say seventy Jubilees were determined on the fall and redemption of Jerusalem?

So what was so important about this Third Year Tithe? The Jubilee system of calculation of time is the answer to why the tithe of the third year is so important! The days Four, Five, Six ascend to the Seventh Day or Shabbat, then descend to the First, Second and to the Third Day of the week (Tuesday). We see this clearly in the Talmud as well:

***Gittin 77a*** *Our Rabbis taught: [If he says, ‘This is your Get if I do not return] till after the septennate,’ we wait an extra year; ‘till after a year’, we wait a month; ‘till after a month’, we wait a week. If he Says, ‘till after the Sabbath’, what [do we do]? — When R. Zera was once sitting before R. Assi, or, as others report, when R. Assi was sitting before R. Johanan, he said: The first day of the week and the second and third are called ‘after the Sabbath’; the fourth and fifth days and the eve of Sabbath are called ‘before the Sabbath.’*

So did the counting of the Sabbatical Year! Therefore, the Third Year was the final year of the ascent from the Fourth Year to the apex of the Seventh Sabbatical Year, or Year of Release. Then, the descent from the Sabbatical Year through the First, Second and final Third Year ended the Tithe Cycle. The cycle could not end on the Seventh Year because it was not a tithed year as there was no planting. Therefore, all tithes had to be closed out before the new cycle could begin. Also, the Third Year, like the Third Day has a double blessing if they obey the commandment to empty-out all the tithes in their house according to Deut. 26:11-12 and Malachi 3:6-16.

Now that we understand how the seven are counted: 3, 2, 1, 7, 6, 5, 4. Now lets continue this example to understand that maaser, the tithe.

On the eve of Passover of the fourth and seventh years, one would have to rid himself of all tithes and priestly gifts (*Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני* 5:6).[[94]](#footnote-94) Then, on the seventh day of Passover in the afternoon, one would make the declaration.[[95]](#footnote-95) Passover occurs six months into the year which always begins in Tishri. Passover of the fourth year would be three and a half years into the seven year Shmita cycle.

Thus the declaration was made at the end of three and half years and again at the end of seven years.

The Pattern of Seven

**Maaser - מעשר**

Since our Sages teach us that all sevens are related, it follows that there is a pattern to the sevens such that we can begin to learn how the first three and a half are related to the second three and a half.

Lets start by examining the maaser - מעשר, the tithe, which was taken in six of the seven years:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Maaser  Ani  מעשר עני  First Tithe | Maaser  Sheni  מעשר שני  Second Tithe | Maaser  Sheni  מעשר שני  Second Tithe | No  Maaser  מעשר | Maaser  Ani  מעשר עני  First Tithe | Maaser  Sheni  מעשר שני  Second Tithe | Maaser  Sheni  מעשר שני  Second Tithe |

As we look for the pattern, we notice that the only time we transition from **Ani - מעשר עני** (first) to **Sheni - מעשר שני** (second) is between the third and fourth years. We also note a clear pattern of: **Ani-Sheni-Sheni** on both sides of the seven, on either side of the seventh year where no maaser - מעשר is taken.

So, one of the patterns is that we transition from the first (**Ani - מעשר עני**) to the second (**Sheni - מעשר שני**).

**The Creation**

In the creation we see the pattern in a slightly different way. We see that the first three have a direct relationship with the last three. For example: The light was created on the first day, but the planetary bodies which give light were not created till the fourth day. The waters were separated on the second day, but the critters who “swim” in the waters above (birds) and the critters that swim in the waters below (fish) were not created till the fifth day. Finally, we see that God created the land and plants on the third day, but the critters that walk on the land and eat the plants, were not created until the sixth day.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A 3rd**  **Day**  God  created  dry  **land**  God  created  **plants.** | **A 2nd**  **Day**  God  separated  **waters**  **above**  from  **Waters**  **below**. | **One**  **Day**  God  created  the  heavens  and earth  and  separated  **light**  from  darkness. | **The**  **7th**  **Day**  God  **Rest**ed. | **The**  **6th**  **Day**  God  created  **beasts**.  God  created  **men**. | **A 5th**  **Day**  God  created  **birds**  and  **fishes**. | **A 4th**  **Day**  God  created  the  **sun**,  **moon**,  and  **stars**. |

Thus we see a one-to-four relationship with the transition between the creation of the environment with their associated example occurring between the third and the fourth days.

For more patterns within the number seven, see the following studies: 7CHART and SEVEN.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year 3**  Rishon - מעשר ראשון was given to the Levites and Priests  Ani was given to the poor.  **rishon & ani** | **Year 2**  Rishon - מעשר ראשון was given to the Levites and Priests  Sheni was taken to Jerusalem and eaten.  **rishon & sheni** | **Year 1**  Rishon - מעשר ראשון was given to the Levites and Priests  Sheni was taken to Jerusalem and eaten.  **rishon & sheni** | **Year 7**  **Sabbatical**  No tithe | **Year 6**  Rishon - מעשר ראשון was given to the Levites and Priests  Ani was given to the poor.  **rishon &**  **ani** | **Year 5**  Rishon - מעשר ראשון was given to the Levites and Priests  Sheni was taken to Jerusalem and eaten.  **rishon & sheni** | **Year 4**  Rishon - מעשר ראשון was given to the Levites and Priests  Sheni was taken to Jerusalem and eaten.  **rishon & sheni** |

# 

# Fifty and Forty-nine-Year Cycles.

There is a dispute, in Arachin 12b, between R' Yehuda and Rabbanan. According to R' Yehuda, the Yovel year, the 50th year of the 50 year Jubilee cycle, counts as the first year of the next 50 year cycle. Therefore, the cycle is really 49 years with the 50th/1st year being a Yovel. Rabbanan, however, hold that the cycle is actually 50 years and only after the Yovel year does the cycle begin again. The consensus is that, at least after the destruction of the Temple, the halacha is like R' Yehuda that the cycles are 49 years.

In The Jewish Encyclopedia:

*There is a difference of opinion in the Talmud as to whether the jubilee year was included in or excluded from the forty-nine years of the seven cycles. The majority of rabbis hold that the jubilee year was an intercalation, and followed the seventh Sabbatical year, making two fallow years in succession. After both had passed, the next cycle began. They adduce this theory from the plain words of the Law to "hallow the fiftieth year," and also from the assurance of God's promise of a yield in the sixth year sufficient for maintenance during the following three years:*

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:22*** *"until the ninth year, until her fruits come in"*

*Which, they say, refers to the jubilee year. Judah ha-Nasi, however, contends that the jubilee year was identical with the seventh Sabbatical year[[96]](#footnote-96). The opinion of the Gaonim and of later authorities generally prevails, that the jubilee, when in force during the period of the First Temple, was intercalated, but that in the time of the Second Temple, when the jubilee was observed only "nominally," it coincided with the seventh Sabbatical year. In post-exilic times the jubilee was entirely ignored, though the strict observance of the Shmita was steadily insisted upon. This, however, is only according to a rabbinical enactment[[97]](#footnote-97), as by the Mosaic law, according to R. Judah, Shmita is dependent on the jubilee and ceases to exist when there is no jubilee[[98]](#footnote-98).*

# Three and a half years

Now that we know that the Torah was read through in three and a half years, I thought it prudent to examine the other Torah related items which also follow a three and a half year cycle.

Two *meshichim*,[[99]](#footnote-99) Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben David are represented by the triennial, or Shmita, Torah reading cycle. The Master of Nazareth (Yeshua), Mashiach ben Yosef, is said to have had a ministry of three and a half years – one triennial Torah cycle! Thus we would we would expect that Mashiach ben David would also have a ministry of three and a half years in order to complete the septennate and the second triennial cycle.

The following quotes from the Tanach and the Nazarean Codicil[[100]](#footnote-100) speak of a period of three and a half years:

Elijah caused the rain to stop for three and a half years. 1 Kings 17:1 - 18:1, as the Nazarean Codicil confirms:

***Luqas (Luke) 4:25*** *But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*

***Yaaqov (James) 5:17*** *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

***Daniel 7:25*** *And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.*

***Revelation 11:2*** *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

***Revelation 11:3*** *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

***Revelation 12:14*** *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

The following quotes also speak of a period of three and a half years:

There is a custom among especially righteous Jews to have their Tefillin and Mezuzot checked each year during Elul. According to the strict Halacha, Mezuzot must be checked once every three and a half years.

The Bar Kochba Revolt in 132-135 C.E., which "apparently lasted about three and a half years".[[101]](#footnote-101)

During the Maccabean revolt the temple was desecrated for roughly three and a half years, a figure which has often been pivotal for millennial exegesis.

The following quotes from the oral law speak of a period of three and a half years:

Ezekiel describes the movement of the Shechinah from the Holy of Holies to the Mount of Olives. The Shechinah remained there for a complete Triennial Torah cycle of three and a half years:

***Midrash Rabbah - Lamentations Prologue XXV*** *"R. Jonathan said: Three and a half years the Shechinah abode upon the Mount of Olives hoping that Israel would repent, but they did not; while a Bath Kol issued announcing, 'Return, O backsliding children (Jer. III, 14), Return unto Me, and I will return unto you (Mal. III, 7).' When they did not repent, it said, 'I will go and return to My place (Hos. V, 15).' Concerning that time it is said, 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before it grow dark' (Jer. XIII, 16): before it becomes dark to you for lack of words of Torah, before it becomes dark to you for lack of words of prophecy, 'and before your feet stumble upon the mountains of twilight.'"*

The Talmud (in *Yoma* 11a) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (291:1) states that mezzuzot must be checked twice in seven years. Many *poskim* explain this to mean every three and a half years.

***Yoma 11a*** *…For it has been taught: The mezuzah of an individual's [house] should be examined twice every seven years, and of public buildings twice every fifty years.*

All Tefillin and mezzuzot must be checked periodically to verify their kashrut. Everyone is required to check his Tefillin and mezzuzot twice in seven years, or once every three and a half years, since it is an established fact that over a period of time Tefillin and mezzuzot are liable to become invalid.

Rabbi Meir, speaking about the Red Heifer, says that [the animal is designated as] a "cow" when it is three and a half years old:

***Midrash Rabbah - Lamentations Prologue XXV*** *"R. Jonathan said: Three and a half years the Shechinah abode upon the Mount of Olives hoping that Israel would repent, but they did not; while a Bath Kol issued announcing, 'Return, O backsliding children (Jer. III, 14), Return unto Me, and I will return unto you (Mal. III, 7).' When they did not repent, it said, 'I will go and return to My place (Hos. V, 15).' Concerning that time it is said, 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before it grow dark' (Jer. XIII, 16): before it becomes dark to you for lack of words of Torah, before it becomes dark to you for lack of words of prophecy, 'and before your feet stumble upon the mountains of twilight.'"*

The four letter name of HaShem was taught twice in seven years:

***Kiddushin 71a*** *Rabbah b. Bar Hanah said in R. Johanan's name: The [pronunciation of the Divine] Name of four letters the Sages confide to their disciples once a septennate — others state, twice a septennate. Said R. Nahman b. Isaac: Reason supports the view that it was once a septennate, for it is written, this is my name for ever [le'olam] which is written le'allem. Raba thought to lecture upon it at the public sessions. Said a certain old man to him, It is written, le'allem [to be kept secret].*

Maintenance to the Holy of Holies was also done twice in seven years:

***Pesachim 86a*** *Come and hear: Abba Saul said: The upper chamber of the Holy of Holies was more stringent than the Holy of Holies, for the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year, whereas the upper chamber of the Holy of Holies was entered only once a septennate — others say, twice a septennate — others say, once in a Jubilee — to see what it required?*

Meam Loez[[102]](#footnote-102) also speaks of a three and a half year period:

Nebuchadnezzar started an attack. He remained in the suburbs of Antioch and he sent Nebuzaradan with three hundred donkeys carrying axes made of the hardest iron. The iron was so well­ tempered that it could even cut through other iron. Nebuzaradan used the axes to try to hack through the gates of Jerusalem but they all broke on a single gate, which was hardly damaged. Nebuzaradan laid siege to Jerusalem for three and a half years but he could not conquer it. He was ready to return home when G-d put the idea into his mind to measure the height of the wall and he discovered that each day it was sinking two-and-one-half handbreadths. Finally, the wall sank com­pletely into the ground.

On the eve of Passover of the fourth and seventh years, one would have to rid himself of all tithes and priestly gifts (*Maaser Sheni* 5:6). This unusual mitzvah performed only twice every seven years. It is called "*Viduy Maaser*" - literally, 'Tithing Confession.' But this is not a confession in the usual sense. The individual goes to Jerusalem and publicly declares that he has fulfilled all obligations regarding terumot and ma'aserot, the various tithes of produce distributed to the kohanim, the Levites, and the poor. The Torah commands us to take inventory twice in seven years to assure we have distributed all the maaser, other gifts and taxes that are required of us.

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 26:13-15*** *When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; 13 Then thou shalt say before HaShem thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them: 14 I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of HaShem my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. 15 Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.*

Passover occurs six months into the year which always begins in Tishri. Passover of the fourth year would be three and a half years into the seven year Shmita cycle. Thus the declaration was made at the end of three and half years and again at the end of seven years.

So, what connects these events that they should all be associated with three and a half and seven?

**A prophet is not accepted in his own country – famine – no rain. No Torah.**

***Luqas (Luke) 4:25*** *But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;*

**Shechinah moved out of the Temple waiting for repentance. Was not accepted in that place. No Torah**

*"R. Jonathan said: Three and a half years the Shechinah abode upon the Mount of Olives hoping that Israel would repent,*

**Mezzuzah guards a house. It causes us to remember the commands of HaShem. So there will be Torah**

*The mezuzah of an individual's [house] should be examined twice every seven years.*

**The name of “Loving Kindness” – The essential name in the Torah.**

*Name of four letters the Sages confide to their disciples once a septennate — others state, twice a septennate.*

**The location of the Torah (luchot) and Moshe’s scroll.**

*the Holy of Holies was entered only once a septennate — others say, twice a septennate.*

**I did what the Torah required.**

On the eve of Passover of the fourth and seventh years, one would have to rid himself of all tithes and priestly gifts (*Maaser Sheni* 5:6).

Each of these issues seems to be about remembering HaShem and His Torah. This dovetails nicely with the septennial lectionary cycle which has as its main purpose to cause us to

# Simchat Torah

Simchat Torah is the only time of the year when the Torah reading is done at night time.

By rabbinic tradition, Shemini Atzeret celebrates the conclusion of the annual and the triennial cycle of the reading of the Torah. This celebration is known as Simchat Torah. In the Diaspora (exile) Shemini Atzeret is a two-day festival, with the Torah reading concluded on the second day, and it is common to refer to the second day as Simchat Torah and only to the first day as Shemini Atzeret. In Israel, where the festival lasts but one day, the two names are used interchangeably.

The central features of the Simchat Torah celebrations are the hakafot, the circuits around the synagogue, with the participants carrying the scrolls of the Torah, to the accompaniment of joyous singing and dancing. The hakafot are held both in the Arbit and in the Shacharit services. After the morning hakafot, three scrolls are taken from the Holy Ark for the Torah reading service. From the first scroll, the final portion of Devarim is read to conclude the entire Torah; from the second scroll, the first chapter of Bereshit with a few additional verses in order to indicate there is no pause in the cycle of the Torah readings; while from the third scroll, the appropriate Maftir is read relating to the sacrificial service for Shemini Atzeret. According to custom, everyone is called for an aliyah to the Torah.

# Verbal Tally Connectors

In 1989 Dr. Yosef Ofer published a full and updated list of all the Haftorot that were read according to the three-and-a-half year custom (except for two). Dr. Ofer writes the following concerning the three-year system:

“The first verse of the haftarah, of the triennial cycle, includes a sort of “gezerah shavah” (inference by analogy) to the first (or second) verse of the portion read from the Torah. This usually meant two or three words common to both, and sometimes also some common content.”

To wit, as opposed to the Babylonian custom of choosing a passage from the Prophets which is similar in theme or content to the parallel Torah reading (as indicated in Megillah 29b), the custom of Eretz Israel (the “Palestinian” custom, which is also called the Triennial cycle) was to find an appropriate passage from the Prophets based on a unique word found at the beginning of the Torah reading, even if the content was dissociate. Dr. Ofer points out that the haftarah of Malachi 3:4 (*And the offering [Minchah] of Yehuda and Jerusalem will be sweet*) which was the haftarah for the “sedra” beginning *This is the sacrifice of Aharon and his sons... a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a* ***perpetual meal offering*** *(Minchah tamid)* (Vayikra 6:12-13).

**The triennial Torah readings are related to the Haftorah and the Psalm by the verbal tally (vhk hnss or word-association), of related words.**

**The annual Torah readings are related to the Haftorah by their thematic tally.**

The Torah is related to Matityahu and to Yochanan by a verbal tally. The Triennial cycle is related to Matityahu as Midrash and the festival readings are related to Yochanan as sod.

The Mishna and Gemara are related to Marqos and Luqas by thematic tally, not by verbal tally.

Melech David wrote the first commentary on the triennial cycle when He composed the 150 Psalms.

The triennial cycle is prophetic in that it is prophesy about things to come. This is why they are arranged chronologically. This is why Melech David cared about the triennial cycle; it is the cycle of kings who need to understand the future in order to rule properly.

Whilst our Ashlamata (Haftarah) can be chosen, our Torah and Psalm are fixed. This variable Ashlamata (Haftarah) can be determined from the corresponding verbal tally found in Matityahu. The first Torah portion, Bereshit 1:1 – 2:3 is tied to the closing verses of Matityahu. This gives us a connection to Simchat Torah and also gives us a bit of an understanding as to how the Nazarean Codicil connects our principles together.

The primary connection between a Torah reading and its corresponding Ashlamata (Haftarah) is a “verbal tally”. The key word in a Torah portion is also the key word in the Ashlamata. This very similar to Hillel’s second middot: “Gezerah shavah” (literally, "a comparison of equals"), in which the use of the same term in two distinct parts of the Torah allows the application of a detail from the one case to the other, unrelated case.

# Ashlamata (Haftorah)

The term haftarahwas chosen by the Babylonian schools as a designation for the reading from the Prophets, in the annual cycle. The Palestinian term for the reading from the Prophets, of the triennial cycle, was *ashlamata*, apparently meaning “that which finishes the readings” or “that which completes the Torah.”

The Haftorah (literally means “conclusion”, referring to the placement of this reading at the end of the reading of the Torah) reading is chosen based on word associations in the Torah reading. The Nazarean Codicil will help narrow the choice. The word tally should be based on precedents such as: How was a word used? The readings should be divided at the paragraph markings, in English, or the (+ space divisions in the Hebrew).

Many scholars see the triennial Torah and Ashlamatot readings as chaotic with different congregations having different readings. One who sees the Jews today, such as I, would have a very hard time dealing with such a chaotic condition. It is hard to believe that Jews were not completely unified in their Torah readings. When I see multiple Ashlamatot I do not think chaos. I think: How do they ALL fit, logically, into a grand scheme of readings? While I surely do not yet understand all of the pieces, I do have a glimmer.

My glimmer is that when we have only two variant readings, then one must pertain to the Nisan cycle and one must pertain to the Tishri cycle. Take, for example, the Ashlamatot associated with the Torah reading of Bereshit 6:9 – 7:24. The Ashlamatot associated with this Torah reading are:

(1) Isaiah 54:9-17 + 55:5

(2) Isaiah 60:18 – 61:4 + 9

Now, if one looks at the subjects of these two readings, he will find that Isaiah 54-55 speaks about the flood, and that Isaiah 60-61 speak about the days of the Mashiach’s return. When we examine the Tishri cycle, we find that Bereshit 6 is read in the middle of Cheshvan. In the Nisan cycle we read this same portion close to Lag B’Omer. This suggests that we would read Isaiah 54:9-17 + 55:5 during the Tishri cycle, and that Isaiah 60:18 – 61:4 + 9 would be read during the Nisan cycle, because the subject matter concerns the particular time of the year. Thus we see that rather than being chaotic, the multiple Ashlamatot in fact help us connect our Torah reading to the time of year when we read that particular ashlamata.

So, what do we do when we have more than two Ashlamatot associated with a particular Torah reading? My working hypothesis is that the additional Ashlamatot are associated with a particular month. For example, if a Torah seder is read in Cheshvan, then Ashlamata “A” would be read. If that same Torah seder happens, due to calendrical variation, to fall in Kislev, then we would read Ashlamata “B”. We will see how this works out as we continue to study this fantastic lectionary.

There are a minimum of ten verses for the Shabbat Haftorah which are divided seven to start and three to end. The Haftorah must end on a positive note.

The Abudraham (R. David Abudraham, 14th c. Spain) explains the origin of the Haftorah:

*Why do we read from the Neviim? Since there was a decree against Israel preventing them from reading from the Torah, corresponding to the seven who would come up to read from the Torah - and no one reads fewer than three verses per Aliyah - they ordained that twenty-one verses from the Neviim should be read... (This approach can also be found in Tosafot Yom Tov, Megillah 3:4 - he cites the Sefer haTishbi who maintains that the aforementioned decree was passed by the wicked Antiochus Epiphanes IV).*

As Abudraham points out, the minimum requirement for a reading of the *Haftarah* is twenty-one verses, although there are exceptions to this rule (generally, if the entire theme is exhausted in fewer than twenty-one verses). This does seem to suggest a correlation to the Torah reading (seven aliyot times three verses at minimum),

The rules regarding the regular *Haftarah* as found in the Talmud are:

1) One who reads the Torah should not read less than three verses and he should not read to the translator more than one verse [at a time]. In a Prophets, however, [he may give him] three at a time. If the three verses constitute three separate Parashiyot, he must read them [to the translator] one by one. The reader may skip [from place to place] in a Prophets but not in the Torah ... (Mishna Megillah 4:4)

2) He who says the *Haftarah* from the Prophets should read not less than twenty-one verses:

***Megillah 23a*** *The following was cited in objection to this: ‘He who says the haftarah from the Prophet should read not less than twenty-one verses, corresponding to [those read by] the seven who have read in the Torah’. Now if it is as you say, there are twenty-four? — Since it is only out of respect for the Torah [that he reads], no corresponding verses [to those read by him] are required [in the prophetical reading]. Raba strongly demurred to this: There is, he said, [the haftarah of] ‘Add your burnt-offerings’ in which there are not twenty-one verses, and yet we read it! — The case is different there, because the subject is completed [before twenty-one verses]. But where the subject is not completed, do we then not [read less than twenty-one]? Has not R. Samuel b. Abba said: Many times I stood before R. Johanan, and when I had read ten verses he said, ‘Stop [both of] you’? — In a place where there is a translator it is different, since R. Tahlifa b. Samuel has taught: This rule was laid down only for a place where there is no translator, but where there is a translator a stop may be made [earlier].*

3) The reader may not skip from one Prophets to another. In the minor Prophets, he may skip, provided only that he does not skip from the end of the book to the beginning:

***Megillah 24a*** *MISHNAH. ONE WHO READS THE TORAH [IN SYNAGOGUE] SHOULD READ NOT LESS THAN THREE VERSES, AND HE SHOULD NOT READ TO THE TRANSLATOR MORE THAN ONE VERSE [AT A TIME]. IN A PROPHET, HOWEVER, [HE MAY GIVE HIM] THREE AT A TIME. IF THE THREE VERSES CONSTITUTE THREE SEPARATE PARAGRAPHS, HE MUST READ THEM [TO THE TRANSLATOR] ONE BY ONE. THE READER MAY SKIP [FROM PLACE TO PLACE] IN A PROPHET BUT NOT IN THE TORAH. HOW FAR MAY HE SKIP? [ONLY] SO FAR THAT THE TRANSLATOR WILL NOT HAVE STOPPED [BEFORE HE FINDS HIS PLACE].*

# Shabbat Torah Reading Rules

There are a minimum of twenty-one verses for each Shabbat with a minimum of seven readers with each reader reading a minimum of three verses. The verses must be consecutive without skipping. The verses are divided as follows:

1. Kohen
2. Levi
3. Israel
4. Israel
5. Israel
6. Israel
7. Israel – Position of honor, for the Sephardim, because he also says kaddish.

8. Maftir

The following sources detail some of the rules that govern the Septennial cycle.

***Berachoth 22b*** *Our Rabbis taught: If a man was standing saying the Tefillah and he remembered that he was a ba'al keri, he should not break off but shorten the benedictions. If a man was reading the Torah and remembered that he was a ba'al keri, he should not break off and leave it but should go on reading in a mumbling tone. R. Meir said: A ba'al keri is not permitted to read more than three verses in the Torah.*

***Taanit 27b*** *An objection was raised: [A section of] six verses is read by two, but [a section of] five verses by one; should, however, the first person have read three verses then the second person reads the [remaining] two and one verse from the following section; some say, he reads three verses [from the following section] because we do not read from a [new] section less than three verses. Now in accordance with the view of him who says that it should be repeated, let then [the third verse of the first section] be repeated; and in accordance with the view of him who says that it should be divided, let the verse be divided? — There the position is different because he has plenty of verses at his disposal.*

***Taanit 26ab*** *ON SUNDAY [THEY READ],[[103]](#footnote-103) IN THE BEGINNING, AND, LET THERE BE A FIRMAMENT; ON MONDAY,[[104]](#footnote-104) LET THERE BE A FIRMAMENT, AND, LET THE WATERS BE GATHERED TOGETHER; ON TUESDAY,[[105]](#footnote-105) LET THE WATERS BE GATHERED TOGETHER, AND, LET THERE BE LIGHTS; ON WEDNESDAY,[[106]](#footnote-106) LET THERE BE LIGHTS, AND, LET THE WATERS SWARM; ON THURSDAY,[[107]](#footnote-107) LET THE WATERS SWARM, AND, LET THE EARTH BRING FORTH; ON FRIDAY,[[108]](#footnote-108) LET THE EARTH BRING FORTH, AND, AND THE HEAVENS [AND THE EARTH] WERE FINISHED.*

***Megillah 21b*** *ON MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS AND ON SABBATH AT MINHAH THREE READ. What do these three represent? — R. Assi said: The Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Hagiographa. Raba said: Priests, Levites, and lay Israelites. But now, in the statement of R. Shimi, ‘Not less than ten verses [of the Torah] should be read in the synagogue, the verse ‘and [God] spoke to [Moses saying]’ being counted as one’, — what do these ten represent? — R.Joshua b. Levi said: The ten men of leisure in the synagogue. R. Joseph said: The ten commandments which were given to Moses on Sinai. (R. Levi said: The ten times hallel [praise] which David uttered in the book of Psalms.) R. Johanan said: The ten utterances with which the world was created. What are these? The expressions ‘And [God] said’ in the first chapter of Genesis. But there are only nine? — The words ‘In the beginning’ are also a [creative] utterance, since it is written, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*

*Raba said: If the first reads four verses he is to be commended; if the second reads four verses he is to be commended; if the third reads four verses he is to be commended. ‘If the first reads four verses he is to be commended’, as we have learnt: ‘There were three bags holding three se'ahs each, in which the priests take up the money-offerings out of the [shekel] chamber, and they were labeled Aleph, Beth, Gimmel, so as to show which was taken out first, so that sacrifices could be brought from that one first, since it is a religious duty to offer from the first. ‘If the middle one reads four verses, he is to be commended’, as it has been taught: ‘[The seven lamps] shall give light in front of the candlestick; this teaches that they were made to face the western lamp and the western lamp faced the Shechinah; and R. Johanan said: This shows that the middle one is specially prized’. ‘If the last reads four verses he is to be commended’: because of the principle that ‘in dealing with holy things we promote but never degrade’. R. Papa was once in the synagogue of Abe Gobar, when the first one [who was called up] read four verses, and R. Papa commended him.*

*NEITHER LESS NOR MORE [etc.]. A Tanna stated: The one who reads first makes a blessing before the reading, and the one who reads last makes a blessing after it. Nowadays that all make a blessing both before and after the reading, the reason is that the Rabbis ordained this to avoid error on the part of people entering and leaving synagogue.[[109]](#footnote-109)*

***Megillah 21b*** *ON NEW MOONS AND ON THE INTERMEDIATE DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL FOUR READ. ‘Ulla b. Rab enquired of Raba: How is the portion of New Moon[[110]](#footnote-110) to be divided? [The paragraph commencing] ‘Command the children of Israel and say to them’[[111]](#footnote-111) has eight verses. How are we to deal with them? Shall two persons read three verses each? Then two verses will be left [to the end of the paragraph], and it is not proper to leave over less than three verses to the end of the paragraph.[[112]](#footnote-112) Shall two read four verses each? Then seven verses will be left altogether, [the paragraph beginning] ‘and on the Sabbath day’[[113]](#footnote-113) being two, and [the paragraph beginning] ‘and on your new moons’[[114]](#footnote-114) being five. How are we to do? Shall we read [as one portion] two from one paragraph and one from the next?*

***Megillah 22a*** *[This is not right], since we do not read less than three verses together at the beginning of a paragraph. Shall the reader read two from one and three from the other? Then only two verses are left [to the end of the second paragraph]! — He replied: On this point I have not heard [any pronouncement], but I have learnt the rule in a somewhat similar case, as we have learnt: ‘On Sundays, [the ma'amad read the paragraph] "In the beginning" and "let there be a firmament",[[115]](#footnote-115) and to this a gloss was added, "In the beginning" is read by two and "let there be a firmament" by one’, and we were somewhat perplexed by this. For that [the paragraph] ‘let there be a firmament’ can be read by one we understand, since it has three verses, but how can ‘In the beginning, be read by two, seeing that it has only five verses, and it has been taught, ‘He who reads in the Torah should not read less than three verses’? And it was stated [in answer] to this [question] that Rab says he should repeat,[[116]](#footnote-116) and Samuel says he should divide a verse. Rab said he should repeat. Why should he not say ‘divide’? — He was of opinion that any verse which Moses had not divided, we may not divide, whereas Samuel held that we may divide. But surely, R. Hananiah the Bible teacher[[117]](#footnote-117) said, I was in great pain in the house of R. Hanina the great, and he would not allow me to make [additional verse] divisions save for the school children, because they are there to be taught? — Now what was the reason there [why he was allowed to make divisions]? Because it could not be avoided; here[[118]](#footnote-118) too it cannot be avoided. Samuel said that he divides. Why did he not say that he repeats? It is a precaution to prevent error on the part of those coming in and going out.*

*An objection [against both these views] 8 was brought from the following: ‘A section of six verses may be read by two persons, a section of five verses must be read by one. If the first reads three verses, the second reads the remaining two from this section and one from the next; some, however, say that he reads three from the next, because not less than three verses should be read at the beginning of a section’. Now if it is as you said,[[119]](#footnote-119) then according to the one who says he should repeat, let him repeat, and according to the one who says he should divide, let him divide? — It is different here,[[120]](#footnote-120) because this method is open to him.[[121]](#footnote-121)*

*R. Tanhum, said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: The halacha follows the alternative opinion[[122]](#footnote-122) mentioned.*

*R. Tanhum also said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: Just as at the beginning of a section not less than three verses should be read, so at the end of a section not less than three verses should be left. Surely this is obvious! Seeing that in regard to the beginning of a section where the First Tanna is not so strict the alternative opinion is strict, is it not certain that in regard to the verses left [at the end of the section] where the First Tanna is strict the alternative opinion will also be strict? — You might argue that it is usual for people to come in [to synagogue during the reading of the law],[[123]](#footnote-123) but it is not usual for them to go out and leave the scroll of the law while it is being read;[[124]](#footnote-124) therefore we are told [that we do not argue thus]. But now with regard to the First Tanna: Why does he forbid [less than three verses] to be left [at the end of the section]? On account of people going out of synagogue,[[125]](#footnote-125) is it not? Then with regard to the beginning also he should take precautions on account of people coming in? — I can answer that a person coming in enquires [how much has been read].[[126]](#footnote-126)*

*Rabbah the son of Raba sent to enquire of R. Joseph: What is the law?[[127]](#footnote-127) He sent him back word: The law is that the verse is repeated, and it is a middle reader[[128]](#footnote-128) who repeats.*

*THIS IS THE GENERAL RULE: WHENEVER THERE IS A MUSAF etc. The question was raised: How many read on a public fast day?[[129]](#footnote-129) Shall we say that on New Moon and the intermediate days of the festival when there is an additional sacrifice four read, but here where there is no additional sacrifice this is not the case? Or shall we argue that here also there is an additional prayer? — Come and hear: ON NEW MOONS AND ON THE INTERMEDIATE DAYS OF FESTIVALS FOUR READ’, from which we conclude that on public fasts only three read. Look now at the preceding clause: ‘ON MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS AND ON SABBATH AT MINHAH THREE READ’, from which we may conclude that on a public fast four read! The truth is that we cannot decide from here.*

*Come then and hear [this]: ‘Rab happened to be at Babylon[[130]](#footnote-130) during a public fast. He came forward and read in the scroll of the law. Before commencing he made a blessing but after finishing he made no blessing. The whole congregation [afterwards] fell on their faces, but Rab did not fall on his face’. Let us now see. Rab read as a lay Israelite.[[131]](#footnote-131) Why then did he say no blessing after finishing? Was it not because another was to read after him? — No. Rab read as Kohen,[[132]](#footnote-132) for R. Huna also read as Kohen.[[133]](#footnote-133) I can understand R. Huna reading as Kohen, because even R. Assi and R. Ammi who were distinguished kohanim of Eretz Israel showed deference to R. Huna. But as to Rab there was Samuel [his Babylonian contemporary] who was a Kohen and who took precedence of him? — Samuel also showed deference to Rab, and it was Rab who of his own accord paid him special honor and this he did only in his presence, but not when he was not present. It is reasonable also to assume that Rab read as Kohen, because if you presume that he read as a layman, why did he say a blessing before reading? — It was after the regulation[[134]](#footnote-134) had been made. If so, he should have said a blessing after reading also? — Where Rab was present there was a difference, because people came in [late] but did not go out [during the reading of the law].*

***Megillah 22b*** *Come and hear: ‘The general principle is that wherever the people would be hindered from their work, as on a public fast and on the month of Ab, three read, and where the people would not be hindered from their work, as on New Moons and the intermediate days of festivals,2 four read’. This settles the question. Said R. Ashi: But we have learnt differently, viz., THIS IS THE GENERAL RULE: WHEREVER THERE IS A MUSAF BUT NOT A FESTIVAL FOUR READ: Now what is added [by the words ‘THIS IS THE GENERAL RULE’]? Is it not a public fast and the month of Ab? But according to R. Ashi, whose view then is recorded in the Mishna? It is neither that of the First Tanna nor of R. Jose, as it has been taught: ‘If it [the month of Ab] falls on Monday or Thursday, three read and one [of them] says a haftarah. If on Tuesday or Wednesday, one reads and [the same] one says the haftarah. R. Jose, however, says that in all cases three read and one [of them] says the haftarah’. But still the words ‘THIS IS THE GENERAL RULE are difficult! — No. They add New Moon and the intermediate days. But as these are stated explicitly: ON NEW MOONS AND THE INTERMEDIATE DAYS FOUR READ? — [The Mishna] is merely giving an indication that you should not say that the festivals and the intermediate days have the same rule, but you should take this as a general principle, that for every additional distinguishing mark an additional person reads. Hence on New Moon and the intermediate days, when there is an additional sacrifice, four read; on festivals, when [in addition] work is prohibited, five read; on the Day of Atonement when [in addition] there is a penalty of kareth, six read; on Sabbath when there is a penalty of stoning, seven read.*

*ON FESTIVALS FIVE READ, ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT SIX etc. Whose view does the Mishna embody? It is neither that of R. Ishmael nor of R. Akiba, as it has been taught: ‘On festivals five read, on the Day of Atonement six, and on Sabbath seven. This number may neither be increased nor diminished. So R. Ishmael. R. Akiba says: On festivals five read, on the Day of Atonement seven and on Sabbath six. This number may not be diminished but it may be increased’. Whom [does the Mishna follow]? If R. Ishmael, it conflicts with him over the additional number, if R. Akiba, it conflicts with him over the question of six and seven! — Raba said: The view is that of a Tanna of the school of R. Ishmael, since in the school of R. Ishmael it was stated: ‘On festivals five, on the Day of Atonement six, on Sabbath seven; this number may not be diminished but it may be increased. So R. Ishmael.’ R. Ishmael is now in conflict with himself! — Two Tannaim report R. Ishmael differently.*

*Who is responsible for the statement which has been taught: ‘On festivals people come late to synagogue and leave early. On the Day of Atonement they come early and leave late. On Sabbath they come early and leave early’? Shall I say it is R. Akiba who makes an extra man [read on the Day of Atonement]? — You may also say it is R. Ishmael, [his reason being that] the order [of the service] of the day is very long.*

*What do these three, five and seven represent? — Different answers were given by R. Isaac b. Nahmani and one who was with him, namely, R. Simeon b. Pazzi, or, according to others, by R. Simeon b. Pazzi and one who was with him, namely, R. Isaac b. Nahmani, or according to others, R. Samuel b. Nahmani. One said that [these represent] the [respective number of Hebrew words in the three verses of the] Priestly benedictions, while the other said ‘the three keepers of the door’. [The five represent] ‘five of them that saw the king's face’ [and the seven] ‘seven men of them that saw the king's face’. R. Joseph learnt: Three, five and seven: ‘three keepers of the door’, five of them that saw the king's face’, and ‘seven that saw the king's face’. Said Abaye to him: Until to-day your honor never explained the reason to us, he replied: I never knew that you wanted to know. Did you ever ask me anything which I did not tell you?*

*Jacob the Min asked R. Judah: What do the six of the Day of Atonement represent? — He replied: The six who stood at the right of Ezra and the six who stood at his left, as it says, And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema and Anaiah and Uriah and Hilkiah and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael and Malchijah and Hashum and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, Meshullam. But these last are seven? — Zechariah is the same as Meshullam. And why is he called Meshullam? Because he was blameless [mishlam] in his conduct.*

*Our Rabbis taught: All are qualified to be among the seven [who read], even a minor and a woman, only the Sages said that a woman should not read in the Torah out of respect for the congregation.*

*The question was raised: Should the Maftir be counted among the seven? — R. Huna and R. Jeremiah b. Abba answered differently. One said that he does count and the other that he does not count. The one who says he does count points to the fact that he actually reads [from the Torah also], while the one who says he does not count relies on the dictum of ‘Ulla, who said: Why is it proper for the one who reads the haftarah from the Prophet to read in the Torah first? To show respect for the Torah. Since then he reads [only] out of respect for the Torah, he should not be counted to make up the seven.*

*The following was cited in objection to this: ‘He who says the haftarah from the Prophet should read not less than twenty-one verses, corresponding to [those read by] the seven who have read in the Torah’. Now if it is as you say, there are twenty-four? — Since it is only out of respect for the Torah [that he reads], no corresponding verses [to those read by him] are required [in the prophetical reading]. Raba strongly demurred to this: There is, he said, [the haftarah of] ‘Add your burnt-offerings’[[135]](#footnote-135) in which there are not twenty-one verses, and yet we read it! — The case is different there, because the subject is completed [before twenty-one verses]. But where the subject is not completed, do we then not [read less than twenty-one]? Has not R. Samuel b. Abba said: Many times I stood before R. Johanan, and when I had read ten verses he said, ‘Stop [both of] you’? — In a place where there is a translator it is different, since R. Tahlifa b. Samuel has taught: This rule was laid down only for a place where there is no translator, but where there is a translator a stop may be made [earlier].*

***Megillah 23b*** *MISHNAH. ONE WHO READS THE TORAH [IN SYNAGOGUE] SHOULD READ NOT LESS THAN THREE VERSES, AND HE SHOULD NOT READ TO THE TRANSLATOR MORE THAN ONE VERSE [AT A TIME]. IN A PROPHET, HOWEVER, [HE MAY GIVE HIM] THREE AT A TIME. IF THE THREE VERSES CONSTITUTE THREE SEPARATE PARAGRAPHS, HE MUST READ THEM [TO THE TRANSLATOR] ONE BY ONE. THE READER MAY SKIP [FROM PLACE TO PLACE] IN A PROPHET BUT NOT IN THE TORAH. HOW FAR MAY HE SKIP? [ONLY] SO FAR THAT THE TRANSLATOR WILL NOT HAVE STOPPED [BEFORE HE FINDS HIS PLACE].*

***Megillah 24a*** *GEMARA. What do these three verses represent? — R. Assi said: The Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa.*

*HE SHOULD NOT READ TO THE TRANSLATOR MORE THAN ONE VERSE. IN A PROPHET, HOWEVER, HE MAY READ THREE. IF THE THREE VERSES CONSTITUTE THREE PARAGRAPHS, HE MUST READ THEM ONE BY ONE. For instance, [the three verses], for thus saith the Lord, ye were sold for naught; for thus saith the Lord God, my people went down aforetime to Egypt; Now therefore what do I here, saith the Lord.*

*THE READER MAY SKIP IN A PROPHET BUT NOT IN THE TORAH. A contradiction was pointed out [between this and the following]: ‘He [the High Priest] reads [on the Day of Atonement] "after the death" and "only on the tenth day". But he is skipping? — Abaye replied: There is no contradiction; in the one case the translator will have come to a stop [before the place is found] in the other case he will not have come to a stop. But it states in connection with this. THE READER MAY SKIP IN THE PROPHET BUT HE MAY NOT SKIP IN THE TORAH. AND HOW FAR MAY HE SKIP? SO FAR THAT THE TRANSLATOR WILL NOT HAVE STOPPED. From this we infer that in the Torah he may not skip at all? — The truth is, said Abaye, that there is no contradiction. In the one case [the reader deals] with one subject, in the other case with two; and in fact it has been taught: ‘The reader may skip in the Torah [provided he keeps] to one subject, and in a Prophet even if he goes on to another subject’; and in both cases only so far that the translator will not have stopped [before he finds the place]. It has been taught in another place: ‘The reader may not skip from one prophet to another. In the Twelve Minor Prophets he may skip, provided only that he does not skip from the end of the book to the beginning.’*

***Megillah 25a*** *MISHNAH. THE INCIDENT OF REUBEN IS READ IN SYNAGOGUE BUT NOT TRANSLATED.[[136]](#footnote-136) THE STORY OF TAMAR[[137]](#footnote-137) IS READ AND TRANSLATED. THE FIRST ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT OF THE GOLDEN CALF[[138]](#footnote-138) IS BOTH READ AND TRANSLATED, THE SECOND[[139]](#footnote-139) IS READ BUT NOT TRANSLATED. THE BLESSING OF THE PRIESTS[[140]](#footnote-140) IS READ BUT NOT TRANSLATED. THE STORIES OF DAVID[[141]](#footnote-141) AND AMNON[[142]](#footnote-142) ARE READ BUT NOT TRANSLATED. THE PORTION OF THE CHARIOT[[143]](#footnote-143) IS NOT READ AS A HAFTARAH, BUT R. JUDAH PERMITS THIS. R. ELEAZAR SAYS: THE PORTION, MAKE KNOWN TO JERUSALEM’,[[144]](#footnote-144) IS NOT READ AS A HAFTARAH.*

*GEMARA. Our Rabbis taught: Some portions [of the Scripture] are both read and translated, some are read but not translated, [and some are neither read nor translated].[[145]](#footnote-145) The following are both read and translated: (Mnemonic: B'L'T’ ‘E'K'N’ N'SH'P'H’).[[146]](#footnote-146) The account of the creation[[147]](#footnote-147) is both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think that [through hearing it] people are led to inquire what is above and what is below, and what is before and what is after.1 Therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. The story of Lot and his two daughters2 is both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think that [we should forbear] out of respect for Abraham. Therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. The story of Tamar and Judah is both read and translated. Certainly! — We might think that [we should forbear] out of respect for Judah. Therefore we are told [that this is no objection]; [the passage] really redounds to his credit, because [it records that] he confessed. The first account of the making of the Calf is both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think that [we should forbear] out of respect for Israel. Therefore we are told [that this is no objection]; on the contrary, it is agreeable to them, because it was followed by atonement. The curses and blessings are both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think that [we should forbear] lest the congregation should become disheartened; therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. Warnings and penalties are both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think that [we should forbear] for fear that they may come to keep the commandments out of fear; therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. The story of Amnon and Tamar is both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think that [we should forbear] out of respect for David. Therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. The story of the concubine in Gibeah is both read and translated. Certainly! — You might think [that we should forbear] out of respect for Benjamin. Therefore we are told [that this is no objection]. The passage commencing ‘Make known to Jerusalem her abominations’ is both read and translated. Certainly! — This is stated to exclude the view of R. Eleazar, as it has been taught: ‘On one occasion a man read in the presence of R. Eleazar ‘Make known to Jerusalem her abominations’. He said to him, While you are investigating the abominations of Jerusalem, go and investigate the abominations of your own mother. Inquiries were made into his birth, and he was found to be illegitimate.*

***Megillah 25b*** *Mnemonic: R'E'B'D'N’). The incident of Reuben is read but not translated. On one occasion R. Hanina b. Gamaliel went to Kabul, and the reader of the congregation read, ‘And it came to pass when Israel abode’, and he said to the translator, Translate only the latter part of the verse, and the Sages commended his action. The second account of the Calf is read but not translated. What is the second account of the Calf? — From ‘And Moses said’ up to ‘and Moses saw’. It has been taught: A man should always be careful in wording his answers, because on the ground of the answer which Aaron made to Moses the unbelievers were able to deny [God], as it says, And I cast it into the fire and this calf came forth.*

*The priestly blessing is read but not translated. What is the reason? — Because it contains the words, May he lift up.*

*The accounts of David and Amnon are neither read nor translated. But you just said that the story of Amnon and Tamar is both read and translated? — There is no contradiction; the former statement refers to where it says ‘Amnon son of David’, the latter to where it says ‘Amnon’ simply.*

***Megillah 29a*** *MISHNAH. IF THE NEW MOON OF ADAR FALLS ON SABBATH, THE PORTION OF SHEKALIM IS READ [ON THAT DAY]. IF IT FALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK, IT IS READ ON THE SABBATH BEFORE, AND ON THE NEXT SABBATH THERE IS A BREAK. ON THE SECOND [OF THE SPECIAL SABBATHS] ZAKOR IS READ, ON THE THIRD THE PORTION OF THE RED HEIFER, ON THE FOURTH THIS MONTH SHALL BE TO YOU.’ ON THE FIFTH THE REGULAR ORDER IS RESUMED. [THE REGULAR READING][[148]](#footnote-148) IS INTERRUPTED FOR ANY SPECIAL OCCASION: FOR NEW MOONS, FOR HANUKKAH, FOR PURIM, FOR FASTS, FOR MA'AMADOTH, AND FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.*

*GEMARA. We have learnt in another place: ‘On the first of Adar proclamation is made with regard to the shekels and with regard to diverse seeds. I can understand it being made for diverse seeds, because it is the time for sowing. But what is the ground for making it for the shekels? — R. Tabi said in the name of R. Josiah: Because Scripture says, This is the burnt-offering of each new moon in its renewal. The Torah herein says to us: As you renew the month, bring an offering from the new contributions. And since it is in Nisan that we have to bring from the new contributions, we read beforehand on the first of Adar so that shekels should be brought [in time] to the Sanctuary. With whose view does this accord? Not with that of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel. For if you take the view of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel, he requires [only] two weeks’ [notice], as it has been taught: ‘Moot points in the law of Passover are considered from thirty days before Passover; R. Simeon b. Gamaliel, however, says, from two weeks before’. You may even say it accords with the view of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel. For since a Master has said that ‘on the fifteenth of this month [Adar] tables are set up in the provinces and on the twenty-fifth in the Sanctuary’, On account of the tables we read beforehand [on the first of Adar].*

***Megillah 29b*** *What is the portion of Shekalim? — Rab said, Commanded the children of Israel and say unto them My food which is presented unto me, Samuel said, When thou takest. We call well see how, according to the one who says the portion is ‘When thou takest’, it is called the portion of Shekalim, because Shekalim are mentioned in it. But according to the one who says it is ‘My food which is presented to me’, — are shekels mentioned there? — Yes; the reason is based on the dictum of R. Tabi. I can well understand [the reason of] the one who says that ‘Command the children of Israel’ [should be read], because sacrifices are mentioned in it. But according to the one who says that ‘When thou takest’ should be read, are sacrifices mentioned there? It is the shekels for the sockets that are mentioned there! — [The reason is] as R. Joseph learnt: ‘There were three contributions; of the altar for the altar, of the sockets for the sockets, and of the repair of the House for the repair of the House’. There is a justification for the one who says that ‘When thou takest’ should be read, because he thus makes a difference between this New Moon and other New Moons. But the one who says that ‘Command the children of Israel’ should be read — what difference does he make? — He does make a difference, because on other New Moons six read in the portion of the day and one that of New Moon, whereas on this occasion all read in that of New Moon. This is a good answer for one who says that [when the Mishna says that the ‘REGULAR ORDER’ IS RESUMED it means] ‘the regular order of portions’; but according to the one who says that [what it means is that] the order of haftarahs is resumed [and the order of Pentateuch portions has not been interrupted], what difference is there [between this New Moon and others]? — There is a difference, because on other New Moons six read in the portion of the day and one the special portion for New Moon, whereas on this occasion three read in the portion of the day and four in that of New Moon.*

*On objection was raised: 2 ‘When the New Moon of Adar falls on Sabbath, the portion of Shekalim is read, and the chapter of Jehoiada the Priest is said as haftarah’. Now according to the one who says that ‘When thou takest’ should be said, there is a good reason for reading Jehoiada the Priest as haftarah because it is similar in subject, as it is written [there], the money of the persons for whom each man is rated. But according to the one who says that ‘My food which is presented to me’ is read, is there any similarity? — There is, on the basis of R. Tabi's dictum.*

***Megillah 29b*** *It has been taught in agreement with Samuel: ‘When the New Moon of Adar falls on Sabbath, the portion ‘When thou takest’ is read, and the haftarah is about ‘Jehoiada the Priest’.*

*R. Isaac Nappaha said: When the New Moon of Adar falls on Sabbath, three scrolls of the Law are taken out [of the Ark], and read out of — from one the portion of the day, from one the portion of New Moon, and from one ‘When thou takest’. R. Isaac b. Nappaha also said: When the New Moon of Tebet falls on Sabbath, three scrolls of the Law are brought and read out of; from one the regular portion, from a second the portion of New Moon, and from the third that of Hanukkah. Both statements are required. For if only the latter had been given, [I might think that] in this case R. Isaac required [three scrolls], but in the other case he followed the view of Rab who said that the portion of Shekalim is ‘My food which is presented to me’, and therefore two would be enough. Therefore we are told that this is not so. But why not state the former [only] and the other would not need to be stated? — One was inferred from the other.*

*It was stated: If the New Moon of Tebet falls on a weekday, R. Isaac [Nappaha] says that three read the portion of New Moon and one the portion of Hanukkah. R. Dimi from Haifa, however, says that three read the portion of Hanukkah and one that of New Moon. Said R. Mani: The opinion of R. Isaac Nappaha is the more probable, because when it is a question between the regular and the intermittent, the regular takes precedence. R. Abin, however, said: The opinion of R. Dimi is the more probable. For what is it that causes a fourth man to read? The New Moon. Therefore the fourth ought to read the portion of the New Moon. What do we decide? — R. Joseph said: We take no notice of New Moon, while Rabbah said, We take no notice of Hanukkah. The law, however, is that we take no notice of Hanukkah,’ and New Moon is the main consideration. It was stated: ‘If it [the Sabbath of Shekalim] falls when the portion ‘And thou shalt command’ is read, then six persons read from ‘And thou shalt command’ to ‘When thou takest’, and one from ‘When thou takest’ to ‘Thou shalt also make’. Abaye remarked:*

\* \* \*

The Haftorah Malachi 3:4-24 is read only when Shabbat HaGadol falls on erev Pesach. This passage tells of the tithe that was to be brought to the storehouse [of the Beit HaMikdash], and the time for clearing one's home of tithes (in the fourth and seventh years of the Sabbatical cycle) was erev Pesach.

Following the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch*,* end of sec. 430, after Minchah on Shabbat HaGadol we read part of the Haggada, from avadimhayinu until lechapeir al kol avonoseinu, because the redemption and the miracles began on the Shabbat before Pesach.

# Bereshit (Genesis) 1:1 – 2:3

In this section I will be examining each sedra and sharing the comments of our Beit Midrash.

The first reading from the Torah, according to the triennial cycle, is Bereshit 1:1 – 2:3. The parts for each of the readers are divided by a “:” and the letter Pey or Samek. Thus we see that Bereshit 1:1 – 2:3 shows the following divisions:

1:1 – 1:5

1:6 – 1:8

1:9 – 1:13

1:14 – 1:19

1:20 – 1:23

1:24 – 1:31 (1:24 – 1:28 and 1:29 – 1:31)

2:1 – 2:3

The seven readers are easily delineated, yet we also require a Maftir. This eighth portion is derived by dividing 1:24 – 1:31, a very fat portion, into two readings. We divide at the “:”. Thus we have our eight portions clearly shown in this portion. These divisions can also be clearly seen in the English versions by looking for the paragraph marks or other techniques used to delineate paragraphs in the various English versions.

The Septennial cycle, therefore, follows the natural rhythm of the Torah scroll.

\* \* \*

Hakham Jacob Mann[[149]](#footnote-149) suggests that we will read at home: Isaiah 65:17 – 66:22 as the Haftorah portion for Bereshit 1:1 -2:3. But when we read this in the synagogue, we will read 65:17-25 and then skip to 66:22. This skipping was used to avoid ending on a negative note.

Hakham Yaaqov Mann indicates that the Sephardi tradition normally reads a Haftorah of Yeshayahu 42:5-13 plus 42:21. The verbal tally from the Nazarean Codicil and the Torah reading, suggest that this is the correct Haftorah for Nazareans. This Haftorah begins with the creating the heavens and spreading forth the earth. It goes on to indicate that the Messiah is going to reach out for the Gentiles. Since the theme of Matityahu is the sending of the Gentile Messiah it matches well with the verbal connection between Yeshua, in the NC, and the Gentiles, in the Haftorah.

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 42:5-13*** *Thus saith God HaShem, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6 I HaShem have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. 8 I am HaShem: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*

*9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. 10 Sing unto HaShem a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory unto HaShem, and declare his praise in the islands. 13 HaShem shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.*

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 42:21 21*** *HaShem is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable.*

The Genesis of the Nazarean Codicil gives us a verbal tally the creating of our Haftorah and the creating of the Torah.

Another translation of Bereshit 1:1:

*For the sake of the things called first, G-d created the heavens and the earth.*

This verbal tally also follows Tehillim 1 which the Midrash[[150]](#footnote-150) links with Adam who is also called first.

***1 Corinthians 15:45*** *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

Matityahu is a midrash with an overarching theme of concern for establishing *justice*. The opening verse introduces three men who are closely associated with justice: Yeshua, King David, and Avraham. This meshes well with the Haftorah of Yeshayahu chapter 42 which is also concerned with *righteousness* which is another way of speaking about justice.

We have previously learned that Yeshua is the Living Torah (Mashiach). This gives us another connection between our Haftorah in v.21, with the word Torah. This also correlates with the opening words of the Torah in Bereshit as we see from:

***Yochanan (John) 1:1*** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

This also gives us a verbal tally with Tehillim (Psalms) 1 which is also concerned with the *law of the Lord*.

# In The Peshitta

The Peshitta (Tanach) was translated from the Hebrew, probably in the 2nd century. The Nazarean Codicil of the Peshitta, had become the standard by the early 5th century. Thus we see that the Peshitta represents a translation that reflects traditions that suggests that the triennial cycle was a tradition from very early post Temple times. In addition, the Peshitta includes divisions for the festival as well as the triennial cycles, which supports our understanding that the festival cycle supersedes the weekly cycle, whether the annual or the triennial.

The Jewish Encyclopedia gives us some very interesting detail:

*That the Peshitta of the Pentateuch was in use in the synagogues is seen from the fact that it is divided into the weekly lessons for the Palestinian or triennial cycle. Even those parts which are read in the synagogue on various holy days are indicated; for instance, before Lev. xvi. 1, the indication is given that the following part is to be read on the Day of Atonement (comp. Meg. 30b). Other superscriptions show the rabbinical spirit of the translator, as Ex. xxi.: "'esra pitgamin" (= "'aseret ha-dibrot" = "decalogue"; Ber. 11b); Lev. xvii. 1: "namusa de-kurbane" (= "parashat ha-korbanot" = "the chapter of sacrifices"; Meg. 30b). Later in the second century, when Biblical exegesis reached a higher plane in the flourishing schools of Tiberias and Sepphoris, the Peshitta, which is a somewhat literal translation, began to fall into disuse. It was finally superseded in Palestine in the second century by the translation of Aquila, which was made on the basis of Akiba's teaching, and in the third century in Babylonia by the Targum of Onkelos, which was based on the Peshitta itself.*

*It has been already stated that the Peshitta, from its earliest appearance, was accepted in the Church. This rendered necessary the institution of the office of interpreter ("meturgeman") as in the synagogues; for, besides the fact that the Peshitta, was written in Hebrew characters, the language itself and the mode of interpretation were not familiar to Christians. It is evident, however, that the Peshitta did not assume canonical authority till many centuries later, as Bar Hebræus gave the preference to the Septuagint (see above). It is worth while mentioning that Nachmanides quotes, in the introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch, the Syriac translation of the Wisdom of Solomon ("Chukmeta Rabbeta di-Shelomoh"), and in his commentary (on Deut. xxi. 14), the Book of Judith ("Megillat Shushan").*

Thus we see that the Peshitta gives us a triennial connection in post Temple times, which included both the Tanach and the Nazarean Codicil. Some have also suggested that the Babylonian Talmud makes references to the Peshitta in see *Shabbat 10b*; *Rosh Hashanna 33b*; and *Megillat 10b*.

# Conclusion

The Yovel year follows the seventh Shmita year and is mentioned in:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:8-12*** *You shall count off seven weeks of years - seven times seven years - so that the period of seven weeks of years gives you a total of forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the horn loud; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, the Day of Atonement, you shall have the horn sounded throughout your land and you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim liberty ("release") throughout the land for all the inhabitants thereof. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee* (Yovel) *for you: you shall not sow, neither shall you reap the after growth or harvest the untrimmed vines, for it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you: you may only eat the growth direct from the field...*

As the text states, the Yovel year comes in the 50th year, the year-long culmination of a succession of seven Shmita cycles (49 years).

The Yovel resembles the Shmita year very closely. Perhaps this is why we use the annual Torah lectionary during the Yovel year. When we are freed from the requirement to earn a living, we have the time to handle the larger Torah portions. The Annual cycle allows us to use the Yovel year to focus on HaShem and His sovereignty over us and over the land. This sovereignty is the goal of the Shmita year and the Yovel year.

The following links contain various views of the Triennial Cycle (Triennial Torah Cycle) / Septennial Cycle (Septennial Torah Cycle):

Shmita Cycle of Three and a half years of Torah readings with Rabbinic commentary. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.)

Shmita Cycle readings of Matityahu for ordinary Shabbats. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.)

The Shmita cycle sedarim. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.) Nisan 5765 - Elul 5768.

The Shmita cycle sedarim. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.) Tishri 5769 - Tishri 5776.

The Shmita cycle sedarim. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.) Tishri 5776 - Adar 5779.

Shmita cycle sedarim for three cycles with integrated Tehillim. Nisan 5765 - Elul 5772. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.)

Professor Wacholder's Triennial cycle Torah sedarim sources.

A synthesis of Annual and Triennial cycle Torah readings from the Masorah, Professor Wacholder, with Hebrew names.

The Triennial cycle Torah sedarim as denoted by the Masorah, in Hebrew.

The Shmita cycle sedarim for three cycles, with integrated Tehillim (Psalms) and Ashlamatot. Nisan 5765 - Elul 5772. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.)

The Shmita cycle sedarim for three cycles, with integrated Torah sederim. Nisan 5765 - Elul 5772. (Triennial cycle Torah portion.)

The Ashlamatot (Haftarot) for the Triennial cycle Torah (half a Shmita cycle) as denoted by Jacob Mann, Isaiah Sonne, and Professor Ben Zion Wacholder.

A synthesis of Annual and Triennial cycle Torah readings from the Masorah, Professor Ben Zion Wacholder, the Jewish Encyclopedia, and the Encyclopedia Judaica.

# Appendix A

**Three and a half year Torah cycle correlated with the Shmita and Yovel cycles**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Shmita** | **Shmita Cycle**  **Year** | **Septennial** **Torah Cycle** | **Festival Shabbatot[[151]](#footnote-151) which interrupt the triennial cycle.** | **Maaser** |
| **One** | **Year 1**  **5762 -**5th year of the 19 year cycle.  **5769** – 12th year of the 19 year cycle.  Both are **“normal”** years - 354 days. | **Start Triennial**  **cycle in Tishri**  **Read Bereshit**  **(10 months)** | Chol HaMoed Succoth  Chol HaMoed Pesach  Rosh Chodesh Iyar | Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני  Eaten by owner  Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in  Jerusalem. |
| **One** | **Year 2**  **5763 -** 6th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “full” *leap* year - 385 days.  **5770** – 13th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “full” year – 355 days. | **Read Shemot**  **(10 months)** | Rosh HaShanah  Succoth  Chol HaMoed Succoth  Shemini Atzeret  Chanukah  Chol HaMoed Pesach  Rosh Chodesh Shevat  Rosh Chodesh Iyar | Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני  Eaten by owner  Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in  Jerusalem. |
| **One** | **Year 3**  **5764 -** 7th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**full**” Year - 355 days.  **5771** – 14th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**full**” *leap* year - 385 days. | **Read Vayikra**  **(8 months)**  **Read Bamidbar**  **(8 months)** | Rosh HaShanah  Succoth  Chol HaMoed Succoth  Shemini Atzeret  Chanukah  Chol HaMoed Pesach  Rosh Chodesh Shevat | Maaser ani –  מעשר עני  Given to the poor.  Doesn't have to be  eaten in Jerusalem. |
| **One**  **25 Sabbaths** | **Year 4**  **5765 -** 8th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**deficient**” *leap* year - 383 days.  **5772** – 15th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a **“normal”** year - 354 days. | **Read Devarim**  **(6 months)**  **Start Triennial**  **cycle in Nisan** | Yom HaKippurim  Chol HaMoed Succoth  Chol HaMoed Pesach  Rosh Chodesh Heshvan  Rosh Chodesh Adar II  Rosh Chodesh Av | Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני  Eaten by owner  Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in  Jerusalem. |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Shmita** | **Shmita Cycle**  **Year** | **Festival Shabbatot[[152]](#footnote-152) which interrupt the triennial cycle.** | **Maaser** |
| **One**  **50 Sabbaths** | **Year 5**  **5766 -** 9th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**normal**” year - 354 days.  **5773** – 16th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**deficient**” year – 353 days. | Chol HaMoed Succoth  Chol HaMoed Pesach  Rosh Chodesh Iyar | Maaser Sheni - מעשר שני  Eaten by owner  Has a degree of sanctity, must be eaten only in  Jerusalem. |
| **One**  **51 Sabbaths** | **Year 6**  **5767 -** 10th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**full**” Year - 355 days.  **5774 -** 17th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**full**” *leap* year - 385 days. | Rosh HaShanah  Succoth  Chol HaMoed Succoth  Shemini Atzeret  Chanukah  Chol HaMoed Pesach  Rosh Chodesh Shevat | Maaser ani - מעשר עני  Given to the poor  Doesn't have to be  eaten in Jerusalem. |
| **One**  **54 Sabbaths** | **Year 7**  **5768 -** 11th year of the 19 year cycle.  It is a “**deficient**” leap year **-** 383 days.  **5775 -** 18th year of the 19 year cycle. It is a “**normal**” year - 354 days. | Yom HaKippurim  Chol HaMoed Succoth  Chol HaMoed Pesach  Rosh Chodesh Heshvan  Rosh Chodesh Adar II  Rosh Chodesh Av | All creditors must release their debtors from their debts.  The land lies fallow.  All Jewish slaves must be released from their servitude.  No Terumah - תְּרוּמָה /  No Maaser Rishon - מעשר ראשון /  No Maaser Ani - מעשר עני or  Sheni - מעשר שני  / No Terumat HaMaaser - תרומת המעשר (Given by Levi to Kohen). |

/-----REGULAR-----\ /-----LEAP YEAR-----\

Month DEF NORM FULL DEF NORM FULL

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Tishri 30 30 30 30 30 30

Heshvan 29 29 30 29 29 30

Kislev 29 30 30 29 30 30

Tevet 29 29 29 29 29 29

Shevat 30 30 30 30 30 30

Adar (I) 29 29 29 30 30 30

Adar II -- -- -- 29 29 29

Nisan 30 30 30 30 30 30

Iyyar 29 29 29 29 29 29

Sivan 30 30 30 30 30 30

Tammuz 29 29 29 29 29 29

Av 30 30 30 30 30 30

Elul 29 29 29 29 29 29

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TOTALS 353 354 355 383 384 385

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Shmita** | **Shmita**  **Cycle Year** | **Torah Cycle Start** |
| **Three** | Year 1 – 5762  Year 2 – 5763  Year 3 – 5764  Year 4 – 5765  Year 5 – 5766  Year 6 – 5767  Year 7 - 5768 | **Start Triennial**  **cycle in Tishri** |
| **Four** | Year 1 – 5769  Year 2 – 5770  Year 3 – 5771  Year 4 – 5772  Year 5 – 5773  Year 6 – 5774  Year 7 - 5775 | **Start Triennial**  **cycle in Tishri** |
| **Five** | Year 1 – 5776  Year 2 – 5777  Year 3 – 5778  Year 4 – 5779  Year 5 – 5780  Year 6 – 5781  Year 7 - 5782 | **Start Triennial**  **cycle in Tishri** |
| **Six** | Year 1 – 5783  Year 2 – 5784  Year 3 – 5785  Year 4 – 5786  Year 5 – 5787  Year 6 – 5788  Year 7 - 5789 | **Start Triennial**  **cycle in Tishri** |
| **Seven** | **Year 1 – 5790**  Year 2 – 5791  Year 3 – 5792  Year 4 – 5793  Year 5 – 5794  Year 6 – 5795  Year 7 - 5796 | **Start Triennial**  **cycle in Tishri** |
| **Yovel**  **Year**  **&**  **First year of the next Shmita Cycle.** | **Year 50 – 5797**  **This is a Yovel year according to Rambam.**  **We do not observe the Yovel year at this time.** | **Start annual**  **cycle in Tishri[[153]](#footnote-153)**  **Start Septennial cycle in Tishri** |

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**Author**

**Edition** Jerusalem

**Publication Name** Levin-Epstein

**Year** 1959

**Language** Aramaic Hebrew

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בני בבל עושין שמחת תורה בכל שנה ושנה...בני א"י אין עושין שמחת תורה אלא לשלש שנים ומחצה

“The inhabitants of Babylonia observe Simchat Torah annually…The inhabitants of Eretz yisrael celebrate Simchat Torah only every three and a half years…” (trans. Lionel Moses).

\* \* \*

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1. *Ba’al Shem Tov, Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer,1700-1760* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Nathan of Nemirov, Disciple of the Bratzlaver, d. 1830* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 15:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Aka = Also Known As [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Vayikra (Leviticus) chapter 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hebrew word which is derived from the word *eser*, meaning tenth. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Two [Triennial](half.html), or Palestinian, cycles of [three](three.html) and a half years. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The so called New Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Torah was reading was completed in in a three and half year cycle and would be read twice in a Shmita cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Vayikra (Leviticus) chapter 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Title given to the heads of the Jewish academies in Babylon, from the 8th century until the middle of the 11th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. **Anno Mundi** (Latin: "in the year of the world") abbreviated as **AM** or **A.M.**, refers to a [Calendar](calendar.html) era counting from the Biblical [creation](bara.html) of the world. In [Hebrew](hebrew.html): לבריאת העולם‎. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. **Gaonim** (Hebrew: גאונים‎) were the presidents of the two great rabbinical colleges of Sura and Pumbedita, in Babylonia, and were the generally accepted spiritual leaders of the Jewish community world wide in the early medieval era. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The **Tosafot** or **Tosafos** (Hebrew: תוספות‎) are mediæval commentaries on the [Talmud](orallaw.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Rav Moshe Isserles [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Choshen Mishpat 67:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Anno Mundi years = Jewish calendar years. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. **Hakhel** (Hebrew: הקהל, "assemble") refers to the Torah-mandated practice of assembling all [Jewish](gen-jew.html) men, women and children to hear the reading of the Torah by the king of Israel once every seven years. This ceremony took place at the site of the [Temple](temple.html) in [Jerusalem](city.html) during [Succoth](succoth.html) in the year following a Shmita year. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. **Chazal** is an acronym for the Hebrew "**Ch**achameinu **Z**ichronam **L**ivracha", (**ח**כמינו **ז**כרונם **ל**ברכה), literally "our sages of blessed memory". In rabbinic writings this generally refers to the sages of the Talmud and of other rabbinic literature. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The seventh month of the year. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The first month of the year. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. **Tzadik** ([Hebrew](hebrew.html): **צדיק**‎, "righteous one;" pl. *tzadikim*) is a title which is generally given to those who are considered to be righteous / generous such as a spiritual master or rebbe. The root of the word *tzadik*, is *tzedek* (צדק), which means justice or righteousness. This is also the root for *charity*. This term thus refers to one who pursues justice and generousity. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Lit. *Lords of Returning*, meaning: Masters of Repentance. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Sefer HaTodaah, Eliyahu Kitov [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Rosh Hashanah 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. **Terumot** ([Hebrew](hebrew.html): תרומות, lit. "Donations") is the sixth tractate of *Sidra Zeraim* ("Order of Seeds") of the [*Mishna*](orallaw.html) and of the [*Talmud*](orallaw.html). It discusses two type of donations, one the terumah which is 2% or $5 of your crop given to the [Kohen](priests.html) and 10% of the Masser that is given to Levite is given to the Kohen and this called "termuat Masser" These laws to do not apply when there is no [Temple](temple.html) in [Jersulam](city.html). However, these tithes are still separated and just put away to remember what was done in the past and not given to kohen. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Tithes [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Artscroll Tanach on Ezra, page 155 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Sefer HaTodaah, Eliyahu Kitov [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. **Shekel** (**shekel**, [Hebrew](hebrew.html): שקל‎, pl. **shekel**, **shekalim**, Hebrew: שקלים‎), is an ancient unit of weight or of currency. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The Feast of [Passover](passover.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Adolf Buechler, "The Reading of the Law and the Prophets in a Triennial Cycle," Jewish Quarterly Review 5(1892/3), 420-68, and 6(1893/4), 1-73 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Title given to the heads of the Jewish academies in Babylon, from the 8th century until the middle of the 11th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hilchot Shmita chapter 10, Halacha 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Choshen Mishpat 67:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The so called New Testament, which is neither ‘new’ nor a ‘testament’. It is an appendix to a testament (of [Jeremiah 31:31ff](covenant.html)), which is called a ‘codicil’. Since it was written by the Deciples of [Yeshua](yeshua.html) the Nazarean, we have renamed this group of writings the ‘Nazarean Codicil’. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Haftarahs = Ashlamatot* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Translation by Lionel Moses [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Taanit 4:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Margaliot ed., p.88 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. **Rambam** was the preeminent medieval Jewish philosopher and one of the greatest Torah scholars of the Middle Ages. He is also known by the names **Moses Maimonides**, **Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon** or the acronym the **Rambam** (Hebrew: **רבי משה בן מימון**‎; [Hebrew](hebrew.html) acronym: **רמב"ם**). It is said that “from Moshe to Moshe, there was none greater than Moshe”. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See *Nachalas Yakov* on *Mesechta Sofrim* 16:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. The Torah [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. A piyyut (plural piyyutim, [Hebrew](hebrew.html) פיוט) is a Jewish liturgical poem, usually designated to be sung, chanted, or recited during religious services. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Hebrew Poetry from Late Antiquity: Liturgical Poems of Yehudah. Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary, by Yehudah [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. **Midrash** (Hebrew: מדרש‎; plural *midrashim*, lit. "to investigate" or "study") is a homiletic method of biblical exegesis. The term also refers to the whole compilation of homiletic teachings on the Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. A common term for the Weekly Torah portion (*sidra* or *sedra*) in Judaism. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. **Mekhilta** or **Mekilta** (Hebrew: **מכילתא**) is the halakic midrash to the Book of Exodus (Shemot). The name "Mekhilta", which corresponds to the Hebrew "middah" (= "measure," "rule"). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. chapter 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. evil speech [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. chapter 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. **Parashah** (Hebrew: פָּרָשָׁה "portion," plural: *parashot* or *parashiyot*) formally means a section of a biblical book in the masoretic text of the Tanakh (Jewish Bible). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. **Bat Kol** ([Hebrew](hebrew.html) **בּת קול**: lit. *small voice* or *whisper*) is a "heavenly or divine voice which proclaims [HaShem's](hashem.html) will or judgment." [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Genesis [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Song of Songs [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Exodus [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Leviticus [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Lamentations [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Numbers [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ecclesiastes – Song of Solomon [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Deuteronomy [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. "Sidrei Keriat ha-Torah be-Eretz Yisrael: Iyun Mechudash" (Tarbiz 67, 5758, pp. 167-187), Prof. Shelomo Naeh [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *"*[*Hakhel*](hakhel.html)*:" The Septennial National Assembly, By Rav Elchanan Samet* [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Yerushalmi, Sotah 7:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Yerushalmi, Sotah 7:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Tractate Soferim 16:10 gives the number as 175 (compare Yerushalmi. Shabbat.16:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. The Biblia Hebraica Stutgardensia – BHS has 167 sederim [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. The number of paragraphs which start with an expression of commandment. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Tehillim (Psalms) 68:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Yehoshua (Joshua) 14:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Rosh HaShana 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. MANN, Jacob. & SONNE, I.*The Bible as read and preached in the Old* [*Synagogue*](synagog.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Adolf Buechler, *The Reading of the* [*Law*](law.html) *and the Prophets in a Triennial Cycle*, Jewish Quarterly Review 5(1892/3), 420-68, and 6(1893/4), 1-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. The portion Ki Thisa in which this passage occurs usually falls on a Sabbath about the beginning of Adar. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. This passage is in the portion Pinhas, which usually falls about the middle of Tammuz. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. This is known as the Triennial Cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. A Midrashic commentary for the Torah and Ashlamata readings for the [festival](festival.html) and special days. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. ***Pars pro toto*** is Latin for "(taking) a part for the whole" where a portion of an object or concept represents the entire object or context. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Tarbiz 67, 5758, pp. 167-187 [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. [Hebrew](hebrew.html): Sabbaths [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. B'Har 2:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Torah commentary by Shlomo Efrayim of Lunshitz (1550-1619); Poland. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. The term is taken from Ezekiel.20:37 and originally meant "fetter." The fixation of the Torah text was correctly considered to be in the nature of a fetter upon its exposition. When, in course of time, the Masorah had become a traditional discipline, the term became connected with the verb מסר ( = "to hand down"), and was given the meaning of "tradition." (Jewish Encyclopedia) [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Halikot Kedem," p. 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. The Old Testament [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Rosh Hashannah 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. A list of punishments reserved for sinners. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Rosh Hashanah 16a [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Tosafot ad loc., s.v. Kelalot [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. A list of punishments reserved for sinners in Vayikra (Leviticus) 26:14-43 [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Heave offering [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. See Devarim (Deuteronomy) 26:13-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. **RAMBAM** Hilchot Ma'aser Sheni 11:1-3. *Maaser Sheni* 5:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. R. H. 9a; Git. 36a; comp. Rashi ad loc. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Tos. to Git. 36a, s.v. "Bizeman" [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Git. l.c. and Rashi ad loc [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Meshichim = Messiahs [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. The so called New Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Encyclopaedia Judaica, CD-ROM edition, article BAR KOKHBA, chapter Bar Kokhba Revolt [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Written by His Eminence Hakham Yitzchak Behar Argueti in the Yalkut MeAm Lo’ez (Comentario del Pueblo Ladinador) of blessed memory and translated by Hakham Aryeh Kaplan. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Gen. I, 1-8. Three were the minimum number of verses each person was permitted to read. As three persons (Priest, Levite and Israelite) read from the Law, there were not sufficient verses in any one section for the reading, and therefore two sections had to be coupled. Even then on some days (e.g., Sunday and Monday) a verse had to be repeated because the two sections did not have the minimum number of [nine](nine.html) verses. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Ibid. 6-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Ibid. 9-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Ibid. 14-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ibid. 20-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Ibid. 24-31 and II, 1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. People who come in after the reading has commenced, on seeing a fresh person commence to read without saying a blessing, might think that no blessing is necessary before the reading. Similarly, those who leave before the reading is concluded might think that no blessing at all is necessary after the reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Which consists of three paragraphs of eight, two and five verses. Num. XXVIII, 1-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Ibid. 1-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. V. infra. varp A ‘paragraph’ is a section at the end of which a blank space is left in the Scroll. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Ibid. 9, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Ibid. 11-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Gen. I, 1-5, and 6-8; v. Ta'an. 26a. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. The last verse read by the predecessor. Lit., ‘skip’, ‘go back’. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Heb. tre, a Bible teacher who appears to have been also a professional reader of the Scripture, with proper vowels, stops and accents, as the tanna (v. Glos. s.v.) was a professional memorizer of the [Mishnah](orallaw.html) or Baraitha. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. In the readings of the ma'amad. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. That he either divides or repeats. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Which deals with the Biblical reading on Mondays and Thursdays. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Whereas on [New Moon](chodesh.html) the next paragraph deals with a different subject and therefore cannot be read. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Lit., ‘the "some say"’; viz., that three verses are read from the next paragraph. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. And therefore, if they hear only the first verse of a section read, may not know that at least three verses have been read. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. And therefore, even if only one verse of a section is left, they will see that three are read. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Who might think that if two verses to the end of a section had been left by a reader at the point when he went out, only those two will have been read by the next reader. Cf. n. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Supposing he finds when he comes in that someone reads three verses beginning from the third verse of a paragraph, he inquires whether the previous reader read only the preceding two verses or more. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. With respect to the reading by the ma'amad and on the New Moon readings. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. I.e., not the one who reads last. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Other than the [day of Atonement](kippur.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. [Babylon stands here, as in other places in the Talmud, for Sura which was in the neighbourhood of the old great city of Babylon, and in contradistinction to Nehardea where Samuel had his seat, v. Obermeyer p. 306]. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. I.e., third, being neither kohen nor Levite. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. I.e., first. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Although only a lay Israelite. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. That a blessing should be said both before and after each reading. V. supra, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Jer. VII, 21, the Maftir to section Zaw (Lev. VI, I to VIII, 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Gen. XXXV, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ibid. XXXVIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Ex. XXXII, 1-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Ibid. 21-25. (So Maim). [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Num. VI, 24-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. II Sam. XI, 2-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Ibid. XIII, 1-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Ezek. I and X. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Ibid. XVI. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Wilna Gaon omits the words in brackets. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. B = Bereshith (creation); L = Lot; T = Tamar;E= ‘Egel (Calf); K = Kelaloth (curses); N = ‘Oneshin (penalties); N = Amnon; Sh =Abshalom, P = Pilegesh (concubine); H =hoda’ (make known). [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Gen. I. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. The Pentateuch is divided into a number of portions (sidra), one to be read on each Sabbath of the year, commencing with the Sabbath after [Tabernacles](succoth.html). The opening verses of each weekly portion are also read on Sabbath afternoon, and in the morning service on the Monday and Thursday of that week. It is the weekday reading that is here primarily referred to. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. "The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue", Jacob Mann [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. The [Midrash](orallaw.html) on Psalms Vol. 1, by William G. Brande, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. These are the moedim which fall on Shabbat in this particular year. These are the moedim that interrupt the triennial Torah cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. These are the moedim which fall on Shabbat in this particular year. These are the moedim that interrupt the triennial Torah cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. We do not observe the Yovel year, therefore we do not have this reading today as part of the [triennial cycle](half.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-153)