

TORAH SERVICE POLICY

Adapted by majority vote of the Board (8-1-1) on 25 October 2018

Main composition in 17 July 2015 with minor wording revisions in October 2018

Preamble to any further or subsequent Torah Reading Policy for Adath Shalom

Nb-1: In what follows, please read “reading” as short for “reading or chanting.” In the view of Adath Shalom, the devotion is present either way, and allowing reading as opposed to chanting enlarges the corps of people willing to take on a portion from the Sefer Torah.

Nb-2: There is no previous material on reading from the Sefer Torah in the AS Policy Book. However, that does not mean that there has been no earlier discussion, including an extensive discussion in 2002 and a shorter one in 2008. What follows is an amalgam of previous discussions and more recent policies.

Nb-3: The following is a direct quotation from a preamble from a document prepared in 2002 and signed by Michael Caplan, David Kriger and Joel Yan. It is still relevant to Adath Shalom today.

The subject arises because it is the core of our service and so we always strive to do it better. The ideal of "halachically-correct" readings - reading or singing from the Torah, rather than doing either from a book - is the ideal towards which we aspire. The practical reality is that we -- and a number of other lay-led USCJ congregations in North America -- may be some years away from fully reaching that goal. How long it takes depends on our abilities and the level of participation in the endeavour.

Other parts of this document are taken from the 2002 and 2008 documents.

Torah Reading Policy for Adath Shalom

1. Adath Shalom has a strong preference for reading from the Sefer Torah, as opposed to reading from the chumash. To the greatest extent possible, chanting from the Sefer Torah will be the norm on Holy Days and special occasions, such as Bnai Mitzvah celebrations.
2. If preparation time is inadequate or other exigencies occur, we accept reading from a chumash. When someone reads from a chumash, we will have aliyot and blessings as if reading from the Sefer Torah. We are aware that these blessings violate halakhic strictures, but they add to the pleasure that congregants derive from the Torah service. We may have someone following the reading silently in the Sefer Torah, but this procedure does not make reading from the chumash any more halakhically correct.
3. Blessings before and after the readings should always be in Hebrew. This provision also applies to reading of the Haftarah.
4. The Torah reader should endeavour to prepare sufficiently well that mistakes are minimized. However, should a mistake be made, it is exclusively the prerogative of the gabbai and the gabbai sheini, and only them, to make the corrections. Corrections are not to be made by other members of the congregation. If someone thinks it necessary, corrections can be made privately to the reader after the service.
5. Adath Shalom has always taken great pride in being a Learning / Participatory congregation. Therefore, it will be our practice to:
 - Encourage those who can to read / sing directly from the Sefer Torah.
 - Train those who would like to learn how to read / sing directly from the Torah.
 - Urge everyone to try doing part of a Torah reading from the scroll.
6. Adath Shalom operates on the triennial cycle, with the divisions and aliyot as defined in the USCJ Luah and *Yad LaTorah*. They in turn are based on the teshuvah by Rabbi Eisenberg for CJLS.* Exceptions to this rule will be made only when all of the following apply: a) the alternative reading is explicitly listed as acceptable in the Luach, as in Year 1 of Parashat Yitro; b) the reader is able to read the extended portion entirely

from the Sefer Torah; and c) permission has been given at least two days in advance by an officer of Adath Shalom. Allowing this option violates the general rule of not switching back and forth between annual and triennial cycles, but this appears to be practice rather than a formal prohibition and it is not expected to occur very often.

* www.rabbinicalassembly.org/teshuvot/docs/19861990/eisenberg_triennial.pdf