

Upholding Different Principles

When the Torah reading is completed in most synagogues, the scroll is held aloft and the congregation chants, "This is the Torah that Moses placed before the children of Israel" (Deut. 4:44). Ashkenazim add "at the Lord's bidding through Moses" (Num. 9:23). In Sephardic synagogues, the scroll is generally raised before, not after, the reading.

In one case, the tradition shows an affirmation of reverence for what one is about to hear. In the other there is a confirmation of the sacredness of what one has just heard. Each has its point, and its adherents.

The attitude with which one approaches things in this world — work, relationships, study, anything — conditions the way one will react. If we are prepped with purpose, we are far more likely to relish and to succeed. It is nonetheless true that we cannot substitute preparation for experience. We need to listen, to undergo the transformation that only comes with actual participation. To hold the Torah aloft at the beginning is the right way to be ready for the reading; to hold it aloft at the end is the right way to react to the reading.

This is a characteristic Jewish solution: there are two important principles, each with its adherents and each practiced in different communities. All is literally *l'hagdil Torah ul'ha'adirah*, to glorify and magnify the Torah.