

Parsha Management – Doubling, Halving, Accuracy

**By: SHELDON EPSTEIN, BERNARD DICKMAN and
YONAH WILAMOWSKY**

Introduction: The Current System of Torah *Parsha* Reading - Terminology & Characteristics

An integral component of the *Shabbos* morning prayer service is the reading of the Torah portion of the week. For the most part, these weekly Torah portions are the individual *parshiyos* that collectively comprise the *Chumash*. The number of *parshiyos*, as given in all standard *Chumashim*, is 54. The first *parsha*, *Bareishis*, is read the *Shabbos* after *Simchas Torah* and thereafter on every *Shabbos* which is not also *Yom Tov/Chol Hamoed*, the remaining *parshiyos* are read successively. The last *parsha*, *V'zos Habracha*, is the lone exception to the rule and it is read on *Simchas Torah*, not on *Shabbos*. Because a regular Jewish year has either 353, 354 or 355 days, a single reading cycle has at most 51 available *Shabbosim* and a Torah cycle cannot be completed in one year if *Shabbos* morning readings are limited to a single *parsha*. As a result, on several *Shabbosim* during a regular year two *parshiyos* are read. Since at times *Yom Tov* comes out on *Shabbos* and further reduces the number of *Shabbosim* available for the *parsha* readings, the number of *parshiyos* that are read in tandem throughout the year varies from year to year. The reading designations that are currently universally used for *Shabbos* Torah readings, limit the *parshiyos* that can be read in tandem to the following 7 pairs:

ויקהל-פקודי, תזריע-מצורע, אחרי מות-קדושים, בהר- בחוקותי, חקת-בלק, מטות-
מסעי, נצבים-וילך

Sheldon Epstein, Bernard Dickman and Yonah Wilamowsky are professional educators. Their joint works on Biblical and Talmudic topics appear in *Tradition*, *Higayon*, and *Location Sciences*.

While the need for “doubling up” on regular years is immediately obvious, leap years which have either 383, 384 or 385 days and up to 55 *Shabbosim*, for the most part also require “doubling up.” The reason for the leap year doubling is that every year at least one *Shabbos* will be on *Pesach* and one on *Succos*. This leaves at most 53 *Shabbosim* for the standard Torah readings. If even one additional *Shabbos* is also *Yom Tov* (e.g., *Rosh Hashanah* starts on *Shabbos*) then again we have more *parshiyos* than *Shabbosim*.

Table 1 gives the breakdown of the *parshiyos* that are read together in the Diaspora for each of the different possible 7 regular year and 7 leap year calendars. Each of these 14 different possible calendars is known as a *קביעות*. In the scheme used in Table 1, the first letter (ז,ה,ג,ב) represents the day of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, *Shabbos*) in which *Rosh Hashanah* starts, and the second letter (ח,ס,ה,כ,סד,ו,ש,ל,י,מ) says how many days (58, 59, 60) in total there are in the months of *Marbesvan* and *Kislev*. For example, a leap year with *קביעות* of ה"ה, starts on Thursday, and *Marbesvan* and *Kislev* have 58 days. The 14 *קביעות* of Table 1 are the only ones possible in our lunar calendar. In terms of the total number of days in the year, ש,כ,ה leap years have 383, 384 and 385 days respectively, while regular years with these designations have 353, 354 and 355 days.¹

The row directly under the *קביעות* designations in Table 1 lists how many *Shabbosim* during that yearly cycle have regular *parsha* readings. All remaining rows under the *קביעות* designations are filled with 1's or 2's, with 1's indicating that a pair of *parshiyos* are read together in a single week and 2 indicating that they are read separately over a two week span. As expected, the number of 1's for regular years far exceed those for leap years. The differences in the 1's, however, primarily occur for the first 4 double *parshiyos* (i.e., 0 for leap years and 27 of 28 for regular years) and with only minor differences for the last 3 pairs (i.e., 11 out of 21 for leap years and 13 out of 21 for regular years). This difference reflects the fact that the reading discrepancies between leap years and regular years caused by the added 4 weeks of an extra month of *Adar* are addressed by the combining of the first 4 sets of possible double *parshiyos*.

¹ See, גרא או"ה סימן תכה ס"ק ג and טור סימן תכה. We will discuss the Tables in the טור in detail later.

Table 1

Number of Weeks it takes to Read the Indicated Parshiyos for each Year Designation in the Diaspora

<u>Number of Times These פרשיות are Read Together</u>	<u># of שבת Readings Parsha Tandem</u>	<u>Leap Year קביעות</u>					
		<u>ב"ה</u>	<u>ב"ש</u>	<u>ה"ה</u>	<u>ה"ש</u>	<u>ז"ש</u>	
		50	52	52	53	51	50
		2	2	2	2	2	2
		2	2	2	2	2	2
		2	2	2	2	2	2
2	בהר - בחוקותי	1	2	2	2	2	1
5	חקת-בלק	1	1	2	2	1	1
4	מטות-מסעי	1	2	2	2	1	1
	נצבים-וילך	1	2	2	2	1	1
		<u>Regular Year קביעות</u>					
<u>Number of Times These פרשיות are Read Together</u>	<u># of שבת Readings Parsha Tandem</u>	<u>ב"ה</u>	<u>ב"ש</u>	<u>ה"ב</u>	<u>ה"ש</u>	<u>ז"ה</u>	<u>ז"ש</u>
		47	46	48	49	48	47
6	ויקהל-פקודי	1	1	1	2	1	1
7	תזריע-מצורע	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	אחרי מות-קדושים	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	בהר - בחוקותי	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	חקת-בלק	2	1	2	2	2	2
7	מטות-מסעי	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	נצבים-וילך	1	1	2	2	2	1

Finally, the first column of Table 1 gives the number of times a particular pair of *parshiyos* are read together across the different types of years. The frequencies vary from a low 4 of 14 cases for בלק-חקת (i.e. rarely read together) to a high of 12 of 14 for the pair of מטות-מסעי (i.e., almost always read together).

Table 1 demonstrates that in our 54 *parsha* system it is possible, but not usual, for all of the *parshiyos* to be read separately in a given year in the Diaspora. Of the 14 possible קביעות, only a ה"ה leap year has this characteristic (i.e., it is the only column that has only 2's). The frequency of this קביעות is rather erratic. The current year 5765 (2004/2005) has this קביעות. The last time it occurred was 1981, 24 years ago, and the next time it will happen is in 2008, three years from now. The forthcoming three year break is the shortest possible break between such occurrences.² After 2008 the next time all of the *parshiyos* will be read separately in the Diaspora is 2052, i.e., 44 years later. A review of the calendar given by פרי חדש אור"ח סימן תכה for years 5511 (1751) through 6000 (2240) shows that in the given 490 year period the longest stretch of time between Thursday-חסר leap year occurrences is 44 years and the average time is about 26 years. Thus, it is very likely that the next two occurrences represent the longest and shortest possible waits between years in which every *parsha* is read separately and the last 24 year break is close to the norm.³

² Although it is possible to have leap years 2 years apart, it is not possible that both have a Thursday-חסר designation. The reason directly follows from the different types of possible קביעות. If the first leap year started on Thursday and had 383 days, the next year would start on Tuesday and be regular with 354 days (see Table 1- all years starting on Tuesday are כסדרן). Thus the third year would have to start on *Shabbos* and could not satisfy our requirement.

³ The last time breaks of 3 and 44 years occurred was 247, 244 and 200 years ago. An analysis of the פרי חדש calendar also shows that in the Diaspora for the period between 1751 and 2240 all of the *parshiyos* are read separately only 19 times with the following frequency for given number of years between occurrences:

Years Between Occurrences-	<u>3</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>44</u>
Frequency of Occurrence	2	1	3	9	3

Hence:

Probability of this event occurring = 3.9% (i.e. 19/490),

Mean Number of years between occurrences = 26.1

The situation in *Eretz Yisrael* differs somewhat from that of the Diaspora. Table 2 offers an overview of *parsha* reading in *Eretz Yisrael* under our current reading assignment system and shows that in addition to leap year ה"ה, leap years ב"ש and ג"כ also have every *parsha* read separately.⁴ Thus, in *Eretz Yisrael* each *parsha* is read separately about three times as often as in the Diaspora.

Note that הוקת-בלק are never read together in *Eretz Yisrael*.⁵ These two *parshiyos* are combined only in the Diaspora and serve to bridge the gap between the Diaspora and *Eretz Yisrael* when *Shevuos* starts on Friday resulting in the Diaspora having one extra day of *Yom Tov* on *Shabbos* than *Eretz Yisrael* (i.e. the 2nd day of *Shevuos*).

Finally, for our current *Shabbos parsha* reading system the number of *Shabbosim* requiring standard non-*Yom Tov* readings range:

- In the Diaspora from 50 to 53 for leap years and 46 to 49 for regular years,
- In *Eretz Yisrael* from 51 to 53 for leap years and 47 to 49 for regular years.

We have endeavored in this section to give an overview of the major features of our current *parsha* reading system and its related calendar terminology. In subsequent sections we will discuss other characteristics of the current reading assignment system as well as the objectives that shaped the particulars of the system. We will also trace the history of the system from the Gemara through Rambam, Tur and *Shulchan Aruch* and introduce other reading assignment models that utilized different mechanisms and *parshiyos* combinations to complete the yearly Torah reading cycle.

Median & Mode # of years between occurrences = 27

Since a leap year occurs once in almost every 3 years, this means that on the average the Thursday - הטר combination occurs once every 9 to 10 leap years.

- ⁴ The reason these years are different in the Diaspora, is
- ב"ש - *Pesach* starts on *Shabbos* and in the Diaspora this means that the last day of *Pesach* is also on *Shabbos*. Thus, the Diaspora has 1 less *Shabbos* available for a standard *Shabbos parsha* reading.
 - ג"כ – Again *Pesach* starts on *Shabbos* and the above reasoning applies.
- ⁵ This is under the standard system. In a later section we will mention a custom among some Yemenite groups to always read these *parshiyos* together.

Table 2

Number of Weeks it takes to Read the Indicated Parshiyos for Each Year Designation in Eretz Yisrael

Number of Times These פרשיות are Read Together	Leap Years						
	ב"ח	ב"ש	ג"כ	ה"ח	ה"ש	ז"ח	ז"ש
3	ויקהל-פקודי	2	2	2	2	2	2
	תזריע-מצורע	2	2	2	2	2	2
	אחרי מות-קדושים	2	2	2	2	2	2
	בהר-בחוקותי	2	2	2	2	2	2
4	חקת-בלק	2	2	2	2	2	2
	מטות-מסעי	1	2	2	2	2	1
	נצבים-וילך	1	2	2	2	1	1

Number of Times These פרשיות are Read Together	Regular Years						
	ב"ח	ב"ש	ג"כ	ה"כ	ה"ש	ז"ח	ז"ש
6	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
7	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	1	1	1	2	2	2	1

The Evolving Rules of Torah Readings; From Gemara to Rambam

Despite the importance of the Torah readings on *Shabbos* and the requirement that each week we do **שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום** (רמבם תפילה) very little concerning these readings is mentioned in the Gemara. In fact, nowhere in the Gemara is it even mentioned that the Torah is partitioned into 54 *parshiyos*. The only requirement in the Gemara concerning *Shabbos* Torah readings is limited to the need to read certain portions of the Torah prior to *Shevuos* and *Rosh Hashanah*, מגילה לא:

תניא ר' שמעון בן אלעזר אומר עזרא תיקן להן לישראל שיהו קורין קללות שבתורת כהנים קודם עצרת ושבתמשה תורה קודם ראש השנה.

The Gemara explains the reason for this is that *Shevuos* is the New Year for Trees and we would like to dispense with the curses before either the New Year for Trees or the regular New Year begins. Note that the Gemara does not refer to the “curses” by the *parsha* in which they fall, but rather by the *Chumash* in which they occur.⁶ In addition, the Gemara is also unclear as to whether it means that:

- On the *Shabbos* immediately prior to the named holidays the particular קללות should be read, or
- We should ensure that by the time the holiday arrives the קללות had been read so that we do not have to start a new year on a down note. This interpretation would allow the קללות to be read two or more weeks before the holidays as well.

Rambam **תפילה יג:ב** after quoting the above Gemara almost verbatim,⁷ adds:

⁶ Although the Mishna does not mention specific *parshiyos* by name, the Gemara does. See e.g. ל - מגילה כט: where two *amoraim* refer to תצוה and כי תשא but a Tosefta discussing the same issue avoids mentioning any reading by name.

⁷ I.e. he uses ויקרא rather than תורת כהנים.

...והמנהג הפשוט שיהו קוראין במדבר סיני קודם עצרת. ואתחנן אחר תשעה באב. אתם נצבים קודם ראש השנה. וצו את אהרן קודם הפסח בשנה פשוטה. לפיכך יש שבתות שקורין בשחרית שני סדרין כגון אשה כי תזריע וזאת תהיה. ובהר סיני⁸ ואם בחוקותי וכיוצא בהן כדי שישלימו בשנה ויקראו אותן הסדרים בעונתן

Rambam's presentation is expansive and informative. Firstly, by putting in an extra *parsha* between the קללות and *Shevuos*, he decides in favor of our second suggested reading alternative.⁹ Secondly, he specifically addresses some *Shabbos* readings by the first few key words at the beginning of the *parsha*. Although these names may differ slightly from how we currently refer to them (e.g. זאת תהיה instead of מצורע) he is undoubtedly referring to same reading. Thirdly, he offers specific examples of *parshiyos* that are read together, בהר - בחוקותי and תזריע - מצורע. His choice of examples, is however perplexing. As seen in Table 1 the *parshiyos* that Rambam chose for his examples are the 2nd and 4th possible pairs of tandem *parshiyos*. Rambam offers no reason for picking these pairs and ignoring the first set of ויקהל-פקודי and the third set of אחרי מות-קדושים. Finally, Rambam introduces *parshiyos* that are to be read in proximity to תשעה באב and פסח. However, by not offering any reason for these choices it is unclear whether they were chosen because:

- They represent the best way of evenly distributing the *parshiyos* over the year (*Parsha* Management), or

⁸ We will generally use Kappach's edition of Rambam which is based on old Yemenite manuscripts. For the most part, this text can be accessed on line at www.Mechon-Mamre.org. When there is a significant difference between this edition and the standard text we will point it out. In the case of this quote, the standard Rambam reverses the order of these *parshiyos*, i.e. אם בחוקותי אם בהר סיני. This reversal of placing the later *parsha* first does not seem to make sense.

⁹ Tosfos, מגילה לא: ד"ה קללות, says that we add an extra week between the curses and the holiday so that we should not go directly into the holiday without a buffer from the curses. רבינו נסים, cited in Tosfos, suggests that קללות mentioned in the Gemara refers to נצבים as well as תבוא. Thus, according to ר"י *Rosh Hashanah* actually comes immediately after the *Shabbos* in which the קללות are read.

- There is a logical connection between these readings and the holidays/fast days with which they are associated.¹⁰

From Rambam's limited discussion in תפילה יגב it is not possible to attempt to start a comparative analysis of our current system and his. However, Rambam augments his presentation here with several longer presentations elsewhere. Firstly, in all standard Rambams at the very end of ספר אהבה there is a list of all of the הפטרות of the year where Rambam mentions by name 53 of our standard 54 *parshiyos* with only וילך being omitted. However, Rambam does not mean to exclude the possibility of וילך being read by itself since Kappach's edition of Rambam¹¹ also includes lists of *pesukim* that are read on Mondays and Thursdays, as well as where each *aliyah* starts and ends on *Shabbos*. These lists include וילך both when it is read alone as well as when it is read together with נצבים. We thus know that Rambam had all of our 54 *parshiyos*. The question then is why did he not mention וילך in his list of הפטרות? If indeed Rambam followed our *parsha* reading system, the answer to this question would be simple. In our system, וילך has no הפטרה of its own. That is to say, each *parsha* represents a thematic idea which is highlighted in its designated *haftara*. וילך has no *haftara* of its own, because when it is read:

- Together with נצבים we read the *haftara* of נצבים,
- Separately, it is the *Shabbos* before *Yom Kippur* and the weekly *haftara* is שובה ישראל which has nothing to do with עשרת ימי תשובה but rather, represents the theme of ימי תשובה.

¹⁰ Later commentators do offer reasons why ואתהנן and צו relate to *Pesach* and *Tisha B'Av*, e.g. צו discusses *kashering* כלים and this is appropriate before *Pesach*. Rambam's language for ט' באב seems to imply that ואתהנן should come after the fast day, but משנה ברורה (ח:תכח:א) says that we want the fast day after דברים. Rambam's language is inconclusive. We suggest he might have phrased it this way because *Tisha B'Av* can fall on *Shabbos* and Rambam's language is less ambiguous as to what to do in this situation.

¹¹ www.Mechon-Mamre.org does not have these additional sections. Even in Kappach's edition these sections appear after Rambam's signature. Nevertheless, Kappach claims that these additions are also the work of Rambam. We will discuss this issue further later in this section.

Note that this *haftara* is also read when האזינו is the *Shabbos* before *Yom Kippur* (Rambam תפילה יג:יט).

Thus, Rambam may agree that וילך is a *parsha* as is clear from his listings of the Monday-Thursday readings, but omits it when discussing *parshiyos* that have their own *haftaros*.

Unfortunately, this explanation for omitting וילך from the list of הפטרות does not seem to suffice. Rambam prefaces his listing of *haftaros* at the end of ספר אהבה with:

הענינות שנהגו רוב העם לקרות מן הנביאים בכל שבת ומפטירין בהן

i.e. these *haftaros* are the ones that are commonly read. But the *haftaros* he lists for the *parshiyos* in חומש דברים are not the ones we read. As Rambam explains in תפילה יג:יט,

נהגו כל ישראל להיות מפטירין קודם לתשעה באב בשלש שבתות בדברי תוכחות ... ומנהג פשוט¹³ בערינו להיות מפטירין בנחמות ישעיהו מאחר תשעה באב עד ראש השנה. ושבת שבין ראש השנה ויום הכיפורים מפטירין שובה ישראל.

Although Rambam asserts that it was a universal custom to read special *haftaros* on the three weeks prior to *Tisha B'Av*, he nevertheless lists different *haftaros* for each of these weeks at the end of *Sefer Ahava* and never mentions there the special *haftaros*. Similarly, he says that it was a custom of most places to read *haftaros* from ישעיהו for the 7 weeks after *Tisha B'Av* and yet for every one of these weeks he offers a different *haftara* at the end of Ahava and concludes with:

וכן נהגו רוב העם להיות מפטירין בנחמות ישעיהו מאחר תשעה באב עד ראש השנה

¹² Standard text reads נהגו העם which is somewhat less inclusive.

¹³ Standard text uses the word עירנו that is, “our city” rather than ערינו “our cities.” It would be very difficult to reconcile all of Rambam’s statements according to the standard reading.

Lastly, in פרק יג he mentioned reading *שובה ישראל* on the *Shabbos* before *Yom Kippur* but offers a different *haftara* for האזינו at the end of *Ahava* without ever mentioning anything about *שובה ישראל*. It would appear that the only way to reconcile all of these statements, would be to assume that Rambam meant that the special *haftaros* readings prior to and after *Tisha B'Av*, as well as the one on the *Shabbos* before *Yom Kippur* are in addition to the standard *haftaros* which relate to the given *parshiyos*,¹⁴ and the reason he only mentioned the readings of the 7 weeks after *Tisha B'Av* at the end of *Ahava* and not the others, was because it is only the 7 after *Tisha B'Av* that are not necessarily universally practiced.¹⁵ If this is correct, even if *שובה ישראל* is read on a *Shabbos* when וילך is read between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* why would it not also have an *haftara* of its own like all of the other *parshiyos*?

We believe that the full explanation for Rambam omitting a *haftara* for וילך requires one additional piece of information. After listing *haftaros* for 53 *parshiyos* Rambam writes:

כל שבת שקורין בה שתי פרשיות מפטירין מענין פרשה אחרונה וזה הוא המנהג ברוב המקומות

¹⁴ Kappach, footnote מט at the end of *Ahava*, with respect to the listing of regular *haftaros* for דברים, מסעי, מטות writes:

כבר נתבאר בפרק יג מהלכות תפילה ה' יט שכבר נהגו העם להפטיר בהן בדברי תוכחות ... ושלוש הפטרות הללו האמורים כאן אין כיום מי שאומר אותן

It is not clear if he agrees with us that in Rambam's times both *haftaros* were read. Our interpretation also seems to be against רמא או"ח תכה:ב who writes:

ויש אומרים שאין להפסיק מנביא לנביא

and in these 7 weeks the regular *haftaros* readings are not in ישעיה. However, there is no indication that Rambam agrees with this rule. In commenting on the Tur the דרכי משה סעיף ג writes:

ודוקא במקום שנהגו להפטיר ב' הפטרות

It would seem that not everyone agrees with the rule.

¹⁵ i.e. Rambam said the three before *Tisha B'Av* are a universal custom while those after *Tisha B'Av* are not. With respect to *שובה ישראל* it is not clear what group he puts it into. We are suggesting that it belongs in the universally accepted group.

The rationale behind this rule presumably is that when two *parshiyos* are read together the *haftara* associated with the latter *parsha* is read because it is that theme which was last expressed. If so, then when **נצבים-וילך** are read together the *haftara* should be that of **וילך**. However, our current practice today is to read the *haftara* of **נצבים**, the first **פרשה**.

There is in fact another situation where the double *parsha haftara* rule is not applied. Rambam in his list of Monday-Thursday Torah readings presents the possibility of *parshas* **חקת** being split in half, and read over a two week period as follows:

קרח יא פסוקים דגד סימן
זאת חקת יא פסוקים גגד סימן
ויסעו מקדש יא פסוקים דדג סימן
בלק יא פסוקים גגד סימן

i.e. the 87 *pesukim* of *parshas* **חקת** are literally split into two halves by stopping the first reading at **ויסעו מקדש** (במדבר כ:כב) which is the 44th *pasuk*. Rambam does not say when **חקת** is halved but Kappach (footnote 64) explains:

... המנהג העתיקה מסור מימות הגאונים הוא שאין מחברין חקת ובלק אלא חולקין
פרשת חקת וקורין חציה אם פרשת קרח וחציה מן ויסעו מקדש עם פרשת בלק
וכ"ה בכל סדורי תימן העתיקים וכ"ה בסדור רס"ג וכ"ה במדרש הגדול ובכל
מדרשי תימן העתיקים

The breakdown of the *Shabbos* reading of **קרח-חקת-בלק**¹⁶ over a two week period is further described in the subsequent section in Rambam dealing with *Shabbos parsha* readings. As mentioned previously, in *Eretz Yisrael* and in most years in the Diaspora the *parshiyos* of **קרח** (95 *pesukim*), **חקת** (87 *pesukim*) and **בלק** (104 *pesukim*) are read separately. However, in any year when *Shevuos* starts on Friday our standard procedure is to read **קרח** by itself (95 *pesukim*) and

¹⁶ We note that both references in Rambam to a **קרח-חקת-בלק** split are found only in Kappach's edition of Rambam. However, even then, the first reference appears in brackets i.e. [], and the second is prefaced by a comment that appears to have been added by someone other than Rambam. In effect our only evidence that Rambam has a **קרח-חקת-בלק** breakdown comes from sources of questionable origin. Nevertheless Kappach claims that these are the words of Rambam and we will go along with his assessment.

combine חקת-בלק into one week's reading of 191 *pesukim*. In Rambam's reading scheme the disproportion in size between the weekly readings was significantly reduced by splitting חקת in half, and reading the first half with קרח (138 *pesukim*) and the second half with בלק (148 *pesukim*). Rambam does not say what *haftara* is read on *Shabbosim* that חקת is split, but Kappach comments:¹⁷

...לפי מנהגנו שחולקין פרשת חקת וקורין קרח וחצי חקת עד ויסעו מקדש ולשבת שניה קורין מן ויסעו מקדש עד סוף בלק, מפטירין הפטרת הרוב כלומר שבת ראשונה הפטורת קרח ושבת שניה הפטרת בלק.

Thus, like וילך, when the first half of חקת is combined with a different *parsha* it takes the *haftara* of the other *parsha*. But why is the rule changed in both of these situations? Kappach's comment מפטירין הפטרת הרוב must be understood as a statement of what we do but not why we do it. The mere fact that קרח contributes most of the *pesukim* of the *Shabbos* reading (i.e. 95 to 43) is not the reason for reading its *haftara*. In two of the other double *parshiyos* we also have the larger *parsha* coming first, i.e.,

- ספר ויקה has 122 *pesukim* and פקודי has 92 *pesukim*,¹⁸
- מות קדושים has 64 *pesukim* and אחרי מות has 80 *pesukim*,

and still we read the *haftara* of the smaller (second) *parsha*.¹⁹ Although the proportion of the difference is greatest in Rambam's case (i.e. קרח is more than twice the size of the first half of חקת), there is no indication that relative size is the major determining factor.

A simpler answer for the first half of חקת exception, is that these 43 *pesukim* never are read on their own on any *Shabbos*, are not a

¹⁷ Kappach edition, footnote 55 at the end of ספר אהבה.

¹⁸ In most *Chumashim* the number of *pesukim* in all *parshiyos* are listed with the single exception of פקודי. *chumash* מלבים has a number, 92, and אצא, סימן.

¹⁹ וכשקורין שתי פרשיות מפטירין באחרונה ובלבד באחרי רמא או"ח תכח:ח. It is a matter of coincidence that this issues occurs on one of few double *parshiyos* where the first *parsha* is the larger of the two. The reason for the switch in this case has to do with the material in both *haftaros* and not with the length of each *parsha*. In fact, Rambam lists what we read on קדושים as the *haftara* for מות אחרי מות and does not have כבני כושיים for either *parsha*. Regardless, Rambam stated the rule and offered no exceptions.

parsha and thus have no designated *haftara* of their own. While the first half of הקת has an *haftara* on *Shabbosim* when read together with the 2nd half of הקת, that *haftara* is more significantly related to the latter part of the *parsha*²⁰ and the latter half is the majority of the *parsha* (i.e. 44 *pesukim* to 43 *pesukim*). Thus, when the first half of הקת is read with קרה it is preferable to assign it the *haftara* of a *parsha* just read (even if it is the first *parsha*) rather than creating a new *haftara* that would never be read in any other situation.²¹ In effect, the double *parsha haftara* rule was created for situations when two *parshiyos* are read together, and not when one *parsha* is read with the smaller fragment of another *parsha*.

To complete the answer to our original question we now suggest that just as we have explained that the first half of הקת is not a *parsha* but the smaller segment of another *parsha*, so וילך is not a *parsha* but the smaller half of a *parsha* that encompasses both נצבים and וילך. This idea that נצבים and וילך, which have only a combined 70 *pesukim*²² (i.e. 40 *pesukim* and 30 *pesukim* respectively) are really only one *parsha* that is sometimes split to be read over a two week period, was expressed by Saadia Gaon in an early 10th century work (סדור) (רס"ג עמ' שסד) as follows:

כבר אמרנו כי הפרשות נג' וראוי שנבאר כי שמונה מהן פעמים מתחברות שתיים שתיים ונקראת בארבעה שבתות, והם, ויקהל ואלה פקודי, אשה וזאת תהיה, אחרי מות קדושים. בהר סיני ואם בחקותי, ומהן שלש נקראות בשתי שבתות אחת ומחצה בכל שבת והן ויקח קרח וזאת חקת ווירא בלק ... ומהם פרשה נחלקת לשני חציים ונקראת בשתי שבתות אם הוצרכו לכך והיא אתם נצבים נחלקת עד וילך משה.

This point of view is also expressed by Rishonim a century after Rambam. Meiri²³ writes:

²⁰ Although the *haftara* is related to some *pesukim* in the first half as well, the greater relationship seems to be with the second half of the *parsha*.

²¹ Whether this *parsha* would ever be read at all in *Eretz Yisrael* is discussed later.

²² Note that there is a סימן at the end of each *parsha* which is the numerical equivalent to the number of *pesukim* in the *parsha*. The סימן for נצבים is numerically 40 while the סימן at the end of וילך is numerically equivalent to 70.

²³ This may also be the view of Tosfos, מגילה לא: ד"ה קללות, who says: שאלו בבית המדרש של רבינו ניסים: למה מחלקים פרשת נצבים וילך לשנים כשיש ב' שבתות בין ר"ה לסוכות בלא יוה"כ ואין מחלקין מטות ומסעי שארוכות יותר ...

ומצאתי בספר ישן על קלף כתיב שכתב דנצבים-וילך נחשבת לאחת- חזמת אנך לשיר השירים פ"ה אות כ חלקו התורה לנ"ג סדרים כו' ועשרה בספר אלה דברים שאתה מונה נצבים-וילך באחד שאינן אלא סדר אחד אע"פ שחולקים אותה לפעמים - קרית ספר להמאירי מאמר ה.

Accordingly, we suggest that neither נצבים-וילך nor חקת-בלק follows the general rule outlined by Rambam for Torah readings that involve multiple *parshiyos* because neither וילך nor חקת is a *parsha*. Moreover, if נצבים-וילך is really one *parsha* then he holds there are only 53 *parshiyos*²⁴ and Rambam may therefore have decided that it does not require any *haftara* other than שובה ישראל.

Our assumption about Rambam's agreeing with Saadia Gaon that נצבים-וילך is one *parsha* still has one potential problem. In תפילה יג:ב Rambam mentioned only that *parshiyos* can be combined in order to meet the yearly cycle. If נצבים-וילך is indeed one *parsha* why did Rambam not mention that sometimes it is necessary to split a *parsha* (like Saadia Gaon did)? We suggest that Rambam was not interested in giving exhaustive details on what the system entails. He was merely highlighting "doubling-up" as a common mechanism that would undoubtedly be necessary in creating a *parsha* reading system. He did not, however, mean to imply that other mechanisms such as "halving a *parsha*" could/would not also be employed. As evidence of his not intending to be exhaustive, note that we have previously cited Rambam's presentation at the end of Ahava where the three *parshiyos* of קרח-חקת-בלק are read in a two week period. This possibility, which also requires cutting a *parsha* in half, is not mentioned or implied in *Hilchos Tefillah*.

Another proof that Rambam accepts the idea of halving a *parsha* is תפילה יג:כב:

... חל ראש חודש אדר להיות בשבת, והיה סדר אותה שבת ואתה תצוה, קורין ששה מואתה תצוה עד ועשית כיוור נחושת, והשביעי חוזר וקורא מכי תשא עד

Note that נצבים וילך is referred to in the singular, while מטות ומסעי takes the plural.

²⁴ If there are only 53 *parshiyos* then the only קביעות in which every *parsha* is read in its entirety by itself is ה"ש on a Leap Year in both the Diaspora and *Eretz Yisrael*.

else is already being doubled). Thus, we have no other choice but to say that Saadia Gaon's "doubling-up" list is also not exhaustive.²⁵

In conclusion, Rambam appears to agree with Saadia Gaon with respect to:

- The number of *parshiyos* in the Torah, 53,
- Combining and halving *parshiyos* in order to complete a cycle,
- Sometimes reading קר-ה-חקת-בלק over a two week period.

However, unlike Rambam, Saadia Gaon gives a detailed list of what to read on every leap year קביעות, Table 3, and it is significantly different from our current reading system. The nomenclature in Table 3 is the same as in Tables 1 and 2 except for 2's and 3's (rather than 1's and 2's) appearing in the קר-ה-חקת-בלק row (rather than a בלק-חקת row). Note how the קר-ה-חקת-בלק combined readings (i.e. 2) for the most part replace our מטות-מסעי couplings. In addition, for leap years with קביעות of ב"ה or ז"ש, because קר-ה-חקת-בלק are combined anyway, the coupling of מטות-מסעי is shifted to ויקהל-²⁶פקודי. As a result, the *parshiyos* of מטות-מסעי are almost never read together.²⁷

Because Rambam makes no direct comment on when or why certain *parshiyos* are connected it would appear that Rambam has no specific preference for Saadia Gaon's *parsha* reading system in its totality. However, there is certainly nothing in Rambam to indicate that he would find anything wrong in following Saadia Gaon's recommendations.

Defining A *Parsha*

Saadia Gaon asserts that there are 53 *parshiyos* and identifies those that are sometimes joined with others and those that are sometimes split. How does he determine whether something is a *parsha*, or only

²⁵ See Kappach, תפלה יג:ב, footnote 7

²⁶ Saadia Gaon's comments that it has to be shifted to one of the first 4 sets of *parshiyos* and whoever does it at ויקהל-פקודי is demonstrating טוב הבנתו.

²⁷ Table 3 has מטות-מסעי being read together on two types of regular years. Saadia Gaon does not say it is this pair that is read together. Any pair would suffice.

part of a *parsha*? For example, did he arbitrarily designate תזריע-מצורע as two *parshiyos* and נצבים-וילך one? Or is there something inherent in the *pesukim* of each which give them their respective designations? Secondly, if a *parsha* may be split or coupled, what is the difference if something is designated as a portion of a *parsha* or a complete *parsha*? If תזריע-מצורע are considered two *parshiyos* they can still be read in one week, and if they are one *parsha* they can be split to be read over two weeks. Why then is it important to identify them as being one or two *parshiyos*?

According to some, *parsha* designations are part of the מסורה. מפרשת ויקהל in זוהר says:

אסור למאן דקרי באורייתא למפסק בפרשת' או אפילו מלה חדא, אלא באתר דפסק משה פרשת' לעמא לאשלמי יפסק. ולא יפסק מילין דשבת אחרת בשבתא דא. (מגן אברהם או"ח סימן רפב) נ"ל כוונתו דאם בא לסיים הסדרא שלא במקומו המיוחד, אסור.

The meaning of בפרשת' in the Zohar is unclear. Magen Avraham proves that it cannot refer to פתוחות or סתומות, and concludes it must refer to a סדרה read on *Shabbos*. If מ"א is correct, the concept of a *parsha* dates back to Moshe's time and is part of the מסורה. However, Magen Avraham challenges this possibility from מגילה כט: which discusses a Triennial *Shabbos* reading system where the Torah was completed once every 3 years. (קידושין ל.) המקנה tries to resolve the difficulty by explaining that in the Triennial system all²⁸ of our *parshiyos* were divided into three and read over a three week period, and suggests that the Zohar only meant that *parshiyos* were set, but the exact weekly reading of the *parshiyos* were not. Thus, he asserts that we need not read an entire *parsha* in any שבת or can even combine two *parshiyos* in one *Shabbos*, but we cannot start reading on *Shabbos* in one *parsha* and complete the reading in the middle of another one. Hamakne's explanation, however, does not seem to be consistent with the custom of Saadia Gaon and Rambam who break חקת into two parts that are read with different *parshiyos*.

²⁸ Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky, אמת ליעקב, goes through all of the *parshiyos* and discusses how those that are too small to be broken into three parts are handled.

Table 3

Number of Weeks it takes to Read the Indicated Parshiyos for Each Year Designation
According to Saadia Gaon

	<u>Leap Year</u>					<u>Regular Year</u>				
	<u>ב"ח</u>	<u>ב"ש</u>	<u>ג"כ</u>	<u>ה"ח</u>	<u>ה"ש</u>	<u>ב"ח</u>	<u>ב"ש</u>	<u>ג"כ</u>	<u>ה"ח</u>	<u>ה"ש</u>
<u>Number of Times</u> <u>These Parshiyot are Read Together</u>	50	52	52	53	52	47	46	46	48	47
2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Not Applicable	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
4	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	
<u>Number of Times</u> <u>These Parshiyot are Read Together</u>	47	46	46	48	49	47	46	46	48	47
6	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Not Applicable	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
4	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1

For the rest of this paper we assume that the designation of the *parshiyos* is not Masoretic, but rather determined by a set of rational criteria that we will attempt to identify. We have already discussed two operational Torah reading systems and will discuss another in a later section. These systems will be our guidelines and we will add additional intuitively reasonable rules as needed.

In the absence of definitive guidelines it is reasonable to assume that to decompose the Torah into *parshiyos* we seek to group the text into units that contain a common theme and are of “appropriate size.”²⁹ The need for a common theme is obvious³⁰ and seems to be satisfied by each *Shabbos* reading in our current 54 *parshiyos* system (i.e., assuming נצבים-וילך are two *parshiyos*) whether we read individual *parshiyos*³¹ or our designated paired *parshiyos*. The question we are addressing in this section is how to differentiate:

- A large *parsha* with a common theme that was broken into two *Shabbos* readings with common and related themes, from

²⁹ The concept of “appropriate size” appears in a wide range of sorting and decomposition problems. For example, Twersky, *Mishna Torah of Maimonides*, Yale University Press, discusses why Rambam divided the ד into 14 books. He claims that it was a matter of balancing the number of books and the number of topics per book. Had Rambam chosen books with very broad themes, he would have had few books with many topics in each. On the other hand, had he chosen books with narrow themes, he would have had many books with few topics in each. Twersky says Rambam felt both of these extremes were undesirable and settled on a reasonable number of themes that allowed a significant and manageable number of topics in each.

³⁰ Bar Ilan’s *Daf Shevu’i* no. 139, says מהרי”ץ (סידור עץ חיים) (ח”א דף קצא, סידור עץ חיים) attributes a different Yemenite custom of separating מטות-מסעי but combining חקת-בלק to

... שיש קשר בתוכן של שתי פרשיות חקת ובלק יותר מהקשר שבין פרשת מטות למסעי. סוף פרשת חקת עוסקת בניצחון ישראל על האמורי וזוהי פתיחת פרשת בלק וירא בלק בן צפור את כל אשר עשה ישראל לאמורי.”

While we give credence here to the desirability of *parshiyos* having a common theme we will argue that this is not the primary reason for Saadia Gaon’s choice.

³¹ See, for example, Buchman, *Bedibur Echod*, 1990.

- Two *parshiyos* with separate common themes that were combined to be read together on a single *Shabbos* because the material covered in each was similar enough to be viewed as a common theme?

The need for *parshiyos* of “appropriate size” is meant to smooth out the *Shabbos* readings and avoid readings that are overly long or brief. With respect to length, Table 4 lists the number of *pesukim* in each of the 54 entities and demonstrates that:

- *parsha* size ranges from a low of 30 *pesukim* (וילך) to a high of 176 (נשא),
- The average *parsha* size is 108 *pesukim*,
- 28 *parshiyos* have greater than average size, and 26 are below average size,

These numbers are consistent with a system of *parshiyos* of appropriate length.³² However, for the most part the *parshiyos* that we have discussed in this paper as sometimes being read together (shaded in Table 4) are, in terms of size, in the bottom 25% of the list, i.e. תזריע-מצורע (48th and 42nd), אהרי מות-קדושים (45th and 49th), בהר- בחוקותי (50th and 46th) and נצבים-וילך (53rd and 54th). Given an objective set of *parshiyos* of disparate size we would assume that the small and large *parshiyos* are randomly distributed throughout the Torah. That does not seem to be the case here, where a succession of short individual *parshiyos* seem to appear in close proximity. The more likely interpretation would seem to be that these pairs are each a large *parsha* that has been split to be read over a two week period. Yet Saadia Gaon insists that all of these *parshiyos* with the exception of נצבים-וילך are individual *parshiyos*. What criteria is he using to differentiate נצבים-וילך from the other pairs?

³² Two key descriptive statistics of a list of numbers is its mean, μ , (a measure of central tendency) and its standard deviation, σ (a measure of dispersion). In this case $\mu=108$ and $\sigma=32$. In general, all of the data will lie within 3σ of its μ . For the 54 *parshiyos* the data ranges from 2.1σ below the mean to 2.4σ above it. This indicates a well behaved set of numbers with no statistical “outliers”.

Table 4

Number of Pesukim³³ in Standard 54 Parshiyos System

Our System		Our System		Our System	
Rank	Parsha	Rank	Parsha	Rank	Parsha
1	נשא	19	כי תבוא	37	שופטים
2	פנחס	20	וארא	38	תרומה
3	במדבר	21	שלה	39	קרח
4	נוח	22	משפטים	40	פקודי
5	וישלה	23	בשלה	41	שמיני
6	ויצא	24	וישב	42	מצורע
7	וירא	25	מטות	43	חקת
8	בראשית	26	ויקרא	44	ויחי
9	מקץ	27	עקב	45	אחרי מות
10	כי תשא	28	כי תצא	46	בחוקתי
11	בהעלותך	29	תולדות	47	יתרו
12	מסעי ³⁴	30	ויגש	48	תריע
13	לך-לך	31	בא	49	קדושים
14	ראה	32	חיי שרה	50	בהר
15	שמות	33	לברים	51	האזינו
16	אמר	34	בלק	52	הברכה וזאת
17	ויקהל	35	תצוה	53	נצבים
18	ואתחנן	36	צו	54	וילך
	Pesukim		Pesukim		Pesukim
	176		122		97
	168		121		96
	159		119		95
	153		118		92
	153		116		91
	148		112		90
	147		112		87
	146		111		85
	146		111		80
	139		110		78
	136		106		75
	132		106		67
	126		106		64
	126		105		57
	124		105		52
	124		104		41
	122		101		40
	122		97		30

³³ This chart is based on the actual number of *pesukim* in these *parshiyos*. It is slightly different from the number listed at the end of each *parsha* in standard *Chumashim*.

³⁴ We have shaded all *parshiyos* that are sometimes read together with another *parsha*. Eleven of the 15 shaded *parshiyos* are amongst the 15 smallest *parshiyos* in the Torah.

The most logical explanation is that Saadia Gaon considers any 2 *parshiyos* that are more frequently than not read together on the same *Shabbos*³⁵ in regular years as well as leap years as one *parsha*, while if they are more often than not read separately they are considered two *parshiyos*. Based on Table 1 this means נצבים-וילך is one *parsha* and based on Saadia Gaon's reading scheme this means מטות-מסעי are two *parshiyos*³⁶ - exactly as Saadia Gaon asserts. However, this would still not explain why Saadia Gaon classifies בהר- בחוקותי, אחרי מות-קדושים, תזריע-מצורע, ויקהל-פקודי *parshiyos* since for the most part they are each read together in regular years and read apart in leap years. If *parsha* designation was determined based simply on overall frequency of being read separately or together, since regular years occur about twice as often as leap years (i.e. 12 for every 7), we would designate each of these pairs as a single *parsha*. Saadia Gaon's designations thus imply that he determined whether something was 1 or 2 *parshiyos* based on the percentage of time they were read together on a leap year,³⁷ i.e., *parshiyos* are designated to primarily meet the needs of leap years and in regular years *parshiyos* are combined to compensate for the missing

³⁵ Whenever we use this phrase we are referring to all readings other than *V'zos Habracha* which is not read on *Shabbos*.

³⁶ We would point out that based on our current reading system מטות- מסעי are almost always read together and should be considered 1 *parsha*.

³⁷ Only קרה-הקת-בלק being considered three *parshiyos* remains unexplained. With only two קביעות exceptions, קרה and the first half of הקת are always read together, as are the second half of הקת and בלק. Based on the frequency of occurrence criterion, קרה and the first half of הקת should then be deemed one *parsha*, and the second half of הקת and בלק another. However, if we viewed the *parshiyos* this way, it would mean that on those years that הקת is read by itself, we would be joining part of one *parsha* with part of another *parsha* to create a weekly reading. The idea that we use parts of two *parshiyos* to make a *Shabbos* reading may not be considered palatable. Thus, קרה-הקת-בלק were designated as three *parshiyos* though they are only read this way in two out of fourteen קביעות. We should point out that we do find the combining of parts of two different chapters in נביא to form a single *Shabbos haftara*. However, chapters in נביא are in no way comparable to Torah *parsha* designation.

Shabbosim. His readjustment to a 53 *parsha* system slightly alters and improves *parsha* size uniformity,³⁸ i.e.:

- *parsha* size ranges from a low of 41 *pesukim* (וזאת ברכה) to a high of 176 (נשא),
- The average *parsha* size is 110 *pesukim*,
- 27 *parshiyos* have greater than average size, and 26 are below average size.

Finally, note that Saadia Gaon's decomposition of the *Chumash* into 53 *parshiyos*, results in 5 *Chumashim* with 12, 11, 10, 10, and 10 *parshiyos* respectively. This means, that for the most part, during leap years each *Chumash* will be read almost the same number of *Shabbosim*,³⁹ while on regular years the numbers of weekly readings for each *Chumash* is approximately 12, 10, 7, 9, and 10 respectively. Thus, while the size of each week's reading follows one distribution pattern, the frequency of weeks each *Chumash* is read is at times quite uniform while at other times quite disparate.

Our definition of *parsha* may also explain why Saadia Gaon's *parsha* system hardly ever doubled מטות-מסעי while our system almost always does. Since במדבר precedes *Shevuos* and *Tisha B'Av* is before ואתחנן it is necessary that some reading flexibility be built into the system for the *parshiyos* between במדבר and ואתחנן. The two most likely candidates in terms of commonality of theme are מטות-מסעי or חקת-בלק. Both of these, however, are fairly large, i.e., מטות - 112 *pesukim* (25th largest), מסעי - 132 *pesukim* (12th largest), חקת - 87 *pesukim* (43rd largest) and בלק - 104 *pesukim* (34th largest). Either pair that is combined would far exceed what is currently the largest *parsha*, but by our rule whichever we choose to be read together would be deemed a single *parsha*. Our current solution is to assign the major doubling up

³⁸ I.e. $\sigma=30$, and data size ranges from 2.2σ below μ to 2.3σ above it. See Chart 1 at the end of the paper.

³⁹ Although Bamidbar has 10 *parshiyos* it is almost always read in 9 weeks. However, for each of those weeks the average size of the reading is much larger than usual. *Bareishis* is read the most weeks of all *Chumashim* but it has by far the largest number of *pesukim* of all of the *Chumashim*, i.e. the *Chumashim* respectively have 1,533; 1,210; 859; 1,288 and 955 *pesukim*.

to ⁴⁰ מטות-מסעי and disregard the excess length.⁴¹ Saadia Gaon avoids this problem by throwing a third *parsha*, קרה, into the mix. Both of these solutions have their own difficulties.

With respect to the significance of designating something a *parsha* rather than part of a *parsha*, we have up until this point identified at least two differences:

- The *haftara*- If an entire *parsha* is read with an entire other *parsha* then the *haftara* of the second *parsha* is read. If a part of a *parsha* is read with another entire *parsha* then the *haftara* is that of the entire *parsha*.
- Combining different *pesukim* to form a *Shabbos* Torah reading- On *Shabbos* it is permissible to read: part of a *parsha*, or one or more *parshiyos*.⁴² It is not permissible to read fragments of two different *parshiyos*.⁴³

⁴⁰ We are not addressing why we double מטות-מסעי more frequently than הקת-בלק. Either pair yields a large *Shabbos* reading. Presumably מטות-מסעי, the larger of the two, is doubled up more frequently because they fit together better. This, of course, directly conflicts with the מהרי"ץ quoted in a previous footnote. Our discussion here concentrates more on why Saadia Gaon avoided the frequent doubling up of either of these pairs of *parshiyos* by interjecting another option.

⁴¹ In our system, assuming that we agree with Saadia Gaon that נצבים-וילך are one *parsha*, we would then have 52 *parshiyos* with:

- *parsha* size ranging from a low of 41 *pesukim* (וזאת ברכה) to a high of 244 (מטות-מסעי),
- The average *parsha* size being 112 *pesukim*,
- 23 *parshiyos* having greater than average size, and 29 below average size,
- $\sigma=35$, and data size ranging from 2.0σ below μ to 3.7σ above it.

This distribution worsens *parsha* size uniformity and introduces a statistical “outlier”. See Chart 2 at the end of the paper.

⁴² The concept of dividing fixed units of texts for reading or reciting purposes appears in situations other than *Shabbos* Torah readings. For example, we find in תפילה that at times partial Chapters in תהלים are read (e.g., the latter half of פרק קטז on days when only half הלל is recited) while at other times the two halves of the Chapter are read

We suggest that these differences have practical halachic ramifications. As we have seen, even Saadia Gaon's readings were meant as general guidelines and not as requirements to be precisely followed. Thus, Rambam mentions only those parts of Saadia Gaon's system that he feels must be followed and is silent on the rest. According to Rambam it is then possible to follow Saadia Gaon's reading scheme directly or modify it by, for example, doubling up *מטות-מסעי* and reading *ויקהל-פקודי* separately. The key, however, is that those who choose to follow Saadia Gaon's general system can only make changes that conform to *parsha* readings based on what he identified as a whole *parsha* or as part of a *parsha*. As we will see in the next chapter there are other systems that were put forward that identified *parshiyos* differently. Anyone adopting another system would then be limited in changing readings based on the rules as applied to the *parshiyos* in that system.

מחזור ויטרי : An Alternate Reading Schedule Based on Dividing *Parshiyos*

As we have seen, Rambam extended the Gemara's list of preferred readings to include *parshas* *צו* before *Pesach* on a regular year. Rambam said nothing about what is read before *Pesach* on a leap year which requires 4 or 5 more *Shabbos* readings before the arrival of the holiday. Rambam was certainly not the first to mention the *צו* requirement. About a century earlier than Rambam we find the

consecutively (e.g. Chapter 116 on days when full Hallel is recited). This halving of the text is such that even when both halves are recited they are done so separately rather than together (i.e., on a day when full Hallel is recited and all of Chapter 116 is read, it is not read as one unit but rather it is read sequentially just like the other separate Chapters). We also find in *תפילה* instances where an entire Chapter of Tehillim is read with one or several sentences of other Chapters (e.g., *רביעי, אשרי*, *שיר של יום*). There is some question as to whether Chapters 92 and 93 of Tehillim are recited at *קבלת שבת* on Friday before *ברכו* with a pause between the two chapters. If there is no pause this is the only example we can think of doubling, i.e. two full chapters are merged to be read together, in an analogous way that we sometimes read two full *parshiyos* on *Shabbos*.

⁴³ Is it possible that it is something like this that Zohar had in mind?

following quote in ⁴⁴מחזור ויטרי (written by שמחה, a disciple of Rashi⁴⁵):

לעולם קורין פרשת צו את אהרן. קודם הפסח: ופרשת וידבר. במדבר סיני. שאו
שהוא תחילת ספר קודם עצרת ... וכל סימנין הללו אין זזין ואין משתנין מקומן
לא בשנה פשוטה ולא בשנה מעוברת.

מחזור ויטרי goes beyond Rambam and requires that צו precede *Pesach* even on a leap year. The way our reading system is currently set up and the way Rambam lists *Shabbos* readings at the end of Ahava this requirement cannot be met. מחזור ויטרי does not specifically say how this is to be accomplished but ⁴⁶השלמה למחזור ויטרי supplies the details⁴⁷ that are reproduced in Table 5. The numbers in the boxes in this Table indicate over how many weeks the particular *parsha* or *parshiyos* are read, e.g.:

- 2 in a תצוה row means that this *parsha* was read over a 2 week period,
- 2 in a חקת-בלק row means that each *parsha* was read on a separate week,
- 4 in a ויקהל-פקודי row means that it took 4 weeks to complete these readings (2 weeks each for ויקהל and פקודי).

⁴⁴ "מחזור ויטרי", Alef Publishing Co., Jerusalem, POB 894, תשכג, page 221.

⁴⁵ Rashi and the author of מחזור ויטרי both died in 1105. Rambam wrote the Yad about 1171.

⁴⁶ Ibid pages 803-806. From names and events mentioned in this supplement the Editor suggests that it was written sometime between 1142 and 1210.

⁴⁷ In this presentation almost all of the *parshiyos* are referred to by the current names that we know them. The exceptions are:

ויקהל	for	תרומה
תשא	for	כי תשא
אחרי	for	אחרי מות
ראשי	for	מטות
תצא	for	כי תצא
תבוא	for	כי תבוא

Table⁴⁸ 5מחזור ויטרי Reading Assignments For Each Year Type Designation

		<u>The Diaspora</u>						
<u>Number of Times These Are Read In One Week</u>		<u>Leap Years</u>						
		ב"ה	ב"ש	ג"כ	ה"ה	ה"ש	ז"ה	ז"ש
5	⁴⁹ תצוה	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	⁵⁰ כי תשא	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
2	⁵¹ ויקהל	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	⁵² פקודי	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
4	נצבים-וילך	1	2	2	2	1	1	1

		<u>Regular Years</u>						
<u>Number of Times These Are Read In One Week</u>		<u>Regular Years</u>						
		ב"ה	ב"ש	ג"כ	ה"כ	ה"ש	ז"ה	ז"ש
6	תצוה	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
7	כי תשא	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	ויקהל-פקודי	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	חקת-בלק	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
4	נצבים-וילך	1	1	1	2	2	2	1

⁴⁸ Details on 8 of the 14 possible קביעות are given in השלמה למחזור ויטרי. The data for the missing 6 is easily reconstructed. All קביעות discussed in השלמה appear in this Table in black. All inferred information appears in this Table as shaded.

⁴⁹ When תצוה is read over a 2 week period, the first week's reading is from the beginning of תצוה (שמות כז:כ) through שמות כה:מג - 45 *pesukim*. The second week's readings is the rest of the *parsha* - 56 *pesukim*.

⁵⁰ When כי תשא is read over a 2 week period, the first reading is from the beginning of כי תשא (שמות ל"א) through שמות ל"ב:יד - 60 *pesukim*, and the second reading is the rest of the *parsha* - 79 *pesukim*. One other interesting point in the מחזור ויטרי system is that on certain leap years the *Shabbos* on which כי תשא is read can be *Parshas Shekalim* (see previous section). However, it can never come out on תצוה.

⁵¹ When ויקהל is read over a 2 week period, מחזור ויטרי says the first week's reading is from the beginning of ויקהל (שמות לה:א) until בצלאל לו:א. בצלאל לו:א. ויעש בצלאל שמות לו:א, and ויעש בצלאל starts שמות לו:א, ויעש בצלאל לו:א. If he is referring to the first *pasuk*, the split is 35 *pesukim* 87 *pesukim*. If it is the second the split is 73 *pesukim* and 49 *pesukim*. Since the second choice leads to a more even distribution and the first does not follow a פ or ס, we assume he means the latter one.

⁵² When פקודי is read over a 2 week period, the first week's reading is from the beginning of פקודי (שמות לח:כא) through שמות לט:לא - 42 *pesukim*. The second week's reading is the rest of the *parsha* - 50 *pesukim*.

The most striking item in Table 5 is that all three double sets of *parshiyos* listed in Tables 1 and 2 for *Chumash Vayikra*, i.e. תזריע-מטות-מסעי, אהרי מות-קדושים, מצורע, בהר- בחוקותי, אחרי מות-קדושים, מצורע, as well as מטות-מסעי do not appear anywhere because according to מחזור ויטרי they are always read together. As discussed in the previous section, because of their relatively small size it is reasonable that each of the pairs from *Vayikra* is considered a single *parsha*. מטות-מסעי, however, is different. Its 244 *pesukim* - 68 more than the largest current single *parsha* (נשא) - would seem to indicate that it is 2 *parshiyos*, but the fact that it is always read together must mean that it is 1 *parsha*. If, however, someone felt that this size is too large then they would be forced to reject the reading system of מחזור ויטרי. Indeed, a variation of this objection was raised by רבינו תם i.e. רבינו יעקב בן רבנא מאיר that if you always read צו on the *Shabbos* before *Pesach*,

...לא מצינו מקום למטות ומסעי להיחלק לשתים ואתה ידעת כי ראיות הן ליחלק יותר מאלה פקודי⁵⁴ וותכל לפי שהן סדרים גדולים וגם הפטרות נתקנו לצורכם ואם לא עכשיו אימתי?

Focusing now on the pairs in מחזור ויטרי that are sometimes read separately, based on the initial rule offered in the previous section, נצבים-וילך and כי תשא are each one *parsha* and חקת-בלק are two. The status of תצוה and ויקהל-פקודי are less clear. With a single exception, both are always read together in a regular year and partitioned in a leap year. But the entire תצוה has only 101 *pesukim*, which is less than an average sized *parsha*. If we consider תצוה as two *parshiyos* they would be the 2nd and 4th smallest *parshiyos*. The issue with respect to ויקהל-פקודי is similar but somewhat different. Since neither ויקהל nor פקודי are ever read in their entirety by themselves, the choice is not whether ויקהל-פקודי is one large *parsha*⁵⁵ or two average sized *parshiyos*, but whether it is 1 large *parsha* or 4 very small *parshiyos*.⁵⁶ We have no evidence as to whether מחזור ויטרי agrees with Saadia Gaon that frequency of occurrence in leap years is the

⁵³ מחזור ויטרי, page 806.

⁵⁴ The breakpoint in פקודי where מחזור ויטרי says reading would stop on a leap year.

⁵⁵ It would however be smaller than מטות-מסעי which we are currently considering one *parsha*.

⁵⁶ Two of the 4 would be the 2nd and 3rd smallest *parshiyos*.

determining factor in whether something is a *parsha*. Viewing the distribution of *parsha* lengths from both perspectives (i.e. תצוה and ויקהל-פקודי are each one *parsha* or are a total of 6 *parshiyos*) the more compact distribution occurs if we assume that מחזור ויטרי holds that overall frequency of occurrence is the key factor and in this system the entire תצוה as well as ויקהל-פקודי are each one *parsha*. This then yields a total number of 48 *parshiyos* and the *parsha* size distribution has the following characteristics:⁵⁷

- *parsha* size ranges from a low of 41 *pesukim* (וזאת ברכה) to a high of 244 (מטות-מסעי),
- The average *parsha* size is 122 *pesukim*,
- 21 *parshiyos* have greater than average size, and 27 are below average size.

Overall this distribution is more disparate than that of Saadia Gaon.

From the perspective of number of *Shabbos* readings for each of the 5 *Chumashim*, for regular years the מחזור ויטרי system results in 5 *Chumashim* with 12, 10, 7, 9, and 10 readings respectively,⁵⁸ while leap years have a 12, 14, 7, 9 and 10 pattern. Thus, at no time does this system attempt to level off the number of *Shabbosim* readings for each *Chumash*. The major benefit of מחזור ויטרי system seems limited to the fact that every year the same *parshiyos* are read on the *Shabbosim* immediately prior to a *Yom Tov*. (See Table 6 at the end of this paper for a summary of the strengths, weaknesses and characteristics of each of the *parsha* reading systems we have discussed.)

If we are correct in assuming that מחזור ויטרי employed a 48 *parshiyos* system, the only time that each *parsha* will be read separately

⁵⁷ I.e. $\sigma=36$, and data size ranges from 2.2σ below μ to 3.4σ above it. See Chart 3 at the end of the paper.

⁵⁸ Is it coincidental that Mishnayos is divided into 6 *Sedarim*, with the number of מסכתות in each Seder respectively: 11, 12, 7, 10, 11, and 12? This number pattern is very similar to the breakdown of the 5 *Chumashim* according to מחזור ויטרי. It is also interesting that the 4th value, i.e. 10, represents נזיקין and if the three בבא's are counted as one (ב"ק קב.) and סנהדרין and מכות are considered one (see, for example, *A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud*, pp. 23, 28) to get to the traditional count of 60 מסכתות, then the breakdown in *Mishnayos* is 11, 12, 7, 7, 11, and 12.

is a regular year with a קביעות of ב"ח or ז"ש. As a result, where Rambam had enough *parshiyos* to basically accommodate leap years but too many for regular years, מחזור ויטרי has the reverse situation. This then resulted in Rambam primarily using the merging of *parshiyos* (with the exception of נצבים-וילך which is split) to control the cycle while מחזור ויטרי needed to split *parshiyos* (with the exception of חקת- בלק which he doubled) in order to address leap years.

Opposition to the reading scheme of מחזור ויטרי is already noted by מחזור ויטרי himself. After giving his view that צו is always read before *Pesach* on both regular and leap years, he concludes:

ובצרפת אין משתנין כל הסימנין הללו ... ואינו נהוג בשנה מעוברת שפעמים שקורין זאת תהיה המצורע קודם הפסח ... ובה"ח מעוברת ובה"ש מעוברת קורין אחרי מות קודם פסח.

While Rambam תפילה יג:ב did not state what happens on a leap year, he presumably follows some variation of the צרפת position. He therefore has no need for halving תצוה or cutting ויקהל-פקודי into four. Assuming Rambam was aware of the מחזור ויטרי position⁵⁹ which primarily based its reading scheme on dividing a *parsha*, he might have only mentioned the idea of combining *parshiyos* in תפילה יג:ב and omitted mention of breaking up a *parsha*, because it is around the former mechanism which he felt the system should primarily rest. Moreover, since in his scheme it is easy to see why ויקהל-פקודי are considered two *parshiyos* but more difficult to assert that תזריע-מצורע are two (i.e. they are both relatively short), he gave תזריע-מצורע as his first example of doubling up.⁶⁰

Some final thoughts now on the objection of ר"ת to the reading scheme of מחזור ויטרי. Rabbenu Tam objects on the grounds that the splitting of *parshiyos* should consider length equalization, commonality of material contained in the split parts, and the historical reality that we have designated *haftaros* for מטות and מסעי. He argues that if you follow the reading schedule of מחזור ויטרי these

⁵⁹ As noted in a previous footnote on Table 5, in this system it is possible that תשא is on שקלים. Rambam mentioned this possibility but in his system it cannot happen. He must thus have been familiar with other systems where it could happen.

⁶⁰ We would still be left with the question of why Rambam mentioned only the first and last pairs of double *parshiyos* in ויקרא.

haftaros will never be read. This argument is as interesting for what it says as for what it does not say. Firstly, ⁶¹מחזור ויטרי like Rambam, says that during the three weeks before *Tisha B'Av* we read *haftaros* from דברי ירמיהו. Although we argued that Rambam holds that two sets of *haftaros* are read on these *Shabbosim* in general this is not customarily done. Thus even if מטות-מסעי are read separately their individual *haftaros* would not be read. If an argument is to be made for a *haftara* reading, it should be made for the *haftara* of *Parshas* Pinchus which precedes מטות, i.e. if מטות-מסעי are always read together then the 3rd *Shabbos* before *Tisha B'Av* is always Pinchus and thus the *haftara* of Pinchus will never be read. This is an interesting argument but not Rabbenu Tam's.

Secondly, Table 5 shows that כי תשא is split in מחזור ויטרי system only in the years that מטות-מסעי are currently split in our system. Thus, if we eliminate the כי תשא split in מחזור ויטרי system, we can restore equilibrium by splitting מטות-מסעי on those same years. This, of course, will come at the expense of צו not coming the *Shabbos* before *Pesach* on leap years with a קביעות of ה"ח or ה"ש. However, the revised Torah reading assignment of Rabbenu Tam is very similar to that of Rambam and in no leap year does צו precede *Pesach* by one week. Thus, Rabbenu Tam could have addressed at least his need for sometimes reading the *haftaros* of מטות-מסעי with only a minor change in the splitting of כי תשא. If the question as he posed it was the driving force in his objection to מחזור ויטרי system why did he replace the entire system instead of making minor corrections?

Finally, Rabbenu Tam is strangely silent on whether we have a tradition on *haftaros* for each of תזריע, מות, אהרי מות, בהר. Does this indicate that in fact no such tradition exists?

From Rambam to *Shulchan Aruch*

As we have seen, Rambam modified the Gemara's requirement that the קללות of *Vayikra* precede *Shevuos* to the *parsha* of Bamidbar precede *Shevuos*, and also mentioned that צו precede *Pesach* on a regular year. Although Rambam is silent on what happens before *Pesach* on a leap year, the natural progression of one week *parsha*

⁶¹ Ibid, page 223.

readings for the extra *Shabbosim* generated by a leap year generally results in *Pesach* following מצורע i.e. 3 *parshiyos* later.⁶² This situation has already been introduced in the last section as being the custom of צרפת and is reflected in the following מחבר או"ח תכח:ד:

לעולם קוראין צו את אהרן קודם פסה בפשוטה ומצורע במעוברת חוץ מבה"ח מעוברת שקורין אחרי מות קודם הפסה.

The exception that the *Mechaber* adds is a year with a קביעות קביעות e.g. 5765. Such a year has one extra *Shabbos*⁶³ and thus requires an additional *parsha*, אחרי מות. רמא adds, "וה"ש מעוברת" i.e., any ה"ש leap year also has one extra *Shabbos* reading before *Pesach*.⁶⁴ Again, these exceptions were already cited in ויטריי as being the custom of צרפת and it is not clear why the מחבר left out this case since it is exactly the same as the one he mentions.

"ולעולם קוראין פרשת במדבר סיני קודם עצרת" מחבר continues, and offers no exceptions. However, here too there are two exceptions. Leap years starting on Thursday that have an extra שבת causing מות אחרי to be read before פסה, also cause נשא to be read before שבועות. ברורה משנה ברורה. שבועות. Again, no reason is given for the silence on this matter by the מחבר and רמא.

In comparing and contrasting the presentation of Rambam and בית יוסף we perhaps can understand why the former did not mention the reading that precedes *Pesach* on a leap year. It is possible that Rambam felt that there was no significance in whether מצורע or מות אחרי were read before *Pesach*.⁶⁵ However, why would neither he nor בית יוסף discuss the difference of what precedes *Shevuos* on a leap

⁶² In general the extra month adds 4 more *Shabbosim*. By reading ויקהל and פקודי separately (instead of together as is done in almost all regular years) and going three *parshiyos* beyond צו the extra 4 *Shabbosim* are accommodated.

⁶³ I.e. *Adar Bais* has 5 *Shabbosim* as it starts and ends on *Shabbos*.

⁶⁴ In this case the first *Adar* has 5 *Shabbosim*. קביעות ה"ש also causes an extra *Shabbos* in a regular year. See Table 1 where only קביעות ה"ש on a regular Year requires ויקהל פקודי be read separately so that צו is on the *Shabbos* before *Pesach*.

⁶⁵ Some explain מצורע is preferred because it, like צו, discusses the washing of כלים.

year? Doesn't the Thursday leap year קביעות contradict Rambam's statement that *parshas Bamidbar* is read before *Shevuos*? We may perhaps infer from this that Rambam felt that it made no difference whether במדבר or נשא directly preceded *Shevuos*. The main thing was that it not be directly preceded by the קללות. Hence, Rambam's words שיהו קוראין במדבר סיני קודם עצרת simply means that under all circumstances at least במדבר must precede *Shevuos*, and that is always true. This understanding, however, would mean that Rambam's phrases:

...והמנהג הפשוט שיהו קוראין במדבר סיני קודם עצרת
..., צו את אהרן קודם הפסח בשנה פשוטה

use the word קודם differently. In the first phrase קודם means prior but not necessarily immediately before, but in the second case it means directly before.⁶⁶

The issue of what to read on ה"ה and ה"ש leap years is, however, more complex. The following quote appears as a footnote to סו מצוה in the ⁶⁷חינוך:

רבינו וכן רבינו בחיי חלקו פרשת משפטים לשתים כמנהג ברצלונה ושאר קהילות [וכן נהגו עד ימינו באלגיר ותוניס] אשר בשנים מעוברות שקביעתן ⁶⁸הח"א הש"ג שבהן בחורף כט שבתות ועד מצורע כה סדרים וכדי לקיים הסימן סיגרו ופסחו דהיינו לעולם בשנה מעוברת קורין מצורע [שתרגמו סגירן] לפני פסח הוסיפו ⁶⁹פרשת אם כסף.

⁶⁶ I.e. if it means "prior" in the second, Rambam did not need the qualification that it refers to a regular year since צו is read prior to *Pesach* on leap years as well.

⁶⁷ Mechon Yerushalaim Edition, 5748.

⁶⁸ This קביעות is given in a three letter format. The first two letters mean the same as before. The third letter refers to the day of the week on which *Rosh Hodesh Nison* occurs. Thus הח"א means: *Rosh Hashbanah* starts on Thursday, the year is חסר and the first day of Nison (or equivalently the first day of *Pesach*) is Sunday.

⁶⁹ This splits the *parsha* into 60 *pesukim* and 58 *pesukim*. The regular *haftara* was said with the first *parsha* and אם כסף תלוה starts its *haftara* at ירמיה (This is our best guess. It is not clear from the footnote if it starts at this verse or at לא:כו or לא:לו -all it says is that it starts with the words (הנה ימים באים) finishes the *perek* and then continues from ירמיה לג:יט.

In Barcelona, the idea expressed by the *Mechaber* that מצורע come before *Pesach* was not understood as something which naturally occurs, but as something that was desirable. On leap years that began on Thursday, where מצורע was not going to be the *Shabbos* before *Pesach*, a *parsha* was therefore split⁷⁰ to induce the desired result. This split also resulted in Bamidbar always being read the week before *Shevuos*.⁷¹

If Rambam agreed with מנהג ברצלונה in the splitting of *Mishpatim*, it would answer our question as to why he did not mention exceptions to the reading of Bamidbar before *Shevuos*. It would also explain⁷² why the מחבר mentioned the *Pesach* exception but not the one for *Shevuos*, i.e. with respect to *Shevuos* מחבר basically quoted Rambam. Since Rambam makes no distinction on the year (because he holds like the הינוך with respect to splitting משפטים) neither does מחבר (even though he does not agree with הינוך). With respect to what to read on a leap year before פסח, Rambam is silent but מחבר holds it should be מצורע. It is here then that מחבר can state the distinction between the years. All this would be plausible except for the fact that Rambam in his list of mid-week and *Shabbos* Torah readings never mentions the possibility of splitting *Mishpatim*. We are thus left with several questions on both the presentation of Rambam and *Mechaber*.

⁷⁰ מנהג ברצלונה even on years like 5765 once again has one more reading than *Shabbosim* and needs to double up on one of the later *parshiyos*. Thus, in Barcelona there never was a year in which every *parsha* was read separately. The footnote does not mention what *parshiyos* would have been doubled up on in years that משפטים was split. Assuming, as we are, that it was important to keep Bamidbar on the *Shabbos* before *Shevuos*, the only *parshiyos* that would be available to double are חקת-בלק or מטות-מסעי. Although in our system there is a general reluctance to double חקת-בלק we would probably do it rather than merge מטות-מסעי on the only two situations that they are read separately.

⁷¹ The footnote attributes the splitting of *Mishpatim* to wanting מצורע before *Pesach*. How do they know the reason was not to keep Bamidbar immediately before *Shevuos*?

⁷² The question of why מחבר left out the gloss of the רמא would still remain.

טור: A Question of Accuracy

Our study of *parsha* readings:

- Started with a statement in a ברייתא by a 2nd century *Tanna*,
- Went to a הלכה in the יד written by Rambam in the latter part of the 12th century, and
- Ended in a סימן in the שלחן ערוך written by Rabbi Yosef Cairo in the latter part of the 16th century.

The most important Halachic work of the period between Rambam and שלחן ערוך is the early 14th century טור. In או"ח תכה the Tur writes:

לעולם קוראין צו את אהרן קודם פסח בפשוטה ובמעוברת מצורע חוץ מבז"ח מעוברת קוראין אחרי מות קודם פסח ולעולם פרשת וידבר שהיא תחילת הספר קודם עצרת ובה"ח מעוברת ובה"ש מעוברת נשא קודם עצרת.

Unlike Rambam and מחבר, טור makes the distinction for both *Pesach* and *Shevuos*. With respect to *Shevuos*, Tur correctly identifies the leap years of ה"ח and ה"ש mentioned by מחבר and רמא with respect to *Pesach*. However, with respect to *Pesach* he identifies a קביעות that does not have the property he attributes to it, i.e. a leap year with קביעות ז"ח. For a leap year that starts on *Shabbos* and is מצורע, חסר is indeed read the *Shabbos* before *Pesach*. It does not seem possible to attribute the Tur's comment to his use of a *Shabbos parsha* reading system different than ours because at the end of this סימן he offers two explanatory Tables and in the second one his schedule of *parshas* that are doubled is identical to ours⁷³ (see Table 1). How then do we understand Tur's reference to ז"ח?

The recently published critical edition of Tur, מפעל הטור, addresses the problem of the questionable letters ז"ח by putting these letters in parenthesis and adding brackets with the letters ה"ח in place of ז"ח, and second brackets with the letters ה"ש. The introduction⁷⁴ to this edition says that whenever the editors found a

⁷³ For the sake of completeness we mention that Tur also discusses what to read when *parshas Shekalim* falls on תצוה or כי תשא and concludes by saying that in our *parsha* reading system this can never happen.

⁷⁴ Section entitled "אל תשכן באהליך עולה" Pages טו-טז.

manuscript with better language than that in the standard Tur they inserted the “correct” language without brackets.⁷⁵ The use of brackets was limited to situations where they had no manuscript with the new words but did have writings from reliable אחרונים indicating that a change was warranted. Unfortunately, the editors do not mention who the person(s) are upon whom they relied on to add these parenthesis. While the corrections in this case may conform to what we read, it seems difficult to assume that they are what the טור originally wrote. Firstly, with respect to *Pesach*, our Tur mentions only a single incorrect exception but with respect to *Shevuos* he correctly mentions both exceptions. If a printer’s error had occurred with respect to *Pesach*, it would then have been to both change the first term and completely omit the second one. The chance of a double error, involving two different mistakes, seems unlikely. Secondly, if originally the wording was as מפעל הטור השלם suggests and at some point in time there was an error in transcription, which text did the *Mechaber* have? If he had the original correct version with ה”ח and ה”ש written out for both *Pesach* and *Shevuos*, it seems implausible that in the *Shulchan Aruch* he would have mentioned only one of the two exceptions with respect to *Pesach* and neither with respect to *Shevuos*. On the other hand, if *Mechaber*’s Tur had a reading of only ז”ה, like we have, then why did he not mention in his בית יוסף commentary on the Tur that this is not correct in our reading system? It would, therefore, seem clear that the *Mechaber* had neither our wording nor that suggested by מפעל הטור השלם. What then was his wording?

We do not offer here a solution to all of our above questions, but suggest that before an answer can be developed the accuracy of Tables in the Tur must be verified. Our problem with ז”ה is predicated on the fact that the second Table in the Tur concerning

⁷⁵ One example of this may be in the section entitled הלוחות that immediately precedes the two explanatory Tables. The standard Tur text reads:

... והדמיון בזה רצונו לידע שנת חמשת אלפי' והא' לבריאת עולם ... הנה נתברר לנו ששנת חמשת אלפים ומאה היא שנה שמינית למחזור רס"ט

in the first line makes no sense and it is clear from the rest of the statement that Tur is referring to year 5100. מפעל הטור השלם has this without parenthesis,

... והדמיון בזה אם רצונו לידע שנת ה' אלפים וק' לבריאת עולם ... הנה נתברר לנו ששנת חמשת אלפים ומאה היא שנה שמינית למחזור רס"ט

parsha readings precisely describes our system and in our system ז"ה on a leap year does not have אהרי מות before *Pesach*. However, we have already shown that many other *parsha* systems besides ours were used,⁷⁶ and we also know that there are definite challenges to the authenticity of the first table in the Tur. As it commonly appears in all standard Turim, the first Table offers an almost 1,000 year calendar that starts in 5055 (1295 CE) and ends in 6042 (2282 CE). This Table assumes that our Lunar Calendar cycles every 247 years⁷⁷ and its authorship is generally attributed to נהשון גאון who was Gaon from 872 CE until his death in 890. The Tur's Table covers 4 of these cycles or 988 years (4*247).⁷⁸ It is easily demonstrated that the 247 year repeating cycle assumption is in error. While for the most part two years that are 247 years apart are identical, the *molad*⁷⁹ of the later year is 905 *belakim* earlier, with a probability of approximately⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Other reading systems besides ours that we have previously mentioned are: Rambam splitting of חקת, Saadia Gaon, Chinuch splitting of משפטים, and the more radical system of מחזור ויטרי. But this list is not exhaustive. Other systems existed as well. For example, Sar Shalom (שערים ללוח העברי, 1984, Netanya, p. 112) mentions places where וירא or מקץ were split and places where תרומה and תצוה were always read together so as never to have a *parsha* where Moshe was not mentioned. See also "The Torah Reading Cycle: Past and Present" by Norman Bloom, *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy*, Vol. XVIII, (1995-1996), pp. 37-58.

⁷⁷ I.e. years that are 247 years apart have identical קביעות.

⁷⁸ Details on this system and its history can be found in Sar-Shalom, p 51.

⁷⁹ The *molad* is an approximation of the time of conjunction, and the conjunction of Tishrei determines the lunar calendar. There are 1080 *belakim* in an hour. Generally speaking, if the *molad* of Tishrei is:

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or *Shabbos* before noon- *Rosh Hashanah* starts on that day.
- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or *Shabbos* after noon- *Rosh Hashanah* is respectively on Tuesday, Thursday, *Shabbos*, Monday,
- Any time on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday- *Rosh Hashanah* respectively starts Monday, Thursday, *Shabbos*.

⁸⁰ Two years that are 247 years apart will have a different קביעות only if the first *molad* was between 12 and 12:50 pm (905 *belakim* \approx 50 minutes) on a Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or *Shabbos*. The probability of this is $(4/7)*905/(1080*24)$.

2% that the change will affect the calendar. This means about 5 changes⁸¹ every 247 year cycle, or about 20 (4*5) errors in the Tur's 1000 year calendar. Because of these mistakes פרי הדש composed his own calendar (that we have previously mentioned) for the period 1694⁸² through 2240.

The question is whether the Tur mistakenly assumed the 247 year cycle was correct and used it? מפעל הטור השלם, brings the standard Table in the Tur, then gives a revised Table designed and published by R' Refael Gordon in "המליץ", תרסב (1902). R' Gordon says:

והלוח הישן הוא מוטעה מאד לא יצא ח"ו מרבינו הטור זצ"ל

and claims that the Table usually found in the Tur was not the one in the original Tur but was mistakenly put in by a later publisher of the Tur. He surmises that a mistake like this occurred because the 1522 Venetian edition of the Tur and some other older editions were published without the Table, and when the Table was later reinserted, it was the wrong one.⁸³ R' Gordon proceeded to devise a calendar

⁸¹ We are discussing the starting day of a year. However, if the starting day of a year change then the קביעות of the previous year changes as well. Thus, when we say 5 changes in 247 years we mean at least 10 changes in קביעות, and an equivalent multiple in the Tur's 1000 year calendar. These changes are also cumulative, i.e. the changes from one 247 to the next carry over into future 247 year multiples as well. Thus, in 1000 years there will be far more than 20 errors.

⁸² פרי הדש calendar found in the standard *Shulchan Aruch* starts with year 1751 (57 years later). פרי הדש himself says he is starting from year 1694, but by the time the calendars were printed in the *Shulchan Aruch*, years had elapsed and the publisher decided not to include calendars for years that were in the past.

⁸³ One of the proofs offered to corroborate R' Gordon's assertions, is the citation we previously mentioned that the Tur was originally published in 5090 and 5091 and that its designations in the Tur's Table were זח-הש. The *molad* for *Tishrei* 5091 (1330) was Thursday 12:29 pm and according to the standard rules presented in a previous footnote, *Rosh Hashbanah* should be deferred to *Shabbos*. Yet the Tur's Table designates it ה"ש, i.e. *Rosh Hashbanah* is Thursday. It is argued that there is no way that the Tur made a mistake on the year in which he published his work. We are not convinced by this argument and present here a brief outline of a way of explaining why the Tur may have written זח-ה"ש.

that he suggested was the one that appeared in the original Tur, and claimed that in 1905, three years after he published his revised calendar, he found very similar ones in two old Tur manuscripts.⁸⁴

The presentation in מפעל הטור השלם only discusses R' Gordon critique of the first Table in the Tur. It does not mention anything about whether the second Table was also left out of the 1522 Venetian Tur and later reinserted. It is certainly evident that the second Table in the מפעל הטור השלם edition is not the one found in the standard Tur. Although no mention is made to that affect anywhere in the text, the second Table in this edition has an extra row at the bottom which describes the *parsha* readings in *Eretz Yisrael*

In a recently published article entitled “A 5765 Anomaly” (Tradition, 38:3 Fall 2004) we discussed a dispute between Saadia Gaon and Ben Meir in the year 923. The *molad* of *Tishrei* that year was *Shabbos* 12:13 pm and Ben Meir insisted, without supporting reasons, that the *molad* cut-off point to defer *Rosh Hashanah* was 12:36 (not 12:00) and ruled that *Rosh Hashanah* start on *Shabbos*. Saadia Gaon disagreed and said that the noon cut-off was fixed and insisted *Rosh Hashanah* start on Monday. In our article we argued that this dispute was about the inaccuracy of the *molad* calculations and that over time the 36 minute “buffer” Ben Meir offered would grow larger. As a recent application of this dispute, we demonstrated that in 5765 the *molad* of *Tishrei* was Tuesday 1:16 pm and *Rosh Hashanah* began on Thursday. However, the inaccuracy in the *molad* had grown to over 1 and a half hours and according to Ben Meir *Rosh Hashanah* would have started on Tuesday. Finally, we showed that early in the history of fixed calendars the *molad* inaccuracy was small and seldom led to significant differences in the start of *Rosh Hashanah*. We posited that the first 4 times that this issue could have been raised was 923, 927, 1145 and 1330. Thus, if the Tur went along with our interpretation of Ben Meir, his designation of 1330 as ה"ש would have been correct, as would have been his designations for:

- 1333,1334 and 1335 (*molad* 1334- Tuesday 12:28 pm),
- 1375 (*molad*- Monday 12:44 pm),
- 1513, 1514, 1515 (*molad* 1515- Shabbos 12:28 pm)
- 1519 (*molad*- Thursday 12:27 pm).

Accordingly, the first error in the Tur would not have occurred until the middle of the 17th century, or more than 300 years after his lifetime.

⁸⁴ The editor of מפעל הטור השלם points out, that R' Gordon's revised Table is different from almost all known כתבי יד of Tur.

for each קביעות. Moreover, in order for this row to make any sense it is necessary to know that זקת בלק is never read together in *Eretz Yisrael*,⁸⁵ but nowhere in the Table is this stated. Although this Table does reflect what we do today, it is unclear if מפעל הטור השלם is claiming that this is the original Table that was somehow shortened in later editions of the Tur, or they are simply trying to make the Table complete.

Because of all of the problems we have mentioned with the Tur in this סימן, without verification that at least the upper half of the second Table in the Tur is in fact a copy of the Tur's original Table it is very difficult to use the Tur, as we have it, to shed any light on the Tur's *parscha* reading pattern.

A Review and Commentary

The material we have presented suggests that originally the assigning of *Shabbos* Torah readings was fluid with only a minimum set of rules that had to be satisfied. Communities could and did individually choose whatever reading pattern they wanted as long as it conformed to the basic rules. We thus find Rambam, תפילה יג:א, mentioning that although there was an ancient custom of completing one cycle of Torah readings in 3 years (Triennial system) the generally accepted method was to complete the readings in one year. The system Rambam refers to is mentioned in מגילה כט: as having been practiced in *Eretz Yisrael* in the times of the Tannaim. The wording of Rambam in *Hilchos Tefillah* makes it sound as if the Triennial System was still practiced in his time, albeit not commonly, perhaps 1000 years later. This is indeed confirmed by the writing of Benjamin of Tudela in 1170 about the Cairo Community:

“Two large synagogues are there, one belonging to the land of Israel and one belonging to the men of the land of Babylon... Their usage with regard to the portions and sections of the law is not alike; for the men of Babylon are accustomed to read a portion every week, as is done in Spain, and is our custom, and to finish the law each year; while the men

⁸⁵ We mentioned this previously in an earlier section.

of Palestine⁸⁶ do not do so but divide each portion into three sections and finish the law at the end of three years.” (Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 15, p 1247.)

A system that was robust enough to accept a Triennial and an Annual Torah reading cycle coexisting in one community, would obviously also tolerate a variety of different Yearly systems as long as all of the systems satisfied the basic rules.⁸⁷

With the initial rules in place, it appears that as time passed certain non mandatory reading patterns received wide acceptance (e.g. Rambam’s addition of **צו** before *Pesach* on a regular year) and were then incorporated by the leading Halachic authorities of the generation as part of the new set of minimum requirements. These rules, in turn, then stayed until another round of additional practices became universally accepted (e.g. *Shulchan Aruch* adding that **מצורע** immediately precede *Pesach* on most leap years). Our currently employed universally accepted *parsha* reading system is then of relatively recent vintage. Sar Shalom (page 110) makes the following interesting comment about our custom of referring to a week by the name of its *parsha* reading:

כל עוד רווחו מנהגים שונים בחיבור פרשיות וחלוקתן לא ניתן היה לכנות את שם השבוע על שם הפרשה שכן בשעה שהיו קהילות או עדות שקראו פרשת תרומה היו אחרים שקראו את פרשת אם כסף וכדומה, בעקבות התפשטות הש"ע של הרב יוסף קארו על פרושיו ותוספותיו התפשט המנהג האחיד המקובל היום בכל תפוצות ישראל מנהג זה בחיבור פרשיות נעשה דומננטי ודחה את כל המנהגים האחרים גם חזוק הקשרים בין הקהילות והתפשטות לוחות השנה תרמו רבות

⁸⁶ Note that according to his reporting it was only people stemming from Eretz Yisrael who practiced the triennial cycle.

⁸⁷ *מהרץ חיות* asks how מגילה לא: is consistent with the Triennial system? Rav Tzadok Hacoen suggests that, in the Triennial system these pieces would be read on the *Shabbosim* before *Shevuos* and *Rosh Hashanah* regardless of where they were up to in the Torah. Sar Shalom (*Sinai*, Vol 123-124, pp 620-641, "הקריאה בארץ ישראל בתקופת המשנה והתלמוד", argues that the custom of reading the Torah in some sort of cycle, yearly or triennially, arose after the destruction of the second *Bais Hamikdash* whereas the custom of reading the words of the תוכחה prior to *Shevuos* and *Rosh Hashanah* was suspended with the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*.

ליצרת מסגרת אחידה לפרשת השבוע ומכאן קצרה הדרך לקביעות שם לשבוע:
שם השבוע - כשם פרשת השבוע .

Sar Shalom dates the common use of designating a week by its פרשה השבוע to the period after the publication of the *Shulchan Aruch*. It was the dissemination and acceptance of the *Shulchan Aruch* that galvanized the acceptance of a universal *parsha* reading system. Our current system has then been in place for only about 400 years.⁸⁸

In viewing other situations involving Torah readings, it would seem that flexibility in allowing individual community discretion is the norm. For example, in מגילה כא:-כב. the Gemara presents a discussion of how to assign עליות on *Rosh Hodesh*. The Gemara explains that the number of *pesukim* in the relevant sections of *Parshas Pinchas* does not allow four *aliyos* without violating a rule of Torah reading that disallows starting or ending an *aliyah* two *pesukim* or less from a פ or ס. The Gemara offers two solutions. Shmuel says פוסק, i.e. the first *aliyah* gets the first two and a half *pesukim*, and the second *aliyah* gets the next two and a half *pesukim*. רב rejects this solution because כל פסוקא דלא פסקיה משה אנן לא פסקינן.

Shmuel responds that this is a general principle meant to be employed when there are alternatives. However, in cases like *Rosh Hodesh* where there are no alternatives, the rule may be ignored.⁸⁹ רב disagrees and recommends דולג. There is the following disagreement as to what this means:

⁸⁸ As we have previously explained, even in our system when the first day of *Pesach* is *Shabbos* or the first day of *Shevuos* is Friday, there will be a period of time when the Diaspora and *Eretz Yisrael* are reading different *parshiyos*. This nevertheless should not upset the system since everyone knows the reason for these differences and when told where one community is reading will immediately know what the other one is reading.

⁸⁹ Note the similarity between this dispute and the one we mentioned previously about whether it is preferable to split a *parsha* or double up two *parshiyos*. Note also the similarity between the objection mentioned here not to split a Pasuk in half and the comment of Zohar mentioned previously,
אסור למאן דקרי באורייתא למפסק בפרשת' או אפילו מלה חדא, אלא באתר דפסק
משה פרשת' לעמא לאשלמי' יפסוק. ולא יפסוק מילין דשבת אחרת בשבתא דא.
Shmuel's response here in the Gemara may also be the answer to our question on Hamakne's answer to Magen Avraham's question.

- Rashi, and Rambam תפילה יג:יב (11th and 12th century)- The 2nd aliyah rereads the last *pasuk* that the first *aliyah* read (this is what we do),
- Ramban (13th century) – Each person reads his required allotment of *pesukim* and we do not worry that someone is ending two *pesukim* before a פ or ט because we have no alternative.
- גרא או"ה תכג' ס"ק ג (18th century) - The first person reads the first 3 *pesukim*, the second person reads *pesukim* 4-8 and the 3rd person reads *pesukim* 6-10.

Gra bases his decision on what he considered to be the best solution and that this solution is given in מסכת סופרים. He concludes with:

וכיון דבר"ה לא איפסקא בגמרא דילן מסתבר טפי לנהוג כמו שמפורש במ"ס סתם בלי מחלוקת ובלי שום חששא וע' בתוס' דברכות יח א' ד"ה למח' ... וכן אנו נוהגים ע"פ מ"ס כו':

Despite the long history of practical Halacha from the times of the Rishonim more than 500 years before him that disagreed with him, Gra had no difficulty instituting a Torah reading system that he felt superior. ❧

Table 6

Summary of System Characteristics

System	Parsha Size	Readings Per ⁹⁰ חוליה Uniformity	Shabbos/Yom Tov Reading Relationship ⁹¹	Idiosyncrasies
Current	1 Outlier	In Leap Years	Some ⁹²	
Saadia Gaon	Normal Type Distribution	In Leap Years	Some	קרה-הקת-בלק
מחזור ויטרי	1 Outlier, wide dispersion	Never	Yes	

⁹⁰ I.e. How many *Shabbosim* is each *Chumash* read?

⁹¹ I.e. Are the *Shabbos* readings that precede Yom Tov each year always the same?

⁹² I.e. On regular years it is always the same.

Chart 1
Parsha Size Distribution

Saadia Gaon

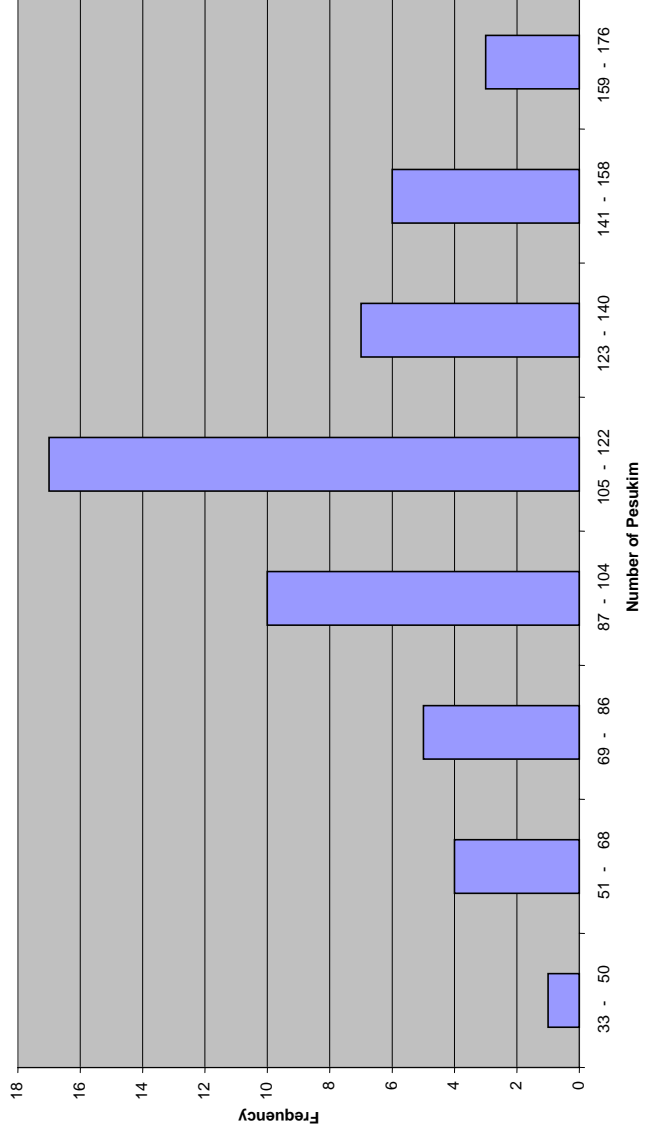


Chart 2
Parsha Size Distribution

Our System

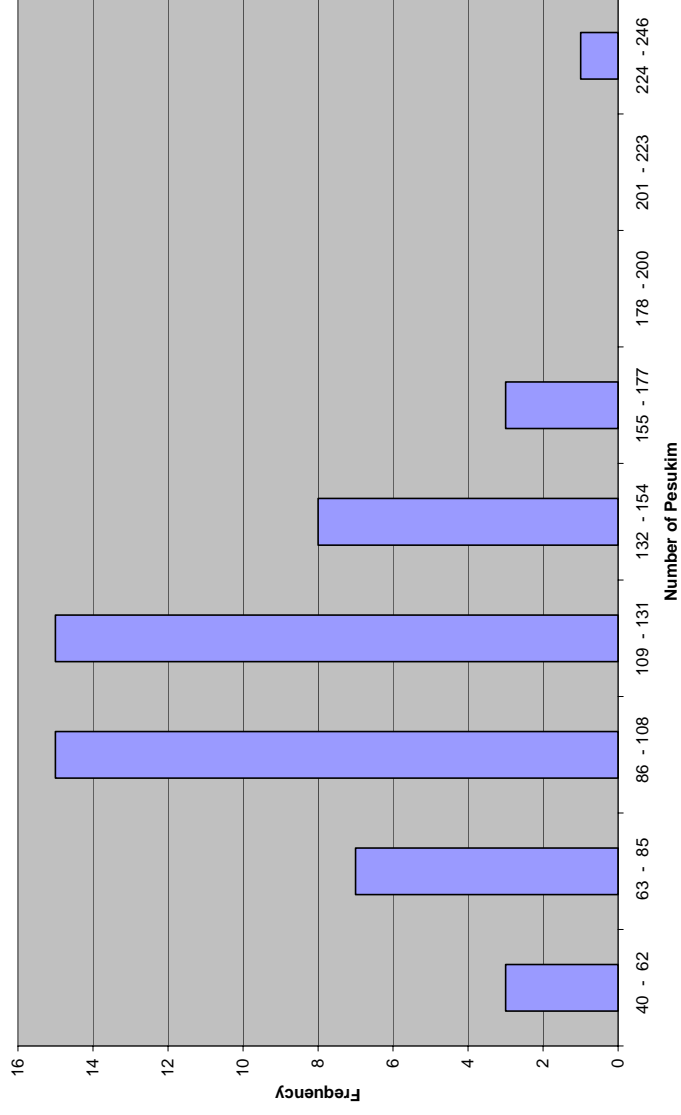


Chart 3
Parsha Size Distribution

