Have You Ever Wondered...

In the Zechus of a Refuah Shleima of my Rabbeim, Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky shlita, הגאון הרב שמואל בן איטא עטיל and Rav Moshe Heinemann Shlita, הגאון הרב משה בן פיגלא.

Q: Should one correct a Bar Mitzvah boy who makes a mistake while reading from the תורה?

A: Leaving a Bar Mitzvah boy aside, there is a general question whether it is permitted to correct someone who makes a mistake in public since he may be embarrassed. The working assumption is that the average בעל קורא would not feel humiliated, in so much as we are humans, we all err from time to time. Additionally, he would be more comfortable knowing that people are listening intently and making sure that he is reading properly.

Additionally, Rabbi Moshe Heinemann shlita feels that a Bar Mitzvah boy really needs to be corrected as well since, otherwise, he won't prepare well and the whole level / standard will be dropped and go downhill. Perhaps the way it's done can make a big difference as well. Some shuls make an announcement beforehand that corrections should be left to the teacher or *gabbaim*.

There are multiple benefits from this that come to mind:

- The *gabbaim* are listening intently and often a person further away can hear something different.

- Typically they are בעלי דקדוק and know or are trained as to what should be rectified and repeated, while other imperfections should just be left alone.

- All it takes is one over-zealous person who finds problems with every פסוק to completely fluster and derail the Bar Mitzvah *bochur*.

- It is probably easier as it is less shameful on the boy when the fix-up is done close by and quietly rather than called out by the masses across shul.

There is even a concept of some הלכות changing due to כבוד הבריות! Rav S Z Aurbach, *zt"l*, once allowed a בר מצוה *bochur* who prepared the wrong הפטרה to read that one instead. Obviously, each situation is different, but sensitivity is clearly needed.

I still remember when my 8th grade Rebbi, Rabbi Gobioff, walked in on a Sunday morning and announced that he proudly was not יוצא the מצוה of קריאת התורה that Shabbos. He went on to explain that the Bar Mitzvah boy completely butchered his *leining*. Many congregants decided to arrange another קריאה after davening in the main sanctuary. You can only imagine how embarrassed and humiliated the boy and his family must have been. My Rebbi made a conscious decision that, as important as קריאת התורה is, it is not worth giving up one's עולם הבא for, so he simply left shul and went home!

Q: What type of errors should be corrected when the בעל קורא makes a mistake?

A: The רמ״א (*OC* 142:1) writes that only mistakes that are משתנה על ידי זה הענין should be corrected. The *MB* (*OC* 142:4) points out that sometimes missing a letter does not change much while in other situations the נקודות / vowels can completely alter the meaning or the tense. It is even conceivable that the טעמי המקרא / cantillation marks, when deviated from, can change the understating and essence of the *pasuk* (משרת vs. מפסיק).

When it is warranted to go back, it is done even if Hashem's name has been said and even if we have moved into the next עליה already (*MB* ibid.).

Even when the טעות is not deemed "correctable" the Rama (ibid.) writes that one who makes a small change in the טעמי הקרא, for example, he sings a תלישה גדולה instead of a תלישה קטנה one is גוערין בו / admonish him privately (אשל אברהם שם). Today, we are not נוהג like that.

Interesting to note that in Khal Adas Yeshurun (KAJ), the בעל קורא rarely makes any mistakes. In fact, if something is off even once every two months, you can hear murmuring in the crowd while the ציבור wonders why he is not sufficiently prepared as one should be while standing in front of the king!

The *Mishna Brurah* does quote the שו״ת מהרם מינץ which is brought in the אליה רבה how accurate and meticulous the Torah reader needs to be:

החזן צריך לחזור מתחילה הסדרה שתהא שגורה בפיו כל הדקדוקים במתגים, מלעיל ומלרע, ימין ושמאל, ויקרא במתון ולא במהירות, ואולי יבליע שום אות או תבה.

Rav Moshe Heinemann, *shlit"a*, told me that when when he was in Lakewood there was a fellow by the name of Kirshner who never deviated or committed the most subtle or nuanced טעות while *leining*. His memory was so good that they just made him the גבאי as well since he remembered everybody's name, even a guest from years ago! When he moved out of town, Rav Heinemann took him over as *Baal Koreh*. Some of his חברים commented, "Finally we have someone that makes mistakes once more and therefore *leining* has become interesting again!"

Rav Heineman ended by saying that ideally the Rabbi of a shul should not be the *Baal Koreh* since, if he messes up, people will wonder what type of Rav do we have? But in the Agudah Baltimore, often there is no one that goes up to read from the תורה, so instead of making everybody wait, Rav Heinemann looks away from his personal כבוד and goes up himself!

As an aside unrelated to *krias haTorah* Rabbi Dovid Zucker, *shlit"a*, the Rosh Kollel in Chicago, shared with us when he was in town recently, that he asked Rav Elya Svei, *zt"l*, some 40+ years ago, "as a Rosh Kollel and someone who is looked up to, am I allowed to make a mistake?" Rav Svei answered, "Yes, but don't make too many of them"!

At the other extreme, the *Sharei Efrayim* (3:1) writes that those who are מדקדק with their reading הרבה יותר מהצורך, to the degree that it sounds like a completely different הברה / dialect, then אין רוח חכמים נוחה מהם.

Around three months ago I got a text saying:

"Want to prank the *Baal Koreh* tomorrow morning?

After the כהן makes his ברכה, the entire קהל should answer ameeeeiiiin, using the Yom Kippur ניגון. Good luck reading פרשת אחרי מות in the normal *trop* after that..!"

We can't close without mention of those fellows who come to shul armed and trigger happy waiting and hoping for lots of mistakes to be made. Occasionally they return home with a frown on their face and tell their wives, "Rough morning, no mistakes! Why does he review so much anyways?"

CINCINNATI Community KOLLEL

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann is a Rosh Kollel in the Cincinnati Community Kollel. The above relevant shaylos are a sampling of questions that were asked recently. Rabbi Heinemann can be reached at RabbiCHeinemann@gmail.com or 513-835-5005.