

## The Torah Processional

Welcome to Worship Shorts!

Today, I will discuss the *Torah* Processional. At a high moment in the service, we open our Ark and bring out one of our *Torah* Scrolls. After some prayers and proclamations, the person assigned to carry it wanders around the room and ends up back at the *bima*, where the scroll is opened and read.

I have heard many explanations as to why we do this and what the proper etiquette is for this, but sometimes it's difficult to discern between actual reasons given by historical Jewish leaders and Messianic reasons given by well-meaning but sometimes uninformed leaders in the Messianic movement who are often looking for new explanations for old traditions.

The simple reason for having a Torah processional is to emulate, in a ritualistic way, the verse in Numbers 10:35, which says, "So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said, 'Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You.'" It represents the power of God to protect His people and to make them unconquerable.

Now the etiquette is to move to the aisle as the *Torah* approaches and to touch it with a Bible, or a *Siddur*, or corner of one's *Tallit*. In most places it is not touched directly by one's hand, although there are places where this practice is considered acceptable. Like anything else involving ritual observance, we should be careful not to injure someone's spirit by bringing harsh criticism or uninvited instruction. If visitors don't know our customs, we should be more lenient and provide gentle correction at an opportune time.

But why do we give such honor to a scroll? It's not the scroll that we honor, although we certainly wish to show due respect. But it's the content of the scroll that we honor, since its content is God-breathed. It is God's word, and it indicates His instruction to us. How do we know this?

We know this from 1 Samuel 4 when Israel attempted to use the Ark containing the tablets as a weapon in their battle against the Philistines. The Philistines were frightened at the thought of fighting the God of Israel, and they prepared themselves to fight fiercely. God used that battle to judge the High Priest, Eli and his two sons. The two sons of Eli were with the Ark when it was captured, and they were killed.

Eli, when he heard that the Ark had been captured, fell over and broke his neck and died. The Ark was powerless against the Philistines because the leadership of Israel was in disobedience to God's instructions, as contained in the tablets.

So the *Torah*, since it is the beginning of God's word, the first five books of Moses, is symbolic of all of God's instructions, including His instructions concerning the requirement in Psalms 2 for us to "*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are those who put their trust in Him.*"

As followers of the New Covenant, we have received the *Ruach Elohim*, God's Spirit, and the Spirit of God gives us instructions which not only tell us how to live but teach us how to understand and fulfill all the commandments of the Holy One of Israel. When you do His will, this is the most important way to honor the *Torah*.

Thank you for listening to Worship Shorts!