

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline  
Reading and Righting  
May 11, 2023

**Q** Should I correct a *ba'al korei*'s mistake?



**A** The Rambam (Hilchos *Tfilah* 12:6) writes that a *ba'al korei* should be corrected. Other *Rishonim* say to refrain, to avoid embarrassing him (Tur O.C. 142 quoting Sefer Hamanhig).

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 142:1) codifies the Rambam's ruling. The Rama mostly agrees but sets a limit: One should send the *ba'al korei* back (i.e., even if he has moved on—Teshuvos Vehanhagos 1:147) only for a mistake that changes the meaning, not for an error in *trop* (cantillation) or *nikud* (vowels); but even in those cases, the correction should be shouted (only if the error is caught before he continued reading—*ibid.*).

The Mishnah Brurah (*ibid.* 4) points out that even *nikud* mistakes sometimes change the meaning, e.g., from future tense to past; for those, the *ba'al korei* should be sent back. And in certain cases, even the wrong *trop* can change the meaning (*ibid.*). Conversely, if a letter is omitted (or added) and the meaning is *not* affected, one need not go back (*ibid.*).

If an entire word was omitted, even one that does not affect the meaning, the *ba'al korei* must be sent back (Biur Halacha *ibid.* s.v. *Aval*).

Some *poskim* are more lenient, like the Derech Hachaim (cited in Biur Halacha *ibid.* s.v. *Ein*), who says that even mistakes that change the meaning don't need to be corrected. Ask your *rav* or *gabbai* which view your shul follows. The practice in many shuls, from what I've observed, is to correct all mistakes when caught immediately, except those of *trop*.