

RECEIVING AN ALIYAH TO THE TORAH

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A minimum⁽¹⁾ of eight people - a Kohen, a Levi, five Yisraelim and an additional person for maftir⁽²⁾ - are called to the Torah every Shabbos morning. If a Kohen is unavailable, either a Levi or a Yisrael is called instead of him, but if a Yisrael is called instead of a Kohen, then a Levi can no longer be called after him.⁽³⁾ If a Levi is unavailable, then the same Kohen who was called for Kohen is called again.⁽⁴⁾

THE PROCEDURE

- 1.** The person being called should take the shortest possible route to the bimah so that there is no unnecessary delay. If all of the routes are equal in distance, he should ascend from the right side.⁽⁵⁾
- 2.** Before reciting the blessing,⁽⁶⁾ the oleh (the one receiving the aliyah) should look inside the Torah to see where the koreh will begin reading. He then rolls up the scroll and recites Barechu followed by the first blessing. Alternatively, he may leave the scroll unrolled but should close his eyes while reciting Barechu and the blessing.⁽⁷⁾
- 3.** After the reading is over, the sefer should be rolled up and the final blessing recited. The final blessing should not be recited over an open sefer even if one keeps his eyes closed.
- 4.** The blessings must be recited loud enough so that at least ten men are able to hear them. The poskim are extremely critical of those who recite the blessings in an undertone.⁽⁸⁾

WHO IS CALLED TO THE TORAH?

It is appropriate and preferable to call to the Torah only those who are God-fearing Jews who observe the mitzvos. Under no circumstances is it permitted to call non-believers to the Torah, for their blessings are not considered blessings at all. If absolutely necessary, it may be permitted to accord them honors that do not necessitate a blessing, e.g., hagbahah or gelilah.⁽⁹⁾

Most often the aliyos are allocated in rotating order or at the gabbai's discretion. But it is a long-standing tradition which has become universally accepted to mark milestone events by receiving an aliyah. People marking such events are called chiyuvim, since custom dictates that they are obligated to receive an aliyah. Sometimes, however, there are not enough aliyos for all of the people

who are chiyuvim.(10) Based on the opinion of the majority of the poskim, the following, in order of priority, is a list of the chiyuvim who are entitled to an aliyah(11):

1. A groom(12) on the Shabbos before his wedding [or on the Shabbos before he leaves his hometown to travel to his wedding].
2. A(13) child(14) who becomes bar mitzvah on that Shabbos.(15)
3. The father of a newborn(16) boy or girl, if the mother is in shul for the first time since giving birth.(17)
4. A groom on the Shabbos after his wedding, if the wedding took place on Wednesday or later in the week.
5. One who has a Shabbos yahrtzeit.(18)
6. The father of a baby boy(19) whose bris will be that Shabbos or during the coming week.(20)
7. A groom on the Shabbos after his wedding, if his wedding took place before Wednesday.
8. One who has a yahrtzeit during the upcoming week.(21)
9. One who must recite the ha-gomel blessing.(22)
10. One who is embarking on or returning from a journey.
11. An important guest.

CONSECUTIVE ALIYOS FOR RELATIVES

In order to avoid ayin ha-ra, a "bad omen," the gabbai does not call a father and a son, or two brothers [who share a father] for consecutive aliyos.(23) Even if the parties involved are not concerned with ayin ha-ra and wish to be called consecutively, it is not permitted.(24) Moreover, even if the gabbai mistakenly did call the relative for a consecutive aliyah, the one who was called should remain in his seat and not accept the aliyah(25). If, however, the mistake was realized only after he ascended the bimah, then he is not instructed to descend.(26)

L'chatchilah, even brothers who share only a mother, or even a grandfather and his son's son,(27) should not be called for consecutive aliyos. If, however, there is a need to do so, or if - b'diavad - the call to ascend to the bimah was already made, it is permitted for them to accept the aliyah.(28) All

other relatives may be called consecutively even l'chatchilah.

The consecutive aliyos restriction does not apply:

1. If the consecutive aliyah is the maftir on a day when a second Sefer Torah is read for maftir, e.g., on Yom Tov or Rosh Chodesh, or when the Four Parashiyos are read.(29)
2. In a congregation where the names of the olim are not used when they are called for an aliyah. While most Ashkenazic congregations today do use names when calling the olim, in some congregations no names are used for the shevi'i or acharon aliyos.(30)
3. To hagbahah and gelilah, in a congregation where names are not used when calling up for hagbahah and gelilah.(31)
4. If another person was called for his aliyah between them and that person happened not to be in shul or was unavailable to receive his aliyah.(32)

FOOTNOTES:

1 Some congregations add aliyos while others do not. Since both practices have a basis in halachah, each congregation should follow its own custom. It is preferable not to call more than eleven people altogether; Be'er Heitev 284:3, alluded to by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 284:5.

2 Who can be either a Kohen, Levi or Yisrael. Those congregations who add aliyos may also call a Kohen or a Levi for the last aliyah (called acharon), but should not call a Kohen or a Levi for any of the other additional aliyos; Mishnah Berurah 135:36-37.

3 O.C. 135:6.

4 O.C. 135:8.

5 O.C. 141:7.

6 A bachelor (whose custom is not to wear a tallis) should don one when receiving an aliyah on Shabbos or Yom Tov mornings. But he need not put on a tallis when receiving an aliyah at other times (Monday and Thursday or Rosh Chodesh, etc); Halichos Shelomo 12, note 29.

7 Mishnah Berurah 139:19. The third choice, which is to leave the sefer open but turn one's head to the left, is not recommended by the poskim, including the Mishnah Berurah.

8 O.C. 139:6. See Chayei Adam 31:12.

9 Igros Moshe O.C. 3:12,21,22.

10 A general rule is that members of a shul have priority over non- members, even if the non-member's chiyuv takes priority over the member's.

11 This list covers the Shabbos Kerias ha-Torah only.

12 Who has not been married before.

13 If both the aufruf and the bar mitzvah want the same aliyah, then the one who is a greater talmid chacham has priority. If that cannot be determined, then the two should draw lots. Lots should be drawn whenever two chiyuvim lay equal claim to an aliyah.

14 The father of the child, however, is not a chiyuv at all; Sha'ar Efrayim 2:10.

15 According to some opinions, the same chiyuv applies even if the child became bar mitzvah during the past week; Harav C. Kanivesky (Ishei Yisrael, pg. 409).

16 Even if the baby was stillborn; Sha'arei Efrayim 2:5.

17 If the wife is not in shul, then the husband has an obligation to receive an aliyah when 40 days have elapsed from the birth of a male child, or 80 days from the birth of a female child.

18 A yahrtzeit chiyuv is only for a father or a mother. A yahrtzeit for a father has priority over a yahrtzeit for a mother; Kaf ha-Chayim 284:6.

19 A father who is naming a baby girl on Shabbos has priority over a father of a baby boy whose bris will take place during the week; Da'as Torah 282:7.

20 According to some opinions, if the bris will take place on Shabbos, then the father is a greater chiyuv than a yahrtzeit on that Shabbos; Ishei Yisrael, pg. 410.

21 If two people have yahrtzeit during the week, the one whose yahrtzeit is earlier in the week has priority; Kaf ha-Chayim 284:6.

22 Ha-gomel can be recited without an aliyah.

23 O.C. 141:6. This holds true even for shevi'i and maftir, unless the maftir is a boy under bar mitzvah;

Mishnah Berurah 141:20.

24 Mishnah Berurah 141:19. Aruch ha-Shulchan 141:8 maintains, however, that one who is unconcerned with ayin ha-ra may do as he wishes.

25 Be'er Heitev 141:5; Sha'arei Efrayim 1:33.

26 Mishnah Berurah 141:18.

27 But a grandfather and his daughter's son are permitted to be called for consecutive aliyos; Kaf ha-Chayim 141:27.

28 Sha'arei Efrayim 1:33.

29 Mishnah Berurah 141:20. Some poskim do not recommend relying on this leniency when no Kaddish is recited between the aliyos, e.g., Chol ha-Moed Pesach (Sha'arei Efrayim 1:32), while others are not particular about that (Aruch ha-Shulchan 141:8). On Simchas Torah, however, all poskim are lenient about this; see Yechaveh Da'as 3:50.

30 Mishnah Berurah 141:21.

31 Teshuvos Avnei Cheifetz 16, quoted in She'arim Metzuyanim B'halachah 23:10.

32 Sha'arei Efrayim 1:30.

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