

RECEIVING AN ALIYAH TO THE TORAH PART 2

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 process

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].

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].

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.

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?

While it is appropriate and preferable to call to the Torah only those who are God-fearing Jews who observe the mitzvos, when the need arises or for the sake of peace it is permitted to call even those who are lax in certain areas of mitzvah observance [9], as long as they consider themselves believers in Hashem and His Torah. But 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 [10].

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 [11]. 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 [12]:

- 1.A groom [13] on the Shabbos before his wedding [or on the Shabbos before he leaves his hometown to travel to his wedding].
- 2.A [14] child [15] who becomes bar mitzvah on that Shabbos [16].
- 3.The father of a newborn [17] boy or girl, if the mother is in shul for the first time since giving birth [18].
- 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 [19].
- 6.The father of a baby boy [20] whose bris will be that Shabbos or during the coming week [21].
- 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 [22].
- 9.One who must recite the ha-gomel blessing [23].
- 10.One who is embarking on or returning from a journey.
- 11.An important guest.

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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 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 (who is not wearing a tallis) should put one on when receiving an aliyah on Shabbos or Yom Tov mornings, but he need not do so when receiving an aliyah at other times (Monday and Thursday or Rosh Chodesh, etc); Halichos Shlomo 1:12-20.
 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. Preferably, they should be called only after the first seven aliyos; Pe'er ha-Dor 3, pg. 36 quoting an oral ruling from the Chazon Ish. See Yagel Yaakov, pg. 286.

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

11. A general rule is that members of a shul have priority over non-members, even if the non-member's level of chiyuv is greater than the member's.

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

13. Who has not been married previously.

14. If both the aufruf and the bar mitzvah demand 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.

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

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

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

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. Some hold that 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.

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

23. Ha-gomel can be recited without an aliyah.

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