

Receiving An Aliyah To The Torah

A minimum of eight people – a Kohen, a Levi, five Yisraelim and an additional person for maftir – 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. If a Levi is unavailable, then the same Kohen who was called for Kohen is called again.

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.

Before reciting the blessing, 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.

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.

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 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. (*Rabbi Daniel Neustadt, torah.org For final rulings, consult your Rav.*)