
Appendix C: *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Honors

As you can see from the following pages and forms, there are several different ways to honor your guests. All the honors listed are available to you whether or not you are sharing a date with another family, so you should fill in the entire “*Aliyot* List” form (Reform or Conservative) included in this appendix. Thus, if you are having a double ceremony, both families will have representatives at each of the ark openings and at the lifting and dressing of the *Torah*. Both families will also receive a maximum of four *Torah aliyot* for a Reform or a Conservative Shabbat morning ceremony.

General guidelines

Include everyone.

While every family is different, it has been our experience that people are very easily slighted. So, for example, if you invite one uncle to do something, you should invite all the uncles to do something. If you start asking first cousins, ask them all.

It’s always better to ask.

Even if you think that Aunt Sadie wouldn’t want to have an *aliyah* because she hates to speak in public, it’s always a good idea to offer her the option. If she says yes, you’ve made her feel great and avoided possible hurt feelings. If she says no, you’ve still made her feel great because you thought of her. Win/win.

Don’t worry if you don’t have enough people to do everything.

You don’t need to use all the *Torah aliyot*, and you can honor someone more than once. For example, someone can be called to the *Torah* and also open the ark.

Make sure everyone is told in advance what s/he is going to do.

There are certain kinds of surprises that almost everyone dislikes. Being called to perform publicly with no warning is one of them.

Write legibly.

Please fill in the names on the appropriate *aliyot* list of all who are to be honored. For the *Torah aliyot*, please include full Hebrew names (these may be written in English). See *Torah Aliyot* section on the next page for more information about Hebrew names.

The Honors

Presentation of Gifts

The TBA family is very proud of your child and has gifts to present. This is done during the *bar/bat mitzvah* service. Since they do come from the congregation, it is appropriate to ask a Temple member to make the presentation. This person should refer to the Gift Presentation Guidelines (See Appendix I). If you have not invited a Temple member the Clergy may also be asked.

Ark Opening/Closing

This occurs three times during a Reform ceremony and twice during a Conservative ceremony.

The honor consists of opening and closing the doors of the ark.

These people do not have to be Jewish. Therefore, this is the place to honor any non-Jewish family and friends.

Torah Passing

This is limited to the parents, grandparents and great-grandparents of the *bar/bat mitzvah*.

Torah Aliyot

Aliyah means “to go up.” (Plural is *aliyot*) One is called “up” to the *bima* to recite a blessing before the *Torah* is read. Then the reader will chant from the *Torah*. Then the one being honored recites the blessing after the reading.

The blessings both before and after the *Torah* reading may be spoken or chanted in Hebrew (reading from either Hebrew or transliteration) or in English. Please ask your guests to practice; while we certainly don’t expect perfection, it is painfully embarrassing when individuals mangle the blessings.

At TBA, the public recitation of blessings is limited to those who are Jewish; therefore, anyone called to the *Torah* for an *aliyah* must be Jewish. However, if there is a non-Jewish spouse or significant other, they may be called to stand with his or her partner by the *Torah*. Our goal is to maintain a distinction without making anyone feel excluded.

Reform: Your family may have a maximum of four *aliyot*. In the case of a shared date, each family still gets four *aliyot*. We generally invite one or two people up at a time, though we can take up to four at a time (it does get a little crowded at the *Torah* table).

The first *aliyah* is for guests. This is often given to grandparents, though that is not a requirement. Remember that grandparents will be participating in the passing of the *Torah*, so you may choose to honor someone else with the *Torah aliyah*. The second *aliyah* is for older siblings of the *bar/bat mitzvah*. If there are no older siblings, this *aliyah* is also for guests. The third *aliyah* is for the parent(s). The last *aliyah* is for the *bar/bat mitzvah*.

Conservative: On *Shabbat* morning there are eight *aliyot* to the *Torah*. Your family may have a maximum of four *aliyot*. (The other four go either to the other family, in the case of a shared date, or to congregants). We generally invite one or two people up at a time, though we can take up to four at a time (it does get a little crowded at the *Torah* table).

The first *aliyah* of the morning must be given to a *Kohain*, and the second to a *Levi*. If none of your family or guests are *Kohanim* or *Levi'im*, members of the congregation who are, will receive these *aliyot*. Your four *aliyot* will follow. If one of your family or guests is a *Kohain* or *Levi*, their *aliyah* is included in the four *aliyot* you are allowed.

If none of your family or guests are *Kohanim* or *Levi'im*, your four *aliyot* are usually arranged as follows. The first *aliyah* is for guests. This is often given to grandparents, though that is not a requirement. Remember that grandparents will be participating in the passing of the *Torah*, so you may choose to honor someone else with the *Torah aliyah*. The second *aliyah* is for older siblings of the *bar/bat mitzvah*. If there are no older siblings, this *aliyah* is also for guests. The third *aliyah* is for the parent(s). The last *aliyah* (*maftir*) is for the *bar/bat mitzvah*. As well, you have the opportunity to honor family members or guests by inviting them to lead one of the English readings listed on page 34.

Reform and Conservative: Each person is called to the *Torah* by his or her English name and Hebrew name, if the person has one. A full Hebrew name consists of the individual's name plus the names of his or her father and mother. For example, our patriarch Isaac, who was the son of Abraham and Sarah, would be called Yitzchak ben (son of) Avraham v'(and) Sarah. If someone can't remember his or her name, s/he might ask a parent or other older relative. You can also check a *ketubah* (marriage contract) or naming certificate. Rabbi Holtz would be happy to translate any Hebrew documents for you. **Please do not invent a name!** It would be much better to simply call the person in English, rather than trivialize the custom of naming children after loved ones.

***Hagbah* and *Gelilah* (Lifting and Dressing the *Torah*)**

This is for two people, one to lift and one to dress. They should both be Jewish. In the case of a double *bar/bat mitzvah*, each family will honor two people leaving one thing for each person to do: lift, belt, cover, yad. Lifting involves holding the *Torah* by the wooden rollers and raising it over one's head. Dressing involves putting the belt, mantle and silver back on the *Torah*.