

## How to Have an *Aliyah* Touch...Kiss...Roll...Hold...Pray



There are generally seven *aliyot* during the *Shabbat* morning *Torah* reading in addition to the *maftir aliyah*. There are three *aliyot* on *Shabbat* afternoon at the *mincha* service and on Monday and Thursday mornings.

When you are honored with an *aliyah*, you should approach the *amud* (the table from which the *Torah* is being read) and tell the *Gabbai* (the person assisting the *Torah* reader) your full Hebrew name (unless they already called you up by your Hebrew name.) Remember, your full Hebrew name includes your father's and your mother's Hebrew names. For example: *David ben Yisrael v'Freida*. *Ben* means "son" and *bat* means "daughter."

After your name has been called by the *gabbai*, remember these five steps:

### Touch, Kiss, Roll, Hold, Pray

1. **Touch** the *Torah* with the corner of your *tallit* or with the *chagurah* (belt) at the point designated
2. **Kiss** the *tallit* or *chagurah* (belt)
3. **Roll** the *Torah* together
4. **Hold** the rollers with both hands
5. **Pray** - Recite the blessing



### Blessing before the *Torah* reading:

Leader: *Barchu et Adonai ham'vorach*

Congregation: *Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam vaed*

Leader: *Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam vaed*

Leader: *Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam,  
asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim  
v'natan lanu et Torato.*

*Baruch Ata Adonai notein HaTorah.*

Leader: בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ:

Congregation: בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

Leader: בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

Leader: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בְּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים

וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:

Bless THE INFINITE the blessed One! Blessed is THE INFINITE, the blessed One, now and forever!  
Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who has drawn us to your service,  
and has given us your Torah. Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, who gives the Torah.

At the conclusion of the reading, you should again touch the *Torah* with your *tallit* or the *chagurah* (belt,) at the point designated, touch it to your lips and recite the appropriate blessing.

### Blessing after the *Torah* reading:

Leader: *Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam,*

*asher natan lanu Torat emet*

*v'chayei olam nata b'tocheinu.*

*Baruch Ata Adonai notein HaTorah.*

Leader: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,

וְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נִטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה:

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who has given us a Torah of truth,  
and planted in our midst eternal life. Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, who gives the Torah.

Honorees generally remain on the *bimah* at the *Torah* reading table until the following *aliyah* is complete.

To learn more and see a video of an *aliyah* in action, visit [www.wishmemazaltov.com](http://www.wishmemazaltov.com)

## A Little More Detail

The Hebrew word *Aliyah* means Going Up, as in going up to the *Bima*. But, it also could refer to a spiritual ascent, for it wasn't always true that the *Oleh* (one who has an *Aliyah*) goes up. Back in Babylonia there is evidence that the *Torah* was actually brought down to the reader. Originally, the one called to the *Torah*, read the torah, and there were no blessings recited. The next step in the *aliyah* evolution was that only the first blessing was recited before the entire reading and the last after the entire reading, in between there were no blessings recited at all. But wait, the Talmud changed this to a blessing before each and every *aliyah*. Why? You'll love this, 2000 years ago: Because those who come late or leave early should not be deprived of hearing both of the blessings. But after Talmudic times, it became more difficult to find readers and embarrassing for those who tried. So, in ancient times, we would read the beginning and end in Hebrew and the middle in our local language. In Babylonia, the Gabbai began to help the reader read and then, finally, the Gabbais would do it themselves, while the one called up stood silently. Finally, we reached the tradition of our day, of the one who is called to the *Torah* do just the blessings before and after the reading.

The *Oleh* is invited with his/her Hebrew name, traditionally using your father's name. When saying a *misheberach* for the ill, we traditionally use our mother's name. Of course, we use both. The reader shows the *Oleh* where the reading begins and with a *Tallit* or *chagurah* (Torah belt), the *oleh* touches and kisses, but never rubs, the spot. Then the *oleh* takes the *Torah* by the handles, called the *Atzei Chayim*, the Trees of Life. Why? Because the *Shulchan Aruch* teaches us 500 years ago that we always take hold of the object over which a blessing is being recited (think about a *tallit* or the *challah*). Once upon a time we would keep the scroll open, but then we began closing the scroll, so it doesn't look like the blessings are being read from *Torah*.

The *Oleh* then begins with the *Barchu*, a call to the congregation. Before Ezra from the book of Nechemiah read from the *Torah*, he'd bless God and then the congregation would respond. When the *Oleh* says the *Barchu*, he/she should also bow and straighten. The *Shulchan Aruch* says that the *Oleh* must say the blessing loud enough for the congregation to hear, so they can respond. The blessing itself talks about our chosenness. What we are doing during an *aliyah* is recreating Mt Sinai, just as our service recreates the Temple service. So, when we recite the words *Notein HaTorah*, the Giving of the *Torah*, we raise the *Torah*, accepting this precious gift from God.

When we finish our first *aliyah* blessing, we move over to our right, but continue to hold the right handle, while the reader holds the left. When the reader finishes we touch and kiss the *Torah* on the spot where the reading finished, hold the handles again, close the *Torah*, recite our second blessing, and then move to the other side of the *amud* (the table) to make room for the next *aliyah*.

Now, the only problem with all of these customs is that sometimes people get afraid to take an *aliyah* for fear of "getting it wrong." The *mitzvah*, the commandment, is accepting the *aliyah*, the choreography is just tradition. Don't be afraid of a little bit of knowledge, we won't embarrass you (now that is against Jewish law). And, remember, our goal is a more knowledgeable Temple Beth David, not a scared one.