

Guidelines for Torah Honors at Shaare Torah February, 2004

After spending considerable time evaluating our current system of honors during the Torah service, the ritual committee seeks to establish new policies for this essential part of the Shabbat morning service. The goals of these guidelines are as follows:

- Increase number of participants in the Torah service.
- Increase sense of family participation, especially at life cycle events, but on “regular” Shabbatot as well.
- Encourage participants to learn the skills to take an aliyah and participate in the Torah service.

In terms of aliyot to the Torah:

1. Either one or two people will be called to the Torah for each aliyah.
2. All persons receiving an aliyah must be Jewish, and of bar/bat mitzvah age, 12 yrs. old for girls and 13 yrs. old for boys.
3. Because the purpose of being called to the bima for an aliyah is to recite the blessings, if two people are called, both honorees must take a speaking role. *One person will recite the blessing before the Torah portion is read, and the second person will recite the blessing after the Torah portion is completed.*
4. If two people are called, they do not have to be related to each other. For example, couples might include the bride and groom at an Aufruf, parents at a baby naming, or parents of a bar/bat mitzvah, but it could also include aunts, uncles, unrelated godparents, or other non-related friends.
5. Parents are encouraged to bring children under b’nai mitzvah age to accompany them to the bima to share in the experience of taking an aliyah, though these younger children are not called by name and may not say the blessings.
6. If two are called, if the aliyah is for a Kohen, both participants must be Kohanim; for the Levi aliyah, both participants must be Levi'im. Furthermore, Kohanim and Levi'im may not be called up for those aliyot that are reserved for Yisraelim.
7. People may be invited to have a joint aliyah on Shabbatot where there is no simcha such as a bar/bat mitzvah. Occasions may include special anniversaries, the honoring of new members, and various other circumstances.

We will also seek to involve as many participants as possible in non-speaking roles, and to emphasize these roles as important honors. All persons receiving these honors must also be Jewish, and of bar/bat mitzvah age, 12 yrs. old for girls and 13 yrs. old for boys. Parents are encouraged to bring pre b’nai mitzvah age children with them when participating in these honors. Non-speaking honors will include:

1. Removing the Torah from the Ark and participating in the procession around the synagogue.
2. Lifting the Torah after the completion of the Torah reading.
3. Dressing the Torah.
4. Holding the Torah during the remainder of the Torah Service.
5. Returning the Torah to the Ark.
6. Opening/closing the Ark at the beginning of the Torah Service and opening/closing the Ark at the end of the Torah Service. These honors may be given to adults or to children around the age of 11 or older.