

JOINT ALIYOT

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שאלה

May two (or more) people share an aliyah?

תשובה

The aliyah was always held to be an individual honor, and joint recitations of the blessings has been seen as a *ברכה לבטלה* (an unnecessary blessing) and running afoul of *תרי קלי* (the principle that two voices at once are not clearly heard). Therefore, it is preferable to grant single aliyot and resolve multiple demands through the use of a hierarchy of claims and the judicious use of additional aliyot. Where a couple has a joint *שמחה* (celebration) they may come up together but only one should be formally called and recite the blessings. Where congregations already call couples together, it is preferable if only one recites the blessing. Alternatively, splitting the blessings, fore and aft, is preferable to joint recitation.

Joint *בני מצוה* should receive separate aliyot (for evenhandedness, neither should be given the maftir aliyah, or, alternatively, the penultimate aliyah might be termed *מפטיר* (ראשון), but only one person should recite the haftarah blessings. They may, however, split the reading of the haftarah or recite it together, since the congregation's attention to the doings of the *בני מצוה* is unusually rapt.

The question, as phrased, is general. "May two (or more) people share an aliyah?" The complications follow, like an avalanche. "Can they say the blessings together? One say the first and the other the second? One say the blessings with the other standing silently by? Relatives? Kohen? Levi?" What the question does not divulge is: What is the case? What drives the question? What problem seeks its solution? For it is evident that normative practice does not support joint aliyot, indeed the very notion of a "minyan" of seven suggests a head count, and normative practice has a commensurately normative claim upon us

unless a case can be made for the need to diverge from it. Only with such a need in mind can the situation be fairly weighed. It will be necessary to speculate.

In the first instance, the joint aliyah that comes to mind is that of a couple. Why such an aliyah? In those synagogues that do not call women to aliyot, the perceived need to find appropriate methods to honor women within the service while holding the line on the traditional rules may be a dramatic need, indeed. In that case it would seem preferable that the male recite the blessings and the female stand silently. Alternatively, the couple's aliyah may be proposed for more balanced reasons. *Aufruf*, anniversary, baby naming. In these cases the demand for joint aliyot may cogently arise within egalitarian congregations, as well, and the joint recitation of the blessings would seem to be the preferred practice. The matter of the differing status of the partners would then become relevant. We should even consider, given the stricture against consecutive aliyot for first degree relatives, whether husband and wife may be called together at all. But another joker hides within this scenario. If an egalitarian synagogue is the venue, why create joint aliyot, a *novum*, when each partner can be given an independent aliyah? This question might very well intrigue feminist theoreticians. Would we consider joint aliyot for, let us say, the fathers of the bride and groom at an *aufruf*? If not, why should we do so for wives, subsuming women's identity once more within their marriage?

This last speculation points to yet another reason why joint aliyot might be required specifically in egalitarian congregations: too many חיובים (obligatory honors). Without women's aliyot, traditional congregations are often pressed by the weight of multiple celebrations into extra aliyot. If aliyot are to be given to women as well, the demand doubles, and surely the option of adding aliyot has some limit.¹ Here joint aliyot for the same gender would indeed make sense. But the natural grouping would recommend sending up, for instance, the uncles of bride A to one aliyah and the aunts of groom B to another, whereas the rules regarding separation of first degree relatives would force us to mix the parties (brother of bride and brother of groom, but not both of the bride's brothers together). Might we not be better being ruthless in limiting the number of חיובים (obligatory honors) we can honor?

It is with these speculations rampant that we approach the halakhot.

The Issues

There is a well-known dictum derived from the Gemara that appears on its face to argue against a shared aliyah: תרי קלי לא משתמעי – two voices simultaneously cannot be made out and therefore do not fulfill mitzvot of hearing. Although the Bavli reference, on Rosh Hashanah 27a, concerns a distant case and is unclear, the Bavli refers there to a tannaitic source for this principle, appearing on Megillah 21b and concerning the case of Torah reading which is before us.

והא תניא: בתורה אחד קורא ואחד מתרגם. ובלבד שלא יהו שנים קורין ושנים מתרגמין.

Is it not taught: In the Torah, one reads and one translates.
Certainly, two may not read nor two translate.

¹ At the outset there is a technical limit set by the rules of verse division, as enunciated by Rabbi Eisenberg in his paper on a proper triennial cycle (unless we permit repetition of the reading as on Simhat Torah). That limit is more severe where reading the Torah on a triennial cycle. In either case, we really do not wish to test that limit. (See Richard Eisenberg, "A Complete Triennial System for Reading the Torah," *PCJLS* 86-90, p. 384.)

The text of that baraita is uncertain,² but the halakhah is not. On Megillah 21a the Mishnah states of Megillat Esther: “If two read it they have fulfilled their obligation,” but the Gemara immediately appends (at the top of 21b): “It is taught: That is not so of the Torah.” This conclusion holds, and is codified in Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 141:2.³

Now, originally the person called to an aliyah read that aliyah portion, in which case that prohibition would apply. Today, however, there is an appointed reader in lieu of the עולה, so that perhaps it would again be possible to have shared aliyot, as long as there were a single reader.⁴

In discussing the instant case in Yerushalmi Berakhot 5:3 the Gemara appears to suggest that this, too, is forbidden, for when the baraita is cited, Rabbi Zeira gives as the reason “on account of the blessing.” If it is the dual blessing, and not the dual reading, which is at issue, then the modern situation changes nothing. The Talmud there rejects that reason, however, as follows:

ההתני: לא יהו שנים מתרגמין ואחת קורא. אית לך מימר מפני הברכה? אלא משום שאין שני קולות נכנסין לתוך אוזן אחת.

Is it not taught: Two should not translate and one read? Can you say that that is on account of the blessing? Rather (it is) because two voices do not enter a single ear.

The rejection of the reason of the blessing leaves open the possibility that two עולים sharing one blessing could be allowed. It should be noted, however, that the Talmud’s rejection is based on the search for a single consistent reason for two clauses of the baraita. ברכה (blessing) is not such a reason. That does not imply that it would not be a sufficient reason for the first clause alone.⁵

² In addition to the two Bavli references cited, the baraita in question appears in J. Megillah 4:5 and Berakhot 5:3 and in T. Megillah 3:20 (Lieberman text, p. 359). See Prof. Lieberman’s note in his long commentary, Tosefta Kifshuta, Megillah, p. 1194.

³ In J. Berakhot 5:3, a competing baraita would permit dual readers. However, that baraita is never cited as a precedent להלכה.

⁴ The commentators have difficulty with the very institution of the Torah reader, given this stricture against dual readers. For if the honoree is to say a blessing he surely must perform the function over which he recites a blessing, yet if the honoree recites alongside the reader, is this not a forbidden dual reading? (See Magen David no. 3 on S.A. Orah Hayyim 141). The law as codified there by Karo is clearly in the nature of a compromise:

לא יקרא שנים, אלא העולה קורא וש"ץ שותק, או ש"ץ קורא והעולה לא יקרא בקול רם. ומכל מקום צריך הוא לקרות עם הש"ץ כדי שלא תהא ברכה לבטלה. אלא שצריך לקרות בנחת שלא ישמע לאזניו.

Two persons may not read. Rather, the honoree reads and the cantor remains silent or the cantor reads and the honoree should not read aloud. But he does have to read with the cantor so that his blessing not be gratuitous. Rather he should read softly so that it not be audible.

This problem reaches even further, to the heart of contemporary custom. Relying on the Torah Reader, we are prepared to call anyone to the Torah, although the law as codified by Karo requires minimally a person who is able to read the Torah (Orah Hayyim 139:4). Relying, however, on a Yerushalmi text that rules that hearing alone suffices to fulfill the mitzvah, Maharil is reported in the Ashkenazic emendations to Karo, there, as ruling that we read for anyone, even a blind or ignorant (that is, Hebrew-illiterate) person and Magen David argues this case in Orah Hayyim 141. That being the case, the concern that the honoree mouth the words is a matter of preference and not of law.

⁵ Indeed, the dictum of Rabbi Zeira is considered as a valid legal norm by Magen Avraham to Orah Hayyim 669, but is in doubt, there, because of another reason unrelated to the Yerushalmi’s apparent rejection. The author of Sefer Haredim, in a commentary to this Yerushalmi passage, associates Rabbi Zeira’s dictum with the verse גדלו לה' אתי ונרוממה שמו יחדו (Ps. 34:4: “Praise the Lord with me. Let us hallow His name together”). The speaker speaks in singular, not plural. That verse, along with the verse ה' אקרא הברו כי שם ה' אקרא הברו (Deut. 32:3, “I will call upon the Lord’s name. Exalt our God!”), serve as the supporting

If it could be established that a dual blessing is forbidden here, not just a dual reading, we would still wish to know if it is forbidden on account of *תרי קלי* (two voices) or *ברכה לבטלה* (a gratuitous blessing) such that two simultaneous blessings are forbidden, but splitting of the blessings fore and aft might be permitted, or if the unit nature of the aliyah is protected. The former would more likely be the case since the original requirement for blessings is only for the opening and closing blessings of the whole reading, and the intervening blessings are only said “as an enactment to address those who enter and those who leave” (Megillah 21a,b). No aliyah blessing unit had ever been proposed. Moreover, even that rule prohibiting simultaneous dual blessings could, perhaps, be waived for the intermediate aliyot since the median aliyot have their blessings only *משום כבוד תורה* (for the honor of the Torah). For those who would understand this prohibition of dual blessings as a type of gratuitous blessing, of course,⁶ even the initial enactment establishing these median blessings is a problem. To compound this situation does not sit well. And this is not a workable solution, since permission will be taken as applicable to the first and last aliyah as well despite our words. Furthermore, such a ruling is contrary to the very enactment establishing these blessings. The Talmud’s concern is that comers and goers not be misled as to the proper aliyah procedure. Those intermediate aliyot must represent that proper procedure. This argument, however, strengthens the possibility that we might permit shared aliyot with one *עולה* (honoree) reciting the first blessing and the other the second. This would mimic the original procedure wherein blessings were said by different people fore and aft.

Conflicting Rulings

This possibility appears to be foreclosed by the majority of halakhic decisors in a related case wherein they rule that if a person is stricken and unable to continue in the middle of an aliyah (assuming the honoree reads his own), the successor should begin that aliyah over again (S.A. Orah Hayyim 140). That rule applies, according to the Rema, even today, in the presence of a Torah Reader. The Tur, citing Talmud Yerushalmi (Megillah 4:5), gives the reason clearly,

דאי תימא ממקום שפסק נמצא (הפסוקים) הראשונים נתברכו לפנייהם ולא
לאחרייהם ואחרונים נתברכו לאחרייהם ולא לפנייהם.

If you say [he picks up] where [the first honoree] stopped, it will follow that the first (verses) have a blessing before them but not after them, and the latter [verses] have a blessing after them but not before.

Rambam rules otherwise (Hilkhot Tefillah 12:6). If one may rely on the old order, then it would be unnecessary to repeat (save possibly the first aliyah) since one always calls many

texts for the responsive structure of public prayer (*ברכו* and *זימון*; Berakhot 45a and 21a, and see Yoma 37a), the latter specifically for the Torah blessings. This is an appealing construct and it would establish Rabbi Zeira’s position, but nowhere are either of these verses expressly used to teach the prohibition of dual blessings. We are left with the sense that this was considered forbidden, but without solid proof.

⁶ In a responsum (*Mi-ma-aynei Ha-yeshua* no. 32) in which he ultimately permits dual blessings, Rabbi Joshua Hirschhorn argues that the problem of dual blessings posed by Rabbi Zeira is a form of *ברכה לבטלה* or *ברכה שאינה צריכה* (gratuitous or unnecessary blessing), which concept he finds in an early Amoraic dictum by Resh Lakish on Yoma 70a and which is regularly used as a precedent (להלכה). He is doubtless correct that that is, at heart, the issue. His lengthy *pilpul* on the parameters of that concept, however, fails. See below.

readers dependent on a prior blessing. (See BaH on this Tur). The ruling is that one may not so rely. Henceforth, if not before, we seem to have arrived at a requirement that each aliyah be an independent unit.

These extant rulings appear to side against shared aliyot. However, there continues to be some wiggling room. It might be possible to rule with Rambam. Alternatively, the BaH, in presenting the reasoning for decisively abandoning the old practice, relies on intentions and expectations. The stricken reader cannot have anticipated that another would need to rely on his blessing, therefore such reliance is impossible. But were such a procedure normative, it would be possible to rely on it. Or so it seems.

But even this is not clear. BaH bases his comments on the Rosh (Megillah 3:3) based on the aforementioned Yerushalmi text. Korban Netanel, there, no. 60, reports in the name of the RaN a differing assessment of that rule. By that assessment the issue is not intent, but rather an enactment which changed the grounds from requiring one broad Torah reading to requiring seven independent and complete reading units. Once that change was effected, and barring another enactment, blessings (by the same person) are required fore and aft of each aliyah. Korban Netanel offers this conclusion explicitly:

אם כן, אי אפשר ששני בני אדם זה יברך על תחילת הקריאה וזה יברך
לאחריה.

Therefore, it is not possible for two people to say the blessing, one before the reading and one after.

We are left in an odd position. The tendency of all this material appears to be to forbid shared aliyot. Yet loopholes abound. But none of those loopholes is particularly compelling. Is our need of this הטר (permission) sufficient to override or manipulate the precedents that exist, such as they are?

Other Cases

It cannot be assumed that our forebears faced the demand for aliyot for couples. It is not unlikely, however, that they faced the pressure of conflicting חיובים (obligatory honors). Perhaps that situation can illuminate the issue before us.

Indeed, there are at least two laws, arguably three, that show rabbinic precedent in this regard. The first is known to all. I refer to the ruling that in the presence of two or more kohanim, but no levi'im, one kohen alone is called for both aliyot (S.A. Orah Hayyim 135:8). Why are both kohanim not called together? That would obviate any problem of preference and distribute the aliyot more fairly. It might be argued that Karo has available another solution to multiple kohanim, that of calling the many kohanim alternately with Israelites (S.A. Orah Hayyim 135:10) such that doubling up was unnecessary. However, Rema rules against that practice, and no one appears to propose aliyah sharing as a viable alternative solution. Indeed, where the Hafetz Hayyim considers the problem of two competing *aufwurf* parties, he concedes that where necessary (במקום צורך) one can subdivide the parashah, calling one party with its one kohen in the first set of seven aliyot, then restart the series with the kohen from the second party (Mishnah B'rurah 36). This directly addresses the possibility of mixing the parties and sets some precedent against such a proposal. To our point, it fails to contemplate shared aliyot as a possibility, even though the proposed solution requires doing an injustice to the honor of a kohen.

The second precedent, though also a proof from omission, is stronger still. On Shabbat we are permitted to add to the statutory seven aliyot. Therefore, it is possible to expand the

aliyah structure so as to resolve conflicts. That is not the case on Mondays and Thursdays and Shabbat afternoons when three and only three aliyot are permitted. If the first must go to a kohen and the second to that kohen or to a levi, what then do you do under pressure of your Israelite congregants and their lifecycle events? The voice is that of Rema (S.A. Orah Hayyim 135:1):

‘אם היו שני חתנים בבית הכנסת והם ישראלים, מותר להוסיף לקרות ד’
דלדידהו הוי כיו”ט שמותר להוסיף. נראה דהוא הדין לשני בעלי ברית...’

If there were two grooms in the synagogue, and they are Israelites, it is permissible to add a fourth reading, for it is, for them, like a holiday wherein it is permissible to add. It would seem (also) that that is the case with regard to two circumcisions.

Again, the value of limiting aliyot to three is established by the Mishnah (Megillah 3:1). That law is authoritatively understood by the Gemara (Megillah 23a) as protecting workers’ time. To neglect such a ruling should be troubling on its face. Furthermore, the proposed solution assumes a holiday which is clearly personal; what of the concerns of the workers? Yet Rema does not suggest doubling aliyot. Better to force a fourth. Indeed, Magen David, here, sides with those who would override this permission (as does Mishnah B’rurah):

ונראה לי דשפיר דלא נהגי כן.

It seems to me that they act more properly not doing so.

This effectively returns the original dilemma of two grooms. And the three aliyot stand. And nowhere is it recommended that there may be an alternative solution. As unsettled as are the grounds for rejecting dual aliyot, that clear was it to the פוסקים (halakhic decisors) that that was simply not an option. Indeed, the earliest and clearest ruling on this subject, in a responsum on the question of a dual haftarah with the joint recitation of blessings and text, is by Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet (Rivash) in the fourteenth century, who rules:

א”כ ראוי למנוע אותם – וכ”ש שלא לברך שנים דאיכא משום ברכה
לבטלה.

Therefore it is appropriate to prevent them – certainly two should not say the blessings since that would entail a gratuitous blessing.⁷

Simhat Torah

There is a situation, however, in which halakhists do, after all, address sharing aliyot. I believe it only goes to prove their unwillingness to do so, though the reverse might be argued: that it opens a door. The case is the unusual celebration associated with Simhat Torah. The well-known custom is to give everyone in synagogue an aliyah on that occasion, repeating the Torah portion as often as is necessary, and even giving a mass aliyah to the children (Rema, S.A. Orah Hayyim 669). Tellingly, he reports the unusual, but marginally acceptable practices of repeating the reading and giving the children aliyot (S.A. Orah Hayyim 282:2-3) but does not report mass aliyot save that of the children. Magen Avraham, however, attests the practice, on Simhat Torah, of doing so and wonders how this can be done in light of the dictum of Rabbi Zeira. Baer Heiteiv, there, cites opposition to

⁷ Responsa of Rabbi Isaac ben Sheshet Perfet (Rivash), no. 36. Isserles, S.A. Orah Hayyim 284:5.

this practice, but Hafetz Hayyim (in Mishnah B'rurah 12) approves. Hafetz Hayyim is careful, however, to hem in his approval. He proposes that only one of the group should say the blessing, with the others simply listening. Or, that one, alone, should say the blessing before the reading and another, alone, say the blessing after (apparently relying on the interpretation of the Yerushalmi passage about the stricken reader which depends on intentionality). He advises that the mass children's aliyah should have a single adult who is the official recipient of the aliyah. In his *Shaarei Ha-tziyun*, below the text of Mishnah B'rurah, he adds that, in any event, all these practices should be in the additional aliyot, after the statutory five aliyot of יום טוב have been called, "one by one."

One can see in the Hafetz Hayyim a support for the notion that intentionality may permit separating the former and latter ברכות and a willingness to accept dual aliyot, with or without this procedure, on Simhat Torah. Yet equally clear is the preference for a single voice of ברכה. Do we cite the preference or the acceptance as precedent? Moreover, all this is clearly part of the שמחה יתירה (exceptional festivity) which suffuses Simhat Torah and permits many aberrations.⁸ Do we conclude from permissions given in this context that they may be applied in another, or do we not?

Arukh Hashulhan clearly understands that these permissions are not transferable. He rules, here, (669:2)

וגם נהגו ששנים עולין ביחד ומברכין ואף שאינו נכון מכל מקום מפני
שמחת סיומה עושין כן.

There was also the custom that two come up together and say the
blessings. Even though this is not proper, nevertheless, they do so
on account of the joy of its (the Torah's) completion.

I think he is correct. In my synagogue, which does not give women aliyot, it was determined long before my tenure that women would receive aliyot after the men on Simhat Torah. It was popularly understood, even by those who have threatened to resign should women be given aliyot, that Simhat Torah is different and that the affirmative value of everyone sharing in the celebration of Torah was such as to permit what is otherwise forbidden. As a matter of legal fact, I believe that no more is evidenced here.

A Permission

One modern פוסק, alone, as far as I have been able to discover, found it correct to call two persons together to an aliyah, with both reciting the blessings. Rabbi Joshua Hirschhorn, chief rabbi of Montreal some thirty years ago, argued at length in a responsum that the

⁸ See by Abraham Yaari's *Toldot Hag Simhat Torah*, pp. 91ff, especially pp. 96-97. Cited are numerous sources reporting Ashkenazi customs to call many at once to an aliyah on Simhat Torah. (Indeed, the *Levush* of Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe specifies,

ונוהגין להרבות קרואים לספר תורה וכך הרבה לפרשה אחת ואין איסור ברכה לבטלה בדבר כדי לזכות כולם
בקריאת התורה ביום סיומה.

It is the custom to call many honorees to the Torah, even many to one portion. And this does
not involve the prohibition against gratuitous blessings for it is intended to grant everyone the
privilege of reading Torah on the day of its completion.

By implication, that concern would apply in other situations.)

Ephraim Zalman Margoliot (Ukraine, then Austria, early nineteenth century), in his work *Shaarei Ephraim* on the rules of the Torah Service (8:56, 9:8 and 9:30) rules as does the Hafetz Hayyim. Rabbi Joshua Hirschhorn appears to stand alone in understanding that those customs may be extended to the year. See below.

precedent of Simhat Torah may be generalized.⁹ He understands that the prohibition of dual blessings stated by Rabbi Zeira is a reflection of the general prohibition against unnecessary blessings (ברכה לבטלה). Since two are not needed for the aliyah, but only one, Rabbi Zeira prohibits the unnecessary second blessing. He understands, however, that the blessing is a personal performance blessing concerning the reading of the Torah, and that therefore, the blessing would be appropriate for each honoree, but that Rabbi Zeira rules that it is necessary to avoid incurring the need for excess blessings. This is not, however, the dominant rule, he argues, based on the later structure of blessings at each aliyah (which would not have been possible, he feels, were the blessing not justifiable) and from the permission to have additional aliyot, with blessings. These cases, as indeed the history of the medieval debate concerning whether personal performance blessings may be (or perhaps should be) said separately even though done together, or repeated after answering “Amen” to another, or whether one recitation of the blessing should suffice for all – a debate which is resolved by later Ashkenazi authorities in favor of private recitation – these lead him to conclude that Rabbi Zeira’s dictum is null and that those sources which affirm it do not represent the final halakhah.

I do not know how Rabbi Hirschhorn would explain the extreme unwillingness of the tradition to consider joint aliyot if he is correct. More to the point, I do not believe he is correct that the Torah blessings are personal performance blessings. Indeed, the fact that the original enactment of Torah blessings assumed seven aliyot but blessings only at the beginning and end of the reading argues eloquently that the blessings were enacted for the public reading and not the personal performance of the honorees. Furthermore, personal performance blessings are typically recited before, not after, performance of a mitzvah. Indeed, the personal performance blessing with regard to Torah study is identical with the blessing before the reading of the Torah and is said in the preambles to Shaharit. There is, however, no blessing after. In fact, every honoree says a redundant blessing when called to the Torah כבוד תורה (to honor the Torah), which is the explanation offered for the enactment of the medial and additional blessings rather than Hirschhorn’s proposed understanding. (This argues, too, against the BaH’s view with regard to an interrupted reader who cannot continue. He argued that the honoree relies on the prior blessing, also seeing the blessings as the personal obligation of the honoree.) In the debate on multiple private vs. a single public blessing, private blessings won out with regard to personal performance. Not so with regard to a community obligation. With regard to public mitzvah blessings the etiquette is to prefer a single public blessing to many private ones, arguing כבוד עם הדרת מלך (the King is best honored in public assembly). It is self-evident to me that the aliyah structure is of that cloth.¹⁰

⁹ See n. 6 above.

¹⁰ On personal performance mitzvot, see S.A. Orah Hayyim 8:5 with Shaarei Teshuvah 8:7 and Arukh Hashulhan 8:11 and Mishnah B’rurah 8:13 thereon. The original preference of the classical texts for reciting a single mitzvah blessing for all is quashed over time, asserting itself only כבוד עם (in public), when the function is not personal but communal.

Hirschhorn spends interpretive time on the somewhat ambiguous source in Tosefta Berakhot 6:15. Its clauses can be variously interpreted (see Lieberman’s Tosefta Kilshuta thereon, p. 117). He also cites J. Megillah 4:1, which is the same as Berakhot 7:1, (the continuation of the deliberation on the Mishnah wherein dual readers are discussed, now on to discuss the Mishnah’s original ruling that blessings are to be said only before and after the Torah reading as a whole) which compares the Grace after Meals to the Torah blessing in order to derive blessings before and after the meal and before and after the reading of the Torah

Halakhic Conclusions

Given the unwillingness of our precedents to recognize dual or mass aliyot save on Simhat Torah, though subject to many of the same pressures that we face today, I believe that we should rule against dual aliyot. The forces that drive consideration of the issue are neither new nor overwhelming. Aliyot are conceived, correctly, as individual honors to the honorees, as well as honors to the Torah. If the latter, only, the procedure permitted on Simhat Torah should reign every time the Torah is read, and we have seen that it does not. Especially in

each from the other. This comparison is found in Mekhilta D'Rabbi Yishmael, Pas'ha (Bo) 16 and in Berakhot 21a and 48b. The Yerushalmi text continues with an illuminating inquiry:

ר' זעירא בעי: אילין ג' קרויות מה את עבד לון? כג' שאכלו כאחת או כג' שאכלו זה בפני עצמו וזה בפני עצמו? אין תעבדינן כג' שאכלו כאחת הראשון מברך ברכה ראשונה והאחרון מברך ברכה אחרונה והאמצע אינו מברך כל עיקר אין תעבדינן כג' שאכלו זה בפני עצמו וזה בפני עצמו אפילו האמצעי מברך לפניה ולאחריה? אמר ר' שמואל בר אבדומא: [לא] למדו ברכת התורה מברכת המזון אלא לרבים. אם לרבים אפילו בינו לבין עצמו אינו מברך? א"ר אבא מרי אחוה דר' יוסי: עשאוהו כשאר כל המצוות שבתורה. מה שאר כל המצוות טעונות ברכה אף זו טעונה ברכה.

Rabbi Zeira queried, “These three honorees, how do you treat them? Are they like three who have eaten together or like three who ate separately? If you treat them like three who ate together, the first recites the first blessing and the last recites the final blessing and the middle one does not say a blessing at all. (But) if you treat them as three who ate separately, even the middle one should recite both the blessings before and after.” Said Rabbi Samuel bar Avudma, “They did (not) derive a Torah blessing from the Grace after Meals except for the public” If they are (derived) only for the public, does he say no blessings alone? Said Rabbi Abba Mari, brother of Rabbi Yose, “They made it (Torah blessings) like all other mitzvot in the Torah. Just as all other mitzvot require a blessing, so this one requires a blessing.”

Hirschhorn, here, considers the possibility that the Torah blessings in their original formulation were public. He assumes, however, that Zeira is functioning before the change in practice to median blessings and wonders, that being the case, how Zeira can ask this question of proper practice when the Mishnah is explicit and fits the public nature of the event. He concludes that Zeira wondered, given the analogy to Grace after Meals, whether these blessings have both public and private dimensions and that his question concerned the possible interplay of those two dimensions, to wit whether the middle honoree has a personal obligation to say the blessing should they have been late, for instance, and missed the opening blessing. The answer of Abba Mari is, then, that these blessings are treated as personal performance blessings.

While this interpretation is impressively clever, it is not necessary. It is probably better to assume that Zeira's inquiry is part of the discussions which underlay the shift to median blessings. Zeira assumes that these blessings are personal performance blessings and questions the Mishnah's ruling on that basis and through the analogy to Grace after Meals. Shmuel bar Avudma answers that Torah blessing is a public event, with blessing required of the event not the personal performance. That position is questioned: Does that mean (private) Torah study has no blessing at all? And Abba Mari answers: Of course it does; in that regard it is like all other mitzvot, with a blessing required of every individual. It is unclear if he means to suggest that a blessing before, alone, is required, or whether he intends thereby to extend the requirement of both blessings to the median aliyot as the Bavli does. I believe the former is the case. In any event, the Yerushalmi proceeds to speculate with another story, from an earlier Amoraic generation (Zeira and company are fifth generation, the story is second or third generation), set apparently in the private study domain, in which people are urged to remember that a blessing is necessary when reading from the Torah:

א"ר שמואל בר נחמן: ר' יונתן הוה עבר קומי סידרא שמע קלון קרוי ולא מברכין. אמר לון: עד מתי אתם עושין את התורה קרותה קרותה?

Said Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani: Rabbi Yonatan was passing by the study session and heard voices reading Torah and not reciting a blessing. Said he to them, “For how long will you leave the Torah bald?”

Though the Talmud, there, does not ever clearly rule that median blessings should be required, as the Bavli does, the germs of the sensitivity to reading without blessings is evident. The Bavli does not, however, rule (as Hirschhorn understands in light of the Yerushalmi) that the rabbinic enactment was to make median blessings fore and aft a personal-performance requirement. Rather, as all subsequent commentary has understood, the Talmud's enactment on account of those coming and going (Megillah 21a) was established to honor the Torah during its public reading: משום כבוד התורה נתקנה כשקורא בתורה.

our age of heightened sensitivity to the radical dignity of the individual, to begin a custom which treats individuals as corporate entities is, I believe, incorrect. Rather, I would recommend the following.

(1) Egalitarian synagogues can utilize standard הוספות (additional aliyot) to gain sufficient aliyot to cover their חיובים (obligatory honors). Non-egalitarian synagogues will not be as severely pressed. An order of חיובים (obligatory honors) such as was practiced with regard to mourner's kaddish when it was being said individually¹¹ should be available to the gabbai so as to assure evenhandedness and to limit strife. I propose the following:

First round Principals: Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Aufruf, baby-naming, שלושים (if it is the first aliyah since shivah), Yahrzeit

Second round Parents: Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Aufruf, baby-naming (grandparents)
Principals: anniversary

Third round Other first degree relatives: Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Aufruf, baby-naming, anniversary
Principals: שלושים (if it is not the first aliyah since shivah), guest

Fourth round Other relatives, friends (simhah order as above)

Obviously, where conflicts can be avoided through careful scheduling, that is to be preferred.

(2) When aliyot for couples are appropriate to an occasion, such as an anniversary, aufruf or baby naming, so that calling the couple is not counterindicated by respect for the individual, one may be called with the spouse attending (... עם אשתו/בעלה...) and only the first party reciting the ברכות. In this case the second is clearly not the honoree, but an attendant. Thus none of the restrictions against dual aliyot apply.¹² However, where the synagogue permits women aliyot, the honoree may not be the husband as a matter of course. Rather, the birthing mother should take precedence in receipt of the aliyah at a baby-naming, and the home-based party – bride or groom – at an aufruf. Where neither has precedence, as on an anniversary, or when both bride and groom are congregants, the choice should be made by the couple. The kohen/levi/yisrael status of the attendant, in such a case, is immaterial since only the official honoree is in receipt of the aliyah.

(3) There are many congregations that have already begun assigning shared aliyot. To those congregations I would advise that that custom should preferably be rolled back as soon as possible. Where it does not appear possible to roll back the extant custom, it is possible to defend that custom as מנהג המקום (local practice), where the custom is for the couple to split the blessings, one fore and one aft, relying on the BaH's interpretation that the bar to such blessings is a matter of intention which is resolved in this case, or, where the blessings are chanted jointly, relying on the rejection of Rabbi Zeira's dictum by the Yerushalmi. Both cases rely on the precedent of Simhat Torah. It bears

¹¹ See S.A. Orah Hayyim 666:4 with commentaries, and J.D. Eisenstein, *Otzar Dinim Uminhagim* p. 359b.

¹² Rabbi Martin Berman informs me in a correspondence of a custom he has seen among the Sephardim for the family of the honoree to stand during his aliyah. This bears some similarity to the notion advanced of attending the honoree. Rabbi Gerald Skolnik asks where these rulings leave a custom of his synagogue, upon installation of officers, to call all incoming or outgoing officers to a group aliyah. Here the special nature of the communal occasion recommends to me that it would be possible to draw a limited extension of the Simhat Torah rules to permit this. One should be appointed to say the blessing for all if at all possible, however.

repeating that it is to be strongly preferred that aliyot be given to only one. A silent partner is preferable where a couple shares an aliyah. Failing that, splitting the blessings is probably preferable to joint blessings.¹³

(These congregations, if they have not eliminated the custom of specifying aliyot for kohen and levi, as permitted by CJLS in 1990,¹⁴ are faced with the need to determine the place of a mixed lineage couple. The husband's status, of course, is that of his father. The wife's status is itself more problematic. In a CJLS responsum in 1989, entitled "The Status of Daughters of Kohanim and Levi'im for Aliyot," Rabbi Joel Roth establishes that a lineal sanctity adheres in כוהנות on the basis of their fathers, and that that lineal sanctity suffices for receipt of the first aliyah.¹⁵ Faced with two potentially conflicting statuses we must

¹³ This preference, in light of ancient practice. Note that Margolioth and Mishnah B'rurah seem to prefer that, as well. Rabbi Hirshhorn's reasoning, however, tends to the reverse.

¹⁴ Mayer Rabinowitz, "Rishon or Kohen," *PCJLS 86-90*, pp. 437-443.

¹⁵ Joel Roth, "The Status of Daughters of Kohanim and Levi'im, for Aliyot," *PCJLS 86-90*, pp. 419-434. Rabbi Roth, in fact, discusses two forms of female priestly sanctity: lineal sanctity and associative sanctity. It is the latter form of sanctity which controls the laws concerning the eating of תרומה (the priest's food). There, the daughter of a kohen eats תרומה when in her father's house before marriage to an Israelite or again subsequent to a divorce; conversely, the daughter of an Israelite may eat תרומה when married to a kohen, but not upon divorce. Permission to eat תרומה comes from association with the house of a kohen and is not based upon her own lineage. Lineal sanctity, however, appears to control the other perquisites mentioned.

Rabbi Roth supports giving aliyot as כוהנות to women who have lineal sanctity. He refuses, however, to rule on whether it would be proper to give such aliyot to women without lineal sanctity who are married to kohanim. For our immediate purposes the issue is moot, since such a woman has a kohen husband, by definition. Since we rule that the kohen aliyah follows upon the presence of one kohen, her status does not matter. However, there will be times when that wife of a kohen will appear in synagogue without her husband. Is she then to be treated as a כוהנת by association or as a ישראלית by lineage?

It is necessary to determine whether the rules of תרומה or those of מתנות כהונה (priestly perquisites) apply to aliyot; it is clear to me that both should not. This does not so much stem from precedent as from our need for clarity. Indeed, the precedent of the priest's perquisites seems to argue that the two can function together, for an Israelite wife of a kohen surely could receive the priest's perquisites for her husband as an Israelite man can receive them for his wife the כוהנת. And she has no lineal sanctity. But the example is misleading. It is precisely not on account of her associative sanctity that she may receive the priest's perquisites. The husband of a כוהנת has no such associative sanctity. Rather, a stranger (זר) may receive these, if only said stranger is associated with a kohen or כוהנת. It is as a stranger that the wife of a kohen is qualified here, unlike תרומה. Associative sanctity and lineal sanctity function in separate spheres.

While it might be possible to argue that any association with priesthood should suffice to merit an honor, such a position raises anomalies that argue forcefully against our taking such a position. We do not wish to cast our women as appendages of their husbands. Furthermore, the call to strip a recognized כוהנת of long standing of her customary honor upon divorce is objectionable in its own right. All the more so since only associative כוהנות would lose their privilege upon divorce. Lineal כוהנות who marry kohanim would not.

Lineal sanctity fits the model of independent women which we now share, by and large. Associative sanctity is suspect in an age of working women. The matter of תרומה is as received, but it is not necessary to extend that category. Rabbi Roth has established precedent to recognize aliyot for lineal כוהנות, like other perquisites of priesthood and unlike תרומה. Let it be so exclusively.

One more problem does arise out of applying the precedent of priestly perquisites to aliyot. This is a corollary of the problem of independence versus association that we found with the concept of associative sanctity. Ruling that couples may receive a shared kohen aliyah based on the status of one of them and the example of priestly perquisites is straightforward enough, but shares the problems of association. Should the Israelite partner now be given the kohen aliyah in the absence of their kohen spouse? The precedent permits just such a transferred honor. Again, upon divorce such an honor would have to be removed. This structure may be more egalitarian than the former one (being true of husband or wife), but is no less jarring. For that reason alone we should rule, and I propose that we do so rule, that the association of a זר or זרה to a כוהנת or kohen for the purpose of aliyot be applied only in the presence of the kohen spouse. Absent the spouse, the individual should be called to the Torah in accord with his or her own lineage. This is a חומרה (a stringency)

determine which aliyah to give. Here, Rabbi Roth's sources are determinative. Rabbi Roth learns the lineal sanctity of women from the cases of priestly perquisites (מתנות כהונה) and redemption of the first born. In both cases there is not only precedent of women receiving these perquisites, but also of their non-kohen husbands receiving them in their absence. Clearly, then, having ruled that an aliyah is deemed equivalent to these perquisites, it follows that said honor inheres as well in the couple, who should be called (exclusively) to the kohen aliyah.¹⁶

בני מצוה

One large item remains, and that is the problem of multiple בני מצוה on one Shabbat morning. While each might be given a separate aliyah, the contest for the haftarah is bound to be great. It would be preferable to have the בני מצוה doing separate pieces of the service. For instance, one could recite the haftarah and the other could read Torah or lead Musaf. When that is not acceptable to the community or to the families, however, we need to determine the proper procedure.

Although the maftir itself is clearly defined as a separate and superfluous reading (kad-dish and repetition), the halakhah codifies the same restrictions in S.A. Orah Hayyim 284 with regard to the maftir and haftarah as with regard to the Torah. As noted previously, the first clear prohibition on dual aliyot was formulated and codified on this basis precisely with regard to the haftarah. Nevertheless, these restrictions are all based on a simple analogy to the rules regarding Torah reading, and it is not clear that that must be so.¹⁷

with regard to the precedents of priestly perquisites, and well within our jurisdiction. I believe that this will be instantly recognizable to the congregation, who would understand the linked kohen aliyah as such and the individual aliyah as such.

Lastly, it must be pointed out that some of this discussion is moot if no dual aliyot are given, and *that* is the ruling of this paper. It is nonetheless necessary to decide the status, with regard to the kohen aliyah, of the spouse of a kohen. The problems of association remain and this ruling is unaffected.

¹⁶ The permission to rely on the status of the kohen in a shared aliyah follows, here, squarely from the association of husband and wife. This would not be true of a shared aliyah of unrelated individuals given because of the large number of חיובים (obligatory honors). In that case the kohen and levi aliyot should be given only to those who qualify individually. Similarly, the rest of the statutory aliyot should include no kohanim or levi'im so as to cast no aspersions on their status. If it is necessary to have a joint aliyah including mixed status individuals that aliyah should be reserved for a הוספה (an additional aliyah).

¹⁷ S.A. Orah Hayyim 282 and 284. There is an alternative baraita and subsequent statement by Ulla in Yerushalmi Berakhot 5:3:

תני שנים קוראין בתורה ואין שנים מפטירין בנביא. אמר עולא: קרויות בתורה ואין קרויות בנביא.

It is taught: Two people read from the Torah but two do not add from the prophet. Ulla says: There are 'calls' with regard to the Torah, but not with regard to the prophet.

This might have import here. As understood by Pnei Moshe, the subject is dual reading and Ulla's comment interprets the baraita. The tannaitic source is non-normative (it would permit dual reading of Torah which we expressly do not). Ulla explains that the requirement to read Torah is more substantial than the requirement to read from the prophets, wherefore people attend less well to the haftarah than to the Torah reading. This reading would support the notion that where attention patterns differ the ruling might follow. Indeed, Baer Heiteiv no. 1 understands that the original requirement of reading a passage from the prophets came as a result of the banning of the proper Torah reading. If so, when the Torah reading is in place attention to the haftarah is clearly of less moment.

Rabbi Solomon Sirillo, however, proposes a different reading of that Gemara, one that I believe to be correct. He understands Ulla's comment as independent of the baraita. קרויות (calls) refers to what we would call aliyot. "There are (separate persons) called up within the Torah reading, but not within the haftarah reading." This reading is supported by the use of the term קרויות with this meaning in Massekhet Sofrim, chapter 13,

The Torah reading rules, as we have seen, appear to be based on three principles: תרי קלי (two voices), ברכה לבטלה (gratuitous blessing) and the unit nature of the aliyah, with blessings fore and aft. With regard to the former there is strong reason to doubt whether it applies to a bar mitzvah. The base ruling of תרי קלי prohibits such reading for Torah but does not do so for the Megillah. If the issue is, as stated, that many voices are difficult to hear, this too should be prohibited. The Gemara (Megillah 21b) explains that with regard to Megillah and Hallel even ten may read because these texts are especially beloved and people will therefore pay special attention. Some recommend this as the justification for permitting shared aliyot on Simhat Torah only.¹⁸ In celebration of the Torah people will pay special attention. In my experience that does not correspond to people's Simhat Torah practice. It does, however, correspond highly with people's behavior with respect to בני מצוה. It is perfectly clear that where בני מצוה are involved the attention accorded the haftarah far exceeds that accorded the Torah reading. Insofar as the reading alone is concerned, then, we might be correct to permit dual reading of the haftarah (and even the maftir) because people are clearly focused on the doings of the בני מצוה.

On the matter of the blessings, however, it is at once more and less clear. Whereas the blessings of the Torah were originally applied only around multiple honorees, it appears that that was never the case for the haftarah. If the analogy to the Torah blessings is to their original format, it might be possible to split the haftarah blessings. If it is to the Torah blessings as practiced, and we understand that as does Korban Netanel rather than the BaH, then it would appear improper for two בני מצוה to split a haftarah and its blessings. Then again, if the issue is ברכה לבטלה, blessings are required fore and aft no less than for the Torah blessings.

As with the Torah blessings, whereas I cannot prove it absolutely, I sense in this material that split and joint aliyot run counter to the intent and practice of the tradition. That understanding is stated clearly by Korban Netanel and Arukh Hashulhan about Torah blessings and by Rivash about the blessings of the haftarah. And I believe it to be the intention behind Ulla's words in Yerushalmi B'rakhot (5:3), that the aliyah was designed as a unitary honor.¹⁹ I think we are well advised, given our own assumptions concerning the radical respect due the individual, that that form be maintained.

The best format, then, for two בני מצוה who must share a haftarah would be to assign separate aliyot to the בני מצוה (for evenhandedness it is better that neither receive the maftir aliyah or, alternatively, the penultimate aliyah might be termed מפטיר ראשון either as a standard הוספה or as an additional repetitive reading after kaddish) and that they then split the reading of the haftarah as two successive readers for the maftir, who should recite the blessings around the haftarah alone. The concept of a Torah reader for the haftarah is not very familiar, but there have been communities wherein the prophet was read from a

and elsewhere in Yerushalmi Berakhot 7:1 (= Megillah 4:1). Ulla's dictum, taken thus, is a clear statement of the unit nature of the haftarah with its blessings fore and aft. (See *Encyclopedia Talmudit*, vol. 10, p. 5, and Gedalia Felder, *Yesodei Yeshurun*, vol. 4, p. 417.)

Ephraim Zalman Margolioth rules simply, *אין לקרות שני אנשים לעלות יחד לתורה ואפילו למפטיר יש למנוע*. "One may not call two people simultaneously to the Torah. Even for the maftir one should prevent this." His language suggests less certainty on his part with regard to the haftarah, probably due to the general sense that it is of less moment than the Torah reading, like the Pnei Moshe understanding of Ulla's comments. But his language simply reflects the language of Rivash, and there is no uncertainty there. Whereas I initially leaned toward this leniency, I have increasingly come to see it as insubstantial and Sirillo as correct concerning Ulla.

¹⁸ Eliyahu Rabbah no. 12 to S.A. Orah Hayyim 669.

¹⁹ See n. 17 above.

scroll, in which case the Torah reader read the haftarah for the honoree as he did the Torah.²⁰ The integrity of the aliyah and of the blessings around the haftarah is thus maintained. If it is strongly preferred that the בני מצוה chant the haftarah together, they should nonetheless not recite the maftir and haftarah blessings together, nor one after the other. Rather, one should be called to maftir and recite the Torah blessings and the other recite the haftarah blessings (though they might stand together), and they may then chant the haftarah together.²¹ The key to these arrangements is to let it be known that the בני מצוה are not a joint entity, but separate בני מצוה (especially important when they are twins), and that they are sharing leadership in the service but are not two sides of one coin. I believe that to be psychologically proper, as it is halakhically so.²²

Obiter Dicta

On the matter of first degree relatives and their proximity at aliyot and whether that should apply to spouses as well: there is no halakhic bar to proximate aliyot for first degree relatives (S.A. Orah Hayyim 141:6), but only one of custom due to עין הרע (the evil eye). We do not hold such superstitions. Orhot Hayyim proposes an alternative reason related to the prohibition of first degree relatives in the matter of testimony,²³ which would apply to spouses, but his is not the regnant reasoning. While “tradition” may be sufficient reason to continue the practice of not assigning proximate aliyot to first degree relatives, we need not expand the category to include a new class of persons unmentioned in the literature.

It should be clear that we may not grant any pulpit privileges to the spouses of Jews who are intermarried. Congregations which grant such aliyot to the Jewish partner should not see the status of the silent partner as an attendant to the proper honoree as an opportunity to honor the family. On the contrary, we are always to be careful not to recognize intermarried couples as such.

²⁰ Mishnah B'rurah to S.A. Orah Hayyim 284:8. Gedaliah Felder, *Yesodei Yeshurun* 4, p. 413. Successive readers are uncommon for a single honoree to the Torah since the portions are short. It is not at all unusual within the full reading, nor for longer texts such as the Megillot. Here, not length but the demands of the בני מצוה control. But there does not appear to be any stricture in theory against such a successive reading.

Ephraim Zalman Margoliot posits such a stricture for a whole parashah (*Shaarei Ephraim* 3:6), but offers no support for it. Given the original practice wherein each honoree read his own aliyah this seems unreasonable. Even he concedes that if the Torah reader is late and an unprepared reader had begun, it would be appropriate to switch in midstream, though only between aliyot.

²¹ Surprisingly, although it is not recommended, some precedent exists for separating the reader of the haftarah from the recipient of the maftir aliyah as long as some tie of haftarah to maftir is maintained. That precedent (in a wholly different context) might be applied here, allowing the bar mitzvah who was not maftir to say the haftarah blessings since the bar mitzvah who had maftir reads the haftarah with him. (See S.A. Orah Hayyim 284:4, Isserles and Magen Avraham no. 3 there and Mishnah B'rurah nos. 7-8 thereon. But see Mishnah B'rurah no. 10, as well. The Hafetz Hayyim is not fully consistent here, citing different and opposing sources. The key seems to be the difference that, with regard to one unable to continue, the haftarah was already begun by the maftir.)

²² For a different suggestion on the problem of two בני מצוה competing for the same maftir, see Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe* 1, Orah Hayyim 102), who proposes holding a minyan in reserve for the second bar mitzvah during the first maftir and repeating the maftir and haftarah for that minyan that had been absent for the first. This appears to be the preferred mode of modern Orthodox writers. See Gedaliah Felder, *Yesodei Yeshurun* IV, pp. 416ff., and Eliezer Waldenberg, at length, *Tzitz Eliezer* 6, no. 36.

²³ Gedaliah Felder, *Yesodei Yeshurun* 2, p. 238.

Conclusion

The aliyah was always held to be an individual honor, and joint recitations of the blessings has been seen as a **ברכה לבטלה** (an unnecessary blessing) and running afoul of **תרי קלי** (the principle that two voices at once are not clearly heard). Therefore, it is preferable to grant single aliyot and resolve multiple demands through the use of a hierarchy of claims and the judicious use of additional aliyot. Where a couple has a joint **שמחה** (celebration) they may come up together but only one should be formally called and recite the blessings. Where congregations already call couples together, it is preferable if only one recites the blessing. Alternatively, splitting the blessings, fore and aft, is preferable to joint recitation.

Joint **בני מצוה** should receive separate aliyot (for evenhandedness, neither should be given the maffir aliyah, or, alternatively, the penultimate aliyah might be termed **מפטיר ראשון**), but only one person should recite the haftarah blessings. They may, however, split the reading of the haftarah or recite it together, since the congregation's attention to the doings of the **בני מצוה** is unusually rapt.