

## Calling non-binary people to Torah honors<sup>2</sup>

*Approved on May 25, 2022, by a vote of 24-0-1. Voting in favor: Rabbis Aaron Alexander, Jaymee Alpert, Adam Baldachin, Pamela Barmash, Emily Barton, Gabriel Botnick, Suzanne Brody, Nate Crane, Elliot Dorff, David Fine, Judith Hauptman, Joshua Heller, Barry Leff, Amy Levin, Daniel Nevins, Micah Peltz, Avram Reisner, Tracee Rosen, Rachel Safman, Robert Scheinberg, Mordecai Schwartz, Deborah Silver, Ariel Stofenmacher, Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields. Abstaining: Rabbi Rachel Isaacs.*

### שאלה

How should we honor non-binary individuals called to the Torah?

### תשובה

#### Introduction

This teshuvah will focus specifically on how individuals of non-binary gender should be honored in the Torah service. Non-binary people self-identify as neither exclusively male nor exclusively female. Many affirm that they are most accurately referred to in English by gender-neutral pronouns. To date, the gender-neutral pronoun usage gaining widest acceptance is *they/them/their*—in which what has typically been considered a plural pronoun now may refer to a single person.

Our movement is already on record in many ways as seeking to be sensitive to gender diversity.<sup>3</sup> It is clear that a full exposition of how non-binary gender identity is to be construed in halakhic language and appropriately expressed across all our lifecycle events is necessary—indeed, such a teshuvah is already overdue. However, these writers consider that that teshuvah

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<sup>1</sup> *The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly provides guidance in matters of halakhah for the Conservative movement. Individual rabbis, however, are authorized to interpret and apply halakhah for their communities.*

<sup>2</sup> We gratefully acknowledge the advice given by the readers of our first draft, including Laynie Soloman, director of national learning for SVARA and co-director of the Trans Halakha Project, as well as Rabbis Amy Levin, Joshua Heller, Avram Reisner, and Tracee Rosen, in addition to those who are thanked in Footnote 15.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, “Resolution Affirming the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People,” Rabbinical Assembly, April 6, 2016, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/resolution-affirming-rights-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-people>, accessed March 28, 2022. Also see Leonard Sharzer, “Transgender Jews and Halakhah,” <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/transgender-halakhah.pdf> (though note that it does not address people who identify as non-binary).

should be written by a rabbi, or rabbis, with lived experience of being non-binary, which is not the case for any of the three of us. We hope such a teshuvah will come speedily and soon.

With that said, non-binary individuals attend our services and are part of our communities. As an initial step, it is time to ensure they are appropriately honored when called to the Torah.

Individuals often change their personal names to reflect their lived non-binary identities. Sometimes such a name and/or pronoun change will be made official—on a driver’s license, etc.—and sometimes not. Yet regardless of legal status, in community spaces and closer circles a person’s name is the marker of their selfhood. The Hebrew *shem* connotes not only nomenclature but essence - a person’s name is not only what they are called or known by but in some way conveys who they truly are. Thus, a name is unique and precious.

Furthermore, to be called to the Torah by one’s name is a sacred encounter—not only with the flow of our history but with each other. Our names are announced in public for the room to hear and for the community as a whole to witness our answering the call. We bring all of ourselves, all of the facets of our identity, past and present, to that moment.

When it comes to Hebrew usage for non-binary individuals, we run into the fact that Hebrew is a binary language. Ingenuity and inventiveness are required. What pronouns should the person use? Do they still consider *ben* or *bat* sufficient to reflect their gender, whether they have changed or retained their original Hebrew names? What Hebrew grammatical forms can be used that are not exclusively masculine or feminine? Some forms which appear to be masculine-plural may sometimes be neuter-plural (e.g., *b’nei yisrael*, *yisraelim*), but there is no singular neuter pronoun comparable to the English *they/them/their* when referring to an individual.<sup>4</sup>

However, in seeking to expand the options in the conventional Torah service liturgy, we are not entirely dependent on umbrella concepts such as *b’tzelem elohim* or *k’vod habriyot*, important though those are. These writers consider that the specific etiquette of the Torah service is indeed addressed in our sources, and it is to these we now turn.

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<sup>4</sup> While the Academy of Hebrew Language has yet to create new Hebrew morphologies (see <https://hebrew-academy.org.il/2017/10/23/השוייון-המגדרי-הלשון-העברית-והאקדמיה>), these questions are eagerly being taken up in the wider Jewish community (see <https://www.them.us/story/queer-inclusive-judaism> and [www.nonbinaryhebrew.com](http://www.nonbinaryhebrew.com)). Some non-binary people use Hebrew genders interchangeably, depending on how they construe their identity in a particular moment; others are stretching the bounds of Hebrew: “ ‘We have ‘modeh ani’ and ‘modah ani,’ the masculine and the feminine, but what about people like me who are neither?’ said Ze’evi Berman, a cantorial student at Hebrew Union College, referring to the daily morning prayer. ‘I use ‘modet ani,’ and I’m bringing that to every community where I’m leading.’ ” (<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/outside-the-gender-binary>) These experiments are quite recent and need time to develop through usage and revision, and this teshuvah limits itself to standard Hebrew grammar.

## Calling people up to the Torah by name: history and halakhah

An examination of the history of the *minhag* to call up people to the Torah by name demonstrates that the entire rationale for doing so is to avoid situations of embarrassment and disrespect. Today, we can avoid such situations of embarrassment and disrespect by calling people to the Torah in the way that they request to be called.

Calling people up to the Torah by name is mentioned in some of the manuscripts of *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, regarded as the first prayerbook (Babylonia, 9th c.)<sup>5</sup>, but this citation cannot be considered authoritative because the manuscripts of *Seder Rav Amram* are notoriously wide-ranging and unreliable. Other medieval citations to the practice of calling the *olim* up by name are found only in Ashkenazic sources, including *Mahzor Vitry* (13th c.)<sup>6</sup>.

A 2021 essay by Yisrael Berend<sup>7</sup> notes that not all Ashkenazic communities accepted this practice to call people to the Torah by name. The 13th c. Ashkenazic halakhist Rabbi Mordekhai ben Hillel, in his commentary to Gittin 59a, cites Rabbi Samuel of Bomberg's teaching that there is no obligation to call people up to the Torah by name, as the purpose of this practice is משום דלמא אתי לאינצויי, because otherwise conflict might develop (about who should go up to read from the Torah next).<sup>8</sup>

Rabbi Moses Isserles' gloss to the Shulhan Arukh, OH 139:3, discusses this practice at some length and makes reference to some earlier responsa:

אפילו ראש הכנסת או חזן לא יקרא עד שיאמרו לו קרא ונהגו ששליח צבור  
כשרוצה מברך וקורא בלי נטילת רשות משום דהוי כאלו משעה שמינוהו לש"ץ  
הרשוהו על כך:

הגה: ובמדינות אלו אין נוהגין כן ואין החזן עולה רק כשהסגן אומר לו לעלות  
אבל אין קורין לו בשמו כמו שאר העולים שקוראים אותם בשמם פלוני בר פלוני.  
מי שאביו מומר לעכו"ם קורין בשם אבי אביו אבל לא בשמו לבד שלא לביישו  
ברבים [ת"ה סי' כ"א וס"ח] ודוקא שלא עלה מימיו בשם אביו אבל אם הוא גדול  
והורגל באותו העיר לעלות בשם אביו והמיר אביו קורין אותו בשם אביו כמו  
שהורגל שלא לביישו ברבים וכן אם איכא למיחש לאיבת המומר [מהר"ם פאדואה  
סי' פ"ז] ואסופי ושתוקי קורין אותו בשם אבי אמו ואם אינו יודע קורין אותו בשם  
אברה' כמו לגר:

<sup>5</sup> *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*. ed. Gershom Harpanas, 1984. Bar-Ilan University. *The Responsa Project*. [Ramat Gan, Israel]: Bar-Ilan University, 2020. Also see *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*. ed. Daniel Goldschmidt. Mosad Harav Kook, 1972. p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> #93.

<sup>7</sup> Hamaayan, Tevet 5781, "חובת הקריאה לעולה לתורה בשמו," [https://www.machonso.org/hamaayan/?gilayon=60&id=1779#\\_ftnref13](https://www.machonso.org/hamaayan/?gilayon=60&id=1779#_ftnref13).

<sup>8</sup> Mordekhai to Gittin 59a, assuming ה"ר שמואל מבייבר"ק is Rabbi Samuel of Bomberg (13th c. Germany).

*Even the head of the community or the Hazzan should not read [from the Torah] until they tell him: "Read." And the custom is that the prayer leader may, if he wants to, make the blessing and read without taking permission; because it is as if he was given permission for this [role] when he was appointed as the prayer leader.*

**Rem"a:** *And in these [Ashkenazic] lands, this is not the custom, and a Hazzan should not go up [to read from the Torah] unless the assistant calls him up. However, he [the Hazzan] is not called up by his name like all the other olim who are called by their names, [in the form] "Ploni Bar Ploni."*

*Someone whose father is an apostate is called up by his father's father's name, and not with his name alone, in order to not shame him in public. [Terumat Hadeshen, siman 21; Sefer Hasidim (siman 791)]. And this is only when this person has never been called up to the Torah with his father's name; but if he is an adult and accustomed in that city to be called up by his father's name, and then his father became an apostate, he should be called up to the Torah by his father's name as they are accustomed to, in order to not to shame him in public. And so too, if there is a concern about the hostility of the apostate.<sup>9</sup> [Maharam Padua - siman 87] [Regarding] an Assufi [someone who does not know the identity of his parents] and a Shtuki [someone who knows the identity of his mother but does not know the identity of his father], we call him by his mother's father's name, and if he doesn't know it, then we call him up with the name "[son of] Avraham", as [would be done for] a convert.*

This passage indicates that calling up people to the Torah by name, while not mentioned in the Talmud, is a time-honored practice in the Ashkenazic world. It also notes that the name may be modified, in order to avoid embarrassment to the *oleh* (as, after all, the purpose of this practice in the first place is to avoid discord and embarrassment). In particular, the reference to a parent who is an apostate could be a source of embarrassment, leading to a preference for the use of the patronymic form but with the name of a grandparent.

The responsum of Maharam Padua<sup>10</sup>, to which the Rema refers, describes two brothers whose father had become an apostate. It was assumed that in such a case, they should be called up to the Torah by their grandfather's name, so as not to embarrass them by invoking the name of their apostate father. However, in this case, the two brothers had refrained from taking an aliyah in the synagogue since that time because of how painful and embarrassing it would be to suddenly be called up by their grandfather's name, which would simply call greater attention to their father's apostasy. Maharam Padua relies on the precedent of the Terumat Hadeshen, indicating that of course the brothers should be welcome to be called up for an aliyah using the grandfather's name if that were their preference, but that it is also permissible for them to continue to be called up using their father's name if that is their preference. He cites the Talmud's injunction, - נוה לו לאדם שיפיל עצמו לכבשן האש ואל ילבין פני חבירו ברבים - "It is better for one to throw oneself into a furnace rather than to embarrass a person in public."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Presumably, a concern that this apostate would be so offended that his son would not be called up with his patronymic that he might take vengeance against the Jewish community.

<sup>10</sup> Meir Katzenellenbogen (1482-1565), *Responsa Maharam Padua*, #87.

<sup>11</sup> BT *Bava Metzia* 59a.

A responsum of the Rema<sup>12</sup> also refers to this responsum of Maharam Padua and notes that he was giving permission specifically with regard to calling someone up to the Torah. For the writing of a Get, the standards are more exacting and one needs to be referred to by one's halakhic name and any aliases, even if it would include an embarrassing patronymic. However, this is not the case for calling someone up to the Torah by name, the entire purpose of which is to help the Torah reading to proceed in an orderly fashion and to avoid the potential embarrassment of two people coming up to read at the same time.

The essay by Yisrael Berend on this topic also cites the 19th c. Rabbi Isaac Danzig's interpretation for this custom, in his *Responsa Beit Yitzhak*: ואנו מכבדין את התורה בקרוא את העולין לה בשם של חיבה ואהבה, להראות שהם חשובים בעינינו up to it with names of affection and love, to demonstrate that they are esteemed in our eyes.”<sup>13</sup> We give esteem to the Torah when we show esteem to those who are being called up to it.

Berend notes that the Jewish community of Djerba, Tunisia had the custom of calling people up without mentioning their names.<sup>14</sup> A responsum of Rabbi Hayyim Azoulai<sup>15</sup> notes that the practice in Jerusalem was similarly not to call people up to the Torah by name, but to signal to them in a different way that they should come up. However, calling people up by name has become the prevailing practice.

Halakhic sources are therefore clear that calling people up by name is a meritorious practice specifically because it conveys respect and love to the *olim* and thereby conveys respect and love to the Torah. It also prevents the potential embarrassment of two people coming up to the Torah at the same time, and should in no way cause embarrassment to the *olim*.

Hence, the entire rationale that underlies calling people up to the Torah by name is that of *derekh eretz*, civility in interpersonal relations. This time-honored minhag requires that people be called in the way that they prefer to be called, as a basic gesture of respect. The next part of this teshuvah outlines how people who are non-binary may be called to the Torah.

### **A Torah Service liturgy for honorees of all genders<sup>16</sup>**

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<sup>12</sup> Rabbi Moses Isserles (1530-1572), *Teshuvot Rema*, #41.

<sup>13</sup> Berend cites Danzig, *Responsa Beit Yitzhak, Torat Haminhagim* 21. (Note that this *Responsa Beit Yitzhak* is different from the better known *Responsa* volumes called *Beit Yitzhak* by Rabbi Isaac Fleckeles.)

<sup>14</sup> Berend, *ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> 18th c. Jerusalem and Europe; *Responsa Hayyim Sha'al*, 1:13.

<sup>16</sup> This liturgy was developed in 2017 at the Fort Tryon Jewish Center in New York, NY, by Rabbi Guy Austrian with the congregation's Ritual Committee and other congregants, including Rabbi Joel Alter, Rabbi Noah Bickart, Rabbi Matthew Goldstone, Karen Greene, Lois Griff, Seth Guthartz, Rabbi Elie Kaunfer, (now Rabbi) Mary Brett Koplen, Jenny Koshner, Jack Murad, and Laynie Soloman. Invaluable insight and feedback were given at the time by Rabbi Miles Cohen, Rabbi Ari Lev Fornari, Dr. Ruth Langer, Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Rabbi Dalia Marx, and

A welcoming prayer community offers honors in the Torah Service, such as an *aliyah* to the Torah or *habgahah* and *gelilah*, to a wide range of members as well as first-time guests, including of course non-binary members and guests.

This liturgy offers three gender variations: masculine, feminine, and neutral. It does not seek to create a single universal version for all honorees, because the aim is not to eliminate or flatten gender differences, but rather to lift up the diversity of human gender identities, using a manageable set of options. Those men and women who have long been accustomed to being called with forms such as “*ya’amod*” and “*ta’amod*” will continue to have that experience. Non-binary Jews are called with a third, gender-neutral option, which aims to be as continuous as possible with older forms in both content and sound. Other aspects of the ritual language are made uniform, where a reference to the honoree’s gender is not needed, or where the neuter-plural form may be employed, or where ease of use for the gabbai recommends a single text.

However, *gabba'im* are not able to visually assess honorees’ gender identities in order to decide which grammatical forms to use. A kind and patient community, in which people are still learning about the range of gender identities, allows people to make mistakes and be gently corrected. Even so, it is wise to avoid such situations in the Torah service, where efficiency and inclusivity should converge smoothly.

Our expectation is that *gabba'im* can learn the gender identities of regulars, as they have learned who may be called to the kohen or levi *aliyot*. Guests can be alerted to the three liturgical options by their hosts and friends. It is advisable for the congregation’s honor cards to include language such as, “You can be called up by one of three gender options: masculine, feminine, or neutral (non-binary). Please let the gabbai know how to call you up.” If necessary, a gabbai can discreetly ask an honoree how they would like to be called up.

### **1. Calling honorees for an aliyah to the Torah:**

The standard call to an aliyah has three gendered elements: (a) the verb inviting the honoree to stand, (b) the description of the honoree’s relationship to his or her parents, and (c) the honoree’s place in the sequence, as follows:

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Rabbi Joel Roth. This liturgy is deeply indebted to variations that had already been developed at congregations such as Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) in New York and Congregation Sha’ar Zahav in San Francisco and in their important *siddurim*; by organizations such as Keshet and TransTorah; and by many individual transgender and non-binary Jews who have insisted upon different ways of naming themselves and being named.

יְעַמֵּד , _____ בֶּן _____ , שְׁלִישִׁי	Let ____ son of ____ stand ( <i>ya'amod</i> ), the third [person to be called] ( <i>shelishi</i> ).
תְּעַמֵּד , _____ בַּת _____ , שְׁלִישִׁית	Let ____ daughter of ____ stand ( <i>ta'amod</i> ), the third [person to be called] ( <i>shelishit</i> ).

For (a), the verb, we add a third, neutral option: “**na la'amod**” / “נָא לְעַמֵּד” a formal usage in modern Hebrew that means “please stand.” While perhaps a bit unusual idiomatically, “na la'amod” is grammatically correct, appropriately brief, adds just one syllable, and sounds almost indistinguishable from the familiar gendered “ya'amod” and “ta'amod.”<sup>17</sup>

For (b), the bridge from the honoree’s name to the parents’ names, many non-binary Jews use “**mibeit**” / “מִבֵּית” (from the house of) or “/” לְבֵית “**l'veit**” (of the house of) in lieu of “ben” or “bat.” These gender-neutral usages have precedent as names in *ketubot* (marriage contracts) where they can introduce the vernacular last names of the partners’ families, as well as in Israeli idiomatic usage. The intent of this proposed naming convention is to have *mibeit* or *l'veit* followed by the Hebrew name(s) of the parent(s).<sup>18</sup>

In practice, the gabbai must refrain from automatically filling in “ben” or “bat” when listening to and repeating the honoree’s Hebrew/Jewish name. Rather, the gabbai simply waits until the honoree gives the appropriate phrase, and repeats what is said.

For (c), the place in the sequence, we recommend the use for all honorees of the custom already present in many congregations, which is to refer not to the person being called up (for example, “*shelishi*” or “*shelishit*”) but to the *aliyah* itself. Since “*aliyah*” is always a feminine noun, the formulation is always feminine; for example, “*la'aliyah hashelishit*” (“for the third aliyah”), and so on.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> An alternative proposal used in some other communities is “*ekra la'amod*” (“I call to stand”), but we feel that it shifts the attention from the honoree to the gabbai who is speaking.

<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Dalia Marx and others have suggested that לְבֵית may be more common and idiomatic in rabbinic Hebrew contexts such as *ketubot*. At the time of this writing, מִבֵּית seems to be the prevailing choice among non-binary Jews in the U.S. Among those who pioneered the use of מִבֵּית were Max Strassfeld and their father Rabbi Michael Strassfeld for Max’s commitment ceremony, officiated by Rabbi Camille Angel in 2006. We expect that this naming custom will take its own organic path. In any case, the choice is up to the individual honoree and should simply be repeated by the gabbai.

<sup>19</sup> The Mishnah in Megillah 4:2 lists the number of people who read from (i.e., are called up to) the Torah on a given day or holiday, and not the number of aliyot (though it is effectively the same thing). Changing the reference from the *oleh/olah* (“*shelishi/shelishit*”) to the *aliyah* (“*la'aliyah hashelishit*”) is a shift in rhetorical emphasis, and may mark an increased deference toward the role itself. Such a shift may already be underway in common English usages such as “the third aliyah begins on chapter 3, verse 3,” or “would you like to do *hagbahah*?” Perhaps it is, then, appropriate to name both the individual and the role, balancing the two. This shift is permissible in order to meet the goal of calling honorees of all genders with appropriate respect, using established Hebrew grammatical forms.

**Aharon:** When adding an extra aliyah (such as an eighth on Shabbat morning), the traditional liturgy calls the honoree as “aharon” or “aharonah.” The revised liturgy would be “**la’aliyah ha’aharonah**” (“for the last aliyah”).

**Maftir:** When calling someone for a maftir aliyah, the traditional liturgy again refers to the honoree, with their name, as “maftir” or “maftirah” (“the one who will read the Haftarah”).<sup>20</sup> The revised liturgy would call all such honorees to the role, “**likri’at hahaftarah**” (“for the reading of the Haftarah”).

**Levi:** When calling someone for the Levi aliyah, honorees have until now been recognized as “levi” or “bat levi.” They give the name of their Levi father last, so that the call concludes with the ringing out of “Levi!” regardless of the honoree’s gender. This practice can continue when the honoree is non-binary and calls themselves “*mibeit so-and-so halevi*.”

**Kohen:** The traditional liturgy for calling someone to the kohen aliyah is a special case. After the gabbai’s introductory liturgy (“*veya’azor veyagen...*”) the gabbai calls up a male or female honoree as follows:

פֹּהֵן קֹרֵב, יַעֲמֵד _____ בֶּן _____ הַפֹּהֵן	Kohen, approach ( <i>kerav</i> ), let _____ son of _____ the kohen stand ( <i>ya’amod</i> )
בַּת פֹּהֵן קֹרֵב, תַּעֲמֵד _____ בַּת _____ הַפֹּהֵן	Daughter of a kohen, approach ( <i>kirvi</i> ), let _____ daughter of _____ the kohen stand ( <i>ta’amod</i> ) <sup>21</sup>

The custom of opening with “*kohen, kerav*” or “*bat kohen, kirvi*” is no mere flourish but alludes to a verse (Lev. 9:7):

<sup>20</sup> In rabbinic literature (e.g., Mishnah Megillah 4:2) this function is referred to as להפטיר בנביא (literally, “to release [from the Torah reading] with a reading from a Prophetic book,” or more directly, “to read the haftarah”). As Rabbi Miles Cohen explains: “The maftir’s job is to read from Nevi’im (Prophets). But the one who is called is not allowed to do so without first paying respects to the Torah. To put Nevi’im and Torah on the same footing would not give due honor to the Torah. So most Shabbatot, we even invent a token aliyah, reading material that has already been read, just so the one who is called can first read from the Torah. The blessing before the haftarah is very strangely structured (two in one) to make just this point. Although the one who is called should be reciting a blessing about the haftarah, the blessing raises an irrelevant subject, namely Torah, and by tying the Torah to Moshe (the first prophet, of course), the blessing can claim to stay on topic. All this is for the honor of the Torah” (adapted from e-mail communication).

<sup>21</sup> Rabbi David J. Fine has suggested that *bat kohen* may be replaced with the term *kohenet* as found elsewhere in rabbinic literature to refer to the daughter of a *kohen*.



וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן, קְרַב אֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת-חַטָּאתְךָ וְאֶת-עֹלֹתְךָ, וְכַפֵּר בְּעַדְךָ, וּבְעַד הָעָם; וַעֲשֵׂה אֶת-קָרְבַּן הָעָם, וְכַפֵּר בְּעַדָּם, כְּאֲשֶׁר, צִוָּה ה' .	Then Moses said to Aaron: "Approach the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering, making expiation for yourself and for the people; and sacrifice the people's offering and make expiation for them, as the Lord has commanded."
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The allusion to the verse evokes the tradition that the Torah reading table is a stand-in for the altar, and that the kohen coming for an aliyah is a stand-in for Aaron, the original kohen.<sup>22</sup> Eliminating this introductory call to approach would be the simplest option, but it would entail the loss of this deeper, mythopoetic resonance, of the sort that infuses so much of Jewish liturgy and synagogue customs.

The best option to preserve both the textual allusion and the sound of the traditional form may be to actually cite the first few words of the verse, “*vayomer Moshe el Aharon, kerav...*”—ending thus with the familiar call, “*kerav!*” Since we are quoting directly, there is no need to modify the gendered verb. Citing a verse fits this section well, as another verse citation quickly follows: “*ve’atem hadeveikim...*” (Deut. 4:4).

Gabbayim have typically asked aloud, when necessary, “Is there a kohen or bat kohen present?” The gabbai should instead ask, “**Is there anyone present who is a kohen or the child of a kohen?**”

## 2. Calling someone for *hagbahah* (הַגְּבִייהַ) or *gelilah* (גְּלִילָה)

The conventional call for *hagbahah* and *gelilah* in many congregations includes the gender of the honoree in both the call itself and the reference to the honoree’s role:

יַעֲמֹד הַמְּגִבִּייהַ תַּעֲמֹד הַמְּגִבִּייהַ יַעֲמֹד הַגּוֹלֵל תַּעֲמֹד הַגּוֹלֵלֶת	<i>Ya’amod hamagbiah</i> , Let the [male] lifter stand. <i>Ta’amod hamagbihah</i> , Let the [female] lifter stand. <i>Ya’amod hagoleil</i> , Let the [male] wrapper stand. <i>Ta’amod hagolelet</i> , Let the [female] wrapper stand.
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As with the aliyot and the Haftarah, to avoid calling a person by their *role* (as lifter or wrapper), we must shift to describing the action: “*lehagbahat hatorah / liglilat hatorah*” (“for the lifting of the Torah / for the wrapping of the Torah”), which are the formal names of these actions. In order to retain a reference to the person, there is a preference for honorees for these two roles to be called by their (Hebrew/Jewish) name, just as for an aliyah. This is already the custom in many communities.

Thus, all honorees for *hagbahah/gelilah* may be called as follows:

1. a variation by gender: “*ya’amod*,” “*ta’amod*,” or “*na la’amod*,”
2. the honoree’s name (though some communities may choose to omit this), and
3. “*lehagbahat hatorah / liglilat hatorah*”

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<sup>22</sup> We are grateful to Rabbi Miles Cohen for alerting us to this allusion.

### 3. Mi shebeirach for an individual after an aliyah

Congregations which offer an individual *mi shebeirakh* blessing for one who was called to the Torah use a variety of texts. Typically these begin as follows:

<p>מי שברך אבותינו אברהם יצחק ויעקב,          שרה רבקה רחל ולאה,          הוא יברך את _____ בן/בת _____          בעבור שעלה/שעלתה          לכבוד המקום, לכבוד התורה, ולכבוד השבת,          ואת ... _____          ואת כל משפחתו/משפחתה          ואת כל הקהל הקדוש הזה.          בשכר זה, הקדוש ברוך הוא ישמרם ויצילם...</p>	<p>May the One who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac,          Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah,          bless _____ son/daughter of _____          because he/she has come up (<i>alah/aletah</i>)          for the honor of God, Torah, and Shabbat,          as well as _____          and his/her entire family (<i>mishpahto/mishpahtah</i>)          and this entire holy congregation.          On this merit, may the HBO guard and save them (all)...</p>
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It presents two gendered forms: the verb for “has come up” (*alah/aletah*), and the possessive “his/her family” (*mishpahto/mishpahtah*).

In addition to the gendered “*ba’avur she’alah/she’aletah*,” the neutral version can be: “*ba’avur ha’aliyah*” (“because of this aliyah”).

In addition to the gendered possessive “*mishpahto/mishpahtah*,” the neutral version can be: “*ve’et kol hamishpahah*” (and the whole family). The lack of possessive form here is admittedly awkward but does have some precedent in more colloquial Hebrew, and is preferable to dropping the reference entirely or requiring honorees to list all their family members by name.<sup>23</sup>

**PSAK:**

1. The rationale that underlies calling people up to the Torah by name is that of *derekh erez*, civility in interpersonal relations. This time-honored minhag requires that people of all genders be called in the way that they prefer to be called, as a basic gesture of respect.
2. Individuals of non-binary gender should have the choice to be honored by the congregation using the gender-neutral forms of the call to the Torah and Mi Sheberakh as found in this teshuvah, or similar forms acceptable to the rabbi and congregation.

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<sup>23</sup> Ideally, the rest of the *mi shebeirakh* text can be uniform for all honorees, if it applies the blessing to many people—the honoree, the family, and the entire congregation—and uses neuter-plural forms (*yishmereim*, *yatzileim*, etc.). A sample text, which differs somewhat from that found in *Siddur Lev Shalem*, is found in an appendix to this teshuvah.

## Appendix: Text of Revised Liturgy for Calling Honorees in the Torah Service

### 1. Calling an honoree for an *aliyah*

three variations by gender for the call to stand; one uniform reference to the aliyah itself

יַעֲמֹד / תַעֲמֹד / נָא לַעֲמֹד _____ [בֶּן / בַּת / מִבֵּית] _____	Let _____ [child of] _____ stand
... לַעֲלִיָּה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית.	... for the third <i>aliyah</i> .
... לַעֲלִיָּה הָאֲחֵרוֹנָה.	... for the last (additional) aliyah.
... לְקִרְיַת הַהַפְּטָרָה.	... for the reading of the Haftarah.

### Calling a non-binary honoree who is the child of a *kohen* for the first *aliyah*

... הַפֶּל הַבּו גְּדֹל לֹא לְהִינּוּ וְתָנוּ כְבוֹד לַתּוֹרָה,	... Let us render greatness to God and give honor to the Torah,
פָּהֵן קָרַב, יַעֲמֹד _____ בֶּן _____ הַפָּהֵן /	<i>male</i> : Kohen approach, let _____ son of _____ the kohen stand
פָּת פָּהֵן קָרְבִי, תַעֲמֹד _____ בַּת _____	...
הַפָּהֵן /	<i>female</i> : Bat kohen, approach, let _____ daughter of _____ the kohen stand ...
כַּפְתּוּב: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן, קָרַב,	<i>non-binary</i> : As it is written: “Then Moses said to Aaron:
נָא לַעֲמֹד _____ מִבֵּית _____ הַפָּהֵן.	Approach” (Lev 9:7), let _____ [child of] _____ the kohen stand
בְּרוּךְ שָׁמַתַּן תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִדְשָׁתוֹ... _____	... Blessed is the One who, in holiness, gave the Torah to Israel...

### 2. Calling someone for *hagbahah* (הַגְּבָהָה) or *gelilah* (גְּלִילָה)

three variations by gender for the call to stand; one uniform reference to the action itself

יַעֲמֹד / תַעֲמֹד / נָא לַעֲמֹד _____ [בֶּן / בַּת / מִבֵּית] _____	Let _____ [child of] _____ stand
... לְהַגְבִּיחַת הַתּוֹרָה.	... for the lifting of the Torah.
... לְגִלְיַת הַתּוֹרָה.	... for the wrapping of the Torah.

**Appendix: Sample text of an individual *Mi Sheberakh* for one called up to the Torah:**  
*three variations by gender for one called up; remaining references in neuter-plural are to the congregation.*

מי שְׁבַרְךָ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אֲבָרְהֵם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שְׂרָה רַבֵּקָה רַחֵל וְלֵאָה,

הוא יְבַרְךָ אֶת \_\_\_\_\_

**בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁעָלָה /**

**בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁעֵלְתָה /**

**בְּעִבּוֹר הַעֲלִיָּה**

לְכַבּוֹד הַמָּקוֹם, לְכַבּוֹד הַתּוֹרָה, וְלְכַבּוֹד הַשְּׂבִיט / וְלְכַבּוֹד הַרְגָּל,

וְאֵת \_\_\_\_\_

**וְאֵת כָּל מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ /**

**וְאֵת כָּל מִשְׁפַּחְתָּה /**

**וְאֵת כָּל הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה**

וְאֵת כָּל הַקְּהָל הַקְּדוֹשׁ הַזֶּה.

בְּשֹׁכֵר זֶה, הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִשְׁמְרֵם וְיִצְלִיֵם

מִכָּל צָרָה וְצוּקָה וּמִכָּל נֹגַע וּמַחֲלָה,

וְיִשְׁלַח בְּרַכָּה וְהַצְלָחָה בְּכֹל מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם / וְיִזְכּוּ לַעֲלוֹת לְרִגְלֵךְ /

עִם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֵיהֶם, וְנֹאמַר: אָמֵן.