

Shabbat Morning Bat Mitzvah

RABBI BEN ZION BOKSER

This paper was adopted by a vote of 14-0-1 on May 28, 1981. Members voting in favor: Rabbis Kassel Abelson, Ephraim L. Bennett, Ben Zion Bokser, David M. Feldman, Wolfe Kelman, David H. Lincoln, Mayer E. Rabinowitz, Joel Roth, Alexander M. Shapiro, Morris M. Shapiro, Phillip Sigal, Israel N. Silverman, Harry Z. Sky and Henry A. Sosland. Abstaining: Rabbi Edward M. Gershfield.

SHE'ELAH

In a congregation where women are not given *aliyyot*, is it permissible for a girl to recite the *Haftarah* at the Saturday morning service, thus enabling a congregation to schedule a Bat Mitzvah as part of the regular Shabbat morning service?

TESHUVAH

The Bat Mitzvah has become a standard institution in contemporary Judaism, expressing the growing awareness that a girl, like a boy, should be given the opportunity to make a formal commitment to her faith as a member of the household of Israel. But when and how the Bat Mitzvah should be celebrated has not been fixed, which is only natural in a relatively new development in Jewish practice.

The general tendency has been to observe the Bat Mitzvah at the late Friday evening service. This readily suggested itself, since this service was outside the norm of traditional observance, and adding a new institution like the Bat Mitzvah did not involve any change in the familiar pattern of synagogue life. But the late Friday evening service has been in decline in recent years, as we have moved toward the more traditional sensibility of focusing our attention on the Saturday morning service as the main service.

In light of these considerations, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards recommends that a Bat Mitzvah may be celebrated during the Shabbat morning service, that the girl read the *Haftarah* with the *berakhah* preceding and the *berakhot* following the *Haftarah*. The issue of *aliyyot* for women is not involved here, since the reading of the *Haftarah* is outside the rubric of the seven formal *aliyyot*.

We believe that this will invest the Bat Mitzvah with more solemnity, as befits the purpose it is intended to express.