

Glossary of Terms

Aliyah: (lit. ascension) 1) Reciting a blessing over the reading during services, which is considered an honor. Reciting the blessings is generally referred to in English as “having” or “getting” an *aliyah*. 2) Immigrating to Israel, generally referred to in English as “making” *aliyah*.

Bat Mitzvah: (lit. daughter of the commandment) A girl who has achieved the age of 13 (or sometimes 12) and is consequently obligated to observe the commandments. Also, a ceremony marking the fact that a girl has achieved this age.

Bar Mitzvah: (lit. son of the commandment) A boy who has achieved the age of 13 and is consequently obligated to observe the commandments. Also, a ceremony marking the fact that a boy has achieved this age.

Bimah: The raised platform from which the service is conducted and Torah is read.

B'nai Mitzvah: (feminine plural *B'not Mitzvah*) (lit. children of the commandment) Plural of Bar Mitzvah. Children who have achieved the age of 13 and are consequently obligated to observe the commandments. Also, a ceremony marking the fact that children have achieved this age. From this time on the boy or girl is regarded as an adult in all religious respects; he or she is counted as one of the ten Jews necessary for *minyan*, the minimum required for congregational worship service.

Galilah: 1. The honor of dressing the Torah after it has been read during the worship service.

Haftarah: (pl. *Haftarot*): (lit. conclusion) Additional portion read from the prophetic books (*Neviim*) of the Scriptures at the conclusion of the Shabbat and Festival Torah recitation and reading. Usually, though not always, the *Haftarah* contains some reference to an incident or idea mentioned in the Torah reading.

Hagbah: The honor of raising the Torah and showing it to the congregation after it has been read. Historically, this was done before the reading to show the congregation that the correct scroll was being used. When the Torah is raised, the standing congregation should see at least three columns of writing.

Hebrew Name: Hebrew names are used in prayer in and out of the synagogue and for other religious rituals. When a person is called up in synagogue for an aliyah (the honor of reciting a blessing over a Torah reading), he or she is called up by his or her Hebrew name. The names that appear on a *ketubah* (marriage contract) or on a *get* (writ of divorce) are Hebrew names. When a people are ill and *mi shebeirach* prayers are recited for their well-being, they are identified by Hebrew names. When a deceased person is remembered through the Yizkor prayers recited on certain holidays, the Hebrew name is used. Jewish tombstones often carry the Hebrew name instead of or side-by-side with the secular name.

A Hebrew name begins with a given name, followed by **ben** (son of) or **bat** (daughter of), followed by the person's father's (and often mother's) Hebrew name.

If the person is a kohen (descendant of Aaron), the name is followed by "ha-Kohen." If the person is a Levite (descendant of the tribe of Levi), the name is followed by "ha-Levi."

This format of naming is seen as early as the Torah where, for example, Moses' successor Joshua is repeatedly referred to as Yehoshua ben Nun (Joshua, son of Nun).

Glossary of Terms, continued

Examples:

- Abraham's son Isaac is *Yitzchak ben Avraham v'Sarah*
- Isaac's son Jacob is *Ya'akov ben Yitzchak v'Rivka*
- Moses's Hebrew name would be *Moshe ben Amram v'Yochevet ha-Levi*

While his brother Aaron would be *Aharon ben Amram v'Yochevet ha-Kohein* (because Aaron was a priest).

Musaf: (lit. additional) The additional prayer service that is "added" and recited on Shabbat, *Rosh Chodesh* (New Moon) and *Chagim* (Holidays) when an additional offering was presented in the ancient Temple

Motzi: (lit. brings forth; takes out). The blessing recited over bread and is the standard blessing before meals. "*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha'aretz.*" Translation, "Praised are You, Adonai our God, Who brings forth bread from the earth."

Parashah: (pl. *Parshiyot*) (lit. portion; section). Torah portion. The division of the Torah into 54 portions; the weekly Torah portions, also now called *sidrah* so that the Torah is completely read in one year.

Mi Shebeirach: A prayer for the well-being of one who is ill, recited following the blessing after reading the Torah.

Tallit or Tallis: Prayer Shawl. Outer religious garment that holds the commanded *tzitzit* (fringes) (Numbers 15:38); reminiscent of the robe-like garment worn by our desert ancestors. Four tzitzit are attached to remind us of our responsibility to God; worn at morning prayer.

Sedrah: see parashah.

Shehecheyanu: A blessing recited that thanks God for, "sustaining us and bringing us to this season;" said on various "first" occasions including Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Shamash: (lit. servant; attendant). The shamash helps organize those ascending the *bimah* for *aliyot* and assists the Rabbi and Cantor with ritual items during the service.

