The Chicago Center
Digest
Mishna Berura
THE DAILY RESOURCE FOR MISHNA BERURA YOMI
Thurs, Nov 12, 2026 ■ ב' כסלו, תשפ"ז
סימן קל"ט סעיף ו'-י"א

Halacha Highlight

Holding the *sefer Torah* and declaring חזק

Shulchan Aruch Siman 139 Seif 11

צריך לאחז בספר תורה בשעת הברכה

One must grasp the *sefer Torah* while he recites the *beracha*.

Shulchan Aruch (סעי' י"א) writes that one who reads the Torah must hold onto the rollers (ע' מ"ב ס"ק ל"ה) while he recites the *beracha*. Rema explains that the custom is based on a juxtaposition of *pesukim* in Sefer Yehoshua. In one *pasuk* Yehoshua is told (Yehoshua 1:8), לא ימוש ספר תורה הזה מפיך—This *sefer Torah* should not depart from your mouth, and the following *pasuk* states, חזק ואמץ—be strong and courageous. The juxtaposition indicates that one should hold onto the Torah. Mishnah Berurah (ס"ק ל"ה) cites Bach and Taz who agree that one should also hold onto the Torah as it is being read. Magen Avrohom (ס"ק י"ג) cites two different ways this practice is followed. One practice is that while reciting the *beracha* one holds the two rollers in his two hands and while reading he lets go of the left roller. The second practice is to hold onto the parchment with a cloth with both hands while reciting the *beracha* and then to release his left hand during the actual reading.

The Rema goes on and teaches that the custom to say חזק to one who finishes reading the Torah is also based on the same *pesukim*. The wording of Rema implies that after every *aliyah* one says חזק to the one who received the *aliyah*. This, in fact, is the practice of *sephardim* who say חזק וברוך to each person after his *aliyah*. This custom can be traced back to Avudraham (סדר שחרית של שבת ד"ה והטעם). The practice of *Ashkenazim* is based on Levush who writes that חזקis said only upon the completion of each of the five books of the Torah. Badei HaShulchan (סי' פ"ד ס"ק כ"ב) rules that the one who receives the final *aliyah* of one of the books of the Torah does not himself say the words חזק חזק ונתחזק- since the words are a *beracha* directed to the one who received that *aliyah*. However, there are authorities who justify the practice and one who does say the words should not be rebuked (פסקי תשובות אות י"ז).

Stories to Share

Answering the Call?

ש"ע, ס' קל"ט, ו': "ואם לא שמעו הצבור את המברך אע"פ ששמעו החזן עונה..."

As we find on today's daf, one who cannot say borchu in a loud enough voice for ten people to hear him should not accept an aliyah. Even if one recited borchu in a tone not heard by a minyan and the congregation hears the chazzan answer, "boruch Hashem hamevorach…" they should not follow suit.

One kohein was extremely hoarse but since he was the only kohein present he was called up to the Torah Although he did his utmost to be heard, most of the minyan did not hear his recitation of borchu. Ten people did hear his recitation. The rest of the minyan wondered if they should answer when they heard the chazzan reply. After all, they had heard nothing at all.

When this question reached Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt"l, he ruled that the congregation could respond with the chazzan. "In a case where ten people heard the recitation of borchu or the like, the rest of the minyan can also respond even though they did not hear it themselves."

קונטרס הלכות קרה"ת בית הכנסת ותש"ק, ע' 7

On another occasion, the only kohein present was a very elderly man who had to be helped to walk along. The rabbi indicated that the bimah and the sefer Torah should be moved to him while he received his aliyah, since he certainly could not go to the bimah himself. But later he wondered if he had acted correctly.

When this question reached Rav Elyashiv he ruled that he had likely not erred. "Regarding the elderly who daven in an old age home or the like who cannot approach the bimah on their own, לכאורה it is permitted to bring the sefer Torah near them so they can receive an aliyah and make the blessings as is fitting."

עלינו לשבח, ח"י, ע' תל"ד

Overview

Siman 139 Seif 6:

***Borchu* and the *berachos* must be recited out loud and those who recite them so that others cannot hear are mistaken. According to some opinions one is required to repeat the *berachos* out loud** in order that the *tzibbur* should be able to hear and respond ברוך ה' המברך ועולם ועד. If the *tzibbur* does not hear the one who recited *beracha* they may not answer אמן even if they heard the *chazzan* answer אמן.

- If ten people cannot hear the one who recited the *berachos* it is considered quietly. Magen Avrohom warns that one must also be careful when reciting *kaddish* that ten people should be able to hear. (M.B. 24)
- The wording of Rema implies that this opinion is only concerned about *borchu* but *b'dieved* one need not repeat the *berachos* if they were said quietly but *l'chatchila* one should recite the *berachos* out loud as well. (M.B. 25)

Siman 139 Seif 7:

After the *tzibbur* responds ברוך ה' המברך לעולם ועד the one receiving the *aliyah* should also recite those words to include himself with those who are blessing Hashem.

Siman 139 Seif 8:

If one was called for an *aliyah* immediately after he recited *birchos hatorah* he must repeat אשר בחר בנו for his *aliyah* since the *beracha* was enacted to give honor to the Torah when reading the Torah for the *tzibbur*.

- Shulchan Aruch refers to where he did not read a single *pasuk* after *birchos hatorah*. (M.B. 29)
- Pri Chadash and other authorities maintain that one should read a *pasuk* as he approaches the Torah so that his *beracha* can take effect on something. (M.B. 30)

Siman 139 Seif 9:

If one was called for an *aliyah* before he recited *birchos hatorah* he is then exempt from reciting the *beracha* of אשר בחר בנו since this situation is no worse than one who discharges his obligation by reciting אהבה רבה.

- Authorities note that it is not exactly parallel to discharging one's obligation with אהבה רבה since in that case he does not have to recite לעסוק בדברי תורה and והערב נא as opposed to this case where he is exempt only from repeating אשר בחר בנו. He should also read *birkas kohanim*. (M.B. 32)

Siman 139 Seif 10:

In the *beracha* after Torah reading the words אשר נתן לנו תורת אמת refer to *Torah she'bichsav* and the words וחיי העולם נטע בתוכינו refer to *Torah sheba'al peh*.

- Our custom is to say וחיי עולם without a ה before the word עולם. (M.B. 33)

Siman 139 Seif 11:

One who receives an *aliyah* must grasp the Torah while he recites the *beracha*. This custom is connected with the *pesukim* in Yehoshua לא ימוש ספר תורה הזה מפיך followed by the words חזק ואמץ. This is the basis of the custom to say חזק to the one who finishes reading Torah.

- Bach and Taz agree that one should grasp the Torah during *krias hatorah* as well. Some have the custom to grasp the Torah with a kerchief. Magen Avrohom writes that the custom is to kiss the Torah after it is read. (M.B. 35)