


HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's question:

Two boys were born a couple of days apart. They wish to celebrate their *bar-mitzvah* on the same *Shabbos*. Both want to read the *parsha* and the *haftarah* and both families want to celebrate with a *kiddush* of their own. Does the older boy have *kedimah*, priority? What if one of the fathers is an officer on the *shul* board? Does this affect his *kedimah*? What if one is a member for a longer time period? Is it possible to share one *kiddush*?

The issues:

A) *Krias haparsha* for a *bar-mitzvah*

B) The *kiddush* for a *bar-mitzvah*

C) *Kedimah*

A) *Krias haparsha*

[The reader should be called *korai*, or *baal-kriah*, to be grammatically correct. In the vernacular, a combination word has become popular – the *baal-korai*.] The one reading any *parsha* should be qualified, properly prepared, able to read the words with the correct cantillation notes and the correct vowels, audibly and in a way that the congregation understands it. He must be an adult male with a good reputation, as he is like any *shliach tzibur*. The *haftarah* is not the same as the *krias hatorah* itself. *Krias hatorah* is a Rabbinic institution. Nonetheless, it is considered a basic obligation with specific requirements. The *haftarah* was initially instituted as an alternative to the *kria* during a period of decrees by the gentile authorities forbidding regular *kria*. A passage of *Navi* was read instead. After the abolishment of the decree, the *hafatarah* was still observed. Originally, it required a proper *sefer*, hand-written parchment scroll. Nowadays, most *shuls* use a printed version. The *haftarah* is connected to the subject matter of the *parsha*. On special occasions, a special *hafatarah* is read, usually with a special *maftir* reading as well.

The *parsha* is divided into *aliyos*. On *Shabbos* there are seven *aliyos*. In order to give the person reading the *haftarah* honor, and to connect the *parsha* reading to the *hafatarah*, an *aliya* is added after all seven for the *maftir*. On special occasions, the *maftir* reads a special reading, and then the connected *haftarah*. In order to show that the *maftir* is not part of the main *parsha* reading, *kaddish* is recited between them. The Talmud allows a minor to read the *haftarah*, and also to get the *maftir aliya*. Strictly speaking a minor may also receive one of the seven *aliyos* on *Shabbos*. There must be enough adults to fill the main *aliyos* as well, but a minor may be counted as one of the seven. He may not act as the *korai*. Nowadays, we do not allow a minor to receive a regular *aliya*.

The *minhag* to be the *baal-korai* at one's *bar-mitzvah* is ancient. The poskim discuss it in relation to his being a fully qualified adult. Majority is reached with a combination of actual age and of physical maturity. The signs of maturity recognized by the Torah are

not visible externally. The question is, may we rely on the age alone, or do we presume that the boy has the unseen signs? The standard answer is that since *krias hatorah* is Rabbinical for the most part, one may rely on the presumption of physical majority.

There are various explanations given for this *minhag*. The simplest is that it is his first opportunity to show his majority in public. He could act as *shliach tzibur* for any *tefilah*, which requires an adult. However, in most of those cases, he does not discharge the adults present with his recital. *Krias hatorah* is recited only by the *baal-korai*, and his reading exempts all adults present. Another reason could be: originally, anyone who got an *aliya* read his section. This was disbanded in *Ashkenazic* communities, because it was difficult for some *olim* to prepare or to read. To save them from embarrassment, one person represents all the *olim*. The *oleh* reads quietly along with the *baal-korai*. An *aliya* is a *kibud*, special honor, since not everyone in *shul* can receive one. On the occasion of one's *bar-mitzvah*, it is considered a *chiyuv*, obligation to be honored with an *aliya*. This is like a *kohain* who is inducted on the first day of his service. The *bar-mitzvah* can also read his section. Initially, this was the procedure. Some actually had the *minhag* to reserve the fifth *aliya* specifically for the *bar-mitzvah*. The *minhag* might have then spread to have the *bar-mitzvah* replace the regular *baal-korai* for the whole *parsha*.

The source for giving the *maftir aliya* to the *bar-mitzvah* is more obscure. If he has a true *chiyuv*, he should get one of the main seven *aliyos*! It seems that two factors led to this *minhag*. If the *bar-mitzvah* already had an *aliya* earlier in the week, he does not require an *aliya* on *Shabbos*. Therefore, *maftir* is sufficient. Second, it is the shortest *aliya*. Some boys might not be able to prepare and read more than their one *aliya*. Third, if the *haftarah* is read from a printed *sefer*, it has the vowels and cantillation marks. Therefore, the person honored with the *aliya* can read it himself, rather than have the *baal-korai* do it for him. This is also easier for a *bar-mitzvah* than preparing the entire *parsha*. Fourth, the *minhag* in some communities is to honor the *bar-mitzvah* on the *Shabbos* before his actual birthday, like a *chasan* before his wedding. The only *aliya* available to him as a minor is *maftir*. Finally, as a *kibud*, *maftir* is unique. After *kohain* and *levi*, anyone can get the remaining five *aliyos*, including more than one *chiyuv*. Only one of them can get a *maftir*. This lends more prestige to the *aliya*. [See Megila 19b 21a-25a, Poskim. Tur, Sh Ar OC 53:4-10 55:1 4-5 9-10 136:BHL 225:MA4 282:4(MA6) 284:4, commentaries. Shaar Efrayim 2:2 10. Nitei Gavriel Bar-Mitzvah 6-8 10-11 13.]

(B) The kiddush

The origins of the *bar-mitzvah kiddush* seem to be a dressed down version of the *seuda* on the occasion. Originally, it appears, people would receive guests for a light snack in their homes at some time during the day. The 'light snack' has become rather lavish, but usually there is no bread to make it into a real *seuda*. Nonetheless, the fact that one recites *kiddush* on *Shabbos* renders the snack somewhat of a *seuda*. *Kiddush* may be recited only if the *seuda* is eaten there. On *Shabbos* by day, the *kiddush* is not quite the same as on Friday evening, and the *seuda* may be made up of snacks, rather than bread.

The *seuda* is based on Midrashic and Talmudic references. The Midrash refers to a *brocha* recited by the father of the *bar-mitzvah*. Until this moment, the father is liable for the sons actions. At majority, the son is responsible for himself. The father recites a

brocha on being relieved of the liability. This *brocha* is customarily recited on the first occasion that the boy shows his adulthood. Nowadays, being called to the Torah serves as a public sign of reaching majority. After the *aliya*, the father recites the *brocha*.

In the course of this discussion the poskim refer to a *seuda* to celebrate the *bar-mitzvah*. Ideally, it should be on the birthday, and can be considered *seudas mitzvah*. This means that it is a *mitzvah* to participate. If it is not held on the birthday, the words of Torah expounded by the boy at the *seuda* render it *seudas mitzvah*.

The terminology used by the poskim is that a father should feast as he would on the day of his son's *chupa*. Some cite a verse using the term *peer* as a reference to both *tefilin* and a *chasan*. One explanation for the *seuda* is thanksgiving for the same reason as the aforementioned *brocha*. Another is that the soul of the boy now comes into his own, affecting the entire universe with his *mitzvos*. The Zohar relates that R Shimon bar Yochai celebrated profusely on the day his son R Elazar was *bar-mitzvah*. Some say R Elazar was a special case. Some suggest that donning *tefilin* is reason for a feast.

The main basis for *seuda* is a Talmudic passage. The blind are exempt from *mitzvos*, but may perform them voluntarily. One who fulfills *mitzvos* as an obligation is more worthy than he who fulfills them voluntarily. A blind sage declared that if someone would prove that he was obligated, he would make a feast. Some raise an objection to this main reason. There is no true Scriptural obligation until the boy has sure physical signs. Therefore, many of these parties would not qualify as a *seudas mitzvah*. The other reasons might also depend on this. Nonetheless, the common practice is to invite others to participate in the celebration of at the very least a *kiddush* on the *Shabbos* of the *bar-mitzvah*. Perhaps, since it is *Shabbos* anyhow, and there is *kiddush*, this makes it more celebratory even if the boy is not Scripturally an adult.

In general, one does not mix two separate reasons for a *seudas mitzvah*. Each should have its own *simcha*. Thus, two weddings should not share the same *seuda*. However, in light of the aforementioned discussion, the *kiddush* on the *Shabbos* of a *bar-mitzvah* would not seem to involve these issues. Firstly, it is not necessarily a full *seudas mitzvah*. Second, if the birthday is on *Shabbos* or *Yomtov* it is celebrated anyhow, unlike a wedding. This would seem to show that one may combine this *simcha* with another. Accordingly, there is no problem with two *bar-mitzvah* boys sharing one *kiddush*. This is usually done when they are twins. Something special should be added for each boy. [See Kidushin 31a Baba Kama 87a Beraishis Raba Toldos 63:14, commentaries, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 225:2 Rema, commentaries. Chavos Yair 70. Tzitz Eliezer XI:17. Yabia Omer OC:I:27. Nitei gavriel Bar Mitzvah 15 16:7-911.]

C) Kedimah

There is an order of priority when there are more than one *chiyuvim* for *aliyos*. If both are of equal precedence, the poskim say that lots should be drawn. This applies when both *chiyuvim* apply equally, on the same day. They are both competing for one *kibud*. Only one of them will be satisfied. For example, if two people have *yahrzeit* on the same *Shabbos*. The *minhag* is that the *yahrzeit* gets *maftir*. If two boys' birthdays are on *Shabbos*, and both want *krias hatorah* and *maftir*, lots would be drawn. However, this assumes that all else is equal. In our case, their birthdays are not on *Shabbos*. Further-

more, as far as *krias hatorah* goes, they could share it. Furthermore, since they are anyhow not being given the *kibud* on the day of the birthday, they could delay it to another week if necessary. The question is, should one of them delay it, and if so, which one?

One factor that was raised is that one father is an officer. If there are no *chiyuvim*, the *aliyos* are distributed according to a hierarchy based on honor. Priority is given to Torah scholars who have a communal position, then to scholars who are worthy of such appointments even if they do not serve in such capacities. Next come the children of the Rabbis and then the communal leaders, and finally all others. However, if the practice is to pay for the *kibud*, anyone may apply to be called earlier in the order. Based on this order of priority, it would appear that if there are a limited amount of *kibudim*, the officers would get preference. Accordingly, the officer in our case should be shown deference.

Another factor is the seniority. One boy was born a couple of days before the other. It could be argued that from the moment he was born he was destined to have a claim on this *Shabbos*, before the second boy's claim existed. If they are twins, and especially if one is the first-born, such an argument would make sense. However, when they come from different families, it is less obvious. Since they need not become members of the same *shul*, they might have no claims to seniority based on birth. However, seniority is counted in certain *halachic* applications. It does not supersede superiority in scholarship. Therefore, all things being equal, the gabbai may use his discretion to apply seniority as a deciding factor. All members in good standing are equal, regardless of how long they have been members. [See references to previous sections. Gitin 59a-60a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 136, commentaries. Shaar Efrayim 2:14.]

In conclusion, the son of an officer can be given preferential treatment. Seniority can be followed. The *kria* of the *parsha* may be shared, as well as the *kiddush*. However, it is preferable to try to satisfy the needs of both boys. Since the birthdays are not on *Shabbos*, each may choose to delay his celebration to maintain the peace!

On the parsha .. [Yaakov] put the maids and their children first, and Leah and her sons last, and Rochel and Yosef last. [33:2] Leah and her sons last – From here we learn: *acharon acharon chaviv*, the closer to the last is most precious. [Rashi, Beraishis Raba 78:11] Yaakov clearly valued Rochel most of his wives, and Yosef most of his children. He wanted to protect them more. If so, this commentary really teaches us nothing new. Furthermore, the comment is made on the words Leah and her sons! Moreover, the Midrash seems to derive a lesson from here, that as a rule, one places the most precious last. Usually, we would assume that the more prominent should take precedence. Perhaps this applies when they are unequal. The one who is greater should come first. When they are all equals, but one is more dear than the others, placing them last shows endearment. In this case, Yaakov treated all his wives and children as equals in terms of greatness. However, he endeared Leah and her sons more than the maids and their sons.

Sponsored by Michael and Yahel Schwarz in memory of Yahel's mother, Chava Chaya bas

Sarah a”h. ם

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