

New Ritual Policy: Honoring Women as Bat Kohen and Bat Levi

At Congregation Beth El, when calling people to the Torah, we follow the tradition of calling a Kohen and a Levi with the first two aliyot. Based on our standing as an egalitarian congregation, the Ritual Committee, in consultation with the rabbi, has decided to confirm our policy of allowing women to be called to the Torah as a Bat Kohen or Bat Levi for the first two aliyot.

What this policy means is that women that are Bnot Kohanim (daughters of a Kohen) may be called to the Torah for the first or Kohen aliyah and women that are Bnot Leviim (daughters of a Levite) may be called to the Torah for the second or Levi aliyah. A woman who is a Bat Kohen will also be permitted to participate in other rituals granted to Kohanim, such as Aliyah laDuchan (performing the Priestly Blessing). Likewise, as with men, this policy also means that women that are Bat Kohen and Bat Levi are no longer eligible to be called for aliyot 3-7. The status of Kohen/Levi will continue to follow that of the father. We have also concluded that we will permit, on occasion, an alternate method of calling to the Torah- that of Rishon and Sheni instead of Kohen and Levi. This procedure will be utilized especially to allow families celebrating semachot to make full use of the 5 aliyot which are reserved for them. As per Rabbi Fish's instructions to the committee, all of these positions are in accord with rulings of the Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards.

If you are a Bat Kohen or Bat Levi (a daughter whose father is a Kohen or Levi), please send an email to ritual@congbethel.org so that we may note this in your records and honor you accordingly. Certain family circumstances (adoption, conversions in the family, etc.) may impact your status. Please consult with Rabbi Fish if you have any questions about your particular circumstances. Feel free to also send an email or contact Marvin Rosenbaum or Brett Pogany, Ritual Committee co-chairs, if you have any other questions or concerns.

Thanks and see you in shul,
The Ritual Committee