

## Torch Award Cover Page 2003-2005

Category: **Best Club Administration Program**  
Title: **Membership retention: Aliyah Cards**

Club #642  
Beth Judea Men's Club  
5304 RFD  
Long Grove, IL

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Repeat Program: NO

**Club representatives will be at convention.**

Summary:

In an effort to help men feel they are "getting something" for their membership dues and to make men more at ease when they are called to Torah, the Men's Club developed an Aliyah card for members to keep in their wallet or Tallit bag. This card contains both the member's Hebrew name and the blessings for the Torah reading.

Items included in application:

This electronic application consists of a .pdf format document. A sample page of the aliyah cards- both front and back- is included.

Applicant (contact): Evan B. Rumack, DDS 1/19/2005

Club President: Mark Travis 1/19/2005

## Introduction

Every Men's Club leader has been asked the question "What do I get for my membership dues?" Time and again we search for the answer that will satisfy the particular person posing the query and come up with the standard answers of brotherhood, programming, spirituality, etc. And the questioner always has a plethora of excuses for not participating or even joining.

But what if we offered "something" tangible? What can we use to make synagogue members feel they are receiving a value for their dues? As we in Beth Judea Men's Club asked ourselves these questions, we realized that a great many men are very self conscious when called for an aliyah- and they come up with excuses for not participating in this mitzvah as well. How can we make men feel more comfortable and at the same time give them a "value?"

As we have all seen, but maybe not observed or recognized, the first thing a person does when called to the Torah is to try to find the blessing he must recite. So they fumble through a siddur with which they may not be all that familiar to find the brachot. Next, they try to remember their Hebrew name to tell the gabbai; it certainly doesn't help that they are nervous because they rarely get the opportunity to use it. **Men's Club to the rescue!**

We can start to answer the perceived value question and help our members be a little more at ease when called to the Torah with one small and inexpensive item: an aliyah card given only to Men's Club members to be carried and handed to the gabbai.

## Planning

In order to implement our plan to give each member an aliyah card, it was necessary to collect the full Hebrew names of each paid up or complimentary member. In addition to including a line on our membership form, members of the Board of Directors took it upon themselves to call each man. This gave us the chance to introduce himself to each member and talk Men's Club on a personal basis, thus giving our members the feeling that someone cares about them!

After compiling the list of names, one member was responsible for creating and laminating the aliyah cards. The actual procedure is described below.

Aliyah cards were distributed at a membership event in the Fall and again at Men's Club Shabbat. The reaction was universally positive and the response at services from gabbaim is almost always a smile and a "where did you get that?"

## Procedure

After the Hebrew names were collected, the names were checked for proper spelling using The Complete Dictionary of English and Hebrew First Names (Alfred J. Kolatch, Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., Middle Village, NY, 1984). These were then entered into a word processing program that supported Hebrew letters with the vowels. We were able to use DavkaWriter<sup>®</sup>. The beauty of this program is the ability to easily switch between Hebrew and English fonts. Business cards were

purchased at a local office supply store and a label was created using Microsoft Word®, which will also support Hebrew fonts. Utilizing the cut and paste features of both software programs, the names were manually merged to the labels.

For the reverse side of the cards, the blessings for the Torah reading were typed in Hebrew and reduced to fit the label size. A font from DavkaWriter® was chosen that replicated that used in the siddur for ease of reading and pasted to the label template. The cards were then duplex printed with the Hebrew name on the front and the blessings on the back.

Finally, business card sized self laminating covers (Scotch Business Card/ID Protectors LS851G) were purchased and each card was sealed. The result is a card that fits in either the wallet or tallit bag, is durable, and is fairly permanent.

### Discussion

The reaction to the aliyah card has been extremely positive. Men who have not received a card because they are not Men's Club members have asked how they can get one. When a member has been called to the *bima* in our synagogue, the gabbai is accustomed to reading the name from the card and anticipates taking it from the man coming to the bima. When members travel to other shuls, reactions have also been great- a warm smile and a "that's a great idea."

An unexpected by-product of this program was to put together a book that is kept on the bima so synagogue members at large can be called

to the Torah by name without even being asked their Hebrew name. We have expanded this book's list to include any and all names we are able to obtain either by synagogue records or by e-mail messages the Ritual Vice President has sent. This program has most decidedly increased the awareness of the Men's Club by both the synagogue administrators and the synagogue Board members.

One improvement to be made in this program is to schedule a function specifically to distribute the aliyah cards and to tell each man the meaning of his name. This information is readily available in the above mentioned dictionary and should be of interest to every man. Then, we can ask each man to tell us for whom he is named. This might be a kickoff event for a Jewish genealogy series or just a stand alone evening of camaraderie.

Our next project- already under way- is to expand the aliyah cards to the USY group. It is our hope that these young people, many of whom do not even know their or their parents' Hebrew names, will remain connected to both the synagogue and Judaism.

Perhaps the best outcome is the feeling among members that they have, indeed, received value for their dues. We anticipate that these men will have a continued feeling of belonging to something greater than they and will want to participate more in Men's Club activities.

**Front of cards**

Congregation Beth Judea Men's Club

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