

Ribbis: Matters of Interest

GIVING THE LENDER AN ALIYAH

1. *Dovid, the gabbai in Shul in charge of giving out the aliyos, happens to owe money to Zelig, another member of the shul. May he offer Zelig an aliyah? May he offer him shlishi or maftir?*
 - *If an acquaintance of the gabbai, to whom he owes money for a loan, happens to be davening in the shul one day, may the gabbai show gratitude by offering him an aliyah?*
1. Dovid may only offer an *aliyah* to Zelig if done as part of the regular *aliyah* cycle. However he is prohibited to offer Zelig any unique *aliyah* (if not part of the normal cycle).
1. Even where the lender and borrower are friends and the borrower would have done so anyway, it is nonetheless prohibited since it is being done publicly.
1. If they are *close* friends, some *poskim* permit the borrower to offer the lender a public favor *provided he had already done so previously*.
1. In case #2, if he is doing it out of gratitude for the loan, it definitely would pose a problem. Even if the *gabbai* is sure he is *not* doing it out of gratitude, nevertheless there would be a problem offering him any *aliyah*, as this would be considered offering a public favor. Hence, this would be prohibited unless he usually does this very favor for the lender, and everyone is aware of that. (In a small-knit community, this might very well be the case and is therefore permitted.)
1. Obviously, this whole discussion only applies where the *gabbai* has the discretion as to who receives an *aliyah*, but if the *gabbai* is only following the instructions of the *rav*, there would be no issue at all.