How to Make Aliyah to the Torah
עֲלוּיָה לְתֹרָה

The source:
Code of Jewish Law (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 139–141); Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 31b–32a.

What you need to know:

1. After your name has been called, go up to the Torah, to the left side of the reader. After the baal koreh (Torah reader) has shown you the place about to be read, touch it with the tzitzit (fringes) of your tallit (or with the spine of your siddur). The scroll will next be rolled together. Stand behind the Torah scroll and say the following blessing:

בָּרָכָה אֶת אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּבּוֹרָךְ:
Barechu et Adonai hamevorach.
Praise Adonai, to whom our praise is due!

ברוך אֵלֹא שַׁמַּה לְעָלָם וָאֵד:
Baruch Adonai ha'mevorach le-olam va'ed.
Praised be Adonai, to whom our praise is due, now and forever!

ברוך אֵלֹא שַׁמַּה לְעָלָם אַשֶּר בָּחַר אֶצְנוּ וְלָנוּ וְתֹרָתֹו
Baruch atah Adonai elohaynu melech ha'olam asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim ve'natan lanu et toratho
Praised is Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has chosen us from all peoples by giving us Torah. Praised is Adonai, Giver of the Torah.

Then move to the right of the baal koreh so the Torah can be read.
2. After the reading, recite the following:

Baruch atah Adonai eloheynu melekh ha’olam asher natan lanu torat emet ve’chayai olam nata bitochaynu. Baruch atah Adonai notayn ha-Torah.

Praised is Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has given us a Torah of truth, implanting within us eternal life. Praised is Adonai, Giver of the Torah.

3. Then stay on the left side of the reader during the next aliya.

4. Following the next aliya, you may go back to your seat. People will say to you yasher koach “May you be strengthened.” You should respond baruch tihye, “May it be blessed.”

Things to remember:

1. In order to be called to the Torah, the rabbi will want to know your Hebrew name (___ son/daughter of ___ and ___).

2. In many synagogues, people are called in order of their priestly legacy (Cohen, Levi, and Israelite). In their quest for equality, Reform synagogues, Reconstructionist and some Conservative ones have generally discontinued this distinction.

3. Following your aliya, one says Birkat Ha-gomel if appropriate (see below, p. 45). Blessings for health, recovery and the like (mi sheberach) are said at this time also.

4. Some people descend the bimah backwards so as not to turn their back on the Ark—like exiting from an audience with a king.

5. Some people hold the etz chaim while reciting the blessing and actually raise the scroll slightly on the word Torah.
6. Here is the music to help you remember how the blessings for an aliyah are to be sung.

First Blessing.

Second Blessing.

Key words and phrases:

Aliyah עלייה. Going up to the Torah, a Torah honor (also means emigrating to Israel).

Baal koreh בואל קורא. Torah reader.

Etz chaim עץ חיים. Torah roller.

Gabbai גבי. The person in a synagogue who makes things run smoothly during the services by assigning aliya (plural of aliyah) and corrects the mistakes of the person reading the Torah.

If you want to know more:


Hayim Donin, To Pray as a Jew (New York, 1980).

Rose Goldstein, A Time to Pray (Bridgeport, Conn., 1972).