

Usher Schedule: the annual schedule is distributed to all ushers. The Synagogue office also has the schedule and will notify each usher during the week before the assigned Shabbat. If unable to be present, it is the **scheduled usher's responsibility to find a replacement** (usually by trading with another usher) and to notify the Synagogue office at 949-2840 or Office@AhavasIsraelGR.org.

General Duties: to ensure the comfort of worshippers and the smooth running of the service:

- To **welcome congregants** and **visitors**: keep in mind that you are likely the first official “face” of the Synagogue to greet a Shabbat worshipper, so make it a welcoming and helpful experience.
- To assist them in finding seating
- To ensure worshippers have a *Siddur* (prayer book), *Etz Chayim Chumash* (Pentateuch with Torah and Haftarah readings), and the weekly announcement page
- To assign *aliyot*—honors during the Torah service
- To maintain proper decorum during the service, i.e. discourage disruptive whispering, noise, or traffic

Specific Protocol:

1. Services begin at 9:30 a.m. The usher(s) should be present by then. Remember, guests are often the first people to arrive - the usher should be ready to greet and assist the earliest arrivals. If the Service is to be conducted in the main sanctuary, earlier arrival is necessary to arrange prayerbooks. Only one usher is assigned to each Shabbat service. If a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is scheduled then the family will often assign ushers. However, the “official” usher should still be available to assist.
2. Greeting, seating, and assisting worshippers:
 - Greet worshippers with an appropriate remark: “*Shabbat Shalom*,” “Good *Shabbas*,” “Welcome to our services,” “Welcome to Ahavas Israel,” etc.
 - If a person is completely unfamiliar to you, an introduction is appropriate to ascertain if they are a congregant who might be present for a special occasion, for example a *Yahrzeit*, or a visitor.
 - Visitors: If a person appears unsure, apprehensive, or clearly a visitor, then an introduction is appropriate to make them feel welcome, identify the reason for which they have come, help with seating, identify the proper book, perhaps introducing them to a congregant with whom they could sit, or offering the English, explanatory companion to the *Siddur*—*Sim Shalom*. Be sure to tell them they are welcome to stay and attend the *Kiddush* and *Oneg* after the service. If the visitor is Jewish, you may wish to offer them an *Aliyah*.
 - Keep in mind that extended conversation is not appropriate.
 - If a person appears infirm, especially if unaccompanied, help find a seat and provide prayerbooks, or request that another congregant help.
 - People with hearing aides may be told that we have a loop system for the hearing impaired, accessed by switch on many hearing aids. We also have one headset that should be on the table in the back of the chapel/sanctuary. The unit turns on automatically when the headphones are plugged in.

- Although the page number is periodically announced from the *Bimah*, you should know and volunteer this information to people who need it as they walk in.
- If people are entering the sanctuary or chapel while the congregation is standing in prayer, especially during the silent *Amidah* and *Keddushah*, they should remain standing at the back so as not to disrupt worshippers. If an entering person is infirm and the standing prayer may take awhile, use your best judgment, i.e. seat them in the back or in a seat not disruptive to others.
- Handicapped access to the *Bimah* (in the main sanctuary): a lift is present at the right side of the *Bimah* (as you face the *Bimah*). It is easily operated by the person using it. For people who need to use it, it is the usher's responsibility to make them aware of the lift, assist them in getting to it, and in ascending the *Bimah*.
- Chapel seating is often tight. Pews often fill up first in the back. Later arriving worshippers, although self-conscious, should be encouraged to fill the front pews. Bring in extra seats only when there are no open seats in the front. Dan is usually easy to find and will help bring in the chairs. Before bringing in the extra chairs, you may take the book carts out into the hallway to make room in back.
- Chapel Tallitot are kept in the top right-most drawer in the back.
- Chapel and Sanctuary doors should be kept closed to maintain cooler temperatures in the summer and warmth in the winter.

3. Service Decorum:

- Men and boys, whether congregants or visitors, should wear a *kippah*. Ask nicely but firmly that they obtain one. If already seated, bring one to them.
- Any woman ascending the *Bimah* should have a head covering. If not, the usher should provide either a *kippah* or a doily and a clip or bobby pin, all of which are available in the foyer or a basket in the chapel/sanctuary.
- If someone is continually talking, discreetly motion to the person or quietly go to them and whisper to them to be quiet. This may need to be repeated more forcefully.
- End of service in the sanctuary: help worshippers replace prayer books in the racks. With large sanctuary crowds, place two book racks at the rear of the center aisle to make it easier for worshippers to return their prayer books as they exit to the social hall.

4. Prayer Books and Announcements:

- Chapel: Weekly announcements should be handed out when greeting worshippers. If a large attendance is expected, distribute one sheet to a family. Prayer books are located in holders on the backs of the pews. If there are not enough prayer books in the pews, a *Siddur* and *Chumash* should be provided from the book rack. Books are left in the pew holders at the end of the service. **Note**: You must provide worshippers being seated in the front row with *Siddur* and *Chumash*.
- Sanctuary: Books are kept on wheeled racks at the rear of the sanctuary. Hand out a *Siddur* and *Chumash* along with a weekly announcement when greeting a worshipper. Preparation time is needed to sort *Siddur* and *Chumash* into easily dispensable units. Old announcements should be removed from the prayer books and a new announcement placed in the *Siddur*. When many worshippers are expected, for example at a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, ushers should try to

limit announcements to one per family or group and also limit the number of *Etz Chayim Chumashim* allotted per family or group so as not to run short.

5. Assigning Honors and Aliyot: General considerations

- Usher's "Black Book": The Synagogue office provides a black, three—ring notebook each *Shabbat* whether in the chapel or main sanctuary. Familiarize yourself with it. It contains a number of lists including the main list of congregation members who are post *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* age and willing to receive an *aliyah*, if the member is a *kohen* or *levi*, and the dates when they have received an *aliyah*. Note that the first two pages of the member list is a special list of post—*Bnai Mitzvah* teens. Whenever possible, after considering obligatory honors and while also considering *aliyah* history, they should be given *Aliyot*. Other important lists are referenced below.
- The usher is normally responsible for assigning 7 *Aliyot*—7 people, each of whom chant the blessing before a section of the weekly *Torah* portion is chanted and *Hagabah* and *Gellilah*—the persons who lift the *Torah* and help redress it.
- If more than one *Torah* is used, such as on four special *Shabbatot* around Purim or on Festivals, then additional assignments of *Hagabah* and *Gellilah* will be needed. Additionally, fewer *aliyot* are distributed on Festivals (**See the list at the bottom of page 4). The *Shabbat* announcements will indicate the special *Shabbat*, there should be additional labeled stickers in the black book, and/or the Rabbi will notify you of the unusual honors assignments. **Note**: The first *Torah* is usually the larger. Take this into consideration when making assignments.
- When you assign an *Aliyot* to a member, record this in the black book by placing the appropriately numbered colored dot to the right of the congregant's name. Dots are designated 1 – 7, M- *Maftir*, H- *Hagabah*, and G- *Gellilah*.
- First: check the usher black book for the current weekly list of members observing a *Yahrzeit* or the weekly announcement sheet to be passed out, or check with the Rabbi for birthdays, anniversaries, people recovering from illnesses, leaving on or returning from a long journey, celebrating other family or personal *simchas* such as the birth of a child, grandchild, or a family member receiving a school, community, or professional award or recognition, or a guest, who should receive an honor. If these people are present, they should be offered an honor first, even if you know they are likely to decline.
- Second: check the list with the *Aliyot* history of eligible members. Those present may be considered with some preference to those who may not have had an honor recently. **Note**: A person *in mourning* may not be offered an *Aliyah* during *Shiva*, the seven days beginning with the burial.
- The *Torah* service generally begins around 10:15 a.m. Assignments of the first several *aliyot* should be completed before the *Torah* is removed from the ark. You might reserve some of the later *aliyot* for those who come in a bit later (otherwise, those who come later will never receive an *aliyah*). Do not approach a worshipper to ask if they would accept an *aliyah* during the *Amidah* or other silent prayer.
- The *Maftir*, following the seventh *Aliyah*, is the already designated *Haftorah* chanter. There is a list of *Haftorah* chanters in the black book. Check the list. If the scheduled person is not present, notify the Rabbi early enough so that a replacement chanter may be identified and have time to become familiar with the *Haftorah*.

- The usher is not responsible for assigning *Torah* readers.
- If a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* occurs, the usher is not responsible for the assignment of *Bimah* honors but should work with the family to ensure that people assigned honors know to approach the *Bimah* from the steps at the sides and know in what order and when to go up so as to keep the service flowing smoothly.

6. Sequence of Aliyot:

- Although the first two *Aliyot* (*rishon* and *shayni*) have been traditionally assigned to a *Kohen* and *Levi* respectively, these *Aliyot* may be offered to any Jew of post *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* age even if a *Kohen* or *Levi* is present. Non *Kohen/Levi* honorees may be reassured that this is “kosher.”
- If a *Kohen* or *Levi* is offered an *aliyah* and will accept only if called up in the customary position (these people are so designated in the black book), this request should be honored. Otherwise a *Kohen* or *Levi* may take any *aliyah*.
- It is customary not to give siblings or parents/children consecutive *Aliyot*. It is only a custom, but you should make an effort when possible to observe it.
- *Hagbah* (the person honored to raise the *Torah* scroll): this assignment requires some consideration. While there are people on the *Bimah* who may assist, the person should have reasonably assured physical strength and composure.

If you have any questions or concerns about your duties, please direct them to the usher organizer or the Rabbi.

****Number of sifre Torah/aliyot:**

On a regular Shabbat, we use one sefer Torah and we have seven aliyot. The Maftir is usually a repetition of all or part of the seventh aliyah.

On Shabbat Rosh Hodesh and other special Shabbatot such as Festivals that occur on Shabbat and the four special parshiyot surrounding Purim, we use two sifre Torah and we have seven aliyot. The Maftir is a separate section, read from the second Torah.

On Yom Kippur, we use two sifre Torah and we have six aliyot. The Maftir is a separate section, read from the second Torah.

On Festivals, we use two sifre Torah and we have five aliyot. The Maftir is a separate section, read from the second Torah.

When the Shabbat of Hanukkah coincides with Rosh Hodesh or when one of the special parshiyot surrounding Purim coincides with Rosh Hodesh, we use three sifre Torah and we have seven aliyot. The first six aliyot are the regular Torah reading (in the breakdown of aliyot, the sixth and seventh are joined together). The seventh aliyah is the Rosh Hodesh reading, read from the second Sefer Torah. The Maftir is the holiday or other special reading, read from the third Torah.