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## The *Honor* is Yours: Preparing for an *Honor*

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It is an honor to have a role in a religious service. You will enjoy and appreciate this honor with a small amount of preparation.

The best way to learn how to do this is to come participate on Shabbat morning where it happens each week. Also, this guide will help you be prepared. Thank you for your preparation and for your participation!

Please look over the section that describes the honor that you have been assigned. When you are on the *bimah* (raised platform, i.e., in front of the Congregation), the Rabbi, - “tappers” (lay leaders identifying people with honors and sending them to the Bimah), and gabbais (lay leaders assisting in the Torah service) will assist you.

# Opening (and Closing) the Ark

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There are several times in a religious service when the curtains in front of the ark are opened, including the beginning of the Torah service. Typically two people are invited to open the ark. You and your designated partner will go up on the *bimah* as instructed by the tappers and each of you will stand on one side of the ark.

Upon a signal from the rabbi or gabbai, you will open the curtain on your side and remain standing on that side.

Sometimes, when the opening of the ark is brief, you will stay up front and close the ark.

# Aliyah

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Each Torah reading is divided into sections called "alioth" (singular "aliyah" meaning "going up"). If you have been honored with one of these *aliyot*, you will be called to the *bimah* by name (or *aliyah* number). When called, go up and stand behind the Torah table.

The reader will indicate the spot in the Torah where the reading begins. You then touch the corner of your *talit* (prayer shawl) to that spot, and then kiss the *talit* corner.

Then you recite the opening *brachah* (blessing; large print copy is on the table, in Hebrew and also in transliteration). After the reading, the honoree again goes through the kissing ceremony, this time at the spot where the reading ended. The *aliyah* then recites the closing *brachah*. After the *brachah* you will be congratulated by those standing on the Bimah and move to stand on the side of the table with the community on your left and the ark on your right. You will stand there through the next reading and leave after the second *brachah*.

After the next *aliyah* is called, you move to the other side of the Torah (stage left) next to the second gabbai and stands there while the next portion is read. Upon completion of the closing *brachah*, you shake hands with the gabbai and the person who has just finished her/his *aliyah*, then return to your seat. Often other congregants will say, as you return to your seat, *Yasher koach* (loosely, more power to you...the Hebrew equivalent of "congratulations").

If you are not familiar with the blessings over the Torah, you can read them, listen to them, and see them enacted:

➤ Print/audio

Text in Hebrew with transliteration [<http://www.gltorah.org/aliyah>]

(with appreciation to Temple Emanu-El of San Jose and Temple Sholom, Greenwich, CT)

➤ Video

[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpGKdTgQL6E&feature=related>]

(with appreciation to the Glen Rock NJ Jewish Center)

## Notes:

- 1) For an *aliyah*, you will need to be wearing a *tallit*;
- 2) To call you to the Torah, the Rabbi will need to know your Hebrew name. Best to send this to the Temple office in advance of the service. Be prepared to remind the Rabbi, however, when you come forward.

A Hebrew name has three parts. The name is not complete unless it contains all of these parts:

- 1) the individual's name (i.e. Rivkah, Nahum, Phyvel, etc.)
- 2) Son or Daughter of... ("ben" or "bat")
- 3) Father and or mother's Hebrew name depending on circumstances.

(It is traditional to use just the father's name. In our community many also include their mother's name. If mother is Jewish and father is not, the mother's name is used.)

If you have any questions about your Hebrew name please ask the Rabbi.

# Hagbah and Gelilah: Lifting and Dressing the Torah Scrolls

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The persons with these honors are called up together with an introduction (in Hebrew) that includes the two words *hagbah* and *gelilah*. To serve as *Hagbah*, the Torah lifter, you move behind the reading desk, grasp the Torah by the bottom staves and open it up it (“good form” is considered to be showing at least 3 columns of Torah text). You then reposition it on the reading desk so that the mid-point rests upon the edge of the reading desk. Using the reading desk as a fulcrum, you then rotate the Torah to a vertical position and with knees bent (to save the back muscles, not for religious reasons), lift the Torah at least to shoulder height, and turn around so that the writing is facing the congregation. While the line (*v'zot ha Torah...*) is sung, you continue to hold the Torah in this manner, though if you find it difficult to maintain this position, you may lower the scroll so it is easier to carry and move to the designated seat on the stage left of the *Bimah*. When the line *v'zot ha Torah* is complete, singing of other words will begin. If you are not already seated, please sit at this time. When you are seated, lower the Torah to your knees for support (keeping it in the vertical position). The writing of the Torah will be facing you; the back portion will be facing the congregation. Hold the handles loosely to allow one of the gabbais to wind the Torah closed.

The Gelilah now dresses the Torah, being guided along the various steps by the gabbais. Once the Torah is securely rolled it is cinched shut using a belt. Once the belt is secured, you drop the Torah cover onto the Torah and place the *yad* (pointer) over the right-most of the staves. Finally the “crowns” are places on the top rollers. Along with the *Hagbah*, you return to your seat. Often other congregants will say, as you return to your seat, *Yasher koach* (loosely, more power to you...the Hebrew equivalent of “congratulations”). When the dressing is finished, the *gabbai* will either put the Torah in a special holder or let one of the young people in the Congregation (often someone with a Bar/Bat Mizvah ceremony scheduled in the coming year) hold it. You return in your seat. Often other congregants will say, as you return to your seat, *Yasher koach* (loosely, more power to you...the Hebrew equivalent of “congratulations”).

Here is a video [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cb0y80Sk8zs>] of the Hagbah and Gelilah in action.

If you have any questions please ask one of the gabbais or the rabbi.