Access for Your Reading Table-Including Wheelchair Users in Aliyah And Kria

Aliyah sometimes seems like the most basic honor we give to someone in our synagogue. Someone new comes in, or someone has an important life moment, and you offer them an Aliyah, as a way to say our community honors you. How much more so for a lifecycle events, that moment of Bar or Bat Mitzvah, or aufruf before a wedding. It sometimes seems like one of the most basic things the synagogue needs more of is a skilled chanter of Torah. How powerful is it then, as both a message and a method of inclusion, to make sure that this honor and this service are open to wheelchair users, or those that for whatever other reason have trouble standing at an average height?

Now, the good news is that this is something that you can implement immediately. Even if it’s a quick folding table, you can make a change at your synagogue this week, if you identify that it’s an opportunity upon which you want to work.

In the long run, however, it’s natural that we want our sanctuary to be outfitted with intentionality, with the right furniture, and the right look to maintain the important atmosphere while meeting your accessibility needs. We offer here are a few options to meet different needs, though we are happy to work with you identify more custom solutions if these don’t suit.

Angled Reading Table

If you are not yet ready to look at adjustable solutions that can be used as the synagogue’s primary reading table, an excellent option specifically for wheelchair users is the angled Reading table, which adjusts in height and angle to meet the needs of most wheelchair users. You can find an excellent example of this table at: 
https://www.schooloutfitters.com/catalog/product_family_info/cPath/CAT10_CAT186/pfam_id/PFAM1854

Sit to Standing Desks

If you are looking for a more integrated solution, that will allow the wheelchair users in your congregation and those who read from a traditional standing position to use the same table, you might consider an adjustable sit to standing desk. As it sounds, these desks are designed to adjust in height to accommodate sitting and standing use, and are available in handcrank, pneumatic, and electric options. CJP encourages you to consider your own synagogue needs and consult with your own halachic authority in determining which of these technologies is most appropriate for your synagogue. Remember, once you purchase the table, you can always decorate it to suit your aesthetic.

Hand Crank

Pneumatic
https://www.standupdeskstore.com/48-pneumatic-adjustable-height-standing-desk

Electric
https://www.standupdeskstore.com/48-inch-electric-adjustable-stand-up-desk

Pneumatic and Customized Sanctuary Furnishings

Your sanctuary is a carefully thought out space. Most likely, you’ve designed every inch and picked every furnishing to evoke a particular feeling, as you seek a space in which to worship, examining yourself and growing closer to God. Given this, you may decide that you are ready to undertake the added expense of using custom designed sanctuary fittings, rather than even the most elegant of office designed solutions.

There are probably multiple choices from which you can pick, but RSIP Partner Congregation Shaarei Tefillah in Newton has had a wonderful experience with Presentations Gallery Ltd in Mount Vernon New York. While their accessible furnishings page, http://www.designs-ltd.com/Presentations_Gallery/ACCESSIBILITY.htm, does not specifically talk about pneumatic and adjustable tables, it does mention custom solutions, and we do know that they were the source for Shaarei Tefillah’s beautiful pneumatic reading table.

Here are some other links to info on adjustable Torah Reading Tables


https://davidstraussdesigns.com/adjustabletorah-readers-table/