



חזק  
Hazak

# חזק שבת

## Hazak Shabbat Manual

### Shabbat Vayehi

14 Tevet 5766 – Jan. 14 2006  
16 Tevet 5767 – Jan. 6 2007  
13 Tevet 5768 – Dec. 22 2007  
14 Tevet 5769 – Jan. 14 2009  
16 Tevet 5770 – Jan. 2 2010  
11 Tevet 5771 – Dec. 18 2010  
12 Tevet 5772 – Jan. 7 2012  
16 Tevet 5773 – Dec. 29 2012  
11 Tevet 5774 – Dec. 14 2013  
12 Tevet 5775 – Jan. 3 2015

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## Introduction

This manual is designed to provide the Congregation and Hazak chapter with material to plan a successful program for Hazak Shabbat. It includes suggestions for planning and organizing a program as well as learning materials and suggestions for reading and discussion. For further information, please contact Dr. Morton Siegel at the United Synagogue office, or Mr. Maurice Potosky, the Hazak Program chairman. Dr. Siegel can be reached, by e-mail, at [Siegel@USCJ.org](mailto:Siegel@USCJ.org) and Mr. Potosky at [maury3505@aol.com](mailto:maury3505@aol.com). They will be happy to provide you with any support you require.

This manual is an ongoing work and any suggestions you have for improving it, or for adding material, would be greatly appreciated.

## Intent

**Hazak** was established several years ago, by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, to provide a structured programming environment to meet the needs of the mature members of Congregations. As such, the Congregational **Hazak** chapters, in conjunction with Regional leadership and other Congregations, would develop programs of interest to older members of a Congregation, to empty-nesters, and to what one can define as the senior constituency. These programs would be an adjunct to the standard, broadly-based Congregational programs, and would provide added value to membership.

As the program grew, it became evident that it would be desirable to set aside a specific Shabbat to recognize the accomplishments of the Congregational chapter and to recognize the contributions of the chapter membership to the well-being of the Congregation. This would be similar, in practice, to the Shabbat set aside to recognize and honor Sisterhood members (Sisterhood Shabbat) and Men's Club members (Men's Club Shabbat). The Shabbat selected for the first such **Hazak** Shabbat, and continuing annually, was Vayehi, the closing parsha of the Book of Bereshit.

The establishment of **Hazak** Shabbat also affords the mature members of the Congregation the opportunity to participate in a specific activity along with the full Congregation, and thereby, to receive acknowledgment of the importance of the mature membership to the well-being and vitality of the Congregation.

## Modes of Observing

There are many ways for a Congregation and its chapter to observe this Shabbat. For most Congregations, **Hazak** Shabbat was observed by the senior members of the Congregation leading portions of the Shabbat morning service, receiving Torah

honors, delivering the d'var Torah, and sponsoring the Kiddush. Other Congregations elected to observe the Shabbat at Minha and Maariv, concluding with Havdalah. During the services, special readings related to maturity and wisdom can be added to the service. Other choices for observing this Shabbat include inviting guest speakers to talk about the significance of maturity in the life cycle of the Jew and in the community, the importance of maturity and wisdom in leadership, and about issues affecting this segment of our overall Synagogue community.

While **Hazak** Shabbat is geared for the morning service of Shabbat Vayehi, many congregations will find it more convenient to observe it on Friday night at Kabbalat Shabbat, as well as Shabbat afternoon, or on another Shabbat close to the date (December 25, 2004).

### **Committee Structure and Tasks**

It is important that each chapter establish a **Hazak** Shabbat committee to determine the specific program to be conducted for the Congregation. The Committee's duties should include, in consultation with the Rabbi and other key Synagogue professionals:

- a. determining the nature of the program (services, guest speaker, Congregational speaker, Rabbi, Cantor, special readings)
- b. setting up the order of the service and assigning roles for each participant
- c. determining the honors to be distributed
- d. assigning special readings, and introductory remarks
- e. determining the nature of the Kiddush (or Oneg, if Friday night) and assigning duties for carrying them out
- f. assigning ushers to seat guests
- g. setting up a publicity committee to inform the Congregation of the program such as: writing articles for the Congregational newsletter, placing information on the Congregation's web site, preparing circulars for mailing and distribution, and setting up a phone squad to get the senior members of the Congregation to attend the Shabbat
- h. budgetary requests

In general, a committee of six to eight people, including its chairperson, will suffice to accomplish these tasks, which are in cooperation with established committees and arms of the Congregation, and undertaken by professional and lay leadership.

The work of the Committee should begin about six months prior to the event. At that time, the first order of business is to assure that the calendar date is clear. Since the date will always be on Shabbat Vayehi, a calendar lock can be established for following years.

At the first meeting (it is suggested that it be a dinner meeting in order to start early) the decision of the format of the observance should be made, and assignments handed out, according to the above schedule. Notification of the event should go to the Congregation, starting four months prior to the event. Over the next three months all the details should be nailed down, so that one month prior to the event, publicity to the congregation can provide details on the content of the program.

In all these preparations, as noted, it is important to remember to consult the Congregational resources (lay and professional leadership) and the resources of the Regional and Central offices are available to assist in your planning.

### **Notification to Congregation**

A critical factor to the success of any program is the publicity announcing the event so as to attract as many of the Congregational family as possible to attend. The event should be placed on the congregation's calendar as soon as possible.

As noted above, a first notice to the Congregation, in the form of a circular, should be mailed at least four months prior to the event. Articles about the event should be placed in the Congregation's newsletter, each month. If the Congregation has a Shabbat flyer, announcement of the event should be included for each of the six weeks prior to the Shabbat. A phone tree should be established to contact the senior members of the Congregation three weeks prior to the Shabbat. If possible, articles in the local press, Jewish or community, should appear two weeks before the Shabbat. All information about **Hazak** Shabbat should be included on the Congregation's website as soon as possible, and updated regularly. As major decisions about the content of the program are firmed, flyers should be placed in the Synagogue for distribution.

To repeat, it is important that the committee work closely with the publicity committee of the Congregation, with the newsletter committee, and with the Executive Director and Rabbi in planning. Of specific importance are regular pulpit announcements.

## Appendices

### A. Components of a speech for HAZAK Shabbat

Pick and choose among the sections. Use as little or as much as desired.

a. We recognize HAZAK Shabbat, the first in what we hope will be an annual event. This weekend Conservative congregations all over North America are recognizing and acknowledging HAZAK.

b. Open to congregants, aged 55+, HAZAK provides social, educational, and religious programming within the congregation. Our congregation's HAZAK chapter joins other HAZAK chapters from across the region and nation to hold joint programming. This allows for enhanced networking and interaction among Conservative Jews. HAZAK brings together the expertise of years of involvement in congregational leadership and provides a continuing outlet for channeling that experience and corporate memory for synagogue governance and congregational development.

c. In this week's *parsha*, Jacob talks to each of his sons and describes their strengths and weaknesses. He articulates his vision for their future, as individuals and as a people. In doing so he provides them with an understanding of his values that they are expected to promulgate. He also defines the structure of the tribes that will eventually define the structure of the Jewish people from Exodus on.

d. HAZAK Shabbat honors those in the congregation who have made the congregation what it is. As leaders, as workers, and as participants in communal endeavors, HAZAKniks have led the way and set the example for the younger generations.

e. As Jacob set the tone for the structure of the Jewish People, the HAZAK membership sets a tone for the congregation. We wish the HAZAK chapter, our HAZAK members, and all the seniors, future strength. As HAZAK has as its definition, strength, derived from *het* for *hochma*-wisdom, *zayin* for *zikna*-maturity and *kof* for *kadima*-looking forward, HAZAK members epitomize each of these values.

f. *Talk about your congregation's HAZAK chapter. Mention sample programs. Describe how to get involved if you are not already involved.*

The name HAZAK is an acronym. The "*het*" stands for *Hokhmah* (wisdom), the "*za'yin*" for *Ziknah* (maturity) and the "*kuph*" for *Kadima* (looking ahead). So HAZAK notes that the senior represents cumulative knowledge, the ability to judge as *zaken* in a mature fashion, and has aspirations to move ahead during the decades remaining.

## B. Sample Comments A

Referencing Bereshit 49:33: When Jacob stops or has finished instructing (that is the correct translation of "letzavot" ..not blessing, but instructing). when he no longer instructs them, he "gathers his feet into his bed" ..i.e. his activity, is over.....and he dies. The message is really quite clear: when the older, experienced generation draws back from instructing the coming generation..be it as parents, or as community leaders, or as bearers of the tradition, or as grandparents...when through fear of rejection, desire to avoid argument..or whatever..the Zakeyn does not communicate what is essential to the emergent generation, to all intents and purposes that is death; perhaps not physiological, but in the true meaning of the term, no longer having any impact, becoming a residual token of the past,- no one can call that life...existing, yes-but living, no ( the essence of activity is not intransitive, it is outgoing--impacting on others). And so, Jacob dies when he finishes (vayekhal, lit. means to finish as "vayekhulu"-- the heaven and the earth were "finished") instructing his children. The message for the experienced and those who have the knowledge garnered from their experience, and the from the years of living, is clear....life, for the mature means instructing/communicating/alerting; and the fear of rejection (all too real for some), must yield to the joy of fulfilling a true Mitzvah: "veshinantam le'vaneka"...be sure to sharpen your teaching of your experience to your sequiturs. And with that dedication comes the joy of understanding the essence of the human: being created "in the image" as day 6 of the first chapter of Bereshit has it. What image? The essential power of Divinity: "to create and shape"...and what greater joy than helping create and shape the future ? For, in so doing, one assures immortality.

### C. Sample Comments B

In the Jewish tradition, the mature in years are not subject to sympathy or pity but rather, opportunity. It is only when he has passed what is called mid-life that Abraham becomes a religious achiever...and likewise with Isaac and with Jacob. And, of course, we have Moses, whose career begins when he is eighty. And as he resigns his responsibility, the Torah comments, at 120, his vitality was not diminished nor was his eye clouded; that is, his level of perception both intellectual and visual, and his ability to function were at a very good level. This determination to live life fully at any age was communicated by Moshe to his student Joshua...who led our ancestors into the Promised Land. In the Book of Yehoshua, Joshua is quoted: "I am today 85 years old; I am as strong today as I was at the very time when Moses gave me my charge; as my strength was then, so is my strength today...be it for war, or be it, generally, in terms of leadership role." The tradition teaches, then, that maturity in years, when accompanied by maturity in religious living and with a clear ideology and purpose is the expectation of the zakeyn. And the very word, Zakeyn one who is elderly is a fascinating term. For what are the leaders of the community called in the traditional literature? They are called Zekaynim, the elders. And this is reinforced in the Pirkei Abot, the Chapters of The Fathers (that is the Hakhamim, the wise)... "Ziknah beyom Din u"vaharut be'yom krav"...be sure to judge with the mellow values of the elderly and when you are to are called on to struggle, muster the strength of the young. To the Jew, then, the years do not bring doddering nor decline in what is the essence of the nefesh..of the soul..namely, will, courage, understanding, enthusiasm and wisdom. And that is why, in the tradition, all the great leaders were men and women well on in years. And that is why this constituency in the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism chose to call its organization HAZAK, representing Het: Wisdom and mature reflection, Ziknah-the knowledge and experience that comes only with years of observation and Kuph- kadimah--forward with these attributes to continue an active life and, more, to share with those not yet on this level the knowledge to aid them in their move up the ladder of years. While it is self evident that with growth at every stage comes change, change does not mean decline but rather transformation. The nefesh remains the same but is enriched by passage through time, and has the mandate to share with the younger that which will enable them to also glow in the years to follow. How appropriate, then, that we celebrate Hazak as we complete the Book for Bereshit the beginning for each year, and each cycle marks a new beginning, and a new opportunity. No, it is not sympathy or stroking that those who have lived to give, wish to have, but the full opportunity to help in all ways that Jewishness will vest each era in man's and woman's experience with meaning, with community participation, and with the Mitzvah life that is the happy lot of every Jew fulfilling the charge of the Kadosh Barukh Hu Habeyt U'Shma: be constantly obervant and observing and always listen for the call to action. Ve'nithazeyk..we shall be strong in carrying out this charge."