

Solomon Schechter Awards 2007 Hazak

GOLD

Over 900

Submitted by Lola Rabow

VALLEY BETH SHALOM

Encino, CA

818-788-6000

The Valley Beth Shalom Hazak program is concluding its sixth year of operations marked by continuing growth and accomplishment in many aspects, including approximately 100 university-level class, lecture, and activity sessions each year, innovative special events, and a steady increase in both dues-paying members (currently more than 300) and members attending each bi-monthly VBS-Hazak Day (current attendance approximately 100). Programs provide a mix of intellectually challenging Judaic and general learning, information on health and other matters of special interest to seniors, exploration of the arts, and opportunities for fellowship, fun, and service.

Members eagerly and appreciatively attend the regular and special Hazak programs throughout the year VBS-Hazak also enhances its members' lives by providing opportunities to make new social contacts and develop enduring friendships, to share interests by teaching, lecturing, and sharing their passions for learning and artistic creativity. It also provides opportunities to participate in the administration of Hazak, and to volunteer for service to other Valley Beth Shalom and community programs.

Recognizing and responding to the special needs and interests of members 55 and over has enabled VBS-Hazak to become a very important factor in the lives of its members.

GOLD

100-250

Submitted by George Tievsky

KOL SHALOM

North Bethesda, MD

301-493-8198

Our Kol Shalom Hazak chapter has completed four years of interesting and stimulating programs. We have kept to the basic philosophy, formulated at the first meeting of our steering committee in 2003, which has guided our programming since then. Our programs are of personal interest and primarily Judaic in nature. We also recognize how very valuable the life experiences of our seniors are and we provide a forum for sharing those experiences. It is gratifying to see that personal friendships and camaraderie are so much a part of our group.

The programs are educational, have Judaic content and provide opportunities for intellectual and social interaction. We integrate special exhibits having Judaic interest into our programs. Interesting guest speakers on a variety of Jewish subjects, often members of our own congregation, provide us with timely information. We have stimulating study sessions with our spiritual leader, Rabbi Jonathan Z. Maltzman. We have viewed excellent films of Jewish content with stimulating discussions following. Jewish music, both Hebrew and Yiddish, have been a part of many programs and the sing-a-longs bring back precious memories of our past.

Despite the fact that we are a small congregation, slightly more than 200 family units, our Hazak has been a significant presence at the Seaboard Hazak Commission meetings and in the programs of the Seaboard Hazak region. The congregation budget provides Hazak with money for its budget and each member contributes \$18 dues each year. This often is sufficient for transportation costs by bus to attend special exhibits in Washington's museums. Our Hazak members plan all of our programming. We have no paid staff.

We are involved closely with affairs of the congregation. Our Hazak President, Dr. George Tievsky, has been a Trustee of Kol Shalom Congregation and has been succeeded by Bernice Blumenthal, another Hazak person. Our members are active participants in many committees of our congregation. The committees include Membership, Social Action, Kiddush, Ushering, Sisterhood Board and Chesed. Several of our members have given Divrei Torah and have led services. About 80% of our members attend services every Shabbat. To help recognize and celebrate our National Hazak Shabbat, our seniors have been given Aliyot and we have honored Dr. George and Priscilla Tievsky for their continued love and devotion to our wonderful chapter. We hope to, one day soon, have a permanent home for our exceptional shul so that we can invite other Hazak chapters to our many stimulating and interesting events.

GOLD

500-900

Submitted by Howard Gannes

CONGREGATION BETH DAVID

Saratoga, CA

408-257-3333

Our Congregation Beth David Hazak chapter was organized more than 2½ years ago. Today, Hazak addresses more than 55% of our synagogue membership, and we estimate this coverage will increase this year to more than 60%. Our e-mail list includes more than 300 folks. Since inception, Hazak has sponsored 19 functions, with attendance generally 75-100+ per event. We communicate with Hazak members generally via e-mail, also making information available in the synagogue's weekly Shabbat bulletin (print and e-mail) as well as congregation mid-month mailers. We generally publicize each event three or four times, and this repeated publicity (via e-mail) significantly contributes to event success. Reservations, like publicity are generally made via e-mail.

Congregation Beth David has formally accepted Hazak as an affiliate organization (like Sisterhood and Men's Club). We are completely self-funding, and we are seeking ways to provide financial support to our synagogue.

Our support and attendance has been phenomenal. We were granted our charter in June 2005, and we remain the only Hazak group in the Northern California Region. Our Hazak chapter is vibrant and growing, satisfying a need of the 55+ group. This Congregation Beth David organization is now one of, if not the most, active groups in our synagogue.

GOLD

500-900

Submitted by Gloria Rose

TEMPLE ISRAEL OF SHARON

Sharon, MA

781-784-3986

Hazak!! Hazak!! We are one! We are Strong!! How many times has this been said this past year? What is Hazak? This question has been asked many times this past year at Temple Israel of Sharon. Hazak is dedicated to serving the social, religious and educational needs of Jews 55 and over. It is the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's Organization for the mature Jew. Hazak at Temple Israel complements the current demographic-oriented programs for the over-55 constituency by creating additional programming with constituency in mind. It affords the opportunity for seniors to connect and reconnect with their fellow peers in a friendly setting. Hazak is USY, AZA, BBG's for those who are 55 and older!

****Beginnings of Hazak at Temple Israel****

Hazak at Temple Israel in Sharon, Massachusetts had its beginning in the spring of 2005. Post cards were sent to members of the temple who were 55 and older inquiring if there was interest in forming such a group. The following sequence of events transpired to bring Hazak to Temple Israel:

1. August 2005 - Barbeque on a Sunday afternoon —30 reservations received
2. November 8th — About 12-15 members met to discuss the viability of forming a Hazak chapter at Temple Israel. Since there are several chapters in the Seaboard Region, Joanne Tucker-Zemlak, Assistant Executive Director of the Seaboard Region, was invited by Aaron Kischel, a Temple Israel member and Executive Director of New England Region, to hold an informational session at Temple Israel to define the purpose, the programs and the activities that Hazak chapters offered its members. Unfortunately Joanne was not able to attend this meeting due to a family matter. Those in attendance requested that this meeting be rescheduled as soon as possible at Joanne's earliest convenience.
3. December 15th -- About 12-15 members attended this rescheduled meeting with Joanne Tucker-Zemlak. The members of Temple Israel who attended this information session were enthusiastic upon hearing how Hazak had created a place within synagogue life for those who had reached 55 and over. Before the evening ended, a task force was formed and it was agreed upon to create a Hazak group at Temple Israel and to apply for a charter from USCJ.
4. January 11 -- 20 members attended an exhibit "From Haven to Home" at the Moakley Courthouse in Boston. This exhibit presented by the American Jewish Historical Society represented 350 years of Jewish Life in America.
5. February 6th -- During Shabbat morning services the Temple Israel chapter of Hazak received its USCJ charter from Aaron Kischel. The evening prior to receiving the charter, for its first program, 60 members of Hazak attended a Shabbat Shira Service led by the Cantor with music of the Rinat Yisrael Chorus. A Shabbat dinner followed the service and the evening concluded with Jewish Music Trivia and singing with Cantor Dress.

****Current Happenings of Hazak at Temple Israel****

From March 2006 to the current time the membership has grown to 170 members. Programming is varied as the enclosed scrapbook will document the programs that have been offered and activities participated since March 2006 to the current time. Some of them include: attending the Greater Boston Jewish Film Festival, an evening of social and financial awareness (elder abuse and identity theft), sharing a Shabbat morning service with Sisterhood on International Hazak Shabbat (January 2007) where one of the members read the Haftorah.



In order to be more participatory in congregational life, as Hazak approached its first year at Temple Israel, it was felt that we should be represented on Shabbat mornings and give a Hanukah Menorah to all who became a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It was felt this gift would be something that would be used not only now but in the recipients' future life.

Hazak at Temple Israel is a self supporting group, receiving no financial support from the temple and relies on all volunteers to initiate and execute all of its programming, advertising, and correspondence. The original task force became a steering committee when the charter was received. As the group grew it was apparent that line officers would create a more efficient organizational methodology. It would allow committees to grow and flourish and with more creativity for programming.

Hazak is not yet represented on the board and any members of Hazak who serve on committees serve as members of the committee not representing Hazak. Within the current structure, Hazak came under the umbrella of Family and Adult Education with Rabbi Creditor as the liaison. There is no evidence of removing this umbrella even with the growing membership and no actual representation on this committee.

In addition, Hazak members have integrated healthily into other programming ventures of Temple Israel. A member of Hazak gave a D'var at a Friday night Mishpakha Minyan, and members donated money to purchase Hanukah gifts for children from Jewish Family and Children Services, and members volunteered to prepare and serve food to USY members who were attending the pre-convention events held at Temple Israel.

****Hazak in the Future at Temple Israel****

The future of Hazak at Temple Israel appears to be strong. Members respond in a positive manner to all of the programs and the membership continues to grow. In May 2007, members of World War II will be honored, a movie on the "Liberation of Europe" will be shown, and the D'var will be given by a former chaplain of the armed services. It is anticipated that sports fans will enjoy the June program with a trip to the Paw Sox Game in Pawtucket, Rhode Island and during the summer the 3rd annual barbeque and movie night will be held. Our programming will continue to include participation in the Greater Boston Jewish Film Festival, International Hazak Shabbat, February Shabbat Dinner, and the Annual Barbeque and Movie Night. We are looking to grow our programming by some participation in an intergenerational program within the synagogue, a trip to Amherst, MA to the National Yiddish Book Center and other educational events. Hazak: Lifelong Enrichment for all members who are 55 and older!

GOLD

250-500

Submitted by Judith H. Lax

SUMMIT JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Summit, NJ

908-273-8130

Two years ago, the Summit Jewish Community Center created a Hazak group for ages 55+. Activities began with a Sunday morning brunch, subsidized by the synagogue, and a survey of 55+ interests. By now, we have close to eighty members and we received a USCJ charter. We do not have our own paid professional staff but our synagogue's office staff is always very helpful with notices and mailings. Our Hazak executive committee and our membership are involved participants in planning and supporting our varied activities, and Hazak was given a line in the synagogue's budget. Recently, Hazak applied for and received a grant from the Amelia and Ephraim Hirschhorn Senior Adult Education Program, administered by the MetroWest/UJC.

Our Hazak day trips, by car, train or bus, have been diverse and well received -- from the trip to the Jewish Museum to Ellis Island to the rehearsal concert of the New York Philharmonic and more. We also have had in-house events like the AAA Driver Education Review and the AARP session on Medicare D and health insurance options. Our movie with sandwich and drink and our game "night" late afternoons have been edifying and entertaining. The Hazak group has had several Shabbat dinners yearly with kiddush, motzi, zmirot and birkat hamazon shared by our members -- clearly, Shabbat spirit shared with "old" friends. Our Hanukah dinner parties have been festive and fun. From singing to study and services, Hazak members comprise 80-90 % of the weekly morning adult education classes. Hazak members are the students in our elementary Hebrew classes. On another level, a number of our Hazak members lead services and read Torah in daily minyanim and on Shabbat AM and PM. The number of Hazak members who have become Torah readers increases as more take the Cantor's ongoing classes.

The VP who has Hazak in her portfolio, a Hazak member herself, reports to the Board on Hazak activities. A Hazak member recently organized the operation for contributions and Hazak delivery to the regional Food Pantry. One of our members is in the process of organizing help for synagogue members who may have particular or emergency transportation, food shopping needs. Hazak has become an active and well respected group in our synagogue. Hazak, hazak....

SILVER

Over 900

Submitted by Cheri Kalvort

B'NAI TORAH CONGREGATION

Boca Raton, FL

561-392-8566

B'nai Torah Congregation's Hazak "Joy of Life Series" in Boca Raton, Florida, brings entertaining, yet stimulating programs to our large mostly- retired senior population. Always including a D'var Torah from one of our rabbis, and coffee and cookies, these afternoon events usually attract 125- 400 people.

From the Consul General of Israel's Officer, to Yiddish comedy, to piano virtuosi, the programs bring friendship, joy, ruach, and thought-provoking discussion to our members and seasonal visitors to our community. Chaired by Dr. Robert Sherman, the Hazak group is a cohesive organization that is always available when needed, willing and helpful. Many of our active Hazak members are well into their 90's, and add to the multi-generational aspect of our shul. Hazak is an asset to our congregation and an example of how the wonderful golden years can enrich one's life.

SILVER

250-500

Submitted by Sara R. Harris

TIKVAT ISRAEL

Rockville, MD

301-762-7338

Tikvat Israel's HAZAK chapter held the first meeting in December 2005 and received its charter in January 2006 when we hosted the Seaboard Region's HAZAK winter program. The monthly chapter meetings are varied between weekdays and Sundays to accommodate the schedules of the largest number of members.

Recognizing the motto of Wisdom, Maturity and Looking Ahead, our chapter organized a wide variety of events. Our educational programs, promoting wisdom through learning, included a presentation by a County government official on "scams" targeting the senior population and means of protecting ourselves from identity theft. We toured the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Although many had already visited the museum as individuals, this group tour led by our HAZAK member who serves as a volunteer docent, allowed for an exchange of remembrances and ideas. Since we are also part of a world-wide Jewish community, we had a lecture and video presentation about the Jews of Nigeria. Maturity is more than simply age; it also requires an understanding of our heritage and of the society we live in. To appreciate our heritage, the chapter held meetings that included Israeli movies and music with Yiddish and Hebraic backgrounds. We celebrated Chanukah with a December meeting that used the talents of our HAZAK members and others from within the synagogue to entertain through stories, song and humor. We visited a new Jewish Chapel on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Academy and toured the Levy center, named to honor Commodore Uriah P. Levy. To better understand our place in society, we journeyed to the state capital to view a session of our legislature wrestling with problems that impact our lives. Looking ahead meant considering the international issues facing the world and what we, as part of the American Jewish community, could do to help improve life for our fellow Jews. Therefore, we invited an AIPAC speaker to discuss the threats now facing Israel and how we can take action to help mitigate them.

To broaden the appeal of our HAZAK chapter to eligible members and to show the rest of the congregation what we offer, we celebrated HAZAK Shabbat with a Shabbat dinner and guest speaker and invited the entire congregation to join us. Our members regularly participate in minyanim and weekly services and frequently volunteer their time in support of HAZAK and of other worthwhile groups, both within the synagogue and throughout our community. Our activities are totally planned, organized and accomplished through the use of members who volunteer their time and talents. HAZAK has a position on Tikvat Israel's board and the needs of our chapter are aided through funding to offset routine support needs such as mailings. Other HAZAK members have positions on the board and have leadership roles on various committees. Recognizing our responsibility to the local Jewish community, Tikvat Israel's HAZAK chapter accepted as temporary members, people from the nearby Shaare Tefila congregation presently in the process of moving from an old location to a new one now under construction. We believe this has helped to make new friends and strengthen the role of HAZAK within the membership of both congregations.

HONORABLE MENTION

500-900

Submitted by Al Marvet

TEMPLE BETH AM

Margate, FL

954-968-4545

Temple Beth Am is proud of its HAZAK Chapter, which boasts over 50 paid members. It had developed into a very active chapter and holds monthly board meeting as well as general meetings at Temple Beth Am. The attendance at our monthly meetings is relatively large.



Our HAZAK chapter offers our “senior” members an outlet for education as well as fun. It brings a special something to our congregation, including a new respect for the older members. Our Chapter participates in conclaves, outings, conventions, and other activities which bring seniors from other congregations together. Led by an outstanding board, the HAZAK “buzz” is widespread among our senior members.

All of us at Temple Beth Am are proud of our HAZAK Chapter, and look forward to its continued success and growth.

HONORABLE MENTION

250-500

Submitted by Clara Creditor

B'NAI SHALOM

West Orange, NJ

973-731-0160

Our Hazak chapter is very unique in that we have almost 100% attendance at our meetings because of the interesting and educational programs we present, as well as the opportunity to socialize. We have had speakers on “Right or Wrong — a Jewish Approach to Bioethics and Moral Dilemmas,” “Ethics in Judaism,” a 5-session seminar on “Miracles of the Bible,” 2-session program on “Kabbalah”, an Egyptian woman who spoke on “Growing up Jewish in Egypt.” Our Rabbi presents book reviews in January and February. We have trips to the theatre, the Jewish Museum and The Jewish Theological Seminary for “Lunch in the Succah”.

More than 25% of our Hazak members attend Shabbat services regularly. We hold Hazak Shabbat. We take an active part in our synagogue, serving on the Board of Trustees, religious committee, and volunteer in the community soup kitchen, kosher pantry, the blood drive, the coat, toy and food drives for the needy. We help where needed in the synagogue.

Our Hazak seniors gain wisdom from our educational and cultural programs, provide maturity to the other arms of the synagogue, and are looking ahead by helping the needy and giving of their time where needed. We are an integral part of B'nai Shalom. We fulfill the meaning of Hazak.