

Mentoring a HaZaK Shabbat

Here are some easy steps to organizing and conducting a HaZaK Shabbat in your synagogue, regardless of whether there is an active HaZaK chapter or you are just beginning to get started.

1. Who is your audience?

Do you want to advertise HaZaK to the whole congregation or just to interested and eligible congregants? If you want to encourage attendance by the whole congregation, you might want to plan your HaZaK Shabbat for a service which gets a large attendance, usually Saturday morning. Otherwise, you might want to hold the service on Saturday afternoon, at *Minchah* time. A Friday night or Saturday Minchah service lends itself to having a dinner for HaZaK members and prospective members at the same time. Of course, other events on the synagogue calendar will also have an effect on which service is available for a HaZaK Shabbat service. If you are going to use Shabbat Minchah, consideration needs to be given to the fact that HaZaK Shabbat is designed to coordinate with Parashat Vayehi, which would be read on Saturday morning, Jan. 14, 2006, but at Minchah on Jan. 7, 2006. This discrepancy should be discussed with the synagogue Rabbi in order to determine how best to proceed.

2. Organization of the Program

In order to make sure that everyone is working together, a small committee from the HaZaK chapter should arrange to meet with the Rabbi and/or Cantor as soon as possible. The discussion should include a determination of what parts of the service will be led by HaZaK members, including who can and would *leyn* the *aliyot*, how many *aliyot* may be reserved for HaZaK members, other prayers in both Hebrew and English that can be assigned to HaZaK members, who will give a D'var Torah about HaZaK and the weekly Torah portion and any special recognitions that may need to be made for HaZaK members or leaders. *It is important to be honest about the abilities of HaZaK members*, including their real abilities to read in Hebrew and to *leyn* from the Torah, with the length of time they might need to prepare such a part.

A HaZaK Shabbat coordinator should be assigned, who will work directly with the Rabbi and Cantor to make sure all parts that are set aside for HaZaK members have been distributed, the assignees are preparing anything that needs it and they will be prepared for the service.

3. Publicity

This is probably one of the most important aspects of preparation for HaZaK Shabbat. It is an opportunity to publicize both the service and HaZaK, so chapters should make the most of it. In addition to listing the HaZaK Shabbat in the synagogue bulletin, flyers can be prepared to mail home with other monthly mailings, announcements can be put in the Shabbat pamphlet, simple posters can be made for display around the synagogue (and in the immediate community, if appropriate), and calls can be made to congregants who are eligible to become HaZaK members to encourage their attendance at HaZaK Shabbat. The more times people see and hear about HaZaK Shabbat, the more likely they are to remember and attend. If there

is a HaZaK member who is skilled at flyer making, enlist their help in making different flyers to be used as the event nears.

Remember to have lots of HaZaK material to hand out to attendees of HaZaK Shabbat. This is a great way to let other people know what you do and what some of your upcoming HaZaK events are. Have contact information for your chapter, with name, phone numbers and email addresses. It might even be useful to get some business card stock from a business supply store and print up your own HaZaK “business cards” with all the necessary information on them to hand out to people.

4. Oneg Shabbat/Kiddush and Dinner

If you have decided to hold a dinner in connection with HaZaK Shabbat, a committee needs to be assigned this responsibility. It may be as simple as taking reservations, with any fees connected to the dinner, and giving the total to a synagogue caterer or as involved as getting people to volunteer to help cook the meal in advance of HaZaK Shabbat. For Shabbat dinner, remember to order enough Challot for every table and to have enough wine and grape juice (not everyone drinks wine) for each participant. The committee may be assigned the responsibility of choosing the type of meal, with consideration for such things as Kashrut, non-meat eaters and vegetarians, dietary concerns (salt, lactose intolerance, fat free needs, etc.), and when dinner will be served. The religious considerations for a dinner after a Minchah service should be discussed with the Rabbi. Remember to include the Rabbi, Cantor and their respective spouse as invited guests at your dinner.

The Oneg Shabbat (after a Friday night service) or Kiddush (after a Saturday morning service) and what needs to be provided by the HaZaK chapter should be discussed with the Synagogue Administrator or other person who normally arranges for it in your synagogue. The dinner committee may be charged with this responsibility or it can be given to another small group within your chapter, if you have the volunteers.

5. Recognition and Thank You's

During the HaZaK Shabbat service, it is important that a member of the HaZaK Board or Steering Committee thank all those who helped make the service possible. Include the Rabbi and Cantor for their input and help, the synagogue staff (including support and custodial personnel) for the help they gave and the HaZaK participants in the service. If a particular HaZaK member should get a special recognition, this would be a great forum to give that person the honor due to them.