This week’s parashah describes the accounting of funds donated for the creation of the Tabernacle, its manufacture, and finally its completion. With this the Book of Exodus concludes.

In the Spanish and Portuguese tradition, the concluding verses of each of the Five Books of the Torah are read in a special cantillation knowns as the "High Na’um".

This special cantillation is used to indicate important parts of the Torah—such as the Song of the Sea and the Ten Commandments. The use of the High Na’um for these final verses indicates to the Congregation that something special is being read.

When the Reader reaches the final verse the congregation stands and immediately following the conclusion of the last word—the congregation says:

חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזַק

- חִזְקוּ וְיַאֲמֵץ לְבַבְכֶם כָּל

The phrase is actually an amalgamation of two different verses. The first two words from the 10:12 come from II Samuel when Joab is giving words of encouragement before battle. The second part of the phrase comes from the conclusion of Psalm 31.

The Spanish & Portuguese custom is slightly different than what is heard in Ashkenazic synagogues where the congregation recites the words "Hazaq Hazaq veNiHazaq" at the conclusion of each book of the Pentateuch.

What is the source for this custom? An early source for saying Hazaq after a Torah reading is from the Sefer haManhig (R’ Abraham b Natan of Lunel, Provence, 12th c.) who writes that:

"The Custom in France and Provence was for all who read from the Torah—when they conclude—the Hazan would say aloud to them: ‘Hazaq!’" But this refers to the conclusion of each portion and not specifically to the completion of a Book of the Pentateuch.

Commenting on the above, the Abudarham (Spain 13th c.) says that the custom in Spain was to say Hazaq after the conclusion of each book, not each portion. He wonders if perhaps this is what the Manhig actually meant!

The Abudarham is the earliest reference to our custom of saying Hazaq upon the completion of each book of the Pentateuch.

But why are we doing so? An explanation is given by R’ Moshe Mintz that similarly to the recitation of the “Hadran” at the completion of a tractate of Talmud—hoping that we will return to study it again—so too upon the completion of a book of the Pentateuch. But why are we doing so?

An explanation is given by R’ Moshe Mintz that similarly to the recitation of the “Hadran” at the completion of a tractate of Talmud—hoping that we will return to study it again—so too upon the completion of a book of the Pentateuch we say “Hazaq reNoHazaq” —i.e. “take strength” in that we have finished this book of the Torah, and ‘be strengthened’ that we will return to it again.

Daylight Savings Time Reminder
Don’t forget to “spring forward” an hour at 2:00 am this Sunday.
Purim at Shearith Israel

Jews Among Persians and Greeks:
Reading Exeter in Context
Monday, March 21 | 7:00 pm
Bet Midrash Special Guest Speaker:
Professor Joseph Angel
Joseph Angel is a scholar of ancient Judaism with a focus on religion and history in the Second Temple Period. He is the recipient of research fellowships from the Alexander von Humboldt and Yad Hanadiv/Beracha Foundations.

Purim Dinner
Wednesday, March 23
Following 6:45 pm services (Megillah reading at 7:30 pm)
Registered guests are invited to a festive family-style meal in Levy Auditorium. In addition to a tasty dinner, guests will enjoy our annual children’s costume parade. Register at shearithisrael.org/purimdinner by Sunday, March 20.

Women’s Megillah Reading
Thursday, March 24 | 8:00 am
Celebrate 26 years of women reading the Megillah on Purim morning at Shearith Israel. Contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lirohde-csi@yahoo.com for more information.

Sisterhood Mishloah Manot Project
If you participated in the Sisterhood’s Mishloah Manot Project and requested a package (not a card) your package will be available for pickup at the Synagogue on Wednesday, March 23rd and Thursday, March 24th. For questions, please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lirohde-csi@yahoo.com or Mrs. Carla Schein at scheinc6@gmail.com.

Matanot L’Ebyonim
It is one of the core mitzvot of Purim to give charity to the poor, Matanot L’Ebyonim. Your online gift or check made out to the “Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund,” (memo: “Matanot L’ebyonim”) will be distributed by Rabbi Soloveichik on Purim to those in need. Go to shearithisrael.org/matanot to donate.

Purim Breakfast
Thursday, March 24 | Following 8:00 am
Megillah Readings
Immediately following the 8:00 am readings of the Megillah, congregants are welcome to enjoy a festive breakfast. Childcare will be provided throughout the morning. The breakfast is free of charge but sponsors and supporters are highly appreciated. Support this event at shearithisrael.org/purim-breakfast.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

The Other Shearith Israel, South of the Sahara
THIS Saturday, March 12 | 8:00 pm | Levy Auditorium
Sponsored by the Shearith Israel League
Learn about Shearith Israel’s least known secret, a “daughter congregation” in the village of Putti, Uganda. Members of this African Jewish community call themselves Kahal Kadosh She’erit Yisra’el and use our prayer books. Shearith Israel member, Sjimon Den Hollander, will talk about his involvement with this unusual group, his trip to Uganda, and his close cooperation with rabbis Shlomo Riskin, Ari Greenspan, Ari Zivotofsky and others. We expect to host two members of the community who are currently in the United States, and to hear a few of their special melodies, straight from Putti’s unique liturgical tradition. Finally, we hope to hear a Jewish Ugandan musician, Rachman Nachman, perform his reggae style songs with a Jewish twist. Admission: $10 per person (cash or check at the door). All proceeds go to Putti Village Assistance Organization. Light refreshments served.

Freedom, Slavery, and God: The Many Faces of the Haggadah
A Discussion Between
Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik and Leon Wieseltier
Tuesday, March 29, 2016 | 7:00 pm
(Following 6:30 pm services)
No work of rabbinical literature has spoken to so many Jews in so many ways as the Haggadah. What are its secrets? Free and open to the public.
To register email strauscenter@yu.edu

Weekday Judaic Education
For details go to: shearithisrael.org/judaic-education

Sunday
◊ The Book of Kings | Rabbi Hidary | 8:40 am
◊ Saadia Gaon’s Book of Beliefs and Opinions | Sjimon den Hollander | 9:30 am

Monday
◊ Second Temple Jewish History | Rabbi Hidary | 7:00 pm
◊ Bet Midrash | Rabbi Hidary, Phil Hetz, Dr. Josh Eisen, Rabbi Ira Rohde, Meira Wokenfeld | 8:00 pm

Tuesday
◊ Rambam’s Mishneh Torah | Rabbi Hidary | 7:45 am
◊ Feasts and Fasts: The Festivals in Jewish Thought: A Class for Women | Rabbi Soloveichik | 9:00 am
◊ Talmud Class: Tractate Rosh Hashana and the Philosophy of Jewish Time | Rabbi Soloveichik | 8:00 pm | Spring semester sponsored by Gregory Bell.

Don’t let our stock run out.
Be a scotch or arak sponsor. To sponsor or contribute go to shearithisrael.org/scotch-and-arak-sponsorships

Please consider sponsoring a class. Go to: shearithisrael.org/sponsoraclass

Parnas Office Hours
Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org.

Our next public tour is:
Wednesday, April 13 at 11:00 am