



UPCOMING EVENTS

November

- 10th Shabbat for Tots, 5:30 p.m.
BYOSHD (Bring Your Own Shabbat Dinner), 6:00 p.m.
Erev Shabbat Worship with Kol Shirah, 7:00 p.m.
- 12th Sisterhood Hannukah Boutique
- 17th Yom Hodu Service (geared for 3rd-7th graders), 5:45 p.m.
followed by Erev Shabbat Worship
- 18th Yom Hodu (geared by K-2nd graders), 9:15 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

December

- 1st Dedication of Holocaust Scrolls from Hermanuv Mestec during Erev Shabbat Worship, 7:00 p.m.
- 2nd Shabbat Lunch following Services with Guest Speakers Michlean Amir and Mark Talisman, 12:30 p.m.
Camp Havdalah, 6:30 p.m.
- 3rd Speaker: Holocaust Survivor

NORTHERN VIRGINIA HEBREW CONGREGATION

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 Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation

 @nvhcreston



AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE BY CANTOR SUSAN CARO

For most of us, preparing for Thanksgiving and Chanukah in the weeks ahead bring up thoughts on gratitude. While we might make lists of what we are thankful for, we might miss the opportunity to consider how this recognition could shift how we experience our lives. There is a legend about the celebrated violinist Yitzhak Perlman having played through the performance of a concerto on only 3 strings. Knowing the physical obstacles to him getting on and off stage, when one of his violin strings snapped, it is told that he took a breath, signaled to the conductor to continue, modulating and adapting his playing to the challenge of the moment. This would be a most amazing feat, virtually impossible, were it really true. At the end of the performance, he remarked, “You know, sometimes it is the artist’s task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left.”

Now, this is not a real story, but I still find it an inspiring way to embody an attitude of gratitude. The Jewish character value [*middah*]

from Mussar practice called ‘*hakarat hatov*’ which literally means, “recognizing the good” conveys the understanding that having gratitude is a practice which means recognizing the good that is already yours. This is the ethos in the Mishnah, which asks (*Pirkei Avot* 4:1), “Who is rich?” and then answers, “Those who rejoice in their own lot.” Sometimes it is really easy to recognize the blessing in our lives; sometimes, recognizing the good is like ‘finding out how much music we can make with what we still have left.’

In truth, what we don’t have is limitless; when our attention is drawn to what lacks in our lives, we become dissatisfied. Could we instead look into the past and find a difficult situation from which something emerged for which we are grateful, or a present-day difficulty and imagine what it might contain for which we might eventually feel grateful?

Shabbat is a built-in mechanism for us to reset that gratitude meter. Each time we set aside time for joy, for reflection, for family and community, our attitude of gratitude flourishes, enabling us space to recognize the good in our lives. When we truly know our own blessings, we are better prepared to turn that blessing into action, to bring much needed healing and kindness to our world.



PRAYING WITH MY FEET... AND MY PLACARD BY RABBI EMERITA ROSALIND GOLD

You may know that the great Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said that when he walked with The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for racial justice he felt as though he were praying with his feet. I would never be so bold as to compare myself to Rabbi Heschel. But I do think of his words when I participate in the monthly Vigil against gun violence that takes place at the NRA headquarters in Fairfax.

The Vigil has been going on since the month after the killings at Sandy Hook Elementary School. On the 14th (the anniversary of Sandy Hook) of every month, from 10:00 a.m.-11 a.m., a varied group of individuals gather outside NRA headquarters on Waples Mill Road and stand silently. Some carry homemade placards, some choose from placards that are there, and some carry no placard at all. Some of the participants advocate for universal background checks and prohibitions against semi-automatic weapons, others advocate for closing the gun show loophole, and others are there to protest the stranglehold that the NRA has on Congress that prevents the passage of common sense gun safety legislation. Whatever our particular passion, all the participants in the Vigil believe that no life should be lost to gun violence.

My involvement started with a phone call from my neighbor, an active



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ISRAEL BY RABBI JESSICA WAINER

Growing up at summer camp, one of our rites of passage was learning a song for which the first few words are “*eretz Yisrael sheli yafa v’gam porachat...* My Israel is beautiful and blooming.” This song taught us about how the *chalutzim*, the pioneers, came in and built houses, planted trees, paved roads, built bridges and sang songs together. This song, while simplistic in nature, was the old way of teaching about Israel - the land of milk and honey. However, we know that in today’s world our views on Israel, and the ways in which we learn about Israel, must be much more nuanced. No longer are only thinking about the beauty of the land, but the challenges that the land, the people and the conflict brings forth.

In order for us to become educated about Israel, we must begin to understand the diverse narratives that weave through the myriads of people who live in and around Israel. By trying on new lenses, we will be able to see what was once invisible to us, opening ourselves up to interacting with new stories that impact our relationship to, and with, Israel.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH LEAD 2017 BY AVI HOLZMAN

After attending LEAD this year, I realized a lot about my surrounding community. At LEAD you are in your NFTY bubble, and by the end of the event, you know everyone and everyone knows you. Then you come back home, go to school and count down the days until you get to go to the next event. For me, NFTY is a great experience that allows people to have new experiences and be involved in their Jewish community. One experience that I took part in was Asefah which is basically NFTY Congress. This year, Asefah was a wholesome experience that visually displayed how to make laws and pass amendments to the NFTY

member of a local church. She and her husband had been attending for a few years and they thought I might find it rewarding to join them. They were right. Even though I know my presence outside the NRA building isn’t going to change anything, I continue to go because I feel I have to go; I have to make a statement; I have to end my silence. As my neighbor said: “I feel compelled by my religious tradition to stand there, to be there, to tell the people involved in gun violence that every life matters, every death matters.” I have to agree – perhaps now more than ever.

I miss an occasional 14th, and I struggle with attending when it falls on Shabbat. I never pretend to represent anyone or anything but myself (although the Reform Movement has come out strongly in support of measures to end gun violence). The Vigils are always peaceful and respectful; there is no shouting. The people inside the building ignore us. Sometimes folks driving by honk their horns and offer a friendly wave. And sometimes they offer other messages with their hands. But I have never felt frightened or intimidated. Sometimes I chat with other participants, but most times I am just ‘there’ because, as my neighbor said, I have to be.

Elie Wiesel wrote: “There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice but there must never be a time when we fail to protest it.” I feel there is too much at stake in this issue to fail to protest. You are welcome to join me.

When we learn, particularly about Israel, we should think not only of the encounter with the topics at hand, but the relationship itself that each of us has with Israel. This relationship may be in varying stages, and is something that will likely to continue to evolve for the rest of our lives. When we come together in a shared space for learning and dialogue, we can develop these relationships both amongst ourselves and with Israel.

This year, NVHC is working to provide many opportunities for our community to work on each of our respective relationships with Israel. This will be done through ongoing classes, like our monthly iEngage class on Sunday mornings, where we will explore the milestones and their meanings. We will do a more intensive dive into the conflicts of Israel during our Israel Day of Learning on December 10th. And together we will explore the land of Israel during our congregational trip to Israel. Together, we will engage in dialogue and learning about all facets of Israel. Together, we will learn about the nuances of the land, state and people of Israel. Together, we will strive to continue building our relationships to the ever-changing Israel.

constitution. This year, Asefah happened to be right after the main leadership program of the weekend. Asefah is just one experience that happens once a year, yet at every NFTY event there is a new focus of the weekend. Even though this past LEAD was my first-ever NFTY event, I already feel like a piece of the NFTY-MAR puzzle. This is a level of inclusiveness that is unmatched by any other group of people in my life. When I got back to school, I started to notice social cliques a lot more. I also noticed that by going to LEAD, I had a deeper understanding than most kids in my classes. I was also able to go on for hours and hours talking about NFTY. Now, as I gear up for the next event, I know what to expect and what kind of programs it will include.



HONORING OUR HOLOCAUST SCROLL AND REMEMBERING HERMANUV MESTEC

BY RABBI MICHAEL G. HOLZMAN

We are living in a time of “fake news,” where every piece of information is questioned or twisted to fit an agenda or propaganda. In a world without authoritative sources of information, eventually knowledge loses power. This is how tyranny takes root.

We know this because we have experienced it. It is a story as old as the Pharaoh who “did not know Joseph” and told his people that the Jews might join with enemies to rise up against Egypt. Where did he get this information? That did not matter. Centuries of peaceful loyalty to Egypt no longer mattered, and the Jews were enslaved. That is why Jews venerate the Torah. We know the authority of a text prevents the abuses of human power. When we study Torah as individuals, it demands limits on our own power to be greedy, selfish or arrogant. When we adhere to Torah as a community, it gives us the moral imperative to oppose those who would abuse the poor, the weak, or the stranger. Our study of text and the way we respect texts are at the core of the Jewish mission of justice.

What greater symbol of this mission could we have at NVHC than our Czech Torah scroll, which survived the Holocaust? It came from the Jewish community of Hermanuv Mestec, a small town 54 miles east of Prague. Like many small towns throughout pre-war Bohemia and Moravia, it hosted a dying Jewish community with a small synagogue. As the war approached, the community dwindled further until it was liquidated by the Nazis. The Torah scrolls and other Jewish artifacts were removed from the community and taken to Prague. This was happening all over the countryside.

In Prague the scrolls and other objects were tagged, inventoried, and protected. The Jewish Religious Community of Prague convinced the German authorities to allow the Jewish ritual items to remain. The curators of the closed Prague Jewish Museum guarded the artifacts and Torahs zealously even with the threat of the Jews’ eventual deportation to Auschwitz hanging over them. A small group of survivors tried to re-establish the Jewish community after the war, but this collapsed after the Communist takeover in 1948.

The scrolls were removed to a small synagogue outside Prague until 1964, when the Westminster Synagogue received funding from an English businessman to buy 1,564 scrolls from the Czech inventory and keep them in trust. They soon began loaning them to synagogues all over the world. NVHC acquired our scroll in August 1970, and it has served us well ever since.

This object is an amazing testimony to our survival as a people and a culture. Although the horrible fires in Northern California destroyed a Jewish summer camp, URJ Camp Newman, one source of comfort has been the survival of the camp’s Torah scrolls. Similarly, the Jewish community of the US Virgin Islands was relieved to learn that its Torah scrolls had survived unscathed despite the widespread damage caused by Hurricane Maria. In the same way, the 1,564 scrolls lovingly preserved by Czech Jews facing a much more horrible fate give us comfort that we can survive and thrive beyond those who would destroy us.

The Nazis were able to do what they did because they turned information into a plaything. At the heart of their power was their ability to create propaganda that motivated Germans to do horrific things, to conquer other nations, and to endure terrible hardships. But their lies could not endure in the face of the truth that Torah represents. The truth of a people that believes all human beings are created in the image of God (*Genesis* 1:26-27). The truth of a people that teaches its children to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (*Leviticus* 19:18). The truth of a people that could never do what the Nazis did because the Torah demands that we “Love the stranger, because you were once strangers in the land of Egypt” (*Deuteronomy* 10:19). These are imperatives from our text, not “fake news” that can be manipulated or ignored. That is what preserves us as a people. We will honor this scroll from Hermanuv Mestec and the tradition it represents during the weekend of December 1-3 (see the events section) because this is the 75th anniversary of the liquidation of the Jewish community of Hermanuv Mestec. Please join us for all or part of the weekend to honor the memory of Czech Jewry and to honor the lesson we learn from the survival of this scroll.

HERMANUV MESTEC MEMORIAL WEEKEND

Friday Evening, December 1st: A special reading from the Czech scroll, along with a sample of Czech Jewish music from Kol Shirah and other music honoring the victims of the Holocaust.

Saturday, December 2nd, during services: The b’nai mitzvah will read from the scroll.

Saturday, December 2nd — Shabbat lunch following services:

Two guest speakers in the multi-purpose room:
Michlean Amir was born to a Czech family that fled to Western Europe in 1938. After the war they returned home but left following the Communist takeover in 1948 to live in Israel. Michlean Amir eventually worked at the Holocaust Museum and donated a scroll from Hermanuv Mestec to Beth El in Bethesda.
Mark Talisman was active in the early years of the Holocaust Museum, worked closely with the Memorial Scrolls Trust in London, and organized the Smithsonian’s Precious Legacy exhibit of treasures from the Czech State Jewish Museum.

Sunday, December 3rd: Programming about the scroll and what it represents for students in our fifth and sixth grades.

AN NVHC MEMORY

BY DEENA SORTLAND

I joined NVHC when we came to Reston in 1968, and joined the Choir a year later. Robin, Marylin and Mitch were already there. I came in with Lies, Sy, Hank and others.

We grew like gangbusters! We went from strength to strength as our congregation grew. Carol Fram came in to lead the Choir. Carol switched me from Alto to Soprano. Eventually, I was asked to be the Cantorial Soloist. Previously, I taught music to the children in Religious School.

My two children, Stefan and Natanya, were Bar-Bat Mitzvahed. With their example, I decided to become an adult Bat-Mitzvah. Rabbi Rosalind Gold taught three of us women together. What a moving experience! The Rabbi was a wonderful role model.

I am happy to see how the congregation has grown and flourished. My only regret is the failure to change the name of NVHC to Congregation Etz Chayim. Shalom

NVHC SILVER LINE/JCCNV PROGRAM

GENETIC DISEASES IN PEOPLE OF JEWISH HERITAGE

Wednesday, November 15th, 10:30 a.m.-noon

Presented by Dr. Ozlem Goker-Alpan, MD, president and chief medical officer at the Center for Clinical Trials at O&O Alpan, LLC and the director of the Lysosomal Diseases Research and Treatment Unit
 This program and interactive discussion will focus on Jewish heritage and genetic disease, Inheritance pattern and genetic diseases, common genetic diseases among the Jewish population, and the importance of genetic screening and counseling. A kosher style lunch at NVHC will follow the program and is sponsored by US Genetic Diseases Franchise.

Please RSVP to Roberta Sherman at shermansrs1@aol.com no later than November 8 in order to be included in the lunch count.

Fee: \$5

SOCIAL ACTION

FOREST EDGE FOOD PACKING PROGRAM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF 3RD GRADER REGHAN PETERSON

Karin Altshuler recently interviewed her daughter, 3rd grader Reghan Peterson, about Reghan’s involvement in the Forest Edge Food Packing Program:

Karin: Why are you involved in the Forest Edge food packing program?

Reghan: I like it because it is fun and it involves others. It is a way to help the poor people and because I go to Sunday School there (NVHC). Also, we are doing good deeds, also known as mitzvahs.

Karin: Why is it important for others to be involved?

Reghan: Because if only one person did it, it would take such a long time to finish. So we work together so we can get it done quickly.

Karin: How does this program help our community?

Reghan: It gives them (the students at Forest Edge Elementary) free food so they will not starve on the weekends.

SOCIAL ACTION

BACK TO SCHOOL MEANS HELPING FOREST EDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Well, it’s back to school time again! Students at Forest Edge ES and others around the County are sitting down in cafeterias and opening their new superhero and princess lunchboxes excited to show them, as well as what they brought for lunch, to their tablemates. However, some kids don’t have lunchboxes at all, because their parents cannot afford to fill them. Luckily, these students get their lunches via the Fairfax County Free and Reduced Lunch program which fills the food void during the school week. The obvious question is how do these students get food on the weekends? The answer; donations from the community.

Alison Behar and Nicole Holzman lead a food packaging program which provides weekend food for 225 of Forest Edge’s free and reduced meal eligible students. These packages are assembled twice a month during the school year; once by Tamid students, and once by a group of adults and children one Sunday per month after Kehilat

Limmud. Forest Edge families sign up to receive these packages of food for their children, which contain items such as milk, juice, canned tuna, mac ‘n’ cheese, dried fruit, granola bars, peanut butter or cheese filled snack crackers, popcorn and oatmeal.

We would love for you to join us in support of this program. It’s easy and a great way to give back to the community in which we live/ worship. Donate money, food and/or time.

Think you don’t have the time? Packing takes no more than an hour, and it’s conveniently timed to begin right after KL on Sunday. We’re a friendly group and love to see new participants! Everyone can help. It’s a great family activity. We’ve had kids as young as three help pack food. Upcoming Sunday packing dates are November 12th and December 3rd.

Please make a commitment this year to help this worthwhile “families helping families” initiative. Have questions? Please email Alison at alison.behar@gmail.com.

LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

Submit your life-cycle events by phone to 703-437-7733, or email to mozelle@nvhcreston.org.

MAZEL TOV

To proud parents, Victor Ronin and Olena Bilyk, on the birth of their son, Danila Gabriel Ronin, born March 28, 2017.

To proud grandparents, Neil and Deb Meland, on the birth of their grandson, Jordan Edwin Pollack, born on July 19th to parents Cheryl and Kevin Pollack.

B’NAI MITZVAH

NOVEMBER

BAT MITZVAH

Robin Jenna Hess – November 12th

Robin is a “blanketeer” making new handmade fleece blankets for Project Linus. Project Linus provides love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized or otherwise in need of a new homemade blanket. Robin also taught school children and helped improve school grounds during her school sponsored community service trip to Belize.

DECEMBER

BAT MITZVAH

Ella Bishop – December 2nd

Ella will be volunteering at Mulford Riding School on behalf of the Girl Scouts of America and she will be assisting with instructing Girl Scouts.

BAT MITZVAH

Lindsay Greenspan – December 2nd

For her Mitzvah project, Lindsay will be making and donating no sew fleece blankets to INOVA Children’s Hospital.

BAR MITZVAH

Ethan Piccus – December 16th

Ethan is providing snack packs every month to Cornerstones for hungry kids in our area.

A Warm Welcome to New Members

We extend a warm welcome to these NVHC newcomers who have recently become part of our family. Please add their information to your membership directory, and be sure to make them feel at home when you meet them.

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HIGH HOLY DAYS

We want to say, "Thank you!" to the High Holy Days volunteers who helped ensure the flow of congregants and guests to and from services.

HIGH HOLY DAYS APPEAL 2017

Our sincere gratitude goes to the following contributors, who made donations to our High Holy Day Appeal:

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WHAT'S BREWING?



Come to a member-hosted coffee to:

- Drink a cup-a-joe (or tea)
- Have a sweet nosh
- Get to know NVHC members in your area
- Participate in a facilitated discussion about our community's future

NVHC Coffee Connections will take place between November and March with invitations sent out throughout November – February. Watch your inbox for your invitation. We're hoping that every member family attends a coffee by March. Questions? Email Nell Hirsch at nellsings@gmail.com