

The Glance

NVHC's Quarterly Magazine

September | 2023

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Feeling Lost on the High Holy Days
- Life-Cycle Events
- New Members
- The Spiritual Journey of the High Holy Days
- To Fast or Not To Fast?– Making Meaning from our Fast
- Women of NVHC - Join Us for Another Great Year!
- Game Nights: How a Group of 30-Somethings Ignited a New NVHC Tradition
- Social Action Committee - NVHC Change – Feeding the Hungry
- Tzedakah

SEE INSIDE
High Holy Day
Information



CONTENTS



3
Feeling Lost on the
High Holy Days

5
Life-Cycle Events

5
New Members

6
The Spiritual Journey of
the High Holy Days

7
To Fast or Not To Fast?
– Making Meaning from
our Fast

8
High Holy Days

11
Women of NVHC - Join
Us for Another Great Year!

12
Game Nights: How a
Group of 30-Somethings
Ignited a New NVHC
Tradition

14
Social Action
Committee - NVHC
Change – Feeding the
Hungry

16
Tzedakah



Feeling Lost on the High Holy Days

By Rabbi Michael Holzman

For a lot of Jews the High Holy Days can feel overwhelming. The crowds, the Hebrew, the length of the services, the unfamiliar words and music, the dress, and the themes can all seem big, formal and imposing. Some of this is by design, but much of it is a misunderstanding. So I'd like to offer our community a decoder ring in advance of this year's Days of Awe. This is not meant to be a comprehensive, profound theological explanation of each ritual symbol and liturgical message, or a how-to guide for the total newcomer. Rather, I want to point out some key elements that might elevate your experience this year.

Give me the overview

Here it is: We only get to live once! The whole season is designed to focus us on the miracle of being alive, and the limited time we get before death. Our job is to make our time count!

What are these days called?

Most commonly the first holiday is Rosh Hashanah ("Head of the Year") and the second is Yom Kippur (literally "Day of Wiping Clean," or more commonly "Day of Atonement"). Together they are called the *Yamim Nora'im* ("Days of Awe"). The days between the two holidays are called the *Aseret Yamei Teshuvah* ("10 Days of Repentance"), but the most common name for the whole package is High Holy Days. Strangely, the words Rosh Hashanah do not appear in

the Torah, where the day is called *Yom Teruah* ("Day of the Trumpet Blast").

Was there something before Rosh Hashanah that I missed?

Actually, the season traditionally starts a month earlier, so if Rosh Hashanah is on the 1st of the Hebrew month of *Tishrei*, the season starts on the 1st of Elul. In that period, some Jews spend time going over their behavior from the past year, preparing the soul for the work of change.

One more thing: to be extra prepared, a bunch of Jews started adding some extra prayers called S'lichot late at night after the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah (except in cases when Rosh Hashanah is on a Monday or a Tuesday, then S'lichot (or Selichot) is bumped a week early—by the way, neither Rosh Hashanah nor Yom Kippur can fall on a Sunday). Therefore, many synagogues like NVHC have a S'lichot service where they formally begin the season. Songs familiar from the holidays are sung, and the Torah covers are changed over to their High Holy Day whites.

I keep hearing about this Book of Life? What is it?

One of the oldest ideas in human history is the concept of a divine book recording human deeds and determining human fates. From the ancient Epic of Gilgamesh, to the modern Santa Claus list of naughty and nice, humans have always imagined that someone is keeping track of our rights and

wrongs. During the High Holy Days this concept becomes a central metaphor, especially during the *Unetane Tokef* prayer where we say “On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed . . . “ and then list off a wide range of positive and negative possible outcomes for the coming year.

As Rabbi Yael Ridberg taught me once, we all must face the future knowing that a lot of things are arbitrary. The world is out of our control. On Rosh Hashanah we can imagine that we ask God to help us set a direction for the year to come (writing us in an itinerary book of sorts), and we have 10 days to think about that destination before we commit to it with our prayers on Yom Kippur (accepting a deal that’s signed, SEALED, and delivered). This two part action, agreeing to change and then committing to it, sits at the center of the season. And when we commit to it, we agree to endure all the potential events that might come our way—good or bad—just like a big trip.

Why are the prayers so long, dramatic, and intimidating?

The big concept here is sovereignty, and the Hebrew word to know is *malchuyot*, or *Melech*, or *Malkeinu* (as in *Avinu Malkeinu*, “Our Father, Our King”—a song we sing at every single service). While the Hebrew uses masculine words and the image of a male king on a throne, the concept has no gender. It is meant to impose upon us a power that is not us. In the Jewish season when we carefully consider the morality of our deeds, having an external power holds us accountable. So everything about the days, the music, the words, the books themselves, the dress code, the standing, the size of the crowds, the fact that the clergy wear robes and sit on the *bimah*, is meant to convey the power that a sovereign has over us. Frankly, all year long I find God most clearly in my human relationships, in the connections I experience in laughter and love, learning and collaboration, grief and fear, aspiration and hope. My God is a relational God, which is why for most of the year, I prefer to pray on a low *bimah* with the NVHC community around me. But for a couple days a year, my soul needs an external force over me, not with me.

What should I wear?

Given the focus on life and death, we should not be surprised that the traditional garment for a Jewish man is a *kittel*, a white robe that eventually becomes one’s burial shroud. (Honestly, I’m not sure what women are traditionally buried in.) Over time, this has morphed into the more inclusive (and less morbid) custom of generally wearing white during the season. However, at NVHC, expect people to be dressed in formal attire, white or not. The themes of the season are demanding, and thus people generally opt for their most respectful clothing.

What about food?

As I’ll mention later, Rosh Hashanah has that greeting *l’shanah tovah u’metukah* (“For a Good and Sweet Year”) - so this is a dessert holiday. In Europe and North America, apples are rich and luscious at this time, and we add honey to increase that sweetness as much as possible. Honey is also part of the fertility of plants and pollinators, which connects to another big theme of Rosh Hashanah—birth (traditional readings include the miracle births of Isaac and Samuel). Along with that circle of life concept comes round challot (challahs), and to raise the sweetness, expect some raisins, or even marzipan in the challah! The pre-Yom Kippur dinner is usually anything that will hold a person over through the fast. If you have recipes for Yom Kippur lunch, I don’t want to know. Break fast traditions vary, but cold salads and bagels (again round) are common. If you are hosting, you may want a pot of coffee around for those having a caffeine headache.

“

Fasting is not an act of spiritual heroism. It is a way to elevate the seriousness of our morality over the regular priorities of our mortality.

”

Should I fast?

Fasting is meant to spiritually elevate the day. Torah tells us on Yom Kippur to afflict ourselves, and the rabbis add to that prohibitions on things that provide pleasure (adornment, excessive soaps, shampoos or lotions, fancy leather-soled shoes, sex). The goal is to focus the mind on the work of change. The afflictions are understood to be vanities we do as distractions in life. Judaism is not opposed to distractions, but if they block us from the more important work on this important day, that’s a problem. Equally problematic is medical suffering. If fasting might even, possibly, maybe, perhaps cause a medical problem, then DON’T FAST. This is true for pregnant people, for the elderly, the very young, or anyone with a medical condition. Fasting is not an act of spiritual heroism. It is a way to elevate the seriousness of our morality over the regular priorities of our mortality.

What Comes Next?

Sukkot comes only five days after Yom Kippur, and the custom is to go home after Neilah and immediately drive

the first nail into your Sukkah poles (unless yours are metal or pvc). Sukkot is our season of joy, celebrated with socializing outside, drinking wine, and inviting guests over. Sukkot has special greetings, is seven days long and has a separate holiday for its closing, Shmini Atzeret (some diaspora Jews make that 8+1 days). At the end of these seven (or 8+1) days is Simchat Torah, the raucous celebration of rolling the Torah back to the beginning. That makes for a full season of four major Jewish holidays in 23 days. So don't go away after Yom Kippur, as there's much joy yet to be found at NVHC. And if you get tired, don't worry, the next holiday is not until Chanukah! 🕯️

What are people saying to me? Here's the Greeting Glossary

For Rosh Hashanah

Lshana tova: "For a good year," sometimes shortened to just *shana tova*, "Good year."

Lshana tova u'metukah: "For a good and sweet year"

Lshana tova tikateivu: "May you be written for a good year (in the Book of Life)"

For Yom Kippur

(It would be weird to say: "Happy Day of Atonement!" so this gets complicated)

"Have an easy fast": this is an attempt to be polite and kind, but, personally, I really dislike this greeting. The fast is not supposed to be easy, because change is supposed to be hard, if it matters.

Gamar chatima tovah: "May you be sealed well in the end (in the Book of Life)"

All Purpose Greetings

Gud yontif: Yiddish which literally means "Good Good Day" or more idiomatically, "Happy Holiday." If you are new to all of this, remember *gud yontif* because you can use it for any Jewish holiday (except Shabbat, for that Yiddish offers "*gud Shabbes*" in place of Shabbat Shalom).

Chag Sameach: Hebrew for "Happy Holiday," which works for Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, Simchat Torah and all other Jewish holidays (not quite Chanukah or Purim, because they are not technically *Chag*, which refers only to holidays mentioned in the Torah).

For the middle days of Sukkot

Moadim lsimcha: "May this be a happy season for you!" And the proper response is:

Chagim u'zmanim l'sason: "Holidays and times for joy!"

LIFE-CYCLE EVENTS

CONDOLENCES

To Kevin Mitchell, on the death of his cousin, Bruce Alexander

To Isabel Einzig, on the death of her sister-in-law, Risa Einzig Pyles

To Richard Ranard, on the death of his father, Elliot David Ranard

To Betsy Arons, on the death of her husband, Andrew Goodman

To Nevin Reynolds, on the death of his mother, Eva Colleen Reynolds

To Elizabeth Lacher, on the death of her nephew, Samuel Robert Frost Coen

To Robert Stein, on the death of his mother, Patricia Stein

To Lisa Folb, on the death of her husband, Eric Eldridge

To Paul Holtberg, on the death of his wife, Paulette Peltz

To Andy Lacher, on the death of his cousin, Eugene Fine

Submit your life-cycle events by phone to:

703-437-7733, or Email to: mozelle@nvhcreston.org

NEW MEMBERS

A Warm Welcome to New Members

We extend a warm welcome to these NVHC newcomers who have recently become part of our family. Please be sure to make them feel at home when you meet them!

Ronan Bridges and Gian Tigreros

Jacqueline Cole

Jessica Gladstone

Kenneth and Esta Gladstone

Debra Goodman-Herman and Salo Herman

David Jacobstein and Eleonora Ibrani

Andrea and Dustin Lambert

Kathianne Smith

Steven Stoller

Eric and Lindsey Waldman

The Spiritual Journey of the High Holy Days

By Cantor Susan Caro

Summer is a time for travel. We plan places to go and people to see, taking time away from our regular routines. Some prepare for a trip well in advance, making lists for packing, reading about the destination, even learning some phrases in the local language, and searching for the most interesting sights and restaurants. Some engage a travel agent to do all that planning, hiring a guide to follow for some part or the entirety of the trip. Others book tickets and wing it, open to what will come.

The spiritual journey of our High Holy Days is one we can either prepare for or take as an unknown to be experienced. The path is different for each of us. Some of us simply experience these holy days on their own; for others, there will be various amounts of preparation involved: from personal reflection and prayer to practicing music, to journaling or writing sermons, to planning family time which often involves cooking and cleaning. We do it over and over each year, for the annual cycle is part of the journey of a lifetime. With practice, we don't attain perfection, but we can get better at recognizing this recurring human experience. Each year, we have another opportunity to choose to prepare more consciously.

During the Hebrew month of Elul, leading up to Rosh Hashanah, we might begin to notice those things that we've been doing that aren't so productive. We could embrace greater self-awareness. We could notice all the time we spend preparing and planning like crazy for every detail of our over-packed schedules, our professional lives, our financial well-being, or our physical health. Or we could instead notice that the things that really shape us and make us who we are mostly those things that we didn't or couldn't prepare for, like a serious illness, the loss of a loved one, the failure of a relationship, the birth of a child (if you think you can prepare for that, hah!), or falling in love. We could recognize things and situations that we are trying to control and begin to mindfully let go of that which we no longer need. The *shofar* sounding one *tekiyah* each day during the month of Elul is a literal wake-up call to live our best life.


Rosh Hashanah imagines that the Gates of Forgiveness are open, suggesting extraordinary access to God's nearness so that a time of transformation is really possible. Its customs and symbols include the hearing of the *shofar's* call to attention and intention, paired with eating a special round and sweet challah which symbolizes a circle of life and joy in sweetness. This calls us to embrace both happiness and humility.

On Yom Kippur we are meant to confront our own mortality; we intone liturgy that asks hard questions, and we partake of rituals (like fasting) to disconnect from everything we know except the prayerful examination of our souls. We speak and sing of our sins, of our need for forgiveness, and of our desire to start again with a clean slate. During the closing *Neilah* service, our tradition gives us one more determined moment to repent. There is an exhausted urgency in that moment – a euphoria perhaps of equal parts low blood sugar and spiritual need.

The uniqueness and awe of these sacred days are echoed in special sounds and melodies that we hear once a year. We hear them in *Bar'chu*, *Sh'ma*, *Mi Chamocha*, the *Amidah*, in *Avinu Malkeinu*, *Ashamnu*, *Kol Nidrei*, and more. For either a little review, anticipatory listening or first-time learning, please visit www.nvhcreston.org/high-holy-day-melodies to listen to some of these special High Holy Day melodies. This special way we sing "Amen" or these special melodies for this time of year are meant to evoke a very different experience of prayer from Shabbat. These special melodies connect us to ages past, stirring awe and wonder for the mysteries of the universe, remembrance for lives lived and lost, and devotion to our people and to God.

The High Holy Days provide an experiential map of the journey that our soul is making throughout life. It might feel overwhelming to consider what we feel is being asked of us; the preparation for the services and even the services themselves might make a normally capable person feel a bit incompetent. But our souls – the essence of who we are – are making their way through life, whether we pay attention to them or not.

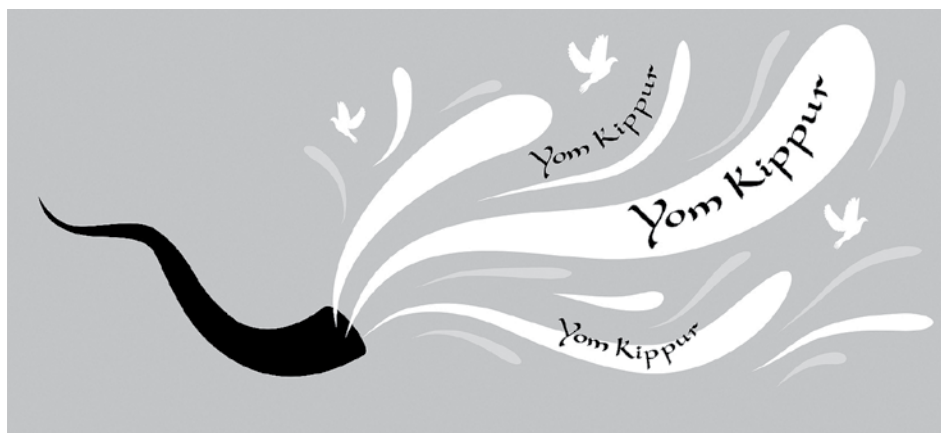
So just breathe – because this map of our prayers and rituals is meant to show us the way, if we let it: the way from fear to acceptance, from confusion to clarity, from doubt to belief, and from complacency to awe. The promise of a New Year on Rosh Hashanah can bring hope for a new day; the ritual of *Tashlich* helps us to cast away that which no longer serves us or that which drags us down. We have words, music, and time on Yom Kippur to navigate through the Gates of Forgiveness.

Through our singing and praying, reflection and action, we are carried by one another in the task of *teshuvah*. We can invite – even beg – God to carry our troubles with us until we can carry them ourselves. May this sacred journey mindfully reveal to ourselves who we really are and what we still need to do so that we can turn back toward our best selves - the Divine image of holiness in us - such that our actions truly repair and redeem the world for us and all of humanity. 

To Fast or Not To Fast? – Making Meaning from our Fast

By Rabbi Ashley Barrett

As we prepare for the High Holy Days, we inevitably spend some time thinking about the fast on Yom Kippur. We wrestle with what that fast will look like each new year. The fast is one singular component of Yom Kippur and the entire lived experience of the *chagim*. It serves a purpose and helps us make meaning of Yom Kippur. However, we do not easily understand that meaning just by skipping a few meals. The fast on Yom Kippur challenges each person to intentionally opt-in, or out, of the practice.



This year as I begin wrestling with this practice, allow me to share some of what I'm wrestling with as I set my intention this season. We learn about early practices in the Torah from the book of Leviticus. Chapter 16 describes the first iteration of the Yom Kippur rituals: "And this shall be to you a law for all time, in the seventh month you shall practice self-denial, and you shall do no manner of work" (Lev 16:29). Self-denial is a difficult phrase to translate, understand, and put into practice. Only in later rabbinic texts does this phrase morph into the practice of fasting most commonly thought of in connection to Yom Kippur today.

What intention can we set in order to heed this instruction to practice self-denial? What else could that look like besides abstaining from food and drink? What is the essence of this command? The Hebrew text can suggest additional ways to connect to Yom Kippur. The Hebrew says "*t'anu et nafshotechem*." We often place emphasis on the verb *t'anu*; as Jews, we connect to our faith through our actions (which themselves represent that connection), so we see the meaning of *t'anu* as to deny or afflict. The end of

the phrase – *nafshotechem* - means our souls. Whatever it is exactly that we do on Yom Kippur must impact our souls. The experience is intended to transform our whole beings, but not exclusively our physical beings.

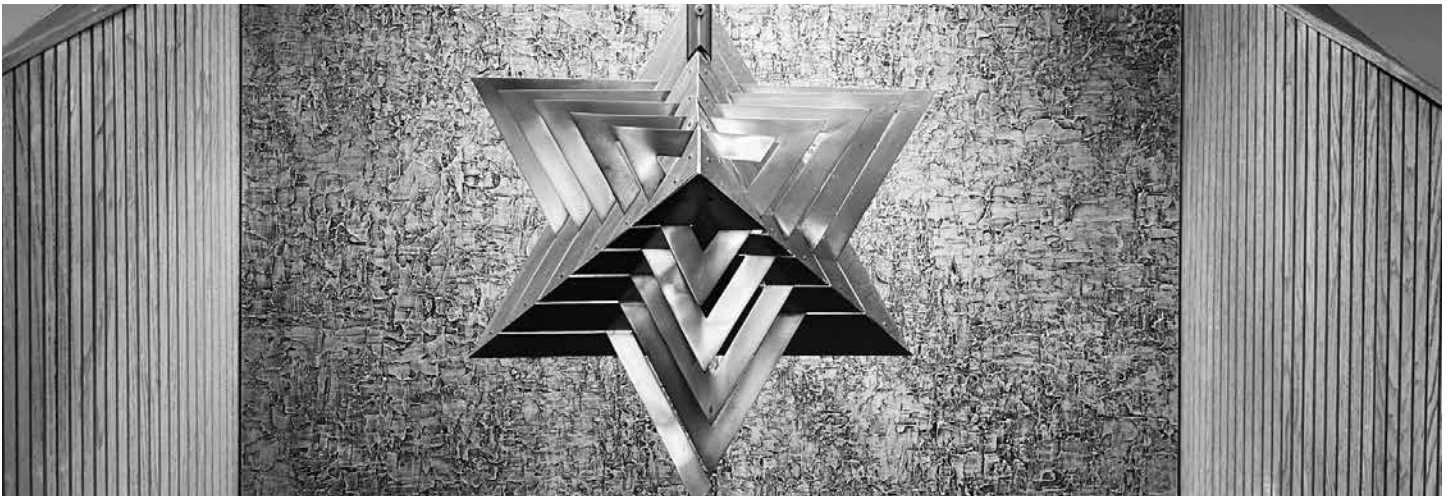
As part of my preparation this year, I'm thinking deeply about what I can deny my soul, not just my physical being, to help me fully experience the liturgy and rites of Yom Kippur. I'm thinking about what pleasures in life I can remove from my day-to-day leading up to the Holy Days in order to feel

the impact on my soul. This is the time of reflection and reevaluation. What is a distraction? How can my distractions help me on this spiritual journey by denying myself those things? Perhaps fasting is not a practice that is feasible for you this year. Consider a mindful deprivation of something else that may distract you from the greater spiritual arc of Yom Kippur.

As you are readying yourself for Yom Kippur, perhaps wrestling with what

fast practice you will have on Yom Kippur, I want to direct you to our *machzor Mishkan HaNefesh*. At the very beginning of the Yom Kippur liturgy (pgs. 10-11), we find two blessings. One blessing is for those who eat during Yom Kippur, while the other blessing begins the fast. Both blessings exist in our *machzor* in support of all practices reflected in our community. These blessings articulate a sense that the action (either fasting or mindful eating) is dedicated to a specific purpose. Consider writing down your own purpose for Yom Kippur this year. What do you hope to gain when you mindfully take something away? This year, simply try to put into words what you are seeking, what changes are you dedicating your practice in service of.

Yom Kippur instructs us to engage with this practice of self-denial during our repentance so that we may move forward into the new year and seek God in life. For this reason, instead of wishing each other an easy or short fast this season, let us inspire each other to have a meaningful day of intention-setting through whatever self-denial your soul needs. 🕯



We look forward to welcoming everyone for the High Holy Days! We hope you find this journey through Elul and the High Holy Days full of meaning, inspiration, and growth.

ELUL

The Hebrew month of Elul is referred to as “the month of repentance,” “the month of mercy,” and “the month of forgiveness.” Elul follows the months of Tammuz and Av, months noted for Torah stories about the sins of Israel — the sin of the Golden Calf in Tammuz, and the sin of the faithless spies in Av — and for two historical tragedies in Jewish history— the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem on the 17th of Tammuz, and the destructions of both Temples on the 9th of Av.

In Elul, we can take time to prepare ourselves for the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which occur in the ensuing month of Tishrei. During this time, we can reflect about our process of *teshuvah*: the returning, renewing, repenting that we each need to do for the past year in preparation for the coming year. We can look at our actions, review our lives, engage in meaningful discernment, and begin to apologize to those we have wronged, including ourselves.

Our tradition calls this process *cheshbon hanefesh*, an accounting of the soul. We strive to elevate the spirituality in our lives, acknowledging our shortcomings and fragility so that we can grow. This year, we are exploring Elul through the lens of a number of Hasidic tales, whose moral, spiritual, and ethical metaphors can be a guide for us in our human experiences. We will share a video each week beginning August 17th – the first day of Elul – containing a story and some ideas for contemplation from that story to inspire and stir you toward meaningful personal contemplation and action.

These videos will be sent via email and posted on our High Holy Day page (www.nvhcreston.org/high-holy-days-5784).

SELICHOT

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

Dinner - 6:00pm, Service - 7:00pm

The whole month of Elul that precedes the holidays is a time of soul-searching and reflection to prepare oneself spiritually. Selichot, meaning “forgiveness,” is the first service of this holy day season dedicated to communal prayers of repentance and forgiveness.

We will begin with a dinner, followed by a special service during which we will roll our Torah scroll book by book to set it for our Rosh Hashanah Torah reading. We’ve never done something like this before as part of this service, and we are excited to add a meaningful ritual to our service to help in our spiritual preparations.

The cost for dinner is \$10 per person and reservations are required.

Go to <https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/selichot-dinner-2023> or scan the QR code to make your reservation.



ROSH HASHANAH & YOM KIPPUR

Rosh Hashanah

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

8:00pm – Erev Rosh Hashanah
Service In Sanctuary and online

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

9:00am – Young Family Service
(suggested through 2nd grade)
In the Tent

10:30am – Morning Service
In Sanctuary and online

3:00pm – Shofar Sounding
In person

4:00pm – Tashlich
In person at Lake Fairfax Park

Yom Kippur

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

8:00pm – Kol Nidre
In Sanctuary and online

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

9:00am – Young Family Service
(suggested through 2nd grade)
In the Tent

10:30am – Morning Service
In Sanctuary and online

1:45pm – Afternoon Study
In Person

3:30pm – Afternoon Service
In Sanctuary and online

5:00pm – Yizkor
In Sanctuary and online

6:00pm – Neilah
In Sanctuary and online

Experiences for Older Kids

Like last year, we invite children to join their families in the sanctuary for services. Together as one multigenerational *kehila* (community), we will move through the liturgy of our *Machzor* (High Holy Day prayerbook). We will again offer a companion *Machzor* for children, where they will find guiding reflection questions, poems, and prayers that align with *Mishkan HaNefesh*. Additionally, during the morning worship for both *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, children will have the opportunity to move to the Multi-Purpose Room to engage in hands-on projects around the themes of the holidays. It's a chance for kids to join with friends and classmates to engage in the spiritual work of the High Holy Day season.

IMPORTANT LINKS

Go to www.nvhcreston.org/high-holy-days-5784 or use the QR codes below to register for tickets, purchase prayerbooks, sign up to volunteer, and more.

Please note: you will need to have completed your Annual Giving Pledge to be able to register for High Holy Day services.

Member Registration

To register, go to
<https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/high-holy-day-registration-5784>



Guest Registration

To register a guest, go to
<https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/high-holy-day-guest-registration-5784>



Volunteering

To do a mitzvah and help out with the High Holy Days, go to:
<https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/high-holy-day-volunteers-5784>



Yizkor Memorial Book

To have your loved one's name listed in the Yizkor Memorial Book, go to
<https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/yizkor-memorial-book-name-form-5784>



Selichot Dinner

To RSVP for Selichot dinner, go to:
<https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/selichot-dinner-2023>



Mishkan HaNefesh

To order a copy of Mishkan HaNefesh, our High Holy Day machzor, go to:
<https://nvhc.shulcloud.com/form/mishkan-hanefesh-order-form-5784>



Join Us for Another Great Year!

By Peggy Nelson



The Women of NVHC are excited to kick off another year of creating connections and memories with all our members!

We welcome and encourage all the women of NVHC to join our vibrant and energetic group. We think the connections you make and the support that you receive at NVHC will be the steadfast backing that we all need to feel a sense of warmth, acceptance, and belonging, as well as support us through all the ups and downs of life.

The dictionary defines “support” as a “thing that bears the weight of something and keeps it upright.” We think that is what Women of NVHC can offer to you. We want Women of NVHC to be a place where friends become family. We are a community, a place to feel like you belong. A place to gather and share food, laugh and talk, and a place to catch you when you need to cry. We can be all these things, and we want you to join us. With all of us, we will continue to help make NVHC a thriving, giving, warm, and friendly place.

Our new Board was installed at our end of year brunch on June 11. We had a tremendous turnout for this great event! The event, the food, the games, and the networking were a huge success. We are planning more exciting events for the coming year, and we want you to be a part of our gatherings.

Our membership drive kicked off in August, but we welcome new members throughout the year. Whether you are new to the community or a long-time resident, we welcome you to join us. We are an inclusive community for all NVHC women – married, partnered, single, divorced, or widowed – with or without children – Jewish and non-Jewish – we want to welcome you all to our thriving group! We hope you’ll take advantage of all we have to offer and become an integral part of our vibrant and supportive community. And, if you are a new NVHC member, we welcome you with one year of free membership to Women of NVHC!

We invite all of you to join us to further our mission of promoting camaraderie, esprit de corps, spirituality, and participation in *tikkun olam*. We support one another, our temple, and our extended community through a variety of activities, and with acts of loving kindness. We are always looking for innovative ways to offer opportunities and events that will

encourage celebrating, learning, and giving to all women of NVHC. Please do not hesitate to contact me with an idea, an interest, or a new way to make connections; we welcome your thoughts and help in developing new opportunities. Now is the time to join us and become a part of our community.

If you join us as a member this year you will receive our weekly emails on Monday mornings and learn about our activities. We will have our usual programs, in addition to a variety of special activities and events. Here is a sample of programs:

- A summer Museum Tour to visit the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Exhibit
- Chocolate & Champagne October membership event! Not to be Missed!
- Book Discussions
- Small Group Gatherings at area Restaurants – Try new places and foods!
- Mah Jongg Tournament!
- Membership Gatherings (winter and spring)
- Cooking Up Camaraderie Fundraiser (small gatherings in members’ homes)
- Women’s Seder – One of our signature events!
- Tikkun Olam Projects (e.g., volunteering at Women Giving Back)
- Knitting and Crocheting Group – Donations to various groups

You get all this and more for your yearly dues. Our funds go to subsidize our activities and to support NVHC through donations (e.g., camp scholarship program, school programs, gifts for *B’nai Mitzvah* students, Confirmation students, and congregational engagement such as social events).

We have a dedicated Board and group of committee Chairs who are creating a dynamic calendar for the upcoming year. Join the Women of NVHC; make deep and lasting connections, and feel the warmth and support of belonging to this great group of women. We are here to support you! We look forward to welcoming you to our activities soon!

L’shalom,
Peggy Nelson
Women of NVHC President
Questions or ideas? Please email me at PeggyNelson8@verizon.net 🌸

Game Nights: How a Group of 30-Somethings Ignited a New NVHC Tradition

By Andrew Harris



The ark is closed, the blessing recited over wine and challah, the NVHC Erev Shabbat service concluded.

It's game time!

Want to dominate the fictional island of Catan? Got a hankering for *Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza*? Care to try to bluff your way to victory by blending in with your opponents?

Once a month a handful of Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation denizens top off their weekly religious observance by breaking out their board and card games.

Now in its second year, the growing gatherings have given some of the synagogue's newest members a means to cross-connect, eat, drink, play, and bond, while turning the multipurpose room into something more akin to a clubhouse.

"It really is exactly what it sounds like. People get together and play games," says participant Jon Keilholz.

Keilholz modestly says he got involved "through my wife," the newest

member of our NVHC clergy team, Rabbi Ashley Barrett. She too is a sometimes participant.

"When you walk in the door, there are maybe 20 board games sitting there, so you can find something and a group of people to play with you," he says.

Keilholz and the Rabbi are players, but game night's patriarchs are a pair of 30-year-olds, Joe Scholnick and Michael Wheatman, who found board games were common ground and built a peer group around them.

"My wife and I were attending Shabbat services at NVHC when we got back to the area," post-college when, as Scholnick recounts, "as luck would have it, right when the pandemic hit."

As in-person services resumed, attendance then was minimal and most of those who did come to the synagogue were outside their peer group.

But as the pandemic waned, people closer in age began to return and express common interests. "We didn't want to lose that connection, so we asked around to see what common hobbies we had and we made quick friends," he says.

Upcoming Game Nights:

- September 8
- October 6
- November 10

No RSVP Required. All Ages Welcome.

Meet in the multi-purpose room after Erev Shabbat Services.

For more information contact Joe@nvhcreston.org

One of them was Wheatman, who remembers he and his wife, Kristina, meeting up with Joe, his wife, Anna, and others at a Shabbat Schmooze.

"We were new to the area and most people were new to the area and were just looking to make friends." They talked about things they liked to do and lit upon a game night.

But, logistically speaking, it wasn't all that simple. Initially, the new friends — about eight of them — would gather at one of their houses, Wheatman says.

But they quickly realized that while they all lived within 20 minutes of NVHC, they did not live equidistant from one another.

“And then it worked out that it was, honestly, like meeting in the synagogue might be the best place.”

That realization begot an outreach to Executive Director Joe Miller, who endorsed the idea.

“They were totally on board,” Wheatman says.

They had the “where?,” but now they needed the “what?” Collectively, the group eschewed old-line games like Monopoly, Uno or Scrabble, for newer Euro-style games, where it’s harder for one player to gain a decisive early advantage over the others.

“The idea in Euro-style games is that everybody’s always in it and there’s multiple strategies for acquiring a lot of points,” Wheatman says.

Among the most popular ones as of now are *Settlers of Catan* and *Ticket to Ride*, although on this March Friday night, he’s caught up in the reflex-action card game *Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza*, from the creators of *Exploding Kittens*.

About two dozen people regularly turn out for the evening’s festivities, bringing a few tables’ worth of drinks and homemade food. Each month, some people come alone, some come with a spouse or partner, some bring their kids. (Sometimes the little ones take a nap during the games). All ages are welcome; all that you need is a love of games and a willingness to meet some new people.

Scholnick says, “The crowd favorite these days is a game called *Chameleon*, where you have to fool the other people into thinking you know the word, even though you don’t know the word and everybody else does. You have to blend in like a chameleon.”

Gamer Dominique Austin, 29, likes *Dixit*, where you need to come up with the word you think best describes the image on a card you’re holding. Then everyone else needs to take a card from their own hand they think may match it. They’re tossed out face down, shuffled, and revealed. Then everyone votes on which they think is the original card.

“That one’s really fun because sometimes it’s like ‘how did you pick that? That makes no sense!’” she says.

Asked if there are bad winners or bad loser, Austin replies, “Oh, I don’t think there’s any bad losers. It can get a bit competitive sometimes,” she adds with a knowing laugh. *Chameleon* too can get a bit testy “because sometimes people are offended, like ‘How dare you think it’s me!’”



“But it’s all good fun,” says Austin, who joined NVHC last summer and immediately fell in with the group.

Catan, a world-wide sensation whose German creator, Klaus Teuber, died on April 1, is easy to learn, says Keilholz.

“There’s a fair bit of luck involved,” he said, adding that may be its saving grace. “If there was no luck involved and it was completely skill, there would be a lot more sore losers, and sore winners.”

The monthly gatherings will continue through the summer, Wheatman says.

“It really is for everybody,” he says. “There’s not age involvement with it. It’s really just come here, drink some wine, play some games, have some really good snacks. It’s just a good time to hang out and make some friends.” 🍷

NVHC Change – Feeding the Hungry

By Bess Eisenstadt



Feeding the hungry is one of Judaism's oldest values. In Genesis, Abraham's first action, after circumcising himself and his household, is to offer food and drink to three men—angels, we learn—who appear outside his tent. “A little water” and “a bit of bread,” he says, and then brings them the finest flour, the tenderest meat, cream, and milk. In the desert, God sustains the Israelites with manna, and commentators, ancient and modern, describe feeding the hungry as practicing the ways of God. Many commentators call on us not simply to feed the hungry, but, like Abraham, to offer them the best we have. In Leviticus, we're commanded to leave the crops at the edges of our fields and the fallen fruit of our vineyards “for the poor and the stranger,” and in the Book of Esther, we're told to observe Purim both by feasting and by giving gifts to the poor. On Passover, we open our doors and invite all who are hungry to come and eat.

Fairfax County is one of the richest counties in the United States, yet many residents go hungry. Citing a Capital Area Food Bank estimate, Cornerstones reports that “an average of 6% of residents in the Herndon-Reston area live with food insecurity, with some pockets of up to 19%.” Moreover, according to Fairfax County Public Schools, about a third of students countywide receive free or reduced-price meals, indicating that they and their families are living in need.

How can we help feed the hungry? NVHC's Social Action Committee (SAC) offers several ways:

The Tikkun Olam Fund: From Purim to Pesach—and at any time of the year—we can contribute to the Tikkun Olam fund, a substantial portion of which is budgeted for food insecurity initiatives, such as food pantries and weekend snack bags (see below).

High Holy Day Food Drive: During the High Holy Days, and particularly on Yom Kippur when we ourselves do not eat, we can bring grocery bags filled with nonperishable food, paper goods, personal hygiene items, and baby items to NVHC for delivery to Cornerstones, which distributes our donations to people in need.

Weekend Snack Bags for School Children: To provide healthy food for children who may not otherwise have enough to eat on weekends, we partner with a nonprofit organization, Helping Hungry Kids (HHK), to purchase and pack enough snacks for six meals for each of up to about 500 students at eight Reston and Herndon elementary schools. HHK leaders and NVHC volunteers purchase the snacks, using HHK and Tikkun Olam funds, and HHK volunteers pack the bags, sometimes with help from NVHC members. Our religious school students also donate snacks and, a few times a year, help pack the bags.

During the school year, HHK packs the snack bags from 10:00am to 11:00am on Wednesday mornings at NVHC, using space next to the Hebrew school classrooms. You can participate whenever you are available and do not need to commit weekly. Simply show up at NVHC, and HHK volunteers will welcome you and show you what to do. We are also currently looking for a volunteer or volunteers with an SUV to transport packed snack bags from NVHC to Forest Edge Elementary School (just down the road from NVHC) at about 11:00am. For more information, contact Bess Eisenstadt (bess.eisenstadt@gmail.com).

Community Shelter Meals: Two or three times a year, we provide dinner for about 75 residents at Cornerstones' Emory Rucker Family Shelter, located next to the Reston Regional Library. Volunteers can prepare a main dish (usually for 8 to 10 people), vegetable, salad, or baked goods (rolls and cookies) at home and deliver their dish to the shelter,

or they can help serve the meal at the shelter. Children are welcome to help prepare the food; servers must be at least 18 years old. To participate, contact Ellen Ranard (socialaction@nvhcreston.org) for information about our next meal and an invitation to sign up.

Hypothermia Shelter Meals: During the winter, from December through March, Cornerstones operates a shelter for single adults in the North County Human Services Building. About once every two weeks, we prepare dinner for approximately 30 people, which Cornerstones staff then serve. NVHC volunteers can purchase ingredients for others to assemble or prepare part of the meal themselves in their own home—for example, an entree (usually for 6 to 8 people) or a dessert (usually about 2 dozen cookies)—and

then deliver the food to the shelter. For more information and invitations to sign up for individual meals, contact Bess Eisenstadt (bess.eisenstadt@gmail.com).

New Food Hub: This fall, Cornerstones is opening a new facility in Loudoun County, with greatly expanded space for storing and distributing both perishable and non-perishable food and other items. Designed to serve food pantries in Fairfax and Loudoun counties, the facility will enable Cornerstones to accept surplus food from local restaurants and grocery stores that would otherwise go to waste. Using Tikkun Olam funds, NVHC has made a donation to the food hub, and we are one of the founding sponsors. Stay tuned for more information as there will be opportunities to volunteer for sorting. 🌱



Emergency Food Pantry

SHOPPING LIST

Low sodium, low fat, fat free, sugar free and organic items are always appreciated for our clients with dietary concerns!

Non-perishable Food:

- Brown Rice
- Cereal, Oatmeal, breakfast items
- Peanut Butter and Jelly
- Wild Rice
- Quinoa
- Chia seeds
- Kidney and black beans (dry)
- Canned fruit
- Canned vegetables
- Canned Tuna, Salmon, Chicken, Ham
- Tea, Coffee (regular & decaf - instant)
- Snacks (crackers, fruit & granola bars, etc.)
- Sugar, honey, flour, salt, spices
- Condiments (mayo, ketchup, mustard, etc)
- Canola Oil & Olive Oil
- Soy Milk or Almond Milk

Hygiene Items:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| • Toilet Paper | • Soap |
| • Deodorant | • Shampoo |
| • Toothpaste | • Toothbrushes |
| • Laundry Detergent | • Feminine Pads |

Baby Items:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Diapers (all sizes) | • Baby Wipes |
| • Formula (Similac) | • Baby Food (all stages) |

Support NVHC's Annual High Holy Day Food Drive!

Our neighbors need our help! Again this year during the High Holy Days, we will be collecting non-perishable food and toiletries for the Cornerstones Emergency Food Pantry. To the left is a list of what items they need. Remember that low sodium, low fat, sugar free, and organic items are appreciated for their clients with dietary concerns.

Grab a grocery bag (or several!) on Rosh Hashanah, fill it with food, and then drop it off inside the lobby at NVHC any time between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Thank you for helping our neighbors in need!

For more information, please contact Minnie Orozco at 571-323-1410 or minerva.orozco@cornerstonesva.org

Cornerstone's Food Pantry and Emergency Services Offices are located at the Lake Anne Professional Building at 11484 Washington Plaza West #120, in Reston.

Thank you for your donation!



Cornerstones
11150 Sunset Hills Road,
Suite 210
Reston, VA 20190
571-323-9555
www.cornerstonesva.org

WE THANK OUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTORS

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Stu Dornfeld and Emily Booth-Dornfeld...in memory of Sylvia Berman

Nell and Don Hirsch...in memory of Edith Furman

Brotherhood Fund

Stu Dornfeld and Emily Booth-Dornfeld...in honor of Evan's birthday

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Rabbi Joel N. Abraham and Temple Sholom...in thanks for celebrating Cantor Darcie Naomi Sharlein

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Mark Turk and Marcy Goldberg-Turk...in memory of Richard Goldberg

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Elizabeth and Andy Lacher...in memory of Samuel Robert Frost Coen

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Cantor Irena Altshul...in honor of Rabbi Holzman's 13-year tenure celebration

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Sam Samuels...in memory of Evelyn Solin

Eleonora Tarasova...in memory of Furman Gregory

Mark Tauber...in memory of Arthur Tauber

TOLI...thanks for hosting our teachers

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Nitzavim Groundbreaking — July 16th



NITZAVIM CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Status on 8/15/2023

93 Donors

\$1.86 Million pledged



We seek full community participation. Please join this important NVHC campaign!

Contact Joe Miller at joe@nvhcreston.org



NORTHERN VIRGINIA
HEBREW CONGREGATION

1441 Wiehle Ave | Reston, VA 20190

NVHC HIGH HOLY DAYS SERVICES SCHEDULE – 2023

Rosh Hashanah

September 15

8:00pm - Erev Rosh Hashanah Service

September 16

9:00am – Young Family Service (suggested through 2nd grade)

10:30am - Morning Service

3:00pm - Shofar Sounding

4:00pm - Tashlich

Yom Kippur

September 24

8:00pm - Kol Nidre Service

September 25

9:00am – Young Family Service
(suggested through 2nd grade)

10:30am - Morning Service

1:45pm - Afternoon Study

3:30pm - Afternoon Service

5:00pm – Yizkor Service

6:00pm – Neilah Service

