

MitzvahMatters!

The original purpose of the public reading of *Haftarot* (selected readings from the bible to accompany the Torah reading) was to connect sacred text with important Jewish values in order to keep those texts relevant for the reader.

The message of the biblical prophets is that the stakes are high for how we act in the world. That message still holds true today. Doing *mitzvot* is the way that we connect with God, with the best parts of ourselves and with one another.

As you prepare to become *BMitzvah*, we want those sacred texts to continue to be relevant in your lives. By connecting *mitzvot* with the social justice and value-based ideas of the Prophets, you will be chanting and learning passages that reflect those Jewish values that bring meaning from our ancient teachings to your own life and to the life of our NVHC Community.

MitzvahMatters! materials are part of your Torah Corps materials which you will receive when you begin in Torah Corps.

Here are the steps for the program:

1. As a family, please read through the entire list of *mitzvot* below. We ask you to choose 2 of the *mitzvot* that you feel most connected to or that interest you the most.
2. Come prepared with those choices to your family meeting with Cantor Caro, which will be scheduled for approximately six months prior to your *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*.
3. Together with Cantor Caro, we will determine which *mitzvah* will become your focus for your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* journey. From that, your *Haftarah* verses that you will chant will be assigned to you, connected to that *mitzvah*/value.
4. Going forward from that meeting, **you will be asked to choose or create three actions/activities** that you will engage in related to this *mitzvah*.
 - a. You will be able to talk briefly about this work at the Shabbat service when you become *BMitzvah*. We will work on this together during Torah Corps.

MITZVAHMATTERS! and Haftarah

As you prepare to become *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*, we will connect doing *mitzvot* with a focused *Haftarah* selection from the social justice and value-based ideas of the Prophets. As you determine which *mitzvah* will become your focus for your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* journey, Cantor Caro will provide your *Haftarah* verses, reflecting that *mitzvah*/value. This paradigm, **MitzvahMatters!** is based around 9 *Mitzvot*/values:

- **Kibud Av Va'em** - כְּבוֹד אָב וָאֵם - Honoring parents. This *mitzvah* is found twice in the Torah, right in the 10 Commandments (Exodus and Deuteronomy)! We are part of an eternal chain.
 - TEXT: Malachi 3:22-24 The prophet expresses here a messianic vision of reconciliation between parents and children.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION:
 - Giving parents time at Embury Rucker by volunteering with kids: volunteer@cornerstonesva.org
 - Contact Local PTA at your school
- **Hiddur P'nei Zakein** - הַדּוֹר פְּנֵי זָקֵן - Honoring the elderly and wise. They deserve our respect regardless of their personal accomplishments. We stand on the shoulders of those who come before us.
 - TEXT: Zacharia 8:4-8 This text reminds us of the importance of valuing the wisdom of the elderly, as they will be the inspiration for redemption and return to Jerusalem, in truth and sincerity.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - NOVA Chai-Ways – novachaiways@nvhcreston.org
 - Warm Up America – www.warmupamerica.org/warmup or jagstoner@aol.com
 - Tall Oaks Assisted Living – www.talloaksal.com
 - Yad L'Kashish – www.lifeline.org.il – assisting elderly in Jerusalem
- **Sh'mirat HaTeva** - שְׁמִירַת הַטֶּבַע - Protecting the environment. Jewish tradition teaches us to care for our planet as stewards of God's creation. We should leave the world as beautiful as we find it.
 - TEXT: Amos 9:13-15 The text reminds us of the beauty in nature, and that when we build and plant and care for the earth, that we will be rewarded with stability and plenty.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION:
 - NVHC Green Team – greenteam@nvhcreston.org
 - Plastic Free Challenge – <https://350fairfax.org/plastic-free-challenge>
 - Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions – www.faithforclimate.org
- **Bikur Cholim** - בִּקּוּר חוֹלִים - Visiting the sick. This is a way we can perform *chesed* (kindness) for another person, a way that we act in God's image. Even just the presence of another person can bring healing.
 - TEXT: Isaiah 38:1-5 This text teaches how the physical presence of a caring person can bring healing and wholeness to someone who is ill.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - NVHC Cares – nvhcares@nvhcreston.org
 - Project Linus – www.projectlinus.org
- **Talmud Torah** – תַּלְמוּד תּוֹרָה - Learning and study. Our learning should extend beyond the words of Hebrew texts. Jewish wisdom can walk through all kinds of doors in our lives. There is tremendous wisdom living as we connect with other.
 - TEXT: II Kings 22:8-12 In the text, a Scroll of the Teaching is found when the Temple is being restored. Even the king learns from the scroll, opening his heart to ensure that the people of his time learn from the wisdom of their past.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - NVHC Lifelong Learning – lifelearn@nvhcreston.org
 - Buddy for reading or homework at Embury Rucker Shelter – volunteer@cornerstonesva.org

- **Sh'mirat Shabbat** - שְׁמִירַת שַׁבָּת - Observing and engaging with Shabbat and Jewish ritual. The early Zionist thinker, Ahad Ha'am, wrote "More than Israel has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept Israel." It is our glue.
 - TEXT: Jeremiah 17: 22-25 Jeremiah reminds the people that observing Shabbat is as much for our own sake as it is to honor God, that rest from burdens and creating sacred time is important for our souls.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION:
 - In order to help our community's households celebrate Shabbat at home or at NVHC, you can explore various projects through:
 - NVHC Cares – nvhccares@nvhcreston.org
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- **Tzedek** – תְּצַדֵּק - Sacred Giving. Tzedakah is not what we give; it is our responsibility as part of our covenant with God.
 - TEXT: Amos 5:21-25 The text teaches that giving to others and acting with justice actually keeps our own humanity alive.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - NVHC Change – socialaction@nvhcreston.org
 - Cornerstones - www.cornerstonesva.org
 - Warm Up America – www.warmupamerica.org/warmup or jagstoner@aol.com
 - Fairfax County - www.volunteerfairfax.org
 - Loudon County – www.volunteer.loudoncares.org
- **Mazon** - מֶזֶן - Feeding the hungry. This is woven into the very fabric of Jewish life. We are meant to ensure that no one should go hungry, that all should have respectful and compassionate access to adequate food. We honor God and each other when we ensure this.
 - TEXT: Isaiah 58:7-10 This text teaches us that food and eating are holy acts and must be approached with a level of mindfulness; that sustenance has to address body and soul. To feed the hungry means to give them both kinds of sustenance and therefore restore their humanity.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - NVHC Change – socialaction@nvhcreston.org
 - Food Pantry Drive Assistance at Cornerstones - <https://signup.com/go/UfTtsFV>
 - Farmers Market Gleaning Assistants - <http://signup.com/go/whtSwne> or hana@potomacvegetablefarms.com
- **Hachnasat Orchim** - הַכְנָסַת אֹרְחִים - Welcoming the stranger or guest. The Talmud teaches that this is so important because it is as if we are welcoming God.
 - TEXT: II Kings 4:8-11 This text demonstrates the importance of welcoming, and things one might do to make a stranger comfortable in your midst, especially when they are not requesting any assistance.
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - ADAMS greeters (school breaks/summers) –
 - Shabbat service (Friday evening or Saturday morning) greeters – board@nvhcreston.org
 - NVHC Hypothermia Shelter – socialaction@nvhcreston.org