

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 *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah*, 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.

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* above. 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 choose or create three actions/activities that you will engage in related to this *mitzvah*.
 - a. You will give a short presentation talk about this work at the Shabbat service when you become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, as an introduction to the *Haftarah* reading. We will work on this together during Torah Corps.

There will be two Shabbat afternoon programs scheduled each year – once in the fall and once in the spring. Everyone in Torah Corps, with their family, will have the opportunity to gather, learn about the various *mitzvot*, and celebrate *Havdalah* (the end of Shabbat ritual) together. Please be sure to attend at least one of these sessions in the year leading up to your *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

MitzvahMatters! is based around 9 Mitzvot/values:

- **Kibud Av Va'em** - Honoring parents. This *mitzvah* is found twice in the Torah, right in the 10 Commandments (Exodus and Deuteronomy)! We become part of an eternal chain.
 - TEXT: [Malachi 3:22-24+](#) The prophet expresses here a messianic vision of reconciliation between parents and children.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE: Jay Silverberg
 - 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** - 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.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE: Sandi Rosengart
 - 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** - 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 9:9-15](#) 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.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE: Ron Rubin
 - 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** - 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: [II Kings 4:33-37](#) This text teaches how the physical presence of a caring person can bring healing to someone who is ill.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE:
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - NVHC Cares – nvhcares@nvhcreston.org
 - Project Linus – www.projectlinus.org
- **Talmud Torah** – 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 22:8-13](#) 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.
 - CONGREGANT ADVISOR: Elizabeth Lacher
 - 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** - 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: 21-26](#) 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.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE: Bob Fenster
 - 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 Worship Committee – worship@nvhcreston.org
 - NVHC Cares – nvhccares@nvhcreston.org
- **Tzedek** – Sacred Giving. Tzedakah is not what we give; it is our responsibility as part of our covenant with God.
 - TEXT: [Amos 5:21-24](#) The text teaches that giving to others and acting with justice actually keeps our own humanity alive.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE: Ellen Ranard
 - 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** - 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 58:1-10](#) 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.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE: Alison Behar
 - 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** - 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 4:8-16](#) 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.
 - CONGREGANT RESOURCE: Sandee and Ed Byrne
 - NVHC or COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
 - ADAMS greeters (school breaks/summers) –
 - Shabbat service (Friday evening or Saturday morning) greeters – worship@nvhcreston.org
 - NVHC Hypothermia Shelter – socialaction@nvhcreston.org