MitzvahMatters!

DEVELOPING GREATER MEANING FOR
HAFTARAH WHILE ‘DOING JEWISH!’
HISTORY OF HAFTARAH

- “Conclusion” of sacred readings
- Selections come from The Prophets
- Many theories of how this additional reading arose
  - Custom, not required
  - Selected texts were quite variable for generations
- Overall purpose was to add meaning to the weekly Torah portion (*parashah*)
WHY MAKE A CHANGE?

Current status:

- Rote learning of these texts
- Traditional *Haftarot* are less relevant for students

Connects to our Strategic Plan: Involve families more in the process
OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- The Prophetic message is that the stakes are high for how we act in the world.
  - The stakes are still high today.
- Original purpose of *Haftarot* still present—
  - Connect with important Jewish values
  - Make sacred texts relevant
- Connect doing *mitzvot* with the social justice and value-based ideas of the Prophets
8 MITZVOT

- Bikur Cholim – Visiting the sick
- Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming strangers and guest
- Tzedek – Righteousness
- Kibud Av Va’em - Honoring parents
- Talmud Torah – Learning and study
- Hiddur P’nei Zakein/Zikaron – Honoring the elderly/Remembrance
- Sh’mirat Shabbat – Engaging with Shabbat and Jewish ritual
- Sh’mirat Hateva – Protecting the Creation and Nature
HOW IT WILL WORK

- Students receive a detailed write up of the *MitzvahMatters!* program in Torah Corps
  - Review periodically in Torah Corps classes as a group
- Reminders sent to parents in monthly Torah Corps newsletter
- Family to discuss *mitzvot* together –
  - Have top three choices selected
- At Scheduled Meeting with Cantor –
  - Discuss choices
  - Finalize decision
  - Get assignment of connected prophetic text
How it will all work

- Shabbat afternoon, twice a year
  - Fall and Spring
    - May 2, 2020, 3-5 p.m.
  - Families gather to learn about all of these *mitzvot*
  - Havdalah
  - Handout for those who miss either or both of these programs

- Additional way to connect families to the process-
  - Reminder sent to families to come to Shabbat on the same *Torah* portion in the year prior to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*
FAMILY PART OF THE PROCESS

- Family chooses *mitzvah* work together
- Family activity for *mitzvah* chosen together
- Participate in ongoing activity for the student to reflect this *mitzvah*
- A family member could chant the *Haftarah* verses instead of the student, if so desired
WHAT’S NEXT

- Students will come home with written detailed description and instructions in February
- Begin to think about which mitzvot most speak to you
  - Family conversations
- Enjoy the MitzvahMatters! journey with your child!