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RABBI'S NOTES



I'm writing these notes between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. It's a Holy Day season unlike any other I have experienced in my life. The physical separation, the spread of COVID, the impending election, the more-or-less exoneration of the police officers who killed Breonna Taylor, the fires, the sorrowful and untimely news of the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, oh my goodness, my heart can barely hold it all.

Today, my beloved friend and teacher Reverend Tansy Chapman led our community in contemplation. Many of you were there. Every word of it was astonishingly, captivatingly beautiful. One image she spoke of struck me particularly: the cathedral at Salisbury in England. She said that when you enter, there is a baptismal pool filled at all times with clear, still water. She spoke of how, when you look into this pool in its stillness, your face is reflected.

I've been thinking all day about that still water. It's not a mirror or a piece of polished steel or silver. Water is the most tender and flexible thing. It picks up every shake and shiver. A pool of still water must be held in a strong vessel that resists any vibrations in the ground.

We all need that stillness somewhere in our lives for the times we're in. We find it in different places. A walk in the woods, time in meditation, a nap, a song, a listening friend. I know that this High Holy Days I have been very much aware of the steadying, anchoring gift of these days—and beyond even that, the gift of Jewish religious practice. Thousands of years of Jewish experience and imagination have been distilled into words and song and gestures. These comprise a strong vessel to protect us from the shiverings of this moment we're in.

This is the first year I have ever heard the shofar and read Psalm 27 every day (except Shabbat) during Elul. When I first decided to do this every day on Zoom, I thought to myself, "Do I really mean every day???" But I knew I wanted to hear the shofar and the psalm. Nothing like inviting all my friends to join me to make me actually do it! Every morning at 9:30 I got on my Zoom, watched your faces pop up one after another, read the psalm and blew the shofar. The daily repetition of the psalm, with its words of protection and embrace, penetrated my soul very deeply. And I loved seeing all of you each morning.

When Tansy described that baptismal font at Salisbury Cathedral, I had a very specific picture in my mind of what it must look like. I saw a rectangle, its size the exact ratio of my computer screen, with your faces reflected in the water. (Way too much screen for me, I admit.) I just now googled the font at Salisbury: it is very elaborate and magnificent, it turns out, and nothing at all like my vision with your faces in it. But for me, the image of your faces is something strong and still, even if made up of pixels. That right now we are alive, that we are able to gather, even virtually, that we are together in this time, I find deeply anchoring. That we can partake of the wisdom of our ancestors to find comfort and inspiration feels like still water.



I know that October will be full of challenges. Many of us will be working with all our steam to try to ensure fair and accessible voting the first week in November. We may be watching a seismic shift in the Supreme Court. We may be dreading an "October Surprise." It will still be fire season. We'll be looking up to the sky hoping for rain. And who knows what else life may surprise us with?

I hope that every one of us is able to find a still place in these tumultuous times, and that we will be able to take refuge there when we need it. In the middle of these Holy Days I am so very grateful to all of you for being that steady and clear refuge that you are, for me and for each other. Despite all that is upon us now, and whatever is on the horizon, I know that we are together, even if only by pixel. With each new bit of difficult news, I have been saying a little mantra to myself: “We will cope. We will help each other. And together we will help others.” And so we will.

HEARTFUL THANKS

Even more than in years past, these High Holy Days have been a shared endeavor. Margaret wishes to thank everyone mentioned below:

- Andrea Luna, Mina Cohen, Mirisa Livingston, Raven Deerwater, and Laura Goldman for thinking about how we might reimagine these days together;
- Adina Merenlender for creating and maintaining our High Holy Day calendar and the schedule for shul visits;
- Marnie Press, Mina Cohen, Barry Baylen, and Pamelyn Close, our L'Chayim Committee, for expert COVID safety counsel;
- Sandra Wortzel for imagining and centering the Tisha B'av installation, “The World as we Knew it No Longer Exists,” everyone who brought materials and who visited and augmented the installation, and Kenny Wortzel for schlepping, building and dismantling;
- Sandra and Kenny for helping to distribute High Holy Day machzorim;
- Laura Goldman for her exquisite Elul meditations;
- Andrea Luna for the beautiful and growing High Holy Day art installation in the shul;
- Eve Giovenco for facilitating a Soul Collage workshop on Elul themes;
- Karen Rakofsky for organizing magnificent Songs of Praise;
- Singers of Praise: Fran Schwartz, Annie Lee, Rachel Lahn, Karen Rakofsky, Aria Millen, Helen Jacobs, Sandy Glickfeld, Nina Ravitz and Terry Clark, Raven Deerwater, and Linda Shear;
- Mirisa for her Torah reading in beautiful High Holy Day trope;
- Alix Sabin, Bob Ross, and Ben Kafin for extraordinary teachings to help us enter the New Year;
- Bob Evans for creating and hosting our first ever Kever Avot ritual, enabling us to virtually visit the graves of our community members who have gone before us;
- Jeff Zolitor for DJ'ing a special program of music on High Holy themes;
- Mina Cohen for creating and hosting a walking meditation on the theme “Between a Person and God/Between One Person and Another”;
- Reverend Tansy Chapman for her contemplative teaching;
- Raven Deerwater for chanting Kol Nidre;
- Jordan Kauffman for playing Kol Nidre on his clarinet;
- Donna Montag for updating our Yizkor list and arranging for Yizkor readers;
- Bob Evans for hosting, advising, and generally making possible our Zoom services;
- Marnie Press for creating our Sukkot celebration this year, and all who helped build and decorate our shul sukkah;
- And my circle of rabbi friends and colleagues who more even than before have shared ideas, materials, practical suggestions, and every kind of support during this unprecedented season.

To those I have inadvertently omitted, my apologies and great gratitude for your hidden gifts.

THE TIME OF OUR JOY: SUKKOT AND BEYOND

Jewish holy days are in some ways like a train with a yearlong route. Over the course of the year, the train pulls into different stations. At each stop we see a landscape we haven't visited for a year. Each station has its own lighting, its own sounds and smells. We eat the foods and sing the songs and partake of the rituals of that location. Each stop has a different emotional feeling to it. Whatever we may have been feeling and thinking *en route*, when we pull into the next station, special thoughts and feelings are evoked by the view from that place.



The train is now in a busy section of the route, with one stop after another over the month of Tishrei. We have just climbed high into the mountains for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and now the train is descending into the fertile valley. Sukkot begins at sundown on Friday, October 2nd, and it ends at sundown on Friday, October 9th, at which point we move into Shabbat/Shemini Atzeret and, beginning Saturday sundown, into Simchat Torah. Our High Holy Day route ends finally at sundown on Sunday, October 11th, when we disembark into daily life, renewed and reinforced.

This beautiful section of the track is *Z'man Simchateinu*—the time of our joy. Joy hasn't been so easy for many of us lately, but here we are, in the time of the harvest, in the beginning (we hope) of the rainy season, our hearts full and souls cleansed. Like everything else this year, we'll have to work a little harder to access the meaning and connection of these holidays. But we can! Below are the offerings for these next days.

Sukkah at the shul—Friday night, October 2nd through Friday night, October 9th. You are most welcome to come by and *yoshev ba sukkah*—dwell in the sukkah—and encouraged to add to its decoration throughout the holiday. Marnie, Luna, Kenny, Sarah, Susan, Joyce and Robin will be building it on September 30th. The theme for our “shelter that is not a shelter” is honoring our vulnerability. Stop by with a thermos of tea and a book, or take a nap under its *schach* (porous leafy ceiling). There will be an etrog and homemade lulav for you to shake. Please wear a mask if anyone else is present and socially distance.



Sukkah on Greenwood Road—Ronnie Karish and Ellen Saxe plan to have their sukkah available for visitors throughout the holiday. Give them a jingle at 877-3475 if you would like to have a sit or walk around their end-of-the-summer garden. Their home is on the Greenwood Road between Elk and Philo.

Willows and rain prayers—willow branches will be available for you to pick up at the shul anytime during Sukkot. They're growing all over the place along roadsides and beach paths if you want to collect your own.

First night/moonrise/candles—on Friday night, October 2nd, 6:30 PM, Margaret and Mickey will welcome Shabbat and Sukkot in the shul sukkah. They invite you to Zoom in and join them for candle lighting and kiddush. They hope to be able to share a full moonrise with everyone. If you have a story—either from your own life or from another source—about joy in difficult times, we'll have some time for story sharing.

Hoshannah Rabbah—on, Friday, October 9th, at 4:00 PM we will join together (by Zoom) to beat the willows and pray for rain for our fire-struck and parched land.

Simchat Torah—Sunday, October 11th, beginning at 2:00 PM, the Torah Mobile will ride again. It will make seven stops with our beloved sefer Torah inside. Everyone is invited to mask up, meet the mobile and, while there, walk around the car (carefully distanced) in one circle. This way there will be the more-or-less traditional seven *hakafot* (processions) celebrating the end of one year of Torah reading and the beginning of another. If you would like to follow some or all of the route in your own car, that would be festive. The exact stops and timing will be announced soon by e-mail.

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES

A full Shabbat service led by Rabbi Holub, with much singing, chanting and silence, Torah teaching and reading, blessings for healing and peace, and time for mourners to say Kaddish. You are welcome to join in on Zoom for any or all of the service from 10:30 AM until about 12:30 PM. The rabbi or members of the community give interpretations of the weekly Torah portion (see schedule below for October). On Saturday, October 31st, Shabbat Lech Lecha/Shabbat Halloween, we will have a special guest teacher: Rabbi Linda Holtzman will give a *drash* and lead a discussion. She is professor of liturgy and rabbinics at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, the organizer of the Tikkun Olam Havurah in Philadelphia, an innovator of Jewish ritual, and an inspiring and wonderful teacher.

10/03/20	Sukkot	Raven Deerwater
10/10/20	Shemini Atzeret	Margaret Holub
10/17/20	Bereshit	Andrea Luna
10/24/20	Naoach	Raven Deerwater
10/31/20	Lech-Lecha	Linda Holtzman

ZOOMING ALONG

We will continue to have MCJC gatherings on Zoom. In addition to Shabbat morning services at 10:30 AM, meetings and classes, and **Chai on The Coast** activities, the Wednesday morning Cup of Coffee and the Friday evening candle-lighting and Kiddush go on. Zoom invitations to these gatherings are sent by e-mail and posted on the MCJC web page. To get the invitations, let Margaret know at mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673.

Cup of Coffee—a time to connect and check in and talk about anything at all every Wednesday morning at 10:30 AM. There will be no cups on October 14th or 21st as Margaret will be on vacation, but tune in every other Wednesday.

Candle-Lighting—a half-hour of schmooze with Margaret and Mickey followed by Shabbat candle-lighting and Kiddush. Schmooze begins at 6:30 PM, candles are lit at 7:00 PM. On October 2nd and 9th, we will celebrate the first and last nights of Sukkot. There will be no candles on the 16th or 23rd as Margaret will be on vacation.

ELDERS' CONVERSATION

The Elders' Conversation will gather on Zoom on Tuesdays, October 6th and 27th, 3:00 to about 4:30 PM. This is a slight change from the usual second and fourth Tuesday schedule. Each meeting we have a theme (selected at the meeting before) and a wide-ranging conversation that begins with the theme and often moves along to deep and surprising places. Our theme for October 6th is "losing it"—coping with diminishing cognitive strength and physical ability. People of all ages are most welcome.

MCJC JUSTICE GROUP



The Justices meet on the second Thursday of each month, 5:30-7:30 PM. All meetings are online via ZOOM. The next meeting is Thursday, October 8th. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list, please contact Rabbi Holub at mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673. She will send out an email Zoom invitation for the meetings. *Everyone* is welcome to attend.

Thank you to Susan Larkin and Jim Ehlers for their donation to the Justice Group in memory of Lillian Davis and Jerry Davis, Shelly Martin's mother and father, and to Sally Swan for a donation to Safe Passage.

Reclaim Our Vote

Over two dozen members of the JG wrote 1000 postcards with information about early voting to voters in Texas for *Reclaim Our Vote* (ROV), a non-partisan Black-led organization with the mission to empower under-represented voters by fighting voter suppression. Now some members are participating in phone banking for ROV. The focus of the calls is threefold:

- to provide voters of color the information and resources they need to fully participate in the coming election;
- to alert voters who are “unregistered” or “inactive” that they may be in danger of losing their right to vote;
- to explain to active voters their safest options for voting during the pandemic.

ROV provides participants with ZOOM-assisted phone bank training, a script for talking points, and guidelines for making the calls. So far, over 500,000 calls have gone out to voters in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Texas, all states with active, ongoing voter suppression.

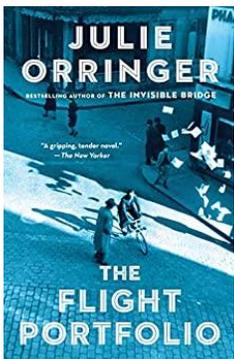
The calls seem to be effective: of 79,000 voters contacted for Georgia's June primary, 72% voted; 55% of calls in North Carolina and Virginia in 2019 resulted in votes; 65% of calls in the Georgia Black Belt resulted in votes in 2018; 85% of calls in the Alabama Black Belt resulted in votes in Alabama's December 2017 special election. If you'd like to get involved in phone banking with the JG, contact Myra Beals at myrah@mcn.org. To make a donation to ROV, go to bit.ly/rov2020donate.

Climate Crew

Jennifer Kreger is continuing to hold Zoom meetings to bring HUBS and ROUTES to the community. She is working on improving the website (<https://hubsandrouten.net>), which provides a bridge among individual, neighborhood, and county emergency preparedness and evacuation efforts.

Directly connected to climate change, the fires in our county and state should put us all on notice. Our local volunteer fire departments need our support because some of their funding is dependent on sales tax revenues that are lower than expected, and benefits such as open houses and Bar-B-Qs had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Please send yours a donation!

BOOK GROUP



We will discuss Julie Orringer's *The Flight Portfolio* on Monday, October 19th at 2:00 PM. In 1940, shortly after the Nazi invasion of France, Varian Fry, a Harvard-educated journalist and editor, arrived in Marseille to operate the Emergency Rescue Committee, helping artists and writers escape from France and immigrate to the United States. In defiance of the Vichy government's refusal to issue exit visas and restrictive U.S. immigration policies, Fry had to procure false passports, secure visas, seek out escape routes through the Pyrenees and by sea, and make impossible decisions about who should be saved, all while under profound pressure and in a state of personal change.

For his part in helping anti-Nazi and Jewish refugees escape Europe, he was the first American recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations” by Israel. In this work of historical fiction, Orringer illuminates previously unexplored elements of Fry's story and tells a tale of high-stakes adventure and unimaginable courage.

You can order a copy of the book from Gallery Bookshop and request a 10% discount as a book club member. Please contact Fran at franbschwartz@gmail.com for a Zoom invitation.

MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:00 PM, these days on ZOOM. The October meeting will be on Wednesday, the 14th. To attend part of the meeting, please contact board member Susan Tubbesing at 962-0565 or susan.tubbesing@gmail.com, and efforts will be made to patch you in.

NEWSLETTER THANKS

We are grateful to Roslyn and Bruce Moore for preparing the September *Megillah* for mailing. Volunteer for a future folding, stamping, and mailing project, and you can do it at home, or another spot of your choosing, in about two hours. If you want to do this *mitzvah*, please contact Sarah at 962-0565 or sarah.nathe@gmail.com

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GREAT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS



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Audrey Wells in honor of Mervin Wells' 100th birthday and his desire to be included in the book of life 5781; Sallie McConnell Costello in memory of Gerry Davis; Danny Mandelbaum & Benna Kolinsky in honor of the wedding of Ashley & Mo; the family of Lillian Davis, mother of Shelley Martin, in memory of Lillian Davis.

To the Adele Saxe Tzedekah fund: Karen Rakofsky, in memory of her father, Sam Rakofsky; Theresa Morales, in memory of Albert Morales.

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