

The MCJC shul is located at 15071 Caspar Road, Caspar, CA.
Send mail to P.O. Box 291, Little River, CA 95456. website: <http://www.mcjc.org>

Call the MCJC at (707) 964-6146
email: sarah.nathe@gmail.com

RABBI'S NOTES



Dramatic times in Torah-reading land! We're finishing the Joseph story, which also concludes the book of Genesis. Joseph, via the deceit of his brothers, has landed in Egypt, where he experienced the harshest fall and the most meteoric rise in fortune. His brothers have journeyed there from Canaan begging for bread. There is a reckoning, a reconciliation (of sorts; one wonders...). Joseph is magnanimous. He sends for their aged father, Jacob, and settles them all in splendor and plenty down in Egypt.

Unbeknownst to all the characters (except, one might say, God), that is the last time in Torah that anyone will be in the Promised Land for more than the briefest visit. The rest of the Torah narrative takes place in slavery in Egypt and then on the long, bumpy journey through the *midbar*, the wilderness, the desert. Next *Simchat Torah*, when we finally arrive at the end of the scroll, we will leave the Israelites at the edge of the Jordan River, looking across to Canaan. Moses will die just short of the finish line. And we'll roll back to the beginning of the story and start the journey again.

Liminality. Between-ness. Crossing over. Remembering good old days and looking ahead to promised lands. In Torah, and ever so much more in life, the action is in the *midbar*. As I write this, COVID vaccines are traveling the country and world in quickly-manufactured super-coolers. Committees are urgently delineating stages for the roll-out, wrestling with impossible ethical dilemmas as they do: all first responders or just those on COVID wards? Everyone 75 and over or just those in nursing homes? What about prisoners? How serious does a pre-existing medical condition have to be? Meanwhile, a soon-to-be former president is disintegrating on the world stage, holding hostage the economic relief for millions. On Christmas people are traveling or not traveling, hosting or not hosting. We anticipate a surge-upon-a-surge of COVID infections in the weeks to come. The action is in the *midbar*.

For some of us, this year has been excruciating: we have been ill or have lost beloveds to the virus. We have closed businesses or struggled heroically to keep them open. We were poor before and have become further impoverished. Some of us have struggled with crippling depression or isolation. At the same time, many of us are dealing with less painful issues. We're in our houses way more than ever before. We're letting stuff accumulate or we're getting rid of it. We're trying to figure out how to get some exercise. We're doomscrolling. We're drinking more alcohol. We're hearing from people in our pasts.

We're starting projects, completing them, not completing them, losing interest. We're making resolutions, keeping them, breaking them. We're looking anew at our relationships. We're remembering things we haven't thought about in a long time. We're getting more comfortable with our computers. Or not. We're missing and longing for much. We're secretly loving not having to get dressed to go out and see people.



Whatever else this time is, it is incredibly interesting. It is thick. It is weird. As I begin to imagine that the COVID crisis, and possibly the Washington crisis as well, will recede at some point, I find myself wanting to...what is the word...? It's not "savor" exactly, but notice deeply, pay attention, enjoy this time not in the way I enjoy a vacation, but in the way of being in a complicated, scary, exciting story. As I start to believe that sometime the thickness of this time will be behind us, I don't want to miss what is happening now.

In saying this I certainly mean no disrespect to people who are suffering terribly. Though it makes me think about a tool for pain relief that I have experimented with when I have a headache. I don't get migraines, and

my headaches, while not infrequent, aren't generally devastating, but they do hurt and I can be pretty miserable. Occasionally, if I remember to, I try to pay close, curious attention to the pain. Where exactly in my head is it? Can I touch the spot? Where does it not hurt? Is the pain sharp? Steady or throbbing? Hot or cold? On the surface or deep inside? In my limited experience, this attention doesn't make the headache go away, but it changes my relationship to it, I don't enjoy it, but it becomes kind of interesting.

I used to know a brilliant Jewish calligrapher named Marilyn Andrews. (Marilyn, if you're out there, fond greetings!) One of her pieces has driven me a little crazy over the years, and I find myself thinking about it lately. Surrounded by beautiful flourishes are the words GODE IS IN THE DETAILS. Yes, "GODE." Misspelled. Messed up. Distorted. Not how I expect to see it. "In the details."

Someday this may be a story we tell, like the Purim story or the exodus from Egypt, but right now we're deep in the details. With GODE. One of these days, when I've been on Zoom for 12 hours and haven't left my house in a week and everything is a mess and I've been picking up piles of junk and setting them down on top of other piles and it is yet again too late to make the phone call I've been resolving to make all week and our fridge is a hellscape and I have to make some dinner out of it and so on—you know, just another day wandering in the *midbar*—I hope I might start looking at it all with a different eye. I hope I might even savor the weirdness of the stage we're in, the Torah-like mix of drama and banality, and the sense that it is a privilege, or at least a trip, to be alive in these times. I hope you are all safe and stay safe. I hope you are all well and stay well. As we begin to feel that this won't last forever, I hope we find time to reflect on the chapter we are in.

TU B'SHEVAT

The beautiful holy day of *Tu B'Shevat*—the “new year of the trees”—falls this year on January 28th. It is customarily (at least in our community) celebrated with a seder of fruits and blessings as we pray together for the Tree of Life, and all life, to be renewed for the coming year. This year we are re-imagining Tu B'Shevat, as we have all our other holidays, and plans are not yet finalized.



Meanwhile, the great Jewish environmental organization, Hazon, is urging all Jewish communities to use Tu B'Shevat as a time to begin planning in a serious way for the upcoming *shmita* year, that seventh year when Torah commands us to leave our fields fallow and live off what we have stored up. The next *shmita* year begins at Rosh Hashana, 2021. Nigel Savage of Hazon writes:

If you are part of a Jewish institution, in 2021 you should be strengthening your Green Team, starting to plan for the shmita year—9 months from now—and starting to make a seven-year plan to integrate education, action and advocacy about the power you use, the food you serve, the education you provide, the relationships you build.

However we celebrate Tu B'Shevat this year, we will do so conscious of a serious mandate to change our own lives and our community practice and to amplify our voices for a sustainable future.

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES

A full Shabbat service is 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 January).

01/02/21	<i>Vayechi</i>	Bob Evans
01/09/21	<i>Shemot</i>	Raven Deerwater
01/16/21	<i>Vaera</i>	Tracy Salkowitz
01/23/21	<i>Bo</i>	Raven Deerwater
01/30/21	<i>Beshalach</i>	Ruby Gold



After a very long journey, Tracy Salkowitz will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah

January 16th, 2021.

Please join Tracy and Rick Edwards to celebrate at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday the 16th.

Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9628821372>

Meeting ID: 962 882 1372

Passcode: 820822

Bat Mitzvah's state of Mind: as anxious as a 13 year old!

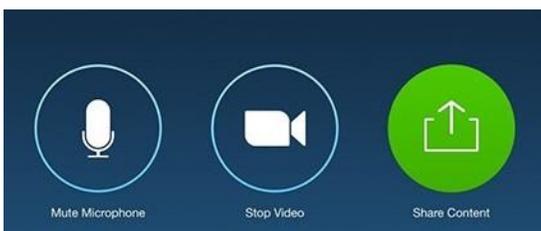
DEEP WINTER TORAH STUDY

With January we enter the book of Exodus. Rabbi Holub will be offering weekly Torah study on the *parshah* for that week. *Parshah*, *sedrah* and Torah portion are all synonyms for the section of Torah read and studied each week. Sometimes it is called *parshat ha-shevua*, the weekly *parshah*. Join Margaret on Thursday, January 7th, from noon to 1:00 PM on Zoom. Each time she will introduce a section of the *parshah* for the following Shabbat and pose a couple of questions. Then we will discuss the portion together.



All are welcome. No knowledge of Torah or Hebrew is necessary. The text will be shared on-screen, though if you have a Bible, you might wish to have it with you. We will continue through March 11th, the week of the last Torah portion in Exodus. At that time, we will decide if we want to continue.

ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM!



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 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—every Wednesday from 10:30-11:30 AM, we pour ourselves a steaming cup and join together for a freewheeling conversation about whatever is on our minds. It continues to be surprising, inspiring, generative and fun. All are welcome.

Candle-Lighting— Every Friday evening the community is invited to Margaret and Mickey's virtual Shabbat table to light candles and make Kiddush together. We start at 5:30 PM with a bit of schmooze, share news of our weeks, and wish each other Good Shabbos. We light at about 5:45 PM. It's a sweet way to bring in Shabbat together.

MITZVAH FREEZER

Thank you to all the cooks who have stocked our freezer at the shul. Many people have taken nourishment from it and we are ready to restock. Since we are still in the midst of a pandemic, we have a couple extra instructions for donators:

1. Please prepare vegetarian food in 1-2 servings that can easily be frozen. Label the package and note the date.
2. Use new and appropriate containers for the freezer. New containers can be found in the shed where the freezer is located if you don't have any. It's not necessary to return containers.
3. Make a copy of the recipe and attach it to the clipboard in the shed so that everyone can easily see the ingredients.
4. Place your donations on the bottom of the freezer so that the oldest will be on the top.
5. Wipe down the freezer where you opened it. Wipes are provided for your use.
6. When entering or leaving the shed, please also wipe off the handle and lock.

Contact a member of the Bikkur Cholim committee for the combination to the lock and let us know you are dropping something off: Mina Cohen (mcohen@mcn.org); Karen Rakofsky (nerak@mcn.org); or Fran Schwartz (franbschwartz@gmail.com).

Once again, thanks to all food donors for your generosity. And if you need help with sustenance, please avail yourself of something from our mitzvah freezer.

ELDERS' CONVERSATION

We continue to get older together with our twice-monthly Elders' Conversation on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month from 3:00-4:30 PM. This month's conversations will be on January 12th and 26th. We pick a topic at the end of the prior meeting and have rich, personal, probing conversations about all manner of things having to do with experiencing the world as we age. People of all ages are most welcome.

Zoom invitations to these gatherings are sent by e-mail. If somehow you missed the email, let Margaret know at mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673.

MCJC JUSTICE GROUP



The Justices meet on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting is on Thursday, January 14th, from 5:30 to 7:30. This month, instead of our regular action-oriented agenda, we will be having a more reflective open conversation about our purpose, the meaning of justice, and how we see ourselves moving forward. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list or attend meetings, please contact Margaret at mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673. *Everyone* is welcome to attend.

Thank you to the following for their generous donations to the Justice Group: Tarbell Family Foundation, Lillian Cartwright, Ronite Gluck, Jeanne & Richard Jackson

Shoeboxes of Warmth

JG participants Diana Corbin and Linda Rosengarten purchased goods for 12 two-year old children living at the Matamoros refugee camp on the Mexican side of the Brownsville Texas border crossing. Yael Berenson packed the clothing in Ziploc bags and her daughter, three year old Ada White, added an original drawing to each bag. Each package contained a fleece-footed pajama, a hat, a pair of mittens, two pairs of socks, a packet of wipes, two dozen pull-ups, a flashlight, a toy or two, and the artwork.

All donations intended for *Cajitas Calientitas* will either be used to cover the purchase and shipment of the packages, or will go directly to Dr. Melba Lucio so she can buy more clothing for children in the camp. We believe that at this time there are 272 children there. The Justice Group sends thank yous to the following donors to this project: Linda Rosengarten, Diana Cobrin, Irene Malone, Yael Berenson & Ada White, Linda Jupiter, Pauline Carrillo, Barbara Kennedy, Claire Ellis & Chuck Greenberg, Sandy Berrigan, Mary Ann Carroll,

Susan Nutter, Summer Huff & Jeremy Deininger, Lorna Dennis, Agnes Woolsey, Carrie Durkee, Karen Rakofsky, Alison Trick-Thornton and Stan Thornton, Jeannette Rasker & Robert Cutler, Susan Tubbesing & Sarah Nathe, Bonnie Saland.

Firewood

Esther Faber has organized free firewood for those who might have trouble paying for it. Walking on the Little River Airport grounds, Esther noticed a large amount of cut wood and thought it could be used by low-income people with wood burning stoves or fireplaces. After getting approval for her plan from the JG, she called the Mendocino County Department of Transportation, explained her idea, and arranged for the wood to be made available to the public. She met with the onsite director of the airport to arrange for a safe and orderly pickup. She has written to community, non-profit and religious organizations, and to the MCN listserv explaining her plan and how to take advantage of the offer. The biggest obstacle is that the wood is in rounds and must be loaded onto truck beds and split off site. Groups or individuals can contact Esther at firewood@mcn.org to arrange pickup.

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF LOVE?



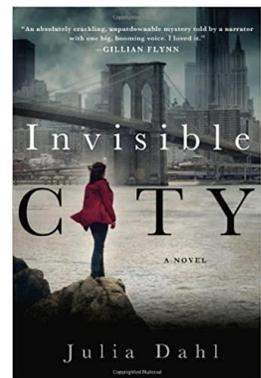
Linda and windflower Shear-Townley invite you to a **Chai on the Coast** matinee of love songs and poetry to honor their 37th anniversary. Please join them on Sunday, January 31st from 3-4:30 PM. They are celebrating all kinds of love: bio family, extended family, friends, heartthrobs, animals, the earth, the ocean, ourselves. You get the picture!

If you would like to contribute a song or poem, please email Linda at linda@shearcpa.com. Let her know if it's a song or poem, and its approximate length. Linda and windflower will

put the program together and everyone will be sent a Zoom link later in January. Of course, you are most welcome to tune in and just listen.

READING GROUP

We will meet on Zoom Monday January 18th at 2:00 PM to discuss Julia Dahl's mystery novel, **The Invisible City**. Just months after Rebekah Roberts was born, her mother, a Hasidic Jew from Brooklyn, abandoned her Christian boyfriend and newborn baby to return to her religion. Neither Rebekah nor her father have heard from her since. A recent college graduate, Rebekah has moved to New York City to follow her dream of becoming a big-city reporter, but she's also drawn to the idea of being closer to her mother, who might still be living in a Hasidic community in Brooklyn. When Rebekah is called to cover the story of a murdered Hasidic woman, she's shocked to learn that, because of the NYPD's habit of deferring to the powerful ultra-Orthodox community, not only will the woman be buried without an autopsy, but her killer may get away unpunished. As she immerses herself in the cloistered world of her mother, it's clear that she's not welcome, and everyone has a secret to keep.



In this fiction debut, journalist Julia Dahl tells a timely story right out of the pages of New York newspapers.

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 January meeting will be on Thursday, the 21st. If you wish 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.

HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

Thanks very much to Kath Disney Nilson and Steve Nilson for preparing the December **Megillah** for mailing. If you volunteer for a future folding, stamping, and mailing project, 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

MEGILLAH SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Mendocino *Megillah* is published in three formats: hardcopy, emailed PDF, and online. You can subscribe to the hardcopy version and have it mailed to you, you can subscribe to the email PDF version, or you can receive both. The online *Megillah* is posted on the newsletter page of the MCJC website: www.mcjc.org/newsletter. Any information on changes in mailing address, changes in email address, and changes in email notifications should be sent to Sarah Nathe at sarah.nathe@gmail.com. If you choose not to be a contributing member of MCJC, we request a \$25 annual fee for the *Megillah* hardcopy or email.

GREAT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS



Ronnie James; Karen Novak; Brona Lesson; Art & Rosalie Holub; Annie Lee; Barbara & Michael Newmark; Sue Siskin; Nancy Harris; Steve Antler & Carla Jupiter; Marinela Miclea; Laura Goldman & Dennak Murphy; Cecile Cutler; Lisa Weg; Patricia Franklin; Kath Disney Nilson; Jeannette Rasker & Robert Cutler; Rachel Lahn; Lew Mermelstein; Bob Evans; Myra Beals; Joan Selchau; Phoebe Graubard; Tracy Salkowitz & Rick Edwards; Katherine Sarin & Steve Schoolman; Rhoda Teplow; Linda Jupiter; John Allison & Rebecca Picard; Amy Katz;

Dawn Hofberg & Bob Schlosser; Carol & Jerry Greenberg.

To the Adele Saxe Tzedekah fund in honor of Rabbi Margaret, from Fran Schwartz.

In memory of, and in honor of Judith Meisel, Mina Cohen's mother, by Ronnie Karish & Ellen Saxe; Harriet Bye & Larry Sawyer; Art & Rosalie Holub; Rachel Binah.

In memory of Allison Bye Coutts by Harriet Bye & Larry Sawyer.

In memory of Shelley Martin's parents, Lillian & Gerry Davis, by Lee & Sally Welty

In memory of Miriam Levitan Schectar by Helen Sizemore.

In memory of Charles Steinbuck & Estelle Rosen by Elias Steinbuck.

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Everyone who lives on the Mendocino Coast, and desires to be one, is a member of MCJC. The MCJC Board of Directors has a goal of having every household become CONTRIBUTING members in 2021. We have memberships at Regular, Limited Income, and Family levels, as well as any level possible for you. Please mail your donations to MCJC, Box 291, Little River, CA 95456, or use PayPal on the MCJC website. When you make a donation in memory or honor of someone, an acknowledgment card will be sent to the individual or family. Please include their name and mailing address. Contact Donna Montag at montag@mcn.org

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The *Mendocino Megillah* is published monthly. The deadline for article submission is the 15th of the month before publication. The editor will include all appropriate material, space permitting, with the exception of copyrighted material lacking the permission of the author. Divergent opinions are welcome. Material printed in the *Megillah* does not necessarily represent the policy or opinions of the MCJC Board of Directors.



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Frankie's Pizza and Ice Cream Parlor: Homemade pizzas, Cowlick's ice cream, and other yummy things to nosh on. Beer and wine available. Open every day but Monday from 1:00 pm - 7:00 pm at 44951 Ukiah Street, Mendocino, 937-2436. www.frankiesmendocino.com

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Outreach (new to the community), Finance Committee, <i>Chai</i> on Coast	Susan Tubbesing*	962-0565	susan.tubbesing@gmail.com
Culture & Education (films/ speakers/ classes/ Women's Retreat/ <i>Chai</i> on Coast)	Harriet Bye*	937-3622	bysawyer@mcn.org
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Kabbalat Shabbat coordinator	Mina Cohen	937-1319	mcohen@mcn.org
Volunteer Coordinator	Susan Levenson-Palmer	882-1750	slevensonpalmer@gmail.com
Building Maintenance	Marnie Press*	937-1905	marniepress@gmail.com
Secretary	Raven Deerwater*	964-8333	raven@taxpractitioner.com
Justice Group Treasurer/Liaison, Finance Committee	Nancy Harris*	964-4824	nancyh@mcn.org
Landscaping	Lew Mermelstein*	650-387-3581	lewmer@gmail.com
Librarian	Nina Ravitz	357-6462	ninabo@mcn.org
Book Group/Bikkur Cholim	Fran Schwartz	937-1352	franbschwartz@gmail.com
<i>Megillah</i> Editor	Sarah Nathe	962-0565	sarah.nathe@gmail.com
Name & Address, Subscription Changes	Sarah Nathe	962-0565	sarah.nathe@gmail.com
MCJC Website	Sarah Nathe	962-0565	sarah.nathe@gmail.com
Online <i>Megillah</i>	Bob Evans	357-2817	bobevans@boborama.net
Rabbi	Margaret Holub	937-5673	mholub@mcn.org