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| **February, 2021 (5781) Mendocino Coast Jewish C✡mmunity**  ***MEGILLAH***The MCJC shul is located at 15071 Caspar Road, Caspar, CA. Call the MCJC at (707) 964-6146Send mail to P.O. Box 291, Little River, CA 95456. website: [http://www.mcjc.org](http://www.mcjc.org/) email: sarah.nathe@gmail.com |

****RABBI'S NOTES**

The new president has called for one hundred days of mask-wearing. Perfect for Purim! We’ve all learned a lot about masks this past ten months, haven’t we? Masks make it hard to recognize people. Masks mess up your skin if you leave them on too long: you get “maskne” or chapped patches. You don’t need to wear a mask when you’re home by yourself, but you gotta wear one in public. Even with a mask on, you’re not supposed to yell or sing. Masks are the twin of social distancing. You’ve probably seen the clever use of pool noodles or hula hoops or antebellum skirts to make it clear how far away six feet really is. Masks and distancing keep us out of each other’s faces.

Masks are gross. They smell bad. They get damp (which is why you wear them, right, but still…). They pull your hair or hurt your ears. You have to remember to have one with you. You have to figure out the right degree of snark or obliviousness when you pass by someone who is not wearing one. We’ve all mastered the slightly lesser serious eye-roll for the ones who sport the mask Bill Clinton-style, under their noses. Or the ones who use them as chin diapers.

Interestingly, wearing a mask doesn’t really protect the wearer so much. If someone else gets in your face and breathes heavily or coughs or shouts, your mask isn’t a very dependable barrier. But masks protect others from your spew: we wear masks to protect other people from our inner toxicity.

At Purim we celebrate the downfall of a vain and stupid king and his evil advisor. We exalt that one of our own—and a woman!—has taken the throne. We feast, we dance, we exchange gifts, we let money fall recklessly out of our pockets so that poor people can pick it up. We don’t worry if they go spend it on booze…we’re going to do the same. Over the centuries, Purim has grown into a bacchanal, a Carnivale, a festival of bawdiness and overdoing and bad taste. Yes! Bring it on!

Costumes are a big part of Purim and, in many communities, the costumes don’t have to have anything to do with the story. Any costume, any alternative personality, is welcome. Purim is the one day a year when traditional gendered prohibitions against cross-dressing were lifted in communities where they were otherwise imposed, and celebrants could revel in the presentation of their choice. The year I was in Jerusalem for Purim, I was dressed as a nun and strolled around the streets with a friend dressed as a Torah scroll. No one batted an eye. My own favorite costume ever was a gorilla suit. I don’t know why; it just suited me.

We read the *Megillah* (not this august publication, but its predecessor, the story of Esther from the Bible) cranking our groggers when we hear the tale of the evil henchman and the dumb king who over and over does his cruel bidding. Usually there is a *Purimshpiel*, the silly play that mocks whoever needs to be mocked. It is customary to be pretty tipsy while engaging in all of this, though this is somewhat controversial thing and certainly problematic for people who deal with alcoholism.

But then we take off our gorilla suits. We sober up and clean up and get to the more serious and wholesome business of preparing for Passover.

I’ve long seen Purim as the date on the festival calendar that holds space for revenge and *schadenfreude*, glee at the downfall of enemies. It is one day long. It both welcomes and contains rowdy behavior. Implicit in how we celebrate Purim is a kind of auto-critique: we make a burlesque of being commanded to do things we’re generally not permitted to do. “*This isn’t how a proper Jew acts, except for tonight*!” Tomorrow, tired and hung-over, we return to our higher selves.

I’ve taught about this before, so forgive me, please, for the repetition, but this year I find Purim both especially compelling and especially troubling. Never before have I felt myself, or heard expressed by others, more loathing for a departed administration or more exuberance at its termination—and especially that of its leader. It’s not so unusual, I guess, to wish that politicians you dislike will land up in jail. But I’ve never heard it or felt it so fervently much less seen it to be likely, and found joy in this.

I wonder… for people who see the world more or less as I do, maybe it would be superhuman not to desire a big public humiliation, comeuppance, payback for people we have seen cause so much harm and foment so much hatred. But what do we do with that very human impulse? I for one don’t want to make it the air I breathe for very long. I don’t want humiliation, comeuppance and payback to be my ongoing passion and preoccupation; I’d rather focus on healing, restoration and new life.

Some say—though not I—that comeuppance is justice. They say that it is necessary for the healthy functioning of our democracy that the cravenness of leaders is punished. I’m not questioning that need for punishment here. What I am questioning—not necessarily disowning, just gazing at—is my own pleasure in that prospect, my own hunger for retribution, not (just) because it is what democracy requires, but because it comes from a deeper, more hidden part of my own make-up.

At various hideous times in the past four years—when Neo Nazis marched in Charlottesville, immigrant children were detained behind wire fences, African-Americans were killed by police, the Capitol was invaded in early January—I heard people say something like, “Well it’s good to get all this awfulness up and visible. It’s like popping a boil. You have to let the pus drain out before it can heal.” I have wondered about that analogy. I have wondered whether these horrific events drained the pus or exacerbated the infection. I wondered whether they constituted a floor below which no one would want to go or whether they normalized violence.

All of which makes me question my long-held theory about Purim, which is that it is a useful container for the Jewish longing for revenge. Does telling the story of Ahasuerus and Haman and Esther and Mordechai drain the pustule of Jewish longing for the downfall of the enemy? Or does it celebrate that response?

I don’t know. I deeply don’t know, but we can’t have our usual mini-bacchanal this Purim anyhow, with our fun little nods toward *schadenfreude*. Maybe that’s a gift of COVID. On the night when ordinarily we would put on our costume, come to the shul and watch the *shpiel* or act in it, swing our groggers at Haman’s evil name, maybe take a little swig from Vashti’s Revenge,… what should we do instead?

Maybe, since we’ll be home by ourselves or with our own little pod, it’s time to take off our masks and contemplate our own capacity to infect others. Maybe it’s a night to look more deeply at what we really want for this world, including the people we think have put it most in peril. Maybe it’s a night to think about what happens when we breathe out, when we sing, when we raise our voices. Maybe it’s a night to try to take charge of our breath and how we use it.

If that sounds a little too serious, here’s another plan. I’ll put on my gorilla mask and suit and lie on the couch with a hot toddy in my hand. I won’t think about my enemies at all. I’ll think about all of you, my friends, in your costumes on your couches and how beautiful and silly we all are. I will just laugh and laugh and hope you’re doing the same.

**SPEAKING OF PURIM**

The holiday begins Thursday night, February 25th, and concludes at sundown on Friday, February 26th. As we have with all our holidays and celebrations this COVID year, we are reworking the details of our celebration. Stay tuned for Purim info!

**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 February). Join Zoom meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9628821372> Meeting ID: 962 882 1372; Passcode: 820822.

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| 02/06/21 |  *Yitro* |  Bob Evans |
| 02/13/20 |  *Mishpatim* |  Margaret Holub |
| 02/20/21 |  *Terumah* |  Janet Sternburg |
| 02/27/21 |  *Tetzaveh* |  Raven Deerwater |

**TORAH STUDY**

In January, we began the book of Exodus; in February, we go deeper into its mysteries. Rabbi Holub is offering weekly Torah study on the *parshah* for that week, the section of Torah read and studied each week. Join Margaret on Thursdays in February, 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. Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9628821372>

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.

**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 we’ll chat on February 9th and 23rd, on Zoom.

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, February 11th, from 5:30 to 7:30. 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 and its ongoing projects: Linda Rosengarten & Ron Hock, Annie Lee, Merry Winslow,

Carol Sack, Liz Helenchild, Sandy Edwards, Mark Kalman & Marcia Steinfeld, Sharon & Howard Lau.

**This month we feature below the words and work of Coast Climate Crew member Jennifer Kreger.**

*I had been to a climate march, read* ***Drawdown****\*, and decided to be more active in reversing the heating of Earth’s atmosphere, but had not yet found a path forward. Then Rabbi Margaret started the Coast Climate Crew as a branch of MCJC Justice Group. She suggested we pick “some concrete goal, like getting solar panels onto every church roof.”*

*The CCC picked a first goal of helping get the County’s Climate Advisory Council off the ground, but my mind’s eye kept seeing the biggest church roofs of Fort Bragg. Wade* [Gray, Jennifer’s husband] *and I met with Greg Escher, pastor of Grace Community Church, whose interest in climate change was initiated by sheltering fire refugees. Along with a farmer who was also a nurse, an outrigger-canoe-building mapmaker, a journalist specializing in poultry, and many others, Greg helped start the project now called Hubs and Routes, which in some ways is just getting going.*

# *I welcome your participation in Hubs and Routes:* ***Community Resource Hubs and Alternate Rescue Routes Throughout Mendocino Coast Health Care District.*** *Hubs & Routes provides a set of tools that you and your neighbors can use in your emergency preparedness and climate repair efforts. It is the brainchild of a grassroots organization here to support our 911 leaders and to help each other thrive through the challenging times ahead. You can learn more about our work in the February issue of the Mendocino Coast Real Estate Magazine, watch our five-minute introductory video at* hubsandroutes.net*, or email me (*refinnej@mcn.org*) with ideas and questions. The more you use Hubs and Routes’ tools, the more powerful they become.*

*The Coast Climate Crew shrank after the Advisory Council project concluded. And my focus on church roofs shifted to Hubs and Routes. The remaining crew members use our monthly meetings mostly as a time to think out loud about our projects in the presence of kind friends. Occasionally, more than one of us is active on the same project in between meetings. We all contribute during the meetings; we offer information and creative ideas; we brainstorm to solve problems related to each other’s efforts. We help each other notice how far we have come in a month or a year. We recall that we are not alone in working to restore a healthy climate. This does a lot to keep us going as organizers and activists. Consider joining (or re-joining) us if you’d like a home base from which to develop or assist with a climate project!*

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***\*****In the spring of 2017, Project Drawdown released its inaugural body of work on climate solutions with the publication of* ***Drawdown,*** *edited by Paul Hawken.* **Drawdown** *has become a seminal text on climate solutions, presenting humanity’s collective wisdom about the practices and technologies that can begin to reverse the buildup of atmospheric carbon by mid-century. The material contained within the pages of* **Drawdown** *has influenced university curricula, city climate plans, commitments by businesses, community action, philanthropic strategy, and our own Coast Climate Crew.*

**READING GROUP**

The Book Group will meet on Zoom, Monday February 15th at 2:00 PM to discuss ***The Prague Sonata***by Bradford Morrow. Music and war, war and music are the twin motifs around which Morrow, recipient of the Academy Award for Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, has composed his magnum opus, ***The Prague Sonata****.* In the early days of the new millennium, pages of a weathered original sonata manuscript—the gift of a Czech immigrant living out her final days in Queens—come into the hands of Meta Taverner, a young musicologist whose concert piano career was cut short by an injury. To Meta’s eye, it appears to be an authentic eighteenth-century work; to her discerning ear, the music is hauntingly beautiful, clearly the composition of a master. But who is the author?

The gift comes with the request that Meta attempt to find the manuscript’s owner, a Prague friend the old woman has not heard from since WWII forced them apart, and make the three-part sonata whole again. Leaving her boyfriend and home city of New York behind for the land of Dvořák and Kafka, Meta sets out on a search to locate the remaining movements of the sonata and uncover a story that has influenced the course of many lives. Then it becomes clear that she isn’t the only one after the music. Evoking decades of Prague’s tragic and triumphant history, from World War I through the soaring days of the Velvet Revolution, and moving from postwar London to the immigrant America, ***The Prague Sonata***is as epic as it is intimate.

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.

**ales vegn eydish**

Tune into YIVO’s ongoing lecture series for a ZOOM conversation with **Jeffrey Shandler about his** new book, **Yiddish: Biography of a Language**, on Wednesday, February 17th, at 10:00 AM PST. The author will be joined by other Yiddishniks: **Anita Norich**, **Ayala Fader**, and YIVO's Director of Exhibitions, **Eddy Portnoy**.

Shandler’s book presents the story of Yiddish, the vernacular of Ashkenazi Jews, from its origins to the present. He relates the multifaceted history of Yiddish in the form of a biographical profile. Through a series of thematic chapters—from “Name” and “Date and Place of Birth” to “Religion” and “Life Expectancy”—he offers insights into the dynamic interrelation of the language, its speakers, and their culture, and explores the varied symbolic investments that Yiddish speakers and others have made in the language. Shandler is Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University. His many other books include **Adventures in Yiddishland** (2005) and **Shtetl: A Vernacular Intellectual History** (2014).

The program is free, but you have to register for the Zoom at https://yivo.org/Biography-of-a-Language

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research is one of the world’s preeminent resources on **Jewish life and history in Europe; Yiddish language, literature, and folklore; the Holocaust; and the American Jewish immigrant experience.** If you are unfamiliar with YIVO’s online museum, programs, courses, exhibitions, publications, and websites, check them all out at https://www.yivo.org/Home

**MCJC BOARD MEETING**

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:00 PM, these days on ZOOM. The February meeting will be on Monday the 22nd. 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 Dobby Sommer for her enduring willingness to prepare the ***Megillah*** for mailing. In January she added another badge to her mitzvah sash. 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

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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 or receive it by email. The online ***Megillah*** is posted on the newsletter page of the MCJC website: [www.mcjc.org/newsletter](http://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**

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Claire Ellis & Chuck Greenberg in honor of Mina Cohen’s birthday.

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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 contributing memberships at four levels: Regular, Limited Income, Fair Share, and Family. For more information, see the annual letter on the MCJC website at <https://www.mcjc.org/membership-and-donations>. 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 the 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:**](http://www.frankiesmendocino.com/) 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,

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964-6209, Email: tonk@mcn.org

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