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## RABBI'S NOTES



*“Now our Sages, of blessed memory, have taught us that the human being was created only to find delight in HASHEM and to bask in the radiance of God’s Shekhinah, for this is the true happiness and the greatest of all possible delights.”*

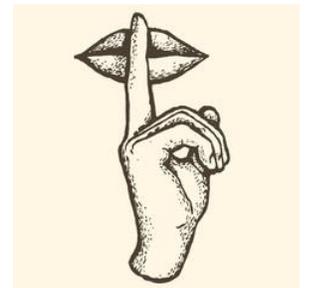
So wrote the RaMChal—Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzatto—in *The Path of the Upright* in 1740.

I haven’t been doing very much basking lately—in radiance or in my yard—what with sheltering in place, and feeling bad about complaining about sheltering in place when so many people have it so much worse, and then trying to figure out whether sitting outside with a friend, chairs six feet apart, is still sheltering in place, and if it is, is it okay to offer them a cup of tea, and then worrying about things beginning to open up, and then worrying about the xenophobia of talking about tourists like they are vectors of death while secretly fearing that they are. Oh, and my computer and the blender and our water pump and the headlight in my car and then the new computer all decided to go sideways at once. And the kitchen sink dripping relentlessly. And my intermittent cough.

Still, in the middle of all this noise, I occasionally remember for a flash that life is more than dripping sinks and Apple techs, and I feel moments of homesickness for the Shekhinah (the feminine immanent aspect of the Divine.). So today—a beautiful spring Sunday, Donna Montag’s AND Bob Dylan’s birthday, both computers working fine, water flowing, and not flowing, from the tap like it’s supposed to—I try to remember God, if not to bask, at least to recall.

During the past few Shabbat morning services I’ve read this gorgeous meditation on the *Amidah* by my brilliant pal, Maggid Jhos Singer. Its seven contemplations echo themes from the *Amidah* prayer. In the third one, Jhos asks us to consider: “What is holiness? And then: In what way am I holy? And then: What is holy about my name?” Each week I’ve paused here for a funny moment: what is holy about my name? Margaret? I don’t know.... My parents liked the name.

This is a riff on the third blessing of the *Amidah*, which says, “Holy are You and holy is Your Name.” What is holy about God’s name? (Or is it, “Name?”) God doesn’t even HAVE a Name. Or rather, God may have many Names, but we are not permitted to say them, or even really, fully to know them. Once a year, on Yom Kippur, the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies and says the Name, and we prostrate ourselves and sing, “*Baruch Shem Kavod.*” “Blessed is the Holy Name.” In the *Kaddish* prayer that we say at the end of every section of the service, we proclaim over and over that “God’s Name is beyond all words and prayers and songs and praises and consolations that can be said in this world....”



Beyond. That’s a good name. All. I like that name too. Unknown. Mystery. And maybe, borrowing from the RaMChal, “Delight” and “Radiance.”

I’ve been noticing ambient noise lately. I’ll be hustling around the house, and then sometimes I’ll just get quiet for a minute and listen. Right now I hear the super-loud tick of my office clock, chickens gabbling next-door, occasional distant car sounds, the hum of my computer, the high-pitched tone that I think is my brain. I just heard Mickey take a breath up in his loft. I think of the house as quiet, as empty of sound, but it’s not, not at all. There is a fullness here surrounding me. Fullness. I like that name too. Also Quiet. Also Emptiness.

I've been living with Mickey for something like 30 years now (it's not quite clear when we started living with each other; it was kind of limb-by-limb for the first couple years). In these quiet days of sheltering in place, I feel like I am getting to know more of him, like more of his nature keeps unfolding as we negotiate these strange times together. Unfolding. Knowing More Of. I like those Names.

I'm sure there is more. More. I love that Name! But for now I am struck by the fullness of life, the resonance, even in what seems empty. Fulsomeness. I think that's a Name.

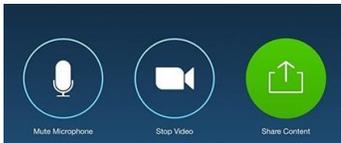
Here's a little memory that just arose as I've been thinking about all this: many years ago a friend of mine, both of whose older brothers had died some years before, made an off-the-cuff comment that she was glad that her brothers' deaths had enabled her financially to go to grad school. I don't remember the financial arrangement, just the comment. I must have responded with something along the lines of, "That's a weird way to talk about your brothers' dying." And she said, "Grief has a lot of texture. It's not all just one thing."



Everything has a lot of textures. Nothing is just one thing. This time that we're in—and every other time that we have ever been in or will be in the future—is replete. Fulsome. More than we can possibly say with all our words or know with all our years. And unfolding as we live and listen.

This to me feels radiant.

## ONWARD WE ZOOM



For the foreseeable future, we will continue to have MCJC activities on Zoom. In addition to Shabbat morning services at 10:30 AM, special holiday observances, meetings and classes, we'll continue with the Wednesday morning Cup of Coffee and the Friday evening candle-lighting and Kiddush. Rabbi Holub will send out Zoom invitations to these gatherings by e-mail. They will also be posted on the

MCJC web page. If you're not getting these invitations, please let Margaret know at [mholub@mcn.org](mailto: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.

**Candle-Lighting**—a half-hour of schmooze followed by Shabbat candle-lighting and Kiddush. Schmooze begins at 6:30 PM, candles are lit at 7:00 PM.

## SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES

Shabbat morning services are held every Saturday morning of the year from 10:30 AM until about 12:30 PM. They are held online via ZOOM. The rabbi and members of the community continue to give *davar Torah* ("word of Torah"), an interpretation (*drash*) of the weekly Torah portion (see schedule below for June). The services will be led each week by Rabbi Holub.

06/06/20	<i>Nasso</i>	Andrea Luna
06/13/20	<i>Beha'alotcha</i>	Esther Faber
06/20/20	<i>Sh'lach</i>	Raven Deerwater
06/27/20	<i>Korach</i>	Margaret Holub

## KABBALAT SHABBAT

Until things change dramatically for the better, the monthly Kabbalat Shabbat service in someone's home has been replaced with the aforementioned virtual schmooze and candle-lighting every Friday evening at 6:30 PM. Gather with members of your community, from near and far, for a little conversation, a short teaching from the rabbi, and then *bentsh likht* with everyone.

## UPDATE FROM THE RABBI & BOARD

Dear Friends:

It's almost impossible to imagine that, just over two months ago, 12 of us gathered in the little kitchen at the shul and turned out dozens of Hamentaschen for our Purim party, where nearly 50 people gathered to schmooze together and enjoy a delicious buffet, and to delight in the antics of our inspirational Purim spiel. It was a different world, one that we all long to return to...but, maybe not quite yet.

MCJC looks very different now in some ways, but, in others, we remain vibrant, warm and familiar. While we are sheltering in place, we have opened our virtual doors to old friends who can now attend Saturday Shabbat services not only from the coast but from any place in the world. The number of people attending these services has doubled and even tripled. Each week, dozens of people also take part in Zoom Shabbat candle-lighting, share coffee with Rabbi Margaret, have deep and meaningful interactions in the Elders' Conversations and Mussar classes, and continue the Justice Group's commitment to *tikkun olam*, repairing the world through action. We held a virtual seder, shared Yom Ha' Shoah with members of the Presbyterian Church, and studied into the wee hours of the night on Shavuot.



The MCJC Board has also been active and meeting on Zoom. While the larger community around us is straining to "reopen," we have been working with a committee of medical specialists to consider the best and safest options for MCJC. Jewish law teaches that to save a life is the ultimate Mitzvah. Your health is our foremost concern. Our community has many members over the age of 65 and others with health issues. So, for the moment, we are continuing to plan creative virtual programs and holiday observances.

In this vein, we are in the process of creating a little, twice monthly e-newsletter, ***CHAI on THE COAST***. This newsletter is meant to be a vehicle to focus on the richness of the MCJC community. True, there are already many websites offering an assortment of Jewish cultural experiences—films, books, and lectures—but we really want to create personal opportunities for you to share *your* talents, skills, and humor with the MCJC community. It might be a get together/discussion with six people or a series of classes, or a song circle, or joke telling. It can be serious, silly, useful or just plain fun and full of life (*chai*). There's no limit to the possibilities.



We invite all you bakers, writers, artists, cooks, teachers, gardeners, poets, photographers, yoga instructors and those with other talents to consider sharing your gifts with our community. If you would be willing to lead a one-time or ongoing gathering, please contact Harriet Bye at [bysawyer@mcn.org](mailto:bysawyer@mcn.org) or Susan Tubbesing at [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com). We will include your activity, a schedule of all activities, and information about connecting via Zoom in the twice-monthly newsletter, ***CHAI on THE COAST***.

Not comfortable hosting your own Zoom gathering, maybe we can help. Just drop us a line.

Your rabbi and board are always open to ideas that will contribute to the well-being of MCJC. Thank you for being part of this community and helping us to adapt to our new reality.

### ELDERS' CONVERSATION

The Elders continue to meet every second and fourth Tuesday at 3:00 PM. Because talking on Zoom is a little more tiring than a regular face-to-face conversation, even with brilliant and high-spirited folks, we will try ending by 4:30 PM. June meetings will be the 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. We pick topics for our next conversation at the end of the prior one. People of all ages are most welcome.

## THE ADELE SAXE TZEDAKAH FUND



From its founding, MCJC has had a *tzedakah* fund that enables us to offer financial support in times of need. It works like this: a request comes to Rabbi Holub, who writes a personal check and then is reimbursed by the Tzedakah Fund. It is totally confidential. Usually, *tzedakah* grants range from \$100-\$200. We wish we could pay rent or wages for people right now, but those are larger amounts than the fund can offer. As you are thinking about how you can help others in a difficult time, a gift to the Adele Saxe Tzedakah Fund would be a wonderful contribution.

## MITZVAH FOOD

There is delicious homemade vegetarian food in the Mitzvah Freezer at the shul and canned food in a box nearby that may be helpful to you these days. And there are Clorox disinfectants and instructions for getting food in a safe way. Please be in touch with Margaret if food would be helpful for you. We also have several generous folks who have offered to bring deliveries of groceries or other needed things, and you're welcome to contact Margaret about these as well.

In April, California launched another food program for these trying times: Great Plates Delivered: home meals for seniors. Participating restaurants deliver three nutritious meals a day to people over 65. If you are interested in this program, call (707) 463-7900 or (877) 327-1799 or email [mendocinocounty.org/greatplates](https://mendocinocounty.org/greatplates)

## MCJC JUSTICE GROUP



"The Justices" meet on the second Thursday of each month, from 5:30-7:30 PM. In June, we will meet on the 11<sup>th</sup>. All meetings for the foreseeable future will be online via the ZOOM platform. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list, please contact Margaret at [mholub@mcn.org](mailto:mholub@mcn.org) or 937-5673. Margaret will send out an email invitation to join the meeting with easy-to-follow steps for downloading ZOOM to your computer, pad, or smart phone. *Everyone* is welcome to attend.

Members came to the May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting with ideas about projects to help our local community and projects to get out the vote for the 2020 election. The following four projects received the most interest and commitment:

### Project Sanctuary and Safe Passage

Both organizations need financial help and supplies to support children and families. Participants in this project plan to raise money for items such as school supplies, food and gas cards, diapers, and sanitary items, and to solicit and gather donated supplies.

### Vote Forward Participation



As part of this nationwide program, letters are sent by volunteers to registered voters in targeted states and districts who are unlikely to vote. *Vote Forward* supplies addresses and a template for letters to registered voters in targeted states. Participants complete the letters with personal statements about why voting is important for the participant. Studies have shown that turnout among voters who receive a *Vote Forward* letter is higher than in a control group that has not received a letter. JG members will choose a state and district to target.

### Newspaper Ethics

Most members of the JG think the response to the two-page Easter paid advertisement was inadequate from **Beacon/Advocate** publisher, J.C. Meadows, and from the newspapers' owners, the Media News Group. Members of this group will develop a strategy to encourage local papers to develop standards for screening paid advertisements, especially any containing hate speech.

## Climate Protectors

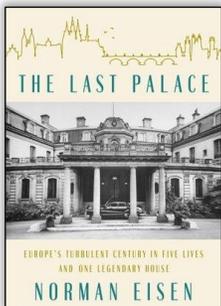
The JG Climate Crew is one of the nine Mendocino County groups participating in a Sierra Club program in nine Northern California counties. Participants learn the science of climate change so that their steps to minimize contributions to global warming are based upon a solid factual foundation. They also network with local climate groups to implement effective climate policies.



**Other projects** were also considered:

- Transportation grants to improve bicycle lanes between Fort Bragg and Mendocino
- Organize local teams of college students to help with Covid 19 tracing and data collection
- Help people with post office boxes fill out the 2020 Census form

## BOOK GROUP



MCJC Book group will meet Monday June 15<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM on Zoom to discuss **The Last Palace** by Norman Eisen. When Eisen moved into the U.S. ambassador's residence in Prague in 2011, returning to the land his mother had fled after the Holocaust, he was startled to find swastikas hidden beneath the furniture. From that discovery unspooled the remarkable stories of his home's former occupants: the optimistic Jewish financial baron who built the palace after World War I; the cultured, conflicted German general who occupied it during World War II; the first postwar U.S. envoy, who fought Soviet domination of the Czechs; and Shirley Temple Black, who came to Prague as ambassador in 1989 determined to help end totalitarianism. Through their tenures in the residence, entwined with the life story of Eisen's Czech mother, **The Last Palace** tells the story of the upheavals that transformed Europe over the past century and illustrates how we can fight

to preserve democracy today.

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](mailto:franbschwartz@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation.

## HOW TO SAY QUIDDITCH IN YIDDISH

The Harry Potter series is one of the most translated works of fiction in history. Over the last two decades, it has appeared in over 80 languages—from French and German to Gaelic and Latin--and recently a Yiddish version appeared as **Harry Potter un der filosofisher shteyn**. It is the work of translator Arun Viswanath, a scion of one of the United States' great Yiddish dynasties. If you would like to learn how it was done or get a copy in the *mamaloshen*, check out the article in **Tablet**, the online journal of Jewish news, ideas, and culture: <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/culture-news/298268/harry-potter-translated-yiddish>

## MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:30 PM, these days on ZOOM. The June meeting will be on Wednesday, the 17<sup>th</sup>. To attend part of the meeting, please contact board member Susan Tubbesing at 962-0565 or [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com), and efforts will be made to patch you in.

## NEWSLETTER THANKS

We are grateful to Nona Smith and Art Weinger for preparing the May **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 are tired of YouTube videos and want to fill your time productively, please contact Sarah at 962-0565 or [sarah.nathe@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.nathe@gmail.com).

### ONLINE MEGILLAH

The **Megillah** is available in a format suitable for online viewing. The format will adapt itself to any screen size, *including smartphones*. It is posted on the MCJC website on the newsletter page:

<https://www.mcjc.org/newsletter>

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In memory of: Frances Lehan by Jonathan & Annette Lehan.

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When you contribute 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](mailto:montag@mcn.org)

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