

Mendocino Megillah

★ Mendocino Coast Jewish Community ★

December 2007

15701 Caspar Road, Caspar, CA www.mcjc.org (707) 964-6146

Rabbi's Notes: Bearing Witness



I love writing these notes every month -- for lots of reasons, but particularly because you all make it possible for me at times to share the things that plague and perplex me. I spill them out into the Megillah, and over the ensuing month, occasionally more, I wander through town and get to have incredibly valuable conversations in the context of a community I love and trust.

So here's my latest fixation... Many of you know that I have been active for some years now with Rabbis for Human Rights-North America, particularly with their campaign against US-sponsored torture called "Honor the Image of God: Stop Torture Now." I have chaired this campaign since right after its inception (this year gratefully co-chairing with Rabbi Joey Wolf from Portland.) It's important work, and I value Rabbis for Human Rights very much as a kind of beacon in the Jewish world.

But even as the anti-torture campaign gets more successful, I get more confused. "Successful," I should say, means that we have collected lots of signatures, written various strong Jewish legal positions and liturgical pieces and such. We've made lots of brochures and postcards. Our graphics are getting pretty good (right now there is a flurry of e-mails about whether a photo on our next brochure of Rev. King and Rabbi Heschel marching together will speak to the young folks or just to the grey ponytails...) We are active in the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. We get to play with the big kids: with the Center for Constitutional Rights and Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch and other great, venerable human rights advocates. We've become the go-to address in the Jewish world about torture. (Not, unfortunately, that any other organization was racing with us to get there...)

But the more of this stuff we put out, the more weirded-out I get. Partly it is the cognitive dissonance I regularly experience of working on nice graphics about torture. Part of it is my own luddite antipathy to packaging and

marketing of any kind at all. But underneath all this is a philosophical conundrum that I just can't figure out.

Whatever other small matters of social justice that I have been involved in before this have been based in a kind of witnessing. I was never homeless myself, but I knew -- up-close and in detail -- a lot about what it meant to be homeless, at least homeless on skid row in Los Angeles in the '80s. I know less, but still a bit, about poverty and race, apartheid and reconciliation in South Africa. I have been in Israel and in the West Bank a number of times over the years and know people affected on several sides of this struggle. On a more local level, I've spent a fair amount of time with sick people and in hospitals, nursing homes and more over the years. If I have opinions about healthcare, they come from things I have seen.

I find myself thinking a lot these days about the term "bearing witness." Elie Wiesel speaks of bearing witness to the holocaust. Writers like the Chilean novelist Ariel Dorfman bear witness to political depredations that they have experienced. The Christian Peacemakers Team folks I met in Hebron speak of bearing witness to what they see going on there. When you are a witness to something, you may be right in the center of the story, or you may be over on the sidelines looking on. You may or may not be personally affected by the events you witness. But you see what you see. If you bring a report to someone, you have some degree of credibility, because you were there.

I find this position of bearing witness to be very powerful and very centering, whether it is I bringing the report or whether I am hearing another person bear witness to their own experience. Bearing witness doesn't mean that one is objective. We are all drawn to understand situations in light of our own values and experiences. We may well be highly partial to one telling of the story. That is advocacy. There is nothing wrong with this. But there is a kind of integrity in speaking what we know, what we have seen first-hand.

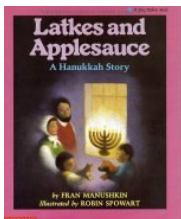
So how does one bear witness to the reality of torture, which is by its very nature hidden, secret, disguised and euphemized? Who am I to stand up and say I think that torture is wrong? Why should anyone listen to me? Yes, I can read documents -- government letters and position papers, pieces of legislation, reports compiled by advocates on all sides of the question. I can look at the photos from Abu Ghraib. I can read testimonies. I can follow the news. Anyone can. And if you read the documents that Amnesty International puts in front of you, you will most likely come to one kind of conclusion. And if you read the documents proffered by ... I don't know, Fox News perhaps, or the National Review, you will likely come to an opposite position.

Likewise, as we all know, with Jewish sources. Our side cites the eloquent 1999 Israel Supreme Court decision categorically banning torture. We cite the restrictions on self-defense in Jewish law, the ban on self-incrimination which makes torture useless. We point to the harrowing cry of *eleh ezkerah*, the account of the ten martyrs tortured by the Romans, read each Yom Kippur. Another side can cite the Jewish mandate to self-defense, the permission to make war, our distinctive experience of terrorism. And so on.

So we make our pamphlets and postcards and statements. We try to get you to sign on, to hold a banner, to make a phone call to a legislator, to write a letter to the paper. And of course the other side has their corresponding pamphlets and posters, and they wage their campaign.

Meanwhile a detainee is held in secret in a "dark site." Not even the Red Cross knows that he is there. He has not been charged with a crime. He has no representation. He cannot see the evidence against him. He is interrogated according to a set of protocols which are kept secret. Not even members of Congress know how "heightened interrogation" is conducted.

How can any of us bear witness to his predicament? How can we not?



Happy Hanukkah -- season of small lights in great darkness -- my dear community.

- Rabbi Margaret Holub

Letter from Old Friends:

Dear Margaret and the whole MCJC,

It was a deep pleasure to daven with you all this past Yom Kippur. Harriet and I felt embraced and welcomed by you all. Your warmth and openness was truly appreciated.

I'm so glad to see the Jewish Community so firmly a part of living in "the diaspora of the diaspora."

Shalom, Bert and Harriet Tepfer... in appreciation and respect for all you have done over the last 24 years since we left!

(Dr. Bert and Harriet Tepfer were among the original MCJC-niks, and they came back to visit this past Yom Kippur from their home in Seattle.)

International Human Rights Day

December 10 is International Human Rights Day, marking the date in 1948 when the nations of the world signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since this date falls so close to our Hanukkah party this year, we won't hold another Human Rights Day Seder this year. But you might want to treat yourself to a review of the Universal Declaration, whose Preamble begins by saying, "*Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...*" and goes on to enumerate a lofty vision of what full human rights would mean. You can find the text of the UDHR on-line at www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.

If any of you get inspired to make your own Human Rights Day Seder, Margaret would be happy to loan you copies of the Haggadah which she co-wrote last year with Rabbi Sheila Weinberg. Give her a call at 937-5673 or drop an e-mail to mholub@mcn.org.

The Rabbi's Getting Old!

Margaret turns fifty on December 21. She and her family invite you to join them for Kiddush and birthday cake after Shabbat services on Saturday, December 22. You are most invited, of course, to come to the service, which begins at 10:30. But don't be shy to drop by for Kiddush at 12:30 or so if that's what works for you.

Thanks For Generous Contributions in The Last Month

Gail Porcelan Sullivan and Tim Sullivan; Linda Leyva; Nancy Harris; Elaine and David Tavelli; Dina O'Sullivan; Terry Gross and Barbara Moed; Burt and Harriet Tepfer; Esther Faber; Jane Corey;

Judith and Fred Meisel to the Judith Meisel Fund In Honor of Jeff Berenson's birthday; Terry Gross and Barbara Moed in Memory of Fanny Gross; Sally McConnell In Memory of Bea Kemper; Sally McConnell In Memory of David Green; Hal and Sidra Stone In Honor of Eli Bye's Bar Mitzvah; Cindy Mettika Hoffman In Memory of Lillian Hoffman; Mina Cohen and Jeff Berenson to the Judith Meisel Fund In Memory of Esther Friedman; Benna Kolinsky and Dan Mandelbaum In Honor of our 2 sons, Mo Mandel(baum) for taking 1st place in the Comedy Central Competition, and Chaya Mandelbaum for his new law job with the Dept of Labor in NYC.

Looking To The Future

From time to time members have given additional financial help to MCJC. Upon the sale of a home, stocks or some other positive financial event they have shared their good fortune. Also, several members have remembered MCJC in their wills. These generous acts insure the long term strength and sustainability of the Jewish Community and our shul here on the Coast. We encourage you to do this if you can.

I WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE

\$ _____

IN HONOR/MEMORY OF

(name)

(ADDRESS FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT)

MAIL THIS FORM TO MCJC
BOX 291, LITTLE RIVER, CA. 95456

Do Your Part To Reduce Global Warming

It costs time and money to mail the Megillah each month by what is now called *snail mail*. It also now costs more

than it did last month! We would be happy to send you the Megillah by email if you request it. It's easy to do, and you'll actually receive your Megillah faster. If you wish to "save a tree" and do your part to reduce global warming contact Myra Beals, myrah@mcn.org, P.O. Box 1113, Mendocino, CA 95460.. Also check out the MCJC website at <http://www.mcjc.org>

Torah Portions

Dec. 1st	Vayeshev.	Gen. 37:1-40:23
Dec. 8th	Miketz	Gen. 41:1-44:17
	Special Chanukah	Num. 28:9-15 7:42-47
Dec. 15th	Vayigash	Gen. 44:18-47:27
Dec. 22nd	Vayechi	Gen. 47:28-50:26
Dec. 29th	Shemot	Ex. 1:1-6:1

Kabbalat Shabbat

This month we will be celebrating our home Kabbalat Shabbat and dinner on Friday, December 7th at the home of Marnie and Ron Press in Mendocino in Mendocino. Please call them at 937-1905 for directions and to let them know you are coming. In January we will be at the home of Mina Cohen and Jeff Berenson in Mendocino. The monthly Kabbalat Shabbat includes a song-filled short service that begins at 6:00 pm and is followed by a pot luck vegetarian dinner. If you would like to host this wonderful event in your home in future months, contact Mina at 937-1319.



Hanukah, Chanukah, Hannukah, etc.

We will have our annual Chanukah celebration on Sunday December, 9th at 5:30 pm. If you want to come early at 11am and help make Latkes (beginners welcomed) with some of MCJC's world-renowned Latke-mavens, call George at 877-3243. Everyone else can bring a salad (names starting with A to M); sour cream & applesauce (names starting N to P); or desserts (Q to Z). Please call Donna at 877-3243 and let her know what you're bringing. We are planning to have everyone sit down and be served, and want to be sure we have enough. If you have an offering

of entertainment; Donna is the person to contact for this as well. We will have our annual raffle drawing that evening. If you have a prize you would like to offer contact Fran at 937-1352. We will announce your added gifts at the party. The tickets and a tentative list of prizes will be coming to you soon. This is an important fundraiser for MCJC to help us meet our obligations for the end of the year so buy lots of tickets! The prizes are great.



Cheshire Books will have a reading of "The Chanukah Guest" during First Friday festivities, December 7th. Call the store at 964-5918 for actual reading time. They also have Chanukah books for all ages. Across the street at

Racines you will find a huge selection of Chanukah decorations, gelt, candles, etc. And don't forget Icons in Mendocino with Judaica including menorahs.

Editorial Policy

The Mendocino Megillah is published monthly. The deadline for submission of articles is the 10th of the month before desired publication. The editor will include all appropriate material, space permitting with the exception of copyrighted material that does not have permission of the author. The material printed in the Megillah is not the policy or representative of the opinions of the Board of Directors of Mendocino Coast Jewish Community. Divergent opinions are welcome. A subscription to the Megillah is included with a contributing membership of \$200.00 or more. A subscription alone to the newsletter is \$25.00 per year. Checks can be made payable to MCJC and mailed to P.O. Box 291, Little River, CA. 95456

MCJC Board Meetings

The next MCJC board meeting is scheduled for Thursday Dec. 13 and then again on Thursday Jan. 17. If you would like to attend a meeting, please contact Raven Deerwater at raven@taxpractitioner.com so he can include you on the agenda.

Changes To The Megillah

Mina Cohen has been editing and producing the Megillah for many years. We are making some changes and could use your help. Bob Evans will be taking on the editing task on a trial basis. Bob is already the editor of the E-Megillah which many of you now get in lieu of the printed version. If you have material for publication please send it to Bob at bobevans@mcjc.org. The same

parameters still apply (see Editorial Policy elsewhere in this issue).

We have migrated to a new membership database that is being maintained by Myra Beals. If you wish to change your information or subscription status you should contact Myra at myrah@mcn.org, P.O. Box 1113, Mendocino, CA 95460

We are looking for a production manager to take on the task of coordinating getting the issues out each month. If you think you might be interested in taking on all or part of this task please contact Mina at 937-1319 or mcohen@mcn.org.

בר מצווה

Please join us in celebrating as our son

Benjamin Sullivan

Is called to the torah as a Bar Mitzvah

Saturday, January 19, 2007

Three-thirty in the afternoon

Mendocino Coast Jewish Community Center

Caspar, California

Reception Immediately Following

RSVP

Gail Porcelan and Tim Sullivan

30671 Highway 20

Fort Bragg, CA 95437

gporcelan@hotmail.com

707-961-1970

D'Var Torah by Drew Duncan

The Torah portion for this week is Noah.

Ever since I saw the movie "An Inconvenient Truth" I was more aware of Global Warming. When I found out that my Torah portion was Noah, I wanted to talk about Global Warming. At first when I tried to correlate the two things they seemed totally unrelated, but when I started to look at the details, I saw many similarities. Some obvious ones are that in Noah there was a flood and if we continue to pollute and harm the earth parts of the world now will be flooded.

Little kid books picture the future of the earth as a happy, peaceful place with floating cities, flying cars and jet packs. Young adult books offer a dimmer picture of the future: The earth

as a polluted and desolate place. When you are a little kid you live in a sheltered world; protected by your siblings, parents, relatives and friends. As you get older, you see the world in a different perspective. You go from being the protected to being the protector. Much like having a Bar Mitzvah.... When I was younger I remember the story of Noah as a pretty picture book that talked about Noah as this hero that led the animals two by two onto the ark. And then the dove went out and found land and there was a rainbow. But as I read it again I see the darker side of the story.

In the portion Noah, it says that the earth was filled with robbery. This might mean that people were stealing from each other and that there was a lot of crime. But the paragraph that talks about robbery mentions “earth” four times in two sentences. So that could mean that humans were robbing the earth of its natural resources. And we still are doing that now. In retrospect, maybe that is what God meant.

It’s kind of weird. The earth is our home. We don’t usually go around our home and say, “I need a piece of wood for my project. Here. That piece looks good. I think I’ll take it, even if it’s part of the wall.” But in fact people have always treated the earth as if it is something disposable. Global warming was first announced in 1700. We’ve known about it for over a hundred years, and we are just starting to do something about it. We used to be able to do things to the earth without dire consequences. But now we can’t.

Say the world is like a huge block of stone, and human beings are sculptors. In the beginning of the project you’re able to mess up and take a huge chunk out of it by accident. But once it gets down to the actual picture and the details, you can’t mess up and make a noseless person. So it’s kind of like the earth: you can afford to make mistakes for awhile. But now that we’ve worn it so thin, the slightest thing will wreck it. The earth is like a shirt or pants or whatever. As you wear it, at first it is thick and the weave is tight. But when you wear it a lot and use it, it will start to wear down and it is really thin. So you just move your arm the wrong way and it tears a big hole in it. That’s like the earth. You have to be careful, because you can’t just go out and buy a new earth.

I have talked a lot about globe warming but I haven’t said what it really is.

When we pollute the earth it traps greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, heating up the planet. When the temperature rises ice caps start to melt, and they raise the level of the ocean.

Most people say that global warming is going to happen years from now. But in less than one month from today a certain species of salt water crab will go extinct because of global warming. That’s just one example of how global warming is happening now.

There are convection currents that go around the ocean like a kind of conveyor belt dispersing cold and hot water to different parts of the world. As Greenland melts, it cools the water and will eventually plunge England into another ice age.

The Netherlands is small country in northern Europe mostly below sea level. They need to rely on their dikes and dunes to protect them from flooding. But if the ocean keeps rising, all their work will be for naught. You know the little boy who stuck his finger in the dike? We are going to need a lot more little boys!

When we melt the ice caps, push species to extinction and harm the earth in other ways, then we are robbing the earth.

If God is part of everybody and part of the earth, then whenever we hurt the earth, we are hurting God.

God doesn’t like to be hurt! He comes to Noah and says, “Behold, I am about to bring the flood... But God stops short of actually destroying the world. He gives himself an out. He tells Noah to build an ark and bring aboard two of every kind of animal, seven pairs of every clean species, his own family and food to feed them all.

When I first I learned about Global Warning, I felt pretty helpless. I felt pretty sure that the world is going to be destroyed by all the damage we are doing. But when I thought more about it, I started to think that there may be some hope after all.

You may also be thinking, “What can we do? What can we do when huge corporations are spewing out more greenhouse gases in a minute than we will in our life time?” What can we do when we don’t litter, but huge corporations pollute a lake?

But corporation owners need to realize that they face the same dangers as the rest of us. If the world is a boat and we are all on it, maybe the corporation owners are up on the top hoping that the rescue helicopters are going to

come rescue them. But if we're all in the same world, where are the helicopters going to take them?

If the earth is like a boat and there is global warming, then the people in Florida are on the bottom deck, they are going to sink first. But if you're in Caspar --you're up on a slightly higher deck and not so close to sinking; you have a little more time to collect your belongings, visit the gift shop... But if the earth keeps heating up, then you will be one of those people close to the water too. If you're in the bottom deck then you'll care more than if you're on the top. But if you try to make it so the boat won't keep sinking at all, then you won't have to worry either.

In the Simpson's movie Homer had this big pail of pig's waste. And there was a long line at the dump because no one was allowed to dump things in the lake anymore. So he had to wait a long time to get into the dump. His friend called him up and said hey, the donut shop is giving away free donuts. So the short term thing was to dump the pig waste in the lake, and then get the donuts. Or he could wait in line and dispose of it properly. He wouldn't get any donuts, but Bart would have a better world.

Homer chose short term gratification over long term security—the wrong decision.

At my school one kid brought this toy called a Diablo, and he played with it, and then everyone else wanted one. So he started a trend. One person influenced all the other people. There are people here today from Davis, San Diego, even New York – if those people go out and tell other people it will start a trend, and soon it will spread, and more and more people will think about it.

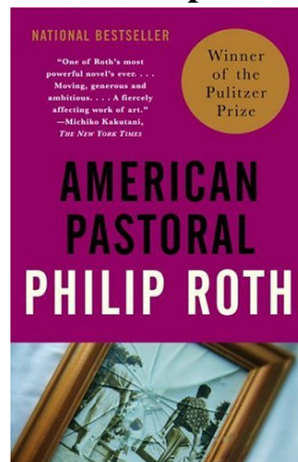
If the big corporations are the big ten-pound weight, and all of us and our friends are each a quarter penny, then one of us won't make the scale tip at all. But if you pour a bucket of quarter-pennies, the scale will tip.

Here are some “quarter-penny” actions that help: recycle, compost, carpool, walk when you can, switch to fluorescent light bulbs and anything else that uses less fossil fuel, which in turn cuts down on greenhouse gases.

Today there is no one Noah. No one person can save the earth by themselves. You have to be the Noah. If you carpool, you are Noah. If you compost, you are Noah. If you walk instead of drive, you are Noah. Everything you do to stop global warming is bringing two more animals on to the ark.

Shabbat Shalom!

Book Group



In December the book group will be reading and discussing “American Pastoral” by Philip Roth. While this novel is set in the close of the 20th century as it draws to an uneasy close, it resonates to current times. Philip Roth weaves a story that includes all the promises of prosperity, civic order, and domestic bliss. Roth's protagonist is Swede Levov, a legendary athlete at his

Newark high school, who grows up in the booming postwar years to marry a former Miss New Jersey, inherits his father's glove factory, and move into a stone house in the idyllic hamlet of Old Rimrock. And then one day in 1968, Swede's beautiful American luck deserts him when his adored daughter, Merry, becomes a sullen, fanatical teenager—a teenager capable of an outlandishly savage act of political terrorism. The group will be meeting at the home of Rosamond Gumpert Jorengesen again on Mon. Dec. 17

. If you need more information please call Fran at 937-1352. In January, if you want to read ahead we will be reading Alegria Goodman's “Intuition.” The books are available at Cheshire Books in Fort Bragg for a 10% discount if you let them know you are in the Jewish Book Group. We welcome new people at any time.

Calendar

Dec 1	Shabbat Minyan	10:30 am
Dec. 4-12	Chanukah	
7	Kabbalat Shabbat - Press	6 pm
8	Shabbat Minyan	10:30 am
9	Chanukah Party	3:30 pm
11	Rosh Hodesh Tivet	
13	Board meeting	5:30 pm
15	Shabbat Minyan	10:30 am
??	Book Group	3:00 pm
22	Shabbat Minyan	10:30 am
29	Shabbat Minyan	10:30 am

Jan 19	Sullivan Bar Mitvah	
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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. Live music weekly, all ages welcome. Open daily from 11 - 9 at 44951 Ukiah Street, Mendocino, 937-2436.

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