

# Mendocino Megillah



Mendocino Coast Jewish Community

February 2009 (5769)

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PDF Version: <http://www.mcjc.org/mjoldart/Megillah/MJMM0000.htm> Email: [megillah@mcjc.org](mailto:megillah@mcjc.org)



## Rabbi's Notes:

### Perspectives on Human Rights

I'm just back from my week of playing professor -- actually a day of playing professor and a week of relishing being, in all sincerity, a student. I was part of

the faculty, along with a nun and an imam, for a little inter-term seminar on human rights in the three Abrahamic traditions. The course was at the Dominican School for Philosophy and Theology, part of the Graduate Theological Union.

The idea of the course was to look at how Judaism, Christianity and Islam might each set about to frame the idea of universal human rights -- which is in many ways quite a modern notion -- in terms of the theology and sacred texts of each. But it was also a chance to just hear the thinking process of each tradition, at least as it was channeled by one practitioner apiece.

Being the spokesperson for the oldest of the faiths, I went first. And I gave exactly the presentation that any of you would expect me to give. I talked about how millennia of rabbis have struggled with basic ideas of human rights: in particular with the problems of self-defense and of universalism and particularism. I talked about the biblical passage which says that if a thief breaks into your house at night, you can kill the intruder; but if she breaks in by day, you can't. I talked about how some teachers say that "love your neighbor" means only your fellow Jew, while others say it means all of humanity. I talked about how in so many cases, history trumps text, especially how the recent experience of the holocaust has made talk of human rights, on all sides of the debate, so intense. I talked about -- and I think I demonstrated -- how noisy and messy and lively Jewish tradition often is, how difficult it is to say, "Judaism says X."

Sister Marianne Farina taught next. I am just giving a few soundbites from many hours of closely-reasoned lecture. And of course she is only one teacher, from only one corner of an enormous faith tradition. Still, I found her talk fascinating, for reasons rather different

than I expected. At the very beginning of her lecture she read a passage from one of the gospels and then just sat silently for a few minutes. I looked around and saw that the other students had their eyes closed. What were they doing? At one point she listed six ways that Christians might approach scriptures:

- as the command of God;
- as a moral reminder;
- as a call to liberation;
- as a response to revelation;
- as a call to discipleship;
- and as responsive love.

I know that many of these words are as resonant and as full of specific meaning for Christians as words like dialogue, debate and study are to Jews. I understand very little of how a word like "discipleship" sounds in the ears and soul of a Catholic. Still, it may sound funny for me to say, but I was struck by how inspiring and personal the bible must be for someone who reads it as Sr. Marianne described.

She herself has spent many years in developing countries -- fighting alongside of indigenous people in Bangladesh against cutting the teak forest, working alongside Mother Theresa in India and more. She talked about globalization, about climate change and its effect on the world's poorest people, about third-world debt, about income inequality, with a powerful, passionate political critique. So, when she offered one more example, in some specific instance or other, this time of an evangelist she admires, who has managed to distill the truths of Christianity down to a few stories so that he can bring them effectively to the Masai in Tanzania, I sat up in surprise.

"Wait a second! Did I hear you right? Are you speaking approvingly of evangelizing native people in Africa? Isn't that just another kind of imperialism???" She could hardly understand my question. Of course she was speaking positively of evangelism. Other students (almost all Christians) joined in the general puzzlement about my reaction. Which in turn led to a long and

thoughtful exchange about what it means to belong to a tradition that sees itself as having 'good news' for all of humanity -- in contrast to belonging to a tradition which is basically tribal and concerned about its own survival and development. Suddenly all kinds of things fell into place for me in that conversation -- why universalism might come so much more easily to a Christian than to a Jew; why missionaries often do such a staggering mix of the best and the worst for poor communities worldwide; why it takes more translation to motivate the Jewish community to care about global inequality than it seems to in Christian communities...

And that was only Day Two. After class that day I went downtown and bought my first Quran. I was afraid even touching it -- was I allowed to own one? What if I dropped it? Could I put it in my book bag next to my copy of Craft Magazine? Our teacher the next day was Imam Khalid Sidiqqi, Imam of the Islamic Center in San Jose and professor of Islam at several community colleges around the Bay. One of the students mentioned to me before class that Dr. Sidiqqi is a "hafez," the title for someone who has memorized the Quran, and that he also has a doctorate in philosophy. He is from India, small of stature, with a strong accent and some of the combination of twinkle and authority that I associate with my beloved Archbishop Tutu.

He began immediately by asking if we had questions. Questions about what? He welcomed us to ask him anything we wanted to know, about any aspect of Islam. Sr. Marianne suggested that someone try to recap the conversation about evangelism from the day before. What did he think about evangelism? He began quoting the Quran (which he always spoke of as the Holy Quran, making me wonder how I should cite his holy book here) by chapter and verse: "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256); "If it were God's will, then everyone would have believed" (10:99 -- that's a paraphrase.) Jews in particular are the chosen people, with a special status of goodness -- if you fulfill your responsibility to God and creation, you continue to be chosen (3:110.)

He moved on to the subject of the day, citing verses about the foundation of universal human rights in the Quran. He had a big stack of index cards in his hand, each covered with tiny handwriting. Chapter and verse about peace, justice, fairness, love, compassion, reconciliation between enemies. At some point people in the class started asking all the hard questions that any of us would ask: about the behavior of so-called Islamic states, about the harsh punishments of Sharia law, about Osama Bin Laden and September 11, about Saudi Arabia and the Taliban. He maintained his grace,

offered reasoned responses to all. Some of his answers worked for me; others did not. I felt for him, standing before yet another audience of people who are fundamentally scared of and mystified by his faith.

Afterwards he and I went out to lunch (at Saul's Jewish deli!) He liked my little car, chatted about having many different teaching positions, talked about his three children. He said he'd never been up to Mendocino and would love to visit. I almost hated to get back to all the big questions that were still kicking around in my head. I asked him at one point if he had ever had doubts about his faith, a "dark night of the soul," or anything like that. "Oh no!" he said without hesitation, "the Holy Quran says that doubt is the enemy of faith."

Now back home I find myself thinking about that line over and over: "doubt is the enemy of faith." For me, doubt, questioning, wondering, worrying, trying thoughts on for size, shedding the ones that don't fit, poetry, paradox, puzzlement -- all of this has been the source of whatever pieces of faith I now have. I do have faith, but it's in ounces, not gallons. What would it be like to see myself as having "good news" for humankind? What would it be like not to doubt? What would it be like to have a vision for the world?

I don't have a punchline to any of this -- just more questions, of course. -- Rabbi Margaret Holub

### **Tu B'shevat – New Years for the trees!**

Tu B'shevat, possibly the most beautiful holiday of the year, comes this year on Sunday evening, February 8. We will have our customary seder of fruits and wines, each blessed and ingested with prayers for the well-being of the natural order. The seder will begin at 5:00 PM at the shul. All are most welcome -- please bring a vegetarian dish to share.



Tu B'shevat, the full moon of deep winter, is the date on which the mystics say that the Tree of Life is judged for life or death in the Garden of Eden. The kabbalists of Safed in the 1700's gave us the holy ritual of blessing and eating fruits which carry our consciousness up the Tree.

For people of any age who may find a whole seder hard to sit through, please feel free to come at 5:00 and stay for the first of the four "worlds" of fruit, song and blessing, then slip out. The table will be beautiful, the shul candle-lit. There will be music and chant. Young children might find it exciting just to see the wonderful

fruits and participate in a part of the whole ritual journey.

If you would like to help with the holy task of readying the table and preparing the fruits, please contact Luna at 972-4494 or [aluna@mcn.org](mailto:aluna@mcn.org). (mh)

### Exodus and Passover Class

Margaret invites all interested folks to a four-session class on Exodus and Passover -- alternate Tuesdays, beginning February 3, 6:00 - 8:00 PM at the shul. Subsequent classes will be on 2/17, 3/3 and 3/24 (not 3/17.) We will hold the Torah account of the exodus from slavery in Mitzrayim in one hand and the haggadah's telling in the other. What does each offer the other? Together we will create a seder supplement that brings our own explorations and issues to the table. This class is being offered in loving memory of Ella Russell, who loved the Passover seder and brought new understanding to the holiday each year. Please let Margaret know if you would like to participate -- mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673.

### In Memory of Three Rabbis

In the same mid-January week, three great rabbis of our time all passed on. Rabbi Allan Lew of San Francisco, who integrated his passion for Zen Buddhism with Judaism; Rabbi Michael Singer, professor at the University of Notre Dame, a leader in dialogue and reconciliation with the Catholic community; and Rabbi Aryeh Hirschfield of Portland, Oregon, peacemaker, author of chant and song, long connected with our friends at Temple Beth El in Eureka. All three rabbis were in their sixties, and each, in his unique way, enlarged the tent of friendship, learning and peace. May they all be remembered for a blessing. (mh)



### The Whole Mishpocha: Cheder by Mina Cohen

Our program for children has begun at Frankie's and we are having great fun. We've begun a tile making project and are learning the stories of the torah. You can join us at anytime. This program is open to all elementary aged school children. If you are not currently on our mailing list and would like your child to attend contact Jessica at 937-2115. This month we will also be celebrating Tu Beshvat, the Jewish celebration of nature (see elsewhere in this megillah for time, etc.) It's a great holiday for children.

### Kabbalat Shabbat

This month we will be celebrating our home Kabbalat Shabbat and dinner on Friday, February 13th at the home

of Mina Cohen and Jeffrey Berenson in Mendocino. Please call them at 937-1319 for directions and to let them know you are coming. In March we will be celebrating at the home of Dawn Hofberg and Bob Shlosser. 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. (mc)

### MCJC Board meeting dates

The next MCJC board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 12th and then again on Thursday, March 12th. If you would like to attend a meeting please contact Raven Deerwater at [raven@taxpractitioner.com](mailto:raven@taxpractitioner.com) so he can include you on the agenda. (mc)

### Book Group



The book group will be meeting on Monday, February 23rd at the home of Rosamond Gumpert Jorgensen. Please call Fran Schwartz at 937-1352 if you wish to join us. We will be reading Joseph Epstein's book "Fabulous Small Jews". This book is a series of short stories by a New Yorker writer, detailing the lives of ordinary (hence the "Small") Jewish people living in Chicago. In March we will be reading "The Gravedigger's Daughter" by Joyce Carol Oates. The book is available at Cheshire Books in Fort Bragg, where you will receive a 10% discount on MCJC Book Club books. (mc)

### February Tisch

We will come together for the Tisch Friday, February 27th at 6:00 pm. Come at 4:00 to bake challah and set up with the kids who will also be busy working on their project (see The Whole Mishpocha). The Tisch is the last Friday of the month and is a great opportunity to celebrate Shabbat together and meet and greet with others in the Jewish community, "younger" and "elder". We provide the vegetarian dinner; you provide the "schmooze." Bring desserts if you like. (mc)

### MCJC Fabulous Dinner ... Returns!

The Mendocino Coast Jewish Community is holding its benefit dinner at the Ledford House in Albion this year on Tuesday, March 31st. If you have attended before you know what an absolutely wonderful night this has always been. The dinner benefits the programs of the Mendocino Coast Jewish Community offering cultural and educational programs to the entire community. This year's dinner will start at 6:00 pm with appetizers created by some of the coast's best Jewish cooks and dinner will commence at 7:00 pm. We will freely

pour excellent wines and some made by our own MCJC winemakers. The dinner will be \$45.00 per person. There will also be silent auction items but best of all is the opportunity to “schmooze” with your friends and neighbors. **SAVE THE DATE-MARCH 31ST.** If you would like to offer an auction item please email Nona Smith at [nonarenee1@aol.com](mailto:nonarenee1@aol.com)

If you would like to reserve a place contact Harriet Bye ([bysawyer@mcn.org](mailto:bysawyer@mcn.org)) at 937-3622 or Mark Zarin ([mzarin@mcn.org](mailto:mzarin@mcn.org)) at 937-0341. See you there. (hb)

### **Jewish Heritage Night, Golden State Warriors**

The Golden State Warriors basketball team and the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco present the 4th annual Jewish Heritage Night. The Warriors will play the Utah Jazz on Sunday, March 1st at 6:00 pm at Oracle Arena. There will be a family friendly tailgate party from 3:30 to 5:30 pm featuring Jewish music, dancing, kosher food, and raffle prizes. Every ticket includes a free commemorative Jewish Heritage Night tee shirt. For more information contact Chris Murphy at (510)986-2214 or via email at [ctmurphy@gs-warriors.com](mailto:ctmurphy@gs-warriors.com).

### **Jewish Chicken Soup Day**

On Wednesday, February 11th at 1 p.m. a group will gather at the home of Carla Jupiter & Steve Antler on the Comptche-Ukiah Road to make 4 large pots of chicken soup. The soup will be put into glass containers and frozen so that it can be provided to people who need some warm, nutritious food. If you want to be part of this service event, please call Steve Antler 937-0835, [santler@mcn.org](mailto:santler@mcn.org) (sa)

### **TODAH RABAH! (Great Thanks) For The Following Generous Contributors Who in the Last Month Helped Sustain Our Community**

Ruth and S.A. Rosenblum Ephraim; Mark and Deanna Apfel; David Saxe; Susan Tubbesing; Joan Benjamin; Alena Deerwater; Rachel Lahn and James Young; Nancy Harris; Harvey Hoehstetter and Lari Shea; Harold Hauck and Gloria Liner; Fran and Roger Schwartz; Naomi Kerwin; Marilyn Rose and James Blackstock; Orah Young; Karen and Leonardo Bowers; Linda K. James and Richard Sacks-Wilner; Karen Rakofsky; Gerry and Sara Kreger; Bonnie Novakov Lawlor; Sydelle Lapidus; Helen Jacobs; Steve Antler and Carla Jupiter; Susan Hofberg; Eileen Lopate; Bob Ross and Ayn Ruymen; Hal and Sidra Stone; Bob Bushansky; Cynthia Copenhagen; Ceril Lisbon; Roberta and David Belson; Michael and Anita Korenstein; Danleigh

Spievak; Mindy Rosenfeld and Hilleary Burgess; Polly Green; Missy and Jesse Fiedler; Betty Deutsch; Terry Gross and Barbara Moed; Harriet Bye and Larry Sawyer; Esther and Sam Markson; Mina Cohen and Jeff Berenson and Betty Barber.

Sandy Glickfeld In Honor of Rabbi Margaret's Solstice birthday; Gail Porcelan Sullivan and Tim Sullivan In Memory of Bill Porcelan and Terrie Sosinsky; Dawn and Bob Hofberg Schlosser In Memory of Lilian and Abraham Ellison Sommer; Margery Cahn In Memory of Albert Cahn and In Honor of Fran Schwartz' birthday; and Susan Miller In Honor of Ella Russell

In Memory of Abby Markson; Esther Markson; Anne Bennett and Aaron Weintraub (mz)

### **The Mendocino Maven**



A big Mazel Tov goes out to Lilly Deerwater (daughter of Raven and Alena) who was accepted early to Vassar College and will be heading back to, Poughkeepsie, NY in the fall.

The Chanukah party was a great success again this year, due in large part to the enthusiastic efforts of the legion of volunteers who acted as latke makers, waiters, decorators, raffle organizers, prize donors, etc.

Ella Russell passed into the next world on New Years Eve, at home in Elk, surrounded by her family and friends, after a challenging and courageous struggle with brain cancer. Over the years, Ella deeply touched (literally and figuratively) many people in the Jewish community, myself included, and she will be profoundly missed.

Thanks to all those who supported and cared for Ella during her illness, participated as members of the Hevra Kadisha, braved a frigid windy winter day to attend her funeral on the Elk bluffs and provided a minyan so her sons could sit Shiva. The eulogy that Margaret gave at the Elk cemetery will be posted in the “Recollections” section of the MCJC website and an article Ella wrote on sitting Shiva will be posted in the “Articles” section.

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Mark your calendars! The MCJC benefit dinner is coming up on March 31<sup>st</sup>. This is an important fund raiser for the MCJC and is always a lot of fun. In the somewhat nearer future there is the Kabbalat Shabbat potluck, Tisch, the Tu B'Shevat seder of many fruits and kabalistic mysteries, and the always amazing Saturday morning Torah Service. During this cold and dark time

of year, it seems especially important to get out and be a part of the community.

Rumor has it that Austin, Tyler and Chloe Grinberg spent their Chanukah in Africa. Austin, Tyler and their Dad hiked up Mt Kilimanjaro and threw a Frisbee, and Chloe volunteered at an orphanage.

If you have items of interest to the community or simchas (joys) you would like to share, please send them to [bobevans@mcjc.org](mailto:bobevans@mcjc.org). - Bob Evans

### MCJC Photography + Chanukah Pix

I have to confess that as website editor, I have not been very eager to post new photos to the website, primarily because it is quite tedious and time consuming. Thanks to advances in web tools, there are now a variety of highly automated websites that support the sharing of photos online. IMHO (in my humble opinion) the best of these is Flickr.com.

I have set up an account on Flickr and created a link on the MCJC website to it in the "Photos" section. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mendocinocoastjewishcommunity/>

If you have digital photos of MCJC events you would like to share with the world, please send them to me as JPEG email attachments [bobevans@mcjc.org](mailto:bobevans@mcjc.org). (The larger the image the better and a little info like the date and event would be great.)

Annie Becket, retired screenwriter and talented photographer, took photos at the Chanukah party and we have posted them on Flickr, check them out at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mendocinocoastjewishcommunity/sets/72157612200435026/> (rge)

### 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. (mz)

### Subscription and Notification

If you would like to subscribe to this publication and/or receive email notifications for events, changes, or important news from MCJC contact Myra Beals at [myrah@mcn.org](mailto:myrah@mcn.org) or send to P.O. Box 1113, Mendocino. Let her know if you prefer to receive a printed Megillah

coming in the mail or by email. If you would like to receive notifications by email please indicate that as well. Subscription to the Megillah is included with a contributing membership of \$200. or more. A subscription alone to the newsletter is \$25. per year. Checks can be made payable to MCJC and mailed to P.O. Box 291, Little River, CA. 95456. (mc)

### 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. (mc)

### Financial Contributions

Contributions to the MCJC can be sent to: **MCJC, Box 291, Little River, CA 95456**. Please specify if they your contribution is in memory or honor of someone, and your name and mailing address. Thanks! (mz)

### A Touch of Talmud

(Margaret recently remarked that not one in 50 American Jews know any Talmud. I hope that this isn't true, but just in case, here are a few lines from Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter 4:1)

Ben Zoma would say: Who is wise? One who learns from every man. As is stated (Psalms 119:99): "From all my teachers I have grown wise, for Your testimonials are my meditation."

Who is strong? One who overpowers his inclinations. As is stated (Proverbs 16:32), "Better one who is slow to anger than one with might, one who rules his spirit than the captor of a city."

Who is rich? One who is satisfied with his lot. As is stated (Psalms 128:2): "If you eat of toil of your hands, fortunate are you, and good is to you"; "fortunate are you" in this world, "and good is to you" in the World to Come.

Who is honorable? One who honors his fellows. As is stated (I Samuel 2:30): "For to those who honor me, I accord honor; those who scorn me shall be demeaned.

[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/2032/jewish/Chapter-Four.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2032/jewish/Chapter-Four.htm)

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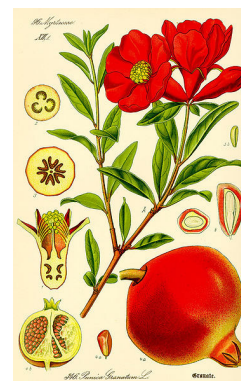
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**« February 2009 »**

Candle lighting times are for Manchester, CA, to generate times for your location are for details on the Torah portions go to <http://www.hebcal.com/shabbat/> MCJC events are **bolded**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> <b>6:00p Pesach Class</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> <b>5:23p</b> Candle lighting	<b>7</b> <b>10:30a Shabbat Minyan</b>  <a href="#">Parashat Beshalach</a> <b>6:54p</b> Havdalah
<b>8</b> <b>5:00p Erev Tu B'Shevat Seder</b>	<b>9</b> <a href="#">Tu B'Shvat</a>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> <b>11:00 Chicken Soup Day</b>	<b>12</b> <b>Board Meeting</b>	<b>13</b> <b>5:31p</b> Candle lighting <b>6:00p Kabbalat Shabbat</b>	<b>14</b> <b>10:30a Shabbat Minyan</b>  <a href="#">Parashat Yitro</a> <b>7:02p</b> Havdalah
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> <b>6:00p Pesach Class</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> <b>5:39p</b> Candle lighting	<b>21</b> <b>10:30a Shabbat Minyan</b>  <a href="#">Parashat Mishpatim</a> <a href="#">Shabbat Shekalim</a> <b>7:10p</b> Havdalah
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> <b>Book Group</b>	<b>24</b> <a href="#">Rosh Chodesh Adar</a>	<b>25</b> <a href="#">Rosh Chodesh Adar</a>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <b>5:47p</b> Candle lighting <b>5:00p Shabbat Tisch</b>	<b>28</b> <b>10:30a Shabbat Minyan</b>  <a href="#">Parashat Terumah</a> <b>7:18p</b> Havdalah

**« February 2009 »** change view: [ [event list](#) | [calendar grid](#) ] [ [month](#) | [entire year](#) ]

**MCJC BOARD & USEFUL NUMBERS**

<b>Rituals and Holidays (including Hevra Kadisha/Cemetery)</b>	<b>Joan Katzeff *</b>	964-9161	jkatzeff@mcn.org
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<b>Community Care (rides, help when ill)</b>	<b>Karen Rakofsky *</b>	937-5522	nerak@mcn.org
<b>Outreach (new to the community)</b>	<b>Donna Montag*</b>	877-3243	montag@mcn.org
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