

# Mendocino Megillah

**Mendocino Coast Jewish Community**

**December 2009 (5770)**

The Jewish Center (Shul) is located at 15071 Caspar Road, Caspar CA.  
The MCJC can be reached at (707) 964-6146 Mail can be sent to PO Box 291, Little River, CA. 95456  
website: <http://www.mcjc.org> email: [mcjcmegillah@mcjc.org](mailto:mcjcmegillah@mcjc.org)  
PDF Version: <http://www.mcjc.org/mjoldart/Megillah/MJMM0000.htm>  
Facebook: [MCJC - Mendocino Coast Jewish Community](#) MCJC Kids



**Chanukkiyot by Annie Becket, Dec 2008**

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mendocinocoastjewishcommunity/3170396988/>



## **Rabbi's Notes: Mussar in Action**

Oy, I'm hooked on *mussar*! It hasn't even been a week since our first class (which I'm nominally teaching but also trying to participate in as the novice I am,) and it's already changing how I look at life – my own, anyhow. □□

*Mussar* is about cultivating positive *middot* – measures, character traits, soul characteristics, plain old behaviors. It's about being the right amount of patient, steady, honest, kind and so on. But, lest it sound like the Girl Scouts, it's about turning a telescope within to look at the mechanics of how we actually live. What do I actually do all day? How do I decide whether to do this or that? What effects to my actions have on everyone around me?□□

I remember, when I was about eight, my friend and classmate, Mike Lingle – a guy who was just so smart that the fun of thinking rolled out of him all the time – started making flow charts of a day of life. Alarm clock rings. You can: get out of bed / roll over and go back to sleep. Say you decide to get up. You can: find your clothes and put them on / go into the kitchen and make yourself some chocolate milk / pick a fight with your sister. Say you opt for the chocolate milk. You can...□□

Who knew that Mike was teaching *mussar* at age eight? Each of these nodes on his flow chart is a *bekhirah* point, a place where a decision is made. Get dressed or pick a fight? What if you are working on the *middah* of *zerizut* – zeal, passion, showing up – and your sister is trying to talk you into skipping school? Maybe it is actually better in this moment to fight, to stand up in the face of temptation, than to be your usual acquiescent and apathetic self. Maimonides counsels the middle path; you can have too much humility, too much self-effacement, for example.□□

The classical *mussar* teachings go back to the Bible and Talmud, certainly to the Golden Age of Maimonides, Rabbeinu Bachya, the RaMCHaL and others. But the technology – how you actually implement the teachings – is a more modern enterprise. The *mussar* movement began in the mid-nineteenth century in Vilna, flowered for a generation or two, then went dormant with much of European Judaism. It is being revived these days by several contemporary teachers and their students and has even made its way to the North Coast of California. I've been passively interested in *mussar* for some time. But it was the inspiration of Caroline Isaacs up in Eureka which motivated a number of us to get serious about learning and trying these practices.□□

In my beginning efforts, it seems to me that the heart of the work is looking closely and realistically at how I actually operate. It is in a sense looking at the flow chart of each day and noting which paths I have chosen.

Then it is a matter of thinking about the moral and spiritual content of these little daily choices. The *mussar-dik* way to look at them, at least according to some teachers, is not in terms of whether they make me happy or not, but how they affect others. Do they, in the words of Rabbi Simcha Zissel of Kelm, “bear the burden of the other?” □

□ So, let’s see, yesterday morning... It’s cold outside. I have plans in the afternoon (to see the incomparable Ronnie Gilbert – fantastic!) The Sunday Times has not yet appeared in our box, despite my sweet Mickey biking out there three times to retrieve it for me. I’m bundled up in my big red chair, drinking tea. And I find myself thinking about choices before me. I could finish last week’s New Yorker. I could get up and get moving, maybe clean things up a bit around here. I could make us breakfast. I could make some phone calls I need to make. Meanwhile I keep bouncing up and checking my e-mail, as though some message is going to come and put me on my path.□□

*Bechirah* points. I can see myself sliding reflexively towards the New Yorker option, as I kind of knew I would. It’s like rolling over and going back to sleep. But some new little part of me asks, ‘who does it serve?’ I get a glimpse of the avoidant part of me duking it out with the part that cherishes those quiet morning minutes. (I decide that a half-hour of reading and tea-drinking will be plenty, to be followed by some more virtuous enterprises. I more or less keep my bargain with myself. I think that in the tiniest possible way it actually does allow me to do a bit of good with my morning.)□□

All of this may sound obsessively minute, and I suppose it is. But somehow in it all I feel a little sigh of relief. Because I, like all of us, actually struggle all the time with these tiny little *bechirah* points – but usually below the level of conscious choice. And there is something exhausting and depleting about feeling like life is slipping by – another hour, another day, and I really didn’t live it as fully as I would wish. Now, mussar tyro that I am, I am trying to see myself in action (and in inaction!) It’s like I am allowing myself to see the creaky joints of how I move through daily life. And knowledge is power. □□

The next step is to try to move in the direction of positive middot. But I don’t know how to do that part yet... □□

Someone in our class posed the fundamental question: why try to be better? And, even while I tried to conjure up how the RaMCHaL or Maimonides or Rabbi Salanter would respond, my wise fellow students began offering up their own answers: to let your soul shine more brightly, to connect with God, to move in the direction of love.□□

It seems clear to me, if not always easy to articulate, that life is precious and brief, and there are choices in every moment that bring more radiance and connection and love into life, or the opposite. At some level there are much more important issues in life than whether I read a magazine or put the toast in the toaster. But at some level, all of life is individual moments in which we do one thing or another or another.□□

-- In the middle of writing this I got a call from a friend and had one of those long chats about the big picture, life choices, calling, passionate commitments and so on. And now I return to Mike Lingle’s flow charts of daily life. What was missing from his drawings were those occasional bigger, more impactful moments in which we make decisions that significantly affect our lives (poor guy, he was only eight...) At these bigger choice points we commit ourselves to particular people, beliefs and practices, and these may at times call for larger and more dramatic actions than are usually the material for *mussar* reflection.□□

But even these are lived out moment-to-moment, in the details of how one spends a chilly Sunday morning. And even these call for looking at the bones of those decisions, which *middot* are in play, whether they are balanced, how they affect and serve and bear the burdens of others.□□ This morning, thinking a bit more about how I’ve been tending to let time slip by, I decided to make a little schedule for the next couple of hours. Just an experiment in the *middah* of *seder*, orderliness, keeping on-track. Time for Megillah-writing is just about up. And I think I’m just about at the end here. - Rabbi Margaret Holub © 2009

## **Mussar Classes Continue**

In December the Mussar class will meet on Wednesdays, Dec. 2 and 16, 5:00 – 7:00 PM at the shul. At each

class we will study and discuss another middah (personality trait) from the list proposed by Rabbi Mendel of Satanov. On December 2 we will study *savlanut* (patience.) On December 16 we will study *sefer* (order.) January dates are January 6 (*haritzut* – decisiveness) and January 20 (*nekiyut* – cleanliness.) This is an ongoing class, meeting every other week through the year. But you are welcome to come in for individual sessions if you would like to. (mh)

### Sharing Joys and Sorrows with our Community

We want to be more systematic about letting each other know when someone in our community has a death in their family, or a child or grandchild born, or other life-changing news. If you would like for an announcement to go out to the MCJC community by e-mail and/or in the Megillah of such an event in your life, please let Margaret know at 937-5673 or [mholub@mcn.org](mailto:mholub@mcn.org). This will make it more possible for us to reach out to each other in times of joy and sorrow. (mh)



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### When People Are in Need of Help

Our fantastic Bikkur Holim (visiting the sick) committee has put together a long list of specific tasks which people sometimes need help with. These include rides, house cleaning, bill-paying, being read-to, simple home repairs, dealing with insurance papers and many other such mitzvahs. You may have seen the sign-up sheets posted on the wall of the shul kitchen. Just a heads-up: at the MCJC Hanukkah party on December 13, there will be an opportunity for everyone to sign up to be available for your favorite mitzvah, so that when a need arises in our community, our Bikkur Holim will know who to call.

The Bikkur Cholim Caring Committee is preparing a list of local resources to help people in our community who are ill or housebound **to access necessary services above and beyond what people can volunteer**. If you'd like **for your business or professional services** to be included on the Resource List, please send your name, phone number and the type of service you provide - e.g. bill paying, house cleaning, caregiving, handyman, etc. - to Mina Cohen at [mcohen@mcn.org](mailto:mcohen@mcn.org). (mh/mc)



### TODAH RABAH! (Great Thanks)

**For The Following Generous Contributors Who in the Last Month Helped Sustain Our Community**

Joan and Norman Rudman; Sally and Lee Welty; Jennifer Kreger and Wade Gray; Susan Hofberg; Rena Blauner; Gerry and Sara Kreger; Donna Feiner; Bonnie Novakov Lawlor; Rosalie and Art Holub; Roberta and David Belson; Irv and Rosalie Winesuff; Ruth and S.A. Rosenblum Ephraim; Ari and Carol Schnieder; Betty Deutsch; Mina Cohen and Jeff Berenson; Nancy Harris

Sandy Glickfeld In Honor of the High Holyday Torah readers; Dan Mandelbaum and Benna Kolinsky In Honor of our beloved Congregation; Nancy and Richard Banker In Honor of Lillian Stein Kohl Sirmeny; Dawn and Bob Hofberg Schlosser In Memory of Lilian Sommer's yahrzeit; Bernice and Harold Zoller In Honor of Helen Jacobs' 60th birthday. (mz)



### Mendocino Maven by The Shadow

Chanukah (הכּוּנִיָּה or Hannukkah if you prefer) is starting early this year, sunset on December 11th, and ends on the 19th, before that other holiday day, which shall not be named, that occurs toward the end of the month. Of course, Chanukah is not really early, it is right on time, on the 24th of Kislev. The MCJC has three opportunities to gather with the Jewish community for 3 events during the festival of light: Kabbalat Shabbat, a Tisch and the annual Chanukah party.

The November Tisch was great fun, with a superabundance of kids, including some that I met for the first time. I was impressed by Chef Ruby Gold's generous use of cumin, the favorite favoring of Eretz Israel.

I hope that you all have an easy and fun holiday season, and that I see you at some or all of the festive MCJC events planned for December. If you have simchas (joys) that you would like to share with the community, please email [maven@mcjc.org](mailto:maven@mcjc.org).

### **Kabbalat Shabbat**

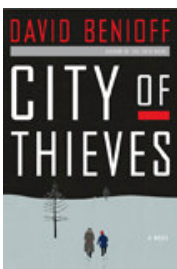
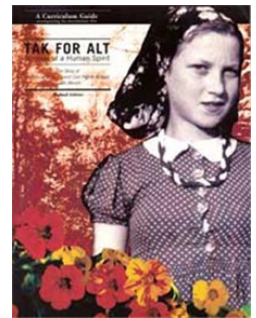
In December we will be celebrating our home Kabbalat Shabbat and dinner on Friday, December 11th at the home of Mina Cohen and Jeffrey Berenson in Mendocino. Please call them at 937-1319 for directions and to let them know you are coming. In January we are going to make a big change in our Shabbat evening celebrations switching our Tisch and Kabbalat Shabbat celebrations. We will have our tisch at the shul on the second Friday of the month, so we'll be there Friday, January 8th and our Kabbalat Shabbat will be on the 4th Friday, on January 22nd at the home of Marnie and Ron Press. 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, December 3rd and then again on Thursday, January 7th. If you would like to attend a meeting please contact Raven Deerwater at [raven@taxpractitioner.com](mailto:raven@taxpractitioner.com) so he can let you know the time and include you on the agenda.(mc)

### **Tak for Alt: Documentary about Holocaust Survivor Judith Meisel**

College of the Redwoods will be featuring [Tak for Alt](#) on Thursday December 10th as part of its Personal Enrichment Lecture Series. The film will be shown in room 114 with refreshments at 5:30 and the film at 6:00 pm. The film is one hour in length and Judith Meisel's daughter Mina Cohen will be on hand to answer questions after the film. We have shown this film at the shul but if you missed it, it has been shown on PBS and has won awards at international film festivals. The film follows Judith back to her shtetl in Lithuania and explores her pre-war childhood to her escape and liberation in Denmark. The focus is on her work as an activist and educator, and her efforts to affect social change. There is no admission charged for this program. (mc)



### **Book Group**

The book group will meet Monday December 21st at the home of Rosamond Gumpert Jorgensen Please call Fran Schwartz at 937-1352 if you wish to join us. We will be reading [City of Thieves](#) by David Benioff. This novel reads like a true story takes place during the siege of Leningrad when the city is on the verge of starvation. It is the adventure of two unlikely comrades who are sent in search of a dozen eggs for a wedding cake. 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. (mc)

### **Thank You for Megillah Help**

Thank you to Mettika Hoffman for collating and mailing our last megillah. Contact Mina if you'd like to help with this task. (mc)

### **The Freezer Has Tasty and Hearty Food for You**

In this season of illness, MCJC can help you with locally made vegetarian food stocked in a freezer at the shul. If you have any need for sustenance in an emergency, all you have to do is call one of the members of the Bikkur Cholim committee and we'll let you know how to get it, or send someone for it. The committee is Fran Schwartz at 937-1352, Karen Rakofsky at 937-5522, or Mina Cohen at 937-1319. All food is vegetarian, not spicy, and we have ingredients available if you have any allergies.

## Torah School Evolution

Torah school has moved back to the shul and will meet at 3:30 after school every other Friday. This will coincide with the monthly Tisch for one of those weeks each month. The children have expressed a desire to learn some Hebrew this year and we have all kinds of projects, field trips, and even a sleep over planned. If you have a child eligible for Torah School and did not get a letter please contact Jessica at 937-2115. Torah School is appropriate for all elementary school aged children.

## December Tisch

There will be no tisch in December, we'll meet again Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

## Shul Kitchen

Thanks to Howard Fuller for his generous donation of stainless steel mixing bowls, soup pots, cookie trays, as well as kitchen utensils for the upgrade of the kitchen shul. (jk)

## Hospitality House

Bring a something extra along with your appetite to the community Chanukah party this year. The [Hospitality House](#) in Ft. Bragg is always in need of the following items for their residents: disposable razors and shaving cream, tampons, single use soap, shampoo and toothpaste, tooth brushes, wool socks for men, women and children, warm hats and gloves. We will forward all donations to the Hospitality House after the party, and encourage community members to continue this practice throughout the year. Thanks, - Joan (jk)



## All-Cultures Holiday Party

Celebrating the cultures and languages and customs of our Coast -- Sunday, January 3, 2:00 - 4:00 PM at Safe Passage (208 Dana Street, Fort Bragg.) Tamales and latkes, stories of childhood Posadas, Hanukkah and more. Singing and speaking different languages together (and maybe learning a few words of a tongue you don't know well), games, dancing, getting to know people. All ages most welcome. For information contact Steve Antler at 937-5925 or [santler@mcn.org](mailto:santler@mcn.org). Enthusiastically sponsored by the Elders Group of the Mendocino Coast Jewish Community and [Safe Passages](#).

## Beginners Bird Walk

led by Holly Tannen, Wednesday December 9th 8:45 - 10:45 am, Big River Haul Road

How do birders recognize all them different birds? What birds can we spot at the bend of Big River? What is fascinating about each of them? Are they really dinosaurs in disguise? Bring: Drinking water, a snack to share, binoculars and birding guides if you have them. Experienced birders also welcome.

Directions: just north of the bridge south of Mendocino town, take the drive down to Big River Beach. Turn left past the standing stones, go uphill and a bit left and park across from the (now locked) toilets. We'll look out for you. In case of rain, we'll postpone till Wednesday December 16th. Questions? Call Holly at 937-5085.



## Chanukah Party

The MCJC annual Chanukah Party will be at the shul on Sunday, December 13th at

5:30. Latkes will be provided by our great volunteers (to help cook phone Donna Montag @ 877-3243). This is not a potluck, food will be served, but we are requesting ONLY salads, applesauce or cookies for easy of serving the many that we expect. If you can provide any of these, OR are able to help set up, serve or clean up, call Luna @ 972-4494. Bring your menorahs and candles, and come early. See you there! (dm)

The Mendocino Megillah is generated in two formats: the legacy hardcopy format which is optimized for printing on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper and the HTML format which is formatted for easy reading on a computer display. You can subscribe to the hardcopy version and have it mailed to you, you can subscribe to the email version or you can receive both. If you don't need the hardcopy and want to do your bit to repair the world by going electronic, and saving paper, toner and physical transport, please email Myra at [myrah@mcn.org](mailto:myrah@mcn.org)  
Todah Rabah! (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)

### Contributions to the MCJC can be sent to:

MCJC, Box 291, Little River, CA 95456.

Please specify if your contribution is in memory or honor of someone, and please include your name and mailing address. Thanks! (mz)

### Using the Shul

If you are opening or closing the shul please double check that the furnace, water heater and lights are all off and that all doors are locked when you leave.

THANKS! (rge)

### Thanks to Our Underwriters for Supporting the MCJC Megillah and the Community

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## MCJC Board & Useful Numbers

Rituals and Holidays (including Hevra Kadisha/Cemetery)	Joan Katzeff*	964-9161	<a href="mailto:jkatzeff@mcn.org">jkatzeff@mcn.org</a>
Rituals and Holidays	Donna Montag*	877-3243	<a href="mailto:montag@mcn.org">montag@mcn.org</a>
Community Care (rides, help when ill)	Karen Rakofsky*	937-5522	<a href="mailto:nerak@mcn.org">nerak@mcn.org</a>
Outreach (new to the community)	Donna Montag*	877-3243	<a href="mailto:montag@mcn.org">montag@mcn.org</a>
Culture (films/ speakers/ Women's Retreat)	Harriet Bye*	937-3622	<a href="mailto:bysawyer@mcn.org">bysawyer@mcn.org</a>
Education (adult and children/ library)	Mina Cohen*	937-1319	<a href="mailto:mcohen@mcn.org">mcohen@mcn.org</a>
Treasurer (finance and donations)	Mark Zarlin*	937-0341	<a href="mailto:mzarlin@mcn.org">mzarlin@mcn.org</a>
Board Secretary	Raven Deerwater*	937-1099	<a href="mailto:raven@taxpractitioner.com">raven@taxpractitioner.com</a>
Building Maintenance	Mark Zarlin*	937-0341	<a href="mailto:mzarlin@mcn.org">mzarlin@mcn.org</a>
Building Maintenance	Harriet Bye*	937-3622	<a href="mailto:bysawyer@mcn.org">bysawyer@mcn.org</a>
Torah School	Jessica Grinberg	937-2115	<a href="mailto:mcop@mcn.org">mcop@mcn.org</a>
Book Group	Fran Schwartz *	937-1352	<a href="mailto:franmie@cs.com">franmie@cs.com</a>
Megillah Submissions and Website	Bob Evans		<a href="mailto:bobevans@mcjc.org">bobevans@mcjc.org</a>
Name & Address, Subscription Changes	Myra Beals		<a href="mailto:myrah@mcn.org">myrah@mcn.org</a>

\* = board member

**December 2009 »**

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

change view: [ [event list](#) | [calendar grid](#) ] [ [month](#) | [entire year](#) ]

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 <b>Mussar Class</b> 5:00p	3 <b>Board Meeting</b>	4 4:34p Candle lighting	5 <b>Shabbat Minyan 10:30a</b> <a href="#">Parashat Vayishlach</a> 6:04p Havdalah (72 min)
6	7	8	9 <b>Bird Walk</b> 10:45 am	10 <b>Tak for Alt - CR</b>	11 <b>Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00p</b> Cohen/ <b>Berenson)</b> <a href="#">Chanukah: 1 Candle</a> 4:34p Candle lighting	12 <b>Shabbat Minyan 10:30a</b> <a href="#">Parashat Vayeshev</a> <a href="#">Chanukah: 2 Candles</a> 6:04p Havdalah (72 min)
13 <b>Chanukah Party 5:30p</b> <a href="#">Chanukah: 3 Candles</a>	14 <a href="#">Chanukah: 4 Candles</a>	15 <a href="#">Chanukah: 5 Candles</a>	16 <b>Mussar Class 5:00p</b> <a href="#">Chanukah: 6 Candles</a>	17 <a href="#">Rosh Chodesh Tevet</a> <a href="#">Chanukah: 7 Candles</a>	18 <b>Torah School 3:30p</b> <b>Tisch 6:00p</b> <a href="#">Rosh Chodesh Tevet</a> <a href="#">Chanukah: 8 Candles</a> 4:36p Candle lighting	19 <b>Shabbat Minyan 10:30a</b> <a href="#">Parashat Miketz</a> <a href="#">Chanukah: 8th Day</a> 6:06p Havdalah (72 min)
20	21 <b>Book Club</b>	22	23	24	25 4:39p Candle lighting	26 <b>Shabbat Minyan 10:30a</b> <a href="#">Parashat Vayigash</a> 6:10p Havdalah (72 min)
27 <a href="#">Asara B'Tevet</a>	28	29	30	31		

**Editorial Policy**

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