

MEGILLAH

The MCJC shul is located at 15071 Caspar Road, Caspar, CA.
Send mail to P.O. Box 291, Little River, CA 95456.

Call the MCJC at (707) 964-6146
email: sarah.nathe@gmail.com

website: <http://www.mcjc.org>

RABBI'S NOTES



March is more or less bookended by Purim at one end (March 6th) and Pesach at the other (beginning the night of April 5th). The two stories are both basically the same—cruel rulers oppress their Jewish subjects; but the Jews are saved and the despots are punished. (That old joke I loathe: “They tried to kill us. We won. Let’s eat”).

Just to continue the reductionist theme, we could look at much of life the same way: things go terribly; they get better; they go down the tubes again; we get a reprieve; the ones who were making things hard, now they’re suffering; now they’re on top, and here we go again. It’s not objectionable to look at life as a constant oscillation between more desirable circumstances and less, better, anyhow, than seeing it as a steady downhill slide! I prefer a messier model: things sometimes go sideways too, and often (always?) fortune and misfortune overlap, bits of joy stick out of the sorrow and spots of sorrow poke through times of joy. “They tried to kill us. They tried to help us. We tried to kill them. We tried to help them. Things took various surprising turns. Some of them did unexpected things. Some of us did. There were changes. Things got better in some ways and worse in others. Everything is in motion. Let’s eat.” But who is “they” and who is “we” anyhow? I’ve got a lot of them in me, and they have a bit of me in them.

On the face of it, Purim is very binary about the hero and the villain. The evil Haman, taking advantage of the King’s dimwittedness, plots genocide against the Jews. Queen Esther, advised and supported by her guardian, Mordecai, subverts the plot (also by taking advantage of the King’s dimness and fecklessness: is the real hero here that stupidity?) and enables the Jews to save themselves and avenge the would-be murderers. We celebrate by getting dimwitted ourselves, cheering the heroes and booing the villains.

But hidden in this blunt-nosed story is the matter of hiddenness itself: Esther’s name is a variant of the word *astir*, “hidden”; there is the hidden divine Name (God is never directly mentioned in the Book of Esther); and there are other little obscure matters as well—who WAS Mordecai to Esther anyhow? Her cousin? Her adoptive parent? Her “nursemaid?” (he is called her *omen*, a masculine form of the word commonly used for a wet nurse). Her pimp, selling her into the King’s harem? There is an ambiguous, veiled creepiness surrounding Mordecai. In a slapstick misdirection Haman is forced to escort Mordecai through the streets on a horse, proclaiming, “This is what is done for the man whom the King wishes to honor!” Haman goes home to his wife and tells her and all his friends this humiliating story, his head covered in mourning, like this is as bad as things can get. Then his wife, Zeresh, sees the (hidden) writing on the wall: “If this guy Mordecai, before whom you are already going down, turns out to be Jewish, you’re doomed.”

There is a tradition of wearing masks and disguises to tell the story, and a custom in some orthodox circles of cross-dressing (forbidden in many of these same circles at other times of the year). There is the matter of inebriates: in the Talmud it is said that we must become so drunk that we cannot distinguish between Haman the villain and Mordecai the hero. We give *tzedakah* on Purim in a profligate way so that we might just be giving money to people who don’t really need it. Don’t forget the line from the Talmud, in Ketubot 67b: “*Rabbi Hanina said: This is what Rabbi Elazar said: Come and let us appreciate the swindlers who ask for charity that they do not need, because were it not for them, who command our attention and receive our charity, we would be sinning every day in failing to properly support the truly poor.*”



Underneath the booing of Haman and the cheering for Mordecai and Esther, there is a loosening of moral binaries, an encouragement to mix it up, to tell the story backwards and sideways, the good behaving badly and the bad, well, at least being confused. I love this loosening, this ambiguity. It feels, dare I say, so adult: a training in seeing nuances, feeling countercurrents, smelling what is unripe, and listening for secrets. Purim is an exercise in complication. What if we could listen to the morning's headlines with this same sense of complication?

As soon as Purim is over, we start getting ready for Pesach, specifically by cleaning out the *hametz* (the leavening) that has worked its way into the crevices of our houses. People who really clean for Pesach boil dishes, change shelf liners, vacuum and shake out furniture, comb the ingredient lists of their spices and condiments looking for any hints of flour, yeast, and any other stuff that can rise and swell. We bake flat, crisp bread from grain that has been scrutinized to ensure that no dampness or mold has made its way in.

When we finally sit down at our clean, bright table with its special dishes and cloths, we tell the story of divine deliverance from Mitzrayim, from perdition. And yet, the night before the seder we deliberately spread some bread around our clean house and, using clumsy tools like wooden spoons and feathers, we "hunt" for *hametz*. Once we find what we have spread around, we announce, "All the *hametz* in my possession is heretofore ownerless, like the dust of the earth." Which is to say that there is always *hametz*, that, like dust, it is everywhere and impossible to completely remove.



Throughout the Passover seder there are countless ambiguities, digressions, non-sequiturs, symbols that don't make sense (the roasted egg, anyone?) And there are those four lovely glasses of wine, inducing in those of us who imbibe a pleasant lack of crispness, so that, by the end of the seder, things can get really strange, odd but right.

At this season of seemingly binary stories, I'd like to lift up complication. I anticipate looking for contradictions, ambiguities, hidden jokes, things I could see in ways different from the way I think I am supposed to see them. I plan to seek out places where the counter-narrative peeks through, where we suddenly start to feel sorry for the enemy or annoyed (or worse) by the character who is supposedly doing everything right. So too maybe in life, in the stories large and small that make up our own pasts and presents, perhaps it is helpful (or at least more interesting) to lift up complication. Maybe there is something sweet, or at least tenderizing, in our enemies, and maybe there are tendencies to watch out for in our heroes. Maybe some of the answers we seek are not ahead but sideways, or dispersed in many places, like *hametz*, like dust.

Wishing us all a month-plus of hidden hopefulness, laugh-inducing contradictions, engaging mysteries, and spaciousness as we hold it all, or as we let it float ownerless over the earth, as it always does.

PURIM FESTIVITIES

Hamantaschen Baking -- Thursday, March 2nd, 4:15 PM at the shul

All Hamantaschen bakers and those who want to learn the (very fun & easy) secret to making delicious ones. Dough and traditional fillings (prune, poppy seed, apricot) will be provided. If you have a special filling, please bring it along. Cooking utensils will be available, but we never have enough large biscuit cutters (or large canning jar lids) and you might want your own apron.

Family Purim Carnival – Sunday, March 5th, 3:00-5:00 PM at the shul

Hosted by the MCJC Young Adults, indoor/outdoor, rain or shine, a costume party, carnival booths, seed planting, Hamantaschen, and a 4:00 PM story time about Queen Esther. ALL ages welcome!!

Young Adults' Hosted Purim Party – Sunday, March 5th, 6:00 PM to ??? at the shul

For a fun evening of *Megillah* reading, shmoozing, Hamantaschen eating, and drinking, don't miss the Second Annual Young Jewish Adults party. All adults welcome.

Purim Surprise Party -- Monday, March 6th, 5:30–7:00 PM at the shul

Hidden under lock and key and known only to them, a Purim Surprise has been cooked up by Paige and Margaret. Not a shpiel, and not a *Megillah* reading, it involves X and Y and Z, and you can find out only by showing up at the shul. Costumes are cool if you like, Purim characters or anything that suits your fancy. Only one thing can be revealed: there will be Hamantaschen.

PESACH PREPARATIONS

The **Annual** (tho not for several years) **Pre-Pesach Clothing Exchange** will shake out on Sunday, March 19th, from 2:00-4:00 PM at the shul. Bring some of your favorite clothes, jewels, artworks, cookware, and other goodies that are ready for new owners. Please bring as little or as much as you'd like, bearing in mind that what doesn't get claimed has to be shlepped. Luna has offered to bring unclaimed items to local thrift stores.

We love to get together a few days before Pesach to **Bake our own Matzah** in a wood-fired oven. This year we're looking for an oven and for fire tenders for this joyful annual endeavor. If you have clues about a possible oven, firewood to contribute, and/or energy to build and keep the fire going, please let Margaret know (mholub@mcn.org). If we are able to arrange this, we'll let you know where and when.

Midrash tells us "In the merit of the righteous women of that generation were the children of Israel redeemed from Egypt". On Thursday, April 6th, we will celebrate the 18th **Women of Exodus Seder** at the shul. We will remember our foremothers who resisted pharaoh and led us out of Mitzrayim; we will follow the traditional seder/order, but will tell the Magid/Story through the voices of the archetypal Women of Exodus. Since it will be the second night of Pesach, we will end with beginning to count the mystical Omer. Newcomers and veterans of all genders are invited. A vegetarian potluck will be shared. If you can contribute to, and/or serve, the meal, help with set-up, clean-up, want to participate in the seder, or have questions, please contact Andrea Luna (text: 707-972-4494, email: havaluna.18@gmail.com).

The **Shul Seder** will take place on Friday, April 7th (the third night of Pesach), from 5:30-8:30 PM. This will be a full seder, all ages welcome. There will be lots of singing, thinking and talking, prayer, hope for a more just world, friendship, questions, love, and celebration. Details to come in early April.

SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES

A full Shabbat service is led by community members, with singing, chanting and silence, Torah teaching and reading, blessings for healing and peace, and time for mourners to say Kaddish. The teachers for March are listed below. We now have hybrid services, so come to the shul or Zoom in from 10:30 AM until about 12:30 PM.

03/04/23	<i>Tetzaveh</i>	Lew Mermelstein
03/11/23	<i>Ki Tisa</i>	Paige Lincenberg
03/18/23	<i>Vayakhel–Pekudeh</i>	Raven Deerwater
03/25/23	<i>Vayikra</i>	Andrea Luna



Members of the community are invited to give a Torah teaching (*drash*) during a Shabbat service. If you have an interest in performing this mitzvah, or would like more information about what's involved, please contact Raven Deerwater at raven@taxpractitioner.com or (707) 937-1099.

ZOOM ADDRESS

We are using the Zoom address here for most MCJC events. You may or may not be asked to type in a password, which is *shalom*. Disregard the numeric passcode at the bottom of the invitation unless you're dialing in on a landline. If you have questions or problems, contact susan.tubbesing@gmail.com.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7071836183?pwd=NzFaTkpiOXVYMDNnNnprOXInZjVhQT09>

Meeting ID: 707 183 6183

Passcode: *shalom*

Numeric Passcode: 776001

KABBALAT SHABBAT



Paige Lincenberg is hosting Kabbalat Shabbat on March 17th at 6:00 PM. Please call her at (404) 556-9969 to RSVP and get directions. Following a Shabbat service, a vegetarian potluck meal will be shared among us.

Our April host will be Lisa Frederickson in Fort Bragg. We are looking for a host for May and thereafter. If you do not wish to host in your home, you can do so at the shul. Please contact Mina at (707) 937-1319 or mcohen@mcn.org.

RABBI'S PHONE NUMBER

Margaret has surrendered her "rabbi line" (707 YES-LORD). She asks that you contact her on her cell phone at (707) 734-0311, or by text, or at her e-mail: mholub@mcn.org. Please phone between 9:00 AM and 9:00 PM and not on Shabbat unless there is something urgent.

PAIGE NOTES



Chodesh tov! This past new moon brings us into the Hebrew month of Adar, a month all about joy! The Talmud teaches החמשב מיברמ רדא סוננשמ "when Adar arrives, joy increases" (Taanit 29a). While I'm sure many of us feel that it's often not as easy as simply choosing to be joyful, this month invites us to lean into that edge. In every moment, including this very moment in which you are reading this, you are choosing what you are doing. This means that you can also stop reading this suddenly and instead choose to go make a cup of tea, go out into the woods, call a dear friend, fake a laugh until it turns into a real laugh, in short, to do something that can bring joy to you. Other non-joyful moments might arise this month too, but right now, right here, in this moment, let the energy of Adar spring us into some joy. Maybe, just maybe, that way we can en-joy more of the harder moments too?

with the kavana of springing joy,
paige

DIE-ERS CLUB MEETINGS

The amazing, protean Die-ers' Club will meet on Tuesdays March 7 and 21, 5:30 to 7:00 PM. There'll be an additional gathering on Tuesday, April 18, 5:30 to 7:00 PM, to make up for the one canceled in February. We will talk about surrender and the desire to control our deaths, practical matters to plan ahead, regrets, grief and mourning, ideas about what happens after death and Jewish customs around dying, and the time after death — not sure in what order we will tackle these, but we'll try to touch them all! All are welcome. The Die-ers' Club meets on Zoom at a different-than-usual address:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9628821372>

Meeting ID: 962 882 1372

Passcode: 820822

One tap mobile

+16694449171,,9628821372#,,,,*820822# US

+16699006833,,9628821372#,,,,*820822# US (San Jose)

ELDERS' CONVERSATION

The Elders meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 3:00-4:30 PM on Zoom. In March, they will meet on the 14th and 28th. The conversation is always provocative and enjoyable. People of all ages are most welcome. Use the MCJC Zoom address page 3, above. If you need more information, please contact Linda Jupiter (jupiter@mcn.org) or Joy Lancaster (ajoylancaster@gmail.com) and they will be happy to fill you in.



LET'S HAVE ANOTHER CUP



Tune in on Zoom for a virtual cup of your favorite beverage every Wednesday at 10:30 AM. Check in with community members and chat about anything and everything from the weather to the state of the nation, or from hamantaschen recipes to kids these days. We also talk about health and wealth, and share wisdom. Leslie Krongold is the host and welcomes your questions and comments any time at elkronq@yahoo.com. Use the Zoom address mentioned on page 3.

HEAVY LIFTING CELEBRATION

On Sunday, March 12th, from 2:00-4:00 PM in the shul, we will celebrate the publication of the limited-edition artists' book, *Heavy Lifting*, the outcome of a collaboration between artist/printer Felicia Rice of Moving Parts Press and poet Theresa Whitehill. The book combines poetry with images in a sculptural book that extends to 14 feet. It was printed in a small edition of 60 copies at Felicia's new letterpress studio in Mendocino.



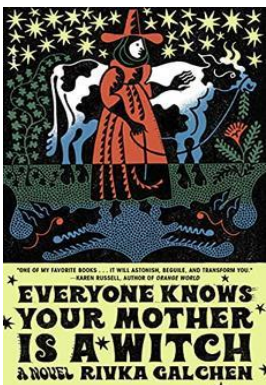
Felicia's letterpress shop and her life's work was destroyed in a wildfire in the Santa Cruz Mountains in August 2020. Rice has relocated to her family home in Mendocino and, with the help of over 800 supporters, has built a new Moving Parts Press here on the coast, following in the footsteps of her parents, Ray and Miriam Rice, who arrived on the coast as pioneer faculty at the Mendocino Art Center in 1960.

The afternoon will include the presentation of a short experimental art film, a brief talk by Felicia, a reading of poetry from the project by Theresa, and conversation. The artists' book will be displayed along with a companion book that includes the full manuscript of poems and documentation of the project. Ten percent of book sales will go to support humanitarian aid in Mendocino County. For more information: visit <https://movingpartspress.com/heavy-lifting> or email Felicia at frice@movingpartspress.com.

MCJC JUSTICE GROUP

The Justice Group meets on the fourth Thursday of the month, 5:30 to 7:30 PM on Zoom. This month we will meet on March 23rd. Watch the announcements for information about the meeting. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list or attend meetings, please contact Donna Medley at dmtthebeez9@gmail.com.

BOOK GROUP



The constant readers will meet on Monday, March 20th at 2:00 PM on Zoom to discuss *Everyone Knows Your Mother is a Witch*, by Rivka Galchen. The story begins in 1618 in the German duchy of Wurttemberg. Plague is spreading, the Thirty Years' War has commenced, and fear and suspicion are in the air. In the small town of Leonberg, Katharina Kepler is accused of being a witch. She is an illiterate widow, known by her neighbors for her herbal remedies and her successful children, including the eldest, Johannes, who is the Imperial Mathematician and renowned author of the laws of planetary motion. It's enough to make anyone jealous, and Katharina has done herself no favors by being out and about and in everyone's business. When the deranged Ursula Reinbold accuses Katharina of offering her a bitter, witchy drink that has made her ill, Katharina faces torture and even execution.

Drawing on historical documents and infused with the intensity of imagination, sly humor, and intellectual fire for which Rivka Galchen is known, *Everyone Knows Your Mother is a Witch* illuminates a society and a family undone by superstition, the state, and the convulsions of history.

Books are available at Gallery Bookshop. For a Zoom invitation to the next meeting, contact Mina Cohen at mcohen@mcn.org.

MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly. In March the meeting will take place on Zoom on Wednesday, the 15th, at 5:30 PM. If you wish to attend part of the meeting, please contact board member Susan Tubbesing at (707) 962-0565, or susan.tubbesing@gmail.com, and she will give you the address.

NEWSLETTER THANK YOU

We are very grateful to Julie and Bob Melendi for preparing the February *Megillah* for mailing. They are almost always available and so very efficient! You too could perform this mitzvah! It takes only a couple of hours, but your sense of accomplishment lingers for days. Please contact Sarah Nathe at 962-0565 or sarah.nathe@gmail.com

MEGILLAH SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Mendocino *Megillah* is published monthly as an emailed PDF and an online version. The online *Megillah* is posted on the newsletter page of the MCJC website: www.mcjc.org/newsletter. Any information on changes in email address or in email notifications should be sent to Sarah Nathe at sarah.nathe@gmail.com. If you choose not to be a contributing member of MCJC, we request a \$25 annual fee for the *Megillah*.

GIVE GENEROUSLY

By now you will have received the annual appeal letter. We hope you are able to respond generously to underwrite MCJC programs for the year ahead. You can mail your donations to MCJC, Box 291, Little River, CA 95456, or use PayPal on the MCJC website. When you make a donation in memory or honor of someone, an acknowledgment card will be sent to the individual or family if you include their name and mailing address with your donation.



THANK YOU VERY MUCH TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS



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Susan Hofberg in memory of Bill Popow; Theresa Glasner Morales: with condolences to Susan Hofberg upon the sudden loss of her beloved partner, Bill Popow.

Rachel Binah and Abby Kellner Rode: in honor of the life of Bonnie Ora Sherk, our sister.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Mendocino Megillah* is published monthly, except for August. The deadline for article submission is the 20th of the month before publication. The editor will include all appropriate material, space permitting, with the exception of copyrighted material lacking the permission of the author. Divergent opinions are welcome. Material printed in the *Megillah* does not necessarily represent the policy or opinions of the MCJC Board of Directors.



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Rainsong Shoes: Shoes & accessories for men & women. Two locations: Mendocino and Healdsburg. 937-1710 (Mendocino), 433-8058 (Healdsburg). www.rainsongshoes.com

Raven Deerwater, EA, PhD: Tax practitioner. Specializing in families, home-based & small businesses, & non-profit organizations. 45121 Ukiah Street, Box 1786, Mendocino. 937-1099. Email: raven@taxpractitioner.com Website: www.taxpractitioner.com

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Rituals (Chevra Kadisha/cemetery)	Joan Katzeff	964-9161	jkatzeff@mcn.org
Outreach (new to the community), Finance Committee, Chai on Coast	Susan Tubbesing*	962-0565	susan.tubbesing@gmail.com
High Holidays/ liaison to young adults	Lisa Fredrickson*	972-0884	yes@mcn.org
Women's Retreat/ Chai on Coast)	Harriet Bye	937-3622	bysawyer@mcn.org
Kabbalat Shabbat coordinator	Mina Cohen	937-1319	mcohen@mcn.org
Volunteer Coordinator	Susan Levenson-Palmer	882-1750	slevensonpalmer@gmail.com
Building Maintenance	Marnie Press*	937-1905	marniepress@gmail.com
Interim Treasurer	Raven Deerwater*	964-8333	raven@taxpractitioner.com
Landscaping	Lew Mermelstein*	650-387-3581	lewmer@gmail.com
Interim Secretary/ Finance Committee	Alix Sabin*	415-238-1342	alixsabin@gmail.com
Library	Nina Ravitz*	357-6462	ninabo@mcn.org
Book Group/ Bikkur Cholim	Fran Schwartz	937-1352	franbschwartz@gmail.com
Megillah Editor	Sarah Nathe	962-0565	sarah.nathe@gmail.com
Name & Address, Subscription Changes	Sarah Nathe	962-0565	sarah.nathe@gmail.com
MCJC Website	Sarah Nathe	962-0565	sarah.nathe@gmail.com
Online Megillah	Bob Evans	357-2817	bobevans@boborama.net
Rabbi	Margaret Holub	734-0311	mholub@mcn.org
Rabbinic Intern	Paige Lincenberg		lincenberg@gmail.com

