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## RABBI'S NOTES



There is a tradition that *mashiach*, the messiah, will be born on Tisha B'Av, the day when the Temple was destroyed. Tisha B'av marks the *hurban*, the catastrophe, actually the double catastrophe, of the decimation of both the first and second temples and the exile of our ancestors. According to this legend, somewhere in the midst of all that ruination a baby will be born who will grow up to redeem history.

Some months ago, before Mickey got sick, I had an early-morning dream that captivated me. I spent some time with the dream, and what came to me was a sense that embedded in the universe, in everything, is a kind of joy. This was a new idea for me. I like life and like the world very much, but I have always assumed, as Camus wrote in *The Stranger*, "the benign indifference of the universe." I figured that the universe neither wants nor abhors; life and death move on as they do, and we may care but the world does not. Like the ocean that is happy to be surfed upon and equally happy to drown you, the world is neutral.

I am not even sure what I mean by words like "the world" and "the universe." These mean to me something like the stage upon which everything happens, what theologian Paul Tillich called the "Ground of Being." It is a new thought to me that the universe is not entirely neutral, but that it has in its everything-ness a quality of joy, of tenderness, of delight. The idea came from a dream, but in the saddest time of my life, I am trying it on.

Writing this column is my first effort at putting this into words, so here goes. I don't mean that there are always beautiful flowers to look at, even when [fill in the blank with your disaster of choice]. It's more like if you zero in close to even something very, very difficult, and you look at it carefully, it actually has many mingled energies. Maybe there is love in there, or desire, or fruitfulness along with all else.

I think of the tenants in an apartment complex in Minsk, Belarus, who repainted a piece of graffiti of two defiant DJ's on a wall and spawned a resistance movement ("The Battle for the Mural—and the Future of Belarus" by Sarah A. Topol, *New York Times Magazine*, March 30, 2022). An autocrat in power. 24/7 surveillance. Threat of jail and worse. All of that, bitter and true, but, at the same time, a sweet belligerence, people coming alive in new ways. Not victory, not at all, but mixed in with the rottenness and cruelty is that beautiful liveliness.



This is a set of experiences I'm just reading about in a magazine. That sense of a joyful and generous universe may be more evident in experiences much closer to home. Over the years I've asked many people a typical rabbi-ish question: When in your life have you felt closest to the Divine? Some people say that they have felt close to God, or the Mystery, or most alive, or whatever their own language might be, when watching a beautiful sunset or holding a new baby. But a surprising number of people say that they have felt especially close to the Mystery when in the presence of death. Something opens up there, a kind of love, a kind of awe.

We've all been sequestered for the past two-plus years because of COVID. Now, in various ways, to varying degrees, many of us are creeping out of our houses and beginning, with some trepidation, to re-enter the world. It seems to me that this re-entry is about more than just going back to the shul or the Film Festival or the Music Festival. We are encountering the world anew. We are talking to people we haven't seen lately. Here's the conversation I have any number of times a day as I bump into friends I haven't seen: "So how are you doing?" Dour face, shrug, "Well, you know, the world...."

The world, indeed. There is much to be dispirited and angry about in our present circumstances. And much to fear about the future. But something feels, dare I say, disrespectful about categorizing our world, our universe, our Ground of Being in such sweeping terms. Even the hardest places and situations in our world have a fractal complexity. As when we stand around the bed of a beloved who is dying, and we feel there some kind of awe along with the sorrow, so too in places that feel cruel or unjust or ruined, places of *hurban*, I wonder if there might be more there than just the evident bitterness? I don't know; I can only imagine and wonder.

As some of you know, I've long been interested in the places where the beautiful and the ugly meet, or the difficult and the easy-to-appreciate. I just re-read a story told by the organizer and public thinker Laura Chasin: "Two years ago...my husband had a terrible accident. He was swimming in a lake and a motorboat ran over him. The propeller cut a gaping gash in his leg. We rushed him to the hospital, but the doctor said that the wound was too large to be sewn up. The only thing we could do was keep the area clean and dry. 'The two sides of the wound will reach out to each other,' the doctor said. 'The wound wants to be whole'" (from ***Solving Tough Problems*** by Adam Kahane). When we think about our terribly wounded world, it is easy to see the gashes, but there is also an invitation to see that the wounds want to be whole.

As I have been mourning Mickey, I have been embroidering. It's a way for me to think and feel, slowly, stitch by stitch. I recently made an image of a wound, a big red gash across a piece of white linen. I sewed beads onto the red fabric of the wound, to make the gash look goopy and raw, like the wound in my heart feels right now. Then I turned the whole thing into a challah cover. I would like to be able to bless a wound, to feel its holiness, to sense the energy in it towards wholeness. I would like to be able to bless the joy that I think might be hidden in my own grief. I haven't quite been able to put my new challah cover on top of a challah on my Shabbat table, but I'd like to.



There will be difficult times ahead—for ourselves, for our community, for our country, and for many in our world. As I write this, the Supreme Court has just overturned *Roe v. Wade*, and promises to go after other hard-won rights and freedoms. These seem like the worst of times, but as we meet them, I wonder if there might be beauty, joy, holiness, generosity, right in the mix with all that we abhor and fear? It was a dream that got me riding on this train of thought, but I am starting to think that, for me, this question—not the answer but the question—might be what is meant by "faith." Faith might be the curiosity, the wondering whether the wound wants to be whole, whether there might be joy in the hurting places in the world and in our own hearts, whether there can be love and awe around the death bed along with sorrow and defeat? It might be something about wondering if there might be a baby a-borning in the midst of all the shards and ruination.

I hope that, as we move toward a new year, we might be able to look closely at the wounds of our world and draw strength from what we perceive. Hope is, after all, an act of faith, and we can practice hope even when faith is difficult.

## TISHA B'AV OBSERVANCE



Tisha B'Av, the day of remembrance of the *hurban*, the destruction of the first and second temples in ancient days, falls this year on Sunday, August 7<sup>th</sup>. We will gather at the shul at 5:00 PM for a time of contemplation and renewal. More details will be sent out as the time nears.

Tisha B'Av was long considered a "minor holiday." But in recent years it has become clear to many that this day of mourning the violence and destruction of times past is an important container for the sadness, fear and rage that we feel about historical violence from times closer to our own. This day of remembrance and reflection offers the opportunity to grieve in community, in sacred space and time, to renew our commitments as individuals and as a community to building a world of justice, generosity and respect.

## SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT



Tu B'av, on the full moon of Av, is that wonderful festival (even more “minor” than Tisha B'av) that invites us to wander through the meadows, seeking love. It's a day for lighthearted fun and flirtation, for trading clothes, and feasting together. According to the **Mishnah**, “...on this day the daughters of Israel/Jerusalem go out dressed in white and dance in the vineyards. This year, Tu B'Av falls on Shabbat, August 12-13, but all are invited to the Young People's Big River Beach Tu B'Av Bonfire on Thursday, August 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. Please bring food/drinks to share and firewood if it's easy. If you plan to attend, contact Aviv at [aykleinman@gmail.com](mailto:aykleinman@gmail.com) to ensure you get to the right place.

## 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 July and August 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. The Zoom address is below.



<b>07/02/22</b>	<i>Korach</i>	Raven Deerwater
<b>07/09/22</b>	<i>Chukat</i>	Bob Evans
<b>07/16/22</b>	<i>Balak</i>	Janet Sternburg
<b>07/23/22</b>	<i>Pinchas</i>	Lew Mermelstein
<b>07/30/22</b>	<i>Matot-Masei</i>	Margaret Holub
<b>08/06/22</b>	<i>Devarim</i>	Raven Deerwater
<b>08/13/22</b>	<i>Vaetchanan</i>	Bob Evans
<b>08/20/22</b>	<i>Eikev</i>	Mina Cohen
<b>08/27/22</b>	<i>Re'eh</i>	Margaret Holub

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](mailto:raven@taxpractitioner.com) or (707) 937-1099.

## ZOOM ADDRESS

We are using the Zoom address here for 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 at [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com).

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7071836183?pwd=NzFaTkpiOXVYMDNnNnprOXlnZjVhQT09>

Meeting ID: 707 183 6183

Passcode: *shalom*

Numeric Passcode: 776001

## IN-PERSON KABBALAT SHABBAT IS BACK!



We are so happy to be gathering in person again. On July 29<sup>th</sup> we will be together at the home of Susan Tubbesing and Sarah Nathe in Caspar South. There will be a short service welcoming in Shabbat at 6:00 PM followed by a potluck dinner. Please bring a veggie dish to share. For directions and to let them know you are coming, contact Susan at (707) 962-0565 or [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com). We are limiting attendance to 25 people in these initial late-COVID gatherings, so please do RSVP.

On August 19<sup>th</sup> we will meet at the home of Joan and Paul Katzeff on Road 409 near Caspar. To let them know you are coming, and for directions, contact them at (707) 964-9161. We need hosts for October and November, preferably for the 3rd Friday of the month. If you would like to host, please contact Mina at (707) 937-1319 or [mcohen@mcn.org](mailto:mcohen@mcn.org).



## SIT A WHILE AND PRAY

For some time, MCJC has had a Chevra Kadisha—the men and women who see to it that the bodies of deceased Jewish community members are prepared for burial according to our tradition and are watched over until burial. At this time, we are in need of people who are interested in being watchers.

*Shmirah* is the act of watching or guarding the body (*Met*); it is an act of loving kindness, and the people who perform this mitzvah are called *Shomrim* (watchers). The practice is ancient, but it continues today to provide comfort to the family and the deceased. In some Jewish traditions, a soul is said to remain close to its body until it departs at the time of burial; the presence of a *Shomer* (watcher) is said to provide comfort to the soul.

In our community, each watcher may decide how to fulfill the role. We ask that people maintain a respectful *Kavanah* (intention). It is traditional to read Psalms, but any spiritual practice is fine. You may pray, but the study of Torah is not encouraged. Eating and talking to others in the presence of the *Met* are discouraged, but you may speak to the departed. Your only contacts are with the *Shomer* who precedes you and the *Shomer* who takes your place.



Now that we are returning to in-person activities at MCJC, everyone is invited to be a *Shomer*. People usually sit for a two-hour stretch, although we have three *Shomrim* who are willing to sit through the night from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM. We want to develop a list of people who are interested in watching, either for two-hour periods during the day or all night long. If you would like to serve as a *Shomer*, or just want more information, please contact Donna Montag at [montag@mcn.org](mailto:montag@mcn.org) or (707) 877 3243.

## ELDERS' CONVERSATION



The Elders meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 3:00-4:30 PM on Zoom. We will meet on July 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. In August, the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The conversation is always provocative and enjoyable. There is usually a topic chosen at the previous meeting. The topic is announced in the weekly email announcement. People of all ages are most welcome. Use the MCJC Zoom address on the page above. If you need more information, please contact Linda Jupiter ([jupiter@mcn.org](mailto:jupiter@mcn.org)) or Joy Lancaster ([ajoylancaster@gmail.com](mailto:ajoylancaster@gmail.com)) and they will be happy to fill you in.

## GOOD TO THE LAST DROP

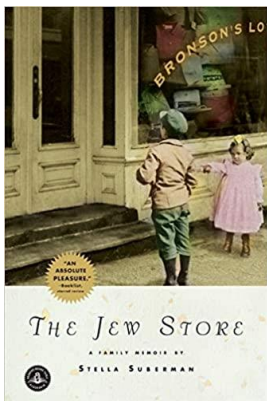
Tune in on Zoom for a virtual cup of your favorite beverage every Wednesday at 10:30 AM. Now that it's sum, sum summertime, you may need to add ice to it. Check in with community members and chat about anything and everything from the garden to the state of the nation, or from zucchini recipes to what the kids are up to these days. We also talk about health and wealth. Occasionally, sports but not often. Leslie Krongold is the host and welcomes your questions and comments any time at [elkrong@yahoo.com](mailto:elkrong@yahoo.com). Use the Zoom address mentioned above on page 3.



## MCJC JUSTICE GROUP

The Justices meet on the second Thursday of each month, in July on Thursday, the 14<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. In August, the meeting will be on the 11<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list or attend meetings, please contact Nancy Harris at [nancyh@mcn.org](mailto:nancyh@mcn.org) or Judy Stavelly at [judyst@mcn.org](mailto:judyst@mcn.org). Everyone is welcome to attend.

## BOOK GROUP



The readers will meet on Zoom at 2:00 PM Monday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, to discuss *The Jew Store*, a family memoir by Stella Suberman. The Bronsons were the first Jews to live in the small town of Concordia, Tennessee, a town consisting of one main street, one bank, one drugstore, one feed and seed, one beauty parlor and many Christian churches. That didn't stop Aaron Bronson, a Russian immigrant, from moving his family out of New York by horse and wagon in 1920 and journeying to this remote corner of the South to open a small dry goods store. Never mind that all the townspeople were suspicious of strangers. Never mind that the Klan actively discouraged the presence of outsiders. Bronson bravely established a business and proved in the process that his family could make a home, and a life, anywhere. With a fine dry wit, Suberman tells the story of her family's experience, which speaks to that of many millions of immigrants in America.

The following month, the group will meet at 2:00 PM on Monday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, for a discussion of *The Tunnel*, a novel by A.B. Yehoshua. Zvi is a newly-retired Israeli engineer when he's diagnosed with frontal-lobe entropy which signals dementia. His physician wife of 48 years refuses to give in to the dire prognosis, and works to find new pursuits for Zvi, and life for them as a couple. It's hard not to read the atrophy in Zvi's frontal lobe as a kind of metaphor for the current state of Israeli society. As Zvi's dementia worsens, he can find his way back to the apartment in Tel Aviv only by using the Yitzhak Rabin memorial, as a landmark, a direction home. Yehoshua, who died recently, was one of Israel's most distinguished authors. Please contact Fran at [franbschwartz@gmail.com](mailto:franbschwartz@gmail.com) for Zoom invitations and/or directions to the meetings. Books are available, or will be soon, at Gallery Bookshop.



## MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:00 PM in the shul. The July meeting will take place on Tuesday, the 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM in the shul. If you wish to attend part of the meeting, please contact board member Susan Tubbesing at (707) 962-0565, or [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com), and she will give you directions. The August meeting has not yet been scheduled.

## NEWSLETTER THANK YOU

We are very grateful to Linda Jupiter for preparing the June *Megillah* for mailing. Not only did she help out, but she offered tea and crumpets and geranium cuttings to the tired editor. How's that for a triple mitzvah! If you volunteer for a future folding, stamping, and mailing project, you can do it in about two very fun and productive hours. It imparts such a sense of accomplishment and spreads goodwill, and geraniums are optional. Please contact Sarah Nathe at 962-0565 or [sarah.nathe@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.nathe@gmail.com)

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Jerome Berk in memory of Mickey Chalfin; Annette & Jonathan Lehan in memory of Bill Garrett; Danny Mandelbaum & Benna Kolinsky in honor of Michael Nissenberg

Sonia Wolfman in honor of MCJC and the Chevra Kadisha; Madeline Lansky: much love to you MCJC; Cecile Cutler: Thank you everyone for the beauty and love that our shul brings to our community; Nancy Harris, on leaving the Board and moving to Michigan: in honor of the MCJC Board members and of Rabbi Margaret Holub.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

The ***Mendocino Megillah*** is published monthly. The deadline for article submission is the 20<sup>th</sup> 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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## July, 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					2 Tammuz 1 Shabbat shmooze & candle lighting 6:30 pm	3 Tammuz 2 Shabbat Minyan 10:30 am <i>Korach</i>
4 Tammuz 3	5 Tammuz 4	6 Tammuz 5	7 Tammuz 6 Cuppa 10:30 am	8 Tammuz 7	9 Tammuz 8 Shabbat shmooze & candle lighting 6:30 pm	10 Tammuz 9 Shabbat Minyan 10:30 am <i>Chukat</i>
11 Tammuz 10	12 Tammuz 11	13 Tammuz 12 Elders' Conversation 3:00 pm	14 Tammuz 13 Cuppa 10:30 am	15 Tammuz 14 Justice Group meeting 5:30 pm	16 Tammuz 15 Shabbat shmooze & candle lighting 6:30 pm	17 Tammuz 16 Shabbat Minyan 10:30 am <i>Balak</i>
18 Tammuz 17	19 Tammuz 18	20 Tammuz 19 MCJC board meeting 5:30 pm	21 Tammuz 20 Cuppa 10:30 am	22 Tammuz 21	23 Tammuz 22 Shabbat shmooze & candle lighting 6:30 pm	24 Tammuz 23 Shabbat Minyan 10:30 am <i>Pinchas</i>
25 Tammuz 24 31 / 3 Av	26 Tammuz 25 Book Group 2:00 pm	27 Tammuz 26 Elders Converse 3:00 pm	28 Tammuz 27 Cuppa 10:30 am	29 Tammuz 28	1 Av 29 Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 pm Tubbesing/Nathe	2 Av 30 Shabbat Minyan 10:30 am <i>Matot Masei</i>