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## RABBI'S NOTES



I've kvetched now and then (maybe more than now and then) about the synagogue of my childhood. Not that I was a regular attender by any means, but when I had to be there I found it dreary and alienating. I constantly complained about the women at High Holy Day—excuse me, “High Holiday”—services in their minks (when it was 100 degrees out, no less!), the mean girls in Sunday school, and the screechy voice of the cantorial soloist. I fussed about how the prayers didn't mean anything to me, how we would be told to draw the Tree of Life in Religious School, but nobody told us what the Tree of Life is. And of course the rabbi: don't get me started! I was not the kid in that setting you would have bet on to grow up to love Jewish learning and practice, much less to become a rabbi

herself.

I just read a magnificent book that is burrowing and rippling in my consciousness, lighting up places I had never before thought to look. One of the places is my own inauspicious Jewish beginnings. The title of the book is a mouthful: ***The Mystical Exodus in Jungian Perspective: Transforming Trauma and the Wellsprings of Renewal***. It is by the brilliant friend of our Jewish Women's Retreat, Shoshana Fershtman. She is a Jungian analyst, a deep student of Torah, Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah, a feminist, an environmental activist, and a beautiful writer and thinker. Her book brings together many, many streams of thought. I can't begin to do it justice here, but I'd like to discuss one line of thought that it has awakened in me.

One stream that flows through the book is stories of people who, like me, were alienated from Judaism as children but found their ways toward Jewish life as adults. Each person's particular beginnings are described. Some had very traumatic childhoods; others had profoundly depressed parents or grandparents. A number asked questions of the adults around them and found them unwilling or unable to respond meaningfully; still others were offended by the materialism and conformity of their families and communities.

Shoshana writes often about the generations that would have been my parents and grandparents and rabbis and Sunday School teachers. Why might they have been embittered, defensive, perfunctory and uncelebratory about Jewish life, unable to answer a child's probing questions about God, meaning and suffering? She describes the trauma of the Holocaust upon those generations who were exposed to its poison, even if they escaped the most direct violence. She writes also about those, like my grandparents, who were earlier forced to flee their homes, in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, because of antisemitic violence.

Those generations were broken in their capacity for faith, much less joy, by the trauma of their historical moment. Of course, historical trauma extends back even farther: the wounds were passed from generation to generation, often in ways that are unexamined and unspoken. Individuals and generations each have their traumas, and they may not be unconnected.



I am embarrassed to say that, until I read Shoshana's book, I had never really thought about WHY my suburban synagogue in the early 1960's seemed so empty and vain, why the rabbis and teachers seemed so spiritually deadened, why I couldn't find clues about faith or joy or meaning. I hadn't really thought about why a woman in that time and place might wear her fanciest clothing to the High Holiday service, why everything I heard there sounded so defensive and conformist to my young ears. At seven or ten or thirteen years old I

could already see that I wasn't going to get any meaning or solace THERE. So, like the people whose stories Shoshana tells, I turned away. She describes this turning away, in personal and collective terms, as "exile."

According to Shoshana, in order to continue to nourish our souls and provide a pathway to the Divine, Judaism itself has to heal and transform from the injuries and diminishment of historical trauma, and especially the wounds that the tradition itself sustained from the holocaust. She writes with gratitude and love about Jewish Renewal—both the movement by that name and Jewish renewal as it has been progressing in many settings—and especially the legacy of Rabbi Zalman Shachter-Shalomi of blessed memory and his many innovations to renew Judaism in our time. In reflecting on this path of renewal, she makes a connection that surprised and moved me very much.

As I was beginning to search for meaning and connection and community in my own young life, people kept appearing at key moments to draw me back towards Judaism: Yudit Greenberg, Rabbi Laura Geller, Barbara Myerhoff of blessed memory, Rabbi Maggie Wenig, Savina Teubal of blessed memory, Rabbi Jane Litman. So many women....

It turns out that my experience was not so unusual. We are blessed to live in a time of Jewish restoration, especially the restoration of women's voices. Shoshana writes about the long history and myth of Judaism, early on in which the feminine was suppressed and overtaken by patriarchy and hierarchy, but continues to peek out at key moments. She tells of Miriam's well running underground, springing up to slake the thirst of the Israelites in the desert. In case you're a little rusty on Miriam's well, in Numbers 20:1, the death of the prophet Miriam is announced and it is noted that the Israelites then ran out of water. The close association of the two events led the sages of the Talmud to build a legend about the abundant well of fresh water that followed Miriam for as long as she lived as she wandered with her people through the desert.



In my own life, particular women—my college teacher, the rabbi at the Hillel House, and others—appeared at key moments to guide me toward the wellsprings of Judaism and, ultimately, of the Divine. Men too, and people I would later understand to be non-binary. The appearance of these to lead me, and to lead us all, out of exile ARE the *Shekhina*. The suppression of women and of the feminine aspect of the Divine is a millennia-long injury to Judaism and to all the cultures that are affected by Judaism. And the renewal of the feminine is a transformational healing in our own time.

We are called to do our parts in generational healing. Shoshana encourages us to reflect back on the generations before us, our direct forebears, and our own younger selves, to ask them, dream them, and look upon their injuries and sufferings with more understanding and more generosity.

There is something in here related to Hanukkah, I'm sure—that dark little holiday of war and displacement and our ancestors' fraught efforts to survive. I will look forward to contemplating these narratives this month and will very much miss sharing those days with all of you. I wish you all a very sweet and renewing Hanukkah and the winter days beyond!





# BIG VIRTUAL HANUKKAH PARTY

December 5<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 PM



We will light all eight candles and celebrate together with songs, stories, latke memories, and a learned teaching by Raven Deerwater. As if that isn't enough, we will sing and dance to our own klezmer band, The Klezmishpochah.

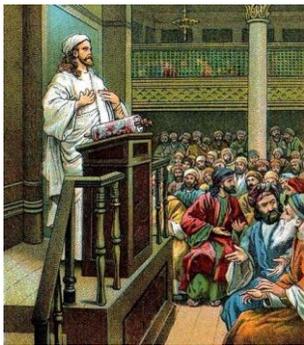
## RAFFLE WINNERS WILL BE ANNOUNCED!

The party will be hosted by Harriet and Larry **on ZOOM**.

👉 See the Zoom address below and be sure to tune in.



## 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. Zoom in for any or all of the service from 10:30 AM until about 12:30 PM. See the Zoom address below

12/04/21	<i>Miketz</i>	Raven Deerwater
12/11/21	<i>Vayigash</i>	Raven Deerwater
12/18/21	<i>Vayechi</i>	Bob Evans
12/25/21	<i>Shemot</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](mailto:raven@taxpractitioner.com) or 937-1099.

## ZOOM ADDRESS

We are using the Zoom address below for all 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.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7071836183?pwd=NzFaTkpiOXVYMDNnNnprOXlnZiVhQT09>

Meeting ID: 707 183 6183

Passcode: *shalom*

One tap mobile

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+13462487799,,7071836183#,,,,\*776001# US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 707 183 6183;

Numeric Passcode: 776001

If you have questions or problems, contact Susan Tubbesing at [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com) and she may be able to help you.



## ELDERS' CONVERSATION



The Elders meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 3:00-4:30 PM on Zoom. We will meet December 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. One of the questions they will be exploring this month is “How do you define old? Does that definition apply to you in your current circumstance?” Tune in and share your experiences and present thoughts and feelings. People of all ages are most welcome. Use the MCJC Zoom address on page 3. If you need more information, let Linda Jupiter ([jupiter@mcn.org](mailto:jupiter@mcn.org)) or Joy Lancaster ([ajoylancaster@gmail.com](mailto:ajoylancaster@gmail.com)) know.

## THE BOTTOMLESS CUP

Join your friends for a virtual cup of coffee or tea every Wednesday at 10:30 AM. Check in with community members and chat about anything and everything from the weather to the human condition, or from recipes to your children and grands. 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 on page 3.



## MCJC JUSTICE GROUP

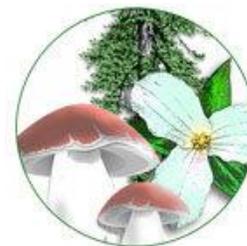


The Justices meet on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting is on Thursday, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 pm on Zoom. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list or attend meetings, please contact Judy Stavely at [judydyst@mcn.org](mailto:judydyst@mcn.org) or Nancy Harris at [nancyh@mcn.org](mailto:nancyh@mcn.org). *Everyone* is welcome to attend.

For the past two months, the Justice Group has hosted speakers: Supervisor Ted Williams and Mendocino Trail Stewards webmaster Chad Swimmer at the October meeting; and Matt Drewno, master gardener and board president of Garden Friendly Community Fort Bragg, at the November meeting.

Williams spoke about the need for accountability and transparency in our county government. He answered questions from the group about the constitutional relationship between the California Attorney General and county sheriffs; Sheriff Kendall's request for a separate IT Department; whether the Sheriff Department's policies and procedural manual are available to the public; and the status of Sheriff Kendall's lawsuit against the county. Ted suggested that we get involved in our county government. He urged us to write our supervisors in our own words rather than using a template or signing a petition.

Schwimmer is a co-founder of the Mendocino Trail Stewards (MTS), the group that is actively working to protect the Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF). The JDSF is the largest state forest in California at 80 square miles, and was sold to the state in 1947 by the Caspar Lumber Company. Though by charter the state is to be demonstrating sustainable forestry practices in the JDSF, in fact, the primary activity there has been the permitting of tree cutting and the selling of timber. The Stewards assert that this is not an acceptable use of public land.



There are currently formal Timber Harvest Plans (THP) for ten square miles of the forest; the plans are based on the General Forest Practices Act that was written in 1973. The MTS point out that the plans are woefully out of date and do not take into account climate change and the need for carbon sequestration and moisture preservation.

Schwimmer invited exploration of the MTS website, [www.mendocinotrailstewards.org](http://www.mendocinotrailstewards.org) to learn more about the JDSF bike and trail routes, to learn about the work of the MTS, and to explore ways to support the mission of the group. He suggested reading ***Smoke Screen: Exploding the Myths*** by Chad Hanson and ***Finding the Mother Tree*** by Suzanne Simard.

At the November meeting, Drewno described Garden Friendly Community Fort Bragg (GFC), a group of volunteers working together to ensure food security on the coast by supporting community and home gardens

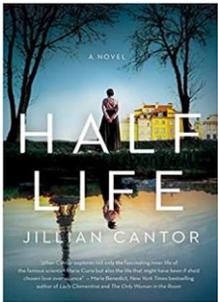
and gardeners. The first garden, the South Lincoln Street Garden was created in 2021 and is located on the south side of the C.V. Starr Center. In 2022, the organization will help gardeners create the Harbor Drive Garden on the Thanksgiving Coffee property owned by our own Joan and Paul Katzeff. The goal of the group is to create one new community garden every year.



For Drewno, gardens are places to grow food, but they also grow community, share abundance, and create resilience and peace. The Garden Friendly Community group helps gardeners learn about planting, irrigation, soil composition and composting, and provides a network of support.

Read more at [www.gfcgardensfortbragg.org](http://www.gfcgardensfortbragg.org),

## BOOK GROUP



The readers will meet Monday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM on Zoom to discuss *Half Life* by Jillian Cantor. In Poland in 1891, Marie Curie (then Marya Sklodowska) was engaged to a budding mathematician, Kazimierz Zorawski. But when his mother insisted Marya was too poor and not good enough, he broke off the engagement. A heartbroken Marya left Poland for Paris, where she would attend the Sorbonne to study chemistry and physics. She met and married Pierre Curie, a physicist colleague. She and he went on to change the course of science forever, and she was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize.

BUT what if things had worked out differently? What if she had stayed in Poland, married Kazimierz, and never attended the Sorbonne or discovered radium? What if she had chosen a life of domesticity in Russian Poland, where education for women was restricted, instead of studying science in Paris and meeting some of the brightest scientific minds of the time? Entwining Marie Curie's real story with Marya Sklodowska's fictional one, *Half Life* unfolds in parallel contrasting versions of Marya/Marie's life. It explores loves lost and destinies unfulfilled—and asks how the life of one remarkable woman, as well as the course of science and history, might have been changed in ways both great and small.

Please contact Fran at [franbschwartz@gmail.com](mailto:franbschwartz@gmail.com) for Zoom invitations and/or directions to the meetings. Copies of the book are at the Gallery Bookshop; tell them you are a member of the MCJC book club and you get a 10% discount.

## A GOOD TIME TO CONTRIBUTE



It's not too late to can still make a financial contribution to your MCJC. This year, because we were not able to hold our annual fundraising dinner and silent auction, we are likely to end the year with a deficit. If you have already given, thank you very much, but if you ever felt like adding a bit more to your donation, this would be the perfect time.

If you have attended the fundraiser in the past, you might consider a special donation to replace the amount you might have spent at the event. If the annual dinner wasn't your thing, maybe the Hanukkah raffle was.

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 when you inform Donna Montag at [montag@mcn.org](mailto:montag@mcn.org)

## MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:00 PM, these days on ZOOM. The December meeting will take place on Tuesday, the 14<sup>th</sup>. If you wish to attend part of the meetings, please contact board member Susan Tubbesing at 962-0565, or [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com), and efforts will be made to patch you in.

## JEWISH FILMS FROM HUNGARY



The Marlene Meyerson JCC is screening two recent award-winning films by Hungarian directors about the impact of World War II on the Jews who lived in their country. The Hungarian Jewish Film Program of the Carole Zabar Center for Film will feature the movies in early December: "1945" (a 2017 film about the healing process of Holocaust survivor as seen through the eyes of a young girl in the time after World War II); and "Those Who Remained" (a 2019 film based on a story by Gábor Szántó that examines the deep undercurrents when two Orthodox Jews visit a quaint Hungarian village that is forced to acknowledge its ill-gotten gains from World War II). Both are streaming virtually from December 3<sup>rd</sup> to December 10<sup>th</sup> for \$15 each. Gather the whole family and it's a good deal. Check out all the offerings of the Zabar Center and register to view the films at <https://watch.eventive.org/cinematters/play/619674c0f8088400d234c1c5>

## NEWSLETTER THANK YOU

We are very grateful to dobbie sommer for preparing the November *Megillah* for mailing. What a mitzvah! Volunteer for a future folding, stamping, and mailing project, and you can do it in about two hours. Please contact Sarah at 962-0565 or [sarah.nathe@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.nathe@gmail.com)

## MEGILLAH SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Mendocino *Megillah* is published in three formats: hardcopy, emailed PDF, and online. You can subscribe to the hardcopy version and have it mailed to you or receive it by email. The online *Megillah* is posted on the newsletter page of the MCJC website: [www.mcjc.org/newsletter](http://www.mcjc.org/newsletter).

Any information on changes in mailing address, changes in email address, and changes in email notifications should be sent to Sarah Nathe at [sarah.nathe@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.nathe@gmail.com). If you choose not to be a contributing member of MCJC, we request a \$25 annual fee for the *Megillah* hardcopy or email.

## GREAT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS



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In honor of the birth of Zolton Lucas David Clark, son of Mimosa Montag-Clark and Donovan Clark, and the joy he has already brought us by Ronnie Karish & Ellen Saxe

In honor of the brilliant and dashing mensch, Harvey Hoehstetter, by Kyala Shea

In memory of Judith Meisel on the yahrzeit of her passing by Mina Cohen & Jeff Berenson

In memory of Allison Bye Coutts by Harriet Bye & Larry Sawyer

## EDITORIAL POLICY

The *Mendocino Megillah* is published monthly. The deadline for article submission is the 15th 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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