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## RABBI'S NOTES



It's Thanksgiving morning as I write, my first without Mickey. Don't worry, this won't be maudlin—my head is pointed toward the feast this afternoon. But, probably like a lot of us, I'm thinking about days gone by and days to come, how things don't change and how they do.

I first came up here in 1984 (38 years ago!) for a weekend to lead a service. I was living in downtown LA, driving my light blue VW Fastback up Highway 128, wondering if I would ever get there, wondering how in the world people could live so far away from ANYTHING. That weekend, I met Jews like I had never imagined: they lived in school buses, built their own houses, grew giant gardens and cooked amazing food from those gardens. I was impressed to see one woman watering her garden naked, stopping to shower in the warm water from the hose lying on the ground in the sun. I hadn't seen Jews doing stuff like that in LA!

They were cobbling together this sweet little Jewish community way out in the woods. There was a Torah school, a weekly minyan, a few of the holiday services. I was so inspired by the spirit of making it happen, of welcoming whoever came, and sharing in whatever Jewishness they knew, of delighting in the produce of the garden and the beauty of ocean and sky. I think I fell in love that weekend. I met some of the people who are still important in my life, among them Donna Montag and Joan Katzeff, who were both on the board of the emerging Jewish community (then known as the Mendocino County Jewish Community, encompassing, as it did, our friends Inland as well).

The following fall, to my delight, I was invited up to lead High Holy Day services. It might have been that year, or maybe the next, that a new family arrived—Mina Cohen and Jeff Berenson, with a tiny Elana and, if I remember right, Mina round with soon-to-be Yael. Mina had a broad Jewish education and a commitment to raising her daughters in a Jewish community. She joined the board soon after.

I moved up here to be the rabbi in 1989. That year there was a heart-rending death of a beloved young woman. And, in an act of surpassing generosity, her mother, Harriet Bye, joined MCJC's board soon after. Donna, Joan, Mina and Harriet have been the strong spine of our beloved MCJC all these years. Donna has been the steward of our finances for many of these years, while maintaining her deep vision of what life in community can be, how we can care for each other, welcome each other, make life better for each other. Joan organized the practical aspects of the High Holy Days for many years and an infinity of other practical matters large and small; she brought her passion for justice to our goings-on and her kindness and respectfulness and sense of doing things properly and well.

Mina has educated a generation-plus of Jewish children, tutored *b'nai mitzvah* students, taught us adults, added arts and culture to our lives, was the instigator of Alephnet (ask Mina or me sometime!), centered our Friday night Kabbalat Shabbats for many years, led an MCJC Israel trip, started the Mitzvah Freezer, and added depth to our Jewishness in many different ways. Harriet has brought her characteristic spark and joy and endless curiosity, shepherding the Women's retreat for all these centuries, organizing parties and cultural events and fundraisers, and bringing friendship and laughter and her probing mind.



This is just a tiny shred of the ways that these four teachers and leaders have shaped our lives as a community over decades. We are who we are as a community because of the beautiful soul and passion of each of them, not just because the particulars of what they have done. Speaking of which, I can't even begin to describe how much plain old work they have all done as well, everything from list-management to *chevra kadisha* management to buying paper towels to fixing broken windows to sorting mail. It is epic.

Mina left MCJC's Board several years ago; Joan a couple years ago, Harriet and Donna more recently. Each of them served our community for three decades or more, Donna for 45 years! All are still involved in our community, still offering their energy and wisdom. I would like to stop and think about how blessed we have all been by their generosity, their vision, and their energy. I would be a very different rabbi, Jew and human being were it not for the ways that each of these beautiful teachers and instigators has shaped me. And we would live very different lives together.

Others have stepped into the stream of leadership over the years. I won't name all those heroes who have been part of MCJC's board over the decades (though I have to send a special shout-out to Mark Zarin, who watched over MCJC's finances for nearly two decades), but here is who is at the helm of the ship now: Marnie Press is part of that early generation of Jews who moved to this land. She's been an active part of MCJC for all this time and joined the board several years ago (I'm fudging on dates because I can't remember WHEN things happened, but I do remember how important they are),

Susan Tubbesing moved up here after she and Sarah Nathe retired from full lives in the Bay Area, and has served over a decade on our board. Lou Mermelstein had a second home up here for years and more recently has made the Coast his full-time abode. Ali Sabin and her wife, Nancy Drooker, have made their second home up here just about full-time and Ali has stepped into a MCJC leadership role. Raven Deerwater, Lisa Fredrickson, and Nina Ravitz are all younger than I am and still work in the larger community. This crew is all meshing together in new, energized ways, also working ferociously hard, also devoted, also visionary.

Each of them has passions as deep and wide as those who came before them, and I am gratefully aware of how they are shaping my life and our lives with their particular energies. I'm also aware that, Ali, Lew, Marnie, and Susan notwithstanding, our community is at a time of generational change. When I look around a room (these days often a Zoom room), I sometimes think about who I have known since the very beginning of my life up here and who I've come to know more recently. The ratio gradually shifts, as I suppose it should.

Continuity is precious, especially when what continues is itself precious. Change is unnerving, destabilizing and also precious, bringing new life and energy and, well, change. I feel excited about the present and about the future of our beloved Jewish community—more than I have in years. It feels alive, full of possibility. Its core values of welcome, generosity, equality, support, love, integrity, and spiritual devotion are all still deeply held. As are some of its eccentricities! At the same time, I think we are expanding our pursuit of social and climate justice, becoming more available to our larger community, hearing more of each other's voices, incorporating the best that technology has to offer, meeting a younger generation of Jewish and Jewish-interested folks, and learning from and building relationships with them.



As I have come to understand in my personal life this past year, we are shaped by what continues and by what changes. We can love and be grateful for what we have had and been, and we can look with curiosity and hope to a changing future. As we say, *Ad meah v-esrim* ("to one hundred-and-twenty!") to Donna, Joan, Mina and Harriet, to our sweet community, to all that has been created, all that is emerging, and all that will yet be.

## HANUKKAH 5783



The first Hanukkah candle will be lit on Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, and the last on Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup>. During the eight days, MCJC has various plans to light up our souls.

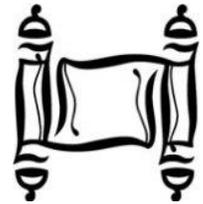
The community **Hanukkah Party** will be on the first day, Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, from 2:30-4:30 PM *OUTSIDE* at the Caspar Community Center. We will light one giant menorah, dance to the Klezmishpoche, our favorite band, play games, sing and celebrate. And we will have the famous MCJC Hanukkah raffle! This won't be a latke feast—COVID realities—but there will be snacks. Bundle up and come see friends and dance.

A **Hanukkah/Solstice bonfire** with mystical teachings about darkness and renewal will take place Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, from 4:00 to ? with Rabbinic Intern Paige and Rabbi Margaret at Margaret's house in Albion. There will be food and drink. Bring warm clothes! To RSVP and get directions, contact [mholub@mcn.org](mailto:mholub@mcn.org).

**ZooMenorah**—we'll Zoom-light our menorahs together almost every night of Hanukkah at 5:00 PM. Not on the first night (when we will have already lit one at the community party) or on Friday night, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, when we'll kindle our menorahs at the beginning of our Shabbat candle lighting at 5:30 PM. But every other night! P.S. Beautiful Hanukkah candles of every variety are available at Corners of the Mouth in Mendocino.

## 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 December 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.



12/03/22	<i>Vayetzei</i>	Nancy Wallace-Nelson
12/10/22	<i>Vayishlach</i>	Andrea Luna
12/17/22	<i>Vayeshev</i>	Raven Deerwater
12/24/22	<i>Miketz</i>	Margaret Holub
12/31/22	<i>Vayigash</i>	Nancy Wallace-Nelson

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

## KABBALAT SHABBAT



The Zoom gatherings will continue on Friday evenings at 5:30 PM. There will be no in-person Shabbat gathering this month because of the recent COVID surge, but we will be together in Cyberspace. In 2023, we tentatively plan to gather in-person at Julie and Bob Melendi's in South Caspar in January, but that will depend on the COVID situation. We are in need of in-person hosts for February on, preferably for the 3rd Friday of the month. If you would like to host, contact Mina Cohen at 937-1319 or [mcohen@mcn.org](mailto:mcohen@mcn.org).

## PAIGE NOTES



As our days continue to get shorter, this new Hebrew month of *Kislev* knows how to fill our pockets. The longer nights of *Kislev* invite us to pay attention to our dreams a little bit more than usual. This might mean taking advantage of the extra darkness when we wake up, or before we go to sleep, to be with our dreams more before we jump into the doings of our day—to listen to our dreams, maybe analyze them, maybe even share them with others. During this month, the Torah gives us myriad examples of this, from Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams (Breishit 40-41), which we shall read about for the next two weeks, to Jacob's dream of angels ascending the ladder, which we read this week in *Parashat Vayetzei* (Breishit 28:12). Think about how many dreams we have all had in our lives that, if we had not just jumped straight out of bed and forgotten them, might have given us insight into something as profound as a looming famine—literal like in the Torah or an emotional or spiritual one. Our subconscious knows, but our consciousness does not always seem to pay attention.

We all walk through life with many pockets. When praying, our spirit-pocket holds the liturgical words of our ancestors, along with the unique relationships each of us has to the Divine. When foraging, our mind-pocket holds all of our identification knowledge that we have acquired over the years, along with our knife and brush. When dreaming, our heart-pocket holds all the metaphorical connections to our various relational dynamics and decision making. One translation of *Kislev* is "heart-pocket"—*kis* meaning "pocket" and *lev* meaning "heart." Whether this month feels less extroverted due to the increased darkness, or more extroverted due to the many holidays, may our dream worlds, Hanukkah lighting, and any other personal practices fill all our pockets, especially our heart-pocket.

אני מודה, paige

## THE JEWISH-AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH



People in the Elders' Conversation, the *Chevra Kadisha*, and elsewhere have expressed an interest in having a class about death that would encompass Jewish wisdom and custom, practical insight, and personal reflection. Rabbi Holub offered a class along these lines way back in 2010, and she is wondering if there is interest in having another one beginning in early 2023? If this is something you might like

to be part of, please drop her a note (at [mholub@mcn.org](mailto:mholub@mcn.org)) about what issues you are particularly interested in exploring together.

## ELDERS' CONVERSATION

The Elders meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 3:00-4:30 PM on Zoom. In December, they will meet on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. 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](mailto:jupiter@mcn.org)) or Joy Lancaster ([ajoylancaster@gmail.com](mailto:ajoylancaster@gmail.com)) and they will be happy to fill you in.



## TAKE A BREAK

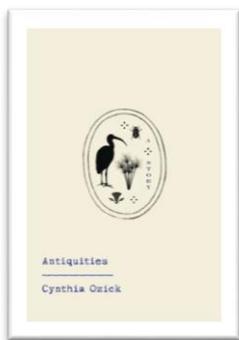


Tune in on Zoom for a virtual cup of your favorite beverage every Wednesday at 10:30 AM. Check in with community members and chat about anything and everything from the garden to the state of the nation, or from latke recipes to kids these days. We also talk about health and wealth, wisely. Leslie Krongold 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 will meet on the first and fourth Thursdays of December, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list or attend meetings, please contact Donna Medley at [dmthebee9@gmail.com](mailto:dmthebee9@gmail.com). Everyone is welcome.

## BOOK GROUP



The readers will meet Monday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM on Zoom to discuss Cynthia Ozick's novella, ***Antiquities***. Lloyd Williamson Petrie, one of seven elderly trustees of the now-defunct (for 34 years) Temple Academy for Boys in Westchester County, is preparing a memoir of his days at the school. Temple Academy was constructed on a plot of land that had belonged to the Temple family, and was "premised on English religious and scholarly principles." It had nothing to do with anything synagogical, far from it. As Lloyd navigates, with faltering recall, between the subtle Anti-Semitism that pervaded the school's ethos and his fascination with his own family's heritage—in particular, his illustrious cousin, the renowned archaeologist Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie—he reconstructs the passions of a childhood encounter with another student, Ben-Zion Elefantin, who claims descent from a colony of Jews who lived on Egypt's

Elephantine Island before the common era. The worldly and well-traveled Ben-Zion is scorned at the school, and Lloyd's friendship with him—they bond over chess—renders Lloyd an outcast too, and he has never been able to figure out why. Books are available at Gallery Bookshop. For a Zoom invitation to the next meeting, contact Mina Cohen at [mcohen@mcn.org](mailto:mcohen@mcn.org).

## MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:15 PM on Zoom. The December meeting will take place on Tuesday, the 13<sup>th</sup>. 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 the address.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE RETIREMENT OF DONNA MONTAG

by Ellen Saxe

As I look around at our present Jewish community, I see many new faces. How fortunate our long-time members are to have the new personalities and enthusiasm. And how fortunate new arrivals are to find a warm, caring Jewish community to join. It is unlikely most of us know the important roll Donna Montag played in the early formation of this community.

I remember riding in Donna's car when she started talking about her desire for an organized Jewish presence on the Coast. She talked about the time, the work, the money it would take, how that was the only way to create what wasn't yet here. Shortly after, groups of us were meeting in each others' houses, creating a mailing list, asking people about their commitment, and trying to bring together the various informal groups that had started to meet independently.

No one worked harder or cared more about building a viable Jewish community than Donna. She produced all of the early editions of the ***Megillah***, and reached out to Bay Area Jewish organizations for advice and assistance. The offer of a Holocaust Torah of our own (to replace a borrowed one) came to Donna. The call from the Northern California Jewish Federation about a rabbi who would be a perfect match for us came to Donna. At various times, she has served as the Treasurer, making it possible for MCJC to hire a rabbi and maintaining our financial health.

Other people have brought a greater knowledge of Jewish traditions, Hebrew, Torah, or scholarly writings, but no one brought a greater desire to work toward community. Donna wanted to make it all work: the practical, nuts and bolts aspects of forming a Jewish presence, AND a community in which every person felt noticed and included.



Without Donna's vision there would, of course, still be Jews on the coast. Many of us would gather in some form to share our need and love for Jewish worship and celebration. But Donna's generous hours of organizing, tabulating, and encouraging created the vibrant community we know and love today.

## NEWSLETTER THANK YOU

We are very grateful to Nona Smith and Art Weinger for preparing the November *Megillah* for mailing. They got it out in record time! You can shine too if you volunteer for a future folding, stamping, and mailing project. It takes a couple of hours and imparts such a sense of accomplishment. Please contact Sarah Nathe at 962-0565 or [sarah.nathe@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://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](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*.

## A GOOD TIME TO CONTRIBUTE

It's not too late to make a financial contribution to your MCJC. 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—before the end of the calendar year.

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.



## GREAT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS



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Phoebe Graubard: In memory of her father, William Graubard, and her mother, Judith Rothenberg Feuer.

Ellen Saxe to the Adele Saxe Tzedekah Fund in honor of Donna Montag's countless hours of service to MCJC.  
Ellen Saxe to the Ella Russell Bikur Cholim Fund in honor of Jane Corey's positive attitude and in gratitude to the medical researchers and the brave and selfless donors who make life-saving treatments possible.

## 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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