

## MEGILLAH

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## RABBI'S NOTES



I've been in New York this past week, taking my customary post-High Holy Day break. I imagine that a lot of the people I sit next to on the subway would be very happy to get away to a week in Mendocino. But I've always loved the vibrancy and all-around excessiveness of Manhattan, and I'm here to soak it up. Maybe I've been trying too hard this visit, but I've been aware of spending a little too much time trudging between one cool place and the next, or googling "What to do in New York today" over and over. Or maybe, in my post-Mickey life, my capacity to jump headlong into fun and excitement is still a bit withered.

Then, on my last day in the city, late in the afternoon, I walked about a million miles and ended up at one of the last places on my to-do list: the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Spaces, way out east on Avenue C. For some reason, it was closed during its open hours, and it was starting to rain. I crossed the avenue to look at a garden, walked in a gate, and there was the most beautiful community garden I've ever seen! The 9<sup>th</sup> Street Community Garden & Park features a koi pond, still-blooming dahlias, big trees, every kind of fanciful awning, seating place, and something that looked like a homegrown coffee bar right in the middle. Oh my! There was what looked like a little party going on under one awning. I sat a little distance from the gathering and just gazed around. Someone from the party got up, walked over to me, and handed me a cup of a warm drink that turned out to be hot cider. A smiley older woman, Puerto Rican, was joshing with an older guy, also with an island accent. They came and sat next to me and started to schmooze. They told me the history of the garden, showed me the spots they had designed and cared for. Pretty soon we were laughing in the rain, and I was completely happy.



After that, I went up the Hudson River Valley (with the fabulous Amy Katz, who used to live on the coast and is now perched here). I've hit peak fall color, and it's glorious. Walking around in one of the little towns I picked up a book by the nature writer Barry Lopez, whom I've always admired without having read much of him. Lopez died in late 2020, and the book I'm holding is called *Embrace Fearlessly the Burning World*. I feel like I need to read it.

In the bookstore, I start at the end. In the last paragraphs of the book, Lopez, ill with the cancer that will soon take his life, describes bucking up a tree that had fallen on his woodshed and crushed it. He works with a friend, wearing many different braces and other protective gear to keep from getting hurt:

"We'll waste little energy and do things in the order that will make the best use of our time so we don't weary too fast. We'll enjoy each other's company and lean against our trucks, drinking from thermoses, and we'll watch fair-weather cumulus clouds scudding overhead, above the crowns of the Douglas firs and hemlocks and cedars, and feel the curious revitalization of physical exertion, the pleasure our mutual dependability, and the gift of life, still, in the waning body."

As I write this, I am aware that you may be reading it shortly before or after the midterm elections. I'll be happy to be happily surprised, but I'm trying to prepare myself for outcomes I don't look forward to. As I do, I keep hearing Mickey's voice, standing out in our yard, ill with the cancer that will soon take his life, saying (just about every day), "This place is Paradise!" I find myself thinking about that garden in the Lower East Side, across

the street from the locked-up museum, and about Barry Lopez and his friend taking pleasure in making firewood from the tree that busted up his shed. And I say to myself, “The portals are everywhere.”

I’m writing this in the week of *Parshat Noach* in Torah. God just got done creating the world, with its Garden of Eden and all its beautiful creatures. But within a very few generations, God, as it were, looks, as it were, into that gorgeous world, now fouled with corruption, and decides to destroy the whole contraption and start all over (well, almost: if that was really God’s intention, why, then, preserve Noah and the animals?) I think of God’s despondency, looking at all the foulness, willing to flood it all nearly to oblivion. Not that any of us can be compared to the God of Torah, but I imagine that many of us can identify a bit with that God-like feeling of despair and indignation: “How could those people take something so beautiful and ruin it?”

At the end of Noah’s story, God pledges never again to destroy the world with a flood. It seems worth preserving, even with all its potential for distressing outcomes. I wonder why, and as I do, my mind wanders to a Midrash: God is scribing the Torah in black fire on white fire, and Moses asks him, “What’s with those curlicues you’re putting on the top of the letters?” God answers, “Someday after many generations, there will arise a man, Akiba ben Joseph, who will derive heaps of law from every little dash, and it is for his sake that I prepare these little crowns.”

Then I imagine God, as it were, gazing down at the little ark floating on the floodwaters and thinking, “One day there will arise a man who will chop firewood from the tree that destroyed his woodshed, and he will enjoy the task; and one day there will arise an old Puerto Rican couple who will sit in the rain with a wandering rabbi and tell her about their garden; and one day there will arise a man who, near death, will stand in his yard and say, ‘This is Paradise’.”



Seeing all that was to come, perhaps—this is my own little midrash here—God would decide that the world was worth maintaining, that it had much to recommend it, ...even damaged, even corrupted. And maybe even that it is Paradise.

It is no small thing to keep our joy up, even when things look dire (and maybe after the elections things won’t look so dire, who knows?). But whatever early November brings, portals to delight and inspiration will continue to be everywhere. We can walk through them, wherever we happen to be standing. We can show each other the doorways. I look forward to being home in Paradise with all of you in a couple of days!

## **WELCOME TO OUR NEW RABBINIC INTERN**

MCJC’s Board of Directors and Rabbi are very happy to welcome our new Rabbinic Intern, Paige Lincenberg. Paige will work with our community for the next nine months. She will reach out to families with children and to younger adults to offer programs that support their needs and interests, as well as augmenting the work of our Chevra Kadisha and Bikkur Cholim, participating in services and holidays, and more.



Many in our community have already experienced Paige’s warmth and thoughtfulness on Zoom or in person. She is a sixth-year rabbinical student in the Aleph Alliance for Jewish Renewal. She lives on the Coast and, along with her studies, has been leading Torah study and services with our friends at Kol HaEmek in Redwood Valley. She just returned from helping to lead a multi-generational, four-day Sukkot festival with Wilderness Torah. She has also created and offered an earth-based Jewish study experience for children through Wilderness Torah.

Paige is passionate about rooting Jewish experience in the earth, also about building enduring relationships and community across generations. She looks forward to learning from our MCJC community even while she offers her insights and energy to us.

## 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 November 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.



11/05/22	<i>Lech-Lecha</i>	Raven Deerwater
11/12/22	<i>Vayera</i>	Margaret Holub
11/19/22	<i>Chayei Sara</i>	Margaret Holub
11/26/22	<i>Toldot</i>	Raven Deerwater

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=NzFaTkpiOXVYMDNnNnprOXlnZiVhQT09>

Meeting ID: 707 183 6183

Passcode: *shalom*

Numeric Passcode: 776001

## KABBALAT SHABBAT



The Zoom gatherings will continue on Friday evenings. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, we will welcome the Sabbath at 6:30 PM; however, after Daylight Savings Time ends on the 5<sup>th</sup>, we will start at 5:30 PM. There will be no in-person Shabbat gathering this month because the Ledford House dinner is on November 15<sup>th</sup>, and Thanksgiving arrives the following week. In December, we will meet at the home of Harriet Bye and Larry Sawyer on Middle Ridge Road on the 16<sup>th</sup>. In 2023, we need in-person hosts for February on, preferably for the 3rd Friday of the month. If you would like to host, contact Mina Cohen at (707) 937-1319 or [mcohen@mcn.org](mailto:mcohen@mcn.org).

## ELDERS' CONVERSATION



The Elders usually meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 3:00-4:30 PM on Zoom. However, in November, due to the holiday and Joy being away, they will meet on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</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.

## LET'S HAVE ANOTHER CUP

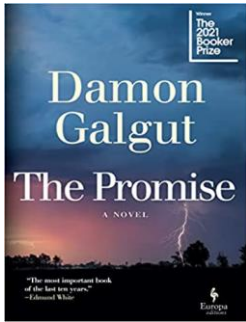
Tune in on Zoom for a virtual cup of your favorite beverage every Wednesday at 10:30 AM. Check in with community members and chat about anything and everything from the garden to the state of the nation, or from zucchini recipes to what the kids are up to these days. We also talk about health and wealth. 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.



## MCJC JUSTICE GROUP

The Justices meet on the fourth Thursday of each month, but in November they will meet on Thursday, the 17<sup>th</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 [dmtthebeez9@gmail.com](mailto:dmtthebeez9@gmail.com). Everyone is welcome to attend.

## BOOK GROUP



We'll meet on Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM on Zoom to discuss *The Promise*, by Damon Galgut. The novel blends characters and history to reveal the devastating impacts of white privilege and institutional racism. On her deathbed, Rachel Swart makes a promise to Salome, the family's Black maid, which will divide the family, especially her children: Anton, the golden boy; Astrid, whose beauty is her power; and the youngest, Amor, whose life is shaped by feelings of guilt. Reunited by four funerals over 30 years, the dwindling Swart family remains haunted by the unmet promise, just as their country is haunted by its own failures. *The Promise* is an epic South African drama that unfurls against the march of history, reflecting the atmosphere of its country, one of resentment, renewal, and hope.

Please contact Fran Schwartz at [franbschwartz@gmail.com](mailto:franbschwartz@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation.

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## ADVICE TO THE FOLKLORN

by Holly Tannen (baum)

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children's and Household Tales)* published in 1812, inspired scholars throughout Europe to collect old tales and songs from common people. The term "folklore" was coined in 1846 by English antiquarian William Thoms, to replace the unwieldy term "popular antiquities." "The folk" were considered to be the rural, illiterate peasants, and their lore was thought to express the essence of their nation.

Most Jews, however, lived in towns, were not farmers, and have always prized literacy. For centuries, Jews lived in an insular society where literacy was fairly high. At a time when most of the world was still illiterate, Jews read and studied large amounts of their religious-literary heritage. Children read Hebrew, adult males, and even some women, studied when their work was done. There seem always to have been a handful of women in traditional Jewish communities who became educated: women from learned families where there were no sons, and daughters from learned families who benefitted peripherally from the education of their brothers.

*Zamlers*, Jewish folklore collectors, sought informants in *shtetls* and in Warsaw and Vilna. They realized that city folk—indeed, any group of people—also had traditions and stories in common. Jews have at least 3000 years of oral tradition, going back to Biblical times. Jews in Eastern Europe had to know Biblical Hebrew, Yiddish, and the languages of the countries they lived in. They translated proverbs, stories and songs from one language to another. Readers learned tales and songs from columns in Yiddish newspapers.

For over 2000 years, Jews have been forced to leave their homelands. They took with them their religious traditions, stories, and songs, sometimes merging them with those of the countries where they settled. A klezmer band at a bat mitzvah today might play a Polish love song, Romanian *hora*, a *Terkisher* tune, "*Bei Mir bist du Sheyn*," and Beatles songs.



"As the Jewish world became less traditional and more secular, with more...of the youth leaving the Yeshivas," says Itzik Gottesman of YIVO (the Institute for Jewish Research), "The study and collection of folklore provided a way to maintain connection with one's religious

parents and grandparents.” But many immigrants, like my grandparents, dismissed Jewish old-world traditions as superstition. When their children and grandchildren became interested in old traditions, they were forced to find them in the stories of Sholem Asch or Isaac Bashevis Singer.

What traditions and stories did your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents share with you, or reject? Which ones did you keep? Which ones did you resist? Which traditions have you revived as you’ve grown older? I’d like to hear from you! Contact me at [htannen@mcn.org](mailto:htannen@mcn.org).

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## MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:45 PM in the shul. The November meeting will take place on Monday, the 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:45 PM on Zoom. 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.

## VALEDICTION

Donna Montag, one of the founders of MCJC and board member for 45 years, is stepping down from her many roles at the end of October. In abundant gratitude and appreciation for all she has done for so long, the MCJC Board wishes Donna a restful and enjoyable retirement. Below is her farewell message.

“The time has come for me to become a community participant and not a community organizer. I have been honored to be a board member since the beginning of MCJC. As the Treasurer for many of these years it has been my privilege to communicate with so many of you, and I appreciate the frank communications that we have had. I have always believed that our community is like a spider web, and each person is a strand. It would be a different community if any one of you had not participated.

I believe that the principles that our community began with—the confidentiality of each person’s contribution, as well as the membership concept that each person is a member who lives here if they want to be—have helped our community to flourish. When Rabbi Margaret came here, I remember one of her first lessons was about *lashon hora*, not speaking ill of others. Our board has always honored this. I know our good will towards each other will continue. With blessings and gratitude, Donna Montag.”

## IF NOT NOW, WHEN?



Every year at this time we remind you that now is the time to send in a contribution to support our Rabbi, our programs, and our shul. If you have already contributed, we thank you enormously, and ask you to consider digging a little deeper with an end-of-the-year donation. If you haven’t yet given, please do so soon. This is your Jewish community and we need your support.

This past year, we had several new expenses that make ending the year on a sound financial footing especially challenging. Early in the year, we purchased a hybrid zoom system that helped those near and far stay connected to MCJC for weekly services and special programs. This new system also enabled many of you to participate in High Holy Day services from the safety of your own home. We have also secured the services of a technician who makes the

hybrid system available each Shabbat and for many holidays.

Another unbudgeted expense was the rental of the Caspar Community Center for the High Holy Days. We did this to ensure that we had sufficient safe space for everyone in attendance. Finally, as you know, costs of utilities, food, and supplies have gone up dramatically. Regardless of how much you normally contribute, please consider giving a little more before the end of the year so our beloved Jewish community can continue to thrive in these challenging times.

Please mail your donations to MCJC, Box 291, Little River, CA 95456, or use PayPal on the MCJC website. When you donate in memory or honor of someone, an acknowledgment card will be sent to the individual or family if their name and mailing address is included with the check. Thank you so much.

## NEWSLETTER THANK YOU

We are very grateful to Laura McIver and Brian McGinnis for helping us prepare the October *Megillah* for mailing. A weekend in the country turned into a golden opportunity to perform a mitzvah, and they seized it. You could grab the gold ring 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

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## GREAT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS



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Bob Schlosser & Dawn Hofberg in honor of Ayla Schlosser & Brett Cooper's wedding;

Nancy Nelson: "New Year's blessings to all here and in the world out there;"

Mark & Deena Zarin: "In honor of Rabbi Margaret and all who helped with Elul and the High Holidays."

To the Adele Saxe Tzedekah Fund: Benna Kolinsky & Danny Mandelbaum; Theresa Glasner Morales.

To the Ella Russell Bikkur Cholim Fund: Benna Kolinsky & Danny Mandelbaum; Theresa Glasner Morales.

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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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