

The MCJC shul is located at 15071 Caspar Road, Caspar, CA.
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RABBI'S NOTES



This afternoon has been a double-header for me: the Elders' Conversation followed quickly by the Die-ers' Club. Quick, send me some Play-Doh recipes and lullabies! Actually both gatherings were beautiful, and I was grateful to be part of both. I find it ever-renewing to hear people, especially people I love and respect, reflecting on how to live good, meaningful, whole lives.

The topic today for the Elders was "living alone." I can share that much, though not more, since the content of our conversation was intimate, revealing and, as always, confidential. I can speak for myself, though. Not everyone in the group lives alone, but I now do. It has made me more aware than ever of the small challenges of daily life. The big ones I already knew about. I know who to call if the roof leaks, if my car breaks down, if I get sick. But what about when my cat brought a living squirrel into the house, who then ran under something and disappeared? Or when I want to make a burn pile and am not quite sure how to get it ignited? Or if I'm bored and cranky and really need to take a walk, but can't get myself out the door? Or if I need help building my sukkah? Who do I call then?

I think a lot about that question, "Who do I call then?" Not so much for myself, as I am richly blessed with beloved neighbors and close-by friends who are used to my calls and lovingly responsive to my dilemmas and crises, small and large. But I am convinced that one of the keys to having a happy and a safe life here on the coast is to have good, dependable answers to that question.

Many years ago I took a sabbatical and read books and interviewed people about community. I read a book called **Counterfeit Community: The Exploitation of our Longings for Connectedness** by John L. Freie, which made a huge impression on me. I keep coming back to Freie's basic argument. In fact, I'm sure I've written about it now and then here in the *Megillah*. Freie talks about how American loneliness makes us susceptible to all kinds of things that call themselves "community." From Applebee's "Neighborhood Bar" to gated senior communities to drive-in mega-churches, pseudo-community gets marketed to us. (Freie published this book back in 1998, when the internet was just a glimmer of what it is now. Imagine what he could point to today!)

By contrast, he defines real community almost entirely in quantitative terms: real community is where people have many interactions with each other. He describes a neighborhood where children play on sports teams together, parents sell hot dogs at the games and volunteer in the schools; where people shop in each other's stores and bowl in the local bowling alley, go to neighborhood places of worship and drink in neighborhood bars, employ each other, even fire each other, fight with each other, oppose each other over issues. In a real community, people know each other's back-stories. They know each other's sorrows and needs and peccadilloes. More interaction equals more community.



I also interviewed (or really had a long, fun dinner with) the great local visionaries Jim and Judy Tarbell, right when they and some of their neighbors were beginning to organize the Caspar Community. What I remember from that conversation was the idea that one productive habit of community building is to take your needs and interests to the community, rather than trying to manifest them privately. So if you need help with childcare or

want to work on your Spanish or learn to prune your fruit trees, you put that query out to the community and connect with the experts who respond. More interaction; more conversation; more community. For a long time I observed these habits of community enacted all around me, in the Jewish community, and in Mendocino, and Elk and Albion, where I have lived. It seemed like people gave each other rides, helped with household tasks, counseled and consoled each other, ate meals together, knew each other's extended families, circled around in times of crisis, and came together in ways that multiply the fibers of community.

I think and hope that this is still happening. But I wonder if there are some holes in that fabric? Maybe always, but especially these days when there are greater wealth disparities than I recall from earlier days, when people have moved here from places where they're used to more services being available, when it takes more hours to earn a living than it might have in the past, when a lot of my old friends really are old now (not to mention myself...) and can't climb ladders and stack firewood and drive long distances? Especially now, after three years of COVID isolation, after many of us are habituated to shopping and socializing and organizing online?

Some years ago Mina introduced me to the idea of a *gemach*. She learned of it from her daughter Elana's orthodox community in Jerusalem. *Gemach* is an acronym for *gemilut hasadim*, deeds of lovingkindness. (It's one of the "deeds without measure whose reward is also without measure." You knew that!) The *gemach* in Elana's community is a kind of catalogue of items available to borrow. Need a baby swing? a FAX machine? costume jewelry? something laminated? a hot plate? Call so and so. Various people in the community have these items to loan out to others in the community.



The *gemach* does at least two important things: it makes it so that everyone doesn't need to buy their own baby swing or hot plate, and it causes people to call each other, to go to each other's homes. It's possible that there are chats in the driveway when the costume jewelry is being dropped off, maybe a cup of tea shared while the laminating machine is warming up. In these not-very-demanding ways, it ups the count of interactions between people that, over time, strengthen community. Maybe it even leads to new friendships.

Paige and I are excited about creating an MCJC *gemach*. She has created a simple database that allows any of us to say what we have to loan out and also what we might be looking for. Paige inaugurated it by offering the use of two kayaks. I added two pressure canners and some folding tables. We're working on ways to make it really simple for both the tech-comfortable and the pen and paper folks in our community to be able to see what's being offered and also to put out queries for things being sought. Look for the *gemach* clipboard at MCJC gatherings and add your offerings and requests. Or e-mail Paige at lincenberg@gmail.com, and she will add them. Or do it the new-fashioned way by going to this Google doc: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18VpVqbopG399GSnu6ScwR2R3PZqbfjENAobPaQ4gAil/edit#gid=0>

We're both looking forward to growing our MCJC *gemach* into something that fits and serves and weaves our community. What do you wish you could borrow from someone in the community? What might you have to offer? Who would you call?

TU B'SHEVAT SEDER



Tu B'Shevat falls this year at sundown on Sunday, February 5th, and we will celebrate with a beautiful, fruit-ful seder at the shul, beginning at 5:00 PM. As ever, there will be abundant fruits with and without seeds, skins, shells, pits, and four glasses of fruit of the vine in color from snow-white to rich, oxygenated red. All will be blessed and enjoyed as we ascend through the Four Worlds to pray for life in this world to continue. Tu B'Shevat is the New Year of the Trees, said by the mystics to be the day each year when the frozen sap deep underground in the root system of the Tree of Life begins to rise to nourish the tree.

In addition to the seder, we are overjoyed to have been invited to many people's homes to plant and bless trees! Most of the tree planting will happen on Sunday, February 5th and Monday, February 6th throughout both days. Because we've had so much joyful response, there may be other tree plantings throughout the week. If you would like to help planting and blessing trees, please let Paige know at lincenberg@gmail.com. Perhaps you prefer something less taxing: to help with the mitzvah of creating a beautiful table for the seder at the shul, please contact Andrea Luna at havaluna.18@gmail.com.

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 February 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.

02/04/23	<i>Beshalach</i>	Andrea Luna
02/11/23	<i>Yitro</i>	Mina Cohen
02/18/23	<i>Mishpatim</i>	Margaret Holub
02/25/23	<i>Terumah</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 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=NzFaTkpiOXVYMDNnNnprOXlnZlVhQT09>

Meeting ID: 707 183 6183

Passcode: *shalom*

Numeric Passcode: 776001

KABBALAT SHABBAT



Our next Kabbalat Shabbat is February 17th with hosts Adina Merenlender and Kerry Heise in Elk. Contact them at 707-877-3333 or 707-489-4362 to let them know you will be attending and to get directions. Following a Shabbat service, a vegetarian potluck meal will be shared among us.

In March we will gather at Sarah and Susan's in South Caspar. If you would like to host one of these gatherings in your home in April or any month after, please contact Mina at (707) 937-1319 or mcohen@mcn.org.

DIE-ERS CLUB MEETINGS

Rabbi Holub is offering a class about death that encompasses Jewish wisdom and custom, practical insight, and personal reflection. We have been exploring our own ideas and feelings about death, Jewish teachings about life and death, end-of-life issues, mourning practices, and our own concerns and wishes as we move closer to the inevitable. The "club" will meet on alternate Tuesdays, 5:30 to 7:00 PM, February 7th and 21st, and March 7th and 21st. We will meet in Margaret's Zoom room (not the shul zoom), at the link below:

Margaret Holub's Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 962 882 1372

Passcode: 820822

GET A JUMP ON THE AFTERLIFE

The Hawaii Inter-Island Chevrah Kadisha has organized a presentation on Zoom by Reb Simcha Raphael on “Exploring Jewish Views of the Afterlife: Contemporary Implications,” cosponsored by three Bay-Area congregational Chevrah Kadishas. This is in honor of 7 Adar, Moses' Yahrzeit. Members of the MCJC have been generously invited to attend at no cost. Reb Simcha is the author of ***Jewish Views of the Afterlife*** and he has lectured and taught extensively on the subject.

The presentation is on Sunday, February 12th from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM PST. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85257776358>, Meeting ID #852 5777 6358.

PAIGE NOTES



Chodesh tov! This Hebrew month of *Shevat* greets us right after the majestic rainstorms that brought some of us into the liturgical state of trembling in awe. Now we get to plant that many more seeds, having that much more water to feed them. We find ourselves in this sweet season of still very much being in winter, yet with increasingly brighter days and the sap in trees beginning to rise.

In autumn, with our High Holiday insights and the leaves falling, we might feel descending energy of Divine connection coming down to us. In the month of *Shevat*, with sap rising, leading towards the expansion of Pesach and blooming ahead, we reach our arms up like branches, growing toward the Divine. As Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (z”l) taught, “We are all theotropic beings. Just as the sunflower turns toward the sun and we call it heliotropic, I believe that all beings are theotropic: we grow naturally toward God.” Whether “God” for you means *Shechinah*, the Oneness, Spirit, or whatever word most authentically resonates, may we together embody trees lifting their waters and sugars from their roots up to their branches, and reach up toward these post-rain sunny skies together.

with blessings on your month of slowly rising,
paige

ELDERS' CONVERSATION

The Elders meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 3:00-4:30 PM on Zoom. In February, 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.



A SPOT OF TEA?



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. Use the Zoom address mentioned above on page 3.

HEAVY LIFTING

On Sunday, March 12th, from 2:00-4:00 PM, 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 entire 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 home for Moving Parts Press here on the coast. She is following in the footsteps of her

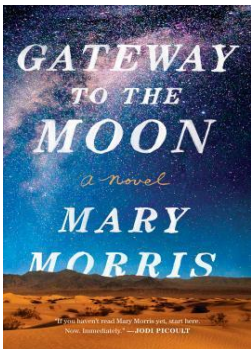
parents, artists Ray and Miriam Rice, who arrived on the coast as pioneer faculty at the Mendocino Art Center in 1960.

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 February 23rd. We have two ongoing projects: the Citizenship Scholarship project and the Indigenous relationships project, and plan to start a third ongoing project area around abortion access. In addition we do "pop-up justice" actions. If you would like to be on the Justice Group mailing list or attend meetings, please contact Donna Medley at dmthebeez9@gmail.com.

BOOK GROUP



The readers will meet on Zoom at 2:00 PM on Monday, February 20th, to discuss **Gateway to the Moon**, a novel by Mary Morris. In 1492 two history-altering events occurred: the Jews and Muslims of Spain were expelled, and Columbus set sail for the New World. Many Spanish Jews chose not to flee and instead became Christian in name only, maintaining their religious traditions in secret. Among them was Luis de Torres, who accompanied Columbus as an interpreter. Over the centuries, de Torres's descendants traveled across North America, finally settling in the hills of New Mexico. Now, 500 years later, in these same hills Miguel Torres, a young amateur astronomer, finds himself trying to understand the mystery that surrounds him and the town he grew up in: Entrada de la Luna, or Gateway to the Moon. Poor health and poverty are the norm in Entrada, and luck is rare.

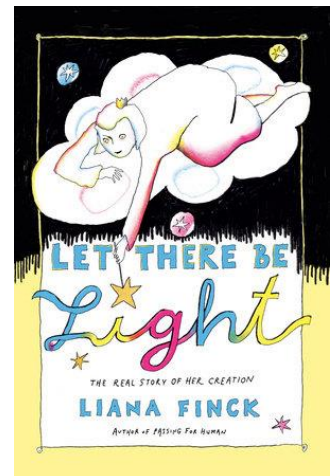
So when Miguel sees an ad for a babysitting job in Santa Fe, he jumps at the opportunity. The family for whom he works, the Rothsteins, are Jewish, and Miguel is surprised to find many of their customs similar to those his own family kept but never understood. Braided throughout the present-day narrative are the powerful stories of the ancestors of Entrada's residents, portraying both the horror of the Inquisition and the resilience of families. Moving and unforgettable, **Gateway to the Moon** beautifully weaves the journeys of the converso Jews into the larger American story.

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

IN HER OWN IMAGE

Let There Be Light: The Real Story of Her Creation, a work of biblical interpretation in comic book form by the cartoonist and illustrator Liana Finck, presents us with a female creator who is anything but supremely perfect. Visually, she's adorable but unawesome. She wears the kind of crown that a little birthday girl gets to wear on her special day. But on these first very special days, she's prone to feeling bad about herself. Instead she feels disappointment and an increasingly urgent desire to hide away. The words "And God saw that it was good" never appear in this version of Genesis. In other words, Finck's God is an artist, which is to say a being plagued with self-doubt. That she's a female artist makes her even more inclined to self-doubt.

Five and a half days into her project, she doesn't see herself in any of her creations. Specifically, she doesn't see any creatures capable of seeing her. She'd like a receptive being at the other end of all her work. Out of her loneliness,



she creates a man, but then Finck dips into extra-biblical sources to have her create Lilith, a woman who isn't about to let Adam name her or tell her what to do. Things start to get real interesting. If this sounds like thought-provoking fun, it is. The **New York Times** called it "An irreverent yet profound retelling of Genesis." It won a National Jewish Book Award for 2022, and **The New Yorker** named it one of the best books of the year.

MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly. In February the meeting will take place on Zoom on Tuesday, the 14th, 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 Steve and Kath Disney Nilson, and their avian helpers, for preparing the January **Megillah** for mailing. 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

February is a good month to support 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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Harriet Bye & Larry Sawyer in memory of Allison Bye Coutts.

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Andrea Luna to the Bikkur Cholim Fund in honor of the Four Matriarchs: Donna Montag, Joan Katzeff, Harriet Bye, and Mina Cohen for all their years on the MCJC board and their continuing work to sustain Jewish Community; Koh ha Kavod!

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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