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## RABBI'S NOTES



The Winter Solstice (and my birthday!) have now passed, and supposedly the days start getting longer. But oh, baby, we all know that the longest and darkest days are really in late January, on into February, when we haven't seen the sun in months. And this year we slog into 2022 with Omicron doing whatever it's doing, and who even knows what letter of the Greek alphabet comes after Omicron?

In that spirit let me tell you a little story: One fall day a couple years ago I was shopping at Corners and, when I came out, I saw two women I hardly knew leaning against one of their cars chatting. One of them must have waved, because I walked across the street to say hello. On the car was a sticker that read, "Ask me about rowing." So I did and then I joined this group of women, none of whom I knew well at all, in a weekly row in the *Helen Dee*, a wooden whale boat, on the Noyo River. I loved the rowing and the (moderate) level of seriousness that the crew brought to the endeavor.

Occasionally a holiday or a birthday would come up, and a message would go around that everyone should wear Day of the Dead costumes or blue for the waves or whatever. I'm not the costume-iest person, but I would go along, and we would laugh and take pictures even while we worked on our strokes. One day, when unfortunately I couldn't row, the crew all dressed as RBG.



When my birthday came along in December it fell on our rowing day, and I was asked in advance what special garb I would like for the day. I was tempted to say, "regular clothes," but I figured I didn't need to be such a curmudgeon. So I said, "Leopard print." The day of the row came, and those women came dressed head to toe in animal regalia—all for me! I had only known them a couple months, and I was really touched at how silly they were willing to look in my honor.

For the first and only time I can remember, there was debris on the river that day and it was decided that it wasn't safe to row. So what should a bunch of women in leopard print do at noon? I suggested we head over to the Golden West bar, which we did. We laid out the voluminous cookies, chips and other snacks we had brought for the row, got some margaritas, played some shuffleboard and turned on the jukebox. A while later, to my endless delight, we were dancing to the Monkees and laughing our heads off.

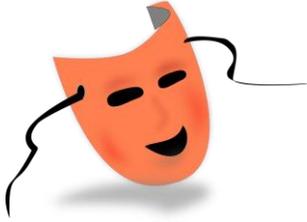


Skip ahead to COVID. It wasn't safe to row, sitting next to each other, breathing hard. Later in the year our boat became unavailable, and our rowing life was over, at least for the foreseeable future. But one of the rowers loves to plunge into icy water, and for her birthday that year she invited the crew to join her. I missed the birthday plunge, but somehow it was set that we would meet weekly and plunge in Big River. I did it now and then. Along the way a "Happy Birthday" banner got created and was unreeled when appropriate. Add to that snacks, costumes, a super-sweet chocolate liqueur called Mozart. Sometimes we would meet and use kayaks. On one birthday we paddled up to a sand bar in the river; when the banner was unfurled, it became "Jennifer Island." Another time the crew slipped into someone's yard early in the morning and decorated her fence with birthday cards and signs.



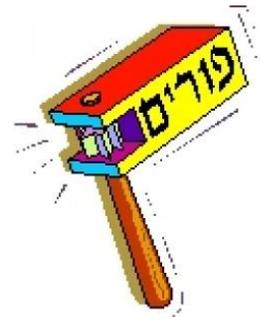
By a statistical fluke, three of the ten or so of us have birthdays in the same week of December. So plans began to be made some weeks ago for a celebration. We decided to meet at the Mac House tent for a drink. Sounded simple and low-key. On the appointed date I arrived to find the birthday

banner strung up across the back of the tent, decorations on tables, a rack of earrings made from Christmas ornaments for each of us to take, hats and crowns, stacks of presents (mostly lovingly selected at thrift stores) and cards, cupcakes with sparklers, an inflatable picture frame that sometimes shows up at events. My heart just burst open and I realized how necessary and nourishing and deeply holy all this silliness really is.



Blessedly, there are lots of different ways to show support and love to other people, and we've all been called on to employ many of them these past two years. We can call and check in, send notes of concern, offer food and rides, pray, and visit (when safe). We can support community endeavors and work to bring justice closer to reality. But fun and play have seemed to attenuate a bit in the seriousness of the times we're in. Maybe it seems a little insensitive to be goofing off during such times. Or maybe it's hard to get in the spirit of costumes and banners when life feels generally pretty heavy.

I've written and taught in the past about the annual cycle of Jewish holidays: how taken together, or sequentially really, over the course of a year they provide a kind of balanced diet of feelings and ideas. We might even think of the year of holidays as a menu or prescription for the necessary ingredients for a full emotional and spiritual life. For example, the holidays of deep winter are *Tu B'Shevat* and *Purim*. *Tu B'Shevat* is the most sensual of our holy days, when we touch and smell and savor many different fruits, then bite into them slowly, move them around our mouths and let the *sheaf* (divine abundance) seeded in each fruit begin to open up as we taste and chew and swallow. Then comes *Purim*—costumes, noise, jokes, bawdiness, intoxication of one sort or another...lightly managed bad behavior—when we cheer for our heroes and drown out the names of our enemies.



Wise ancestors! We need an extra dose or two or three of pleasure and fun during these cold days. In the spirit of the inventors of *Tu B'Shevat* and *Purim*. I hope to escalate my devotion to pleasure and merriment. In keeping with the wise lessons of my rowing sisters, I would like to be clever in how I do so, cooking up any necessary workarounds to the obstacles that would block fun and delight.

Which leads me to a little sabbatical note. Despite my aforementioned love of shenanigans, I have intentionally been very quiet and rather solitary: reading, contemplating, resting. It's been wonderful, and I am so thankful for this time. However, I can't begin to tell you how much I miss you all! How grateful I am to all of you who keep up the spirit of community and connection and celebration while I'm away. During the Hanukkah party, Mickey was zooming upstairs. I could hear some of the laughter and murmur of voices and song, though I wasn't really listening. Suddenly I was surprised by a phone in my face as Mick said, "Someone wants to say hello..." or something like that. I looked quickly at the squares I could see on the phone, and my heart took a leap—there you all were! I felt such a burst of joy. I am so glad to be in life with all of you, even from the distance of my sabbatical.

Wishing you cozy times—and some sensual delight and ribaldry—during these chilly dark days. May we all be well in body and spirit until we come back together for the serious matters of spring time!

## TU B'SHEVAT SEDER



*Tu B'shevat*, the "New Year of the Tree," falls on the January full moon: this year it's Sunday, January 16<sup>th</sup>. We will celebrate at 4:30 PM with a Zoom seder of fruits and blessings. We are taught that on *Tu B'shevat*, the Tree of Life—and hence all life—is judged by God for survival or destruction in the year to come. This ancient holiday, which originated as a tithing deadline for fruit orchards, came to be seen by the mystics as a day to pray that all life on earth continue for the year to come. It has taken on new power and meaning in these times of global warming and ecological cataclysm. This year, the call to pray for the survival of the earth itself seems increasingly strong. To answer the call, gather the supplies listed on the next page and go to the Zoom address on page 4.

ATZILUT  
TU B'SHEVAT SEDER  
of the FOUR WORLDS BRIA H.

SUNDAY JANUARY 16 at 4:30 PM

in MCJC ZOOM-SHUL

We Bless Fruit · Drink Wine & Juice  
YETSIRA

Pray that the SAP will RISE in the TREE of LIFE

Pray to Restore the Natural World

with Spoken Words, Song, Poetry, Music

SUPPLIES: 1/2 c. each red + white wine or juice  
Fruit: some with hard shell, some with inner pit,  
some soft all the way through. ASSIYAH

Led by Andrea Luna

## 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. The January 22<sup>nd</sup> service will be led by Beth Hamon, an artist, educator, and cantorial soloist.

01/01/22	<i>Vaera</i>	Raven Deerwater
01/08/22	<i>Bo</i>	Bob Evans
01/15/22	<i>Beshalach</i>	Nancy Nelson
01/22/22	<i>Yitro</i>	Beth Hamon
01/29/22	<i>Mishpatim</i>	Lew Mermelstein

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 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=NzFaTkpiOXVYMDNnNnprOXlnZjVhQT09>

Meeting ID: 707 183 6183

Passcode: *shalom*

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,7071836183#,,,,\*776001# US (San Jose)

+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 on January 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. The questions they will be exploring this coming month have not been formulated yet, but the conversation is always provocative and enjoyable. Tune in and share your experiences, thoughts, feelings, and any good jokes you might have heard. People of all ages are most welcome. Use the MCJC Zoom address right above. If you need more information, 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.

## HAVE ANOTHER 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 just above on this page.



## MCJC JUSTICE GROUP



The Justices meet on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting is on Thursday, January 13<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 Judy Stavely at [judyst@mcn.org](mailto:judyst@mcn.org) or Nancy Harris at [nancyh@mcn.org](mailto:nancyh@mcn.org). *Everyone* is welcome to attend.

### Support for School for Young Afghan Women

Kate Ruprecht, a young woman who grew up on the Mendocino coast and is now a Fulbright Scholar, approached the JG asking us to help support an underground school for girls and young women she is associated with in Afghanistan. She wrote that she was inspired by Jay Frankston's essay "Speak Up," which urges everyone to use their individual power to do something right. She hoped that as a Jewish group, we would heed that call in respect to this school.

After reading in advance a summary describing the school and its supporters, the group had an extended discussion about our empathy and responsibility as U.S. citizens and as a group of mostly privileged women to respond under the current circumstances to the educational needs of young women in a distant land occupied by and recently abandoned by our government.

We voted to support the school with three month's rent, paid one month at a time. If you would like more information about the school, its students, teachers and supporters, and/or might be interested in making a contribution, you are encouraged to contact Judy Stavely or Nancy Harris at the emails above.

### Indigenous People and Spirit in Places

Adina Merenlender challenged the group to explore the relationship we have as Jews on the Mendocino coast to the indigenous people and places here, and to imagine a more just future for indigenous people here. As an exercise that could begin to create a shared vision for just treatment, and recognition and respect for indigenous people and places, she divided us into pairs and asked us to interview one another on the following four topics:

- Describe places where you find spirit, solace, and connection.
- Are there places you have read/heard/know about from the Bible where Jews found HaShem, spirit, connection?
- How do you steward land, water, and places in your life?
- What have been your experiences, relationships, formal/informal education around California's indigenous people?

After this exercise, Adina identified a smaller group of members interested in continuing the discussion and developing a shared vision for a project.



### Mendocino Trail Stewards Update

Andy Wellspring spoke briefly about the relationship the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians is forging with Cal Fire in the Jackson State Demonstration Forest. Negotiations are ongoing to make the tribe part of the team that manages the forest's timber harvests and protects its cultural and sacred resources. Ultimately, the tribe wants the entirety of Jackson to be a redwood forest reserve.

## MCJC BOARD MEETING

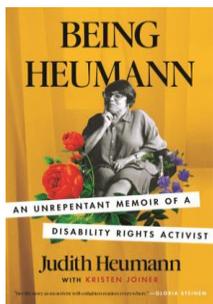
The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:00 PM, these days on ZOOM. The January meeting will take place on Tuesday, the 18<sup>th</sup>. If you wish to attend part of the meetings, please contact board member Susan Tubbesing at 962-0565, or [susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com), and efforts will be made to patch you in.

## NEWSLETTER THANK YOU



We are very grateful to Steve and Kath Disney Nilson for preparing the December **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)

## BOOK GROUP



The readers will meet at 2:00 PM on Monday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, to discuss ***Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*** by Judith Heumann. Paralyzed from polio at 18 months, Judy Heumann began her struggle for equality early in life. Because she was in a wheelchair, she had to fight to attend grade school and then to teach in one. After winning a lawsuit against the New York City school system for denying her a teacher's license, she became the first wheelchair rider to receive a teacher's license. Later she led the Section 504 sit-in in San Francisco which laid the groundwork for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Judy also is one of the stars in the terrific documentary, "Crip Camp," about how a bunch of kids with disabilities learned to be activists at a run-down camp in the Catskills (find it on Netflix). Candid, intimate, and irreverent, ***Being Heumann*** is a story of one woman's lifelong battle—from the streets of Brooklyn and Berkeley to inside the halls of Washington—to make real a world in which we all belong.

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.

## 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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dobby sommer in honor of her sister, Barbara Breakstone Sommer of blessed memory, who passed away on Thanksgiving many years ago;

To the Adele Saxe Tzedekah fund: Theresa Glasner Morales.

## 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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