

The MCJC shul is located at 15071 Caspar Road, Caspar, CA.  
Send mail to P.O. Box 291, Little River, CA 95456. website: <http://www.mcjc.org>

Call the MCJC at (707) 964-6146  
email: [sarah.nathe@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.nathe@gmail.com)

## RABBI'S NOTES



God. *HASHEM*. The Unnameable. The Blessed Holy One. *Ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu*. *Shechinah*. Breath of Life. Life. Source of the Universe. Love. Mystery.

I forget sometimes. In the helter-skelter of daily life—even a daily life that includes some prayer and *mitzvot*—I forget the amazing, mysterious Universe in which I and all of us reside. Right now I am jamming away getting ready for Pesach. I'm putting together a menu for our tiny seder and the details of various Zoom gatherings we will share over the week. I'm planning to clean at least some of the crumbs out of the house—at least to swab out the cabinet that is dusted with flour from a year of sourdough obsession. Oh, and the sourdough itself. I'm deciding whether to make “real” boiled gefilte fish, since my oven blew up and I have only a stovetop this week. I'm “doing the do,” as I often say, mostly happily, with pleasure and anticipation. And I forget God.

At least I would if it weren't for the occasional sighting of a trillium. I am the last person to wax lyrical about spring flowers, but I can't help noticing that winter has ended. All those things that happen—sprouts, buds, birdsong, weeds, wind, asparagus, pollen—signal irrepressible change. And a blessed consistency.

I spend a lot of time ruing the damage to our world, the damage I do as a consumer, a driver, a white citizen of a developed nation, all that. In my urgency not to be heedlessly happy about life, I sometimes forget that I am alive and that life is a blessing. Not just because I am not dead, but for the opportunity to breathe, eat, move, smell the flowers, love. Even as I write this I am pounding myself from inside: what about those people who live with dreadful air pollution and can barely breathe? What about the many people who have too little to eat? Those who are confined in jails and can't move about? Plants and animals brought to extinction? And my part in creating and perpetuating all of it??

But I rue the negation of life because life matters, all of it. Failing, forgetting, not always showing up—that too. I yearn for justice because I want every person to be able to experience this universe with all its grandeur, mystery, and possibility. I yearn for the well-being of our natural world for the same reason, because I want every living thing to have its blessed existence.

I tend to use words like God and life sort of interchangeably. Earlier today, after I had written the above paragraphs, I had to run to town for a bit. I was driving down Albion Ridge thinking about God and life. The air around me was interesting, sunny but blustery, with a little bit of fog mixed in. I had this feeling of life blowing and billowing around me, of the air being filled with life. I felt this not in a technical way, not in a way of bugs and seeds and living stuff blowing around, but more like the intensely living quality of just being on the road in my car on the way to town and thinking about God. Feeling life pressing in all around me. Feeling God, or something Goddish.



The kabbalists teach that, through attention and devotion, we can draw God down into the world. This is part of our human capacity. (I don't doubt for a moment that plants and animals and landscapes also draw God down into the world, all of us creatures in our own ways.) I can't explain what it means to draw God down into the world, even though I know we can all do it. “Down,” “God” and “world” are all slippery terms. But we can feel their meanings even if we can't quite pin them down.

Our mystic predecessors taught practices that help us to engage this capacity. Counting the *omer* can be one such practice. Beginning the second night of Pesach, and for the next 49 days, we “count the *omer*,” marking off seven weeks of seven days. On the fiftieth day, we celebrate Shavuot. This counting is commanded twice in Torah (Deuteronomy 16:9-12 and Leviticus 23:10-16) without a lot of explanation. The kabbalists took hold of this commandment and devised a tool, as it were, to draw God’s essence down to earth via the counting. Each week of the *omer* is associated with a Divine attribute. Each day within the week is also connected with an attribute. By contemplating these pairs of Divine attributes we can—I don’t know exactly how to put it—channel, inhale and exhale, and be in the presence of God.



There are many *omer* calendars, including the little one I devise every year for our community. Each one helps us connect with the attributes of each day of the *omer*. I’ve learned so much from our beautiful friend Yael Raff Peskin, who holds this practice close to her heart and shares it in such delightful and interesting ways each year.

For myself, I love counting the *omer*. (Truth: I love it on the days when I remember to do it!) I love that there is such a beautiful and mysterious ladder between the most elevated aspects of the Universe and the workaday one I usually occupy. I love feeling my own capacity to draw God down to earth through these contemplations. I love being with other people who also explore and engage that capacity.

And it reminds me of much simpler things: remembering God when I’m driving down the road, feeling Godness in the air, feeling the mystery of being in life, of life being in me as well.

Right now the wind is crazy outside. It’s rattling the window and sending a freezing draft through the room. Wind and rattling windows are natural phenomena, but a wind that shakes the room is also exciting and inspiring. It wakes me up to the late-afternoon sunlight, to the cobwebs, to my delicious glass of water. Yes, yes, I so wish that everyone had a house with windows to rattle, and delicious clean water to drink. And that we’d had enough rain this past year that I wouldn’t have to worry about our own well. That place of wishing and ruing is so easy for me to visit. But right now, since I’m thinking about God, a moment of awe drops down upon me. Wind and water are life. And they are a little, inexactly but evocatively, like God.

## SEDER MOBILES



On the last day of Pesach, April 4<sup>th</sup>, the Torah Mobile will be repurposed, and joined by a companion vehicle, to bring *Pesadiche* sweets and fun to our community. You are invited to welcome the Seder Mobiles when they arrive in your area: have an outdoor and socially distanced nosh, see some friends, sing, have a cup of coffee or tea. As is the way with our mobiles, they will roll over, under, around and through Philo, Elk, Albion, Mendocino and Fort Bragg.

Many thanks to the irrepressible Robin Briskin for inspiring and helping to implement this caper! A few more details will be fleshed out soon, and you will hear about them in emails, but here is the tentative schedule (a bit different from mobile tours past):

- ♦ Philo at Lemon’s Market at 1:00 PM
- ♦ Greenwood Ridge Road at Ellen Saxe and Ronnie Karish’s driveway at 1:45
- ♦ Elk Store at 2:30
- ♦ Albion Grocery at 3:15
- ♦ Mendo Post Office at 4:00
- ♦ Fort Bragg Veterans’ Park (across from the library) at 4:30

We look forward to seeing you on Sunday afternoon, April 4<sup>th</sup>, at one of our stops!

## YOM HASHOAH



The annual day of remembrance of the holocaust falls this year on Wednesday evening, April 7<sup>th</sup>. We will gather on Zoom at 7:00 PM for a time of reflection and memorial prayer, including the reading of our list of names of family members and others close to our community who perished in the holocaust. This year we will remember and honor Judith Meisel, friend and teacher of our community and others around the world and mother of Mina Cohen, who passed away last November. As a teenager Judy lived through the full horror of the Nazi holocaust. Subsequently, she devoted her life to teaching people, especially young people, not only about the murder of six million Jews and five million other targeted populations, but also that “the only thing I hate is hate.” These days when hate, against Jews and many others, flows so freely, it is good to contemplate this message.

Join the Zoom meeting at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9628821372>, Passcode: 820822.

## SHABBAT MORNING SERVICES

A full Shabbat service is led by Rabbi Holub, with much singing, chanting and silence, Torah teaching and reading, blessings for healing and peace, and time for mourners to say Kaddish. You are welcome to join in on Zoom for any or all of the service from 10:30 AM until about 12:30 PM. The rabbi or members of the community give interpretations of the weekly Torah portion (see schedule below for March). Join Zoom meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9628821372> Meeting ID: 962 882 1372; Passcode: 820822.

04/03/21	<i>Pesach</i>	Margaret Holub
04/10/21	<i>Shmini</i>	Margaret Holub
04/17/21	<i>Tazria-Metzora</i>	Raven Deerwater
04/24/21	<i>Achrei Mot–Kedoshim</i>	Lew Mermelstein

## TORAH STUDY

In January, we began the book of Exodus; in March, we go to its finale. Rabbi Holub is offering weekly Torah study on the *parshah* for that week, the section of Torah read and studied each week. Join Margaret on Thursdays in March, from noon to 1:00 PM on Zoom. Each time she will introduce a section of the *parshah* for the following Shabbat and pose a couple of questions. Then we will discuss the portion together. In April, we will continue on into Leviticus.

Join Zoom meeting at address in item above. All are welcome. You don't have to know anything about Hebrew or Torah, and the text will be available.



## JOIN US ON ZOOM!



MCJC continues to hold its gatherings on Zoom. In addition to Shabbat morning services at 10:30 AM, meetings and classes, and **Chai on The Coast** activities, the Wednesday morning Cup of Coffee, and the Friday evening candle-lighting go on. Zoom invitations to these gatherings are sent by email and posted on the MCJC web page. To get the invitations below, let Margaret know at [mholub@mcn.org](mailto:mholub@mcn.org) or 937-5673. If you would like to receive the emails announcing **Chai on The Coast** activities, contact Susan Tubbesing at

[susan.tubbesing@gmail.com](mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com).

**Cup of Coffee**—every Wednesday from 10:30-11:30 AM, we pour ourselves a steaming cup and join together for a freewheeling conversation about whatever is on our minds. It continues to be surprising, inspiring, generative and fun. All are welcome.

**Candle-Lighting**—every Friday evening the community is invited to Margaret and Mickey's virtual Shabbat table to light candles and make Kiddush together. We start at 6:30 PM (note new later start time) with a bit of schmooze, share news of our weeks, and wish each other Good Shabbos. We light at about 6:45 PM. It's a sweet way to bring in Shabbat together.

## ELDERS' CONVERSATION

The Elders meet every second and fourth Tuesday of the month, in April on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, from 3:00 to 4:30 PM, on Zoom. (Margaret will be away on April 27<sup>th</sup>, so this meeting may be rescheduled. You'll get an e-mail if this is the case.) Each week we take up a theme we've selected at the prior meeting and explore it in a personal and honest way, sharing our life experiences and our present thoughts and feelings. People of all ages are most welcome. Zoom invitations to these gatherings are sent by e-mail. If somehow you missed the email, let Margaret know at [mholub@mcn.org](mailto:mholub@mcn.org) or 937-5673.

## MCJC JUSTICE GROUP

The Justices meet on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting is on Thursday, April 8<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 Margaret at [mholub@mcn.org](mailto:mholub@mcn.org) or 937-5673. *Everyone* is welcome to attend.

Not long ago, many in our community were moved to donate to *Cajitas Calientitas*, a project that provides warm clothing and other necessities to very young asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors. These children were in a sprawling, squalid, crime-ridden tent camp in Matamoros, across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas. The camp has been a symbol of the human suffering imposed by the efforts by the Trump Administration to keep migrants out of the United States.

**no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark.**



Asylum-seekers are people who have left their country and are seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations there, but who haven't yet been legally recognized as refugees and are waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right; everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.

**no one would leave home unless home  
chased you, fire under feet,  
hot blood in your belly.**

According to Reuters, the Matamoros camp, once home to more than 3,000 children and adults seeking asylum, was the largest camp along the almost 2,000-mile border between the U.S. and Mexico, created in response to the 2019 Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), often referred to as the "Remain in Mexico Program." In early March of 2021, the Biden Administration allowed most in the camp, including all the children, to enter the U.S. and pursue their asylum claims.

**no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land.**

Recently, MCJC received a thank you note from Dr. Melba Salazar Lucio of *Cajitas Calientitas* and Team Brownsville which read, in part: "Currently we are assisting young asylum mothers with toddlers on their journey to their loved ones here in the United States. Your donation helps with food, warm clothing, toiletries and other essential items. We are waiting for asylum seekers to be released and still assisting those stuck in Mexico. We also have people being released by ICE at the local bus station that we are helping with essential items. May God continue to bless the Mendocino Coast Jewish Community."

(<https://www.teambrownsville.org>)

**you only leave home when  
home won't let you stay.**

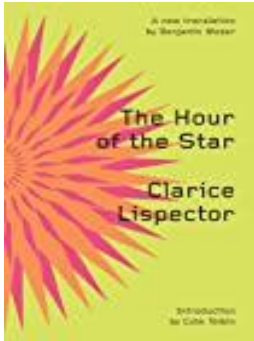
Once the government allows entry to MPP asylum seekers, nonprofit organizations along the border in ports of entry are stepping in to help. Two such examples are Jewish Family Service of San Diego's Rapid Response Network (<https://rapidresponsesd.org>), sheltering asylum seekers from the Chaparral Camp in Tijuana, and the

Annunciation House in El Paso (<https://annunciationhouse.org>), caring for asylum seekers who are crossing from Ciudad Juarez.

**who would choose to spend days  
and nights in the stomach of a truck  
unless the miles travelled  
meant something more than journey? \***

\* (Excerpts from "Home" by Warsan Shire, a Somali poet born in Kenya now living in London)

## BOOK GROUP



The readers will meet on Zoom at 2:00 PM on Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss *The Hour of the Star* by Clarice Lispector. Lispector's final novel, published in 1977 shortly after her death, may well be her masterpiece. It deals with the problems of Brazil's rural Northeast versus the urban Southeast, with poverty and the dream of a better life, and with an uneducated woman's struggle to survive in a sexist society. Narrated by the cosmopolitan writer, Rodrigo S.M., this haunting tale follows Macabéa, one of life's unfortunates, who lives in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, eking out a poor living as a typist. Macabéa loves movies, Coca-Cola, and her rat of a boyfriend; she wants to be like Marilyn Monroe, but she is ugly, underfed, sickly and unloved. Rodrigo recoils from her wretchedness, yet he cannot avoid the realization that for all her outward misery, Macabéa is inwardly free.

She doesn't seem to know how unhappy she should be. Lispector contrasts her pathetic heroine with the urbane, empty narrator and she cuts away the reader's preconceived notions about poverty, identity, love, and the art of fiction. In this novel she takes readers close to the true mystery of life, deep in Lispector territory.

Order a copy of the book from Gallery Bookshop and request a 10% discount as a book club member. Please contact Fran at [franbschwartz@gmail.com](mailto:franbschwartz@gmail.com) for a Zoom invitation.

## CORRECTIONS TO THE NEW DIRECTORY

Oh dear, a couple more errors in the new MCJC Directory have come to light. We mention them here, with a red face, so you can fix them in your copy. Please note two corrections: 1) Bea Karish's real phone numbers are (707) 223-1222 (cell), and (707) 357-6606 (house); and 2) Diana Corbin's actual email and phone number are [diana.corbin123@gmail.com](mailto:diana.corbin123@gmail.com) and (415) 370-5927.

## MCJC BOARD MEETING

The MCJC board meets monthly at 5:00 PM, these days on ZOOM. The April meeting will take place on Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup>. If you wish to attend part of the meeting, 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.

## HOW CAN WE EVER THANK YOU?

Susan Tubbesing happily assisted the MCJC publishing arm in preparing the March *Megillah* for mailing. What a multitasking gal! If you volunteer for a future folding, stamping, and mailing project (hint, hint), you can do it at your kitchen table, or another spot of your choosing, in about two hours. Go ahead, take on this *mitzvah* and you'll feel a real sense of accomplishment and virtue. Please contact Sarah at 962-0565 or [sarah.nathe@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.nathe@gmail.com)

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## GREAT THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING DONORS



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To the Adele Saxe Tzedekah Fund: Ellen Saxe & Ronnie Karish in honor of Susan Tubbesing & Harriet Bye for the love and dedication shown to all of us through **Chai on The Coast**; Karen Rakofsky; Jeanette Rasker & Robert Cutler; anonymous.

Twenty-nine anonymous donors to Rachel's Lift.

Danny Mandelbaum & Benna Kolinsky in appreciation of our beloved and wonderful Rabbi Margaret Holub. Dobby Sommer in memory of Great-Great-Grandpa Rabbi Lander.

## CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP IN MCJC

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Rituals and Holidays (including Hevra Kadisha/cemetery)	Joan Katzeff	964-9161	<a href="mailto:jkatzeff@mcn.org">jkatzeff@mcn.org</a>
Outreach (new to the community), Finance Committee, Chai on Coast	Susan Tubbesing*	962-0565	<a href="mailto:susan.tubbesing@gmail.com">susan.tubbesing@gmail.com</a>
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Kabbalat Shabbat coordinator	Mina Cohen	937-1319	<a href="mailto:mcohen@mcn.org">mcohen@mcn.org</a>
Volunteer Coordinator	Susan Levenson-Palmer	882-1750	<a href="mailto:slevensonpalmer@gmail.com">slevensonpalmer@gmail.com</a>
Building Maintenance	Marnie Press*	937-1905	<a href="mailto:marniepress@gmail.com">marniepress@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Raven Deerwater*	964-8333	<a href="mailto:raven@taxpractitioner.com">raven@taxpractitioner.com</a>
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