



Message from Rabbi Donni: Inside Outside, Upside Down



Purim is our annual Jewish carnival, a day of overflowing silliness and celebration. We dress up in costumes, make fun of ourselves, and laugh and revel as we recount the story of Haman, Mordechai, Queen Esther, and King Achashverosh. There really is no limit to how much we can sing, dance, and laugh – all in an effort to celebrate with intense joy and merriment. And, in perhaps one of the greatest acts of silliness, the debate about the role of getting drunk ensues throughout the generations of Jewish literature and communities.

The Talmudic sage, Rava, proposed that a person is obligated to be so inebriated (literally, spiced) on Purim *ad d’lo yada*, until that person cannot distinguish between cursing Haman and blessing Mordechai (Talmud Megillah 7b).

This is such a strange mandate with little explanation and a huge load of baggage. Is it really possible that the intention is to encourage drunkenness? After all, the biblical stories of Noah and Lot showed the ill effects of drunkenness, and the Talmud itself posits “there is nothing that causes a person greater lamentation than wine” (Talmud Sanhedrin 70b). Certainly, opposition to and discouragement of over-drinking came well before the modern awareness and sensitivity to addiction and alcohol abuse. So, why would the Sages instruct us to get drunk, when earlier Jewish teaching clearly objects to the associated lack of control?

For centuries, Jewish legal sources debated the meaning of this pivotal statement wondering the extent to which this really was intended as an invitation to overindulge. Some point out that the miracles of the story involve wine – the banquet of the king and the meal Esther hosts during which Haman’s evil plot to kill the Jews is exposed. Therefore, they say, we drink wine to recall those miracles even as we avoid getting drunk. Amongst these are some who do rule that this is intended exactly as it is written and others who say a *l’chaim* is in order, but not intended to be unlimited. Maimonides, for example, suggests the intention was never for Jews to get spiced or rip-roaring drunk on Purim or any other time. Rather, he says, the idea is that one should have a celebratory drink and go to sleep. While asleep, he continues, it would be impossible to know the difference between cursing Haman and blessing Mordechai.

For a moment, I want to return to the Talmud to dig a bit deeper, for immediately following the statement of Rava, there is a brief story that seems to point out the very dangers of drinking: Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira once had a Purim feast together and became intoxicated. Rabbah arose and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira! The next day, Rabbah prayed and revived Rabbi Zeira. The next year, as Purim approaches, Rabbah says, “Let master come and we will have the Purim feast together.” Rabbi Zeira replied: “Not every time does a miracle occur” (Talmud Megillah 7b).

Are we really to believe that one killed the other in a drunken stupor, realized what he had done, asked God for help, revived him, and then the next Purim, invited him to join him again for a meal? No wonder Rabbi Zeira responds with the equivalent ‘If you think I am going to another Purim meal with you, you’d better think again!!!’ Actually, it is hard to imagine they would be on speaking terms at all.

So, it seems, the Talmud is exaggerating, and I might add even employing the literary device of satire to make a point, and Rava’s original statement is a suggestion to lead to the discussion and NOT a statement of expected behavior. This is certainly not the only place the Talmud seems to introduce satire and hyperbole as pedagogical tools. Here, the Talmud introduces this unfathomable story not about how much we should drink, but to remind us of how stepping into *ad d’lo yada*- the state of not knowing distinctions – actually helps remind us of deeply religious ideals of faith, miracles, and resurrection, ‘a miracle doesn’t happen every time.’ It was true then and it is true now. Still, we seek (and even experience) the miraculous, we look towards God, and we pray for eternal connections to those who have left this world.

The entire story of Purim is a subversive one about how Jews disrupted the decree against Haman’s evil plot. The victims became the victors, and the oppressors, Haman and his family, were punished. So, for one day each year, we also become subversive – turning ourselves and the world inside out, upside down, and even on its head. In so doing, we too look to emerge with greater appreciation for humor, faith, and an everlasting connection to the Holy Blessing One. Only then will we be able to do the work of the fully living on the day after Purim, the next day and all the days following.

Happy Purim.





Holocaust Survivor to Speak at MCJC

All are welcome to join us for a special presentation at MCJC on Sunday, April 16 at 1:30 pm when Holocaust survivor Steen Metz shares his story, “A Danish Boy in Theresienstadt.” Opportunities to hear directly from those who survived the Holocaust are growing increasingly rare, so invite your family and friends to join us for this free gathering which is part of MCJC’s “Let’s Get Together” series.

Steen Metz and his family were arrested at their home in Odense, Denmark on Oct. 2, 1943 and were deported to the Theresienstadt concentration work camp in Czechoslovakia. Steen will provide a first-hand account of his experience during the Holocaust as a young boy in a concentration camp. Steen and his mother were liberated on April 15, 1945. For more information on Steen, go to: <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/profiles/steen-metz/>

A dessert social will take place immediately following the program. This is a non-ticketed event. A free-will offering will be taken during the dessert social to raise money for a Holocaust remembrance organization of Steen Metz’s choice.



Toasting a Good Run: Gathered together to celebrate years of successful production of MCJC’s *Connections* print edition are, from left to right, Judy Lewis (layout/graphics), Ellen Morton (editor), Al Gimpel (editor), Elaine Steinberg (editor), Sheri and David Drizner (printing and mailing lists), and Ellen Levy (editor and mailer). Missing at the recent brunch at the Lewis home were Linda and John Puzzo (collators). Judy and Ellen Morton, (along with Scott Schwartz) will retain their roles as the newsletter goes electronic, beginning with this issue (more editors are needed—contact Ellen Morton if interested). All those who previously got the print edition, as well as those who are on the MCJC announcement list, will be getting their newsletter every other month via email. Here’s to many more issues of *MCJC Connections*!

Delivering Food to People in Need



MCJC Drive-thru Food Pantry Team members Muriel Pick, Lou Dolmon, Linda & Jerry Trachsler, Paula Eskoz, Charles Mages, Lizz & John Dewey, Dale Morton, and Trish Atwater worked alongside volunteers from St. Ann's Episcopal Church and Grace Lutheran Church on Jan. 9 at the Woodstock drive-thru food pantry food distribution day. One hundred sixty seven families received boxes of food from the pantry that day. In addition, many of the same crew of MCJC volunteers assisted with the Feb. 6 food pantry distribution, which supported the needs of 174 families.

The Woodstock Drive-thru Food Pantry is a joint venture of the McHenry County Faith Leaders Food Collaborative and the Northern Illinois Food Bank. It is located across the street from Woodstock High School at 501 W. South Street in Woodstock and is open every other Monday from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

If you would like to join the MCJC Drive-thru Food Pantry Team and help out with this important community service project once a month, please contact MCJC Social Action Community Service Chairperson Bruce Weiss at woodstockbruce@hotmail.com or 815-338-2721.

Treasurer's Report by Iza Celewicz

By the time you read this article, you should have received a letter from MCJC stating your annual (2022) contributions (thank you!), and asking you to participate in the \$10,000 Matching Funds Challenge. It was a request printed on green paper to grab your attention in the hope that you would respond to it.

As you may recall, one of our members stepped up and proposed a \$10,000 "Matching Funds Challenge." This member willingly donated \$10,000 with the hope it would be matched by donations from others by spring 2023. We kindly ask you to consider our request for help. Please respond with your donation by March 31, 2023, so that we can create a realistic budget for the 2023/24 financial year. Your contribution will help us meet that \$10,000 matching fund goal.

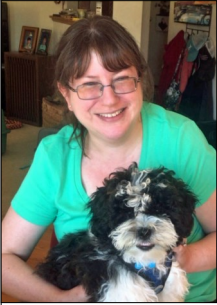
Thank you, as always, for your continued support of MCJC. With your help we will keep our little shul going and serving the Jews of McHenry County.

PANERA FUNDRAISER

Thanks to everyone who supported our Panera Bread fundraiser. The sales for the day were \$313.66 and MCJC will receive 20% of this amount. MCJC also followed up with a similar fundraiser at Portillo's the end of February, but our take had yet to be tallied at press time.

Religious School News

by Davina Kelly



In February we hosted CKI’s Religious School at our Tu B’Shevat celebration. We began with a lively discussion about trees and what they do for us. Then we enjoyed a traditional seder with four shades of grape juice, tastings of fruits and nuts, and tree-themed songs. We wrapped up the morning with seed planting. Fun was had by all!

Another highlight of our winter was when we learned about Jewish American sculptors who were pioneers in their artwork. We then tried our hands at sculpting with foam blocks, with creative and interesting results. Our older students have continued to work on Hebrew prayers and Jewish moral dilemmas with Rabbi Donni.

We look forward to celebrating Purim in March. Our students will put on a readers’ theater of the Purim story for family and congregants. We will also sing songs and bake hamantaschen. Additionally, we plan to do a holiday Tzedakah project.

Chanukah Chappenings



To avoid smelling up the building, the frying of latkes was out in the garage.



Chopping and dicing of latke ingredients was relegated to the cheerful kitchen staff.

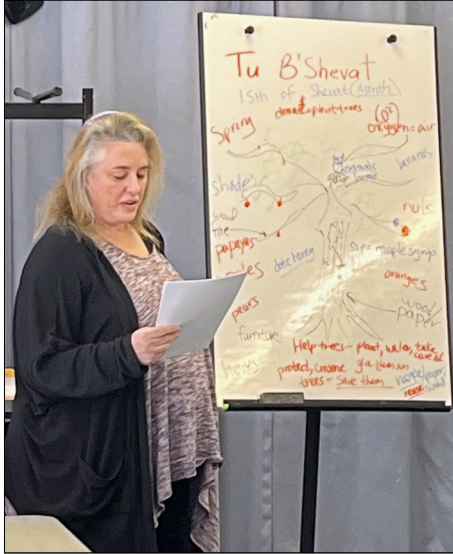


The Religious School kids enjoyed making crafts at the MCJC Chanukah party in mid-December.



The dreidel game remains a perennial favorite.

MCJC and Elgin's CKI Celebrate Tu B'Shevat Together!



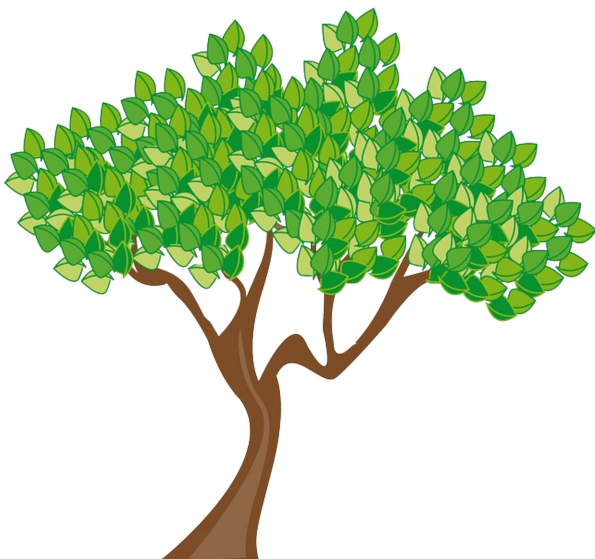
Rabbi Donni lead our seder.



Students and guests had a fun time decorating our planters.



Tree role-playing was a hit...here is a Palm, Maple, Oak, Weeping Willow, even a Bonsai!



Look at our planters filled with green onion seeds!

Purim Celebration Planned for MCJC



The Jewish holiday of Purim will be celebrated on March 5 and March 6 at MCJC. The Religious School will observe the holiday on the morning of March 5 with traditional food, games, songs, and costumes.

The congregation is invited to take part in the Megillah reading on Monday, March 6 beginning at 6:30 pm. Paula Eskoz, who is organizing the event, came across a new Megillah book for our use. Rabbi Donni will lead us through the Hebrew portion, and participants will be asked to take turns reading the chapters in English. The highlight will be the resurrection of some of the favorite songs we have enjoyed over the years at our various themed Purim skits, and some new songs as well.

As per tradition, Goldschlager and hamantaschen will be served, and costumes of any sort are encouraged.

All congregants and friends of all ages are invited to attend the Megillah reading. Please RSVP to Paula Eskoz at laurenmom824@comcast.net so we know how many to plan for.

Happy Purim!

MCJC Book Club Makes Selections

MCJC's Book Club has made its picks for its next two discussions. All discussions are facilitated by Rachel Kamin, an authority on Jewish literature, are held via Zoom and are open to all.

On **Thursday, March 16**, at 7 pm the MCJC group will be discussing *The Latecomer* by **Jean Hanff Korelitz**. The novel tells the tale of Johanna, the mother of triplets who have no strong familial bond and cannot wait to go their separate ways. When they leave for college, Johanna, faced with being alone for the first time, decides to have a fourth child and wonders what role the "latecomer" will play in her already fractured family.

In addition to hosting the MCJC Book Club, Rachel will be hosting a discussion with the author on Zoom on Monday, March 20, at 8:00 p.m. MCJC Book Club participants are welcome to take part in that discussion as well to broaden their appreciation of the book.

The link for the MCJC Book Club on March 16 is:

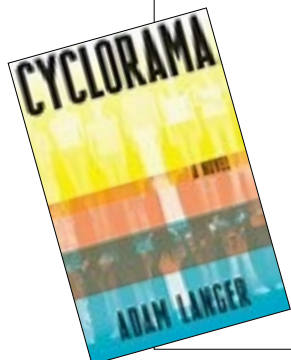
Topic: MCJC Book Club 2023

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83036813760?pwd=cjRzNFBITkx3SDBmM0ZaZzZFQit4UT09>

Meeting ID: 830 3681 3760

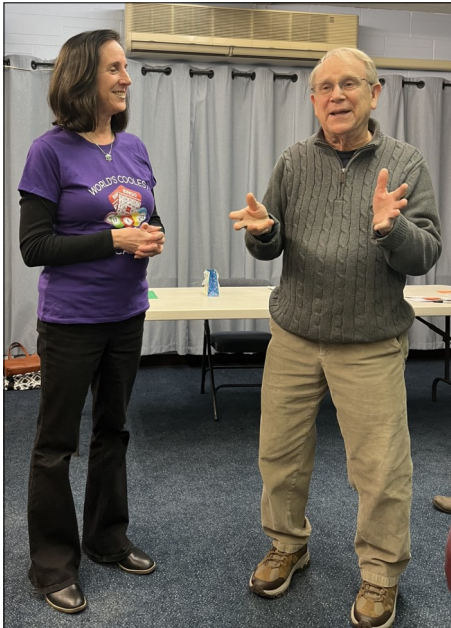
Passcode: 8617



On **Thursday, May 11** at 7 pm, also via Zoom, the MCJC Book Club will be discussing *Cyclorama* by **Adam Langer**. This book is a deeply moving, propulsive story of ten teenagers in Evanston brought together by a high school production of The Diary of Anne Frank that will shape and influence the rest of their lives. In addition, Rachel has arranged for a session to meet the author on Zoom on Monday, May 1 at 8:00 pm.



"Let's Have Fun Together" Bingo and Pizza Night



Bruce and Paula...Dynamic Duo and organizers of the MCJC Bingo Night!



Our lucky winners!



Not everyone was a winner, but we still had a lot of fun!

MARCH 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 <u>7:00 p.m.</u> Ritual Meeting <i>Sue Roth</i>	2 <i>Daniel Cheitlin</i>	3 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Kabbalat Shabbat <i>Borris Grunberg</i>	4 <i>Meyer Pickoff</i>
5 <u>9:00-12:00 noon</u> Building Maintenance <u>9:45 a.m.</u> Religious School Purim Program <i>Paul Weisz</i> <i>Karen Wolf</i>	6 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Megillah Reading <i>Maxine Russ</i>	7	8	9	10 <i>Henrietta Muir</i>	11 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> Shabbat Morning Service
12 <u>9:00 a.m.</u> MCJC Board Meeting <u>1:00 p.m.</u> Bowling Party <i>Fred Jules Janowitz</i>	13 <i>Hakav Avraham Danzig</i>	14 <i>Sylvia Tadelman</i>	15	16 <u>7:00 p.m.</u> Book Club <i>The Latecomer</i>	17 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Kabbalat Shabbat <i>Jean Grossman</i>	18 <i>Libby Oxenhirt</i>
19 <u>9:45 a.m.</u> Religious School <i>Margaret Weisz</i> <i>Maria Sue Finger</i>	20 <u>3:00 p.m.</u> Drive-thru Pantry <i>Fannie Greenfield</i>	21 <i>Martin Russ</i>	22	23 <i>Ken Bailenson</i> <i>Phyllis Crohn</i> <i>Max Schwartz</i>	24 <i>Rebecca Fishman</i>	25 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> Shabbat Morning Service
26 <i>Carole Franks</i>	27	28 <i>Maurice Berkelhamer</i> <i>Geraldine Kaplan</i>	29	30	31 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Kabbalat Shabbat <i>Howard Welsner</i>	

APRIL 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Kabbalat Shabbat
2 <u>9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon</u> Building Maintenance <u>9:45 a.m.</u> Religious School Passover Program	3 <u>3:00 p.m.</u> Drive-thru Pantry <u>7:00 p.m.</u> Ritual Meeting	4 <i>Thelma Perbohner</i> <i>Kenneth Simon</i>	5 1st Night Passover <i>Roslyn Drizner</i> <i>Sam Mages</i> <i>William Cook</i>	6 2nd Night Passover	7	8 <i>Morton Purvin</i>
9 <u>9:00 a.m.</u> MCJC Board Meeting <i>Isaac Silverstein</i>	10	11	12	13 <i>Sydney Engler</i>	14	15 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> Shabbat Morning Service
16 <u>9:45 a.m.</u> Religious School Israel Program <u>1:30 p.m.</u> Holocaust speaker <i>Marvin Silver</i> <i>George Pondel</i> <i>Greta Eskoz</i>	17	18 <i>Melvin Steinberg</i> <i>Max Green</i>	19	20	21 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Kabbalat Shabbat Children's Service	22
23 <i>Sidney Eskoz</i>	24 <i>Sam Drizner</i>	25 Israeli Independence Day	26	27	28 <i>Rochelle Flanzman</i>	29
30 <u>9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon</u> Building Maintenance <i>Esther Grunberg</i>						

Honorable Menschen



Mazel tov to Elli Krandel, daughter of **Craig & Jaci**, for accepting a new job as development director at SVARA, an organization whose mission is to empower queer and trans people to expand Torah and tradition through the spiritual practice of Talmud study.

Please send your good news to office@mcjconline.org to be included in the next newsletter. Share the accomplishments of your family, birth announcements, engagements, etc. Pictures are always welcome!



Habitat for Humanity Update

Things are very quiet at Habitat work sites since the first of the year. All three of the Marengo houses are finished. The Wonder Lake duplex is being worked on by contractors (mudding drywall and blown-in insulation) so no volunteer activity is planned until mid February.

Continuing the sad news relative to the Woodstock Restore, the insurance companies are arguing over who is responsible for the damage and ongoing loss of revenue due to the burst pipe and subsequent flood which caused over \$100k in lost merchandise.

We are waiting for information on build sites for 2023 but that work can't start until spring. Before that, I am hoping for some Critical Home Repairs to be scheduled.

If you want more information about volunteering for Habitat for Humanity please contact me, Howard Frank, at howard.gail.frank@gmail.com.

MCJC Gratefully Acknowledges the Following Donations

In Memory of Joseph Roth
Barbara Schuler
Douglas and Kristopher Smith

Bruce Weiss to the General Fund

In Memory of David Eskoz
Steven and Josie Rochell
Jack and Kay Grossman
Dale and Ellen Morton
Iza Celewicz
Jay and Sunshine Roth
Steven and Ileen Kaye
Jay and Elaine Kadakia
Craig and Jaci Krandel
Rita Janowitz

Donations for Latkes and Cookies
John and Elizabeth Dewey
Marion Michaels

Bruce Weiss donated fees for
“The Secular Songs of Christmas” program

John and Linda Puzzo donated toward
February Birthdays and Onegs/ Kiddushes

In Memory of Stew Bailenson

Steven and Ilene Kaye sponsored an
Oneg/Kiddush



Yahrzeits

Sue Roth	8 Adar	March 1	Carole Franks	4 Nissan	March 26
Daniel Cheitlin	9 Adar 1	March 2	Maurice Berkelhamer	6 Nissan	March 28
Boris Grunberg	10 Adar	March 3	Geraldine Kaplan	6 Nissan	March 28
Meyer Pickoff	11 Adar	March 4	Howard Welser	9 Nissan	March 31
Paul Weisz	12 Adar	March 5	Isaac Silverstein	11 Nissan	April 2
Karen Wolf	12 Adar	March 5	Thelma Beverly Perbohner	13 Nissan	April 4
Maxine Russ	13 Adar	March 6	Kenneth Simon	13 Nissan	April 4
Henrietta Muir	17 Adar	March 10	Roslyn Drizner	15 Nissan	April 6
Fred Jules Janowitz	19 Adar 1	March 12	Sam Mages	15 Nissan	April 6
HaRav Avraham Danzig	20 Adar 1	March 13	William James Cook	15 Nissan	April 6
Sylvia Tadelman	21 Adar	March 14	Morton Purvin	17 Nissan	April 8
Jean Grossman	24 Adar	March 17	Sydney Engler	22 Nissan	April 13
Libby Oxenhirt	25 Adar 1	March 18	Marvin Silver	25 Nissan	April 16
Margaret Weisz	26 Adar	March 19	George Pondel	25 Nissan	April 16
Maria Sue Finger	26 Adar 1	March 19	Greta Eskoz	25 Nissan	April 16
Fannie Greenfield	27 Adar	March 20	Melvin Steinberg	27 Nissan	April 18
Lorraine Danzig	27 Adar	March 20	Max Green	27 Nissan	April 18
Martin Russ	28 Adar	March 21	Sidney Eskoz	2 Iyar	April 23
Ken Bailenson	30 Adar 1	March 23	Sam Drizner	3 Iyar	April 24
Phyllis Crohn	30 Adar 1	March 23	Rochelle Flanzman	7 Iyar	April 28
Max Schwartz	1 Nissan	March 23	Esther Grunberg	9 Iyar	April 30
Rebecca Fishman	2 Nissan	March 24			



MCJC Bowling Party
Fundraiser
Sunday, March 12, 2023
1pm -3pm
101 Franks Rd, Marengo, IL 60152



\$10.00 per person - which includes shoes - payment will be collected at the bowling alley by Sunshine Roth. Trio Grille will be open for all your dining needs.

Please RSVP to Sunshine Roth (815) 455-1810 or office@mcjconline.org.

To place a yearly ad
 please contact MCJC
 at office@mcjconline.org.
 The cost for one year is
 \$125.



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Connections...to our heritage,
to each other, to the future

**McHenry County Jewish
Congregation**

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Visit our website: www.mcjconline.org

MCJC Connections...

...is a bi-monthly publication of the McHenry County Jewish Congregation (MCJC) which was established in February 1979. MCJC is a community synagogue that serves Jews of all backgrounds. MCJC is located at 8617 Ridgefield Road, Crystal Lake, IL 60012; phone 815-455-1810, email: office@mcjconline.org. If you have any story ideas you would like to see mentioned in the newsletter, please phone MCJC or e-mail Judy Lewis at office@mcjconline.org.
All copy must be received by the 1st of the month prior to publication for consideration in the next newsletter.

Thanks to All Those Who Serve MCJC

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Dara.gwynne@gmail.com
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Operations



Candle Lighting Times

March	3	5:26 p.m.
March	10	5:35 p.m.
March	17	6:43 p.m.
March	24	6:51 p.m.
March	31	6:58 p.m.
April	7	7:06 p.m.
April	14	7:14 p.m.
April	21	7:22 p.m.
April	28	7:29 p.m.