



Message from Rabbi Donni: The Torah's Ecological Mandate



Main points:

- * *Our world is good. Jews have always understood it is a good Earth.*
- * *Shabbat is a truce with nature.*
- * *Natural resources are not to be taken for granted, but are to be used with reverence and a sense of the holy.*
- * *Creation is continuous and the opportunity for renewal is ever present.*

From the very beginning, the first chapter in the Torah teaches that creation—our world- is good. After each of the six days of creation, “God saw that it was good.” Jews have always understood it is a good Earth.

Furthermore, it has always been obvious to Jewish readers that the statement that Adam and Eve were placed in the garden “to till and care for it” implied responsibility. They singularly understood the phrase, “And have stewardship over it” as meaning never to exploit and destroy it. In light of the entire biblical structure it was clear that humans were only caretakers and guardians of the earth and responsible for its proper maintenance and enhancement.

A friend strolling with Rabbi Isaac Kook records that: “As we were walking, I plucked some flower or plant. Rabbi Kook trembled and told me that he took great care not to pluck anything unless it was for a benefit. Anything that could grow... there was no plant below that did not have a guardian above. Everything that grew said something, every stone whispered some secret, all creation sang.”

To concretize this idea, the Sabbath, as part of its proper celebration, forbids one to interfere in any way with nature for twenty-four hours. Even animals are to be left at rest. Shabbat is a truce with nature.

The observance of *schmitta* was introduced to give the land a full year of rest, and it is forbidden to sow fields or prune vineyards every seventh year. On the Jubilee year (fiftieth) land must not be exploited, and slaves must also be freed. It is called a “Sabbath” of the land. It is simply an expression of letting go.

The pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot reflect change of seasons and celebrate the bounties of the earth. Natural resources are not to be taken for granted, but are to be used with reverence and a sense of the holy.

Irresponsible destruction of the environment, the poisoning of rivers and streams, is not only a physical threat but a sacrilege. The stockpiles of highly destructive weapons are not only a threat to our survival but a sin. The frightening changes brought about in the climate are not merely disturbing, they are demonic. In the face of all this, Judaism summons us out of our apathy and indifference and demands that we act and make a difference.

No one is permitted to endanger existence when there is interdependency. One is enjoined not to be thoughtless and selfish or to recklessly bring harm or destruction to life. This is graphically expressed in a classic *midrash*:

A man in a boat began to bore a hole under his own seat. When his fellow passenger remonstrated, he replied, “This is my seat and I may do what I wish with it.”

His fellow passenger replied, “Unfortunately, when the water enters, the whole boat sinks.”

The Talmud contains tractates and whole passages dealing specifically with environmental law. Grazing rights are limited if it is harmful to the land (Bava Kama 7:7). Based on Deuteronomy 23:13, the rabbis discuss waste disposal. Aesthetics and reserving natural beauty are emphasized (Bava Kama 82b). Atmospheric pollution is dealt with (Bava Batra, Chapter 2 and Gaonic Responsa). Water pollution is to be monitored (Tosefta Bava Metzia). Even noise is seriously considered (Hoshen Mishpat 156:3).

Animals are viewed with a special sense of concern and consideration in Jewish tradition, for they too are part of the divine plan and partake of creation. Thus, forbidding cruelty to animals is incorporated in the Noachide laws which are enjoined on all mankind.

We are given fair warning in the *midrash*: “When the Holy One created the first person, God took the first human before all the trees of the Garden of Eden, and said, ‘See how lovely and how excellent My works are. All that I have created for you I have created. Consider this carefully. Do not corrupt or desolate my world. For if you corrupt or desolate it, there is no one to set it right after you.’”

We are being summoned by our tradition, if not the entire universe, by the painful cries of the wounds of

(Continued on the bottom of page 2)

President's Report: The Year in Review

by Jonah Markowitz



(The following is an excerpt from Jonah's remarks at the May 21 Annual Meeting/Town Hall.)

We had a really great year here at MCJC. I'd like to take this time to reflect a bit.

The kids had a wonderful school year, thanks to the hard work of our teachers

Davina Kelly and Paula Eskoz. Thanks also to Rabbi Donni, Ilene Kaye, and our wonderful teachers' aides Andrew and Sienna Kelly, as well as our guest teachers over the year.

We also got to enjoy coming together for worship with inspiring and meaningful services by Rabbi Donni and our lay leaders Lou Dolmon, Muriel Pick, and Ilene Kaye. Thank you to the Ritual Committee including Ilene, Lou, Muriel, Linda Trachsler and Sunshine Roth, for coordinating these services.

We had several great social gatherings with speakers like Charles Troy and Steen Metz, thanks to the efforts of Bruce Weiss. We had a fantastic turnout for our Chanukah party. The Purim celebration with the Magillah reading was a blast. Lots of folks came out for our Chinese Dinner at Christmas. Bingo night was a lot of fun thanks to Paula and Bruce and their coordinating efforts.

We continued our tradition of making a positive impact on our community this year by engaging in social action and volunteering. We had a crew who participated in the Food Pantry drive-thru each month, and we also had participants in the Crop Walk for Hunger, the Adopt a Highway program, and more.

We had really fun and successful fundraising events, like our bowling party at Gene and Sandy Lindow's Glo-Bowl in Marengo (thanks to Sunshine for coordinating it). Our fundraisers at Portillo's and

Panera Bread were great as well thanks to Gail Frank who served as coordinator. Linda Trachsler did a fabulous job with the Chanukah sweaters and shirt sale that proved popular.

In addition to these events, I am happy to say that we met our goal of \$10K for our matching funds challenge. Thank you all so much for making this possible by making generous contributions. With these donations as well as membership dues, we are in a financially sound position to enter the new fiscal year.

We do face challenges here at MCJC in a post-pandemic world. I'm sure we all have moments when we look around and realize that things aren't quite the same at MCJC, with fewer school kids, fewer members, and fewer familiar faces we were accustomed to seeing. I'm so grateful to those of you who are still here, active, and committed to seeing MCJC continue as a place of Jewish community here in McHenry County.

I want you to know that we are not alone in facing these challenges. MCJC Vice President Linda Trachsler and I recently attended an online brainstorming session with JUF and JCC as well as a dozen or so presidents, VP's, and rabbis from area congregations to discuss ways to engage the community and see more involvement at shul. We discussed collaborative efforts with these congregations like rotating hosting of services so we can have increased turnout and participation. We also discussed having community events at the Lake Zurich JCC.

Before signing off, I'd like to recognize and thank Robb Tadelman and Ilene Kaye for their years of service to the MCJC Board. I'd also like to welcome Scott Schwartz to the Board and to thank Linda, Iza Celewicz, Dale Morton, Sunshine Roth, and Howard Frank for continuing their commitment to serving on the MCJC Board.



(Continued from page 1)

our planet. As it was written, "The sages say when one chops down a fruit-bearing tree, the tree cries out from one end of the world to the other."

Creation is continuous and the opportunity for renewal is ever present. A beautiful line in the morning prayer service expresses this classic Jewish belief: "God's goodness renews creation day after day."

A renowned nuclear physicist and a Nobel Prize winner was once walking with a companion along the seashore when he saw a beautiful crustacean.

The scientist picked it up, examined it cautiously and then carefully put it back precisely where he found it. His companion asked him why he replaced it so exactly. The scientist replied, "Perhaps I have already tampered too much with the universe."

Perhaps we all have tampered too much with the universe. Now is the time to re-form our attitude, re-arrange our priorities, and regenerate our planet. It is time for *tikkun olam*, "repairing the damage done to our world." Now is the time for all human beings to come to the aid of their Earth.

Religious School News

by Davina Kelly



Students finished the school year with a couple of special classes. First, students attended an Israel-themed class in honor of Yom Ha'atzmaut. During class they practiced reading Hebrew words with no vowels (like many signs in Israel), learned some interesting facts about Israel, and made caricatures out of common objects and scraps of materials in the style of Israeli artist Hanoch Piven.

In another class, students learned about Shavuot and the ten commandments. They then chose which commandments they thought were the easiest to follow, and which ones were the hardest. Finally, they wrote their own eleventh commandment which created an engaging discussion. Also, during May, guest artists Elaine Kadakia and Josie Rochell worked with students to create Mother's Day placemats. They came out beautifully and hopefully

were loved by their moms!

The school year quickly wrapped up on May 21. Special guest Ilene Kaye taught and sang some favorite religious school tunes with students. Then Sienna Kelly taught the students about creating mosaic tiles. They worked as a group to create a wonderful mosaic Star of David. It will need some grouting and glaze over the summer, but will be ready to hang at MCJC by the fall. The day ended with a tasty lunch thanks to Dale Morton and the maintenance men. To all families, have a wonderful and safe summer!



Your MCJC 2023-24 Board of Directors. From left to right: Dale Morton, Scott Schwartz, Linda Traschler, Jonah Markowitz, Sunshine Roth. Missing from the picture are Howard Frank and Iza Celewicz.

Treasurer's Report by Iza Celewicz

While the 2022/2023 financial year ended in the black, I encourage you to send in your membership renewals at your earliest convenience. They were mailed on Thursday, June 8.

The Board will review the budget for 2023/2024 at its June meeting, and we will deal with our finances accordingly. As in the previous two years, you will receive news from the treasurer in this newsletter to keep you up to date on our financial situation.



Habitat for Humanity by Howard Frank



Things are mostly quiet at Habitat for Humanity this spring. We have been working on the Riverwalk Shoppes in McHenry. It consists of 10 small one room "storefronts" that will be available for rental at low cost to small businesses and craft stores 9 months of the year. All that remains to be done are siding and interior paneling before the property is completed. Other than that, we are waiting for plan completion and permits for a couple of new builds which should begin sometime in August.

If anyone knows of a veteran in need of assistance with their home maintenance, have them contact the Habitat office at (815) 759-9002 for possible help with any major work (windows, siding, etc.).

Adopt-A-Highway Program



Special thanks to Bruce Weiss for picking up litter along Ridgefield Road between Country Club Road and U.S. Route 14 on Sunday, May 7 as part of MCJC's participation in the McHenry County Department of Transportation "Adopt-A-Highway" Program. Five 5-gallon cans of litter were picked up, and the work took a little over one hour. The next scheduled "Adopt-A-Highway" litter pick-up is scheduled for 9:30 am on Sunday, July 9. If you are able to help out that day with this important community service project, please contact MCJC social action community service chairperson Bruce Weiss at 815-338-2721 or woodstockbruce@hotmail.com. The ideal number of volunteers for doing the work is four people.

Adopt-A-Trail Program

Special thanks to Donny Kohnke, Linda Hansen, and Bruce Weiss for picking up litter along the U.S. Route 14 bike trail between Ridgefield Road and Lucas Road on Sunday, May 7, as part of MCJC's participation in the McHenry County Conservation District's "Adopt-A-Trail" Program. Three large lawn and leaf bags of litter were collected, and the work took one and a half hours. The spring clean-up usually takes the longest amount of time as normally picking up litter along the above-mentioned bike trail takes between 30 and 45 minutes to do the work. The next "Adopt-A-Trail" litter pick up is scheduled for 9:30 am on Sunday, July 9. If you are able to help out that day with this important community service project, please contact MCJC social action community service chairperson Bruce Weiss at 815-338-2721 or woodstockbruce@hotmail.com. The ideal number of people for doing the work is four.



Woodstock Drive-Thru Food Pantry

Members of the MCJC community worked alongside volunteers from St. Ann's Episcopal Church, Grace Lutheran Church, and Resurrection Catholic Church at the April 24th and May 22nd Woodstock drive-thru food pantry food distribution days. MCJC members Paula Eskoz, Linda & Jerry Trachsler, Lou Dolmon, Donny Kohnke, and Lizz & John Dewey helped out on April 24th, and Linda & Jerry Trachsler, Lizz & John Dewey, Ellen Morton, and Rabbi Maralee Gordon helped out on May 22nd. Interestingly, the number of families who received boxes of food on April 24th and May 22nd was exactly the same number: 199. To-date, a total of 1665 families have received boxes of food from the Woodstock mobile food pantry during 2023.

The Woodstock Drive-Thru Food Pantry is a joint venture involving the McHenry County Faith Leaders Food Collaborative and the Northern Illinois Food Bank. It is located in the parking lot across the street from Woodstock High School at 501 South Street in Woodstock and is open between 3:30 pm and 6:00 pm on the first and third Mondays of every month.

MCJC has been asked to help provide volunteers for the July 24th mobile food distribution days. If you would like to perform a mitzvah and be a volunteer helper at the Woodstock drive-thru food pantry on the above listed days, please contact MCJC social action community service chairperson by phone at 815-338-2721 or by email at woodstockbruce@hotmail.com.



MCJC's Food Pantry volunteers helped feed those in need on May 22.

Honorable Menschen



Miriam Franks, daughter of **Andrea Wolf and David Franks**, graduated Summa Cum Laude from Binghamton University with a BS in Biochemistry, and a minor in Flute Performance. She received the University President’s recognition for her achievement in the Honors Program. Miriam starts medical school at SUNY Upstate Medical School in Syracuse in July. Mazel tov to all, including the proud parents!



It’s a Wrap!: In June, MCJC played host to the b'not mitzvah (plural for bat mitzah) of **Deborah and Sophia Grover**. Mom, Lea Grover, her family, friends, and members of the MCJC community could not have been more proud (or impressed) by their Torah reading skills and d'var Torah insights. The twins credited Rabbis Maralee Gordon and Donni Aaron, Jaci Krandel and the MCJC religious school staff for helping them reach their big day.



David Goldberg and Allison Murphy were married on June 18, 2023 at a beautiful service officiated by Rabbi Maralee Gordon at Salvatore’s Wedding venue in Lincoln Park. David is the son of long-time MCJC member **Mark Goldberg** and his late wife, Susan. The Goldbergs will live in Burbank, CA where David is a rehabilitation counselor for the Veterans Administration and Allison is a high school history teacher. They are planning to relocate to the Midwest in the next year.

MCJC would like to thank **Adam Moliwell** who fixed several of our red siddur books that were coming apart. Adam is studying with Rabbi Maralee Gordon. He is a librarian by profession and a mensch.



Thank you to Sunshine Roth for placing American flags at graves in the lovely McHenry County Jewish Cemetery in Woodstock on Memorial Day where they will remain through Flag Day and July 4th.

JULY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 <i>Jack Jansky</i>	3	4 <i>Asher Reisman</i>	5	6	7	8 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> Shabbat Morning Service
9	10 <i>Rose Pickoff</i> <i>Bernard Pickoff</i>	11 <i>Eleanor Long</i>	12	13	14	15
16 <i>Shandes Knell</i>	17	18	19	20	21 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Kabbalat Shabbat <i>Robert Goldberg</i> <i>Alan Goldberg</i>	22 <i>Michael Mages</i>
23	24 <u>3:00 p.m.</u> Woodstock Drive- Thru Food Pantry <i>Dale Goldman</i>	25	26	27	28 <i>Terry Beekil</i>	29 <i>Nick Frank</i>
30	31					

*Names at the bottom of the dates denote Yahrzeits

AUGUST 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 <i>Gertrude Balkachuk Florence Michaels</i>	2	3 <i>John S. Long</i>	4	5 <u>9:30 a.m.</u> Shabbat Morning Service
6	7	8	9 <i>Minnie Simon</i>	10 <i>Lillian Himmelfarb</i>	11 <i>Mason Parrish</i>	12
13	14	15	16	17 <i>Kate Pondel</i>	18 <u>6:30 p.m.</u> Kabbalat Shabbat	19 <i>Tillie Finger</i>
20	21 <u>3:00 p.m.</u> Woodstock Drive- Thru Food Pantry	22	23	24	25	26
27 <i>Michael Tadelman</i>	28	29	30	31		

*Names at the bottom of the dates denote Yahrzeits

Birthdays**Happy Anniversary!****Yahrzeits**

Jack Jansky	13 Tammuz	July 2	Terry Beekil	10 Av	July 28
Asher Reisman	15 Tammuz	July 4	Nick Frank	11 Av	July 29
Sidney Cheney	19 Tammuz	July 8	Florence Michaels	14 Av	August 1
Rose Pickoff	21 Tammuz	July 10	Gertrude Balkachuk	14 Av	August 1
Bernard Pickoff	21 Tammuz	July 10	John S. Long	16 Av	August 3
Eleanor Long	22 Tammuz	July 11	Minnie Simon	22 Av	August 9
Shandes Knell	27 Tammuz	July 16	Lillian Himmelfarb	23 Av	August 10
Robert Goldberg	3 Av	July 21	Mason Parrish	24 Av	August 11
Alan Goldberg	3 Av	July 21	Tillie Finger	25 Av	August 12
Michael Mages	4 Av	July 22	Kate Pondel	30 Av	August 17
Dale Goldman	6 Av	July 24	Michael Tadelman	10 Elul	August 27

MCJC Gratefully Acknowledges the Following Donations

Thank you to all the members and guests who made free-will donations to MCJC's recent Steen Metz Holocaust Remembrance Program. We were able to make a \$225 donation to the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Steen's honor.

Marian Michaels donated to the General Fund

Ilene and Steve Kaye and family donated in memory of Eileen Frank's sister, Marilyn Helene Horn

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Nedwin and family donated in memory of Stewart Bailenson

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

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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

Rabbi Donni Aaron <i>Rabbi</i>	<u>Members-at-Large</u> Howard Frank Sunshine Roth	<u>Subcommittee Chairs</u> Ellen Morton <i>Communications</i>
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Candle Lighting Times

July	7	8:14 p.m.
July	14	8:10 p.m.
July	21	8:05 p.m.
July	28	7:59 p.m.
August	4	7:51 p.m.
August	11	7:42 p.m.
August	18	7:31 p.m.
August	25	7:20 p.m.