



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 7-15-23 MATOT-MASEI

Ministry News

IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE ON THE LIST TO PRAY FOR YOU CAN SEND THEM TO US AT TOLMM@ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG OR BY TEXT MESSAGE TO 575 644-7706 AND I WILL SEND THEM BY EMAIL ONLY.

Remember that you can support the work of Tree of Life Messianic Ministries with a donation made via PayPal or by check to PO Box 467, Organ, NM 88052. Your donation helps our continued outreach to inmates and the time it takes to put this Newsletter together.

Donate



Tree of Life Messianic Ministries is a 501 C-3 non-profit. To donate go to etz-chayim.org and click on the PayPal or Venmo Link.

Tree of Life Messianic Ministries primarily focuses on its Prison Ministry and helping form groups in the prisons. TOLMM also seeks to help Home Groups and offers a covering for Home Groups and the combined experience of leadership

from Rabbi Philip Hammond and Rabbi Mordecai Silver. Group leaders can receive recognition as Elders under TOLMM, which will help in an advisory role. Your support is needed for the Prison Ministry due to continuing rising costs. We now have an Affiliate in Australia.

HOME GROUPS, CONGREGATIONS AND PEOPLE SEEKING FELLOWSHIP..

Shawn Warren lives in Arizona. If you know of someone who is looking for a group in that area, please let me know and I will send the information to Shawn. Elder Shawn Warren is an Elder affiliated with TOLMM and helps with one-on-one correspondence with inmates in our Prison Ministry Outreach. He also encourages people to contact us about affiliating with TOLMM through Home Groups and our help to group leaders.

Gabriel Martinez has a home group in El Paso. If interested let me know and I will send him the information. Gabriel is an Elder affiliated with TOLMM as is his Home Group, Ohr Ha'Brit Messianic Torah Assembly.

There is a new Home Group in Las Cruces. For more information email tolmm@etz-chayim.org.

Michael and Gayle Michelucci are forming a new Home Group in Idaho.

Rabbi Phillip Hammond has a Zoom Bible Study and a Erev Shabbat and Shabbat Service on Zoom Friday evening and Saturday morning at 11:00am. Rabbi Hammond is in Australia and the time difference would be 5:00pm Friday Mountain Time. Rabbi Hammond is looking into starting a men's group focused in the United States. You can contact Rabbi Hammond at Philip@etz-chayim.org. Rabbi Hammond is now affiliated with Rabbi Mordecai Silver and his ministry, Tree of Life Messianic Ministries. Check out Rabbi Hammond at <https://www.etz-chayim.org/australia-affiliate/>.

We thank you for your support. Blessings in Messiah Yeshua, Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph. D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D. and our team

General News

TO SEARCH FOR MY BOOKS ON AMAZON ENTER “**BOOKS BY RAV MORDECAI SILVER**”. MINE ARE AVAILABLE IN PRINT FORMAT ONLY. I HAVE TWO NEW BOOKS ON AMAZON: RAV SHA’UL AND REFLECTIONS ON TORAH. TO SEE MORDECAI’S BOOKS, GO TO: [HTTPS://WWW.ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG/SHOP-OUR-STORE/PRINT-AND-KINDLE-BOOKS/](https://www.etz-chayim.org/shop-our-store/print-and-kindle-books/)

FOR RABBI HAMMOND’S BOOK GO TO AMAZON.COM AS WELL.

CHECK OUT RABBI MORDECAI SILVER’S 3 YEARS OF VIDEO TEACHINGS ON THE TORAH PORTIONS AND FESTIVALS ON YOUTUBE.

WE HAVE 7 PRISON AFFILIATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

MESSIANIC TEACHING ON THE WEEKLY TORAH, HAFTARAH, AND APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURE PORTIONS...



Rabbi Mordecai Silver tolmm@etz-chayim.org

MESSAGE FOR 7-15-23 MATOT-MASEI

*Matot – Tribes / Mas'ei – Journeys of
Numbers 30:2-32:42 / Num 33:1-36:13
Jeremiah 1:1-2:3 / Jer 2:4-28; 3:4; 4:1-2
Hebrews 3:12-16 / James 4:1-12*

We read this in Numbers-Bamidbar 32:13-15

So, the displeasure of Adonai burned against Yisrael, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the eyes of Adonai was destroyed. And see, you have risen in your father's place, an increase of men, sinners, to add still more the burning displeasure of Adonai against Yisrael. For if you turn away from following Him, He shall once again leave them in the wilderness, and you shall destroy all these people.

Jeremiah – Yirmeyahu 2:7 says this:

Then I brought you into a garden land, to eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land and made My inheritance an abomination.

Can God dwell in you? We are the inheritance of God. Through the Messiah Y'shua we have become joint heirs with Him. Are we sharing in this or dividing it up?

James – Ya'akov 4:1-12 (Go to Bible)

Hebrews 3:12-16:

Look out, brothers, lest there be in any of you a wicked heart of unbelief in falling away from the living Elohim, but encourage one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened by the deceivableness of sin. For we have become partakers of Messiah if we hold fast the beginning of our trust firm to the end, while it is said, "Today, if you hear His voice. Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who, having heard, rebelled? Was it not all who came out of Mitsrayim, led by Mosheh?

Matos and Masei are two parshios joined together, but their names are opposites.

The word "match" (of which the plural is "matos") means a staff. A staff is something inert, cut off from the tree from which it sprouted. It has ceased to have the power of furthering itself, of bringing forth new life. It will always remain what it is now. Static and unchanging.

Masei (from the verb 'to journey') is the opposite. It is the essence of dynamism, of development and growth. For the journey is the example of furtherance.

Really, this placing together of Matos and Masei is symbolic of the Torah itself. The Torah has the power to take the lifeless and change it into life. To take Aaron's inert staff and cause it to flower and bloom. To change it into a serpent.

A simple, inert staff becomes the instrument of the great signs and wonders done in Egypt, for splitting the sea apart. A simple, inert staff becomes the symbol of the beginning of life itself for the Jewish People. The ultimate reversal of the lifeless staff -- the match -- brings furtherance and an eternal future -- the masei -- to our journeys as the Children of God.

I want to close with this Scripture from **Jeremiah 2:13:**

*For my people have done two evils: they have forsaken Me, **the fountain of living waters**, to hew out for themselves cisterns, cracked cisterns, which do not hold water.*

We need to come together as believers. No matter what name we call ourselves. In the end, we are the children of God, followers of the Messiah Y'shua. Are we filled with His living water? Or do we spend so much time arguing among one another that no one who looks on us can see Messiah in us?

I, for one, do not want to stand before my Messiah and have Him tell me that I contributed to the dissension in His body.

Do we have so many spiritual holes in us that we can't hold His water. I want to be one that can hold the living waters poured out by my God!

We include a Traditional Torah Commentary and my Messianic Commentary. The reason for this is so you can see a Messianic Perspective and a Traditional Jewish one. Remember to use discernment in approaching Traditional Jewish teachings as they do not recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. There are various ideas in traditional Jewish circles about the Messiah and even that there is no Messiah, the thinking in Reform Judaism. So, please be careful to balance the teachings.

We do not agree with the Jewish position on Yeshua, but Believers need to know the Jewish thinking on Yeshua and not buy into this thinking and forsake faith in our Messiah. For those who say they would never do this, we must beg to differ, because we have seen it over our lives as Jewish Believer's in Yeshua. We have been Believer's in Messiah Yeshua for decades. We have seen a lot and had many discussions with our fellow Jews and non-Jews who ultimately turned away from Yeshua because they steeped themselves in Jewish teachings. One does not come out of either traditional Judaism or Christianity and come into the Messianic walk, and then going back, or into, traditional Judaism. ***There are many good things in Judaism but denying Yeshua as Messiah is not one of them.*** Berachot (Blessings), Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph.D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D.

A TRADITIONAL JEWISH PARASHAH AND HAFTARAH COMMENTARY



Parashat Matot: Summary

Numbers 30:2-32:42

Moses describes the laws of oaths; the Israelites battle the Midianites; the tribes of Reuben and Gad request to dwell outside of the Land of Israel.

Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the sons of Israel, saying, “This is the word that God has commanded. If a man makes a vow to God or swears an oath, he must not permit his word to remain unfulfilled. He shall do whatever has come forth from his mouth.

“The same goes for a woman, unless her father (in her youth) or her husband obstructs her vows. In that case, God will forgive her because of these obstructions. Every vow and every binding oath of self-denial, her husband can let it stand or her husband can annul it. As for a widowed or divorced woman, anything that she has vowed shall stand for her.” These are the laws that God commanded Moses between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter in her youth in her father’s house.

God then said to Moses, “Accomplish the vengeance against the Midianites in order to raise the sons of Israel from their influences of idol worship and immorality. Afterward you shall die before your peoples.”

Moses did as God commanded and mounted a war campaign against Midian and slew all the males and kings and Balaam, son of Beor. The sons of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their children, all their livestock and flocks and all their possessions. They brought all these prisoners and possessions to Moses and Eleazar the priest in front of the community of Israel.

Moses was angry with the officers of the army who had returned from the war, saying “So you allowed all the females to live? Lo! These are exactly the ones who, on Balaam’s advice, were to

cause the sons of Israel to act faithlessly against God in the matter of Baal Peor so that the plague broke out within the community of God.

“And now kill every male among the children and every female who has known a man for sexual intercourse. You shall camp outside the camp for seven days, and everyone who has slain a person or touched a slain person must be cleared of sin. All the utensils and garments must also be cleared of sin.”

Then God said to Moses, “Take up the sum of the booty seized and divide it among the warriors and among the entire community. And you shall levy a tribute for God from the warriors and also give Eleazar the priest an uplifted donation.” These tributes are listed specifically, and include animals, virgin females, and gold.

Now, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad had great wealth in herds of cattle. They saw the land of Yaazer and the land of Gilead and saw it was well-suited for herds. They asked Moses and Eleazar the priest if they could remain there to tend their herds rather than crossing over to the land God had given them.

Moses responded, “Shall your brothers go to war, and you sit here? And why do you restrain the hearts of the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land that God has given them? That is how your fathers acted when I sent them to scout the land. All the scouts lied about the land except for Caleb and Joshua who followed God. Remember how the anger of God was stirred and God made the scouts wander in the wilderness for forty years until that generation had come to an end.

“And now you have risen in the place of your fathers, you brood of sinful men, to add to the wrath of God that was kindled against Israel. If you hold back from following God, he will make them remain in the wilderness even longer and you will have prepared ruin for this whole people.”

And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad came up to him and said, “We want to build sheepfolds for our cattle and cities for our children. Our children can remain in the fortified cities while we bring the sons of Israel to their place. We will stay until each of them have taken their inheritance in the promised land while we take our inheritance on this side of land.”

Moses responded, “If you will drive out the enemies before God and help conquer the land, then you will be freed from your obligation by God and by Israel. Then you may return to this land, and it shall become your property before God. But if you do not do this, then you have sinned against God and your sin shall be found out.”

Thus, it was done that the children and wives and herds of the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben remained in the cities of Gilead while the men went and conquered enemies as promised.

Parashat Matot Discussion Questions

- 1) With regard to the vows a man or woman makes before God, why are the terms different for a man than for a woman? Are they still different? Why or why not?
- 2) Why does God suggest that a woman must abide by her father or husband? Is that still true today? Why or why not?
- 3) Just a few portions ago, Balaam was the protector of the Israelites and remained loyal to God even when Balak wanted him to forsake God and curse the Israelites. Why, then, was Balaam, son of Beor, killed along with all the Midianites?

Haftarah for Parashat Matot Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

The first haftarah of oppression (for Parashat Matot or Parashat Pinhas), and the haftarah read by Sephardim for Parashat Shemot.

When God begins speaking to Jeremiah, He explains that He chose Jeremiah to receive prophecy before the prophet was even born, while he was still being formed in his mother's womb. Though many people might take this as a compliment, Jeremiah is terrified to learn this, and counters that he cannot serve as a prophet because he is too young and unable to speak. But God insists that Jeremiah will serve Him. God offers a promise of Divine protection and verbal inspiration.

Then God delivers two visions to Jeremiah. In the first, a branch from an almond tree serves as a reminder that God is watchful and committed to bringing His words to fruition. The Hebrew word for almond, *shaked*, is like the word for watchful, *shoked*. In the second vision, a steaming pot, tipped away from the north, represents a disaster that will soon come forth from the northern kingdom—Babylonia. Though the disaster will be great, and Jeremiah will come under attack, God promises to protect him.

At the end of the haftarah, God recalls how devoted Israel was to Him, following Him into the unsown desert, and trekking to Israel. He emphasizes that those who disrespect God and His land will be found guilty, and those who are loyal to God will be rewarded.

Relation to the Calendar

In the Sephardic community, this haftarah is read on the same Shabbat that we read the story of God first appearing to Moses, and Moses attempting to deflect God's leadership charge. Both Jeremiah and Moses offer similar initial excuses as to why they should not be leaders, and God's reassurances to both are similar.

Sephardim hear this haftarah twice every year, as it is also read on the first Shabbat after the 17th of Tammuz, corresponding with either *Parashat Pinhas*, or *Parashat Mattot*. In those cases, the haftarah is not connected to the parashah, but rather to other events on the calendar. The three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and *Tisha B'Av* are called *T'lata*

D'puranuta, the Three Weeks of Oppression, and are considered especially woeful times for the Jewish people. It was on the 17th of Tammuz that the Romans breached the walls of Jerusalem, and it was on the ninth of Av that they destroyed the Temple. During the sad weeks between these anniversaries, we read haftarot—including this prophecy from Jeremiah—that focus on punishments that will be meted out to the people who forget God.

Parashat Masei: Summary

Numbers 33:1-36:13

The sons of Reuben and Gad have promised Moses that they will help the other tribes settle the Promised Land before settling across the River Jordan.

The sons of Reuben and Gad have promised Moses that they will help the other tribes settle the Promised Land before settling across the River Jordan.

Moses records the journeys of the sons of Israel from when they were led out of Egypt by Moses and Aaron, from the first month of the fifteenth day, on the morning after the Pesach offering when the sons of Israel went out before the eyes of all the Egyptians. For God had struck them down with the death of the first-born, with judgment upon their gods. God talks to Moses. "Tell the people that when you cross into the land of Canaan, you shall drive out all people who live there and destroy all their symbols, idols, and places of worship. I have given this land to you. If you do not drive out the people who live there, then those left behind will become like a thorn in your side. They will oppress you as enemies in the land in which you dwell and, it will come to pass that what I had intended to do to them, I will do to you."

God has Moses tell the Children of Israel about the borders of Canaan and the land each tribe shall receive. Each tribe will give a portion of their possessions, land and animals to the Levites who take care of the Tent of Appointed Meeting with God. God said, "Moses, tell the people that in the promised land of Canaan, you shall make safe cities. These cities of refuge shall be a safe place for people who murder until that person has been judged innocent or guilty. There shall be 6 safe cities, 3 on this side of the Jordan and 3 in Canaan."

Moses tells the people about God's specific laws about murder. "If one murders out of hatred, the murdered shall be put to death. This murderer may only be punished by death if at least two witnesses can verify the murderer. No-one may be killed on the words of only a single witness. If a murderer is to die, then do so. Never accept a bribe to keep the murderer alive. If a death occurs without hatred or desire to hurt, then the killer will be taken to a safe city. If the killer leaves the safe city, then that killer can be killed. This is the law of justice for all time in your land. God says to not turn the Promised Land into a place of sins and lies and injustice. Keep the promised land pure for God is watching the Children of Israel."

After the giving of these laws on murder, the land inheritances of Zelophehad's daughters are clarified. Since God told Moses that if there are no male inheritors, land inheritance shall pass to the daughters. The tribal members were concerned about the transference of land when the daughters get married. Moses answered, "These daughters must marry someone in the family of their father's tribe so that no inheritance shall pass from one tribe to another."

These are some of the laws that the Lord commanded the Israelites, through Moses, on the steps of Moab, at the Jordan near Jericho.

Parashat Masei Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is difference between "thou shall not murder" and "thou shall not kill"?
- 2) Why is it important to always have two witnesses before judging someone innocent or guilty of a sin?
- 3) Do you believe that people who murder out of hatred should be put to death? Why or why not?

Haftarah for Masei

A prophecy of destruction that is rife with metaphor.

The Ashkenazic custom is to read Jeremiah 2:4-28 and 3:4. The Sephardic custom is to read Jeremiah 2:4-28 and 4:1-2.

The haftarah for Parashat Masei is the second in the series of three haftarot that are read between the 17th of Tammuz and the ninth of Av, all of which describe Israel's oppression and destruction (*tlata depuranuta*). Though it is not thematically connected to the parashah, the haftarah evokes the sense of mourning that characterizes this period in the Jewish calendar.

The haftarah begins exactly where the previous week's haftarah ended, with the prophet Jeremiah rebuking the people for abandoning God. He laments that the people have failed to remember that God took them from the land of Egypt, guided them through the dangers of the wilderness, and gave them a land full of bountiful fruit. He notes that it wasn't just the common people who are guilty—the priests, Torah scholars, rulers, and prophets have all sinned.

Jeremiah marvels at Israel's audacity. If one were to search the corners of the world, he claims, one could not find a nation so rebellious. Indeed, all of nature is shocked by what Israel has done: "Be appalled, O heavens, at this. Be horrified, utterly dazed!" (2:12)

Mixing Metaphors

The people's sin, Jeremiah explains, is two-fold: They have abandoned God, and they have taken to worshipping useless idolatry. Jeremiah describes this with a water metaphor: God is a fountain of living waters, but the Israelites prefer to dig their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot even hold water.

In continuation of the water theme, Jeremiah tells the people that destruction is inevitable, and they ought not to bother looking elsewhere for help: “What is the good of going to Egypt to drink the waters of the Nile? And what is the good of going to Assyria to drink the waters of the Euphrates?” (2:18) None of these nations will be able to help Israel because they are so deeply soiled by sin.

Moving from water to wildlife, God compares Israel to a lustful camel who copulates on every high hill and under every tree, and to a wild donkey in the desert, passionate and unrestrained.

In the final verses of this rebuke, Jeremiah says the entire house of Israel, including its kings, officers, priests, and prophets should feel like a guilty thief who has been caught. Even the gods the people worship are material for comparison: “For your Gods have become, O Judah, as many as your towns!” (2:28)

So as not to end on a negative note, Ashkenazic communities add a verse to the end of the haftarah which calls Israel the companion of God’s youth (3:4). Sephardic communities jump ahead two chapters and read verses promising that if Israel returns to God, they shall become a blessing among the nations of the world (4:1-2).



From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond

LIFE IS WHAT IT IS??

Living in a “free” society has its challenges!

In the journey of life, we are faced with constant challenges and decisions. Some of these challenges and decisions can be life changing and should be approached with as much clarity as possible. How we handle these moments is influenced by our “world view”. We are told that those of us who are fortunate enough to live in the Western World are free to choose our path. However, is this correct? Freedoms once available are no longer. The threat of litigation is alive and well. Expressing an opinion about certain behaviours or peoples can quickly land you in court. Commenting on certain subjects can cause violent reactions from sections of our communities. There are not only “no go zones” in our suburbs but there are “no go zones” with our opinions. No longer are you free to have a negative opinion about homosexuality, Islam, abortion, euthanasia, global warming, and socialist agendas. However, you are completely free to have a negative opinion about traditional marriage, conservative values, Judaism, Christianity, Israel, and belief in HaShem without fear of persecution. We are coming to a point in the West where our freedoms of opinion are no longer free. Our right to mature dialogue and debate on any given subject is no longer allowed. We are actually being told what “freedoms” we are allowed to exercise. Sadly, these allowed freedoms are drawing people further and further away from HaShems instructions. Those that believe in the God of Israel and people who have a world view influenced by principles of Torah are silenced whenever possible. The world view of the general populace in the West has changed and with it have come

changes in “freedom”. It is fair to say that even 50 years ago the Western World had a predominately Judaic – Christian world view. This is no longer the case, and this reversal in world views has and is bringing significant challenges. The goal posts have been moved from being entrenched in a solid biblical world view and they are now in constant motion. I remember a time in school when we sang the National Anthem and had belief in God. The existence of God was hardly questioned because the existence of God was the dominate world view. I remember a time when there was no trading on a Sunday because that was known as “Lord’s Day”. Hotels closed their doors at 6-00pm and fathers went home to their wives and children. When people went out, they dressed up not down, ties were always worn, and women wore feminine clothes that were modest. Children addressed their elders as Mr. and Mrs. Respect was given to the police, teachers, and clergy. Sport was played for fun not money. Families ate around the kitchen table at the same time, with no TV in the background or mobile phones going off during the meal. Child minding centres were few and far between. Families consisted of a married man and woman with children. This has all changed because we have indeed been free to change our traditions and conditions. There is little doubt that a free society can be a wonderful society to live in. It allows people to fulfil their potential, resulting in wonderful discoveries and advancements in so many areas. In a free society people are allowed to think, explore, and develop new and exciting ideas. Yet there is a danger to our communities and countries when our freedom of thought and action lead us away from the Creator of heaven and earth. History is littered with past “world powers” whose freedoms extended to their destruction. If freedoms are left to follow their natural course, you will witness them turn into restricted governments of those who came to power through those freedoms. The so-called “Arab Spring” is proof of this.

Freedom is a wonderful privilege, and we should exercise it with extreme caution. Freedom gives you choices and it is those choices which can either bring life or death. When you have freedom of choice, choose with care and thought, as each choice and action will result in change.

Rabbi Philip [Yochanan] Hammond. PhD.

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Insights into Judaism



Are Jews the Chosen People?

And what does chosenness mean anyway?

The idea that the Jews are the “chosen people” and have a special relationship with God is ubiquitous in Jewish sources. However, the nature of this relationship is not without complication and ambiguity.

Origins of the Chosen Concept

The notion of Jews being chosen has its root in several biblical verses. One of the most prominent, [Deuteronomy 7:6](#), says, “For you are a people consecrated to Adonai your God: of all the peoples on earth Adonai your God chose you to be God’s treasured people.” The next two verses provide the reason for this choice. God did not choose the Israelites because of their numbers; rather, God chose the Israelites and freed them from slavery because God loved them and because God had made promises to their ancestors, the biblical patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This, of course, begs the question: why did God choose the patriarchs?

In the Bible, the choice of Abraham is assumed and no explanation for it is given. In [Genesis 12](#), God appears to Abraham without any introduction, and commands him to leave his father’s home. But a rabbinic source — embraced and embellished by the 12th-century philosopher Maimonides — asserts that it was in fact Abraham who found God. Abraham alone among his contemporaries established the falsehood of idolatry, affirming that there was only one God who ruled the earth. It was only after this that God appeared to Abraham.

Were Jews Actually God’s *Last* Choice?

The covenant between God and the freed Israelite slaves at Mount Sinai is central to the idea of being chosen. The covenant concretized Jewish chosenness by establishing that the Israelites would abide by the Torah in return for special divine protection. Though God chose the Jews for this purpose, an amazing rabbinic source claims that the Jews were, in fact, God’s *last* choice.

God first offered the Torah to the children of Esau, the children of Ammon and Moab, and the children of Ishmael, but when they were told about the Torah's prohibitions against murder, adultery, and robbery, respectively, they turned down the offer. Only after going to every nation in the world did God finally offer the Torah to the Jews.

Are Jews Only Chosen if They Keep the Covenant?

This tradition assumes that chosenness is not an essential characteristic of the Jewish people, but rather a result of the covenantal relationship. [Exodus 19:5](#) captures this view: "Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples."

Many later thinkers embraced this conditional understanding of chosenness, but there is another strand of thought which maintains that chosenness derives from an inherent quality. Perhaps the most famous proponent of this view was the medieval philosopher Judah HaLevi (1086-1145). According to him, the Jews are endowed with "divine influence." This trait is passed on genetically, and it includes a capacity for prophecy and the privilege of receiving special divine providence. All the other nations of the world are subject to a more general providence and the whims of the natural world.

Is It Racist to Believe Jews Are Chosen?

Interestingly, though some have seen this position as racist, it was embraced in different forms by some modern liberal thinkers. The Reform leader Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), for example, believed that Jewish chosenness is reflected in a "native talent for religion." But many modern Jews have been uncomfortable with the idea of being chosen, particularly the genetic variety.

Some thinkers, influenced by egalitarianism and universalism, rejected the notion of Jews as chosen. Foremost among such thinkers is Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983), the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism. Kaplan was a humanist and a naturalist; he did not believe in a supernatural God that could bestow favor upon one nation, and he believed that it was practically and morally problematic to posit the fundamental superiority of one people.

Still, most forms of contemporary Judaism have not rejected the concept but have played down its importance or stressed its more benign interpretations.

PRAYER & SPIRITUALITY



How This Indoorsy Rabbi Found Connection in the Unlikeliest Place (Guest Article)

Upon meeting me, it is clear that I am an indoor cat. I like to be inside, warm, in a comfortable matching sweatsuit and slippers sipping on my hot coffee. (If I am lucky enough to get a sip before my troops start yelling demands, that is.)

Home is my happy place. Throw on a soap opera or *Schitt's Creek* and I am a very happy Mama. I literally own a T-shirt that says, "Indoorsy."

When I first met my husband, I was a little overwhelmed by his obsession with "doing things." He loved being outside. Meanwhile, my version of the "great outdoors" was sitting on the beach at a hotel drinking iced coffee. Yes, it was apparent from the beginning that family, parenting, Judaism, money — you know, the usual hot button issues — would not be an issue between us. *This* would be one of the great pains of our marriage.

Over the years, we found our equilibrium: Though I rarely agreed to outdoorsy things like camping or kayaking, we'd spend Saturdays at shul followed by a moderately quiet (depending on which child was napping) afternoon at home. Sundays, we'd switch it up: Along with our kids — ages 6, 4, and 2 — we'd head to the aquarium, or we'd visit museums, or maybe catch a movie or get brunch.

Then coronavirus hit. I did not think it would completely change me in the way that it did. I am fortunate that my family and I have not been directly impacted by Covid-19. I am healthy, my family is healthy, my children are blessed to be learning in their classrooms this school year. But our usual entertainment choices were no longer an option. It was time to get creative and re-think what it means to "spend time as a family."

My husband — always an opportunist — suggested, "Let's go hiking." I felt every single part of me cringe. I laughed. He told me he was serious, adding, "It'd be good for you to get outdoors,

Dani.” The kids were excited, too, so I decided to be a team player and tag along. I mean, how bad could it be? I could definitely rock the hiking boot look, and that is half the battle, right?

Our first few hikes went OK, not horrible. They would always begin with the kids stopping every five minutes for a “nature pee” or *another* snack. They would always end with my middle child face-planting and crying hysterically. So, all in all, a normal day in the life. Three mile hikes took twice as long as they should have because our 2-year-old saw “another rock.” Spoiler alert: There are A LOT of rocks on hikes.

And then it hit me. (No, not the rock — although that *did* happen several times when my 2-year-old was told, “no more rocks.”) I realized, just like everything else regarding our “new normal,” I needed a new perspective. Just as we no longer dined in restaurants — opting for UberEats instead — and just as we no longer attend Shabbat services in our physical synagogue — having switched to Zoom — my understanding of who I was, how I spent time with my family, and how I could relate to Shabbat had to change.

When the pandemic first hit last spring, I felt really disconnected. That was largely due to obvious factors like the new reality of virtual school, having the kids home while working from home, and so on. But what I did not realize was that the lack of routine — and our Shabbat routine, in particular — was wearing on me. It no longer felt like Shabbat was a peaceful time. It was just *another* chaotic day at home with the kids but with less electronics. Translation: a disaster.

I never knew I *needed* the outdoors. OK, maybe I still do not *need* the outdoors. But I do need peace and quiet. I need time to disconnect from my electronics and the outside world. I need time with my three kids and husband. I have such a hard time giving them and *myself* the time they need and deserve during the week. Going on hikes on Shabbat has opened up an entire universe for me. While I do not love the hiking piece, per se, I love watching my kids discover nature, run freely without masks in isolated places, and not worry that I am going to miss an email and have to step away to use my phone while my kids kvetch. And so, these outdoorsy afternoons have become my special time. My holy Shabbat time.

Ibn Ezra, an 11th-12th century Spanish Jewish philosopher, wrote in his poem “God Everywhere” that, “Wherever I turn my eyes, around on Earth or to the heavens/I see you in the field of stars/I see you in the yield of the land/in every beneath and sound, a blade of grass, a simple flower, an echo of Your holy Name.”

As a rabbi, Shabbat has always been a special time for me. Part of the reason why I did not go into pulpit work was because I *knew* I needed this day for rest and rejuvenation, and that kind of schedule wouldn’t have worked. But since Covid began, Shabbat is no longer an experience I *choose* for myself, as a halachically observant Jewish person — it has become a *necessity* for me. As Ibn Ezra saw “an echo of Your holy Name” in the natural world, I find these holy moments while exploring God’s beautiful creation. I find echoes of God’s presence watching my children explore the beauties of this world. I find echoes of God’s presence when I push myself

to care for my own soul and wellbeing. Who knew I would find my rest from exerting myself on what my husband claims are “moderate” hikes *outdoors*?

These days, not only can I rock my hiking boots, I dare say I LOVE my hiking boots. They symbolize my happy place, time, and experience with my family *unplugged*. It's *my* Shabbat. While I do miss attending services and having *kiddush* in my community, nothing can replace the feeling of relief, rejuvenation, and rest I feel once we step outside, where I'm no longer concerned with juggling my kids, and making dinner, and responding to urgent emails. When we're hiking, my biggest concern is more appropriately “Is my husband getting us lost again?” Or how to get my son to stop identifying EVERY rock and stick he sees in our path. For me, Shabbat has become a time to *refocus on what really matters*. Thanks to Alltrails (an app), Columbia (my boots), and Jon (my outdoorsy husband), Shabbat isn't only an experience that I respect, honor, and uphold. It's also one I crave.

So, get outside. Trust me. If this indoorsy rabbi mom can do it, SO CAN YOU.

עֵבְרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

אֵמֵן

Eh-Meen

Believe



A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Big Pain

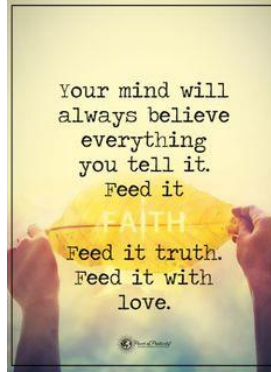
“Oy!” groaned old Marvin Himmelfarb. “I must have appendicitis,” he said as he clutched his left side.

“It can’t be appendicitis,” said his wife Myra confidently.

“How do you know?” asked Marvin. “You are a doctor all of a sudden?”

“I’m not a doctor but I do know that your appendix is on the right side of your body.”

“Aha!” said Marvin. “THAT’s why it hurts so much. My appendix is on the wrong side!”



This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup

One Pan Roast Chicken with Potatoes and Carrots

***Moist and flavorful inside, crispy outside plus a side dish —
all combined in one pan.***

Simple roasted chicken is one of those dishes everyone wants to make perfectly, including me. And while I think I've done a pretty decent job in the past with my citrus and herb roasted chicken, I wanted to make it better, with a moist, flavorful inside, crispy outside and maybe even a side dish all wrapped into one pan. I wanted it all.

As I was working on this dish the past 6 months, I was getting frustrated that things just weren't turning out the way I envisioned. The skin wasn't quite crispy enough, and sometimes the inside was still pink. And so my husband came home one day with *Roasting: A Simple Art* by Barbara Kafka. I really love this book, and not just for her tips on roasting chicken. But the tip I took to heart most of all was the cooking temperature.

Previously I had been cooking my chicken in a 400-degree oven, but her roast chicken recipe called for 500 degrees. So, I gave it a try, and it was one of the elements that has been missing to making a coveted roast chicken.

I also started adding a whole onion to the veggie mix and I really loved how it caramelized while cooking. You can usually find me eating most of the cooked onion before I actually serve the chicken. Oops.

You can use any spice blend you like, but I do recommend marinating overnight in a mix of dry and wet ingredients, such as dried or fresh herbs, citrus, wine, olive oil, soy sauce or fresh juice. I don't use honey when I marinate because I find it tends to burn once you put it in the oven.

Below I recommend the mix I like most for this dish, but you can really make any flavor combination you like.

I also recommend using either an upright chicken roaster (they cost less than \$10 and they are awesome) or a classic roasting pan with rack, which is especially ideal for an all-in-one-dish like this. While the chicken cooks, the juices and seasoning drips down, flavoring the potatoes, carrots and onion with fatty chicken goodness. I think it's really the best part.

And while roast chicken is a Friday night staple, I often find myself making a chicken like this at the beginning of the week, because it is truly an easy dish that is delicious and versatile to enjoy all week.

Ingredients

1 whole chicken
1 Tbsp sweet or smoky paprika
1/2 tsp hot paprika (optional)
2 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp dried parsley
1 tsp garlic powder
pinch red pepper flakes
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
juice and zest from half a lemon
2 Tbsp olive oil
4 Yukon gold potatoes, cut into quarters
3 medium carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2 inch pieces
1 large onion, cut into large chunks
4 garlic cloves, left whole
olive oil
salt and pepper
fresh parsley for garnish (optional)

Directions

Rinse chicken in cold water and pat dry with a paper towel. Place in a sealable plastic bag. Combine dried spices, lemon juice and zest and olive oil in a small bowl. Whisk until

combined. Pour over chicken and seal the bag. Massage the marinade all over the chicken until completely coated. Place in fridge overnight or up to 24 hours.

Preheat oven to 500 degrees.

Place potatoes, carrots, onion and garlic cloves in the bottom of a roasting pan or spread out in an even layer on a large baking sheet. Drizzle with around 1 Tbsp olive oil, and salt and pepper. If using a roasting rack place chicken on top, allowing spice mix to run all over veggies.

If using an upright roaster, place chicken on rack in the middle of the large baking sheet, so that the veggies are surrounding the chicken.

Cook for 30 minutes. Reduce to 425 degrees and flip vegetables to ensure they get caramelized on all sides. If using an upright chicken roaster, pour some of the liquid all over the potatoes and carrots.

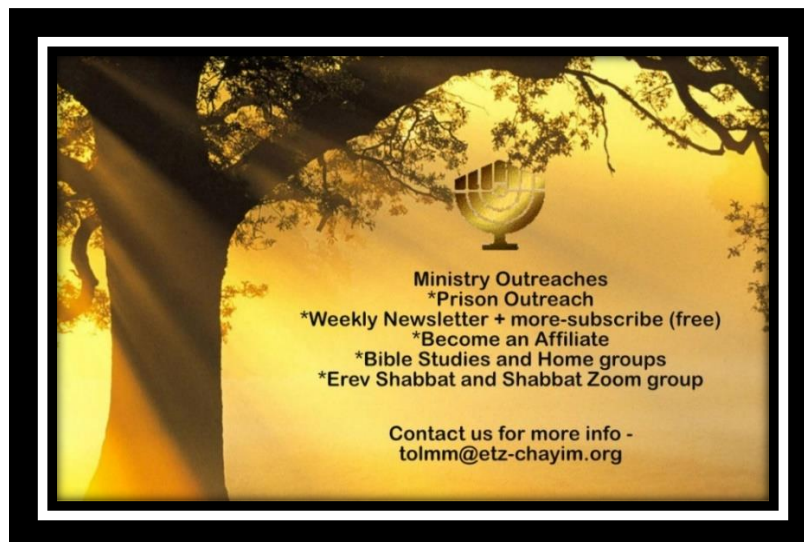
Cook for another 20-30 minutes, or until juices run clear and a meat thermometer reads 160 degrees.

Allow chicken to cool slightly before cutting. Serve with roasted veggies and fresh parsley if desired.

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