

For Week of 7/13

Dear TOS Family,

It was such a pleasure to “meet” so many of you on Zoom during my first service on July 3rd and during the Lunch & Schmooze on July 8th! For those of you who I have not yet had the chance to meet, I am Stefanie Greene, your TOS Cantorial Intern this coming year. I am currently a fourth-year (out of five) Cantorial student at Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion. Due to the pandemic, classes will be remote for the coming year. This afforded me the flexibility to move to Pittsburgh! I look forward to getting to know all of you over Zoom and in person, once it is safe to do so. I am looking forward to seeing many of you at a safe social distance for our upcoming Drive-In Shabbat on July 31st. Mark your calendars!

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about the in-between, both Jewishly and in the context of what is going on in our world today. July 9th through July 30th is a period that is called *Bein HaMeitzarim*, which literally translates to “between the straits”. This time is also often referred to as The Three Weeks leading up to Tisha b'Av, where Jews traditionally mourn the falling of the first and second temples. In this week's double parasha of Matot-Masei, the Israelites also find themselves *Bein HaMeitzarim*. They are about to finally enter the land of Israel and discover that their trusted leader for all these years, Moses, will not be joining them. Our ancestors were sitting in this narrow place with the knowledge of the past and from where they came, but also with the uncertainty of the future and who would lead them through the final stretch into the Land of Israel.

As I write this, the Fourth of July has come and gone, and we are in the midst of a long string of hot, 90 degree days here in Pittsburgh. This peak summer heatwave lull comes each year but somehow feels different this year. Similar to the themes of *Bein HaMeitzarim* and Israelites in this week's Torah portion, many of us are still mourning aspects of our pre-pandemic lives. For many of us, the uncertainty of these times makes it difficult to plan for three weeks from now, let alone three months from now. With an election just a few months away, we also have uncertainty about the future governmental leadership of our country through this pandemic, just as the Israelites must have felt about the uncertainty of their leadership as they headed into the Land of Israel.

This time that we are all now *Bein HaMeitzarim* is a time meant for resting, creating, planning, and just *being*- something that can so easily be forgotten in the normal hustle and bustle of life. What is something you've always been curious about,

or wanted to try? Do you have more time now with family or friends? Though we all have moments of wishing the world were different right now, I'm choosing to make the most of this in-between time by getting to know all of you, and working with Rabbi Weisblatt and TOS leadership in planning for all of the wonderful experiences we will have together this year, whether virtually or in person.

L'shalom,

Cantorial Intern Stefanie Greene