



Marisa Elana James

Before rabbinical school, Marisa was a college English teacher, ballroom dancer, insurance broker, student pilot, bookstore manager and professional Torah reader. She feels at home at Congregation Or Shalom in Orange, CT and Congregation Beth Simchat Torah in New York City, where Rabbis Alvin Wainhaus, Sharon Kleinbaum, Ayelet Cohen and others modeled dynamic, loving, engaged Jewish leadership. She is grateful that at RRC these diverse Jewish influences—Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, secular, Yiddish and others—are all valued as contributing to the rich tapestry of Jewish life today.

While living in Jerusalem for five years, Marisa worked for Encounter Programs, taught Introduction to Judaism classes in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and led the rabbinical student program for T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, where she currently works. Marisa is grateful to friends and teachers who shaped her relationship to Judaism and path to RRC, especially Joan Edelstein Davenny, z"l, Joyce Rosenzweig and Rabbi Amy Klein, and to her beloved friends in and around Jerusalem—Israeli, Palestinian and international—who consistently sustained her with love, good food and decades of experience and wisdom.

Marisa's love of literature and poetry is inherited from her grandpa Milton Malkin, z"l, while her artistic and musical ability, and sense of justice come from her grandma Ruth Sweet Malkin, z"l. Marisa learned to love Hannah Arendt and French poetry thanks to her father, William James. She learned to be fiercely independent and love flying small planes thanks to her dad, Ian Green. She developed a deep love of the natural world, Jewish history and good storytelling thanks to her mom, Holly Green. And she is excited that her little brother Mitchell and his fiancée Gretchen have given her the honor of officiating at their wedding next week.

Marisa is especially grateful to her partner in life, music, languages, travel, Torah and more: her wife (and now rebbetzin) Barbara Ann Schmutzler, the sweetest, funniest, most generous soul she has ever known.



From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth,
from the laziness that is content with half-truths,
from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
O God of truth, deliver us. (*Mordecai Kaplan*)

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, my Rock
and my Redeemer. (*liturgy*)

Drawing from these sources, I compose a new prayer:

May I have the courage to approach all people with kindness and expect the best from them; the determination to bring honor and honesty to every interaction; and the humility that allows me to gain new understanding from all, and may my words and actions be acceptable to the Source of life and blessing.

