

**Simkhat Torah:
Kallah Torah Address
Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe
Class of 2017**

We have just read וזאת הברכה - the last Parasha in the Torah. We read it so many times - over and over again. Let's listen to the words of the very first Pasuk:

This is the Blessing which Moshe אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בְּרַךְ מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ: blessed B'nei Yisrael before his death.

What is אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים? Man of Gd? The Man of Gd?

Is this a special title? Who else is called אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים in the Tanach? Nobody! And now we know that only Moshe is called Man of Gd - where else is he called this in the Torah? Nowhere else! So why is he given this name here and what does it mean? Going back to Sefer Shmot - we find a hint in Parshat Ki Tisa where B'nei Yisrael sin with the Egel HaZahav - the Golden Calf. Gd tells Moshe to go down from the mountain and Gd is so angry with B'nei Yisrael. Gd is ready to give up on B'nei Yisrael and make a great nation only with Moshe!

Lucky for us - Moshe does not give up on B'nei Yisrael so easily.

And Moshe beseeched the Lord HIS Gd ויחל משה את פני ה' אלהיו

"אלהיו" His Gd, Moshe's. Moshe still has his positive, personal relationship with Hashem, even if Hashem is angry with B'nei Yisrael. He begs Gd to reconsider.

This was a process - Gd did not relent so easily. There was punishment for B'nei Yisrael, there was another set of Luchot and then - B'nei Yisrael needed to show their commitment to Gd by building the Mishkan. But the final reconciliation did not happen until after the Mishkan was built at the end of Sefer Shmot. Moshe looked at all that B'nei Yisrael had done and saw that it was just as Gd had commanded.

And Moshe blessed them ויברך אותם משה

The Torah does not tell us what this blessing is. But we have another hint when we look at Mizmor צ - Psalm 90 which we recite every Shabbat and Chag in Shacharit. It starts like this:

A prayer to Moshe or of Moshe - the man of Gd. תפילה למשה איש האלהים

The same unique phrase!

Radak explains that David HaMelech found a scroll written by Moshe himself and included it in his book of Psalms¹.

If we look at the end of the psalm, the Tefilla concludes with the words ויהי נועם ה' אלהינו עלינו

The Midrash tells us that these words constitute the blessing that Moshe gave B'nei Yisrael after they built the Mishkan. Notice the words: ה' אלהינו! OUR GD. The relationship has been restored. In

¹ Me'am Loez states David included it, not wrote it based on. This is why this psalm is in plural, as opposed to David's which were written in singular. (see also Rashi on Shmot 39:43)

fact - Gd gave us a sign. The ענני הכבוד - the Clouds of Glory - had disappeared when B'nei Yisrael sinned with the טטא העגל. This was the moment when they returned - in all their glory!

So here we are - in V'Zot HaBracha, at the end of Moshe's life. מִיְהוֹלָא שִׂיא is a tribute to Moshe's life. He was always a Man of Gd. But when taking his leave of B'nei Yisrael, he left a legacy behind - he left US connected to Gd as well.

Women's Tefila is a wonderful way for women to connect with Gd through Tefila and reading the Torah. Women and girls have an opportunity to take an active part as Chaznit, Gaba'it, Hagbah, Gelilah, leyning Torah & Haftara, giving Divrei Torah. All the women and girls together create a unique and beautiful space where women's voices are lifted in song and prayer.

It is such an honor to be the Kallat Torah of Tefilat Esther - the women's Tefilah group here in HIR. Tefilat Esther was named for Esther Farber Z"l. I did not have the opportunity to meet her in person but living in Raanana and knowing her sons Steven & Seth I heard many stories about Esther, how she started the Women's Tefillah and taught so many, many girls to read.

In fact, after I learned to read in the Torah, it was those stories about Esther Farber which inspired me to teach girls how to leyn. In an amazing real-life twist where ה די (the hand of Gd) was so palpable - I had the tremendous honor of passing on her legacy. Esther sadly passed away while teaching her granddaughter Eliana to leyn for her Bat-Mitzvah. Her parents knew that Esther's stories had inspired me and so they asked me if I would finish teaching her. Eliana Farber became my first student.

Here I stand with this great honor - feeling both a personal connection and a connection of community. May we continue to go מחיל לחיל and strengthen our connections to community and to Gd: women and men, boys and girls.

I leave us with Moshe's Bracha:

**And let the pleasantness of Hashem our Gd be upon us
and establish the work of our hands upon us! Establish
the work of our hands!**

**ויהי נועם ה' אלהינו עלינו ומעשה ידינו
כוננה עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננהו!**



Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe served, for many years, as Community Educator and Director of Mercaz Center for Adult Education in Beth Tfiloh synagogue in Baltimore, MD. Her love of tefilla and ritual led her to be an experienced gaba'it and organizer of women's tefilla groups. She has taught many women and girls to leyn and is the voice of the JOFA Megillat Esther App. Rabbanit Bracha interned at United Orthodox Synagogue in Houston, Texas and at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale in New York. She participated in chaplaincy programs at New York Presbyterian Hospital and at a maximum security women's prison. Rabbanit Bracha is a 2017 graduate of Yeshivat Maharat, following a long career in hi-tech in Israel. She feels blessed to be following this path which nourishes and fills her soul.