

וְאַשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל־כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים וְאַבָּא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי

I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to me (Exodus 19:4)

כִּי מִי־גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אֱלֹהִים קְרֹבִים אֵלָיו כִּי הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל־קְרָאֵנוּ אֵלָיו

For who else is such a great nation that has god so near to it as YHVH our God in all our calling? (Deut. 4:7)

We are the people called from the slavery of Egypt, carried on the wings of *Sh'chinah*, to be among those in this world who witness to the presence of the Divine in this world.

According to *Pirkei Avot*, Moshe received Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Y'hoshu'a, who in turn transmitted Torah to the elders who transmitted Torah to the prophets who in turn transmitted it to the men of the great assembly.

Over time, this linear transmission, the laying on of hands, *s'micha*, from one generation of men to another, became diffused as we wandered, spread out over the world, and as the number of our teachers who nourished disciples grew.

For many, being a rabbi eventually became a degree, a measure of the intellectual mastery of a body of material which, in turn, conferred power and authority.

For us, being a *kli kodesh* acknowledges belonging to a lineage, and expresses a willingness to serve others as a model and guide of spiritual practice and development in this moment of a great shifting of paradigms.

Today, we welcome our latest initiates, rabbis, cantors, and rabbinic pastors into the new lineage of Jewish spiritual renewal – drawing deeply on the wisdom of those who have preceded us and particularly on the devotional mystics of Eastern European Hassidism. This lineage was given first expression and form by our beloved Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. Now, in our time, we lay the hands of *s'micha*, of trust and confidence, on all genders, with loving respect for multiple possibilities of sexual orientation and gender expression. This is in keeping with our commitment to voluntary negotiation with the dynamic, ever fluctuating balance between individual practice and communal cohesion.

According to the lineage of *Pirkei Imahot*, Miriam received Torah at Sinai and passed it to Machlah, No'a, Chaglah, Milkah and Tirzah, the daughters of Zelaphchad, who passed it to Devorah who gave it to Hanna who passed it to Michal bat Shaul, eventually received by B'ruriah and transmitted to Hannah Rachel of Ludemeria, Regina Jonas of Berlin and, now, surfacing again, to walk side by side and share the light equally with the parallel lineage of men with which we began.

We are humbly grateful for this moment of living in the fulfillment of our age-old dream:

May the light of the moon be like the light of the sun and like the light of the seven days of creation.

May the lights of all people, in all their multiple, varied and wonderful forms, grow ever stronger in the bond of open partnership and service to the One.

Amen.

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