

The Hebrew term for Torah reader is *ba'al keriah*. No one fulfills that term more beautifully than my teacher, my mentor, Bernie Horowitz, the *ba'al keriah* at the Bayit for the past thirty years.

On the surface, *ba'al keriah* means "master reader," as the reader of Torah reads from the Scroll without musical notes (*trop*) or vowels. Bernie takes that term to another level with his knowledge of grammar, his emphasis of proper syllables and perfect vocalization.

Also, for Bernie, the melody of the *trop* gives meaning to the words being read. When hearing Bernie's *shalsholet* one can feel Joseph's struggle to do what is right. As Bernie intones the song of Moshe and Miriam, he escorts the listener across the sea. Bernie's reading is nothing less than a profound *perush* on Torah.

But Bernie takes the term *ba'al keriah* to another realm. The word *ba'al*, literally "master," can be understood as a composite of *be'ol* – one who lives "in" (*be*) the yoke (*ol*) of God. Yes, Bernie is the master of master readers. He does so, however, while living the words of the Prophet Micha: *ve'hatzne'ah lechet im Elokecha* – walk humbly with the Lord. As the rabbis say, built into true greatness is humility.

The word *keriah* also has multifaceted meaning. While on its surface it means reader, the word has deeper spiritual significance. *Karah* is the sound that inspires the listener to interpret the message being transmitted. This, too, is what sets Bernie apart. preparing the listener to integrate the Torah message into their lives.

For Bernie, no two sections of the Torah are alike. Reading narrative differs from reading the legal text.

When Bernie reads the Akeidah, the listener wonders if the angel will get there on time. When Bernie reads the *tochacha*, you can hear his plea to God, that the blessings push away the curse. Enough is enough. And when Moshe is denied entry into Eretz Yisrael, Bernie reads it in a way that elicits tears as he empathizes with Moshe's denial of his greatest dream.

Legal texts are read with an understanding that the law is a covenantal partnership between God and his people, inspiring us to understand its ethical message.

Other aspects are read with their respective uniqueness. The construction of the Mishkan which can often seem dry is chanted with the palpable excitement of building God's house. Even the sacrificial service is read with reverence, transporting the listener to the Temple service itself.

After three decades of reading Torah at the Bayit, we have all been uplifted. We are all grateful to our Rabbi, Rav Steven, and Barry Kanner, Avi Bloom and Richard Langer, for recognizing the importance of perpetuating Bernie's Torah reading voice forever.

On a very personal level, Bernie, you have been my rebbe for decades. You have taught me the message of consistency, of day in and day out, being there in prayer, in learning, in Torah reading, with loving precision and exactness that knows no equal.

To you Bernie, I offer the blessing of the words you call out when completing a Book of Torah – *chazak chazak ve'nitchazek*, be strong, be strong, and we will be strengthened.

And Bernie, I pray that you can feel the love and respect of the hundreds and thousands you have taught and inspired who respond: you have taught us well, thank you, thank you, thank you, *chazak chazak ve'nitchazek*.

Bernie, my dear Bernie, may the *kedusha* of your Torah reading continue for decades to come. *Lu yehi lu yehi*.