

Torah On One Foot
Rabbi Matthew Berger



Halleluyah Junction

Listening the local classical music station over the weekend, I heard a wonderful piece of music by the American composer John Adams. It's a composition for two pianos written in 1996. He came across the name for this piece in his travels in the Sierra Mountains. Close to the border of Nevada is a small town called Halleluyah Junction in California. When Adams saw the sign, he had a *Eureka!* moment.

This week's double Torah reading in the Book of Numbers, *Matot-Masei* (Tribes-Journeys), also has a *Eureka!* moment. Now thirty-nine years into their trek across the desert, the Israelites are so close the Promised Land they can taste it. Now, at the end of the road, God wants them to make sure they know exactly where they are and where they will be going. Standing at this important junction, they are told: "When you enter the land of Canaan, *this is the land* that shall be your inheritance" (Numbers 32:1-2).

There is a significant teaching here. Israel is *our* land. It's the only homeland we have for ourselves. Listening solely to the news, it would be easy to see only Israel's shadows. But it is so important for us to celebrate and cherish the Israel that exists today and say, "*this is the land.*"

This past weekend, our congregation was blessed to have a taste of the beauty of Israel here in The Woodlands. The Israeli Scouts Friendship Caravan joined us for Kabbalat Shabbat services on Friday. They gave a wonderful and inspiring performance on Saturday evening where we were dancing in the aisles. In sharing the excitement, energy, and friendship of Israel, they helped us recognize that our homeland should give us all a sense of pride and admiration. For me, this special weekend shared the light of Israel and what our land represents.