

Smicha Chant

בָּאתִי בְּמִגְלַת-סֵפֶר כְּתוּב עָלַי
לְעֲשׂוֹת-רְצוֹנֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי הַכְּפָצְתִי וְתוֹרָתְךָ בְּתוֹךְ מַעֲי

*Baati b'megilat sefer katuv alai, la'asot r'tzoncha Elohai
Chafatzi b'toratcha b'toch may'ai*

I have come, with my whole life written upon me,
To do your pleasure, my God
My own desire and your Torah and mingled within me.
(Psalm 40:8-9)

Back in 1996 I was ordained as a rabbi by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. All through those 8 years of study, I also studied with Reb Zalman, and so I asked him if he would give me smicha after I graduated from RRC. He graciously and enthusiastically said yes. That long awaited moment happened at Elat Chayyim that summer. He asked me to come to the door of where he was staying at sunset. I knocked on his door; he opened it but wouldn't let me in. He asked me to stay up all night in prayer, and at dawn, he promised to give me smicha. And then he scribbled something on a scrap of paper and handed it to me, and quickly closed the door.

It was this line from Psalm 40. I spent all night in the hot tub, crying and contemplating these words and singing them. At dawn I was still crying, but I felt washed clean and ready.... to step onto a path of wholeness and integration.