Be a Planter of Seeds and a Harvester of Fruit
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz - August 19, 2005

You, you lucky and precious few, you who sit tonight on holy and sacred ground, in this special place, this *makom kodesh*, this BB Perlman Camp. To you the BBYOers of today, we the BBYOers, the GAGs and N'siot of yesterday we stand in awe of you, we are humbled by you, we are inspired by you, you make us smile a smile that lights the very core of our souls, you spark memories for each of us of our own cherished experiences in this sacred place. You are the living proof that this sacred thing, this Order as we so passionately called it has remained. Generations ago, someone entrusted it to us, we then entrusted it to each other, and l'dor vdor, generation to generation through many hands and many memories it was given to you. Look what you have done with it! Like silver candlesticks that grandmothers schlepped across the ocean to the new world, you have kept it and protected it, polished it and made good use of it. The silver Shabbas candle sticks that are AZA and BBG sparkle and shine with your love and dedication to their purpose, past, present and future.

In this week's parsha, Va'etchanan, we come upon Moses' farewell address to the Jewish people, if you will his Life Ceremony. All of Israel is assembled at the edge of the Jordan river, they have journeyed for 40 years through the desert, endured so much hardship and suffering, grown and learned so much as individuals and as a people, they are ready, they are eager to enter the promised land. But Moses pulls them aside, all 600,000 of them, like a parent who take his children to an amusement park, the lines are forming, the smell of popcorn and cotton candy are in the air, the sound of kids screaming and having fun, of roller coasters zooming rushes to their ears, they give their ticket to the man in the booth to enter the park, and just then, as they are about o burst

into a run for the nearest vomit rocket, dad sits everyone down one more time to tell them the rules, where to meet, to stay together, yada yada yada, you can almost hear the Israelites moan as Moses begin to talk to them. Dad may take just a few minutes, Moses we should note goes on for 35 chapters. I don't know how long the State of the Order speeches were the other night, but Moses goes on for longer.

In his farewell address confesses that he pleaded with God to let him cross over the Jordan with them to walk in the promised land, but that God refused his request. Rather God commands him to pass on all that he has learned about leadership and this people to Joshua, to charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he will now stand before this people, and he will lead them into the land. Moses' journey has ended, but not his responsibility for his people. Before he can leave them, he must inspire them, and empower them, before he can ascend the mountain and look upon the good land, he must hand over his mantle of leadership of this people, and do it in such a way that the people both honor his memory, and at the same time accept the promise of the future, a future that does not include him, that is their own, in their hands and that of Joshua to make as little or as much of it as they will choose to make. It is one of the greatest tests of leadership that a leader will every experience, the giving up of control, the passing on of your vision to the next generation, but trusting and loving them enough to let that future and that vision ultimately be there's not yours.

It is the essence of what it means to be a Jew, and what it means to be a leader in BBYO. We make the most of the time that we have, we do our best to honor those who came before us, to do Tikkun Olam, repair a bit of brokenness in the world, and then we acknowledge that while the present belongs to us, the future is in the hands of those who

will come after us and we honor them best by planting seeds and giving them tools to harvest the fruits and plant anew on their own.

It is like the famous Chasidic story of the old man and the soldier. A roman soldier happens upon an old man planting seeds by the side of the road. He says to the man, "old man why are you wasting your time, surely you will not live to see these trees grow and bear fruit!" The old man responds to the soldier, just as their were fruits trees in this land when I was born, so will I plant these seeds for the next generation so they may harvest their sweetness."

We, the past GAGs and Nishiot, benefited from the sweet fruits that were planted for us years ago, and each in our own time planted seeds for you, so that you might enjoy the sweetness of the BBYO that so inspired us. Look how you have harvested those fruits, and look what you have planted and how it to has born fruit. Every person in this room, old and young will be both a Moses and a Joshua, it is the very essence of what it means to be a leader, to harvest the fruits of the past and to plant seeds for the future. To those who are leaving BBYO at the end of this convention I say to you, be like Moses, pass on the mantle of leadership, you have spent four year leading your chapters, councils, and regions, use these last few moments to inspire and empower those who will come after you, then stand back and watch them grow. To those who will go from here back to those same chapters, councils and regions to be the next generation of leaders, I say to you be like Joshua. Honor the past, harvest the fruits that those before you so carefully planted and plant for the future as well, for one day you to will be a Moses, and that 13 year old aleph or BBGer will be the next Joshua. And for that I thank God, I thank God for BBYO.