

# Final Words

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

Final blessings play an important part in the Torah. At the conclusion of Genesis, Jacob offers his words to his children — each of the future tribes of Israel. Moses offers his final blessings to Israel at the conclusion of Deuteronomy. When the Torah tells us that Moses could no longer, at the end of his life, "go in and go out" (Deut. Ch. 31) one lovely interpretation holds that he went to the tent of each individual Israelite family and said goodbye. When there were no more unvisited tents, and therefore no place to go in or go out, Moses ascended the Mountain of Nebo to die.

People who are dying sometimes feel as if they are helpless or diminished in the eyes of others. But we will all die. How one dies can be a powerful life lesson. Words offered to those who will live on can be a blessing, helpful and healing.

Facing one's final moments with courage permits a grace unequalled in more everyday settings. As the great medieval poet, Shmuel Hanagid (Samuel the Prince) put it:

*Take heart in time of sorrow, Though you face death's door. The candle flares before it dies, And wounded lions roar.*