



dedicated learning. dynamic leadership.

## **Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony**

### **Rabbanit Gloria Nusbacher**

### **Core Semikha Class of 2020**



When I think about the role of a rabbi in our modern Orthodox society, I am reminded of a story in Masechet Chagiga that describes two encounters between teachers and students.

In one encounter, a student tells Rabbi Eliezer of a halakhic decision that was just reached by a vote of the rabbis. Rabbi Eliezer responds in outrage -- "how dare they have voted on this question. I have a tradition on this from my teachers going all the way back to Moshe Rabbenu. This is not a matter for rabbinic debate!"

In the second encounter, two students visit Rabbi Yehoshua. They relate a teaching, in the name of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, that the task of a student of Torah is to acquire an understanding heart -- to be able to hear and understand both sides of every debate, and to develop an intuition of what God would want in the circumstances. Rabbi Yehoshua praises this teaching warmly.

So which of these teachers is my model for what a rabbi should be? The answer is -- both. Our tradition flows through Rabbi Akiva, who was a student of both these teachers, and who embodies the ability to embrace both of their conflicting approaches. We have to be able to understand the nuances of differing opinions, but also to know when we must simply hold tight to tradition. Not everything is subject to debate.

I see this as the task of modern Orthodoxy -- to live with the conflict of maintaining our tradition even when our intuition pulls us in the opposite direction, to balance the values of continuity and change. And I embrace the challenge of participating in this task as I continue to learn and teach Torah.