

Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony

Rabbi Avi Weiss

Co-Founder



In solidarity with Am Yisrael, Medinat Yisrael, Tzva ha-Haganah I'Yisrael, and our nikhumim to the family of Amit ben Yigal, who recently fell. And in prayer for peace and healing I'khol yoshvei teiveil throughout the world, especially during this time of crisis. Bi'rshut Rabba Sara, Rav Jeff, Rav Daniel, Rabbanit Devorah, our board and supporters, our treasured alumnae and students and those receiving semikha today.

It's not that often that one sees his or her dreams fulfilled. And here we are, on the shoulders of those who dreamed before us. And our dream, your dream, of becoming rabbis has, b'ezrat Hashem, been realized, as you receive semikhah Toreh Toreh b'Issur v'Heter. Dreams, however, inevitably come face to face with reality. What is the difference between the two? A dream is the hope, the vision of a glorious, perfect future. Reality by definition includes

disappointments. A program that doesn't work, financial struggles, a loss of personal confidence. But the key is, when reality sets in, when disappointments set in, never to forget the dream. Once you forget the dream, it's all over because you won't be able to handle the reality. Only by keeping the dream alive, can we survive the difficulties.

When reciting Shmoneh Esrei, we first take three steps back, perhaps symbolizing that built into life will be setbacks. But then, we move forward. In fact, my father's custom was always, when moving forward, to be a trifle, just a trifle, beyond from where he started out, teaching that if we keep the dream alive, whatever the pushback, we will overcome and reach even higher levels. And so my berakhah to you, Atara, Jennifer, Michal, Gloria, Amalia, Judith, Daniella, Alana and Ágnes: Wherever you go, whatever you do, remember this moment. See this Khag ha-Semikhah like an endless, infinite reservoir of nourishment, from which you can draw strength and spiritual sustenance in the good times and bad times. Sfat Emet said it very well. On the words leikh lekha u'lekhi lakh, he writes: Tzarikh adam lehiyot mehalekh. A person must keep walking. M'madreigah l'madreigah. Whatever the challenge is, relive this moment. Remember the dream. Extend the dream beyond the beyond, and keep climbing. Keep reaching higher and higher. [Va'yomer Hashem, leikh lekha] [Leikh lekha, lekhi lakh] [Adam tzarikh lehiyot mehalekh] [she'tzarikh ha-Adam lehiyot mehalekh] [mi'madreigah l'madreigah] Mazel tov. Mazel tov.