

Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony **Rabbanit Dr. Ágnes Veto** **Advanced Kollel: Executive Ordination** **Class of 2020**



The Kotzker Rebbe was once asked: "Why is Shavuot called (*z'man matan Torateynu*) 'The Time our Torah was Given,' rather than 'The time our Torah was Received?" He answered: "The giving took place on one day, but one needs to receive it every single day."

According to *Shemot Rabbah*, when Hashem's voice came forth at Mt. Sinai, it divided itself into all seventy human languages, so that the whole world might understand it. Moreover, Hashem made sure that this "understanding" happened to each according to his or her ability. Even Moses understood Hashem's words according to his ability. The verse in Shemot states: "Moses spoke and Hashem answered him with a voice." Which means—according to the passage in the midrash—"in a voice that Moses could understand."

Hashem it seems, wanted everybody to have an opportunity to understand the Torah. Everybody. Even those who were not yet born, who were not yet conceived, and who became part of Israel by choice: the righteous convert, the *ger tzedek*. A delicate balance had to be maintained between the need to transmit the Torah to the *kehillah*—the community— as a whole, and the desire that it be personally, intimately understood by each individual member: Hashem could have given the Torah to just one person, but instead chose to give it to the whole community.

It seems to me that the Torah was given by Hashem to a special kind of community, one where each member counts, where each member's understanding has to be engaged by the Torah. And that is a good thing. A community is only as strong and happy and healthy as its members are. If half of the *kehillah* does not participate in the understanding of Torah then the entire *kehillah's* grasp on Torah will weaken.

Maharat is a place where women can learn Torah, a place where I learned Torah. That Torah was transmitted to an entire community, long ago, but it continues to be passed along to distinct, unique individuals, through caring and sensitive teaching by wonderful and humane teachers. I want to walk in the footsteps of my teachers, who themselves continue in the path of Hashem—I desire nothing more strongly than to be such a teacher and a transmitter myself. For this is how we can all experience standing at Sinai, being present as individuals and together as a community under the wings of the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence. Thus the *giving* of the Torah becomes the *receiving* of the Torah, for each and every one of us, each and every day.