

## **Ninth Annual Semikha Ceremony Rabba Dr. Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz Advanced Kollel: Executive Ordination Class of 2021**



Simchat Torah has always been my favorite festival, and indeed was the first occasion I ever entered synagogue. Since we only celebrated Shavuot a few weeks ago, it might seem a little strange to be talking of Simchat Torah. But there is a deep and dynamic connection between the two festivals which is worth exploring.

On Shavuot, we celebrate the giving of the Torah, God's self revelation, while on Simchat Torah, we rejoice in receiving the Torah, actively accepting it into our daily lives. Shavuot is a divinely-ordained festival, while Simchat Torah, as we celebrate it today, is actually a medieval tradition with which we humans have embellished an otherwise rather colorless Biblical festival. Here, too, we see divine giving, with unbounded generosity and human receiving, with joy and inventiveness.

This rich and reciprocal relationship of giving and accepting Torah, it's reflected for me in my three years of study at Maharat. My wonderful teachers have given me access to Torah with great generosity and endless patience. And it has been and continues to be my task to receive it in joy and gratitude, in order to integrate it into my own life and, in my turn, to prepare to give Torah to others. *Pirkei Avot* tells us that it is precisely in that space of Torah study, of the giving and receiving of Torah between people, that the *Shekina*, the divine presence, is to be found. Today, I celebrate and thank everyone at Maharat for giving me the tools to help others create that space of encounter between the divine and the human.