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Seventh Annual Semikha Ceremony June 17, 2019 Rabbi Jeffrey Fox, Rosh HaYeshiva

One hundred years ago on May 21st, 1919 the proposed amendment passed the House and on June 4th, just three weeks later, the Senate voted in support. Several months later, in August of 1920, the Tennessee legislature ratified the 19th amendment prohibiting the states and federal government from denying the right to vote based on sex.

The Tennessee legislature was deadlocked 48 to 48 and Harry Burn walked in with his red rose signifying his opposition. However, as they were calling the vote he discovered a note from his mom, Phoebe Ensminger Burn, tucked inside his jacket pocket. In it she prodded him to, "be a good boy and vote for ratification." It was his vote that tipped the legislature and ultimately passed the 19th amendment.

How does change happen? Sometimes we rabbis like to imagine that change comes from an important *teshuva* or *psak* or article or some grand gesture. However, most of the time, change happens not only from the Susan B. Anthony's of the world but with the help of a private letter from a mother tucked inside the jacket of her son.

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 40a, *Sukkah* 46b) actually tells us the secret of how to move the community forward ever so gently. Playing with the first phrase of the second paragraph of the *Shema*, והיה אם שמוע תשמעו (*Devarim* 11:13) and picking up on the double language of שמוע תשמעו, typically translated as "if you will carefully listen" the rabbis say:

אם שמוע בישן
If you listen carefully to the old
תשמע בחדש
you will come to understand the new.

Allow me to interpret this phrase a bit creatively:

אם שמוע בישן
If you listen carefully to the tradition, to our *mesorah*
תשמע בחדש
You will come to understand anew, and perhaps even create anew

Tonight we celebrate eight amazing individuals who bring quiet change through their ability to listen to the tradition and hear voices that were not so prominent in the past.

Rebecca Blady - Blady, your *neshama* brings people together and grounds the Torah of your family by connecting you both horizontally to those in the room and vertically to the presence of God. Simply by setting up shop in Berlin, without making any radical public declarations, you subtly change the rabbinic landscape for a community that is spiritually hungry. I have no doubt that your zaidy is smiling down on the amazing work that you, Jeremy and Hindy have already begun.

Rebecca Blady
אם שמוע בישן תשמע בחדש



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Jenna Englender - Your religious journey is a model for how people can chart a course, work hard and reach their goals. You have a built in spiritual GPS that keeps your moral compass pointed in the right direction. Jenna, you understand what it means to both be a part of broader community and be a leader within your *chevre*. You, Rav Sam and Maya have so much to offer the great city of Detroit. May you continue to be blessed to show us all the right path.

Jenna Englender

אם שמוע בישן תשמע בחדש

Shani Gross - You are a natural leader, and you bring joy into all that you do. Pardes is so lucky to have you and I have no doubt that your current and future students will grow in ways that you can not even imagine. They will also impact you in ways that will be surprising. You understand that the process is often as important as the product, respecting all the voices in the room and making sure that everyone has a seat at the table. As you together with Chaim, Elan and Navon make your way back to West Coast we all know that the Bay Area's gain is Riverdale and Maharat's loss.

Shani Gross

אם שמוע בישן תשמע בחדש

Marianne Novak - You understand what it means to be there for your community, your family and yourself. Over these four years you pushed us to be our best selves - in different ways - because you wanted to learn more Torah. This past year in Teaneck you simply showed up and taught and modeled what it means to be a professional. You did not need, or want, to be in the Jewish Standard because you understand that change happens one sermon, one shiur one dvar Torah at time. You hear the voices in our tradition that others want to ignore and you make us all listen.

Marianne Novak

אם שמוע בישן תשמע בחדש

Tali Schaum Broder - You have been the anchor of the *beit midrash* these past years. There is never a *Sefas Emes* far from your reach. You have the unique ability to be present for people in the hospital, in quiet conversations and in great *shiurim*. Never demanding for yourself but always advocating for those who are in need. The Bayit is your spiritual home, even as your heart yearns for *Eretz Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael*. There is no doubt that the patients in the hospital will benefit from your quiet ability to bring to life our *mesorah* even in the darkest of times.

Tali Schaum Broder

אם שמוע בישן תשמע בחדש

We are blessed this year to also be graduating three members of our Advanced Kollel - Executive Ordination Track. These are women who have been learning and teaching Torah for many years. They will be receiving their *klafim* in just a few moments.

Dr. Devorah Schoenfeld - You teach and live a Torah that never stops asking questions and never stops growing. Your ability to teach non-Jews about the Jewish community and the Jewish world about Christianity is unique. You are almost never the first person to ask a question in class, but when you share the *shiur* almost always changes direction. You do everything with careful, thought-out intention especially the way you have built your family - an inspiration to us all. Your students at Loyola, and the Chicago Jewish community are fortunate to have such a grounded and gifted teacher. You tease out the voices in our tradition that have been silenced for many years.

Dr. Devorah Schoenfeld אם שמוע בישן תשמע בחדש



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Aliza Sperling - You are a natural educator and an inspirational parent. You mine the texts of our Tradition to answer new questions that have never even been asked before. Your search for serious, deep and honest Torah is never ending. You bring to the Kollel an appreciation for order and *seder*. You can already appreciate the ways in which Halakha is made with building blocks - one stacked on the other, bringing more nuanced and complex understanding with each step you take. Your rigorous commitment to hearing different voices will lift up many who have had no champion.

Aliza Sperling

אם שמע בישן תשמע בחדש

Dr. Miriam Udel - You always seem to know just the right words to say. Your poetry, together with your scholarship enlivens every classroom that you are a part of - whether as a student or professor. Your deep human insight into the emotional needs of those around you serves you well as a mentor to so many. The *Yiddish* that you bring to life is a part of our *mesora* (*mesoyrah*) that you mine for a special kind of Torah. The tender came back to pick you up and you jumped aboard with two feet.

Dr. Miriam Udel

אם שמע בישן תשמע בחדש

Dear *musmachot*, may you be blessed to find your voice, your contribution your humble letter tucked inside the pocket of just the right person.

Mazal Tov and congratulations to the Maharat *musmachot* of 2019!

It is always a great honor to welcome Rabbi Sperber to the Yeshiva, thank you for all that you do for Maharat in particular and the Jewish People. I now call up Rabbi Herzel Hefter, who teaches the Kollel, to move us through the final three *musmachot*.