

Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony Rabba Daniella Pressner Advanced Kollel: Executive Ordination Class of 2020



The midrash Tanchuma shares a remarkable exchange between God and Israel. God beseeches the Nation תִּקְבְּלוּ תּוֹרַתִי ? Will you receive my Torah? To which the Nation replies...yes. But God needs more surety “תָּנוּ לִי עֶרֶב” Prove it! In this very human moment, God fears that if we stand alone, we will not be able to take on the full acceptance of God’s Torah. So we suggest that our ancestors will help us take on the Torah and this is still not enough. In our final efforts, we reply בְּנֵינוּ יִהְיוּ עֶרְבִים שְׁלָנוּ . Our *children* will be our guarantors. The Torah is immediately granted on *the condition* that we will not stand alone and that it will be *our children’s Torah*.

What will it take to give Torah to our children? Or maybe...what will it take for our children to give Torah to us? Children are known for their honesty, persistence and passion. We learn that to pass on the Torah, we must make it authentic and dynamic for ourselves first.

תִּקְבְּלוּ תּוֹרַתִי is the search for halakhic honesty and purpose. It is the charge for us to see Torah with our ancestor’s wisdom, our children’s spirit *and* our own humility. For three years in Yeshivat Maharat, I have woken up with this purpose. I now re-enter our world, with bigger questions and weightier uncertainties...this is the need for surety תָּנוּ לִי עֶרֶב - How will I bring wisdom to our community? How will I know I am not alone? And our midrash answers--avinu...our surety is our ancestors *and*... בְּנֵינוּ and BNOTEINU...*our surety is our children*. Our surety will be our *recognition that we are not alone and* our surety will be *our ability to engage each other with Torah that is passionate and brave* for the rest of our lives. I pray that together, we can all live up to this challenge.