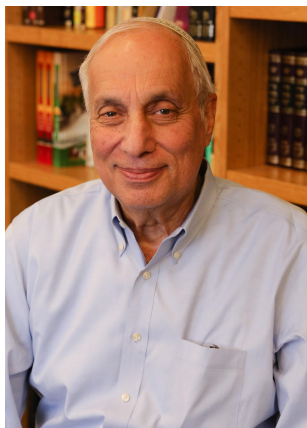


Ninth Annual Semikha Ceremony

Rabbi Avi Weiss

Co-Founder



[*Tov lehodot, lehodot la-Shem*]

In solidarity with Medinat Israel, *Tzva ha-Hagana Le-Yisrael*, with the neshama of little five-year-old Adi; in the hope that Hadar Goldin's body be returned; in endless appreciation for Rabba Sara; and with great thanks to our rosh ha-yeshiva, Rav Jeff, and our rosh yeshiva, Rabbanit Devora, our entire faculty, Abigail, the chairperson of our board, and all of our supporters; and in memory of Marilyn Belz, *zikhrona livrakha*, grandmother of Ariel; and in overflowing love, spilling over - *kosi revaya* - for those receiving semikha, *taf shin pei alef*, 5,781.

Tanya, Liz, Yael, Lindsey, Wendy, Lisa, full of gratitude to all of you, I offer humble blessings of what can be called "*birkat semikha*" - blessings of semikha.

Semikha appears in several frameworks. There is the semikha of the sacrificial service, which has been the subject for many months of the Daf Yomi. The Torah says: "*Ve-samakh et yado.*" And *nashim somkhot reshut*. So it could be: "*Ve-samakh et yada.*" Our *rosh*, the hands are placed semikha style on top of the korban. This is the semikha through which one tries to reach higher and higher towards greater, greater purification, greater *tehora*.

I bless you all with the semikha of *ali*. *Ali*. Reach higher and higher. Foundational to reaching others is we have to transcend and reach within ourselves, striving. *Alei, alei*, reaching higher and higher.

And then there is the semikha of giving authority to others to be decisors of Halakha, decisors of Jewish law, your semikha today. *Tore, Tore be-Issur ve-Heteir*. But I offer a blessing that it be a semikha of *Tore, Tore*, of *Torat ahava*. Let it be a decisor of law that knows the law, but let it be overflowing with love.



dedicated learning. dynamic leadership.

Let it be a loving Torah. A loving Torah? Loving is a verb, how we love the Torah, and it's also an adjective, that the Torah is so very, very loving, how we desperately need rabbis who know Halakha but see Torah as God's love story, love story to Am Yisrael and for the entire world.

And finally, there is the semikha of the loving *berakhot* that we give to our children every Friday night. Leil Shabbat, we gently place our hands - *semikha* - on our children, and in the spirit, we bless them. And in that spirit, all of us, all the rabbeyim and the faculty and administration, we all bless you. We bless each and every one of you.

Tanya, Liz, Yael, Lindsey, Wendy, Lisa: it's your time. Go out there. Impact on Yisrael. Inspire the world. Bring light to darkness, always, always in gratitude to God.

[Tov lehodot la-Shem. Tov lehodot la-Shem, lezamer le-shimkha elyon. Tov lehodot la-Shem, lehodot la-Shem. lezamer le-shimkha elyon, lehagid ba-boker, ba-boker khasdekha ve-emunatkha ba-leilot. Lehagid ba-boker, ba-boker khasdekha ve-emunatkha ba-leilot.]

Mazel tov, mazel tov.