

Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony

Rabbi Atara Cohen

Core Semikha Class of 2020



Avodat Hashem, divine service, demands a near-impossible degree of hope. Whether this avodah takes the form of ancient temple service, halakhic observance, political protest, or a kind gesture to a stranger, underlying each action is a hope that the action has meaning. Each action is a manifestation of the belief that we can make the world a holier, more compassionate place. We hope that our avodah imbues the world with divinity, that through our work we can offer a small piece of redemption.

Ribono shel olam, ruler of the universe: this hope might be too much to ask of us. Our work too often feels futile in the face of the pain and chaos that surround us. Despite our best efforts, whatever good we accomplish feels too small and too temporary

Nevertheless, we persist. The prophet Yirmiyahu promises us:

וַיֵּשׁ תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרֵי־תֵךְ

there will hope for the future. We remember Yirmiyahu's assurance that there will be an end to tears, that redemption is possible. We continue in our avodat Hashem, and sometimes, just sometimes, in small miraculous moments, we do indeed see the light brought by our impact.