



המכללה העברית

Hebrew College

The Ordination of
Graduates of the Rabbinical School
of Newton, Massachusetts

Sunday, June 7, 2020
15 Sivan 5780

2 p.m.

Ceremony via Zoom in which graduates will be honored for their completion of the program and have the title of rabbi conferred upon them. The second part of our rabbinic ordination ceremony will be held when we can safely gather in person next year.

Text of Ordination/*Semikha* Document

We the faculty of the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College give faithful testimony that these students have been devoted participants in our house of learning and have completed the required course of study for rabbinic ordination.

During their years here, they have been eager and diligent in the study of Torah, in prayer, and in service, and have studied Jewish thought and Jewish practice, searching for meaning, revealed and hidden.

The Torah of the Blessed Holy One is their desire and they have been steadfast in making that Torah their own.

Amid a circle of listening companions, they have opened heart and ear to the seventy facets of Torah to study and to teach, to keep and to fulfill, to draw the hearts of Israel near so that each individual might find his or her own path in Torah.

Therefore,

They shall each be called Rabbi.

We have ordained them to take upon themselves the service of the rabbinate.

We attest that they are fit and prepared to stand before communities that may rely upon them, as we have in ordaining them, and may blessings of goodness come upon them.

תעודת סמיכה

אנו מורי ביהמ"ד לרבנים של המכללה העברית
מודיעים נאמנה כי תלמידינו אלו
שחלקם מיושבי בית מדרשנו
סיימו את חוק לימודיהם.

זה כמה שנים שקדו על התורה ועל
העבודה ויגעו בהלכה ובאגדה,
בנגלה ובנסתר, ובהכשרה לעסוק
בצורכי ציבור באמונה.

בתורת ה' חפצם, ולא זזו
ממנה עד שעשאוה תורתם.

בסוד חברים מקשיבים
עשו אונם כאפרכסת וליבם חדרי חדרים
להיפתח לשבעים פניה של תורה,
ללמוד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות,
למען קרב את ליבות עדת ישראל
למצוא כל אחד ואחת את נתיב נשמתם בתורה.

ועל כן

חכם יתקרו ורבי יתקרו

ומילאנו את ידם לשאת את
משרת הרבנות על שכמם.

וראינום נכונים ומוכנים
לעמוד כל אחד ואחת לפני העדה אשר תבחר בהם,
וקהלי עדתם עליהם יסמוכו כאשר סמכנו אנו,
ועליהם תבוא ברכת טוב.

כל מן דין סמוכו לנא.

Jessica Goldberg



מִרְהַמְצַר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי בְמִרְחֹב יְהוָה:
ה' לִי לֹא אֵיֶרָא מִה־יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי אֲדָם:

*From the narrowness I cried out to G-d, and G-d answered me
in abundance. Adonai is mine, I have
no fear; what can a mortal do to me?*

– Psalms 118:5-6

My journey to the rabbinate began more than fifty years before my birth. In the ghettos of Poland, the Stern family found their lives devastatingly transformed. Freedoms lost, yellow stars prominently displayed, lives snuffed out all around them. But through Auschwitz, Mauthausen, and Bergen-Belsen, they held onto some vague trust - in G-d, in humanity, in themselves.

Although the Sterns are only one part of my rich family tree, it is their legacy that has carried me through all of life's joys and sorrows. The ability of my ancestors to have hope in the darkest hour of our people's history, and their subsequent celebration of life by raising proud Jewish children and grandchildren, inspire me every day.

During my time in rabbinical school, I have learned to cry out to G-d. I have learned to trust that my relationship with G-d is secure enough for me to speak frankly. I talk to G-d about the pain I feel so viscerally as I witness the world's injustices. I tell G-d about my own pain, frustrations, and fears. I have learned from our conversations that living in this world as a spiritual person is difficult and overwhelming, at times horrific, but that G-d craves our partnership in the holy task of rebuilding G-d's perfect creation. Just as G-d responded to the Israelites' cries borne of oppression in Egypt and found partners in Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, G-d has responded to my cries my whole life, and today I am finally ready to accept the invitation to partnership. As my favorite prophet, Isaiah, answered his own call to service: Here I am. Send me.

G-d's love for humanity is imperceptibly abundant. G-d engages us at all times. The challenge we face is that we aren't very skilled at noticing. My ancestors heard G-d's response to their cries - a response of love, hope, and faith. Their stories taught me how to listen.

I am both terrified and eager to be a rabbi in this frightening world. I trust that for every challenge and injustice I encounter, I will remember that I am not alone. I have three categories of partners: Adonai, my ancestors, and all those who have supported me on my journey. As I embark on the next chapter of my story, I am full of gratitude for my classmates, my teachers, my friends, my Boston communities, and my family - my extended family, my many in-laws, my spouse David, my siblings Josh, Emily, and Jordan, and most of all, my parents, Marc and Audrey. Thank you all for your partnership as we work toward a world of justice, truth, love, and peace.

Gita Karasov



אמר רבא לעולם ילמד אדם תורה במקום שלבו חפץ
שנאמר "כי אם בתורת ה' חפצו" (תהילים א:ב) ואמר
רבא בתחילה נקראת על שמו של הקב"ה ולבסוף
נקראת על שמו שנאמר "בתורת ה' חפצו ובתורתו
יהגה יומם ולילה" (שם) (תלמוד בבלי עבודה זרה יט.)

Rava says: A person should always learn Torah from a place that her heart desires, as it is stated: "But her delight is in the Torah of God." And Rava says: Initially the Torah is called by the name of the Holy One, but ultimately it is called by the name of the one who studies it. As it is first stated: "Her delight is in the Torah of the Lord," and in the continuation of the verse it states: "And in her Torah she meditates day and night." (Psalms 1:2)

– Avodah Zara 19a

Every day in the Shema we recite *אֶתְּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל לֵבָב* (Deuteronomy 6:5) - that we will love God with all of our hearts. And as Rava reminds us above, we can really only ever access Torah when we are doing so from a place of genuine desire; when our learning stems from a place of true yearning; when our hearts are fully engaged.

It is often easy for me to feel lost in the vast pool of wisdom that our tradition offers. We live in a world of infinite access points to intellectual and spiritual sustenance. And yet, choosing a direction towards which to invest one's full self can be paralyzing. I personally struggle to let my heart be a stronger guiding force than external pressures and influences.

Learning to look inward to orient myself in relation to Torah is one of the greatest gifts I have received from Hebrew College. Here I was taught to amplify my inner voice and allow my deepest questions, doubts, desires, anger, and joy to be my access point to a relationship with God and Torah.

It is this learning from the heart that will draw out my Torah – It is this learning from the heart that will enable others to receive my Torah, shape and form it, and in their own names contribute to the every-growing well of Torah.

I feel abundant gratitude for my teachers who've shown me the power and importance of teaching from your own questions and vulnerabilities, and for my classmates who've shown me how to celebrate the beauty in our differences. I've always felt most rooted by my love for family and I am especially thankful for family members who keep me grounded in the playful and serious nature of this sacred work. Thank you to each and every one of you who've seen me and challenged me in ways I couldn't do on my own. I hope to take the love and trust you've instilled in me and channel it into my service of others.

Noam Lerman



תני חבורה ומשפחה כך הך דומים לכפת אבנים,
את נוטל ממנה אבן אחת וכולה מתרועעת, את נותן
עליה אבן אחת וכולה עומדת.

It is taught that a community and a family are like a stone archway. If you remove even one stone, the whole archway collapses. If you add one stone, it will continue standing.

– Breishit Rabbah 100:7

Throughout my time in rabbinical school, I have shared conversations with *chevrusas* and colleagues about the importance of inclusive spaces. After these important conversations, I have come to wonder if there might be more powerful ways to describe the actions our communities need to take. ‘Inclusion’ suggests one active side and one passive side – one side which is and has historically been part of the majority, and one side that has not.

Instead of working towards inclusion, what if we build communities that fight to achieve intentional *subversive belonging* for each and every person? What if we build communities that are wholly warm and welcoming, that honor each person’s Torah – with systems in place to help with the growing pains of *machloket l’shem shamayim*, of engaging in growthful conflict when it arises?

If one letter is missing in a Torah, it becomes *pasul*, unkosher, and if just one stone is removed, the entire archway collapses. *Breishit Rabbah* teaches that no person is disposable. Disposability tells us that we are not divine beings, that we don’t deserve, that we are not made *b’tzelem Elohim* – in the image of G-d.

Subversive belonging in communities can look like taking social risks, and/or stretching ourselves to make and take space as empowerers and empowered, making space and listening is the invisible glue that often holds communities together. For communities to embrace *subversive belonging*, it is vital to listen humbly to Torah from people with disabilities, people of color, neurodiverse people, transgender and gender non-conforming people, elders and young people, and people who historically are not of the majority.

To counter disposability with a strong stone archway gate, we can acknowledge each other’s unique presence on earth as being integral to the greater push towards liberatory healing.

Thank you to each and every one of my wonderful teachers and classmates at Hebrew College. In addition to my teachers at Hebrew College, I am thankful for mentorship from R. Victor Reinstein, R. Lynn Gottlieb, Dr. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, R. Judith Edelman-Green, Michael Bootzin, Majde Za’aqiq z’l, Sarah Yehudit Shneider, Gloria Krasno, Soferet Jen Taylor Friedman, R. Sofer Dov Laimon, R. Joanna Katz, Nili Simhai, Yuram Muqdas, Rachel Baum, Shaiya Rothberg, R. Arik Asherman, S. Ansky z’l, and Reb Khana Rokhel Verbermacher z’l, who have all shared important Torah that has nurtured my growth.

I am deeply grateful to Hashem for my entire family, ancestors, and support system on this journey, without whom I wouldn’t be here today. Special thanks to my grandmother Marlene Marcus z’l, who urged me to apply to rabbinical school before I knew it was the right path, and to my grandmother Sarah Dean, who is a fabulous text study partner. Thanks to my mother, Sharon Lerman, who continually uplifts my spiritual growth, and my father, David Lerman z’l, who lovingly nudges me to be bold. Thanks to my sister Rachel, who has been a supportive buddy throughout the through life. Thank you Arielle Rivera Korman, for being a profoundly creative, supportive, and loving partner.

SAM Luckey



הַסֵּד־נְאֻמֹת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צְדָק וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקָו:

Loving-kindness and truth have met; justice and peace have kissed.

– Psalms 85:11

In just six words of poetic prose, this verse conveys a bold and powerful vision for our world. Set in the perfect/past tense, the sentence challenges us, the readers, to imagine a just and peaceful society as already realized. Our task is to create our world such that we can say this sentence honestly and with conviction. With the characteristically layered beauty of Torah,

this verse also provides a blueprint, guiding me on how to move towards fulfilling that vision.

הַסֵּד (*Hesed*) loving-kindness: compassion, empathy, tenderness (towards self, others, community, world)

Hesed is both a resource and a balm. Jewish practice and community can provide comfort and stamina. I feel grounded and held by music, davening, and ritual; supported and sustained by my tradition, ancestors, and HaShem, the Ground of Being. I want to lead with love.

וְאֵמֶת (*v'emet*) and truth: critical thinking, discernment, challenging assumptions, continual learning

I have been pushed in my thinking by rigorous text study, especially of Torah and Talmud, and particularly through the dynamism of *chevruta* (study-buddy) learning. Studying texts together can sharpen our minds and expand our capacity for complexity as we turn and turn each text to examine them, and through them ourselves, from new angles. I am excited to teach and to continue learning these empowering and transformative practices, and I will prioritize making Jewish text study accessible to communities that have historically been denied access to it.

נִפְגְּשׁוּ (*nif'gashu*) have met: to interact; to come together

All of our encounters, from conversations to collisions, from wrestling to hugging, are sacred opportunities for connection and growth. I aim to integrate *hesed* and *emet* in my leadership by meeting people, texts, and situations with a balance of compassionate listening and honest investigation.

צְדָקָה (*tzedek*) justice: supporting communities to thrive through redistribution of wealth, risk, and power

Caring for the wellbeing of communities through service, advocacy, organizing, and direct action is sacred and essential work. I am committed to centering that work in my rabbinate.

וְשָׁלוֹם (*v'shalom*) and peace/wholeness: harmony, sustainability, balance, equity

For peace to be whole, as the double meaning of *shalom* implies, each person's wellness is counted, treasured, and needed. This requires both healing of past and present harms and the cessation of violence and exploitation. I am involved with indigenous solidarity work and reparations as forms of *teshuva*, relationship repair, and paths towards *shalom*.

נִשְׁקָו (*na'shaku*) have kissed: a love language of bodies – sensual, present, attentive, perceptive

Inhabiting our bodies connects us to other beings and the living, breathing planet. We need to participate with our full selves, integrating our body consciousness with our brain power. With

my background in circus arts and dance, I am excited to teach and model embodiment, synthesizing physicality and spirituality in the Torah of our lives.

* * *

We are facing unprecedented health, social, political, and environmental challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme wealth disparity, the rise of fascism and xenophobia, and accelerating climate change. With this verse as my guide and with many holy collaborators, I feel ready to engage with these challenges as a Jewish community leader.

While I live and speak the religious language of Judaism, I believe we need the diversity, creativity, and wisdom of the cultural and religious traditions of *all* peoples in this historic moment. I am honored to be in partnership with you, my extended communities, as we work to manifest our world such that we can say, honestly and with conviction, "Loving-kindness and truth have met; justice and peace have kissed."

I am incredibly grateful to my teachers, classmates, peers, *chevrutot*, family, partner, and friends for their support, guidance, and encouragement through these years.

Thank you to all who contribute to creating the container of learning and growth that is Hebrew College, especially the faculty and staff of the rabbinical and cantorial schools!

Michal Micner



בְּאֵין חִזּוֹן יִפְרָע עִם וְשִׁמְרַת תּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁרֶהוּ:

Without vision, we let go. But when we heed Torah, we rejoice
– Proverbs 29:18

With immense gratitude for the support and guidance of my friends, family, classmates and the Holy One of Blessing, I step into the role of Rabbi, and do so in incredibly challenging times. Never in my lifetime has our reality felt more unstable. The precariousness of this moment has shaken so many of us.

Beginning my Rabbinate at this moment brings me face to face with a deep paradox: this work feels simultaneously profoundly unfathomable and profoundly hopeful. Unfathomable because there is no adequate consolation for the grief and destruction that so many of us are experiencing. So much is being lost, and people are suffering immensely. Yet at the same time, hopeful: never have I felt such a sense of possibility for the kind of world many of us hope and act for every day of our lives.

The spiritual concept of עוֹלָם הַבָּא (*Olam Habah*), a concept in our tradition that points to a world that exists beyond our reality, speaks to me in this place of hope. It speaks to me particularly in its English translation as “the world that is coming.” This sense of *Olam Habah* implies a world of the future, but it also hints at something already in process. This process is of this world, made of the material of our hard work and lived experiences. But it is also of a different realm: where this process goes and what it yields is beyond our capacity to imagine. Its unfolding contains an element of the cosmic.

What does it mean to be with the unfathomable and the hopeful in this time of uncertainty?

What does it look like to grieve and heal together, and to do so in a way that both brings us closer to each other and gives way to the crucial work of social grieving and healing?
What does it look like to build together, to courageously imagine and boldly pursue a society more rooted in justice and compassion than ever before?

I choose a path of Torah to begin living in response to these questions. Just as the Torah was God’s artisan tool in creating the world (Bereshit Rabbah 1:1), so too can it be our tool for creating a world made in God’s image. Choosing the path of Torah is not simply about choosing a path of righteousness and kindness. The Torah is too vast and complex to reduce it to such a reading. Rather, Torah is a path of mystery, of questions, of paradox, of grand visions and triumphs, and equally as grand disappointments and losses. The only way we build this new world is with all of this.

We learn in Mishnah Peah 1:1 that there are several *mitzvot* for which we receive reward in both this world and in the world to come. All of them are about how we are with each other: honoring one’s parents, acts of kindness, and creating peace among people. This *Mishnah* reminds us that we are the ones we have been waiting for: how we are with each other now makes possible how we can be with each other in the future. What we seed now makes possible the kind of world that can blossom. In these deeply challenging times, may we have the audacity and love to begin planting these seeds.

Sarah Ann Noyovitz



אִיזֵהוּ חָכָם? הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם.

Who is wise? The one who learns from every person.

– Pirkei Avot 4:1

פְּתַח לְבִי בְּתוֹרַתְךָ.

Open my heart to your Torah.

– Elohai N'tzor, Amidah

This journey to the rabbinate has been full of wonderful twists and turns, and the growth I have experienced has delighted and astounded me. In many ways, I have been surprised by my personal changes – the practices that have taken on new meaning, the skills that have become passions, the explorations that have strengthened my sense of home.

What has remained consistent, however, is my dedication to serving others. My rabbinate has been built on a foundation of compassion and inclusion. Even in the depths of my own learning, I am keenly aware that my experiences are not the same as that of others, and this has inspired sustained dedication to deep listening and patience. In particular, I desire to create community that is based on accessibility and *chesed*, loving-kindness.

As a rabbi, my duty is more than to be a teacher. I have a responsibility to be a devoted learner from the people I serve – they have worlds to teach, if we will only listen. This is why I consider every person I meet to be a teacher of what I call “little-T *torah*.” It is my intention to keep my heart open to the *torah* of every person and to learn from them how I can continue the work of making the world a better place.

Matthew Ponak



נשמתו, ובעולם זה, הכולל עולמים אין ספורות, ימצא את אוצר חייו...ובהיותו צועד בדרך חיים בטוחה זו, במסלולו המיוחד, באורח צדיקים המיוחד שלו, ימלא גבורת חיים ועלויות רוחנית, ואור דיעליו יגלה, מהאות המיוחד שלו בתורה, יצא לו עזו ואורו.

Know that each of us is called to serve in alignment with a unique understanding and perception, according to the root of our particular soul. In this [inner] dimension that encompasses worlds beyond number, we will find life's treasure...When you walk [the] road of life with this confidence, in your own unique way, in this righteous path that you make your own, you are

filled with living courage and spiritual joy. The light of God will be revealed to you. From your own unique letter in the Torah, your power and luminosity will emerge.

– Rav Kook, Shmoneh K'vatzim 4:6

There is a Hassidic story told of a poor man who lived in a broken down house in Prague. He had just enough to get by. One night he had a dream of a pot of gold under a bridge in Vienna. The dream repeated itself for several nights and, though it was uncharacteristic of him, he decided to walk to Vienna and look for the gold. It took several days but when he finally arrived he saw it there in front of him: the bridge from his dreams! He began investigating the area and a guard spotted him. Sensing that he should be honest, he told the guard the truth that he had seen gold under this bridge in a dream. The guard laughed hysterically!

“Who chases such dreams!?” the guard bellowed, “If I chased my dreams I’d be walking just like you! Last night I dreamt of gold buried underneath the stove of a broken down house in Prague. Do you see me packing my bags!?” Hearing those words, the man spun right around and returned home. When he arrived, he dug under his stove and, lo and behold, he found gold. It had been there the whole time, right at home.

Sometimes we have to travel tremendous distances to realize that our greatest treasure is right where we started. I’ve been blessed to be on a spiritual journey for many years. I grew up very connected to Jewish community and later found myself pursuing my dreams in universal, Buddhist, and New-Age spiritual contexts. Ultimately, the more I followed my heart, the more it led me towards home. Hebrew College Rabbinical School has given me the tools to find the deepest, most relevant, and all-embracing wisdom within Jewish tradition. Each generation has its own callings and challenges. It takes study and guidance to become teachers who can access the resonant voices from our past and bring them forth to those who hunger for truth.

For us to be whole, as individuals and as a people, we need to follow our dreams. A Jewish context in which people are encouraged to seek, even if it takes them to destinations far and unknown, is the best chance we have at actualizing Jewish authenticity and passion. Thank-you to all of my teachers, my parents, my parents-in-law, my friends, my children, and most especially my wife, for helping me live into this calling of being a rabbi. I stand tall today only because you have supported me along this path.

May we all come to find our own treasure and to enjoy the journey along the way!

Rachel Putterman



פְּתַחוּ-לִי שַׁעַר צְדָקָה אֲבֹהִים, אֲוֹרָה יְהוָה.
זֶה-שַׁעַר לַיהוָה צְדִיקִים, יָבֹאוּ בּוֹ.

Open the gates of justice for me -- so I may pass through and offer thanks to G-d! This is the gate to Adonai: the just may enter here.

– Psalm 118:19-20 (trans. Rabbi Miriyam Glazer)

The transcendent Gd is immanent in the aperture made between the one seeing and opening to the other. That is the redemptive moment.

– Melissa Raphael
The Female Face of Gd in Auschwitz, 2003

Both gates and apertures serve as metaphors for places of connection with the Divine that result in feelings of empathy and gratitude. My time at Hebrew College has been filled with many such gates and apertures.

When I started Rabbinical School I knew that I wanted to deepen my theology, but I wasn't sure in what direction. I felt some inner conflict between my desire to do justice work and my desire to grow closer to Gd. Underlying this conflict were several burning questions: How do I define Gd? Is there a place of real authority for me within this tradition? How do I facilitate others' connection to the tradition and to Gd in light of my own struggles?

I can honestly say that I have made great strides towards answering these questions over the course of the last few years. I've learned and grown so much at Hebrew College, in ways that I couldn't have imagined. Yes, I'm now liturgically literate and know my way around the Biblical and Rabbinic corpuses. Yes, I can write *divrei torah* that are coherent and sometimes inspiring. But I didn't know that I would discover that Gd is made manifest in the relations between people, in being present with people, in caring for people, in standing up for and with people who are subject to injustice. This discovery all on its own provided the bridge between faith and action that I was seeking.

I have so many people to thank for helping me develop both the skills and the insight that have brought me to this moment including all of my teachers at Hebrew College, but also my mentors and colleagues at the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute and Brigham and Women's Hospital's Spiritual Care Department. I also wish to thank my fellow Hebrew College rabbinical students, especially my cohort. It is my peers who have taught me how to be a committed Jewish social justice warrior, and how to let go of my fear long enough to experience the divine within this crazy world that we are currently inhabiting. All of my life I have been craving the Judaism that I've found at Hebrew College. And I am eternally grateful to Matthew for his support, without which I would never have been able to pull this off.

Talia Stein



לְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ:
לְאָר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּחֲנֶנֶךָ:
יֵשֵׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּנְשֵׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:

*May God bless you and protect you
May God shine God's face upon you and be gracious to you
May God lift up God's face to you and grant you peace*
– Numbers 6: 24-26

A blessing for my rabbinate:

May God bless you and protect you. God sees and cherishes us each as individuals, and blesses us accordingly with what each individual needs. May I strive to be a presence where everyone feels comfortable and has permission to always bring their whole selves.

May God shine God's face upon you and be gracious to you. God will Shine God's light upon you in order to be gracious and kind to one another. One of the profound characteristics of light from a fire is that a fire can light another fire without being extinguished. This Divine light shines upon us, and within each of us cannot be extinguished, but can be used to light another light. We can work to foster light within each other, to constantly find and nourish the good in one another, so that we can help each other live to our fullest potential, without ever diminishing our own unique selves. God, I ask that you help me search for the Divine spark in each person, and bring that light to the surface; that you help me help others to reach their full potential.

May God lift up God's face to you and grant you peace. Bamidbar Rabbah teaches that God will turn God's face towards you, because we know that it is not the same for a person to greet their neighbor while looking them in the face as it is to greet them with their head turned. Just as God lifts God's face to show us the respect and dignity we deserve, we, too, have the opportunity to lift each other up by treating each other with this same dignity and respect. Lifting each other up calls on us to be in a real relationship with one another, to hear and to see one another, and be fully present for each other. Please, give me the ability to let people know that they are worthy of believing in themselves; to commit to journeying with them on their quest for meaning and purpose; and the wisdom to bring Judaism into their lives in a way that inspires them to walk through the world as the person they want to be. In order that we be granted *shalom* – so that, together, we can build a world full of *hesed* and justice.

I am so grateful to everyone who has supported, challenged, and inspired me during this journey. In particular, I want to thank my teachers, mentors, and classmates for your insights, wisdom, and role modeling of how to live a life dedicated to learning and living Torah.

Rebecca Weintraub



מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ, מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִם...

I thank you, living and eternal King...

The very first words we say when we open our eyes in the morning are “thank you, God!” At the very beginning of rabbinical school our teacher R’ Ebn Leader shared that his daughter’s first grade teacher, who had just lost a battle to cancer, taught her six-year-olds that the first words of every siddur, prayer book, are “thank you” and that gratitude is what life is all about.

So, I stand at this eye opening moment, a new day ahead, at the start of an uncertain path, with only these words on my lips; thank you.

Thank you to my classmates who have both challenged and held me lovingly through the ups and downs of this five-year journey. Thank you for the light you bring into this often dark and scary world.

Thank you to the larger Hebrew College community of students and alumni who have made this community a place full of sharp Torah and boundless *hesed*.

Thank you to my teachers who have taught me what it means to be a rabbi both inside and outside of the classroom and who model what it looks like to live a life of Torah in all its beauty and all its complications.

Thank you to the entire Hebrew College staff for setting the foundation of warmth and passion that sustain our community, day in and day out.

Thank you to my spiritual directors and spiritual writing coach for pushing me to seek more honestly.

Thank you to my friends and family who have celebrated with me in my highest moments and cried with me during the darkest ones.

Thank you to my *havruta* for life, my travel buddy, and my number one fan, Jeremy – I would not be here today without your love.

And of course thank you to the Great Mystery, *Hamakom*, the One and Only for whom I pray I will be able to serve with deep love, honest joy, and endless gratitude.

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ

I thank You...

Linda Friedman Memorial Award



Fifty-nine years after Linda Friedman's death, her brother, Lev, RS `18 and niece, Shoshana RS `14, along with the rest of the Friedman family are fulfilling the mitzvah of *Kevod HaMet*, honoring the dead, by reviving Linda's memory through the Linda Friedman Memorial Award. Linda died tragically of kidney failure at the age of 15 on February 14, 1961. A lack of support systems for grieving parents and surviving siblings in that era, the Friedman family learned to suppress the pain of their tremendous loss until Linda's memory was almost entirely repressed.

Linda loved Judaism, and had a strong connection with God, and her family can only imagine that her childhood compassion for others would have translated into an adult passion for justice. Through the Linda Friedman Memorial Award, the Friedman family honors those working for justice with and through the Jewish community. Each year, a third or fourth year Hebrew College Rabbinical School student will be awarded the Linda Friedman Memorial Award in recognition of social justice work they have recently completed or in which they are taking ongoing leadership. The family is especially interested in honoring work that has an impact on a social justice issue and positively transforms the participants' spiritual lives and relationship to Judaism.

In the words of her loving family, "Since her photos were hidden for so long, each of you who see her face and witness her spirit help to honor her memory and bring her into the light."

The 2020 recipient of the Linda Friedman Memorial Award is Tyler Dratch, Rab `21. Tyler is a Jewish educator committed to helping middle school and high school students explore the intersection between social justice, advocacy, community organizing, and the Jewish tradition. Tyler has led social justice workshops that help students find their power and use Jewish texts and spirituality to fuel their activism. Tyler served as the volunteer coordinator for the Hebrew College Chapter of the Newton Sanctuary and Solidarity Collaborative and was a T'ruah Israel fellow. Tyler has also earned a Certificate in Social Justice and Spirituality from Hebrew College.

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Rabbinical School of Hebrew College

The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, founded in 2003, trains leaders who have the empathy and knowledge to guide and inspire others to discover their own authentic Jewish paths. The school provides a rigorous full-time course of study leading to rabbinic ordination within a supportive *klal Yisrael* community. An innovative curriculum integrates the study of primary texts with themes of Jewish living and daily rabbinic practice. Today's ten graduates are ready to transmit their learning and passion to the communities they will serve. They embrace the diversity and creativity of the Jewish people. They will work to nurture communities that respect and delight in varieties of Jewish expression. They have answered a spiritual calling, devoting themselves to a lifetime of learning, teaching, and sharing their love of Judaism with those around them.

Mazal tov! May we all go from strength to strength!