



המכללה העברית HEBREW COLLEGE

Ordination of the
Rabbinical Graduate Leadership Program
at Hebrew College
1860 Washington Street, Newton, Massachusetts

Sunday, May 25, 2025
27 Iyar 5785
1:45 p.m.

Livestreamed via hebrewcollege.edu/RS2025

TODAY'S PROGRAM

Opening Niggun and Processional

Opening Prayer

Rabbi Gita Karasov, Rab`20

Adjunct Faculty and Dean of Students and Admissions

Welcome

Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld

President

Greetings

Rabbi Daniel Klein, Rab`10

Dean of the Rabbinical School

Presentation of Tallitot and Berakhot

Members of the Faculty

Ordainees

Deborah Joyce Anstandig

Willemina Anna Davidson

Rafi Ellenson

Naomi Gurt Lind

Simcha Halpert-Hanson

David Kaplinsky

Akiva Nelson

Sarah Casey Pollack

Elisheva Pripas

Matthew Schwartz

Beni Summers

Aron Wander

Reading of Semikha Document

Rabbi Allan Lehmann, Faculty

Rabbi Shayna Rhodes, Rab`08, Faculty and Co-Director, Mascott Beit Midrash

Closing Blessing

Rabbi Allan Lehmann

Closing Niggun and Recessional

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, her or their 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 זו
ממנה עד שעשאוה תורתם.

בסוד חברים מקשיבים
עשו אוזנם 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 בם,
וקהלי עדתם עליהם יסמוכו כאשר סמכנו אנו,
ועליהם תבוא ברכת טוב.

כל מן דין סמוכו לנא.

DEBORAH JOYCE ANSTANDIG



וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ־לְךָ---הֵיינוּ לַעֲצֹמֶךָ ... וְעִיקַר הַחַיִּים תִּמְצָא בְךָ

Lech Lecha--this implies go toward yourself...the essence of life is what you will find within you.

Mei HaShiloah on *Lech Lecha*

In God's first command to Avram, he is confronted with a choice: how to respond to the Commander, who has just told him to undo everything he has ever known to follow God to an unknown land. It is possible to imagine that at that moment Avram might have lost himself and become completely directed by God.

Yet Hasidic master, Mei HaShiloah (19th century, Poland) suggests that this journey was not one of self-negation, but in fact the opposite. Rabbi Leon Morris describes this as a process of *surrender*. The inclusion of the word *lekha*, "Go to yourself", suggests that through serving God, one can also find one's deepest self. Each of us has the volition to enter a relationship with God, Torah and mitzvot. It need not negate one's self, but rather lead to one's unique self-expression and liberation. Avraham does not only heed God's voice, he challenges it.

I have spent these years attempting to find my voice amidst a surrender to our tradition. This journey, please God, will continue far beyond this moment. I strive to teach from a place of honesty that acknowledges the struggle that surrender sometimes entails. As master educator Parker Palmer famously wrote: *Good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher*. This is what I aspire to achieve.

While each of us has a journey, one can never stand alone. The initial version of *Tefilat HaDerech*, the Traveler's Prayer in *Masechet Brachot*, is written in singular form: "lead *me* to peace, direct *my* steps to peace...". Abaye suggests that the prayer should instead be written in plural. Thank you to my cohort and fellow students who have accompanied me along the way. I am indebted to my teachers at Hebrew College, whose journeys helped shape my own.

I am grateful for the many people and institutions who have helped shape me: the faculty at Pardes in Jerusalem, my former students and colleagues at SAR, Heschel, and my davening community at Darkhei Noam in NYC. I am grateful to Reverend Burkhard Weber, Rabbi Bill Hamilton, Rabbi Ruth Gan Kagan and Rabbi David Lerner, for modeling how to build one's life in generous service of others.

I honor the memory of my Zadie, Leo Beals, who never stopped learning. I am grateful to my dear friends and family, especially my mom, Marcia Seigerman, whose fierce love serves as a source of strength. And to G-d, for sustaining and enabling me to reach this day.

WILLEMINA ANNA DAVIDSON



יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך :

Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own.

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 242:33

This teaching first appears in Pirkei Avot with similar prescriptions about honoring one's peer and teacher. Over time, this ethical maxim became isolated, obtained the weight of law, and found its way to the Shulchan Arukh, a foundational code of Jewish law from the 16th century. In the Shulchan Arukh, it appears amidst a meditation on the relationship between teachers and students, including a list of regulations on how to honor one's teacher that would make many of us uncomfortable. The six words of this teaching are a counterbalance to everything that comes before and after it.

I've thought quite a bit about how to live according to this teaching as an educator and future rabbi. In some ways, it's become a defining source for how I think about my future. Part of me is convinced that if I can master this, everything else will come easily. I wish I could offer a full plan on how to implement this teaching as an educational philosophy, but I'm still figuring that out. So instead, I will offer a prayer.

God of our Ancestors, we are blessed with the light of our students.
Through them, we see words of Torah clearly.
Remind us that we are still students, even when we're the teachers.
Remind us that the space between us and them isn't as great as it appears.
Remind us that we have sat at the feet of teachers who saw and nurtured us.
Remind us to treat our students with the honor they deserve, and grant us the wisdom to know when we didn't.
Amen.

I'd like to thank everyone who has gotten me to this point. I am so grateful to have been able to sit at the feet of many amazing teachers. I'm incredibly grateful for one teacher in particular, Rabbi Lee Moore, for being the first to tell me I would make a great rabbi. I'm also incredibly thankful for my family and family, who have supported me along the way in more ways than I can name, and I want to thank James Moore for encouraging me to apply to Hebrew College in November 2019. To my students, who have sustained me through the last five years, it has been an honor to teach you. Finally, I want to thank my classmates who have supported, challenged, and comforted me. I truly wouldn't be where I am without you and the journey certainly wouldn't have been the same.

RAFI ELLENSON



*Take it to heart
Presence is Godliness*

Deuteronomy 4:39

At the very end of my rabbinical school interview, sitting before teachers that would become my mentors, Rabbi Shayna Rhodes looked up, took a breath, and said:

You've spoken the past hour about your deep relationship with text, translation, and Jewish thought, but you haven't once mentioned the word God. Do you think it's a problem that you want to be a rabbi and you're not thinking about God?

I was ready for a host of questions. But not for one about God. So, I responded:

Honestly, I'm not really ready to think about it. But I think that through my time at Hebrew College, I'll learn how to ask the right questions and get closer to the answer I want.

Before I entered rabbinical school, I imagined immersing myself in the histories and languages of the Jewish people. I dreamt of helping others live lives of meaning, shaped by moments of beauty grounded in the religion, culture, and rituals I love.

Before I entered rabbinical school, and throughout my formation, I had a sense of human presence. Friends, family, and loved ones steadfastly accompanied me throughout. When my father and brother died. When my first writings were published. When depression overtook me. When I accepted a job. In moments of grief, joy, accomplishment, and survival, I was never alone.

I know now these intuitions were divine.

God exists in all moments. There is no place void of God. When we show up for our communities with love and honesty, we breathe life into holy sparks.

It is my commitment as a rabbi to return the kindness that I have received throughout my life and offer that gift back to those whom I am privileged to serve. To use the grammar of Jewish text and culture to provide texture in peoples' lives. To listen with intent, lead with love, and act with responsibility. To conduct the sacred current that surges in moments of authentic human connection.

I will take it to heart. Presence is Godliness.

NAOMI GURT LIND



Reb Zusya of Hanipol, a scholar made of humility from a family made of kindness, found himself close to death and feeling a sorrow that overflowed into tears. His students reassured him: *You are nearly as wise as Moshe and nearly as generous as Avraham; surely the Holy Blessed One will greet you with open arms.* Zusya wailed, through wracking sobs: *If I merit to appear before the Holy Court, they will not ask why I wasn't wise like Moshe or generous like Avraham. They will ask: Why were you not more like Zusya? And what will I tell them then?*

* * *

My early ambitions were nowhere near the realm of Reb Zusya. Chasing dreams that didn't quite belong to me, I filled those years with the desire to be talented like So-and-So and witty like Thus-and-Such.

Then, at some point I heard the secret voice inside myself—a voice that could only come from the Divine Source—saying, *This. This is who you are.*

I ignored it, of course.

Until I couldn't.

I came to Hebrew College, awash with both certainty and doubt. Something was pushing me in this direction, but its very improbability gave me pause at every turn. In the crucible of this holy space, the doubt-to-certainty ratio gradually changed. Learning in havruta through page after page in the Beit Midrash—sharpening my thoughts, sharpening my pencils—I began to find the keys to my own home. There is still doubt, but my certainty of purpose grows ever clearer. Serving my beloved Temple Ahavat Achim community deepens and affirms it each day.

My time at Hebrew College has given me many blessings: teachers of brilliance and generosity, who saw something more in me than I could see and midwived it into being; friends who offered encouragement when the goal seemed vanishingly distant; learning that stretched my soul, challenged my mind, and broke my heart wide open. Along the way, my tireless spouse, Bill, has taken on impossible burdens to lighten mine; my parents, Joseph and Gloria, have cheered me on; and my siblings by birth and by fierce love, Michael, Jamie, Dennie, Bob, Deborah, and Marek have kept me laughing. And my glorious sons, Akiva and Gideon, have been my champions day in and day out. There is not enough gratitude to equal your gifts to me.

Barukh shehecheyanu to have arrived at this moment together.

מְצָאתִי אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי
I have found what my soul loves
Shir haShirim 3:4

SIMCHA HALPERT-HANSON



אָמַר לִיה: שְׁקוֹרִי קָא שְׁקַר בִּי, דָּאָמַר לִי "הַיּוֹם אֶתִּינָא" וְלֹא אֶתָּא. אָמַר לִיה: הֲכִי אָמַר לָךְ:
"הַיּוֹם אִם בְּקִלּוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּ"

[R' Yehoshua ben Levi] said to [Elijah the Prophet]: [Messiah] lied to me. They said to me, "I am coming today," and they did not come." [Elijah] said to him: "This is what they said to you: 'Today, if you would hear G?d's voice.'"

(Psalm 95:7) -Sanhedrin 98a

The story above illustrates for me our work on this earth. The daily encounters we all have with suffering as typified by R' Yehoshua ben Levi's confusion, thinking Messiah had lied to him. Elijah's clarifying response from Psalms holds up a mirror to our struggle to say "yes." Yes, love; yes, our humanity; yes, change; yes, awareness.

"If you would hear G?d's voice" - if we could just lovingly slow ourselves down; if we could ignore the phone, if we could put it down; if we could notice our own mental blocks, our protectors rushing to the front lines of our nervous systems whenever we perceive a threat; if we prioritized seeing the bark on trees, the mosses and lichen instead of seeing past them; if we thought to thank the birds for their daily song. Then *geulah*/the ultimate release, would have enough room to be born into our world.

"*Hayom/Today!*" If we could but hear, then today we'd be free.

My five years spent in rabbinical school began almost immediately with the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is closing with a rapid dismantling of U.S. democracy alongside immense suffering in Israel/Palestine, all of which challenge the very soul of America and the very soul of Jewry worldwide. With my learning as a foundation, I have done my best to strive for a greater sensitivity to the shape injustices take today. I want to make the "*hayom*" louder, reminding myself and others that we can let go and listen; we can get out of our own way and allow Messiah through.

I am grateful to my parents for transmitting Judaism and poetry to me; to my grandmothers, a"n, for teaching me joy in family and heritage; to my siblings for standing by me, standing next to me, for tethering me to who I've been, am and will become. I am grateful to my friend and mentor, R' Becky Silverstein for seeing and holding me through this journey, for modeling care and compassion. I am grateful to Ali: your questions and curiosity challenge my attachment to answers.

And lastly, I am indebted to Luma and Niall, my children. Your torah has been the most profound of all.

DAVID KAPLINSKY



יִפְקֹד יי אֱלֹקֵי הָרוּחַת לְכָל־בָּשָׂר אִישׁ עַל־הַעֲדָה: אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא לִפְנֵיהֶם וְאֲשֶׁר יָבֹא לִפְנֵיהֶם וְאֲשֶׁר יוֹצִיאֵם וְאֲשֶׁר יְבִיאֵם וְלֹא תִהְיֶה עֵדוּת יי כְּצֹאן אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהֶם רֹעֶה:

Let the Eternal, Source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community who shall go out before them and come in before them, and who shall take them out and bring them in, so that the Eternal's community may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.

Numbers 27:16-17

What first inspired me to pursue rabbinical school, paradoxically, were experiences I had in grassroots Jewish communities that prided themselves on not needing a rabbi. It was in these communities that I found some of the most passionate, Jewishly activated people I had ever met. They wanted to take their spiritual experiences into their own hands and, in a certain sense, be their *own* rabbis.

While bottom-up organizing of Jewish community still holds much value, not every Jew is motivated, capable, or interested in being their own rabbi. Shepherds—the Torah's ultimate metaphor for leadership—are still sorely needed in our communities to awaken the joy of our tradition, the spiritual meaning of our rituals, our obligation of righteousness, and to do the hard work of organizing Jewish community.

The metaphor of shepherding rings true to my conception of rabbinic leadership. Shepherds do not tell their sheep exactly where to go and eat—rather they allow their flock to find their way, while still urging them safely down paths that will support their growth and health. Shepherds must identify with their flock to do this task well—not to think of themselves above their flock, but rather to feel a deep sense of kinship with them.

The path has not always been steady on this rabbinical school journey: from starting at the Ziegler School in the depths of Covid on Zoom in New Orleans, to driving solo across country before vaccines to LA, to moving to Jerusalem for a year during regular judicial protests, to making the decision to transfer to Hebrew College for my final years, to the pain of October 7th and its aftermath. Yet ultimately, two types of shepherds kept me on my own personal path to this day: the deep and beautiful Torah I learned from so many wonderful teachers, and the friends I made who supported, inspired, and kept me somewhat sane throughout this wild ride. From Ziegler in LA, the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem, and especially Hebrew College, I thank you all for the honor of learning from you, being challenged by you, and helping me grow into the rabbi I am becoming.

AKIVA NELSON



וְתִנֵּנוּ הַיּוֹם וּבְכָל יוֹם לַחַן וּלְחֶסֶד וּלְרַחֲמִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְעֵינֵי כָל רוֹאֵינוּ.

Each and every day, grant us favor, kindness, and compassion in Your eyes, G-d, and in the eyes of all who see us.

Siddur, Morning Blessings

While a participant in Clinical Pastoral Education, my educator, Rev. Katie Rimer offered me advice that is now core to my vision of the rabbinate. I paraphrase: Your job isn't just to understand your patients' needs and support them while they're suffering. It's also to see their strengths, reflect those back at them, and help them channel their inherent goodness. She taught me how important it is that a spiritual leader see the best in other people. This is a lofty, yet fitting, standard in a tradition that affirms each morning the inherent goodness of every person in the prayer *Elohai neshama shenata bi t'hora hi* (the soul you have given me, G-d, is pure). It's a standard I aspire toward daily.

Reflecting on the past five years at Hebrew College, I feel proud of my growth as a student of Torah, Jewish theology, and prayer. In the tradition of my namesake, Rabbi Akiva, who peppered his teachers with questions until they were reduced to silence, I also feel gratified that I left very few things unasked. Beyond the classroom, my time here was marked by challenges including COVID, October 7th, and debilitating bouts of chronic back pain. Sometimes I think I learned just as much from the informal curriculum as I did from the formal one. Along the way I developed healthier habits of body and mind and learned the value of strong support networks in hard times. I know I will rely on these skills as I transition to the pulpit.

As I end my time at Hebrew College, I want to extend deepest gratitude to my maternal grandparents, Mortimer and Marcia Nelson (z"l), who were the first people to see my rabbinic future and whose generosity made school attainable for me. Thank you to my *besheret*, Carly, who has loved me through all of the ups and downs. Thanks to Mom and Dad, who show their boundless love by joining almost every service I've ever led, and to my siblings, Kyle, Danielle, and Ian, who continue to be some of my most profound teachers. I also feel so much appreciation for Mike and Maureen Margolis, and Ally and Nigel Harriman, the best in-laws I could have ever asked for. Finally, thank you to my mentors here at school and at my rabbinic internships. I couldn't have reached this moment without all of your support and guidance.

SARAH CASEY POLLACK



עשה לבך חדרי חדרים והכנס בו דברי ב"ש ודברי ב"ה דברי המטמאין
ודברי המטהרין

Make for yourself a heart of many rooms, and enter into it the words of Beit Shammai and the words of Beit Hillel, the words of those who declare it pure.

Tosefta Sotah 7:12

Today, I humbly cross the threshold from student to rabbi. I follow in the long line of *ivrim* – a word that means both Jews and boundary crossers who straddle worlds. We are constantly confronted with lines we've drawn to separate and protect ourselves – to be a Jew is to push beyond those boundaries. To be a Rabbi is to accompany someone while they push.

Over the past five years, I have engaged in Rabbinic formation against the backdrop of a global pandemic, the stripping of civil liberties my ancestors fought for, unprecedented political vitriol and fear. I step into a new phase of leadership in a moment that calls for radical transformation, action, and hope.

We live in this world while pursuing a better one – straddling the boundary between the world that is and the world we want it to be. Vaclav Havel, a Czech author, dissident, and statesman, put it best: "Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something is worth doing no matter how it turns out." Rabbi Sharon Brous, following Havel, reminds us that "hope is a verb, a spiritual practice." I aspire to a rabbinate dedicated to the work of building, maintaining, and repairing our world—work that fosters hope.

To my dear friends from so many parts of my life, thank you for accompanying me and cheering me on. Your support came when my family or I needed it most. I am blessed to be part of a sacred community of loved ones.

I am eternally grateful for the generosity of teachers and colleagues who shared their light with me and allowed me to share my spark with them.

To my family, who have loved, supported, celebrated, and cried with me, who pushed me to succeed and nurtured me when I fell short, who have traveled with me to all corners of the world—it is my honor to be in relationship with you.

To Elana, my partner in Torah and in life, my greatest teacher, *Rebbetzin* par excellence, walking through life with you is my greatest blessing. Thank you for your inspiration, sacrifice, commitment, and support. I love you.

And to Avri and Seffi, my babies, who began their lives in the Hebrew College *Batei Midrash*, I hope the words of Torah are forever on your lips and in your hearts. Thank you for letting me learn through and alongside you.

ELISHEVA PRIPAS



אָני יודע דער שױב יאָר מװילי שױב. דװוּ שױב יודע דער, שױבליי
מאָבאָט אַבאָטאָט לװאָט מװאָט דער מװאָט דער.

I know something better than your instrument, a gift that I received from my parents' parents: to be one who understands the thing within the thing.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov Sippurei Ma'asiyot

In the Rebbe Nachman story “The King’s Son and Maid’s Son Who Were Switched,” the king’s true son experiences pain, misfortune, depression, self-destruction, trying anew, and wandering in the woods after being switched at birth with the son of his mother’s maid. After these trials, he goes to a different kingdom that has been turned upside down and is seeking a new king.

On the way, he meets a man who offers him a trade for an instrument he received during his travels: to understand what is underneath the surface, truly see, and find meaning. The king’s son makes this trade because he understands it to be even more valuable than what he has received thus far, this ancestral gift passed down through generations.

For me, becoming a rabbi is about understanding the thing within the thing. It is about looking deeper and seeing what is true beneath the surface. What does that mean? What does it look like in practice?

“Understanding the thing within the thing” means listening deeply and well so that I can hear others into speech.

“Understanding the thing within the thing” means asking questions, good questions, deep questions, and challenging questions. It means looking for motivations, looking for meaning, beyond the simple or *peshat*, while never forgetting the plain meaning.

Importantly, “understanding the thing within the thing” means looking at our tradition deeply, for the wisdom, beauty, and love I see in it and that I hope to draw out and share with others. Simultaneously, I look at our tradition deeply, at that which I find painful and alienating, and do not look away.

As I receive ordination and become a rabbi, I plan to continue to look deeper, to ask more questions, and to look at both the beauty and difficulty I find in Judaism, Jewish text, and Jewish life.

Arriving at ordination has been a long journey, and I am so grateful to so many people. I especially want to thank my wonderful wife, Lynn, who has supported me through rabbinical school and who I am grateful to be with every day. Thank you to my teachers for their wisdom, time, and patience. And thank you to my cohort and other students at Hebrew College for being my community and friends these past six years. Finally, thank you to my family for supporting me as I’ve grown and changed over time.

MATTHEW SCHULTZ



לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הוּא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲלֶה־לָנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְיִקְחֶהָ לָנוּ וְיִשְׁמְעֵנוּ אֶתְּהָ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה :
וְלֹא־מֵעֵבֶר לַיָּם הוּא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲבֹר־לָנוּ אֶל־עֵבֶר הַיָּם וְיִקְחֶהָ לָנוּ וְיִשְׁמְעֵנוּ אֶתְהָ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה :
כִּי־קְרֹב אֵלַיִךְ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבְלִבְּךָ לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ :

[The Torah] is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it? Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very near to thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it.

Deuteronomy 30:12-14

Ahavat Torah—the love of Torah—stands at the center of my understanding of what it means to be a Jew and a rabbi. Through our connection to this ancient text, we draw close to God and to one another.

At Hebrew College, I have gained the necessary tools to understand this ancient text and make it accessible to others. As a rabbi, I hope to help Jews who may feel distant from Torah—for reasons connected to language, culture or belief—come to understand that it is not as remote as it seems. It belongs to all of us. It is our birthright to claim. It is ours to study and to interpret and to actualize in our lives.

These five years of rabbinical school have been transformative. They have also been challenging. Alongside our studies, we have lived through a pandemic and a war. Throughout this time, I have relied on the support of my friends—those who live on the other side of the world, those who live down the hall from me, and all those in between.

I am grateful to my family—especially my mother and father—for supporting me and encouraging me through the many stages of the journey that led to this point.

I am grateful to my cohort, who have challenged and inspired me, and my teachers, whose example I will do my best to follow throughout my rabbinate.

I am especially grateful to my partner Yoav, for his love and support, as well as everything he has taught me about *simchat chaim* and *ahavat hashem*.

BENI SUMMERS



כמו שאמר הכתוב (דברים ל"א:י"ט) ועתה כתבו לכם וגו'
שהתגלות התורה נקראת עתה
מאור עינים : ויצא

The Torah is called Now, as it says in Scripture: "And Now write for yourselves" (Deut. 31:19) for the revelation of Torah is called Now

R' Menachem Nahum Twersky of Chernobyl (1730–1797), Me'or Einayim
(Light of the Eyes): Parashat Vayeitzei

Over these past six years, I have fallen in love with the Now. I did not create this love, it is an inheritance that comes to me through the millennia of my ancestors yearning for closeness to the Now and the Oneness it reveals. My family nurtured my nascent thirst for the Now, directing their life force into me as an extension of the works of my grandparents and great-grandparents. My time at Hebrew College drew me into the lush valleys and abiding wells of the Now, and taught me how to reveal and draw out its life-giving spiritual waters. Within the walls of our House of Seeking I trained my eyes to hear and my ears to see that the Now is comprised of an infinity of layers of potential meaning. Each generation is gifted a chance to explore the layers that are theirs *specifically* to know. I know what it is to dwell in the Now, not just visit. I have acquired a field in the grand majesty of the Now. In its fertile soil, I plant my seeds of hope for health and goodness. From those seeds, I aim to grow communities of light rooted in the Now.

I trust in my path in the Now thanks to my teachers at Hebrew College, fellow travelers on that path. They shaped the contours of my heart toward listening for the still small murmurings of an awesome and transcendent mystery. I surrendered fully to their grammar dojos and textual obstacle courses and emerged a lifelong dutiful student in service to the Now. And serve I must. My parents, mentors, beloveds, and friends taught me that a life well-lived is built on being of service. The dissonant polarization of the world we find ourselves in presents a daunting challenge for our time. We mystics refer to it as the *עֲלֵמָא דְּפִירוּדָא* (*alma d'pheiruda* - world of separation), and it is the venue for attempting wondrous acts of reunification by those whom the Now calls to action. This will be the labor and greatest joy of my precious life, as a rabbi: To unite in complexity, to heal brokenness with wholeness, to soften squares into circles, and to build vessels for journeys in holiness.

כן יהי רצון
והמשכיל יבין

ARON WANDER



מלת "איכה" הוא משרש "איכה" שנזכר בהקינוות ועם מלת "איכה" שבפרשת בראשית
ביאור הליקוטים תנינא יב

The word "where" [ayeh] comes from the same root as "how" [eichah] that is mentioned in the laments and is connected to the phrase "where are you" [ayekah] in Genesis.

Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi Nachman, Be'ur Ha-Likutim II:12

Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi Nachman connects three texts, and thereby connects three questions: "Where is the place of God's glory?", from Shabbat morning prayers; "How?", the first word of Lamentations; and "Where are you?", the question God poses to Adam. This is a way of saying that every political question ("How and why is the world this way?") is also a theological one ("Where is God in such a broken world?"), and every theological question is also an ethical demand ("Where are you?").

After college, I developed chronic pain that made it difficult to stand for extended periods. Each time it flared up, the pain dragged me into endless questioning: "What *is* pain?" Perhaps because the pain was invisible, it also made me wonder what pain might be hidden around me. Who else might be in pain – whether physical, mental or the result of systemic injustices – without me knowing? What obligation did my own pain place upon me to encounter theirs?

Rabbinical school has been a time and place to learn new ways of articulating those questions. Rebbe Nachman, Rav Tzadok HaKohen, Hillel Zeitlin, Rabbi Aharon Tamares – the thinkers, texts, and teachers I have learned from have each given me new language with which to ask: Why is there such injustice around us? What are our obligations in a burning world? Perhaps religious experience is itself our ability to ask those questions again and again without looking away, neither letting hopelessness overwhelm us nor settling for false solace.

My two years in Jerusalem, during which I spent many days and nights in the Palestinian villages of the South Hebron Hills, also deeply inform my understanding of those questions. The Palestinian communities and activists resisting occupation and efforts to forcibly displace them from their land, as well as the Israeli and American Jewish activists fighting alongside them, taught me what it means to stare down despair and brokenness and insist, nevertheless, on struggling for justice and a better world.

I am carrying what I learned from them, and from all my teachers – living and long-dead – as I leave Hebrew College. Where is God? Why is the world this way? Where are we, and what will we do about it?

I am grateful to my teachers, my parents Bob and Jessica, my brother Jonah, my partner Emily, my friends and family, my classmates, and my hevruta Allen.

LINDA FRIEDMAN MEMORIAL AWARD



Sixty-three years after Linda Friedman's death, her brother, Lev `18 and niece, Shoshana `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 fifteen on February 14, 1961. Due to 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 is 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."

Talia Young is deeply honored to be the 2025 recipient of the Linda Friedman Memorial Award. A fourth-year rabbinical student, Talia is a poet, community builder, and educator. Talia found her way towards justice work in high school slam poetry workshops, where she was moved by the impact of hearing people tell their own stories, and by the ability of those stories to spark conversations across identities. Those poetry workshops shaped Talia's vision for justice work— which began with creating spaces where people could connect authentically and feel they truly belonged. Talia has carried this vision with her since then, in her work as an outdoor educator at Teva, as a grassroots climate justice organizer with the Sunrise Movement, and as a field researcher for the Alliance for a Just Recovery. In rabbinical school, Talia was honored to work as the Climate Art and Spiritual Adaptation Fellow at Dayenu, where she worked alongside Rabbi Laura Bellows to develop a new branch of climate arts. Together, they developed and facilitated a creative writing workshop called *Midrash & Imagination* to bring people together to share stories of resilience and help them envision the future we are fighting for—not just what we are fighting against. Talia continues to build community through working as a chaplain in hospital and college campus settings and performing with a local improv troupe that donates half of its ticket sales to the Mass Bail Fund. She loves spontaneous kitchen conversations and learning from the wisdom of the natural world.

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2025 CLASS GIFT

כִּי הֵיכִי דָּשַׁתְּלוּ לִי אֲבֹהָתִי — שְׁתִּלִּי נָמִי לְבָרָאִי

Just as my forebears planted for me, I too am planting for my descendants.

b. Taanit 23a

Dear Beloved Family, Friends, and Community,

As we approach our ordination, we are reflecting on the meaningful time we've spent at Hebrew College. We've been nurtured by extraordinary teachers and mentors, held in a diverse and pluralistic environment, and supported unconditionally by you: our family, friends, and community members.

Our journey through rabbinical school has unfolded amidst unparalleled global challenges and uncertainties, underscoring the critical need for resilient rabbinic leadership, now more than ever. Through these years, the relationships we've built in our cohort, our love for Torah, and the unwavering support of the Hebrew College community have been our pillars.

Inspired by our transformative experience, we are committed to paying it forward. In celebration of our ordination, we are hoping to raise \$20,000 in scholarship funds to benefit others' rabbinical studies at Hebrew College. This is our way of ensuring future students can learn in the same nurturing environment that has been pivotal to our growth as emerging Jewish leaders.

We invite you to join us in this endeavor by making a gift in honor of the Class of 2025 or an individual ordainee.

Contributions can be made at hebrewcollege.edu/rs-scholarship-2025.

We ask that gift be made by June 30th. Every gift, no matter what size, makes an impact in helping us reach our fundraising goal.

For those who prefer to donate by check, please address it to the Development Office, Hebrew College, 1860 Washington St, Newton, MA 02466, with "HCRS Class of 2025 Gift" in the memo field.

Thank you for your continued support and blessings.

Shalom U'vracha (peace and blessing),
The Class of 2025



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 *k'lal Yisrael* community. An innovative curriculum integrates the study of primary texts with themes of Jewish living and daily rabbinic practice. Today's twelve 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.

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