

## **Ninth Annual Semikha Ceremony**

### **Rabbanit Dr. Liz Shayne**

### **Core Semikha Class of 2021**



In the 9th responsum of the Minchat Shlomo, on the topic of using loudspeakers and microphones on Shabbat, the author, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, takes a moment to discuss the question of wearing hearing aids and, by association, eye glasses on Shabbat when there is no eiruv. What is extraordinary about this section is not his conclusion, that such things are manifestly allowed, but his approach. He resuscitates the concept of the *kamea ha-mumkhe*, the amulet that has proven its efficacy, and he argues that, *mutatis mutandis*, our medical devices fulfill similar roles for us in the services they perform and deserve the same exemption from the laws of carrying on Shabbat.

Rabbi Auerbach's point is not that glasses are a magical amulet to improve our vision. His point, rather, is that we are not so different from our Halakhic ancestors. The questions we grapple with at Maharat about the role of assistive devices, projected voices, presence, absence, and telepresence all have their antecedents in Halakhic history, and we just need to know how to look for them.

Our Halakhic creativity is both driven by and inspired by the creativity of those who preceded us, on and on, in a chain that stretches all the way back. We have spent four years building the future by immersing ourselves in the past and taking on the challenges of the present. In these moments, when the texts expand to meet the demands of the day, and we stretch to be the women we are called by this era to be, it feels like being touched with the briefest brush of the divine. When we think we are at our most innovative, most creative, most topsy-turvy, we are also closest to Hashem and most deeply enmeshed in the Halakhic tradition we adore. As JRR Tolkien reminds us, "We make still by the law in which we're made."