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**Purim:
Yes! And...**
Rabba Sara Hurwitz
President and Co-Founder, Maharat

The true miracle of the story of Megillat Esther, is Esther's willingness, even audacity, to say "yes, and.."

For most of her life, Esther was told where to go and what to do. Mordechai directed her to the palace, and commanded her to never reveal her true identity:

Esther did not reveal her nationality and her descent, for Mordechai had commanded her not to tell." (2:10).

לֹא הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת עַמָּהּ וְאֶת מוֹלְדוֹתֶיהָ כִּי מְרַדְּכֵי צִוּוּהָ עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִגִּיד:

Her very name, Esther, is taken from the root *hester* (הסתר), which means "hiddenness." The Gemara (Chullin 139b) uses the pasuk in Devarim (31:18) "*Va-Anokhi haster astir* - I shall surely hide" to connect Esther with hiding. Her essence was trying to remain invisible, hiding her national identity and her true self. Throughout the megillah, her entire demeanor is one of passivity and meekness: "And Esther **was taken**..." (2:8, 16)... and "... when it was the turn of Esther ... to come to the king, **she asked for nothing**..." (2:15). The text emphasizes her lack of effort to be selected. Esther does not strike us as someone who is bold enough to stand up, and say yes.

Tina Fey, actress, writer and comedian, writes in her book, *Bossypants*, that fundamental to her success, is the courage to say yes. She derives this posture from a core rule of improvisation: "The first rule of improvisation is AGREE. Always agree and say YES....Start with a YES and see where that takes you." She goes on to explain that "the second rule of improvisation is not only to say yes, but YES, AND." Agree to do something outside of your comfort and then build upwards to succeed.

For Esther, her "YES, AND" moment comes in Chapter 4 of Megillat Esther. Mordechai sends a message to warn her that her time has arrived to step forward and save the Jewish people:

"...For just such a moment you have risen to leadership" (4:14)

לָעֵת כְּזֹאת הִגַּעְתָּ לְמַלְכוּת

For the first time, Esther says yes, and transforms from being submissive to being the protagonist.

Then Esther ordered to reply to Mordecai (4:15)

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֶל מֶרְדֵּכָי

The commadee becomes the commander. From this point on, Esther becomes the leader and hero of the story. Now, she commands Mordechai to assemble the Jewish people, devises a plan to foil Haman's evil plot, and saves the Jewish community. All because she had the courage and willingness to throw off her veil, come out from hiding, stand up, and say "yes, and..."

The ethic of "Yes and" has been core to Yeshivat Maharat's success this year.

- Eleven graduates said yes to exciting and new positions. This year, Rabbi Lila Kagedan ('15) was welcomed into the Mount Freedom Jewish Center clergy team and beginning this summer, Dasi Fruchter ('16) will serve as full time clergy at Beth Sholom Congregation and Talmud Torah in Potomac, Maryland.
- Twelve students serve as interns at Hillels, synagogues, and JCCs.
- Over 300 donors said yes to becoming major supporters of Yeshivat Maharat this year, giving almost one million dollars.
- 5,000 people clicked to watch our [hineni videos](#), featuring communal support for our students.
- Rabbi Jeffrey Fox has written comprehensive analysis on the question of women and semikha, and scholars have responded yes to our call for articles on women and leadership, all of which will be released on our website shortly.

This Purim let's take off our masks, come out from hiding, and say "yes, and..." **Yes**, [I support Yeshivat Maharat](#) and all it does for the Jewish community. **And**, I too will lead the way to a Jewish community where Orthodox women are protagonists, creating their own heroic stories.



Rabba Sara Hurwitz, Co-Founder and President of Maharat, the first institution to ordain Orthodox women as clergy, also serves on the Rabbinic staff at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale. Rabba Hurwitz completed Drisha's three-year Scholars Circle Program, an advanced intensive program of study for Jewish women training to become scholars, educators and community leaders. After another five years of study under the auspices of Rabbi Avi Weiss, she was ordained by Rabbi Weiss and Rabbi Daniel Sperber in 2009. In 2013 Rabba Hurwitz was awarded the Hadassah Foundation Bernice S. Tannenbaum prize, and the Myrtle Wreath Award from the Southern New Jersey Region of Hadassah in 2014. In 2016 she was the Trailblazer Award Recipient at UJA Federation of New York. She was named as one of Jewish Week's 36 Under 36, the Forward50 most influential Jewish leaders, and Newsweek's 50 most influential rabbis. In 2017 Rabba Hurwitz was chosen to be a member of the inaugural class of Wexner Foundation Field Fellows.