



Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony

Abigail Tambor

Executive Board Chair

Thank you so much for joining us today. We hope you are feeling inspired and energized by all you have seen and heard from our founders, faculty and graduates. The future of Jewish Leadership is bright now that we are drawing from the best and the brightest of ALL who feel called to serve in Clergy, pastoral and educational positions in our communities and institutions. Our program produces leaders who are adaptive - prepared to be proactive, think creatively and are unencumbered by the need to fit a particular mold. Their very existence breaks the mold, they exist beyond the box.

I joined the board of Maharat at its inception because I believed that in order to survive and thrive in the long run, the Orthodox community in particular and the Jewish Community at large needed to attract the best leaders - the most inspiring, the most dedicated, the most creative - regardless of their gender. It is not as if our community was in a position to turn away exceptional talent called to serve just because they happened to be women. And frankly, why should we? Why should this wealth of Torah continue to be undervalued? That would be a crime. For too long, the leadership of this community has not reflected its population, which could only be to its detriment. Beyond the injustice, it was simply bad for business in the long term. With its founding, Yeshivat Maharat sought to right this wrong, attracting, educating and ordaining a new pool of talent that had been left underserved and under-appreciated for too long.

Today, more than ever, we need great leaders, great educators and great pastoral caregivers. In these uncertain times, we need the best, most nimble and hard working clergy, chaplains and teachers to guide, teach and counsel us through the fear, the worry and this new way of life. Ritual needs to be reapproached through new eyes. Who could be more prepared, more dedicated than these women, who have moved heaven and earth to get to this place, who have overcome obstacles, nay-sayers and detractors and have said, in spite of all this, "I choose to lead." These women, who have come to Torah and ritual with new eyes and new perspectives their whole lives. These are our leaders of today and tomorrow. I, for one, could not be more reassured by their existence and more proud of their accomplishments.

So please, join us in this holy endeavor. Support our efforts today as generously as you can to ensure the health of our community in the present and in the future. Join us in this historic movement to expand the breadth of our community's Torah and our access to exceptional service and leadership. Help make the drive and passion these women feel toward their calling to lead the rule and not the exception. The bar for greatness has been reset. Each year, the sisterhood is moving towards the goal of becoming a multitude. These 9 graduates will join their 34 colleagues in the field and will support established and nascent communities, will administer to the sick and dying, will bury the dead and tend to their families and will guide us as we seek new pathways to spiritual life and fulfillment from our homes. This is what our community needs. It cannot happen without you and your support.