



**Seventh Annual Semikha Ceremony**  
**June 17, 2019**  
**Hachnassat Sefer Torah**  
**About Our Torah**

Maharat is grateful to Tova Reich for gifting us a unique Torah, which was rescued by her father, Rabbi Dr. Moshe Ha'Kohen Weiss, in the late 1950s on one of his trips back to the Poland of his childhood. He traveled there in order to make contact with the few Jewish survivors of the Shoah who had returned to their home shtetls. The Torah had been buried in Szczecin, on the property of a Polish woman. Rabbi Moshe Weiss purchased the property to rescue the Torah, but its condition was so deteriorated as to render it unusable by a congregation.

At Rabbi Moshe Weiss' death in Jerusalem in 2015, the Torah was passed to his daughter Tova, who, along with her brothers Avraham Weiss (Rav Avi), Mordechai Weiss, and David Weiss, and her sister, Sara Weiss Tov, took on the task of having it restored to full *kashrut*. During the Torah's meticulous restoration, they learned that it had been written in three sections by three different scribes. These had been sewn together over the approximately 150 years of its use by a community that most likely could not afford a new Torah and chose instead to retain the salvageable parts. The congregation that last used this Torah was destroyed in the *Shoah*.

The children of Rabbi Moshe Weiss, determined to give the Torah new life in a new world, now pass this fully repaired Torah, suitable for being read *b'tzibbur*, to Maharat in recognition of its groundbreaking and courageous commitment to the full *halakhic* participation and leadership of women in Jewish learning and ritual. In giving the Torah to Maharat, Rabbi Moshe Weiss' family honors their father, who saved it for a future beyond his wildest dreams, as well as those of their mother, Miriam Borenstein Weiss, who would profoundly have understood and rejoiced at the inclusion of women in the full authentic richness of Jewish ritual and spiritual life.