

Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony

Rabba Sara Hurwitz

President & Co-Founder



Welcome to Yeshivat Maharat's Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony.

It was not obvious that we would arrive at this moment today. Indeed, our world and lives have been affected by chaos, illness, and unrest. There are fires burning around us, deep rooted racism and injustice to combat, and fear of a world we barely recognize that we must now confront. These last few days, weeks and months have wreaked havoc, and first and foremost I want to honor the memories of those who have lost their lives from illness and from baseless violence. And, I wish a speedy healing and recovery to those who are struggling. The effects of Covid-19 and world unrest have created other kinds of loss as well -- like not celebrating milestone events in person such as this one,

In the face of loss and discord, rabbinic tradition understood that we may be rendered speechless, and so provided us with a liturgical phrase to fallback on.

As explained in Masechet Brachot (Mishna 9:2)

וְעַל שְׂמוּעוֹת רָעוֹת אוֹמֵר בְּרוּךְ דֵּין הָאֱמֶת:

Upon hearing bad news -- and for the Mishna, bad news includes death and loss in general -- one says, "Blessed be the true judge."

And yet here we are, in spite of all that is lost, celebrating.

You see, in the same sentence that acknowledges loss, the gemara recognizes that the world is also full of miracles, bounty, and goodness. And, so, the Mishna explains that there is also language that we say upon hearing good news:

וְעַל הַבְּשׂוּרוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת אוֹמֵר בְּרוּךְ הַטּוֹב וְהַמְטִיב

"Blessed be God that is good and grants good."

The gemara elaborates (59b) and explains that this blessing is recited not only when an individual benefits, but when others stand to benefit as well.



And so, despite the loss we all feel at this moment, each and every one of today's graduates deserve to be celebrated because they are "tovot" they are each uniquely good.

And, "meitivot" they have spread goodness and kindness to others, through their Torah and leadership.

Today is a ha'tov v'ha'meitiv moment.

Allow me some literary license when I say:

הטוב והמטיב it is good and good for the world that nine more leaders are bringing their unique talents and voices to a world in need of spiritual healing.

הטוב והמטיב it is good that now there will be 43 graduates in the field, holding, teaching and inspiring thousands of Jews.

הטוב והמטיב, it is good that Maharat has a stellar faculty, curriculum and staff that has prepared our students to become the compassionate and wise leaders they are today.

הטוב והמטיב, It is good that Maharat has lay leaders and donors who understand the relevance and essential role that our graduates play in the world.

הטוב והמטיב, It is good that we are also celebrating young leaders --- our three high school seniors selected as Emerging Scholars. We wish a mazal tov to you:

Miriam Fisch graduating from Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School in Teaneck, NJ

Noam Goldberg-Kellman graduating from SAR High School, Riverdale, NY

And Elitsa Sklar, graduating from Rochelle Zell Jewish High School, in Deerfield, IL

And, הטוב והמטיב, it is good and good for the world that you have all joined us today in celebrating a better, more equitable Jewish future.

And so, to this year's rabbis: Jen, Michal, Atara, and Gloria, and graduating from our Executive Ordination Track: Amalia, Daniella, Agi, Judith, and Alana.

I say baruch ata hashem hatov v'ha meitiv.