

Eighth Annual Semikha Ceremony

Rabbanit Amalia Haas

Advanced Kollel: Executive Ordination

Class of 2020



Today is the day that Noah's Ark landed on Har Ararat. Mount Ararat. Noah was initially reluctant to board his ark. Change can be difficult, and facing an uncharted future unnerving. I empathize with Noah because when I stepped onto the ark of Yeshivat Maharat, I was also filled with trepidation. Yet the power of this Torah education, the brilliance and devotion of our teachers, the alumni, and the intellectual integrity and kindness of my Kollel cohort, affirmed in me the identity of woman rabbi, even while the entrance of Orthodox women into the rabbinate at times meets rocky waters, indeed.

How similar and yet perhaps dissimilar has our experience been from that of Noah. Our homes have been transformed into a veritable cacophony of the ark. Our children and college students, our spouses and our own workplace responsibilities have all moved home, sliding one on top of the other. And the intense final preparations for our semikha exams have had to fit in as well.

This has been an architecture of women's entrance into the rabbanite never seen before, even at Yeshivat Maharat. We are told that the Teivah had one tzohar, one aperture, so Noah could see outside. The Gemara debates its location. Was it in the side of the ark, so Noah saw the flood descend, erasing the world he knew? Or was the aperture directly above, reassuring Noah amidst the turbulence that he had an anchor in heaven. Our training at Yeshivat Maharat prepares us to engage the world through both apertures. We combine an awareness of the world around us with a focus on our relationship with Heaven. In our work as rabbis, may we merit to be ever connected and connecting others to the holy Torah and mitzvot - the tzohar above. And may we respond with compassion, justice and truth to the tzarkhei ha-tzibur - the needs of the community, the tzohar before us.