

strategic plan 2021-2024




dedicated learning. dynamic leadership.





table of contents

Introduction Letter from the Chair	3
Organizational Background and Context	4
Mission and Vision and Guiding Principles	8
Strategic Direction and Key Priorities	11
Measuring Success	12
Priority 1: Excellence and Innovation	14
Priority 2: Empowering New Audiences	16
Priority 3: Globalization	18
Financial Implications	20
Operational Growth	22
Conclusion	24



“ What’s been a very valuable thing has been meeting the other women: that cohort. It’s a very supportive cohort. Women from all over the globe, but who are like me and have had similar experiences to me, professional life and Jewish life. ”

– Rabbanit Judith Levitan, Kollel Class of 2020

introductory letter from the chair

It is with great pride that we present Maharat's new strategic plan - our roadmap for 2021 through 2024. Building on the success of our previous plan, Maharat will expand our impact through strengthening our core ordination programs and recommitting to excellence and innovation. As we draw more students from around the world, and send more of our graduates beyond our borders, we are embracing our international presence by supporting our students and alumnae globally. We will begin to empower new audiences, providing Torah and leadership to lay and professional leaders alike. We are leaning into what we know best - training and ordaining the leaders that will inspire our community and supporting those already in the field. Our growth is both bold and nimble, while being strategic and incremental. We know that we have valuable Torah and wisdom to share - Torah that is relevant and compassionate and will augment and deepen connection of individuals and communities, lay leaders and professionals.

Thank you to our faculty and staff. Your hopes and dreams for our Yeshiva are baked into this plan and we are grateful for your vision. Thank you to Abigail Callahan for guiding us in this process. Thank you to our alumnae! Your ranks are growing and the multitude we have envisioned is becoming a reality before our collective eyes. We all relish your successes! Thanks to your commitment and your example, communities around the world are acknowledging, embracing and demanding the learning and leadership of women. Thank you to our board of directors - your tireless efforts and wise counsel have brought us to this illustrious time. Thank you to Rav Avi Weiss and Rabbi Daniel Sperber - your vision has changed the face of the world. And to our fearless leader, Rabba Sara Hurwitz, without you this would only be an idea. Your leadership and wisdom have made it a reality.

And to our stakeholders, thank you for your unwavering support. May we all continue to be united in effort and purpose, and may the next phase of this dream soon become a reality.



Abigail Tambor, Board Chair



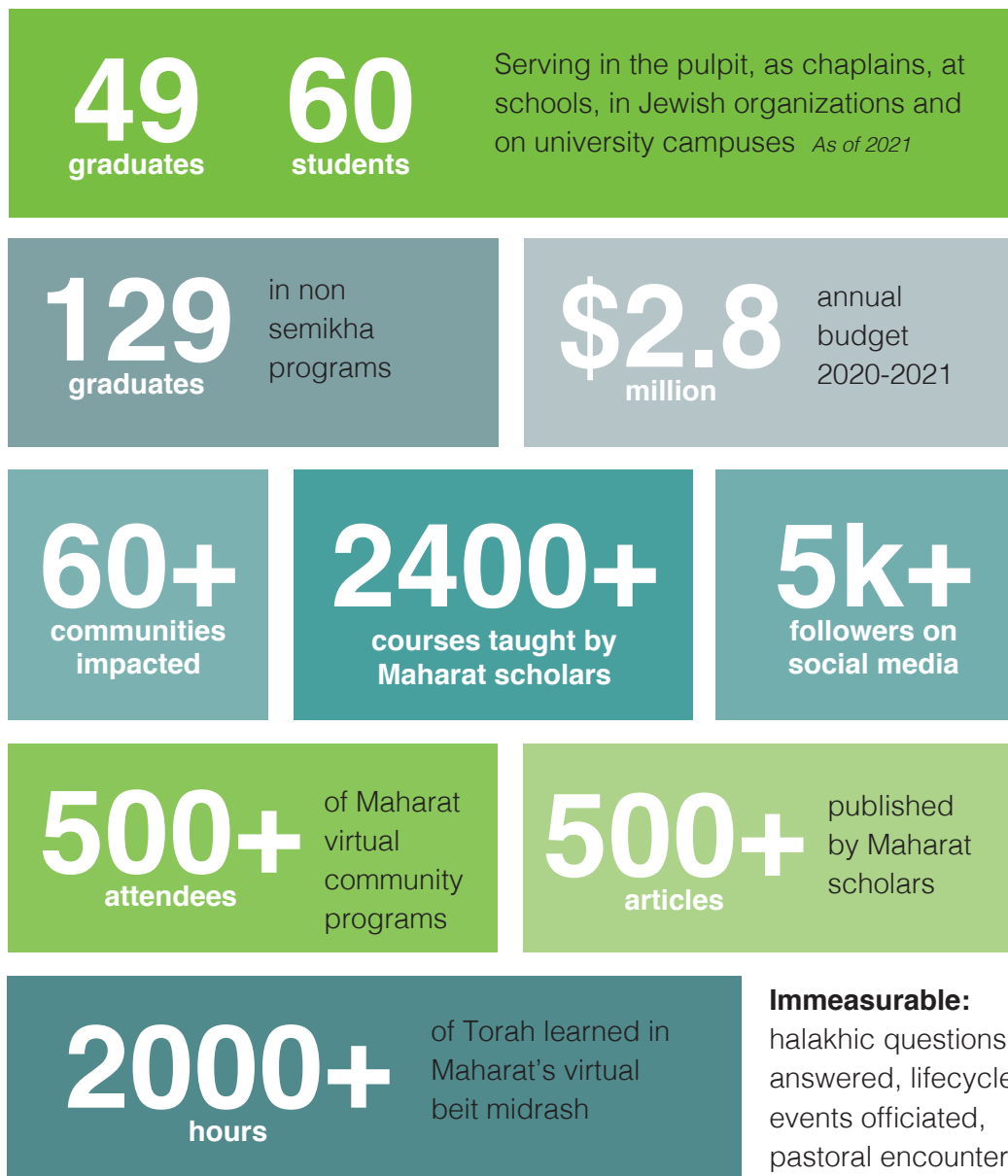
organizational background

Maharat was founded in 2009 as the first (and still only in North America) rabbinical school providing training and rabbinic ordination to women to serve in the highest levels of leadership in the Orthodox world, and beyond. Our mission is to educate, ordain and invest in passionate and committed Orthodox women who model a dynamic Judaism to inspire and support individuals and communities. We envision a world in which Judaism is relevant, Jewish communities are educated, and diverse leaders guide individuals to live spiritually engaged lives. To date, we have ordained and placed 49 women leaders, with another 25 currently matriculated in our Core Semikha and Advanced Kollel: Executive Ordination Track ordination programs, and eight in the preparatory Beit Midrash Program.

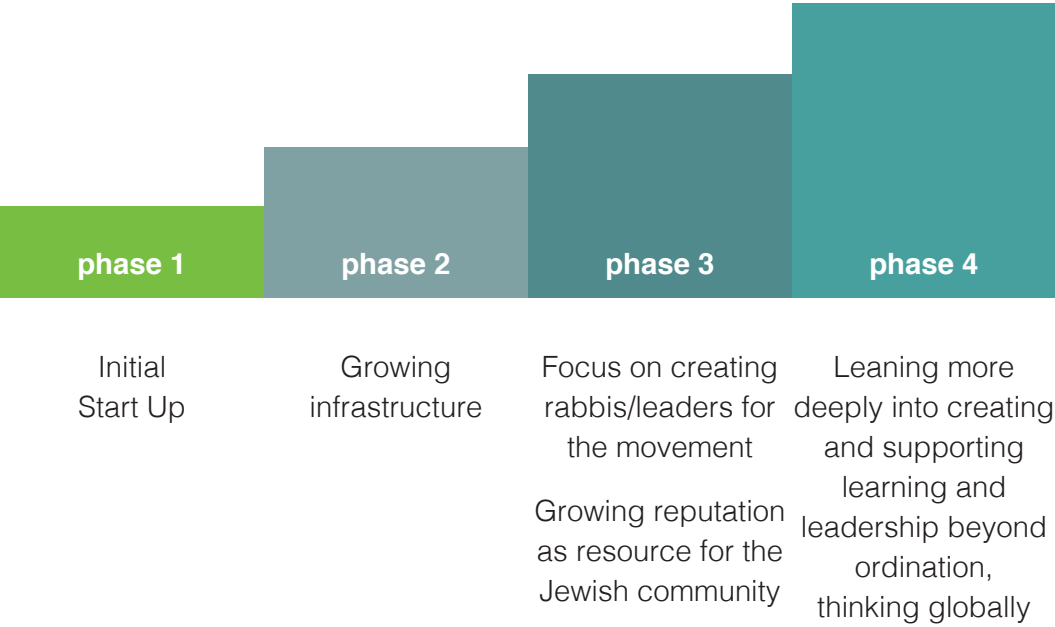
Through education and credentialing, Maharat enables our graduates to break long-standing glass ceilings, serving as Orthodox clergy in pulpits, schools, college campuses, hospitals, and communal organizations in a capacity previously reserved for men alone. Moreover, we are building communities of men and women who are open to and welcoming of women's leadership and scholarship. Through our initiatives, we are increasing the number of women in the highest levels of leadership in the Jewish community.

Ordination of Orthodox women is imperative to changing the conversation about women's leadership and power. The unique value female clergy bring to the community is the same unique value female CEOs, firefighters, movie producers, senators, chefs, university presidents, mechanics, law firm partners, and hospital administrators bring to the table: they force an overdue shift in our communal norms and standards. Moreover, the ordination of women is a step towards ending gender inequality in a community where the greatest power, pay and prestige is reserved for rabbis. With the arrival of Maharat, women from all denominations of Jewish expression and practice finally have a place at the pulpit, on the dais, and around the table so communities draw on the wisdom and leadership from 100% of the population.

organizational impact to date



looking ahead



Since our founding in 2009, Maharat has worked to create a solid and stable infrastructure, steadily growing to deepen and expand our impact. Now in our 13th year, Maharat is ready for our next phase of growth. Our strategic plan will guide us as we seek to broaden our reach, support our growth and solidify our success. Our Core and Advanced Track semikha programs will continue to be our crown jewels, but we are unrolling a plan that recognizes that Maharat is a global yeshiva, supporting our students and alumnae in Australia, France, England, South Africa, Israel, as well as all over North America. We will create a new model of 21st century leadership for the Jewish community around the world that is learned, compassionate and inclusive. We will seek to empower new audiences, expanding initiatives that focus on non-rabbinic participants as well as on supporting our alumnae. We will bring the Torah of Maharat to the world - a Torah of compassion, wisdom and intelligence. A Torah that meets people where they are and invites them in. We strive to create leaders for the community of today and for the community that we envision for tomorrow. Now that Maharat has achieved stability, our focus is on deepening and expanding our impact.



vision & mission

vision

A world in which Judaism is relevant, Jewish communities are educated, and diverse leaders guide individuals to live spiritually engaged lives.

mission

Maharat's mission is to educate, ordain, and invest in passionate and committed Orthodox women who model a dynamic Judaism to inspire and support individuals and communities. We are training leaders who will meet the needs of 21st century Jewry.

“ When people see both women and men leading Jewish community, it sends a signal of inclusivity. It shows that there are no limits to the way that men and women can contribute their talent, passion, and skills on behalf of the Jewish community. ”

– Ariel Weiner, Maharat Board of Directors



“ I think that many women in my stage of life feel like the ship has sailed and that we got the Torah education that we could get and that was it and this is an amazing opportunity to come back, learn what you always wanted to learn, get the Torah you’ve always dreamed about and learn it with the most wonderful faculty and students. ”

– Rabbanit Aliza Sperling
Kollel Class of 2019

Maharat's guiding qualities for leaders

Commitment to *lilmod, lelameid, vela'asot*

Learning, teaching and doing

Lilmod Learning

Maharat trains students to be Torah scholars, compassionate pastoral listeners, and courageous leaders with a clear vision of helping create a community that is vibrant, connected, spiritually meaningful and forward thinking, and which engages with people's lived experiences.

Lelameid Teaching

Maharat serves as a resource for learning for the Jewish community, providing continuing education and connection for young adults, professionals, educators and leaders in the field, meeting people where they are. The issues and concerns most present on people's minds are taken seriously, discussed and given a new framework within which to imagine the community.

La'asot Advocacy

Maharat actively seeks to bring more joy and justice to a broken world. Our students and alumnae are steeped in Torah and are entrepreneurial; they advocate for social change in pursuit of serving a diverse community that holds fast to tradition with an eye towards innovation.

Through our commitment to these values, Maharat will accomplish key outcomes for the Jewish community:

- Maharat will be a global community on six continents bringing our unique brand of transformative Torah to the world
- The Torah of Maharat will shape Orthodox communal discourse on the key issues of the moment
- Our community is more inclusive of Orthodox women, no longer questioning their authority, leadership, and legitimacy to serve
- Graduates are leading more communities and institutions grounded in Maharat Torah
- Maharat will seek out like minded organizational partnerships



“ I believe passionately in
Talmud Torah for women and
that women’s learning and
women’s voices are a critically
important part of Torah and of
conversation.”

– Rabbanit Devorah Zlochower,
Rosh Kollel

strategic direction & key priorities

Maharat's strategic direction over the next three years will focus on three areas of growth: we will continue to value excellence and innovation through our semikha programs and beyond; we will empower new audiences by becoming a resource for Torah education and connection for young adults, professionals, educators and leaders in the field; we will embrace our international reach, becoming a global yeshiva that trains women to be rabbinic leaders, thereby impacting Jews all over the world.

At the organizational level, these three priorities serve as anchor points across programs and initiatives:

excellence & innovation

Continuing to drive excellence and innovation in core and external programs is an ongoing priority that includes producing and promoting Maharat Torah.


The strength of our programs and ability to continue to meet the needs of existing and new audiences is the foundation of Maharat. Continuing to drive excellence and innovation in core and external programs is an ongoing priority that includes producing and promoting Maharat Torah.

empowering new audiences

Maharat's rabbinic programs will continue to be our core offerings, while at the same time we are expanding initiatives focused on non-rabbinic participants. This will include better serving our alumnae and developing programs for new audiences including lay leadership and other professionals more deeply. This priority focuses on reaching women more broadly, both directly and through like-minded institutional partnerships.

globalization

Over the past 12 months, Maharat has reached a broader international audience and has accelerated the use of hybrid learning. This experience has amplified the opportunity for global expansion. Over the next three years, we will recruit, increase brand awareness, and support our alumnae internationally, expanding our ability to serve a broader audience.



“ When my daughter goes to a shul that does not have a rabba, she says, “Mom, where is the Rabba? ”

– Ariel Weiner, Maharat Board of Directors

measuring success

The success of this plan will be measured by assessing the degree to which we accomplish the benchmarks described in each priority, the growth of programs as described below, and a set of dashboard metrics that we will track throughout the year.

For each priority, the benchmarks serve as a tool to monitor progress. Building on this plan, departments and individuals will further define objectives and milestones needed to accomplish these targets. Missing these benchmarks serves as a red flag in the execution of the plan.

Similarly, the growth of program participants is an indicator of success. The following chart indicates the anticipated participant enrollment. These participant milestones are important in tracking progress.

		FY21	FY22 Forecasted	FY23 Forecasted	FY24 Forecasted
excellence and innovation	Ordination Programs	38	43	45	45
empowering new audiences	Light Engagement through social media / newsletter	11,457	14,916	18,300	22,800
	Medium Engagement through public facing programming	900	1,000	1,100	1,210
	Deep Engagement through immersive cohorts	129	160	210	280
alumnae	Graduates	49	58	66	77
	Alumnae Impact through lifecycles, sheilot, classes and pastoral encounters	8,102	11,666	13,275	15,487
globalization	Alumnae, students and community engagement participants	121	184	228	291
operations	Budget Growth	\$2.8M	\$3.65M	\$3.8M	\$3.92M
	Staff	18	22	23	24
	Salary/Benefits growth from prior year	11%	37%	6.5%	3.4%
	No. of Donors	679	750	800	850



priority 1 excellence & innovation

The strength of our programs and ability to continue to meet the needs of existing and new audiences is the foundation of Maharat. Driving excellence and innovation in core and external programs is an ongoing priority that includes producing and promoting Maharat Torah.

Investments in this priority include:

- Dedicated staff to focus on writing, production and marketing, and data analysis
- Funding for marketing analytics and brand building

ongoing commitment to excellence of current programs

- Raise academic, leadership and pastoral skills excellence (at entry and graduation point) by:
 - Ensuring transparency in skills criteria scoring
 - Introducing a general knowledge test
 - Setting graduate standards for excellence
 - Improving practical rabbinics and internships
- Conduct a curricular audit: Core, Kollel, Beit Midrash Program
- Create room for specialization in Core and Kollel
- Increase cohort and cross-cohort integration
- Invest in faculty development and growth

increase brand awareness

- Develop and pilot two new podcasts
- Partner with leading publishers of Jewish scholarship to feature Maharat students, alumnae and faculty
- Increase social media presence on high impact platforms, through daily posts, regular stories, and paid boosts

develop and expand our Center for Lived Torah

- Expand on our Navon think tank
 - Prioritize writing projects (Madrikh)
 - Encourage publishing by 4th year students and provide coaching
 - Hire a program director with writing and publishing experience
- Create resources for lay people to use “on the ground” (i.e. halakhic guides, scripted rituals, etc.)

develop new programs to meet demand

- Explore feasibility of Halakha in Action - for women with semikha to advance their learning and bring halakha into conversation with 21st ideas
- Create opportunities to test new ideas/innovations based on demand from the community or partners

“ I think Maharat is not only a pioneer in that it’s the first Orthodox rabbinical school to ordain women, but it’s a pioneer in what rabbinical schools can be, in terms of its focus on pastoral education, the way we study the texts, the standard that we are expected to achieve in our learning, and the historical perspective that is so important for us to understand as we are learning. ”

– Yael Smootha, Class of 2021

priority 2 empowering new audiences

While the core programs will continue to be the primary focus, we will create opportunities that serve as pipeline programs as well as support alumnae, lay leaders and other professionals more deeply. This priority focuses on reaching women more broadly, both directly and through like-minded institutional partnerships.

Investments in this priority will include:

- Funding workshops for Maharat alumnae
- Retreats and alumnae convenings
- Third-party vendors for training and coaching
- Funding for lay leadership workshops
- Microgrants for innovative projects

launch, market, and enhance pipeline programs

- Articulate and model the rabbinate through a proactive campaign
- Expand on our current campus programs: Meorot Fellowship and Campus Leadership Incubator.
- Roll out new Campus Ambassadors initiative
- Create a robust follow up plan for measuring and maintaining engagement, as well as assessing effectiveness
- Assess feasibility of summer or winter programming for post Israel/college and/or high school students/bat mitzvah girls
- Assess feasibility of fellowship program for girls who are studying in Israel for the year

broaden the scope of alumnae support & professional development

- Offer micro grants for innovative projects
- Establish a system for accountability of action in content production, including mentorship, chevruta, and stipends.
- Institute new models for sharing out what alumnae and students are doing outside of the Yeshiva.
- Offer continuing educational classes and one-on-one coaching support

invest in lay leadership, professional and educators

- Develop workshops, and fellowships to increase leadership, writing, speaking and teaching skills, possibly including incentives, and capitalizing on successes like the Jewish Women's Writing Fellowship.
- Design immersive educational experiences for target audiences including senior rabbis, synagogue presidents, hospital chaplains, women's tefillah leaders, female heads of schools in partnership with relevant organizations

define and expand the professional opportunities and career trajectories for graduates

- Convene a task force to address the challenges of mid and senior musmakhot and the current inaccessibility of the senior rabbinate
- Construct resources for synagogue leadership to address the halakhic and social issues of female senior leadership with the congregation
- Establish a system for relationship building with potential employers



priority 3 globalization

Over the past 12 months, Maharat has reached a broader international audience and has accelerated the use of hybrid learning. This experience has amplified the opportunity for global expansion. Over the next three years, we will recruit, increase brand awareness, and support our alumnae internationally, expanding our ability to serve a broader audience.

Investments in this priority will include:

- A new role focused on innovation
- Innovation dollars to support communities
- Funding for mentorship, travel and other supports as needed
- Technology and training investment
- Stipend model changes
- Retreat center costs
- Lead generation investment

optimization of the hybrid learning model for the Core Semikha

- Strengthening the hybrid learning model to optimize class experience for “Zoomers” and “Roomers”
- Assess the feasibility of hiring faculty to support students learning at Maharat asynchronously
- Create partnership with retreat centers to build community
- Research clinical pastoral education options and cultivate internship sites in other countries
- Provide ongoing faculty professional development on technology

support alumnae around the world

- Support students and alumnae around the world in building energy around their work.
- Increase the accessibility of Maharat's resources through translation of the website and resources to other languages.
- Create an international Beit Midrash structure that provides a tool kit and support for women's Jewish learning and leadership in the international communities connected with Maharat alumnae and students

grow the diversity within the Maharat cohort

- Define what diversity includes
- Articulate clear values for Maharat, the Torah we teach and our students/alumnae contribute.
- Build on our unique selling proposition and values by telling the varied stories of alumnae, their path to and expressions of the rabbinate.
- Increase our stipends to make studying full-time financially viable for a greater range of women.

expand our audience and pipeline

- Develop ways to reach mid-career women
- Develop stakeholders as recruiters
- Invest funds in professional lead generation

“ What’s pretty cool is to chevruta with one of my fellow colleagues in Nashville, a chevruta with a colleague in Cambridge and then zooming into shiur in New York. I can be in Nashville, I can be in London, I can be in New York, all while sitting at my desk in Sydney. ”

– Rabbanit Judith Levitan,
Kollet ‘20

financial implications

To support this plan, Maharat will require investment in each of the three priority areas which will increase the budget from \$2.8 million in FY21 to \$3.9 million in FY24.

Included in these expenses are 6-8 new positions that are required to align Maharat's structure with the needs and goals outlined in this plan.

Priority	FY22	FY23	FY24
excellence and innovation	\$ 436,000	\$ 456,000	\$ 473,500
empowering new audiences	\$ 240,000	\$ 337,600	\$ 348,700
globalization	\$ 146,700	\$ 187,700	\$ 191,700
total	\$ 822,700	\$ 981,300	\$ 1,013,900
projected budget	\$ 3,670,125	\$ 3,850,547	\$3,913,900



“ In Maharat I attempt to teach the way I was taught - to create an excitement, an energy in the study of gemara, one in which the students feel a stake in the gemara in what the gemara means and what the tradition of gemara will mean to them and to their students and congregants.”

– Rabbi Adam Mintz



operational growth

Budget Growth of 30% in FY22

faculty & benefits

- Staff grown 125% from 2016 to 2021 (8 to 18)
- Full benefits package including health insurance and 403b match since 2020
- Salaries increasing to meet market rates
- Funding of professional development opportunities

physical space

- Adding additional office and classroom space to meet growth

evaluation

- Working with Rosov Consulting to measure impact and growth

“ Part of the purpose of our community is to expand what it means to gather, to expand what it means to support each other and to really be there for one another even when we have to be creative and think out of the box about what that means.”

– Rabbanit Dasi Fruchter, Class of 2016


conclusion

This plan is a culmination of more than six months of brainstorming, planning, and dreaming about a world where Orthodox female leadership becomes the norm. It was conceived during a pandemic, with the knowledge that Maharat is nimble, and aims to adapt to the ever evolving and changing needs of our community. The plan builds on the wisdom of our staff, guided by our lay leaders, and our consultant Abigail Callahan. It also takes into account our current landscape, and seeks to hone in on Maharat's unique value add to our community: a focus on training and supporting women as leaders, committed to the values of learning, teaching and doing: Lilmod, Lelameid, and La'asot.

On Mount Sinai, after God spent 40 days and nights teaching the traditions of our Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu, God declared: *lech reid*. Get down. Go Moshe. Leave the mountain top, and go be with the people. Take the lessons learned here, and propagate them far and wide. And so too, we are grateful to our students and alumnae, who have imbibed the Torah that is learned in the Beit Midrash, and have taken the wisdom and scholarship learned from our indelible faculty, down the mountain, out of the beit midrash, and unto the hearts and souls of the Jewish community.

“ Yeshivat Maharat provides an education, a pathway, and a degree of ordination that sets women up to be the leaders they always knew they could be. It situates them in a way that the community can look up to them and see them as their spiritual leaders, their clergy as rabbinic authority and turn to them in times of greatest need and vulnerable and times of joy. ”

– Rabba Sara Hurwitz, President

A photograph of two women smiling and looking at each other outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a grey patterned top and a beaded necklace. The woman on the right is partially visible, wearing a purple headband. The background is a lush green tree.

“ I’ve wanted to be a rabbi since I was a teenager... I never really gave that up. So when I heard about this program that Maharat created for women who are already mid career to become ordained, I was like “Yes! Please!” It felt like a miracle. So it feels like a dream come true. ”

– Rabbi Dr. Devorah Schoenfeld
Kollel Class of 2019


“ Being recognized as an Emerging Scholar showed me that my potential to learn and to grow in Torah is not limited based on my gender. Rather, there is a world with expanding possibilities which allow me to find my place in the halakhic community and the beit midrash along with all my peers, regardless of age, race or sex as we work together to expound and expand understanding.”

– Miriam Fisch, Emerging Scholar 2020







A person with curly hair is seen from the side, wearing a white knit sweater and a gold watch. They are looking out a window with a light blue frame. The background is a bright, slightly overexposed outdoor scene.

“ The gift of coming into a beit midrash, sitting down, opening up a gemara and just having the opportunity to learn as their brothers and fathers did before them is truly a wonderful opportunity. ”

– Rabbi Jeff Fox, Rosh Ha’Yeshiva



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3700 Henry Hudson Parkway, Bronx, NY 10463
718-796-0590 info@yeshivatmaharat.org
www.yeshivatmaharat.org