

Mazal Tov!!

Engagements

Erika Orli Shechter
Sara Covey

Weddings

Nili (Salem)Flaks
Chava (Anderson) Tzemach
Miria (Ginnes) Martin

Births

Adiella Shemtov, son
Chana Wax, son
Chana Mendes-Rodrigo, daughter
Eden Melamed, son
Chana Miriam Shulgasser, son
Chana Rochel Tolliver, daughter
Chaya Komar, daughter
Chaya Mushky Alperovitz, daughter
Daniella Chaya Madai, daughter
Deena (Genuth) Caras, son
Emuna Tiferet Amar, son
Leah David, daughter
Malka Blalock, son
Mia Raquel Baldioceda, daughter
Oriana Devorah Cohen, son
Sarah Heiman, son
Sarah Winter, daughter
Shirli Broda, daughter
Yocheved Shul, son

Rabbi Yosef & Elana Benarroch, granddaughter
Rachelle Silver, granddaughter
Yochanon & Sarah Berlowitz, (former dorm parents), grandson



As the year is closing, open up your heart and hand,
To support Holistic Torah for Women on the Land!

Join our Chai club (monthly donations) & help us build the mind, bodies and souls of our students:
\$18, \$36 or \$54 per month

Sponsor student, Program, Project, or Event:

Sponsor a full student scholarship for one year \$10,000
Sponsor an assisted student scholarship for one year \$5,000
Sponsor the greenhouse project for shmittah year \$3,600
Sponsor two weeks of Torah classes for ten students \$1,800
Sponsor a one week seminar \$1,000
Sponsor our annual newsletter \$720
Sponsor an assisted student scholarship for one month \$500
Sponsor a Torah Class for one month \$360
Sponsor a Rosh Chodesh Program \$180
Sponsor expansion of the flower, herb & vegetable garden \$100
Sponsor one Torah Class \$36

Dedicate New Campus Facilities

Classroom #2 \$15,000
Panoramic Windows \$4,000
Security/Outer Doors \$2,500
Windows large \$1,800
Windows small \$1,000

Already Donated

Beit Midrash | Library | Art & Meditation Veranda | Classroom #1

Donations of any amount are appreciated

Donation Instructions:

Please note:

Only donations made to American Friends of MBBA are tax deductible in the U.S.A (and can be paid off over a number of years)

1. For a tax-deductible donation in U.S.A.:

Please make checks payable to: American Friends of MBBA
c/o Judy Josephs, 98 St. Mark's Place Apt #1C,
New York, NY 10009-5803

2. For a tax-deductible donation in Canada:

Please make checks payable to: Tzaddik Foundation,
c/o Miriam Kreisman, 6592 C. Kildare, Montreal,
Quebec H4W 2Z4

3. Automatic transfer from your account to our Israel Bank:

Please send your donation to:
Mizrachi Tefahot Bank #20, branch 454 Alon Shevut
Beneficiary's Name: Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin
Beneficiary's Account # 524776,
Swift Code MIZBILIT

4. Direct mail

Please mail your check to: Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin,
P.O. Box 84, The Village of Bat Ayin, Gush Etzion 90913, Israel

5. Donation through our Website (includes credit card or paypal option) and all donation options:

<http://www.berotbatayin.org/donate/>

Thank you.

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin

Holistic Torah for Women on the Land

Elul 5774 / 2014

ב'ס"ד



Rosh Hashanah: Time for Elevating our Will

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

You are What You Desire

Rosh Hashanah preparations entail more than purchasing gefilte fish and honey; if we want to be inscribed in the Book of Life, we must elevate our will and the things we desire. Rabbi Dessler explains, "What a person wants – that's what he is." If we desire dead material things then we can be considered as dead. In contrast, when we elevate our will to desire spiritual things such as deeper prayers, acts of kindness and Torah insights, we become truly alive. The Torah urges us to choose life, "See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil...therefore choose life...to love Hashem your G-d, to listen to His voice, and to cleave unto Him; for that is your life..." (Devarim 30:15-20). Even if we are not the greatest tzaddikim, we can still choose life and good. Where we strive to be overrides where we are.

The Far-Reaching consequences of a Single Choice

There are times in our lives when a single choice has far-reaching consequences and causes a radical change in our entire future. For example, the difference between David and Goliath originated in a step in opposite directions by their respective great grandmothers, Ruth and Orpah. Once being close to kedusha (holiness), taking just one step in the wrong direction has serious consequences. The solemnity, shofar blasts, and prayers on Rosh Hashanah give us the impetus to reconsider the turns of our lives and make the appropriate

choices for good. Yet, the heart that resisted Hashem's call on Rosh Hashanah, will be less and less likely to respond to such call in the future. When a person rejects the opportunity offered for rectification, this opportunity may never present itself again. Moreover, by not choosing 'life' in a given moment, one by default chooses 'death' and spiritual decline.

"Choosing righteousness over comfort generates the spiritual energy that we call angels – our advocates to be inscribed in the Book of Life"

The Angels of Her Repentance

Hagar elevated herself from a very low place by her conscious choice at a pivotal moment. As she was running away from the spiritual haven of Sarah's tent, at the verge of leaving the land of Israel (Sforno, Bereishit 16:7), she encountered no less than four angels (Rashi, Bereishit 16:13). Each angel was created by her new level of repentance. It was very difficult for Hagar to nullify herself and serve Sarah, having grown up as a princess in Pharaoh's house. When she accepted to return and be afflicted by Sarah she did a tremendous tikun (rectification), to bend herself in the opposite direction of her natural inclination. Likewise, the effort we put into choosing righteousness over comfort generates the spiritual energy that we call angels. It is this



life-force that becomes our advocate to inscribe us in the Book of Life.

The Well of Hagar

The well which Hagar named "the well of the living one who sees me" became infused with the holiness of her repentance in this place. This is why Yitzchak was inspired to pray there often. Rabbi Dessler teaches that the holiness of a place is created by the great deeds done there. We can feel this high energy in the homes of people who live Torah lives filled with emunah, prayer and love of others. In preparation for Rosh Hashanah we may choose to surround ourselves with the aura of holiness by visiting such places and absorbing their light.

Rosh Hashanah Conception

Hagar and Yitzchak, who was conceived on Rosh Hashanah, share the same gematria (numerology). This is because Hagar enabled Yitzchak's conception by allowing Avraham to deposit in her some of his spiritual impurity inherited from his father. Yishmael, the father of the Arab people, thus enabled Yitzchak to be born completely pure (Arizal, Sefer Halikutim).

(Continued on page 2)

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Rebbetzin's D'var Torah (cont'd)

Furthermore, Avraham having to expel Yishmael helped him to reach the level where he was ready to perform the *akeida* (near sacrifice) of Yitzchak. It is a great virtue to humble oneself to become the vessel for a person with greater *kedusha*. The conflict between Sarah and Hagar, portrayed in the Rosh Hashanah Torah reading, is the root of the current conflict between their respective offspring. This explains why the Arabs today have so much hatred against the Jews. They have reverted back to where Hagar was before her rectification. When they accept that their connection to Hashem depends on their humbling themselves to the leadership of Israel, then they can once again become a vessel for the *kedusha* of the Chosen People.

Choose Life by Giving

We have the opportunity to make a significant shift in our lives by the choices we make, especially in preparation for Rosh Hashanah when the Book of Life and Death are open. "Tzedakah (charity) delivers from death" (*Mishlei* 10:2). By bringing energy of life to others we also draw it to ourselves. Tzedakah shares the same root as *tzadik*, and is connected with the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*, as it states, "the *tzadik* (righteous) is the *Yesod* (foundation) of the world" (*Mishlei* 10:25). Through the foundation of Tzedakah the flow of light and life energy enters the world. Maharal explains that this can be compared to a well of water. The more we draw from the well, the more it gets filled with new water (*Netivot Olam, Netiv Hatzedakah* 1). I bless you to take advantage of this opportunity to choose life by supporting Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. May your well be replenished with multifold blessings both physical and spiritual in the merit of supporting Holistic Torah for Women on the Land! May you be inscribed in the Book of Life, "Tzedakah to Life!" (*Mishlei* 11:19).

From Boston to Bat Ayin Ariel Hendelman

My journey to Bat Ayin started with a very difficult conversation a little over a year ago. I had just made *aliyah* and was back on the kibbutz ulpan where I had been for five months. It was there that a friend told me one of the most painful and shocking things I've ever had to hear: I'm not halachically Jewish. Having grown up with a Jewish father and been through a conservative conversion with my mom when I was three years old, I had believed my whole life that I was completely Jewish. I was raised in a Reform home, where I went to Hebrew-school several times a week and had a Bat Mitzvah. I always loved Hebrew-school and remember wishing that it could be every day. Since I always felt at home immersed in Judaism, it was such a shock to be told 20 years later, as I sat on a kibbutz in Israel that I wasn't really a Jew after all. So what was I going to do? Part of me thought, who cares what halacha says? I feel Jewish. But there was another voice inside me; tender as a whisper and strong as a scream, it told me to find a way to become halachically Jewish.



A while back someone had given me a pamphlet on *Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin*. Sure enough, amongst other things, it offered a conversion program. B'erot's tag line jumped out at me off the page "Holistic Torah Learning for Women on the Land." The words found their way into my heart and soul. I knew that a typical midrasha learning environment was not what I wanted, and B'erot was decidedly atypical. I thought that if the doors were opening for me to come to B'erot, then that would be my sign from Hashem that this was the place for me. During my phone interview the Rebbetzin's voice on the other end was immediately warm and comforting. As we spoke and I described my situation and myself, she told me that she had created the conversion program at B'erot precisely for women like me. When I hung up, I knew that I was going to do this; I was going to convert at B'erot. I felt as if I had been waiting for this my whole life and in turn, B'erot had been waiting for me. 32 years we waited to find each other, like lovers, our destinies were entwined.

I've now been learning at B'erot for six months and I can't imagine myself in any other place. I have the opportunity here to study *Tanach*, *Parshat HaShavua*, and Halacha. I also have the unique ability to experience classes that other midrashot don't offer. I'm learning Chassidus from both Chabad and Breslov teachers. I'm learning about the plants of Israel and their many healing properties as correlated by the Rambam in Herbal Workshop. I am able to connect with my body and release in our Meditative Movement class. Even in our more "typical" classes, Rebbetzin finds a way to infuse it with Bat Ayin style, like putting on an impromptu play while studying Megillat Ruth. There is truly nowhere else where I could get learning of this depth and diversity. I feel as though the Torah has been spread out from inside me like wings. I see its beautiful, fragile letters in every rock, rosemary bush, and fig tree; in every smile of the people I am surrounded by here in Bat Ayin.

Sometimes when we are in the middle of a journey, it's hard to see how special it is or how much we have grown. Yet, I can say unequivocally that I have found my true self here. I am acutely aware of the unique privilege to which I've been tasked; to do *teshuvah* and convert simultaneously. This is not a burden, and it's not just another chapter in my life's book; this is my voice tuned to the pitch of Hashem, lifted up together in harmony. Now that I know this melody, I can never forget it. Thank you to B'erot and to all the shining *neshamos* who make this place special.

Growing for Health: Educational Greenhouse Project

We are excited to announce in preparation for the *Shmitah* year in Israel our "Growing for Health Educational Greenhouse Project." At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we encourage students to connect to the land through an educational gardening program. As we draw close to our *Shmitah* year, without this project, we would need to terminate our gardening aspect of the program. Our incoming dorm father is spearheading our Educational Greenhouse Project to allow our gardening program to continue and our students to maintain their healthy diet of vegetables during the *Shmitah* year.

This project will enable students to participate and learn about not only the construction of the greenhouse but as well the halachically permissible methods, during the *Shmitah* year, of planting and harvesting produce grown in pots that are not connected to the ground. In addition to supporting the fresh food needs for our student body, excess produce will be sold to the residents of Bat Ayin and the surrounding communities. It is our hope that this will allow the greenhouse to be self supporting financially for additional seeds, soil, water, maintenance etc.

By partnering with us in this project, you can reap the merit of helping to bring this project to fruition by sponsoring the purchase of building and growing materials. As the students grow, so does your merit for having contributed to this project. Below are methods in which you can contribute to "Growing for Health Educational Greenhouse Project."

Several sponsorships are available; estimated amounts for donation wish-list items are as follows:

- Full-size polycarbonate greenhouse building...\$18,000
- Mini rolled-plastic greenhouse structure...\$5,400
- Solar heating system for greenhouse...\$3,600
- Greenhouse irrigation system...\$1,800
- Greenhouse Training Course...\$540
- Grow lights...\$360
- Pots and seed starter trays...\$180
- Fertilizer...\$54
- Greenhouse ventilation fans...\$36
- Vegetable seeds...\$18



If you would like to contribute to this project, please see the methods of donating overleaf.

From the Outside Fonda Roth, B'erot Friend

I have known Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum for several years having the privilege of hosting her for many learning retreats, Shabbatons, workshops and gatherings in Toronto and Collingwood. Chana Bracha's learning style is eclectic and holistic with an emphasis on personal growth through the wisdom of Torah. She teaches Torah with a feminine twist as a fusion of traditional texts, Chassidism, environmentalism, with a pulse on the modern world perspective. Chana Bracha is a wonderful teacher for both group and private consultations.



Over the years, I have enjoyed her workshop on "forgiveness" which was very helpful and insightful, studied the Torah's perspective on healthy eating and done a Tu B'shevet seder with Chana Bracha and felt connected to the Land of Israel. Chana Bracha did an amazing *shiur* on the spiritual importance of baking challah which was very enlightening. This spring, Chana Bracha did an interactive class in my home on motherhood and the group bonded in a loving way. Chana Bracha has a special way because she is so authentic. I have also benefited from a one on one EmunaHealing session with her. I appreciate her availability and desire to connect to her students.

This summer I was fortunate to be able to visit Rebbetzin Chana Bracha at the Women's Learning Center - Midreshet B'erot - in Bat Ayin - and spent some quality time learning together with her students from around the world. The students ranged in age and were from interesting places in the world and seem to come from diverse backgrounds. We learned about the Magen David and its protective secrets which I found fascinating. The property itself is also impressive - containing a greenhouse, chicken coops, herb, vegetable, and wild flower gardens, air conditioned caravans used by the students as their residence, and special customized Magen David's on the doors and windows. I look forward to returning and spending more time learning and connecting to the Land of Israel at Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin in the future!