

# Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin

Holistic Torah for Women on the Land



Elul 5775 / 2015

## Tapping into the Forty Days of Awesome Divine Favor

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha

Some days we awake with words of praise and prayer. At other times, a dark film of spiritual laziness clings to us as we mumble our prayers hurriedly with our mind on the forthcoming breakfast meal topped with the latest Facebook newsfeed. Now, is the chance to face our higher selves during the forty days from the first of Elul until Yom Kippur, for these are days of *עֵת רַצוֹן/et ratzon*, (Divine Favor).

During this period Moshe went up to the mountain again to atone for the Golden Calf and Hashem forgave Israel by

**During Elul we have the opportunity to rectify all mitzvot done halfheartedly in the past year, and elevate them.**

giving us a second chance with a second set of tablets (The Ten Commandments). Since then, every year during this time we have a special potential to return to who we really are in the land of our soul.

From the day when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree, good and evil became entrenched within all of us, and often this evil succeeds in disguising its ugly face behind a mask of goodness. Now during Elul, we have a heightened ability to distinguish between good and evil, and can more easily return to recover our inherent good.



This concept is encapsulated by King Solomon by the following statement, "He who found a woman found a great good, and obtained *רַצוֹן/ratzon* (favor) from Hashem" (*Mishley 18:22*). In this month, the astrological sign of Virgo – the only woman in the zodiac– we have the special opportunity to get in touch with our greatest good, at this time of Hashem's favor (*רַצוֹן/ratzon*), ...

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## Welcome to the Rosens: Our New Dorm Parents!

We welcome former B'erot student, Liba Rosen (Katz) and her husband Yoel, who will be the new dorm parents this upcoming year at Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin! Originally from New Haven, Liba was a student at B'erot in 2011 and has since lived in Jerusalem where she taught English and took her masters in creative writing. Yoel, grew up in Monsey and has been living in Israel on and off for about 10 years. He attended yeshiva at *Lev Aryeh* and *Mayanot*, served as a lone soldier in the Israeli army and has since been working and living in Jerusalem.

The Rosens have been married for almost two years and are now expecting their first child.

Liba is enthusiastic about giving back to the B'erot community that gave her so much when she was a student. She looks forward to offering guidance and counseling about post-seminary life: making *aliyah*, learning Hebrew, living in Israel, dating, marriage...etc. Liba's desire to return to B'erot and Bat Ayin and her wish to give extra support for the students throughout their time in B'erot adds to the overall atmosphere on campus.



Liba also looks forward to the possibility of teaching Jewish Creative Writing to interested students.

The Rosens are very excited to join the B'erot community this year and we appreciate having them on staff!

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## Rebbetzin's D'var Torah (cont'd from page 1)

...when His right hand is stretched forth to receive our repentance (B'nei Yissaschar, Elul 1).

The main ways of serving Hashem are through *yirah* – awe, and *ahava* – love. During the Divinely Favorable time of Elul, we emphasize 'Love,' while Tishrei opens with the 'Days of Awe.' Hashem in His mercy and kindness accepts our purification and holiness throughout the month of Elul and considers it as if we purified the entire past year (Toldot Aharon). Taking advantage of this time of Divine Favor gives us the chance to rectify our Torah, *tefilah* and other mitzvot, done halfheartedly during the past year, and raise them all up in complete holiness.

Just as Shabbat imparts blessings for the entire week, the month of Elul, prior to the renewal of the year, includes all the spiritual abundance for the upcoming year. Therefore, it is *et ratzon*. In order for the goodwill to be mutual, we need to get in touch with our higher will during the month of Elul. When we

elevate our will, we can devote ourselves totally to Hashem as implied by the initials of the month of Elul, *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li* – "I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me..." (Song of Songs 6:3). This is the opportune time to dedicate our "I" – ego to become "for my beloved" – Hashem (S'fat Emet, *Parashat Vayelech* year 5634).

Purifying ourselves during Elul enables us to crown Hashem as King over all of our limbs on Rosh Hashana, and brings us to complete unity with Hashem on Yom Kippur. This process of return is alluded to in the following verse from the Rosh Hashana prayer, *"שאו שערים ראשיכם ושאו פתחי עולם ויבא מלך הכבוד"* - "Lift up the gates of your heads, O gates, lift up the everlasting openings; so the King of glory may enter" (*Tehillim* 24:9).

The *שערים* /*she'arim* – gates allude to the month of Elul, the gate of the year. Rather than being the last month of the previous year, Elul is actually the beginning and the gate of the new year. Therefore, it states,

"Lift up the gates of *ראשיכם* your heads (beginnings)," meaning lift up the month of Elul – the gate of the year through removing evil by means of doing good. This purification enables us to enter Rosh Hashana in total coronation of Hashem as the King of our entire being. While the "gates" are external, the "openings" are more internal, they allude to the Ten Days of Repentance about which it states, "Seek Hashem while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (*Yeshu'ahu* 55:6). By means of working on ourselves during this period of Divine Favor, we can remove any blocks so that the "King of glory, [Hashem] may enter" into our entire being on Yom Kippur (*Netivot Shalom, Devarim* p 247).

I look forward to a loving awesome semester with the students of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin experiencing Divine Favor and returning to the land of our soul.

May Hashem bless you all with a favorable and awesome year of both spiritual and physical abundance!

## The Student Experience: From Namibia to Bat Ayin!

My name is Eliraz Hadar and I am originally from Namibia, which is adjacent to South Africa.

Namibia, for many decades hosted a vibrant and very active Jewish community. Over the years, the Jewish community has unfortunately dwindled, leaving a historical synagogue, today barely attended.

Three years ago, something in me began to stir. My Jewish soul started yearning for something greater. I sold my business and left my entire comfortable life behind, which I had spent years building with great strain, to follow the yearning of my heart.

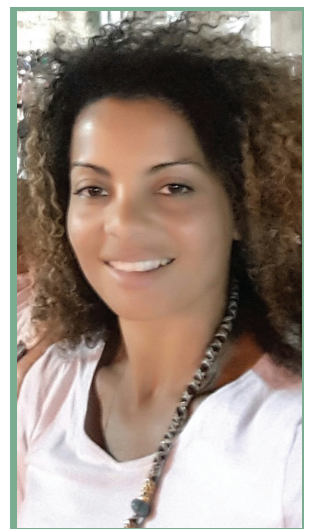
At the time I was Executive Director to the First Lady's Trust, owned a successful business, which made skin care products and owned an

internationally acclaimed beauty school. In addition, I worked part-time consulting for the Polytechnic of Namibia & developing the Innovation Programs for the newly established innovation center acting as director on various high profile organizations.

*So how does a tribal African girl with a Jewish background end up in Bat Ayin, Israel?*

My desire for Israel started burning in my heart and from then on, I had set my next goal in life, to go to Israel and learn. At the time, I did not know how it would be possible, financially, physically and emotionally.

I went on-line and the only place that resonated with me was B'erot Bat Ayin, which offered classes connected to nature, creativity and Torah in a different way than I had ever heard before. The location in the Judean hills also sounded very exotic to me. I was fascinated and intrigued...



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## The Cutlers: Friends, Supporters, Students

When David Cutler entered the B'erot office for the first time, I was expecting the stereotypical CPA wearing a suit and tie. Imagine my surprise, when a man walked in wearing a tie-dye shirt, shorts, a long beard, a ponytail, and a warm and friendly smile. I realized at that moment, that not only was this a very generous, intelligent and kind person, but also innovative!

David's successful accounting firm, based in Tucson, Arizona, testifies that he is at the top of his field. Atypical of most accounting firms, David offers a personal touch and values long-term connections with his clients. He believes these in-depth relationships allow him to be most attentive to the unique situation of each client. This personal approach has been well received, evidenced by his continuously expanding clientele, which has grown to over 500 in 30 years. It is a pleasant surprise to see a businessman that has found a way to successfully employ his business savvy skills, while remaining true to his colorful and interesting personality. This is much like B'erot, which delivers authentic and deep Torah teachings, while allowing our students to stay true to themselves and express their own creative and colorful aspects.

David's sincere commitment to Torah is evident from his extensive donations to supporting the local Jewish community. His support has included bringing a rabbi into the local day school so children could receive a Jewish education, contributing to the Chabad Tuition fund that allows the youth of Tucson to attend yeshivot, commissioning a Torah scroll, assisting many couples with their weddings, organizing minyanim and sponsoring the Bais Yael Kiruv shul.

The Cutlers' connection to Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, spanning over a decade, began when David's niece, Shalva Cutler, a daughter of David's twin brother, was a full time student. Shalva's parents, Danny & Gayle were so happy with what Shalva gained at B'erot, they hosted several fundraising speaking events with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha. When David was introduced to B'erot through his brother, he was so enthralled with its holistic vision that he arranged for his first wife Felicia (Yael Faige bat Chaim) to join us as a short-term student. She too was an avid lover of nature and gardening. After Yael Faige's passing, David began to support B'erot Bat Ayin in her memory by enhancing the B'erot gardens and grounds.

This past year Miri joined us as a student and flourished in the environment of B'erot. It was a privilege to host Miri & David's engagement party on the grounds of B'erot, which David had so generously contributed in beautifying. It was also an honor to witness their marriage at the Dead Sea last spring.

It's important to both David and Miri to support their community and local charities. Years ago, when a local food bank struggled to provide fresh produce and eggs to the homeless, David founded The Felicia Ann Cutler Farm in Tucson, Arizona to honor his late wife's legacy. This four-acre farm dedicates hundreds of pounds of fruits and vegetables to a soup kitchen along with fresh chicken and eggs. Their goal is to continue to expand by tilling land in other parts of Tucson, growing more food and helping more people. The Foundation has fed hundreds of homeless and low-income people and families in Tucson.

David & Miri's commitment to providing healthy produce as well as Torah education for others is right in alignment with B'erot Bat Ayin's vision of combining Torah learning with gardening! Over the past year, we have been able to make significant improvements in the living quarters of our students due to the generosity of the Cutlers. In the near future, we plan to build a new dorm with the help of matching funds received from the Cutlers. We are grateful for their ongoing support and wish them much *hatzlacha* on their *aliyah*!



David and Miri at their wonderful wedding



One of B'erot's renovated caravans



Rebbetzin and Miri at the Ancient Synagogue of Ein Gedi at the Dead Sea

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## *The Student Experience* (cont'd from page 2)

Nevertheless, I did not have the faintest idea of how I would ever make it to a place like that, so I shelved the idea, but kept it very close by.

A few months later, our weekly newsletter invited our congregation to a unique sounding lecture with Rabbi Daniel Kohn, the community Rav of Bat Ayin. When I heard him speak, I felt inspired by his words and connected on a deep level to what he was teaching. I also saw this as *Hashgacha Pratit* (Divine Supervision) that right in front of me, was someone connected to the midrasha, which I had kept so close in my mind even though it seemed so far away at the time.

As soon as I could possibly make it happen, I left my exciting job in the Innovation Department for the Namibian Business Institute, and departed for Israel to enroll in Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin.

Bat Ayin is unlike any other place in Israel. This place gives you the space to discover yourself and the deepest Torah teachings. One thing to keep in mind that when you come, make sure that you either have the capacity to stay longer than you expected, possibly indefinitely or at least plan that one day you will return. Right now, I am going through this feeling and extending my stay to appease the yearning of my heart.

## Engagements

Aurianna Weiss  
Michal Shapiro  
Joy Chava Young  
Ahuva Moss  
Eliraz Hadar  
Rafaela Ades Carnevale

## Weddings

Erika Orli (Shechter) & Avi Mandel  
Sara (Covey) & Yosef Lopez  
Nili (Salem) & Keith Flaks B'Simcha  
Ines (Cindra) & Jeffrey Levin  
Benita (Kursan) & Stanley Zive  
Ziesel Miriam (Finver) & Nevo Rahimi  
Chana Sarah (Marcus) & Yoseph Tugenberg  
Eliana (Campbell) & Shaul Royzen  
Rachel (Feldman) & Yitzhak Glasman  
Esti (Hartwig) & Yaniv Levi  
Miri (Ansley) & David Cutler  
Bracha (Lappen) & Dmitriy Hanuka  
Hannah (Jacobs) & Adriel Bienn  
Ariella (Weiss) & Yaakov Barron  
Sara (Beihler) & Benyamin Elon  
Vanessa Devorah (Mattes) & Eliyahu Zack

## Births

Yael (Trufsau) Beneviste  
Chana (Gavric) Wax  
Miriam Leah (Droz) Gamliel  
Dahlia (Purim) Friedman  
Chaviva Urit-Storchan  
Shoshana (Diggs) Beck  
Yehudit Batya (Weinberger) Shrager  
Rina (Barkai) Lerman  
Dena (Genuth) Caras  
Chaya (Goodman) Kurtz  
Shaina Nerill  
Leah Raub-Gottlieb  
Shayna Rehberg

## Aliyah

Aliza Neuriman  
Chava Sigala

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open up your heart and hand,  
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Tzaddik Foundation  
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#### **3. Donation through our Website (credit card or paypal) [www.berotbatayin.org/donate/](http://www.berotbatayin.org/donate/)**

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