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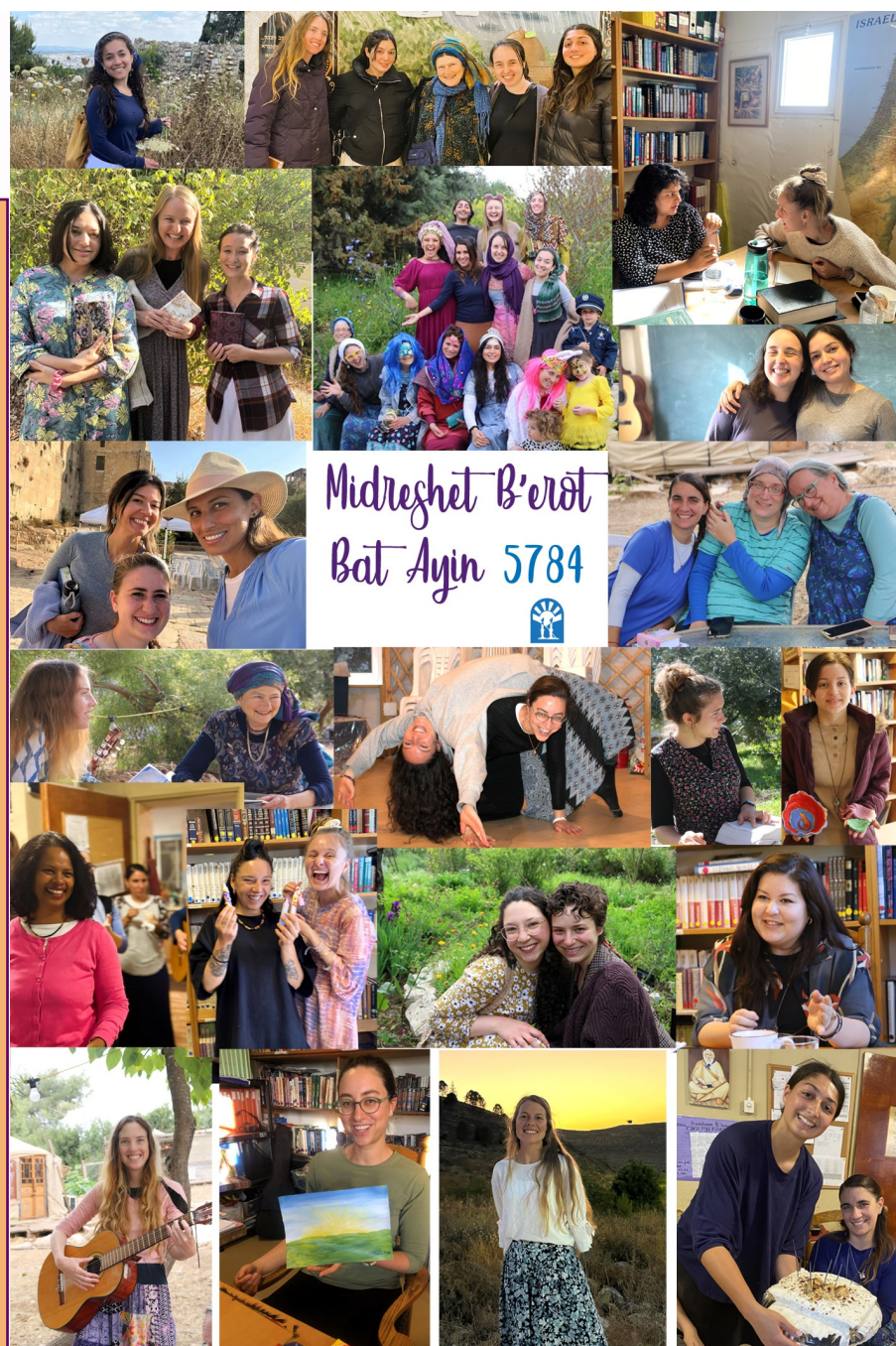
Shamayim Gabai
Sarah Haskell

Weddings

Liora Leah Popper
Yedida Miriam Levy
Ruchama Simcha ezgaui
Ruchama Peretz

Births

Naama Windmonte, twin sons
Leah Diskin, son



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for Women on the Land!

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Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin

Holistic Torah for Women on the Land

Elul 5784 / 2024



What is the Connection between our Current War and Rosh Hashana?

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

The redemption process is compared to the decomposition of a seed that allows it to sprout into a new plant. The war that came as a shocking blow began a new stage of this disintegration process. The week following the onset of the war, B'erot Bat Ayin carried out our *From Farm to Table* Week, with students and volunteers as scheduled. Thank G-d we were able to keep it going, preparing our soil and sowing the winter crop. As the majority of Israelis finally began to wake up to the fact that there is no political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that certainly continued land concessions will never bring lasting peace, we must turn to the Torah for guidance.

I had recently taught how the key to understanding the Middle Eastern conflict is found in the Rosh Hashana Torah reading (*Bereishit* 21:9-13). When Sarah saw the way Yishmael was 'playing' with Yitzchak, she proclaimed: "Drive out this handmaid and her son, for the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak" (*Bereishit* 21:9). What drove Sarah to make such a harsh

claim to expel Hagar and Yishmael? Be'er Mayim Chayim explains that he was 'playing' – meaning Yishmael was making himself a copy of holiness to play the role of Yitzchak. According to Malbim at Yitzchak's weaning party, Sarah saw Yishmael mocking saying, "Only I am Avraham's son since Sarah got pregnant with Yitzchak by Avimelech." Rashi proves how the word *מַצַּחֵק* / *metzachek* – 'playing' or 'mocking' can also refer to adultery, idol worship, and murder. Then why is the matter of inheritance so important to Sarah? Why wasn't she concerned that Yishmael's other evil traits would influence

"Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice! for in Yitzchak, your seed will be called"

Yitzchak? From Sarah's reply, "For the son of this handmaid shall not inherit with my son" - we learn that Yishmael would fight with Yitzchak about the inheritance, saying, "I am the firstborn and will, therefore, take a double portion." They would go out to the field, and he would take his bow and shoot arrows at Yitzchak, and then say: "I am just playing" (Rashi, *Bereishit* 21:10). The Maharal explains that Sarah's main concern was that the dispute over the inheritance would lead to murder.



Since the immigration of European Jews to Israel increased in the 1880s and on, the descendants of Yishmael have repeatedly tried to murder the descendants of Yitzchak and make Israel and the world *Judenrein*. Although Yitzchak Rabin offered 90% of Yehuda and Shomron during the Oslo Accords in 1993, Arafat, thank G-d, refused. Why do the Arabs continually reject land for peace and any two-state solution? It is because they still believe Yishmael's false claim to be Avraham's true heir. They refuse to accept Israeli land concession, claiming "Why should you give us what is ours," we will claim our own heritage and take it by force." Considering themselves the true heir and Israel the intruder, any Israeli offer to give them their own state is utterly insulting. For the sake of their imagined birthright, they will continue to try murdering and mutilating Jewish men, women, and children because the life of any Jew is a threat to their inheritance claim, as even a 1-day-old baby is a potential heir.

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Goldi Mendelovitz – Engaging with the Essence of Existence



Goldi's name fits her perfectly. She is a bright golden energy of light, joy, and compassion. Here is the story of how she came to Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin.

My name is Goldi Mendelovitz, and I'm from Brooklyn. I'm 24 years old, and I grew up religious. I've always had this far-off idea that in some other lifetime, I'm an artsy, farmland, creative, imperfect, connected to the Earth person, yet, the confines of my life didn't allow me to entertain that reality. My life was in a box, in a system. I never thought that I would be able to live a different life. What I lived was all I knew. It's not a bad lifestyle, everything is meant to be, and I'm just moving through my life as I heal and grow. For most of my life, I was in that box, and it was scary to leave, but it was miserable to stay inside, yet every now and then, my soul would give me glimpses of a different life.

A few years ago, I had a crisis (which also means spiritual awakening in Korean). At that point, I really began a healing journey. When I woke up emotionally, I started working through a deep healing journey, getting to know my innermost core self and who I am – my *Tzelem Elokim*. I discovered that my spiritual roots are way deeper than I could ever have imagined. I've been trudging along the path, doing the work, holding on for my dear life, and working hard. At times it's been arduous, painful, messy, dark, scary, lonely, and isolating. I was in a very, very dark place. I was really struggling

to stay above water and grappling with existential loneliness. I didn't feel I had a place, a sense of belonging on this Earth, in my home, hometown, community, or anywhere in the world, so I moved across the country from New York to LA to find myself and to do more healing.

The dark period that I went through had its gifts and lessons that pushed buttons and triggers in me so that I could learn, grow, and heal. And then, when a close friend sent me B'erot's newsletter, it was like a door opened. When I read it, I felt my flagging spirits elevate and I was back in that dream life that I never

As I'm working the land, I'm working the interior landscape

knew, that was never familiar to me, yet my soul was familiar with it. A life of 'artsiness,' earthiness, and imperfection. A life of light, growth, friendship, community, love, and interconnectedness with the Hashem, who is not just in the sky, but all around us, that hugs us with color and pure light. I felt light physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and I thought, "Oh, but this is not me, this is not my lifestyle, I didn't think it could pertain to me. "I'm not worthy or deserving enough" to live such a life. But I spoke to my close friend and told her how the newsletter really uplifted my spirits. I began looking into the classes and programs at B'erot Bat Ayin and started contemplating, could this reality be mine? For weeks I contemplated; Do I go? How do I go? When can I go? Will I be able to go? What would it actually be like if I go? How will I make friends? What will I do with the life I leave behind? It was a struggle working through all those thoughts to get here. It was

tough, but one by one I resolved all of those thoughts, and in short, I made it to Israel!

During this journey, I've met parts of myself that I've neglected and abandoned for so long. I have struggled so much with my self-worth and my belonging, that I have needed to engage directly with my existentialism. "Do I have a place on this Earth?" "Do I belong here?" "Am I worthy enough?" God doesn't give me a break in this lifetime. It's a continued uphill battle. Now and then, I get to pause and get snapshots of existence, of life settling over me and seeing it's all okay. It's all meant to be. I'm traveling in the right direction and learning to see the opportunities for love. It's getting easier as the load is getting lighter. I don't regret a moment of these past nine months. I'm walking uphill to meet my Creator. I'm learning that God doesn't want me to settle or to compromise my self-worth. God wants me to meet Him, where I can stand to my fullest height, tall and brave. That's where I am now. The beautiful place I'm in, in motion, physically, I am climbing uphill and doing the work. I know God wants me to become my fullest self, to access my courage, strength, bravery, and tenacity. I know He believes I can do it.

So that's what I'm doing here at Bat Ayin. I'm working the land, and I'm working the interior landscape of me within. As I work with the dirt and the soil, I'm working with the dirt and soil within. I'm sprouting the seed of growth within me, and I'm growing up all the parts of me that were wounded, neglected, abandoned, and rejected. I'm healing through the light, through the spirit of Torah, through the Matriarchs, through having a safe space to fall apart, like a seed rots in the soil to grow a beautiful bloom.

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That's exactly what I've been doing here. I've let myself fall apart in the Mishkan that I've created in my room. In the Mishkan, there's only light. I know that I'm here to bear more light. That means excavating the dirt within, clearing the way. I CAN be a vessel containing light and pouring it into the world. It's not easy. It's not easy living with people, with souls that have come down into this world, and gone through their own traumas. We press each other's buttons, and it's painful but the pain demands to be felt. Pain demands us to look within and see where we can grow. A diamond can only be found in the dust. Diamonds don't just grow on the trees for us to pick. All valuable

metals must undergo intense heat and pressure to be molded into the beautiful jewel that will adorn that precious bride. And God and I are bride and groom. I can't capture my whole life here at B'erot Bat Ayin in just the written word, but I want to paint a glimmer of a snapshot. Friday night Shabbat davening, being part of something greater than myself, a place where we get to sing the ethereal Carlebach melodies. We dress in all white, we dance on our feet. We come together in sisterhood. We hold each other up when we forget the song in our own hearts, and we sing it back to others when they forget. I love going to Shabbat meals at the homes of families in the community because I get to pick and choose which pieces I'd like to adopt and cultivate in myself – in my internal family. This has been such an important part of my journey, the community I'm in, the people I meet, the souls I embrace, the food I cook, the art I create, the poems I write, the people I connect with, the love I love, and

the light I spread. I've kept forging on, and not by my own strength. I have a village of people to hold me, adopted aunts, uncles, mothers, fathers, spiritual sisters, grandmothers, nature, and life, breathing into me daily. I get to learn Torah that I was never, ever exposed to before, like Rav Kook who tells us to be a light unto the nations.

In the community I grew up in, we stay hidden. We don't mingle. We don't go out. Because "They're out to get us." Thus, it's completely new to me that I am meant to be a light to the nations and spread my light!

I am learning Rabbi Nachman and following Rabbi Natan's creative flow of Emuna. I really get to be that earthy girl that my soul was longing and yearning to be! I get to learn herbology! And to be so blessed to live in the land where all these herbs grow! I get to use all my creativity and talents. It's a blessing to cook for my friends. I get to love and charm and be charmed. I get to shine. I'm getting to know life one day at a time.





At Na'ama Miriam Widmonte's Twin Brit

Continued from page 1.

Yishmael's descendants have many merits in their favor, they believe in One G-d whom they pray to fervently and frequently. Due to their merit of circumcision, they have been granted temporary control over the Holy Land for 1,300 years when it was empty of anything, like their circumcision which is empty and imperfect. They will prevent the children of Israel from returning to their place until the reward for the merit of the children of Yishmael reaches completion (*Zohar, Shemot 32a*). Remarkably, the Holy Land has been under Muslim rule between the 7th and the 20th century!

The merit of circumcision is shared by Israeli Jews to an even greater completion: We perform it on the 8th day as prescribed in the Torah, and we remove both the inner and the outer foreskin.

Yet many Arab leaders refuse to recognize the Israeli Jews as descendants of Avraham, since many of us, unfortunately, do not fulfill all the mitzvot Hashem commanded Avraham. Some Arabs claim that we are a bunch of Europeans polluting the Middle East with Western values. The current war is clearly upon us to purify us from our secularism and squish us until

we turn to G-d with all our hearts. Indeed, many secular soldiers have requested tzitzit, realizing its protective power.

Living in the relative Safe Haven of B'erot of Bat Ayin, our sacred soldier duty is to learn Torah and keep the mitzvot with even greater fervor, overcoming fear by strengthening our emunah in Hashem, and intensifying our prayers. As Rabbi Eliezer predicted during times of yore: "Why is he called Yishmael? In the future, Hashem will heed the prayers of the Jews who will be in terrible pain and anguish because of what the Yishmaelites will do in the Land at the end of days" (*Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer 31*).

No matter how low we have fallen, we must be comforted knowing that as the direct descendants of Yitzchak, son of both Avraham and Sarah, we are the true heirs of the Land of Israel. This claim is repeated over and over in the Torah. For example: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and between your seed after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant, to be to you a G-d and to your seed after you. I will give you and your seed after you the land of your sojourning, the entire land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be to them for a G-d" (*Bereishit 17:7-8*).

Yet, Avraham had a problem, he loved Yishmael too dearly, and when he received the promise of begetting a son with Sarah, in conjunction with the promise of the inheritance of the Holy Land specifically for her son, Avraham

prayed for Yishmael: "If only Yishmael will live before You!" (*Bereishit 17:18*). Since Hashem had promised him at first, that a heir would be born of his own body, and the heir was to be one person, Avraham thought that this referred to Yishmael. Now that he was told that he would beget a child from Sarah and that this child was to be the heir, he feared lest Yishmael die (*Ramban, Bereishit 17:18*). Later, when Sarah demanded to expel Yishmael, the Torah relates that "the matter greatly distressed Avraham" (*Bereishit 21:11*). If anyone still questions who is the true heir of the Promised Land, Hashem removes all doubt by clearly validating Sarah's claim: "Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her voice! for in Yitzchak, your seed will be called" (*Bereishit 21:12*). Only after hearing this, did Avraham concede to send away Yishmael.

The divergent viewpoints in Israel, regarding whether to negotiate with Chamash or to eliminate them, are echoes of Avraham and Sarah's relationship with Yishmael respectively. While Avraham related to Yishmael as "His son" (*Bereishit 21:11*), Sarah called him "the son of the maid-servant" (*Ibid. 10*). Yet since Avraham is inferior to Sarah in prophecy (*Rashi, Bereishit 21:12*), the Voice of Sarah becomes stronger and clearer as we approach the final redemption. The more we heed the prophetic Voice of Sarah, and strengthen our emunah, unity, Torah learning, and mitzvah observance, the closer we become to harvesting the final fruit of redemption!



Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin Unveils New Bomb Shelter

With great pleasure and gratitude to Hashem and our supporters we announce that Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin has celebrated the successful completion of our new, spacious bomb shelter, marking a significant milestone in our commitment to ensuring our students and staff's safety and well-being. This achievement was the culmination of a dedicated fundraising campaign led by Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum and the logistical undertakings of Rav Mechael and Meir Siegelbaum, with the help of B'erot dorm father Moshe Rozenbaum. Together, their collective efforts and determination successfully obtained the bomb shelter for Midreshet B'erot during the critical stages of the October 7th war.



Preparing the Grounds

For the students and staff of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, the new bomb shelter is more than just a structural addition to the campus; it is a symbol of security and stability during unpredictable times. Raising the funds needed for this critical project was challenging, involving countless hours of effort and a deep sense of shared purpose among our supporters. The fundraising campaign, launched to create a safe haven amidst the uncertainties of the region, quickly gained momentum. It was heartwarming how the donations poured in from friends, supporters, alumnae, and online students, each contribution

representing a gesture of solidarity and a commitment to the safety of the community of Midreshet B'erot. The campaign was not just about financial support; it was a rallying cry for unity, a collective promise to stand together in the face of adversity.



As the project moved from concept to reality, anticipation grew among our students. The shelter boasts ample space and modern amenities including a functional bathroom and shower. The shelter's placement is adjacent to the main Beit Midrash and across from our backyard garden and yurt. The completion of the challenging logistics of transplanting the shelter on our campus less than two weeks after the onset of the war was met with overwhelming relief and joy.



The Chanukat Habayit ceremony was a deeply emotional occasion. The event was filled with gratitude and songs of praise as everyone reflected on the journey of the campaign and the significance of the new shelter. There were heartfelt words of thanks for everyone who contributed, from the smallest donations to the largest, each playing a crucial role in turning this vision into reality.

For our students, the new shelter is a beacon of reassurance, allowing them to pursue their studies and engage in campus life with greater peace of mind. For the staff, it represents a renewed commitment to creating a secure and nurturing environment where learning and growth can flourish without a shadow of uncertainty. The successful completion of this project is more than a triumph of engineering and fundraising; it is a profound affirmation of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin's resilience and dedication. It stands as a powerful symbol of what can be achieved when people come together with a shared sense of hope and purpose.



As Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin looks to the future, the new bomb shelter will continue to serve as a cornerstone of safety and security on campus. Your support has played a significant role in making this dream a reality, and we are immensely grateful for your continued partnership. We are in the process of creating a beautiful, landscaped garden and terrace to surround the new addition to our campus. It's nearly complete, and with your continued support, please G-d our bomb shelter will be integrated into our serene and peaceful campus on the Judean Hills. This building is a perpetual reminder of the strength found in unity and the unwavering spirit that drives the Midrasha community forward.