



To my Dearest Fellow Alumni,

As this year's Shana Alef girls move into their houses, begin their classes, and find their friends, all of your faces continuously pop into my head. I can hear Kaley Ames' roaring laugh, and Suzanne's newest epiphany being proclaimed in the office. With the memories of both past years in mind, I am now becoming a part of year three, and it's such a wonderful beginning. Girls, you would be proud. We have another batch of strong, truth-seeking, quirky characters joining our Machon Maayan family. But that's the point. You are all still in this family. So I want to tell you that the Alumni Network of Machon Maayan has officially begun. I'm so excited to get this going, mostly because it gives me a great excuse to talk to you all, but also because I don't think our love and connection to Machon Maayan should be affected by distance.

As for me, I can't stop thanking Hashem. I still don't believe that I'm actually getting married, it's the craziest feeling to know that I'm done searching. Eli is a total gift from Hashem, and I hope you all feel as clear and in love as I do when you meet your Zivug.

With Rosh Hashana around the corner, I want to share a bit of sweetness. We have many different ways of relating to Hashem, but this time of year we emphasize His role as our King. This usually evokes fear. The thought of listing every mistake we've made before a royal king sounds like inevitable doom. But in Judaism, the King has the power to override law. That means Hashem loves us enough to look at our individual situations, and make a decision, beyond the law. Instead of seeing your own failure in Hashem's kingship, see your unique relationship with Hashem, see hope.

I am so grateful that I get to see these new girls begin this wonderfully intense process, and I think that's the key to finding my "Elul Mindset." Think about who you are now... you're priorities, you're friends, your decisions, you're reality! And think about how you've grown and evolved since our Rosh Hashanah together at Machon Maayan. What a Bracha to be able to change, and what an honor to have such instant inspiration at our fingertips. I hope the Chagim are uplifting, and your davening is everything you need it to be. We all miss you, and can't wait to see you back in Eretz Yisrael!

Shana Tovah!

*Leah Ciner*

## A Look at Teshuva by Rav K

[Based on an article by Rav Aviner]

It says in the Talmud that 'Teshuva precedes the world.' This statement is not chronological, but causal. In other words, Teshuva enables the world to exist and is the foundation of our lives. The world is dynamic, everything is in motion; there is constant activity as the world progresses in an unceasing upward process of self perfection.

The world was purposely created in an imperfect state, so that it could be enhanced and perfected. This process of improvement is the essence of Teshuva, which is not only the transformation of evil to good, but also the progression from good to better. There does not exist a person whom is a Tzaddik in this world who only does good and never sins. Even in the absence of concrete sins, we are constantly required to elevate ourselves from one level to the next.

Superficially, Teshuva can be viewed as a negative process: you sinned, you do Teshuva. Better yet, don't sin and you won't have to do Teshuva. This is not the correct perspective. Teshuva is a priori, not de facto. It is a positive, dynamic, divine drive for improvement, not merely a desirable action taken in order to reverse an undesirable one. Just as an infant has an unconscious drive for growth- just as every blade of grass has 'an angel telling it to grow' - so, too, there are inner forces that drive mankind in general, and Am Yisrael in particular, to improve. Thus, the world is constantly changing, improving, and striving toward perfection. The sages tell us that 'Torah scholars have no rest in this world nor in the World to Come, as it is written: 'They shall proceed from strength to strength.' Tranquility comes not from rest, but from unceasing progression from strength to strength. This is the true attainment of peace and joy.

We have been blessed with both physical and spiritual capabilities for growth. This is the power of Teshuva, the power that builds the universe and imbues it with meaning. Wishing everyone a year of health, happiness, and success.

May we all continue to go from strength to strength and achieve all that we set out to do and merit true Simcha and meaning in our lives.

### Alumni Mazel Tovs/ Machon Maayan News

- ~ Debbie Katz ('06-'07)  
made Aliyah in July
- ~ Leah Ciner ('06-'07) got  
engaged to Eli Veffter in July
- ~ Layah Rosenzweig ('07-'08)  
made Aliyah in September
- ~ Welcome to Rav Daniel Hartstein,  
Machon Maayan's  
new Executive Director

### OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2 - Shaina Rubinstein
- 3 - Anna Stoll
- 15 - Jenna Grunfeld
- 19 - Sara Gurza
- 21 - Dani Beckerman
- 22 - Sarah Kramer
- Shelly Silverstein
- 27 - Rebecca Reich

## Born Again by Rav Ben Tzion

"זה היום תחילת מעשיך זכרון ליום ראשון" - *Rosh Hashana* is the day Man was created, the sixth day of creation. As such, it is imperative that we embrace this day as an opportunity to become like Adam, a בריאה חדשה - a new creation. We stand alone on *Rosh Hashana* - like Adam who was created alone - and assess and acknowledge that we, as individuals, have a unique role, contribution, and purpose in this world. Through self-introspection and honesty, we use this time of the year to improve and renew the "I", and if done correctly, we are obligated to proclaim like Adam, בשבלי נברא העולם - the world was created for me! Man, however, is not alone in his quest for renewal. At the very moment that man is recreated, G-d's Kingdom is renewed - "כי אין מלך בלא עם" - there is no King without a Nation. The individuals of Israel come together in unison to accept the dominion of G-d. We blast the *shofar* to coronate our new King and we gather by a pool of water during *Tashlich* to anoint *Hashem* as the monarch of our Nation as the *Gemara* says

ת"ר: אין מושחים את המלכים את המלכים אלא על המעיין, כדי שתמשך מלכותם (תלמוד בבלי מסכת הרוית דף יב עמוד א)

"We anoint Kings only by a spring so as to symbolize that their monarchy will endure."

These days are truly Days of Awe! What an awesome opportunity we have to strengthen ourselves as individuals and to play a role in uniting our people by inaugurating *Hashem*, once again, as our Master! It is specifically during this period of reflection that we in *Machon Maayan* remember your unique personalities and grow nostalgic as we contemplate the profound individual contributions you made during your year at *Machon Maayan*. May you continue to develop these strengths in our dream of uniting the Jewish People in its love for *Hashem*, the *Torah*, and the Land of Israel.

## Shmittah Year or Not? by Meryl-Lee

This year we had the huge privilege to observe shmittah. There is a special Mitzvah that is carried out every seven years, immediately upon the completion of the shmittah year. This Mitzvah of Hakhel is a ceremony, in which the King if Israel gathered all of the Jewish people in Jerusalem and read certain sections of Sefer

D'varim. Imagine the scene. Thousands of men, woman and children who were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot were addressed by the King to hear words of Torah. Rav Hutner explains, that this awesome event was a reenactment of the giving of the Torah. Every seven years Hakhel reaffirmed our commitment to Torah.

Rabbi Yissacher Frand asks a wonderful question. He wonders why Hakhel was done specifically after a shmittah year. We were an agricultural society. Shmittah gave us a break from work and time to immerse in Torah study. During shmittah, registration in Yeshivot sky rocketed. New women's seminaries and men's yeshivot sprung up everywhere. Did we really need an affirmation of the centrality of Torah after our spiritual high of a year saturated in Torah? Rabbi Frand says that is precisely when we needed Hakhel.

We can never be complacent and say, "I did it! I had my year of Torah study. Now it is time to get back to work." No! Precisely at the conclusion of the year of Torah study we declared that it was not the end of our Learning. We attended Hakhel and pronounced that we continue to thirst for Torah.

May we all be blessed with a year filled with brachot for the insight to recognize Hashem's hand in every aspect of our lives. May we always continue to find our place of Torah even in a non-shmittah year!

## WHERE IS SHE NOW? ALUMNA OF THE MONTH:

### HANNA SORKIN

**Where are you these days and what are you studying?** After spending this past summer as an advisor on NCSY's TJJ along with three other Machon Maayan alumnae, I began my junior at Stern college, studying speech Pathology and Audiology. I chose it because it was kind of following me around for 4 years... whenever I would open a magazine or look up at a billboard, I would see a picture of a little baby with a cleft palate, which is the target speech therapy population. It took a while, but I finally decided that this creepy recurrence was G-d trying to tell me something - whether that's true or not, that's the way I decided to interpret it. I'm really enjoying my classes, though I do feel a bit like I'm in medical school because of all of the anatomy and biology that's involved. At the end of the day I feel like I'm doing something fulfilling with my education and career, and also leaving enough time for my future family, children, etc.

**What's the one thing you miss most about Machon Maayan?** Being completely surrounded by Torah, Yidishkeit, holiness, and knowledgeable rabbis and teachers. I may go to Stern, but it's completely unlike being in Eretz Yisrael. I miss breathing and feeling Torah. I miss the constant inspiration, challenge, and encouragement from my rabbis. They provided an atmosphere of Kedusha which allowed me to strive for better Torah understanding, an appreciation for my religion, and an internal need to commit to observance. In America I sometimes feel like a hypocrite, because Torah and Halacha are easily and sadly compromised. I miss the clarity I had in Israel.

**Any words of wisdom for this year's Shana Alef?** GO TO RABBI MACHLIS' house for Shabbos, any meal, any time. JUST DO IT! Don't let your year pass by without visiting this Tzaddik's home. (Leah, explain to them who he is and why he's amazing.) I'm convinced he's a Gadol Hador. G-d willing, Mashiach will come today, and I'll get to meet all of you guys in Israel. If not, G-d forbid, then I'll be making Aliyah soon enough and be a speech therapist/Madricha at Machon Maayan for the rest of my life :)

