



1st Grade Siddur Party, January 24, 2016

**Koleinu**

Fall 2016

**קולנו**



**ROBERT M. BEREN ACADEMY**

# One Small Step for Man, One Giant Leap for the Community

**Rabbi Aharoni Carmel**  
**Head of School**

This past summer I attended Leadership: An Evolving Vision at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The week-long program entailed high-quality lectures with outstanding professionals in the field of education and many unique, profound and fascinating experiences.

On the second day, we traveled for about an hour outside of Boston to a place called Project Adventure which is an innovative, non-profit teaching organization and a respected leader in adventure-based experiential programming. At the heart of Project Adventure's mission is to produce life-changing outcomes by facilitating transformative group experiences. I found myself spending the day engaging in strategic team games while evaluating my and others' leadership and management style as well as problem-solving skills. Right before the end of the day, my group was standing in front of a very high rock climbing structure facing a clear though challenging task – climbing to the very top. Right away we became

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# Salute to SOCIAL STUDIES



High School students (l-r) Bracha Teigman, Dina Kirshner, Aileen Sar Shalom

The study of human society is a fascinating endeavor and many upper school students at RMBA relish the unique opportunity to analyze the psyche. Our Social Studies program has progressed over time thanks to our administration recognizing the value of providing a variety of appealing courses, favorable teacher to student ratios and an exceptional teaching staff leading to impassioned student learning.

Social Studies classes are richly diverse and include World History, US History, Current Affairs, Government, Economics, Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology. Students appreciate selecting from a variety of thought provoking and topical courses each semester. The classes themselves are dynamic and Leora Geralnik (Grade 11) shares, “My teacher Mr. Cell is energetic and engaging while offering a hands-on teaching experience. Learning goes beyond the book and I am taught how to apply concepts to my everyday life.”

Principal Raquel Cedano and her staff have dedicated a significant amount of time and effort into developing courses that will instill substantial knowledge and life skills while affording students a more global perspective with regards to academia. Mrs. Cedano adds, “**The growth of this program allows students to become involved global citizens who can knowingly speak about history and society, share their opinions and learn to appreciate differing views in a respectful and civil-minded manner.**”

RMBA instructors across the board are encouraged to create detailed syllabi and content for each class but allow leeway for discussion especially when topics or issues resonate deeply with

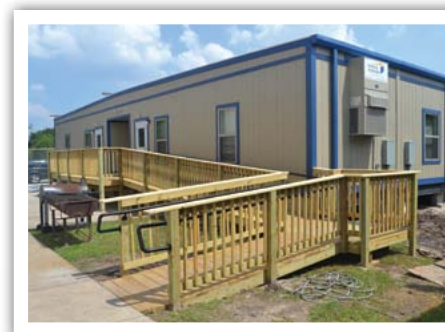
students. Teachers seize opportunities to involve students in passionate discussions that challenge their interests. Social Studies Teacher Ben Cell adds, “I like to engage students outside the realm of familiarity to bring a fresh perspective and exciting ideas to the forefront.”

Teaching Social Studies material during a presidential election cycle is especially stimulating with organic discussions and real time analysis of information. Current events connect to broader themes that tie into the syllabi making students and teachers active learners throughout the process. Social Studies teacher Peter Novick encourages his students to view history as a live subject and not merely a recitation of facts and shares, “**I want my students to be actively engaged with a deeper level of learning through participation.**”

The unique classroom atmosphere factor into our students’ continued successes. Smaller class sizes and combined grade levels create a tightknit dynamic. The social interconnectedness generates a distinct comfort level while RMBA’s strong emphasis on Jewish values lends itself to students being respectful towards one another making for a favorable learning environment.

**Over the past three years, nearly 80% of our graduating seniors were accepted to the first college program of their choice.** Our faculty strives to balance the quest for competitive college acceptance results with a rigorous academic approach in line with actual college classes. We proudly believe that our dual curriculum approach provides a clear advantage to our students by way of encouraging a higher level of critical thinking encompassing all subjects. ■

# Room to GROW



At the start of the school year, families noticed the sudden appearance of a large new building on our campus alongside the gymnasium. The administration is thrilled to share this new addition to RMBA that will provide six additional classrooms to house our flourishing lower school population.

Earlier this year, the board approved the purchase of a new building with classrooms serving our upper early childhood program. This includes two three year old classes, the pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes

## THE STEADY ENROLLMENT GROWTH SPEAKS TO THE INCREDIBLE VITALITY OF OUR SCHOOL AND THE VALUE FAMILIES PLACE ON THE IMPORTANT JEWISH EDUCATION WE OFFER.

and a music room. Kindergarten will benefit with a second room that will allow for students to receive customized instruction and assistance in smaller group settings during the day. The building delivers state of the art classrooms and restrooms with newly decorated spaces including new age appropriate furniture and manipulative learning tools.

The origin of this addition stems from the recent enrollment growth. Three years ago we had 267 enrolled students and now there are 330. Rabbi Carmel enthuses, “**The steady growth we have experienced these past few years speaks to the incredible vitality of our school and the value families place on**

**the important Jewish education we offer.** Once satisfied with the stability of our growth trend, we moved swiftly to procure and establish this new building enabling RMBA to provide a learning environment that could meet the needs of all our students.”

We currently offer two classes for EC 15, EC2, and EC3. In elementary school, in addition to offering Montessori and Traditional learning tracks, we now provide two 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade Judaics classes. By investing in additional classrooms and hiring additional staff, we are in a position to cap our classes to ensure we maintain optimal student to teacher ratios and ensure our students receive the best possible education in a comfortable and appropriate setting. These changes have greatly benefitted Early Childhood and Elementary School students and teachers alike. Lower School General Studies Principal Helene Lubel shares “It is thrilling to see RMBA continue to grow. As a Jewish Day School educator, it is my honor and privilege to

facilitate the education of our students in an environment that will allow each child to learn and grow. **Manageable class sizes are vital to ensure teachers can give each student the time and energy to help them succeed.**”

The purchase of the building in addition to numerous campus improvements including new roofing and air conditioning units, exterior painting and landscaping involved a significant amount of capital. **The board recognized the potential RMBA has to grow and believes in the need to invest responsibly to ensure the longevity and success of RMBA.** ■



**“WHEN A TEACHER HAS PASSION FOR SOMETHING, THE STUDENTS FEEL IT AND ARE MORE INVESTED.”**



Teachers Roza Gross and Colleen Bryant at the installation presentation ceremony on September 2, 2016

# Creating Judaic Beauty

**“From the first moment we knew that something special was going to happen.”** shares Elementary School Hebrew and Judaics teacher Roza Gross when discussing the Legacy Heritage sponsored Judaic Arts Conference at Camp Stone, Pennsylvania in 2015. Joined by Art Teacher Colleen Bryant, this marked the beginning of their year long journey to integrate Judaic and Art programming at RMBA.

Receiving a grant to create and implement a Judaic inspired art project, Roza and Colleen were tasked to oversee a committee of high school students that could create and execute the endeavor. They would use the knowledge and skills gained at the conference while working with acclaimed contemporary Judaic artist David Moss who would serve as their mentor to create engaging curriculum for our students.

The Judaic Art Initiative committee decided upon creating a large three-sided sculpture. It would symbolize our renewed commitment of collaborating Art and Judaics in exciting and innovative ways. Blessed with an abundance of outdoor space at RMBA, the students decided to take advantage and initiate annual outdoor art installations.

Since this was the start of something new, the theme focused on the book of Genesis. Roza and Colleen were inspired by artist Yaacov Agam’s work and specifically, a three-dimensional sculpture they experienced at Camp Stone. Using this as inspiration, they shared with the committee who were equally as motivated to recreate this design concept with a Genesis themed focus unique to RMBA. The Memorial Day Flood affected our community greatly and students saw a deep



Nava Teller, Shani Yanowitz, Chaya Gerlitz, Gali Hampel in front of one side of the installation

connection to Genesis. The first panel represents the seven days of creation. The second panel reflects the flood of *Noach* and the Memorial Day flood in our community. The third panel is inspirational and signifies rebuilding our community and the *Chesed* given and received following the flood.

Both Roza and Colleen felt the importance and need to better integrate Judaics and Art into their classroom instruction. Mrs. Bryant’s goal is to create **“a vibrant Judaic connection with our art curriculum to match our core values and school mission statement.** Exploring Judaic themes through art in a more modern and exploratory way have been a revelation for me,” shares Mrs. Bryant. “I feel an incredible amount of passion and it has reinvigorated the ideas behind my teaching.” Morah Gross is equally enthusiastic and believes her new method of teaching provides another avenue for children to absorb knowledge, even those who are not conventional learners. “I am able to teach biblical text in a more visual manner thereby reaching and connecting with all my students.”

RMBA was honored to have David Moss visit this year to share his incredible artwork with students and teachers, view student-made artwork influenced by his mentorship, provide guidance for using art to instruct in the classroom and collaborate on the creative process with the sculpture committee. The abstract ideas behind the sculpture were defined, but the imagery had yet to be finalized. Using Synectics, a six step process David designed to approach problems with creative solutions, the committee had a clearer vision for completing the mural illustrations. He reinvigorated the installation process and students and staff alike were enthralled by his energy and creativity.

Motivated by David’s approach to let a space speak for itself, Roza and Colleen noticed that the Lower School Gazebo had much potential. With seven interior panels, they were

motivated to create mini murals of Israel’s seven species of fruit. The project began during the week of Tu-B’Shvat and involved both Upper and Elementary school students. This will be an ongoing project and as each Jewish holiday approaches, students will paint relevant symbols on each exterior panel.

The entire project was deemed such a success that we were awarded a grant extension for a second year and will develop a newly inspired outdoor installation and outdoor classroom space. The administration has long recognized the incredible potential for synergy between Judaic Studies and Art programs. **The excitement generated from this collaboration has brought about a powerful and dynamic connection to Torah among our students** and we cannot wait to harness this energy during year two and beyond.

Both teachers have noticed the impact this collaboration has had on their students. Mrs. Bryant explains, “When a teacher has passion for something, the students feel it and are more invested. The Judaic themed projects incorporated into my curriculum allow students to feel successful regardless of their traditional artistic skills or Judaic knowledge”. Roza concludes, “This process encourages exploration of their own ideas without there being right or wrong answers. **Art can bring Judaic text alive for my students regardless of their ability and this is a powerful tool to have as an educator.**” ■

**“ART CAN BRING JUDAIC TEXT ALIVE FOR MY STUDENTS REGARDLESS OF THEIR ABILITY AND THIS IS A POWERFUL TOOL TO HAVE AS AN EDUCATOR.”**



Rena Schwartz painting one of the wood panels of the installation

# Where Credit is Due



Natalie Bublil (4th Grade)

In March, RMBA received a two-day accreditation visit from AdvancED, the world leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers in their pursuit of excellence. Every five years, an assessment is required to receive the distinction of accreditation and led by the detailed preparation of Principal Raquel Cedano, RMBA was ready for the challenge.

Accreditation allows for reflection of accomplishments and examination of potential achievements. The process involves education professionals visiting schools to support and assess their work. They conduct rigorous interviews with students, teachers, administrators and parents coupled with classroom observations to gather quantitative and qualitative data to base their findings.

Led by Dr. Franci Roberts, Head of School of The Rubicon School in The Woodlands, the accreditation team was impressed with our dedicated staff, students and sense of community that sets us apart. Using the ELEOT (Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool) evaluation, RMBA scored well above industry standards in every testable category and solidified our status as a quality learning institution while recognizing numerous positive attributes unique to RMBA.

They acknowledged that our parents and staff value independence, partnership, adaptability, integrity, vigor and community while strongly believing these character traits to be as important as the acquisition of knowledge. They agreed that the sense of purpose and caring for the community is part of the fabric of RMBA and that we exhibited exceptional commitment to ensuring the reinforcement of each student's educational experience. An example is the SPA (Student Personal Advisor)

program where Upper School students are assigned a teacher who supports the student academically, spiritually and emotionally with individualized attention.

They identified that we are committed to our beliefs, culture and community by strongly educating students in academics and character traits. Students are provided an abundance of support for opportunities to practice community values while applying and achieving in learning, thinking, and life skills.

Results of the ELEOT indicated both the quality of the learning experience and the positive attitude students exude towards learning. Students exhibit care and respect towards peers and teachers while teachers shared that same level of deference and concern for students with limitless patience for the academic and maturity levels present at any given time. Leadership, staff and parents are "committed to instilling academic values, Judaic values, and American values in every student of Robert M. Beren Academy."

As a concluding thought, Dr. Roberts shared, "Being part of an accreditation team is always rewarding for me. You truly have a family atmosphere which is very appealing, and I wish I could send my grandchildren here!"

**AdvancED shares research-based quality standards serving as a trusted partner to more than 32,000 public and private schools systems – enrolling more than 20 million students – across the United States and 70 countries.**

# Garnering a Legacy

"We didn't realize how strong the education is until we talked to families who moved here from other cities and their children needed extra help to catch up!" shares Jenelle and David Garner. **They firmly believe attending a Jewish Day School is integral to reinforcing Jewish values and traditions and the level of education at RMBA is exceeding their expectations.** This made signing a letter of intent for the Create a Legacy program an easy decision for the Garners.

Create a Legacy is jointly funded by the Houston Jewish Community Foundation and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in partnership with area synagogues, agencies and day schools. It is a two-year initiative that brings Houston's Jewish organizations together to ensure a dynamic and enriched future for the community by securing legacy gifts. During the first year, RMBA secured well above the 18 signed letters of intent needed to ensure a \$6,000 incentive participation gift. In year two we are once again seeking an additional 18 commitment letters. The program helps individuals and families form legacy gifts to provide permanent sources of support for specific Jewish causes they care about.

The strength of RMBA's secular and Judaic education appeals to the Garners and they see their children Yari (12th Grade), Akiva (10th Grade), Shira (7th Grade) and Shayna (5th Grade) thrive on a daily basis. "The school is a warm and loving place where the staff knows each child and how they learn best, what makes them happy and when they need extra attention. RMBA allows our children to pursue goals and paths without any limitation."

## Thank you to our RMBA Create a Legacy Donors

- Anonymous
- Joseph and Yvette Joy Blog
- Dena and Baruch Brody
- Elena and Barry Diner
- Howard and Beverly Feldman
- Jenelle and David Garner
- Tova and Pablo Geralnik
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- Harry E. Wilbanks

As of September 1, 2016

**If you would like to learn more about the Create a Legacy Program, contact the RMBA Development Director at 713-723-7170**



The Garner Family (l-r) Akiva, Shira, David, Shayna, Jenelle and Yari

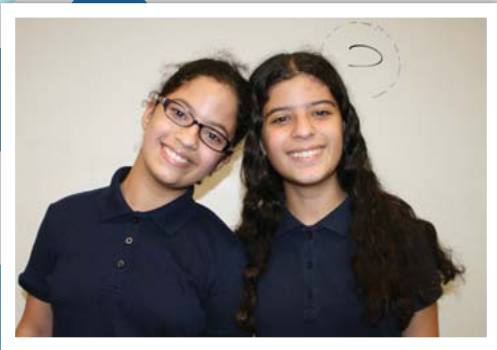
The Garners recognize the hard work and sacrifices individuals made to ensure that RMBA was created for the Jewish community. "When our last child graduates in 2024, our commitment to the school does not end. **We have an obligation to ensure that it continues for many years to come and our financial commitment whatever that may be in the distant future is critical to its continued success.**" They have also committed to their synagogue, UOS, the center of their religious life and beliefs.

RMBA is dedicated to ensuring the school's financial stability while maintaining the highest level of academic excellence. Though some might not have given much thought to after-lifetime giving, the Garners recognize that any gift will make an impact and add, "If we can help relieve that balancing act in the future, we can't imagine a better use of our money."

Individuals like the Garners, are choosing to make provisions to leave after-lifetime gifts to make a lasting impact on RMBA for generations to come. The program is founded on the principle that all of us, regardless of age, wealth or affiliation, can make an enduring impact. They wish to dispel the misnomer that 'Create-a-Legacy' means you must leave a significant financial pledge. "We know that any amount is appreciated and it all adds up. You can designate a percentage of your estate or a flat amount. It is so easy to pledge and to make a change to your will." They conclude, **"Our children know that we are taking part in the Create a Legacy program and feel proud that we feel strongly about the future of the Houston Jewish Community."** ■

# Join us as welcome some of the newest faces around RMBA...

## Carrasso Family



Netanela (7th) and Shir (7th) and parents Limor and Moshe Carrasso moved from San Antonio

## Harari Family



Rita (EC4), Rhonda (K), Rose (EC2), Rachel (EC2) (l-r pictured above) and parents Lillian and Saul Harari moved from Indianapolis

## Engelhart Family



Noam (EC15), Rafi, Aviya (EC4) and Stacey Engelhart relocated from Israel

# Meet the Morgans

**M**oving from the Motor City area, Bella and Jeff Morgan were both anxious and excited about what lay ahead. Following successful visits to Houston, they met great people and found a school community they felt enthusiastic about. In January of this year they made the official move South where Jeremy (8th grade), Ellen (6th grade), Hailey (5th grade) and Matthew (3rd grade) entered RMBA to welcoming arms. In no time, the Morgan crew had fit right in to the Houston mix.

Hailing from the Northeast, Bella and Jeff spent most of their young lives in New Jersey and New York respectively. Following time at Barnard College and Yeshiva University, they entered medical residencies in New York City where their paths finally crossed and they began a life together. After Jeremy was born, they moved to Englewood, New Jersey for six years followed by yet another six year stint in Southfield, Michigan. Jeff was recruited by the Texas Heart Institute/Baylor College of Medicine and the Morgans decided that moving to Houston provided a wonderful professional opportunity with many upsides for their family; notably the Jewish life and community.

Bella and Jeff couldn't be more pleased with how well their children have adjusted and transitioned into their new environment and add, "We are extremely happy with the academic rigor of the school and feel that it offers an excellent secular and Judaic-especially Hebrew language-education. We chose RMBA because it was the school that most closely reflected our approach to Judaism and our feelings about the State of Israel."

The Morgans left behind wonderful friends and an eclectic Detroit area Jewish community with a real mixing of different flavors of observant Judaism. Fortunately, Houston and RMBA in particular are known for their welcoming atmosphere, diversity and strong sense of Jewish community and we have exceeded their expectations.



Ellen (6th), Jeremy (8th), Bella, Matthew (3rd), Jeff and Hailey (5th) Morgan

**"WE ARE EXTREMELY HAPPY WITH THE ACADEMIC RIGOR OF THE SCHOOL AND FEEL THAT IT OFFERS AN EXCELLENT SECULAR AND JUDAIC - ESPECIALLY HEBREW LANGUAGE-EDUCATION."**

This sports minded family was most excited to leave behind the cold Detroit winters and are adjusting to the hot and humid Houston summers. They quickly took a shining to Genesis and Greens, two types of Kosher restaurants that they did not have in Southfield. The move had been seamless barring one weather related incident as their new home in the UOS neighborhood flooded on Tax Day. While dealing with the difficult impact, they were overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of the RMBA and UOS community. "From the high school students who showed up at our home to clean and pack up, to the many families who fed and took care of us, we were just amazed at the wonderful community within which we landed." Bella and Jeff conclude, "The incredible silver lining was the support that literally left us speechless and in awe of the generosity of spirit on display in Houston."

Looking ahead, the Morgans are planning their eldest son's Bar Mitzvah in a new city they call home. They are truly happy to be here and feel blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of such an incredible Jewish community.

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TO MEET MORE STUDENTS!

## Chen Family



Stav (7th), Shir (1st), Maor (EC2), Nitzan (5th), Matan (3rd), Maayan parents Anat (l-r pictured above) and Moshe Chen from the Fondren neighborhood

## Hunsinger Family



Alisa, Caleb (EC2), Brandon and Dominic (EC2) Hunsinger from the Meyerland neighborhood

## Krispil Family



Noam (1st), Shira (EC3), Eran, Gila and Ayala (EC15) moved from Corpus Christi.

# RMBA PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

**THE GOAL IS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO BECOME FLUENT AND INDEPENDENT READERS. THERE ARE BUILT IN PACING GUIDES ... THAT AID TEACHERS IN ENSURING THAT THE MATERIAL IS COVERED IN A TIMELY MANNER TO ALLOW FOR STUDENTS TO SUCCEED.**



In the fall of 2015, RMBA introduced a pilot *Chumash* program to our 2nd grade students titled **Lehavin U'LeHaskil**. It was deemed a huge success on many levels and as a result, we are incorporating it into 2nd and 3rd grade. Each year, we will continue to add additional grades until it forms the basis of our 2nd through 5th grade *Chumash* curriculum.



3rd graders (l-r) Rafi Miller, Shir Tzion Carmel and Samson Roisman with Morah Rivka Gottlieb in *Chumash* class

Adopting a new syllabus can be both exciting and challenging but the administration believed in the immense potential for this particular *Chumash* program. Judaic Studies instructors received training in New York to learn how to best utilize the material at their disposal. *Lehavin U'LeHaskil* provides a skill-based learning environment offering students a systematic foundation to build vital *Chumash* knowledge while in each grade. It allows educators to build on the analysis of the stories in *Chumash* and to add emphasis on developing Hebrew skills that students can improve upon. Learning how to identify the *shoresh* (root), prefixes and suffixes, the singular and plural of Hebrew words and building common *Chumash* vocabulary are just some of the added benefits that aid students in both their Judaics and Hebrew studies. The curriculum offers a

**program also focuses on *middot* and values which is what we believe to be essential in guiding and educating our children.** A compelling illustration of its success is that for the first time, this program affords the opportunity for standardized testing to provide valuable comparative data. Conducted in the winter and spring, these nationally standardized results provide our teachers with incredible insight into the ability and knowledge of individual students and the class as a whole, allowing for modification of instruction to ensure the successful comprehension of material by all students. The intensity of this skills-based *Chumash* curriculum integrates our Hebrew and Judaic learning while increasing textual skills, building literacy and improving Hebrew proficiency. And to this we say **Le Chaim to Lehavin U'LeHaskil!** ■

spiral approach in that the knowledge continues to build upon itself, and each year the skills are revisited with a greater depth of analysis, building upon the knowledge gained in previous years. The goal is to encourage students to become fluent and independent readers. There are built in pacing guides and workbooks that aid teachers in ensuring that the material is covered in a timely manner to allow students to succeed.

**In addition to being more skill-based, the**

# PHOTOGRAPHY through a Jewish Lens

Shir Carasso, 7th Grade



“Even those things that you may regard as completely superfluous to Creation, even they were included in Creation; and God’s purpose is carried through everything.” **Genesis Rabbah 10:7**

Noah Meimoun, 10th Grade



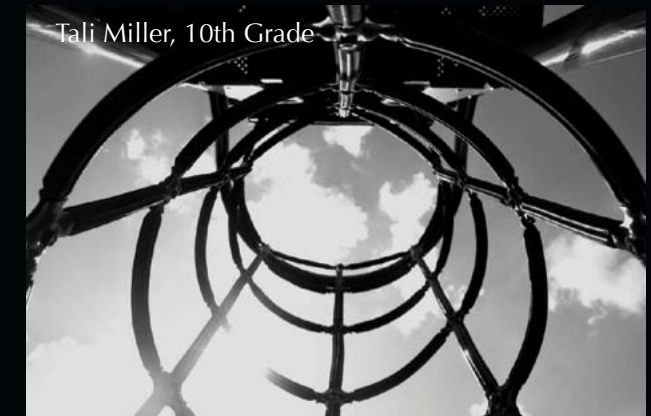
“At Sinai Moses received the Torah and handed it over to Joshua who handed it over to the elders who handed it over to the prophets who in turn handed it over to the men of the Great Assembly.” **Pirkei Avot 1:1**

Simcha Korn, 12th Grade



“All of Israel is bound up together.” **Babylonian Talmud, Shevuot 39a**

Tali Miller, 10th Grade



“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.” **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**

Shaked Carmel, 10th Grade



“I found the world provided with carob trees because my forefathers planted them for me. I am planting them now for my children.” **Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 23a**



**A**ri ('91), Shira ('94), Eliana ('00) and Ilan ('06) Lipsky graduated from the Hebrew Academy and RMBA many years ago but continue to remain connected through their parents Sharon and Bill, longtime supporters of the school and **their shared belief in the importance of a strong Jewish and secular education as the basis for a meaningful life.**



Back row (l-r) Maya Schwartz, Danny Schwartz, Shira Lipsky Schwartz, Bill Lipsky, Ilan Lipsky, Sharon Lipsky, Maayan Lipsky, Ari Lipsky, Robin Lipsky, Chaim Kirby, Amichai Kirby. Front row (l-r) Noa Schwartz, Keren Schwartz, Ayelet Lipsky, Eliana Lipsky, Eitan Kirby.

Each has gone on to varied and successful careers following graduation. Ari attended Yeshiva in Israel, studied at MIT and received his medical degree from Albert Einstein Medical School in addition to a Doctorate in Epidemiology at UCLA. Shira and Eliana both attended Midreshet Lindenbaum in Israel and went on to Boston University. There Eliana received her B.A. and Masters, and a Doctorate in Education from Loyola University. After undergraduate studies Shira earned her medical degree from George Washington School of Medicine. Ilan attended Full Sail University in Florida and received his B.S. degree in Video Game Design.

Ilan is the sole returnee to Houston and works in IT at the Advanced Laser Vision & Surgical Institute. Shira resides in Silver Spring as a Pediatrician with her husband Danny and three daughters Noa, Keren and Maya. Ari made Aliyah and works at Rambam Health Care Campus in Haifa in addition to a medical startup company. He lives in Zichron Yaakov with his wife Robin and three children Ayelet, Maayan and Gilad with a fourth on the way. Eliana is an education consultant for Jewish educational organizations and has two sons, Amichai and Eitan with her husband Chaim and together they recently embarked on a sabbatical year in Caesarea, Israel.

All have fond memories of Houston such as the time spent at the ERJCC, Astroworld, powerful thunderstorms, and summer downpours in addition to warmhearted recollections of their days at school. But the experiences at RMBA clearly left an indelible mark on all four siblings. Ari notes, "It's been 26

years since I left, but the education I received continues to help ground my values and choices, especially now as I raise my own children." Ilan is grateful for his time at RMBA and adds "**Beren provided me with a strong Jewish identity and education.**"

As a family they are proud to acknowledge their passionate Zionism and strong commitment

to the Jewish community. Despite the distances between them, they try to get-together often with vacations involving water: sailing, scuba diving, swimming, white water rafting, etc. And they love to sing, all the time!" Initially the Lipskys relocated to Galveston from Florida but providing their children with a Jewish education was important and moved to Houston to attend the Hebrew Academy (in the middle of a Hurricane no less!). Shira adds, "Our parents quickly saw that the school emphasized values mirroring their own: **a commitment to serving the Jewish community, both locally and globally, and maintaining strong ethical and moral codes, all the while not compromising a strong secular education.**"

Eliana, whose field of expertise is Jewish Education and credits her time at RMBA shares, "It's given me insight into the kinds of experiences and education that I want for my own children as part of understanding what it means to belong to the Jewish people and be a knowledgeable Jew." She recently reconnected with the school and had the unique experience of spending this past summer in town before their move to Israel and enrolling her children at RMBA's Camp Moshava Houston, a time that they thoroughly enjoyed.

Looking ahead Ari continues to see his future in Israel, Eliana hopes to one day live closer to Shira while Ilan can envision himself as a successful video game designer. Although they do not know where they will eventually end up, there is no doubt they shall continue to remain close and see each other often... while carrying a lasting Lipsky tune of course. ■

## Alumni and Former Students

# Mazal Tov

**Ari Lipsky** ('91) and wife Robin welcomed a son, Gilad Shmuel

**Myles Brody** ('96) and wife Rocky welcomed a daughter

**Rebecca (Najer) Uranovsky** ('99) gave birth in Israel to her third child

**David Komer** ('00) developed and launched an interactive children's learning app for Tu B'Shvat titled "Make It Grow"

**Eliana Lipsky** ('00) received her Doctor of Education (Ed. D.) from Loyola University Chicago. Dissertation Title: "Balancing Textual Authority with Student Voice: A Collaborative Action Research Study in One Modern Orthodox Chumash Class"

**Nadine (Schulman)** ('00) and Daniel Damboritz welcomed twin daughters, Adi and Ella

**Jamie Haseltine** ('03) and wife Debbie welcomed a daughter Isla Ruth

**Chana Tamar Adler** ('03) and Ari Kapusta on their marriage

**Rachie Jacobson Gold** ('03) and Ari Gold welcomed a daughter Ayala Nitzan

**Anna Kerzner** ('04) and Dovid Schwartz of Far Rockaway, NY on their marriage

**Chaim Perl** ('04) and Raizy Fried of Brooklyn, NY on their marriage

**Benjamin Kusin** ('05) to Shira Massis of Kew Gardens Hills on their marriage

**David Kusin** ('05) graduated from Case Medical School with highest honors and received an award for distinction in research



Alexander Beren Jefferson Haffetz (l) and wife Erica Kimmel Haffetz (r) arriving in Israel on August 17, 2016 following their Nefesh b'Nefesh flight.

**Chaya Miriam Nimchinsky** ('09) and Chayim Gerson on their marriage

**Rachel Rolnick** ('09) to Jacob Novakov on their marriage

**Clarice Shkedy** ('09) and Daniel Itshakov of Woodmere, NY on their marriage

**Tani Pollak** ('10) to Ruthie Zisblatt of Sharon, MA on their marriage

**Matthew Sarafzadeh** ('10) and Sara welcomed a daughter Shira Malka Penina

**Atara Urkowitz** ('10) and **Joseph Gomez** ('10) on their marriage

**Miriam Adler** ('12) and Elisha Saidoff on their engagement

**Isaac Mirwis** ('12) and Sophia Berman on their engagement

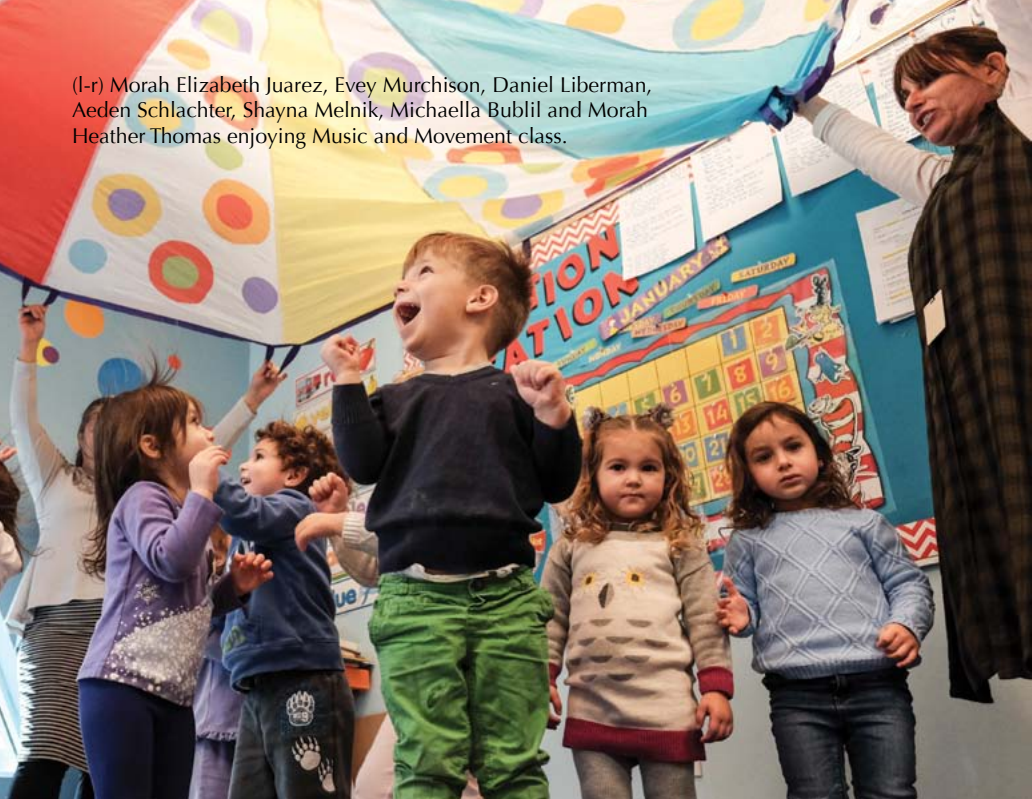
**Gabi Yaffee** ('12) and **Albert Katz** ('13) on making Aliyah and their marriage

Mazal Tov to **Alexander Beren Jefferson Haffetz** and his wife Arica Kimmel Haffetz on making Aliyah



RMBA Alumni Social held on January 9, 2016 at Genesis Steakhouse and Wine Bar (l-r) Marshall Levit, Evan Weinberger, Danielle Buks, Steven Mitzner, Liat Goldstein, Jay Gordon

(l-r) Morah Elizabeth Juarez, Evey Murchison, Daniel Liberman, Aeden Schlachter, Shayna Melnik, Michaella Bublil and Morah Heather Thomas enjoying Music and Movement class.



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aware of the team's instrumental part in achieving this task. Logistically, at any given time, five of us were holding the rope in different positions to ensure the safety of the climber. Most important was the team's responsibility to cheer, support and encourage each of the members as he or she is trying to make their way up. We were able to create an inclusive environment with no judgment on any individual's performance; no one achieved too much or too little. The team was deeply invested in its mental role and the support was phenomenal. The vast majority of the team was unsuccessful in climbing all the way up and so, when it was my turn and considering that I never work out, I seriously doubted my ability to ascend more than the average team member did. Despite all the team's support, I still heard the little voice inside my head questioning my ability to perform well and so, a little shakily I began to climb. It was difficult and challenging, my hands and legs hurt immensely, and a number of times I considered giving in...however, I managed to go all the way up while the team cheered me on. On the way

down, I felt that I somehow got lucky but needed to maintain my record of success. Before I knew it, the other team member who climbed all the way up did it again but through a different and even more challenging path. Everyone looked at me again to determine if I were up for the challenge and willing to repeat the accomplishment. It was at that moment that I regretted succeeding the first time as the expectations were now greater by both the team and me. I wasn't quite sure how I was going to do it and what the chances were that I was going to fall down. Indeed, it was much harder than the first time and my muscles were already fatigued. Nevertheless, the team was so wonderful. The support and the encouragement, the cheering and the shout outs provided an incredible boost and so I found myself once again on top of the rock celebrating a second (very sweet) victory. While reflecting on the experience I reminded myself once again about the special power of community. Our Rabbis on so many occasions teach us about the importance of community, its impact and its need. The Jewish

community and its cohesiveness is what kept us alive as a nation over the last two thousand years. On Purim we give *mishloach manot* to each other in order to foster friendships in the community and at the Pesach seder we start the night by inviting whoever has no place in the community to join us. One is strongly guided to pray with the community rather than individually and even the prayer language suggests the use of the plural form to encourage collective prayer. My little community at Harvard helped me achieve things I never would have attained by myself.

Soon after coming home I was invited to join a WhatsApp group consisting of colleagues that I met while at Harvard who were inspired by our shared experience at Project Adventure to form a running group. At first I thought it was a joke - the last time I ran seriously was probably about twenty years ago while serving in the army. I tried so many times to run or workout but always failed to stick to it because I was too busy or tired and anyway, it always seemed so boring. But again I could not believe that I found myself running four times a week mostly for the sole purpose of sharing my progress with my little runner's community while encouraging others. Once again I experienced how much one can feel a sense of achievement while surrounded by a strong and warm community. There is a reason why Facebook is such a successful company and an essential tool for so many who want to be part of a community. Human beings need a great community to surround them. As our school community significantly grows I am so excited for the opportunity for each and every one of us to connect, interact and provide and receive support with so many new people along with our old friends. **Shana Tova to all who support our vibrant and growing community!**

## We asked our students: "What do you love most about RMBA?"

We can use the SMART Board in class and it makes learning fun.

Itamar Shitrit, 1st Grade

My Montessori class allows me to read, write and work together with my friends. But really just **everything!**

Mikey Sulman, 3rd Grade

In Middle School we can choose an Explo course that we are interested in creatively and I selected Art and Music.

Nava Teller, 6th Grade

We are all friends with each other and teachers can give us extra attention and help.

Coral Vaknin, 10th Grade

Learning Math is fun so I can solve problems and correctly answer the questions.

Gilad Yarmush, 3rd Grade

My friends are in different grades which is special and we are able to have close bonds with our teachers.

Rebekah Grzebinski, 9th Grade

The sense of community as everyone knows one another. Every year we make more friends and get to know each other even better.

Noah Meimoun, 10th Grade

I love the gym, playground, my uniform, my teachers and learning to write and spell.

Anaëlle Levenstein, Kindergarten

During recess I can play outside on the big field and playground area on the monkey bars and find caterpillars with my friends.

Lenoy Jarufi, 1st Grade

The intense warmth and comforting feeling I get when I walk inside on any given day.

Maya Wadler, 11th Grade





Robert M. Beren Academy's

# Spring Fundraiser

**February 25, 2017**

For more information  
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SAVE *the* DATE



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