

# TZOHAR

SEMINARY FOR CHASSIDUS AND THE ARTS

Director Mrs Amy Guterson

Principal Rabbi Aaron Herman

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## OUR THIRD YEAR

at Tzohar Seminary has been sensational. With eighteen students attending from Australia, England, Israel and across the USA, Tzohar's groundbreaking sense of purpose has really come alive.

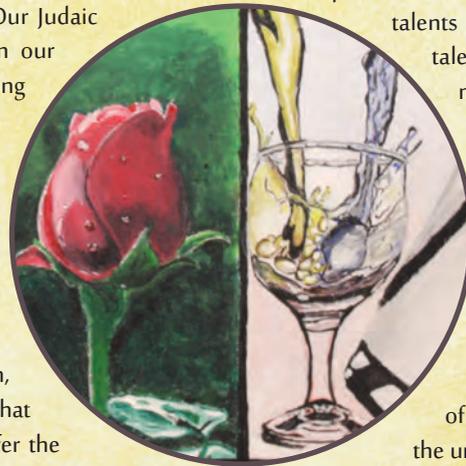
Our "Tzoharites," as we love to call them, spend half their day studying Torah with a focus on Chassidus. The other half of the day is spent learning the craft of each art. Tzohar students study visual arts, photography, music, dance, creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting, theatre, filmmaking and animation. Our arts instructors are professionals in their field and really teach our students the "how to" of each craft. Our Judaic teachers instill a deep love of learning in our students and create forums for questioning and truth seeking.

When the content of that deep investigation and honest learning is expressed through student artwork, writing, films etc., that is where the "groundbreaking" happens. Tzohar students use their individual talents to express these profound concepts. Both the form and the content are a match in depth, honesty, expressiveness and purpose. And that is what Tzohar and its students have to offer the world.

"Tzohar Ta'aseh La'teva" (Genesis 6:16). G-d commanded Noah to create a window or skylight to let the light into the ark. Rashi also comments that it could have been a precious stone to shine its light out. Tzohar Seminary is here to allow the light of creativity into each individual *neshama* (soul) of its students. Our students shine the light of Torah, Chassidus and their individual expression of that truth, into the world through their art and through their very beings.

It is a great joy to watch our students grow through the year as individuals, as artists, and as Jewish women ready to change the world.

Please enjoy the art and writing of our current students throughout this newsletter. Illustration is a detail of a painting by ALEX SLATER



## AS TEENAGERS MATURE,



they often feel a tension between their desire to be creative and their desire to conform. They have an appreciation for tradition while at the same time recognizing that they have a deep desire and need for personal expression. How can these two aspects of life – tradition and individuality—be synthesized? Tzohar Seminary is the place where students embark on a journey of discovery that will lead them to shape their unique answer to this question.

At Tzohar Seminary students are encouraged to ask meaningful questions. What makes me special? What are my inborn talents and what is the best way to develop these talents? What ideas and experiences have shaped my life and what is the best way to share these concepts with others? How can my personal contribution enhance the Jewish community and the world-at-large?

These timeless questions are at the heart of the Torah subjects and Chassidic philosophy that we study. Students are exposed to a range of material that provides them with the ability to embark on their own life-long journey of personal discovery. Chassidic thought stresses the unique relationship that we each have with G-d, while at the same time emphasizing the relationship that we share as a community. The greatest sense of personal expression is not when we exhibit radical individualism, as that can serve to enhance our own ego and selfish tendencies. True individuality is to be found only in the context of a relationship, where within that shared framework, every person's qualities are recognized, appreciated and celebrated. In that sense, the human body provides an apt parallel, where each organ and limb provides an indispensable contribution to the overall well-being of both itself and the rest of the body.

At Tzohar Seminary, it is our goal to give each student the tools to live a life of meaning. Connecting to her Jewish past, a Tzohar student provides each one of us with a window into the vibrant, joyous and creative Jewish community and world that we are building together.

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**AIDEL COHEN**, from Georgia, has a unique ability to express herself in rhyme. Aidel says, "I am learning to be more confident in my artistic abilities and I'm learning how to connect Chassidus to my life." The story she wrote for our Tzohar presentation expresses how everyone can determine his or her attitude:

"Your life is not what others say  
And you can pick the role you play  
Your ballad's words you choose within  
Damsel in distress or heroine."



**SOPHIA KATZ** is from New Haven, Connecticut. Having attended public high school in the past, Sophia felt that coming to Tzohar was the next step in integrating her artistic self with her Jewish self. Sophia shares that, "Learning Chassidus has changed the way I look at the world. I feel empowered by the richness of these concepts which influence my day-to-day life."

At Tzohar, Sophia wrote, directed and edited a film that shares her past experience and spiritual growth.

**CHANA CORNA** hails all the way from Sydney, Australia. She is multi-talented and plans to study animation upon her return home next year. "I have learned more than I ever could have hoped to in seminary, both in the arts and in Chassidus," says Chana.

Chana is recording her experience at Tzohar Seminary on her blog: [Chana-learns-to-write.tumblr.com](http://Chana-learns-to-write.tumblr.com)



From Crown Heights, NY, **LIBA FARKASH** is a natural performer and a gifted actress and singer, who also loves to paint. She is studying voice at Tzohar this year. "I have expanded my range vocally, hitting notes I didn't know I could hit before!" Liba says. "I also feel like I am learning Chassidus for the first time. There's so much to learn from and absorb."

**ALEX SLATER**, from Brooklyn, NY, enjoys capturing G-d's beauty through her camera lens. She hopes to work as a professional photographer.



**I WAS LUCKY** to have spent two years at Tzohar Seminary. Tzohar Seminary has changed my life, and done wonders for me. It's why I have developed into the person I am today.

I came to Tzohar with a passion and talent for music, expecting my existing skills to be fine-tuned and developed. And that is all I had in mind. Well, I didn't know what was coming my way. For the first semester, every girl is required to take all of the arts classes. I didn't think that I would really be good at anything other than music. But I was wrong.

Enter Melissa Martin; playwriting and screenwriting teacher at Carnegie Mellon University and, of course, Tzohar Seminary. In her first class, Melissa asked that we all think of a family story, and to write it down in detail. "It's just a little exercise," I remember her saying, "To get your writing flowing."

"Typical," I thought. But I was so wrong. I scraped up a story



### ON THE SET OF "THE BOOK OF LIFE"

Clockwise from left:

**YITA FETTMAN**, cinematographer; **SHEINA BRUMMEL**, screenwriter; **CHAVIE RESNICK**, director and editor (Tzohar Students 2013); with Chantal Belman as Betty and Susie Bhojwani as Ellen.

I knew well, and wrote it down as she instructed. Melissa guided us through everything from there and, before I knew it, my little story had turned into a play, and then further developed into a screenplay. In my second year of Tzohar, I developed the script further. That year, Tzohar produced its first collaborative film based on my screenplay. Who woulda thunk?!

Overall, Tzohar has really helped me come out of myself, and get to know myself better. I have a deeper

appreciation for Torah learning, thanks to all of the wonderful teachers there. And I now know that every person is given a gift to share with the world. Our role is to develop and use that gift to its greatest capacity to fulfill our purpose in this world, to reveal G-dliness. I have learned this at Tzohar Seminary for Chassidus & the Arts in a very real and personal way.

— **SHEINA BRUMMEL**, Tzohar Class of 2012 & 2013  
"THE BOOK OF LIFE" CAN BE VIEWED AT [WWW.CHABAD.ORG](http://WWW.CHABAD.ORG).

## THE WRITER

BY ESTER ECKHAUS

I wanted a place to write. Just myself, and the company of my uninterrupted thoughts; words being born in my patient hands. So I took for myself a single reclusive room, sunlight tickling every wall.

On my first day I sat there and spun a magnificent web from my growling pen. And leaned back in my sturdy chair, pleased with my creations.

Everyday, for two months, I poured every inch of that space onto my desperate pages; and every ray of sunlight pouring through that window had a name and a feeling and an urgent message to the world. But slowly my words dwindled and I sat for three days, a prisoner to my unyielding chair. Uninspired papers spilling over the edges of my lonely desk. I jabbed and prodded my barren heart and brain; I inquired the rusty typewriters of my mind about the abrupt shortage.

But it seemed the curtains closed on me. Someone had locked the door and left this burnt out mind to fend for its own light.

My empty-handed voyage anchored at the dock, and a lighthouse at the tip of my thoughts slowly lit and informed me that since I can no

longer go inward for the words, I must pick myself up and go OUT.

In the coming months, I neither wrote about sun rays, nor the simple pleasure of a writer's solitude.

I sat near a dirty homeless man and wrote about misfortune.

I watched the hundreds of people rushing by and wrote about ignorance.

The human race; racing toward the end of the earth, to either make the jump or run around in circles by the edge.

Next I walked among them and wrote about the multitudes of struggles I tripped over. Each person in the crowd searching for something to save them; to make their diminutive lives worth their expensive shoes.

I shuffled among them and pictured a lifetime of words on each man's chest. So many glorious words!

And with each word lighting up, I wrote.

Standing in the crowd I watched words, like blinking fireflies, crystallize my pages.

And the spaces in my mind came back to life:

Sad and then strong—and finally, illuminating.

**ESTER ECKHAUS** is from Brooklyn, NY.  
She likes to write.



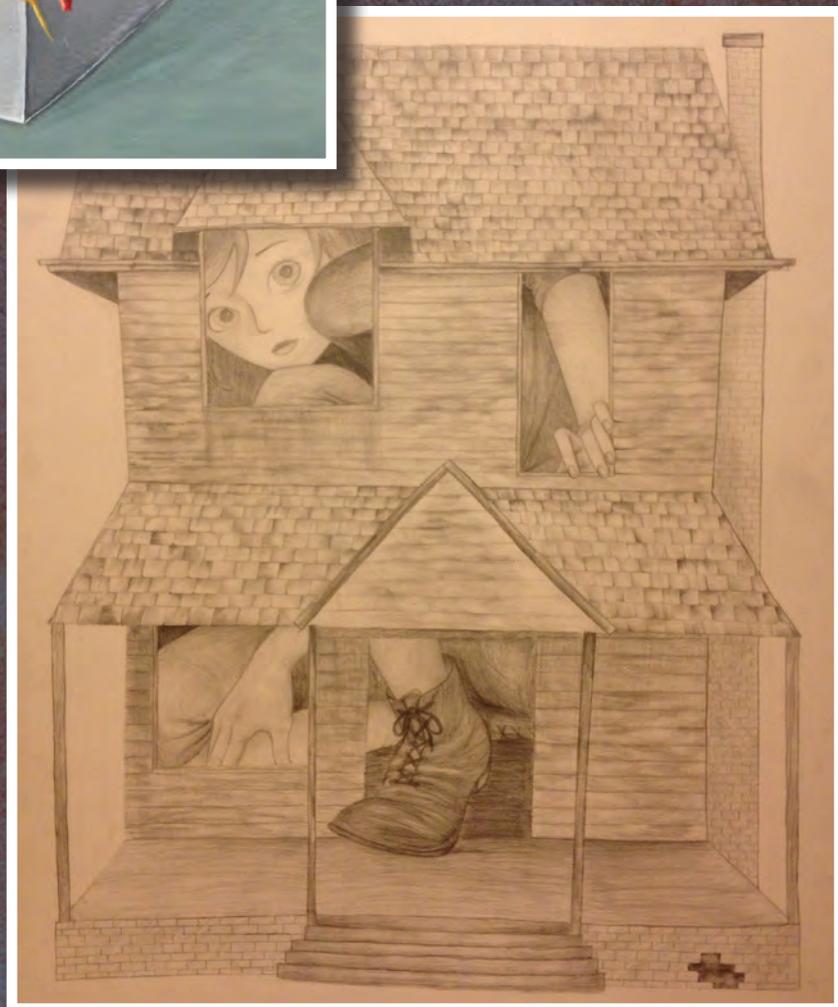


We tend to feel stifled by our boundaries, yet without them, we are frozen by the endless possibilities. A potted plant needs to be contained in order to grow. Similarly, our infinite soul is boxed into a rigid body. Our lifestyle is ordained within the parameters of Torah. And it is through these boundaries that we can live a meaningful and blossoming life.

— Esther Adler

My drawing was inspired by the Chassidic concept that the Exodus from Egypt symbolizes overcoming challenges and limitations. There is a moment of realization when we become aware that it is time for us to change our behavior or surroundings, to free ourselves from our own "Egypt", and to further connect with Hashem.

— Chana Corna



Often we are faced with two opposing realities, yet they merge in harmony forming a more brilliant truth. The two faces represent the masculine and feminine aspects of G-d. They also symbolize the two souls within each person, the G-dly soul and the animal soul. Just like G-d's creative energy fuses and spirals and culminates in a physical creation, similarly, our opposing forces can coalesce and jointly fulfill Torah and Mitzvos.

— Rosie Krinsky



My painting represents our constant, reoccurring choices. These two joy-filled characters are set against a perpetually moving clock-hand, emphasizing the passage of time. The baby's happiness is natural, while the grandmother is making a conscious decision to be open and receptive to life's gifts. Similarly, G-d deliberately chooses to recreate the world at every moment, allowing His relationship with us to grow and deepen.

— Sara Teller

# SOULFUL MUSIC

## Professor Nizan Leibovich

INTERVIEW BY RIVKAH JOSEPH

### What was it like growing up in Israel?

I grew up in a small community where everybody knew each other. One advantage of Israel's small size is that everything is close to everything else. I could see my entire family almost every week and spend valuable time on a regular basis with my grandparents on both sides.

### When did you first get involved with music?

I always had an inclination towards music. My father's cousin was a lawyer and an amateur violinist. His wife was a professional pianist. I used to go to their home as a kid, and play around on their piano. They also had a weekly string quartet session with some lawyer and doctor friends who were quite proficient on their instruments. I remember asking my father to attend these musical gatherings. I also remember vividly that when the classical radio channel started in Israel, I was fascinated by the richness of the music and recorded everything I could. I even remember specific pieces I'd listen to over and over, like Beethoven's Spring Sonata and Bach's Italian Concerto. One day my father brought home an old organ from the furniture sale

of a family that was leaving Israel. He purchased it mainly to add a nice touch to our living room. That's what started my real interaction with music. Once I started playing it, I was immediately drawn to composition. I was about 11 years old.

### What made you decide to pursue a career in music?

In my teens I became more and more involved with music, playing both the classical guitar and the piano, as well as composing. The small town I grew in had a great music conservatory. After auditioning, I began playing in the orchestra, taking theory lessons, forming bands—anything that would satisfy my wide musical interests. At some point it became obvious to me that music was what I wanted to do with my life and after serving in the army, I entered the Rubin Music Academy in Tel Aviv University.

### What brought you to Pittsburgh?

I made it a point to meet a conductor in Israel that used to come often and work with some of the major orchestras. One day we were sitting down, talking, and I found out that he was teaching in Pittsburgh. It was the first time I'd heard this

city's name. Somehow I managed to persuade him to audition me. A few weeks later I got a letter saying that I was accepted. At that time only two people were accepted to the program every three years. So that was how I came to be in Pittsburgh...to study conducting and composition at Carnegie Mellon.

### What does your musical career consist of presently?

I work with various orchestras, ensembles and choirs, and I also teach. Teaching has always been an important part of my musical endeavors. My first professional job after graduating from Carnegie Mellon was as Resident Conductor of the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, a position coupled with that of Adjunct Professor of Composition at Pittsburgh's Duquesne University.

### What do you enjoy about teaching at Tzohar?

The girls come from a variety of backgrounds, and each brings something different to the classroom. The students are open-minded and eager to learn something new. From the look in their eyes when something substantial is being discussed I know that new ideas are being sparked, and creativity nurtured. It's something very special here.

### In what ways do you connect your music and Jewish identity?

I cannot separate the two: I am Jewish and I am a musician. Obviously over the years, I've undertaken various projects specifically mindful of my Jewish background. For instance, a few years ago I was commissioned to write a Klezmer influenced symphonic piece for an orchestra in Switzerland. When I attended the first rehearsal the music was well played but lacking in Klezmer "spirit." But because they were excited by the music and open to the ideas I shared with them, the collaboration wound up being satisfying for ensemble and composer alike. In general, everything I do has a connection to my Jewish and Israeli identity, and my broader awareness of contemporary life and current events. An artist cannot separate himself from his surroundings and his upbringing. Creativity comes from something very deep within oneself. When someone is composing, he or she is not only a composer, and when painting, not only a painter. Who they are and everything they stand for is there with them. My being Jewish contributes to what I'm doing on so many levels. And what I'm doing in turn contributes to my Jewish identity. They are inseparable.



RIVKAH JOSEPH is from Melbourne, Australia. She plays piano, guitar and oboe and enjoys singing, arranging and composing, as well as the rest of the arts. She plans to study music and education when she returns home.



After a day of Torah and artistic studies, Tzohar students enjoy one-on-one learning, Lounge & Learn, farbrengens, guest lecturers, cultural field trips to the theatre, museums and concerts, as well as recreational activities.



## ADMINISTRATION

RABBI YISROEL ROSENFELD

— Regional Director, Chabad of Western PA

MRS. AMY GUTERSON — Founder and Director

RABBI AARON HERMAN — Principal

HINDY GUREVITZ — Administrator

MRS. BLUMI ROSENFELD — Program Mashpia

BRYNA COHEN — Dorm Mother

## TEACHING FACULTY

RABBI AARON HERMAN

— Chassidic Discourses, Talmud and Jewish Philosophy

SARA BLOOM — Chumash

RABBI CHONYE FRIEDMAN — Tanya

RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN GUREVITZ — Halacha

LEAH HERMAN — Hashkofa

MRS. BLUMI ROSENFELD — Bayis Yehudi

SHTERNIE ROSENFELD — Sichos

SHULAMMIS SAXON — Inyonei Geulah U'moshiach

ESTHER SHULMAN — Davening and Lounge & Learn

DENA TAUB — Chumash

RABBI SHAIS TAUB — Chassidus

AMY GUTERSON — Creativity & the Arts and Theatre

SRULI BROOCKER — Animation

LEIBEL COHEN — Filmmaking

TANYA COHEN — Fine Art

NIZAN LEIBOVICH — Music

MELISSA MARTIN — Playwriting/Screenwriting

DOVBER NAIDITCH — Creative Writing

MISA PASCARELLA AND SARAH RILLS — Dance

ELIRAN SHKEDI — Photography

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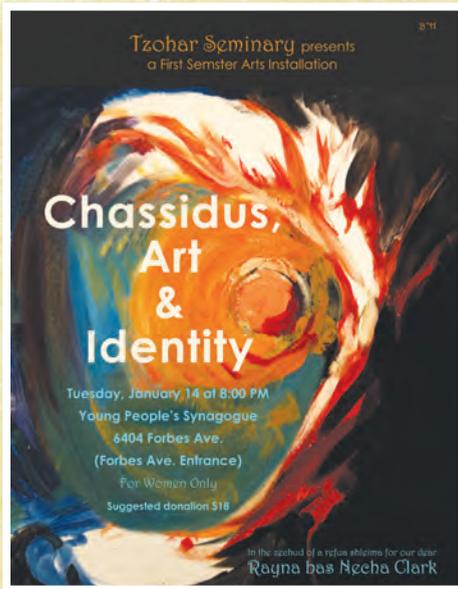
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## TZO HAR SEMINARY SHOWCASES TALENT TO COMMUNITY

Most schools, yeshivas and seminaries conclude a semester with written tests. At Tzohar Seminary for Chassidus and the Arts in Pittsburgh, the end of first semester means presentation time.

On Tuesday evening, January 14, 2014, the students of Tzohar Seminary presented "Chassidus, Art & Identity," a presentation of paintings, poetry, dance, music, storytelling and films. The students chose a concept in Chassidus that they connected with personally, and expressed it through an art form of their choice.

The Tzohar vocal ensemble performed a beautiful acapella version of the Chassidic niggun, *Tzama Lecha Nafshi*, as well as contemporary Jewish selections.

Women from across the Pittsburgh community enjoyed the presentation and were inspired by the depth and beauty of the students' work.

