

IN MEMORIAM  
JOY ZITA ROCHWARGER BALSAM  
YOCHAVED ZLATA BAT FULYA FEIGE V'YITZCHAK TUVYA



February 2, 1967-May 21, 2004  
22 Shevat 5727-1 Sivan 5764

Memories of my beloved friend Joy, z"l, adapted from a letter written to her husband, Jerry, and sister Michelle.

by Susan Handelman, Jerusalem, Israel.

I want you first to know how I met Joy. It is a story I love to tell. In 1993-94, I came to Israel for a sabbatical year from the University of Maryland, where I was teaching at the time. A few days before I was to leave to go back to the US, I was feeling the inevitable sadness at having to depart. I was busy packing and went to Pomerantz's bookstore downtown to stock up on a huge supply of sefarim to ship back to America. It was a hot July day and I remember impatiently waiting in a line of three or four customers in the stuffy store. Michael Pomerantz is a wonderful, caring man who takes a lot of time with each customer, but I had many errands left to do and was getting restless and frustrated as the minutes ticked on. A short young woman was standing right behind me in the line with a sefer in her hand. I can't remember who spoke to whom first...but it was about the frustration of our having to wait so very long. We commiserated. I said I was going to make a big order so it would take her longer in her wait, and if she had only one book maybe she should go ahead...that I was going to order a ton of books to send back to the US because I was leaving a few days after being there for a year. The young woman's interest quickened and she said she knew how hard that was— to have to leave Israel—and she had gone through that herself so much, and asked what had I been doing. I said I had been on sabbatical learning in various women's yeshivas.

She looked surprised and even more interested and said she was a women's yeshiva teacher and ran the Beit Midrash in Midreshet and asked where had I learned, and we spoke of the places, Matan, Nishmat, etc., and I said again with a heavy heart how hard it was for me to go back now and leave Israel. She told me, with great sympathy, how she used to fly to Israel immediately after her last final exams at Barnard, and stay until the last possible moment...the day before classes began again there in the Fall, and how wrenching it always was for her, and how grateful she was that she now had the zechut to live in Israel.

We found we knew Bryna Levy and Avivah Zornberg and others in common. She asked me my name, and as I told her, she smiled with surprise and pleasure and said she knew about me from my book **Slayers of Moses**, and said something about Nechama Leibowitz reading it, and how she was close to "Nechama." And within five minutes, it was as if we had known each other for years. I was surprised and delighted to find such a kindred soul suddenly in the midst of Pomerantz's bookstore waiting line. Another typical "Jerusalem experience," I thought to myself happily, as my spirits were lifted by talking with Joy. We were deep into a conversation about Nechama and Torah learning and she was telling me I had to meet Nechama, and I said I was in awe of her and scared, and she told me how no, not at all, Nechama was so warm and wonderful and how she visited her every Friday and they played Lotto together. My eyes widened. After this five or ten minutes of conversation, Michael Pomerantz was finally free of the customer and I was next and let Joy go ahead and buy her book, and said a warm good-bye to her...and felt once more the pain of leaving this wonderful place where I could meet such a person standing in line at a bookstore.

About a month later, I was sitting in my office at the U. of Maryland, before classes began. I remember it vividly. It was a hot late August day, and I felt so far from Israel and was in a sterile office. I opened my mail and found an envelope from Israel. I did not recognize the scrawled handwriting but it was a personal note.

And who do you think it was from?

It was beautiful notecard with a Jerusalem scene on it and a handwritten note from Joy saying she wanted to say hi because she knew how hard it was to have to go back to the US from Israel when you did not want to, and it must be so hard for me now, and she was thinking of me and wishing me a shana tova. WOW...What a wonderful woman, I thought to myself as I smiled broadly...so thoughtful!...such a lovely gesture...really going out of her way to find my address, get the right card, and send it to me...I treasured it.

I wrote her back a thank you to the address, and telling her how great it was to have that little taste of Jerusalem come into my office that day...and how I so appreciated it...and that was it.

When I came back a year and half later on another grant, I went to sit in on one of Bryna Levy's Matan courses on Tanakh and she invited me for Shabbat, and Joy was there for Shabbat, too. Somehow, they spoke about having met me and arranged it....So we spent that Shabbat together and I was delighted to see her again. I remember noting that she had some interesting literary text she was reading that Shabbat.

When I came back again in 1997 for my two years in the Jerusalem Fellows, by then Joy was working with the Polish Jews and we saw each other in circles of mutual friends and places like Yakar. I loved to speak to her about teaching and her relation to her students and her shiurum, and her love for Eretz Yisrael.

When Joy herself unexpectedly joined the Jerusalem Fellows program in 1998, it was my second year there and that's when I really got to know her. It was a very intimate experience, the Fellows. We were all thrown together several days a week for long periods of classes and lectures, and had to do group projects together. We were a varied group of senior educators from all over the world of vastly different backgrounds. It was a big step for her to leave Midreshet and enter this different world and not so easy at the beginning; and it wasn't easy for any of us to learn how to work together and have to become "students" again. Having been in the Fellows for a year, I often helped and advised Joy on how to meet the challenges.

We would all have a great time on the Jerusalem Fellows' tiyulim together...I remember once especially. We were on Jerusalem Fellows' tiyul to the north and Jeff Saks and I were sitting in the front seat — because we get carsick — and Joy was sitting right behind us, and Debbie Kram, who had founded a women's Torah learning program in Boston and had become good friends with Joy, and we were all talking about shidduchim and bad dates and sharing our harrowing stories and laughing. Then Joy spoke and she was serious for a moment, and we could see how painful it was for her — all the bad dates — and people started giving her advice, and she said plaintively, "But why can't it just all be about the person? Why do I have to worry about how I look and what I say — why can't we just relate as people?" She was right...she did not want to play games...And, thank G-d, she found Jerry, who just really loved and saw Joy as the person she was ...and wanted her to wear no makeup, just to see her better.

I remember how we kvetched about how bad the planning for the tiyul was and how they should have let us plan them, and I said, "Joy, you have great experience in this— maybe you could do the next one." So Joy volunteered to plan the next tiyul, which she did with Steve Horenstein, a composer and musician in the program. We went south and they had done a lot of hard work — as Joy always did...planning, checking things out, and took us to interesting places. She was always laughing, smiling, on top of things with her clipboard and checklist. I dubbed

her and Debbie Kram and myself the “Bladder Brigade” — we were the ones who ran off the bus to the sherutim first thing and requested frequent sherutim stops on the tiyulim...and we always laughed about it.

We became very close in that year with all its ups and downs. I remember she had me over one summer Shabbat when she lived on Oliphant Street in Talbiyeh and had some of the Polish Jews there for lunch and she wanted me to meet them because she wanted me to teach in Poland. It was a burning hot July day...and I had never been in her little apartment there. Ever since she left for the US and especially these days, when I pass by Oliphant, I always gaze over to her building and remember how she told me how she so loved her neighborhood and street.

I had a great time that Shabbat... we were all squeezed in a long table that took up most of her small living room. I was interested to see the wide variety of Torah and secular books she had. I fell in love with those Polish Jews, so refined gentle, searching, sensitive, and it was clear that they were crazy about Joy. They so loved her! They could not stop smiling whenever they looked at her, and they kept saying said her name with such affection: “Joy!” “Joy!” It was clear she a special rapport with them and loved them back. What a zechut, I thought, what a zechut she has to have brought them all here — these lovely, sensitive neshamos with their stories of how traumatic it was for them to come out of the closet as Jews there, and here they were, due to her, sitting in the brilliant sunshine of a Jerusalem summer day...in the Gan Eden peace of Jerusalem on Shabbat. Joy kept trying to get me to do a Shabbat in Poland. She once showed me pictures of it and her there and all the places. Dark heavy buildings, snow — like out of some World War II movie — and then the warm, smiling faces of her Jewish students and friends.

I think it was during this time that I suggested she come to the shiur of Rav Marc Kujavski at our friend Phyllis Jesselson’s house...and I remember she started coming and became a regular a part of the shiur, and Marc also tutored at the Jerusalem Fellows and I suggested she learn with him there and it was he who really connected to her to Rav Hutner’s great work of Jewish thought, the **Pachad Yitzhak**. He suggested to her that she and I translate some of it into English, but it was not something I had time for, so she forged on with it on her own. Rav Kujavski, who is a great talmid chakham, thought very highly of her, often asking me how she was and what was happening with her work on the **Pachad Yitzhak**, or asking me to send her a reference. Ever since I got the news she was ill last fall, Phyllis and I asked him to dedicate the shiur to her every Thursday and so he did. When she was back in Israel this past March, I suggested she come to the class and she did, and we were all so happy to see her and she spoke of how well she felt, of the near disappearance of the tumors, and as it seemed then, her near cure, and how she was going to the Kotel every day to thank Hashem for the nes, that it was something the doctors could not explain, but she had told them there is a factor they were not considering known as Hashem who was involved in it...and what it all meant to her and it was so moving...I do not think I have ever seen Rav Kujavsky that moved publicly.

There had just been time for a few private words between us before the class started. She said to me so earnestly and intensely and with a kind of half smile. “Susie, this past year... I can’t believe it.... I mean I have cancer and everything, and all the treatments and chemo and surgery, but, Susie, it has been the happiest year of my life!” This was due to her marriage to Jerry; Jerry made her happy in a way no one else ever did or could.

It was also during that time during the Jerusalem Fellows that I solicited her article for the book of writings by women Torah scholars I was editing, **Torah of the Mothers**, on her rela-

tionship to Nechama Leibowitz, and sat with her to outline it and helped her edit it. It is really a wonderful piece and I am so happy that there is this part of her for people to read who never knew her. That piece is so much “Joy,” full of passion for Torah, wonderful and disciplined insight, love and affection for Nechama with whom she had a special bond and poignant in its description of Nechama’s passing and what that meant for Joy. Joy’s Torah, for all its rigor, was always a personal torah of love. Simi Peters, a wonderful Torah teacher here, and I have spoken about it a lot lately. Simi also knew Nechama personally, and we both agreed that though Nechama was close to many people, she had a special relation to Joy...that Joy in a way was like the daughter Nechama never had. I remember Joy telling me other intimate stories of conversations between her and Nechama, the kinds of things that could be said only “woman to woman”...intimate things she could not put in the article. And also once how Nechama was so amazed when Joy had to leave her early from one of her regular Friday visits since it was the first time Joy was hosting guests for Shabbat and Nechama was amazed that Joy was cooking up a whole Shabbat meal since she, Nechama, never cooked — and how impressed she was...and how Joy smiled about this and tried to tell Nechama, the most brilliant woman Torah scholar of our generation, no it was really quite easy to figure how to cook cholent! Through Joy, I felt I merited to get to know Nechama, whom I never met personally.

Right before I left Israel again in 1999 to go back to the US, Joy gave me a letter she wrote to me but asked me not to read it in her presence. It was a beautiful letter expressing appreciation for my friendship and all the advice, etc. It touched me very much. She said then she did not know why she started to talk to me in that bookstore all those years ago, since she *never* did things like that! So it was all bashert.

Then I came back on aliya —just a month before, she had left for her two-year job in US. We had been in e-mail contact, and I know how terribly painful and traumatic it was for her to leave. The tables, ironically, had turned. I was in Israel permanently, and she was the one who had to go. I remember when she came back to visit after a year away and Rav Kujavski told me had seen her at the Mandel building and she had looked different. How I asked? He thought for a moment and said: “She is not wearing the running shoes anymore.” When I saw her, I saw what he meant. She had acquired a new look, no longer the yeshiva teacher but the sophisticated Manhattan professional woman...her hair grown out, pumps instead of heels. She was running around to do all her professional tasks and meet all her zillion friends and family and was here only for short time but we spoke briefly. She always made sure to call for a second. Another time she came back and she treated me for dinner on her expense account and was complaining that all the available men in New York were “not normal”...and she was going to give it just one more year and then come back. And then suddenly there was Jerry, and we were all so happy.

And there was the engagement party...with her looking like I had never seen her, just glowing — an entire other side of her had emerged. Jerry brought out the deepest womanly part of her...

Then I remember her wedding and as I came up to her at the kabbalat panim, she said, “Susie, can you believe it!!! This is really happening!” Like she could not believe it herself. She said to me she had gotten everything she had always wanted in a partner, and did not have to compromise on anything and it was worth the wait! I remembered our conversation in the bus the few years back and was so happy for her. Joy had pulled it off!...like everything she had set her mind to do. I was standing close by when Jerry came to do the veiling and as he came close to her face and before lifting the veil over he said to her so lovingly, “You look so beautiful!” I re-

member very vividly that as she was doing the circling on the groom under the chuppah, at one point she made as if to start jogging and smiled mischievously. Another typical Joy moment. And how as they left the chuppah before they left the area where we all sat, they started dancing together...It was so typical of her. She wrote me once from a program in California she was doing and said it was great but she missed Jerry...and I could tell how close they were. In her last e-mail to me after she had gotten the awful news of the recurrence of her tumor to the brain, she wrote to me, "No pity, OK? I just want to continue life as 'normally' as I can, whatever that means. Especially for Jerry."

All through her illness she was full of hope, wrote me always promptly to thank me for the notes I sent her, even on the morning of surgery, and said all of it would help her healing process. She especially loved the digital photo I sent her last winter of a new restaurant that opened right at the end of my street called, ironically, "Joy." I told her: "See all of Jerusalem is waiting for your return!" She sent it to all her friends. She wanted to know if it was a kosher restaurant so I went back, checked, and photographed the menu of Joy's Bar and Grill and sent it to her, and when she was back in March, she told me she loved walking past the restaurant and had gone in to ask them if they remembered the strange woman who had come in to photograph their menu for a friend, because she was the friend: Joy. I think of her every time I look at the restaurant.

So I see her in my mind's eye, like in a slide show, that figure standing behind me in the bookstore, and the one with the clipboard on the bus smiling and calmly and energetically directing our tiyul, and the one glowing and beautiful at kabbalat panim and standing with Jerry at her engagement party surrounded by her endless admirers and friends. And I have a very vivid image of her when we had some program at Ramat Rachel for the Jerusalem Fellows. At the end of a very long day, instead of taking the bus back or getting a ride, she was still chipper and dressed in her sneakers and backpack, and said no she wanted to walk back home — and smiling and waving goodbye, she strode off down the road past the olive groves and cypresses of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, erect, purposefully and quickly...and it was a "Joy moment" and I could feel how she so loved the feel of her feet on the ground of Eretz Yisrael. Sometimes, I imagine her leaving us that way now — just turning around to walk on her own, in her sneakers with her backpack on, waving, smiling, and striding purposefully off alone down the road.

The day after the levayah, I was going on the bus to Bar-Ilan from Jerusalem and my thoughts were occupied with her and the night before...And as I looked out the bus window onto the Harei Yehuda and landscape as it changed and we descended to the Shefeila, the wonderful changing contours of the ancient mountains, the play of intense colors of beige and dark and silver green, the hay fields mown and ready for Shavuot like in some Van Gogh painting, the endless blue sky, the red tile roofs, and I looked at the faces on the bus, the melange of Am Yisrael, haredim in black learning Gemarras and bobbies from Bnei Brak saying Tehillim, young sleeping soldiers hands clasping their cellphones, dati-leumi Bar-Ilan students, in kippot serguot, secular Tel Aviv girls in tight pants and halter tops, etc., etc. I thought: Joy so loved this road, this scene, these mountains, these people. I remember when we came back from one of the Jerusalem Fellows tiyulim, as the bus went up the road to Jerusalem she said how it never ceased to thrill her...to come back and pinch herself that she lived in Jerusalem.

So I sat there on the bus looking out at the mountains and sky and hills and flowers and people "for her and with her"...and I often do now as I make that trip and especially as we pass Beit Shemesh, where her kever is now, and remember that she is back in and one with this land. again... I see the landscape of Eretz Yisrael with the love and energy and optimism she radi-

ated...a gift she continues to give me...especially in these hard times here. I think she would be happy to know that was the way I thought of her and held her in my heart—and will always hold her in my heart.

As Simi Peters put it to me the last few weeks, as we spoke of Joy, she said, “Susie, Joy was really like a little sister to you.” And I said, “Yes, that was exactly it!” I only have a brother...but it was so...she put it into words. She was a soul sister, a friend, a buddy, a colleague, an inspiration.

Each of us who knew Joy well has inside of us a little of fragment of her light, a different facet of her light, and it is a gift we can give each other now, in keeping her with us...and sharing her with others... This is mine.

Her life was a blessing to all she touched, and will always be so.

*In addition to the eulogies included in this collection, other tributes, for which texts are not available, were delivered by Joy's father, her brother Geoffrey, Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier of Fifth Avenue Synagogue, Rabbi Peretz Steinberg of Young Israel of Queens Valley, and Rabbi Reuven Aberman.*

*Below is an e-mail account of Joy's funeral in Israel from Shalom Dinerstein:*

**From:** [Shalom Dinerstein](#)  
**To:** [rabbi@fifthavenuesynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@fifthavenuesynagogue.org)  
**Cc:** [Jonathan Schwartz](#) ; [tropez14@yahoo.com](mailto:tropez14@yahoo.com)  
**Sent:** Monday, May 24, 2004 9:21 AM  
**Subject:** Funeral of Joy Balsam

Dear Rav Kermaier, Rav Schwartz and Larry Present,

Shalom!

I want to share with you the most extraordinary experience I had last night at the Eretz Hachaim cemetery near Beit Shemesh.

There were hundreds and hundreds of people at the funeral last night; the crowd was so large that many were not even able to enter the chapel where the hespedim were given. An incredible variety of people - all ages, all kinds of backgrounds, secular (apparently, at least according to the clothing) and religious.

To my great sorrow, I have been to far too many funerals, including some (like Sunday's) that were truly tragic. But I have never been to such a dignified, mechubad levayah as last night's. If it had not been such a sad occasion, it could have been a vast shiur Torah, musar shmooze and lesson in Halakha all combined into one.

There were many hespedim: Jerry spoke first, and then Joy's sister Michelle, Joy's father, the son of another sister (I think), a young man who apparently was in a family that got to know Joy well in Jerusalem, Joy's brother, perhaps a few more speakers, and at the end, Rabbi Aberman of Michlelet Moriah, where Joy once studied (I think).

It seems strange to say it, but the effect of each hesped and then the combined power of all the hespedim together was uplifting. Although I never actually met Joy, by the end of the evening I felt I "knew" her very well.

Each and every hesped, in its own way, was dignified and gave honor. But the most remarkable of all was Jerry's. I am not saying this "stam" to "give a compliment." No one knew how he found the koach to rise to the challenge. I have never heard a more remarkable, beautiful tribute. And I doubt I ever will hear anything approaching it for its content and for feeling. He even made people laugh! If it is a mitzvah to maspid, then Jerry fulfilled the mitzvah mehadrin min hamehadrin.

I don't know if there can be any consolation after such a tragedy. But if there is even the tiniest opening for the smallest amount of consolation, it is that the maspedim gave such honor to the nifteret.

I believe that the hespedim were video-taped. If you should have an opportunity to see the video, or even hear tape recordings, you will understand what an extraordinary experience it was.



About 5 or 6 years ago, on a family visit to New York, I was in the Fifth Avenue Synagogue on a Friday night, and Jerry, realizing I was “new,” came up to me and greeted me with a “Shalom Aleichem.” In chatting, we realized that we had an indirect keshet: his sister Sheri Gross also lived in Har Nof; her husband Menachem had been our pediatrician; and her son Naftali was in class with my son Yosi. And so on successive annual visits to NYC, I always looked forward to seeing Jerry and talking with him. He gave us valuable tips on shopping for food, minyanim, stores, etc. So he is not really a “close friend” of mine, but I consider him a good friend, always there if you needed him. When I called Sheri Gross Friday morning to know of Joy’s condition, and Sheri told me the devastating news, she also said that Joy was also that kind of person - always there if you needed her.

I guess that is all - I wanted to share this with you.

I don’t have Rav Israel Halpert’s e-mail - could you please share this with him. Thanks.

Also, please feel free to share this with anyone else in the kehila to whom it would be meaningful.

All the best,

Chag Sameach!

Shalom

Rabbi Jeffrey Saks, a graduate of the Jerusalem Fellows (Machzor 16), is the director of ATID.

[saks@atid.org](mailto:saks@atid.org)

## Joy (Rochwarger) Balsam ז"ל

Joy (Rochwarger) Balsam ז"ל, who died on May 21<sup>st</sup> in New York at the age of 37, proved the Talmudic dictum: שמא גרים, that one's name has an effect on her nature (*Berakhot* 7b). Her parents יבלחט"א were surely blessed with foresight in selecting the name Joy, and she epitomized it, both in the happiness countless people experienced in friendships with her, but more so in the sense of *Joie de vie*: full, spirited, vigorous engagement with and love of life – both temporal and spiritual.

Joy had many accomplishments, personal and professional. She grew up in Queens, NY, received her BA from Barnard, and wrote her MA thesis at Touro College on the *Ishbitzer*. She had begun her teaching at the Shevach High School in Queens, but following her *aliyah*, and for most of her tragically short career, she was the Assistant to the Dean at Midreshet Moriah, a Jerusalem seminary for Diaspora students who spend a year or two studying in Israel after high school. It was there, as a teacher and coordinator of the Beit Midrash that she found her niche as a mentor to the many hundreds of young women that passed through the school over the years, and with whom she maintained close contact.

During her time as a Jerusalem Fellow she established Atara (Alternatives for Torah Renaissance Abroad), to serve as a framework for what was by then her longstanding commitment to and involvement with Polish Jewry. She would travel regularly to Poland to teach and organize *Shabbatonim* and study seminars, for some years going for a few days each month, and arranging for some of the leading rabbis, teachers and scholars from Israel and America to serve there as scholars-in-residence. From her hospital bed, days before succumbing to the cancer, she was still organizing and giving instructions for the next teacher scheduled to make the trip. On one occasion when I had the privilege to teach a group of Joy's students who had been brought to Israel for a more intense summer seminar, it was obvious to me that Joy was, for these Jews, the virtually exclusive lifeline to all things Jewish. This, to my mind, is one of the unique things about her contribution to Jewish education: She was able to see things from a different, often global perspective. With the opening of Eastern Europe to Torah learning and Jewish experiences in the 1990s, most American educators approached the opportunities presented from a local viewpoint: now we can bring our North American, British, Israeli, etc., students to see Krakow and Warsaw – what a positive effect it will have on them to see the "old country". Not to belittle the value of such programs, Joy saw things differently. She said to herself (and anyone else that would listen), "There are still Jews there, and we dare not give up on them." She knew someone had to teach them, and help them re-forge a new Jewish identity – the renaissance, as she called it. She jumped in, pulling along so many other talented people, with the same energy and contagious enthusiasm that she brought to everything she did.

During her years in Israel Joy developed a very close relationship with Nechama Leibowitz ז"ל, one of the twentieth century's leading teachers of *Tanakh*. Committed to the principle that "*shimush talmidei/ot hakhamim*" is as essential as any cognitive learning, Joy supplemented her attendance at Nechama's *shiurim* and the more intimate setting of her renowned Thursday night classes (conducted in her apartment), by

accompanying Nechama on her Friday shopping and errands for the last six years of the great teacher's life. The deep and personal bond they formed helped crystallize Joy's own commitment to *Ahavat Hashem* as the polestar for all Torah teaching, and – from Joy's own account – was a profoundly formative component in her own religious, personal and professional development. To those that knew her well it's unnecessary to mention that Joy's commitment to *Talmud Torah*, spiritual growth, and working towards personal improvement, were foci of her existence. To those that didn't know her, it would be impossible to adequately explain exactly how fully this informed who she was, and how she interacted with others. [See Joy's tribute to Nechama, "Words on Fire" in *Torah of the Mothers*, ed. O. Elper and S. Handelman (Urim, 2000), pp. 57-81.]

Although I seem to always remember knowing Joy (I can't remember where or when we first met), it was only during the year that we overlapped as Jerusalem Fellows that we really became close. During the program Joy impressed everyone – especially in the give-and-take, rough-and-tumble discussions and seminars – as a person of *substance*. As was mentioned in her sister Michelle's eulogy (and by many others), Joy was *real*. *Authentic*. An *Isha Chashuva*. I developed a great admiration for her, and she became involved with us in the first, founding year of ATID. Had she not gone to New York after the Fellows, we had both hoped that she would have come to work with us in the administration of our program. Until her final illness we would still occasionally talk and email about a project she wanted to do for ATID "one day": to prepare a teacher's resource guide for using Rav Hutner's *Pachad Yitzchak* (one of her passions) as a source for teaching Jewish thought.

Paradoxically, her substance and seriousness never alienated students or colleagues. On the contrary, it drew them nearer. Her humor, playfulness, and warmth blended perfectly with her candor and drive; her deep commitment to tradition and traditionalism was only enhanced – never compromised – by her unconventionality.

The same global vision I mentioned above allowed her to show concern for projects that others were involved in. After a failed fundraising attempt for Atara, she immediately called me to let me know that this otherwise unknown foundation couldn't help her out, but would likely be interested in ATID, and thus helped us secure early seed money for our program. (This story may be atypical – few donors could reject her. She was an effective fundraiser for her causes not because she could sell someone a "bill of goods". She couldn't. Her commitment, vision, charisma – in the positive sense of the term – did the job for her. Some of the leading philanthropic forces in the Modern Orthodox community supported her projects because they knew *this* was a person worth backing.)

On the final day of seminars at the Jerusalem Fellows, we had a concluding program in which everyone was asked to bring in some object, and describe how that symbolizes what they gained from the year. Honestly, I don't remember what anyone else, including myself, brought or said (besides a particular woman's hat – *ha-meivin yavin*), except for Joy. She had a type of child's wind-up toy, which, when released, would bound about the floor in a convulsive frenzy. She said that a friend had once bought it for her as a gift, because that's how she viewed Joy: boundless energy. Joy said that during the year at the Fellows she had begun to think that it might be time to put more focus into what she was doing, personally and professionally – stop bouncing about quite so much – although surely not to diminish the seriousness she brought to her work and life. This may have been part of the reason she chose to go on "*shli-*

*chut*” to New York during these last four years (there was never any doubt she’d return to Israel). She worked first at the Mandel Foundation’s North American office, where she was responsible for setting up training programs for Jewish educators in JCCs. Most recently, she was a program officer at Avi Chai, where she took great pride in her work overseeing the publication of BabageNewz, the prize-winning journal for children, used in Jewish schools. With her typical professionalism and enthusiasm, she sank herself into her work, but she was candid to her friends that she was working with similar vigor at “settling down”. Her whirlwind romance with Jerry Balsam culminated with their March 2003 Jerusalem wedding. Those that danced at that wedding never saw a bigger smile on what was always a smiley face.

Tragically, within a half-year she was diagnosed with melanoma. At first there was optimism, but the remission was fleeting, and in little over a year she had died.

Her infectious joy and enthusiasm, substance and authenticity – and that smile! – won the hearts of countless students, colleagues and friends, in America, Israel and Poland, who will always treasure the memories of Joy.

## תנצב"ה

*To download a packet of obituaries and eulogies as a PDF file, click here: [www.atid.org/joy.pdf](http://www.atid.org/joy.pdf)*

*To share your memories of Joy with her family, or to send condolences, contact Joy’s sister, Michelle Berkowitz, at [lmberko@barak-online.net](mailto:lmberko@barak-online.net)*