

## **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT-Brittney Kohn Goldberg (Akiva '04)**

*Brittney Kohn Goldberg (Alumni '04) graduated as salutatorian of Yeshiva University Sy Syms School of Business in June 2009. An amateur fencer, Brittney was the first woman fencer from YU to qualify for the NCAA Regional Championship Fencing Tournament in Foil. She is currently working for Hyatt International Hotels as an International Sales Coordinator. Brittney recently married YU student, Asher Goldberg, who produces MACSLIVE.COM (home of YU Basketball); a “slam dunk” shidduch for the daughter of longtime Akiva basketball coach Ken Kohn and his wife, Marilyn.*

### **“Q and A” with Akiva alum Brittney Kohn Goldberg**

**AKIVA:** How did you get involved in competitive fencing?

**BKG:** “I came back from my year-and-a-half at Midreshet Moriah in Israel and took a fencing class. I found that I enjoyed the strategy and endurance required by the sport and joined the team. By my senior year, I was voted captain. This past year, my team competed against teams from across the Northeast, including Vassar, Columbia and Harvard. On an individual level, I qualified for the NCAA regional championships where I competed against the region’s top fencers, including a woman from Columbia who represented the U.S. at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

“We often played out of our league; playing against much more seasoned players. From these competitions, I learned that sometimes the underdog does win (in one of our regional competitions I beat a girl from Cornell who had been playing for more than a decade); and that when you try your hardest sometimes you really accomplish what you set out to do – and often exceed your expectations.”

**AKIVA:** You were at Akiva from pre-nursery through 12<sup>th</sup> grade; what are some of your fondest memories?

**BKG:** “There are so many. I loved the bonding we had outside of the classroom, like Tamarack, basketball and my eighth grade play produced by Mrs. Kessler. I loved that the whole school is in one building and that because we were always together we became one family.

**AKIVA:** What is most special to you about Akiva?

**BKG:** “The teachers really cared. They inspired us to push ourselves harder, to learn more and to spark our curiosity. Yes, we are a small school in Michigan but there is no doubt that with our education we can achieve whatever we want to achieve.

“I now have friends from all over the country. I have been their classmates in yeshivot in Israel and in America. I can objectively state that my fellow Akiva alumni and I were academically prepared for the “bigger stage” and, at times, more advanced than our peers – in both Judaic and secular subjects. For example, I remember excelling on an Ivrit aptitude test upon my arrival to Israel and the head of the program asking me where I learned Ivrit – I simply said, “Yeshivat Akiva.”

**AKIVA:** How is Akiva a part of who you are today?

**BKG:** “I credit my love of Israel to Akiva. Israel was such a focal point of our education – from the Israeli teachers and Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations to the decorations in the hallway. Mrs. Kessler taught me to love literature when I didn’t like to read; and my Judaic teachers, especially Mrs. Rena Spolter, who recently made Aliya, inspired my love of Tanach .

“I now want to give back to the school and re-connect with fellow alumni on a personal and professional level. I also want to promote Akiva as an institution. I recognize the pivotal role Akiva plays as a center for modern orthodoxy and religious Zionism for the entire Detroit community. For my friends and myself, I recognize the critical part Akiva played in shaping who we are today and in coloring the choices we make religiously, professionally and in our efforts on behalf of the greater community.”