Dr. Beth Sharon Samuels
Drisha Scholar, Mathematician, Beloved Wife, Mother, Daughter, Sister, and Friend
March 24, 1975 – January 5, 2007

“Kindness and truth shall stand before you” – Psalms 89:15

Dr. Beth Samuels was a gifted teacher of the Torah and mathematics, inspiring her audiences with her passion for learning and life. She was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, and was an alumna of YULA High School and Michlalah in Jerusalem. During her high school years, Beth became an activist in causes of hesed and women’s opportunities for serious Torah study, and continued to pursue these causes fervently throughout her brief life.

Her childhood education gave her a profound appreciation for a Torah-encompassing life. However, she was not exposed to what she described as the “intellectual immersion” into Torah study until she began learning at Drisha Institute during her college years at Columbia University. At Columbia, she also directed the hevrutah program “Wednesday Night Learning,” attracting hundreds of students to commit to serious weekly Torah learning. She was also active in Lights-in-Action, an organization concerned with providing a forum for Jewish education and awareness at secular colleges, and she spent time with YUSSR in the Ukraine running programs for Russian Jews.

After graduating college, Beth studied full time at the Scholars Circle at Drisha in the Talmud and Tanakh program. She also served as an auxiliary New York City police officer while she was living there. At this time, Beth married Ari Tuchman. Her pursuit of knowledge then led her to earn a doctorate in mathematics from Yale University, where she focused on number theory and automorphic forms. She continued to teach Torah extensively to the New Haven community as well as to lead women’s prayer groups and Purim megilah readings. As a graduate of the Drisha Scholars program, Beth frequently traveled around the country as a scholar-in-residence. For two years, she commuted to New York City to direct and teach in the Drisha high school program. Beth and Ari’s family also grew with the joyous birth of their first daughter, Danelle.

Soon after relocating to Palo Alto, California, Beth and Ari celebrated the birth of their second daughter, Natalia. Beth prioritized her time with her family, infusing her love for Judaism and her unswerving emunah into her home. She became an assistant professor of mathematics at UC Berkeley and continued to be active in the ritual, intellectual, and communal life of the Bay Area Jewish community. Beth also remained continuously connected to both women’s learning in general and Drisha specifically. She returned to New York City to teach both at the Drisha dinner and the new winter week for high school girls and consulted on high school activities. Just a few months before she died, Beth was the keynote speaker at a Los Angeles conference on girls’ education at Modern Orthodox schools. The Dr. Beth Sharon Samuels High School Program at Drisha Torah Institute has been set up in Beth’s memory so that young Jewish women from around the world can study Jewish texts and grow in their Jewish commitment.