

# **MEMORIES**

**THE BERGEN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL  
OF JEWISH STUDIES**

**CLASS OF 2016 - 5776**



May 24, 2016

This booklet contains memories and reflections from our thirty-five graduates on their learning experiences and friendships cultivated at BCHSJS over their years here.

We congratulate our graduating seniors for their commitment to Jewish study throughout their middle school and high school years. I am sure you join me in wishing them all the best in their future endeavors. We say *lehitra'ot b'karov* (see you soon) - not goodbye.

Graduates, may you continue to grow and pursue more Hebrew and Jewish learning in your college years and beyond. Mazal tov v'b'hatzlacha!

Fondly,  
Fred Nagler and the entire BCHSJS Family

*Joshua ben Perahia would say: Make for yourself a Rav (teacher), and acquire for yourself a colleague, and give all individuals the benefit of the doubt.* ***Pirkei Avot 1:6***

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## Risa Anczelowicz

Throughout the five years of attending BCHSJS I have participated in a lot of trips. One trip I got involved in was going to NOLA to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. This trip made me realize how important volunteering is and the importance of helping others. I went on the Six flags trip a few times. Every time I went, I got to experience a new ride I had never been on before. I went on some of the overnight trips where I got the opportunity to swim, watch movies, go to the gym, and not get much sleep. I got to experience some of the Shabbatons where I learned how to pray through meditation, star gaze, make s'mores, and play board games.



I have made so many friends through BCHSJS. I started out with my friends who I went to Hebrew school with from my town. By ninth grade most of my friends had left BCHSJS. I ended up making new friends through the trips. One class I took was the Leadership class where I worked with a school in Israel. When the Israelis came to America I was so fortunate to host two Israeli girls who became my best friends. I know I am going to be friends with them for a long time.

From the Leadership class I was selected to go to Israel. We went to a few schools and prepared activities for the students. I was exposed to Israeli salad and music. I learned about the IDF and heard soldiers speak about their experience in the IDF. My favorite part was going to Jerusalem and visiting the Wailing Wall. I had the opportunity of writing a note that I was able to put in the wall.

A class that all the seniors had to take this year was the Senior Seminar. This class included what life would be like as a Jew in college. There are some people I will be meeting in college who have never met anyone who is Jewish. I have been told to get involved in Hillel during college. I plan on celebrating the Jewish holidays.

I have made some pretty interesting memories that happened on trips or being in school. I got to see one of my teachers get her marriage proposal and attended her wedding. I'll never forget when we had to switch locations of our school. From eighth grade to tenth grade we attended at the Ma'ayanot School. Then we switched to the Moriah School because the technology was "better". At one of the Shabbatons my friends and I got involved in scaring people behind a window. It was funny to see the reactions on peoples' faces. It will be weird not attending BCHSJS next year, but it has made a huge impact on my life.

## Tamir Bejar

My four years attending the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies have been truly full of great memories, both with friends and teachers alike. I came to BCHSJS in ninth grade after graduating from the Solomon Schechter Day School of Bergen County. I was lucky because coming into a new school, I already knew many of my classmates who came from SSDS with me. While I mainly enrolled at BCHSJS because my parents made me, I was completely fine with the idea of going to a Sunday Hebrew school because it was a chance for me to reunite with many of my good friends from elementary and middle school, and meet many new people.



I remember getting together with my Schechter friends who I knew would also attend BCHSJS and made sure we all signed-up for the same classes. After a few sessions, it was clear that

was not necessary, for the teachers really made the school a great learning environment where we could both learn and have fun.

Freshman year's Shabbaton, I have to say, was my favorite trip out of all of my four years here. We went to Camp Ramah in the Berkshires for the weekend, and I can honestly say that I have strengthened and created relationships with my peers and teachers that will last, hopefully, for many more years to come. We hung out at the beach of Ramah's lake, played Frisbee, basketball, and other sports, sat at a bonfire, and engaged in learning groups. The teachers who chaperoned the Shabbaton participated in all the different activities and showed their true passion for teaching. After that Shabbaton, I can honestly say that I look up to some of my teachers, not only with the respect they earn for being an adult and being my teacher, but with the respect one shows his mentors.

The past four years have been full of Shabbatons, overnights, and field trips which were not only full of fun and learning, but also created stronger bonds between my friends, teachers, and self. I am proud to say that not only am I a student at the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies, but that I was fortunate enough to be President of the Student Council. It scares me to think how quickly four years have gone by, but when I reflect on my years here, I smile at the bonds that I have formed, the fun which I had, and the personal growth which I experienced through this school.

## **Blake Bichler**

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In the many wonderful years I spent at BCHSJS, I've definitely had enough time to make some memories. There are so many moments I can look back to and smile about. It would be impossible to pick just one of these moments.

So I won't. I've decided instead to focus on what I consider to be the best part of BCHSJS, the annual Shabbaton. At each Shabbaton there was always something that stayed with me even to this day, and that's besides the wonderful food.

In eighth grade at my first Shabbaton, I cemented all of my friendships. Sure, I could have made friends throughout the year, but being thrown into a room with four people and spending a weekend with 50 strangers pretty much forced me to socialize. I talked to my roommates who introduced me to their friends who introduced me to their friends. Pretty soon we had a group that conquered entire tables in the lunchroom.

My second Shabbaton? Well now that I had a nice group to be a part of, I got a little cocky. This is the story of how I made half of an entire grade hate me. It was a cold morning, and the only other person awake was an old buddy of mine named Tom. "It's freezing," he said. He spoke words of insight. How were we to get warm? With a hot shower of course. We took the two shower stalls at 5:30 in the morning. Now that would have been fine on its own. Nobody has ever woken-up because of loud running water before, right? Well the water wasn't the issue. The real issue at hand was the fact that my boy Tom and I decided to have a conversation. Have you ever tried to talk over the sound of a running shower? It's very difficult. Our natural response to this dilemma was to shout everything that came out of our mouths. In time, we had effectively woken-up everyone in the cabin before 6 am. The death stares of twenty-five adolescents are something I definitely won't be forgetting soon.



I couldn't attend the next Shabbaton. The one that year was more calm than the others. The senior year Shabbaton had enough excitement to last me through the years to come. It was a cool and quiet night. The lake at the camp glistened in the moonlight. Our lovely teacher and mentor, Barnett, had gathered the senior class for a journey. He led us down a long winding path and up a staircase I didn't think would hold. We looked around at what I considered a rather boring sight: a large amphitheater. While I thought to myself "this isn't very exciting", Barnett very kindly spoon fed the instructions to tilt our heads upwards. We looked up at the night sky and saw why he had taken us there. At that moment for the first time in my life I saw what the night sky looked like with no pollution. The stars were outstanding. Those few seconds of bliss were the prime moments of all my years at BCHSJS, gazing at the stars with friends I had known since my first days at BCHSJS.

The story isn't over yet. Oh no, there is more. You see, it tends to be windy near large bodies of water such as a lake. So while we stared into the sky, a gust of wind rattled the two large storage garage doors. In the dead of night, surrounded by no sound at all, we suddenly heard booming crashes and clanks. I thought to myself, "Is this the end?" It wasn't, but while our little group fled in terror away from the nightmarish sounds of what was either wind against metal doors or an axe wielding prison escapee, I thought to myself how lucky I was to be sharing the moment with the lifelong friends that I had made at the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies.

## **Cole Caplan**

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I walked into BCHSJS for the first time as a little eighth grader and I can say that five years later I am nothing like that kid who first walked into BCHSJS. It has changed all aspects of my life, like my knowledge of Judaism, my friendships and my overall confidence as a person.

The memories I've made at BCHSJS will always be an important part of my life. These experiences included everything from spending a week in Israel to jumping up and down on the floor at the Shabbaton to purposely keep the girls awake all night.

Five years later, everything has changed. Most of my friends who I came to BCHSJS with are gone, so I've had the opportunity to make new friendships that I'll treasure for a long time. BCHSJS has not only taught me how to be a better person, but to be more confident in myself and to try to put myself out there. BCHSJS stands for the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies, but I feel like I've learned more about other things besides Judaism during my five years here.



## **Jeremy Fine**

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BCHSJS has been a great experience for me. I've made a lot of friends and learned valuable traits that I will always have. By attending BCHSJS, I've learned how to confront anti-Semitic comments and defend the State of Israel and my religion. I will be attending Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island where I will be studying Culinary Arts and Hospitality. I look forward to going and pursuing my dream of being a chef.

## **Ilana Fishman**

The Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies has given me a reassuring foundation of Judaism. I started coming to BCHSJS when I was a freshman in high school, partially as a result of my parents' encouragement and partly due to my own interest in continuing my Jewish education. Having the opportunity to attend a Jewish school felt comfortable, since it represented a way to continue my Judaic education as a follow up to my years at Solomon Schechter. During my sophomore year, I joined a Jewish parodies class that Heather was teaching. In the class we had to make Jewish parody music videos about the Jewish holidays. A few of the videos that we made were about Chanukah and Passover. These videos consisted of us dancing and singing to new lyrics we created for a well-known song. My junior year Shabbaton was very exciting. Barnett, Avital and a group of my friends decided to prank Heather and other BCHSJS students. We went outside and hid underneath the windows so no one would see us. When we heard Heather walking down the hallway, we jumped up from outside and scared her. We were all laughing hysterically as we surprised other seniors.

Another memory is also from my junior year Shabbaton when we split up into teams and one person from each group had to make a teacher laugh while they had water in their mouth. One of my team members was able to make all the teachers laugh on the first try and everyone ended up laughing.

In my senior year I was given the opportunity to join a class called Volunteer Corps in which a group of us visited The Jewish Home. We conversed with the elderly and discovered their past and their stories. This class was very meaningful and special to me because I was able to bring joy and entertainment to the elderly. Another fond memory at BCHSJS involved Heather and Matt's engagement. I remember Heather walking into the cafeteria with a huge smile on her face. I looked at her hand and noticed the ring. I was so happy for them.

During my senior Shabbaton, Barnett took all the seniors out on a star gazing walk, during which we reflected on our years at BCHSJS and reminisced about all the memories and friends we've made. I've grown as a person and made friends from different towns. I have developed more pride in my Jewish heritage and have been inspired and motivated to be a part of Jewish organizations and communities. Waking up on Sunday mornings took some time to get used to, but after a while it became a habit and something I looked forward to. I am going to miss BCHSJS and I hope it continues to grow and prosper in the coming years. Congratulations class of 2016!



## Emily Forer

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Coming to BCHSJS weekly never felt like a chore. I genuinely looked forward to waking-up early Sunday mornings. Personally, BCHSJS was the equivalent of a family. I've made so many memories over the years, and I know I will treasure them all. Having to choose only a few to write about is very difficult for me.



One memory in particular was when a couple of my friends and I scared a teacher, Heather, at a Shabbaton. Barnett, another teacher, had taken us outside to stargaze for a little while, off one of the main hallways in the building where we were staying, and although it was cold, we loved having that quiet moment to ourselves. As I turned to go back inside, I noticed that other students walking through the hallway had no idea there were other students right outside the windows!

I immediately yelled out to everybody outside that we should hide under the windows and scare people, and we should specifically try to scare Heather. We all ran and hid underneath the windowsills, nervously waiting. It was icy cold and painful to squat for so long, but the look on Heather's face was so worth it when we all jumped up, screamed and banged on the windows. Heather and I have created a really close bond these past five years, so she wasn't mad at me for too long afterwards.

Another memory that stands out would be taking Barnett's mandatory core class in eighth grade, then coming full circle and taking his mandatory seminar class for twelfth grade. I didn't just connect with my peers at BCHSJS; I got along with almost every teacher, too. Barnett was the first teacher I got to know in eighth grade, and he quickly became one of my favorites. In that first year, as a scared, lonely eighth grader, Barnett's warm friendly face and cheesy jokes could always cheer me up. At my first Shabbaton that year, I was watching him bang on the teacher's table while he was benching after dinner, and I decided I wanted to learn (and hang out with him). I jumped up from my table, ran over to his, sat down next to him, and demanded he teach me. Then Barnett and I benched together at every Shabbaton over the following years.

I wasn't really able to take his other classes after eighth grade. Yet, with all the trips and events BCHSJS offered, I was able to maintain a close relationship with him. Taking his Senior Seminar class this year was bittersweet. I both loved and hated it. As fun as it was to talk about our future schools or our futures in general, it also reminded me that wherever we all went, he wasn't going to be there with us. I am done with waking up early Sunday mornings. My friends are leaving and going all across the world. I hate thinking about all of that. I will forever be grateful to BCHSJS for providing me with the opportunity to create these bonds, friendships, and memories.

## Allon Goldberg

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## Sophie Goldberg

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I will never forget the eighth grade Shabbaton where I met one of my closest BCHSJS friends, Rachel Silverman. From then on my group of friends has only grown. The Shabbatons have always been my favorite trips, but I also loved seeing Blue Man Group, and just being able to come to Hebrew high every Sunday and seeing all my friends. Heather, Avital, and Barnett are great teachers and I'm so glad to have taken their classes on everything from Israel to Disney and children's books. I am super excited to take everything that BCHSJS has taught me to college next year and I'm hoping to keep in touch with all my friends and teachers even after I graduate.



In eighth grade, I went on my first Shabbaton, what I consider the "real" start of my BCHSJS career. My best friend, Alyssa, got sick and couldn't go. I was upset, but still excited. Vice-Principal Rebecca approached me about a new girl who was going on the Shabbaton, but she didn't really know anyone. Rebecca was hoping that I would introduce myself to her and help her make new friends. This girl's name was Rachel Silverman. Rachel and I talked the whole bus ride there and the weekend was a great experience for both of us. We've gotten so close since then and our friend group has only grown. She is way more outgoing than she first seemed, which I love about her, but Rachel is always looking out for others, and she has the biggest heart of anyone I know. I couldn't imagine not being friends with her. It was all because of the BCHSJS Shabbaton, one of the best experiences of my life.

I'm so happy to have been able to meet Rachel, and all my other friends at BCHSJS. It has been so nice to have friends all over Bergen County, who I see inside and outside of Hebrew high school. I can't imagine leaving all these amazing people next year, and all my amazing teachers, but being able to spend every Sunday for the past five years at Hebrew high school has been one of the best experiences of my life thus far. I know I will cherish the friendships and memories I've made here forever. In the words of Dr. Seuss, "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

## Melissa Gotlib

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I didn't know what to expect when I started attending BCHSJS in eighth grade. After going to Hebrew school at my synagogue for many years, I was worried that I wouldn't be able to adjust to a new school. As it turns out, I had nothing to be afraid of because I realized that I was not alone. So many of my friends from Fair Lawn started this new journey with me and we instantly began to make new friends from all over Bergen County. Not only was it amazing to make connections with the other students, but the teachers were incredibly friendly as well. Forming all of these bonds helped shape me into the person I am today. I first realized how special these relationships were to me during my eighth grade Shabbaton. Ramah Nyack was my old summer camp, so I was looking forward to returning and experiencing it in a completely different way with a different group of people. Spending Shabbat with BCHSJS allowed me to get to know everyone better and really develop lifelong friendships. I never would have imagined that BCHSJS would

have had such a huge impact on my life and I wouldn't trade the friendships I formed here for anything.

## Liel Green

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It feels surreal that I am graduating from the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies this year. It feels surreal that the connections that I have developed with my friends, my fellow peers, my past and present teachers will be sustained and will last a life time.

My favorite thing about the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies is probably the classes. My favorite memories from my time spent at BCHSJS are all associated with the classes that I have enrolled in and taken. Over the past four years I have taken twenty-four classes. These twenty-four classes have covered a wide and diverse variety of topics. I have taken a class about "exotic Judaism", where I learned about Jewish communities located in remote areas of China and India. I have taken a class about Kabbalah, where I learned about the more mystical side of Judaism and life. I have taken classes about Jewish Meditation, Women in the Bible, Rap and Religion, Jewish ukulele playing (cleverly named "Jewkulele"), modern day slavery, and our responsibility to social activism as Jews.



My friends from school do not believe that these classes even exist, that's how absurd, fantastical, and incredible they sound. The valuable knowledge, information, and lessons that I have gleaned and acquired throughout my years at the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies are incomparable. I feel privileged and honored to have had the opportunity to attend BCHSJS and to now graduate from the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies.

## Noam Green

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Like many others, I didn't enroll in BCHSJS because I had a burning passion to continue my Jewish education. I enrolled because my parents told me to and all of my friends were doing it. From the start, there was a distinct separation between us - the Schechter kids - and the other students at BCHSJS. This was only augmented by the fact that during our first semester, we were all placed in a specific class just for us.



Throughout my years in high school, my old friends from Schechter began to drop out and I realized that it didn't make much of a difference to me. By then the pull of the classes at BCHSJS was far stronger than the prospect of socializing that drew me there in the first place. To date, I've taken twenty-four classes at BCHSJS and not one of them was the same as the last. I have found myself looking forward to Sundays because of the diverse Jewish educational opportunities offered to me at BCHSJS, something that I could never get at my public high school.

Additionally, one of my favorite parts of BCHSJS is the yearly scavenger hunt. If I'm going to be frank, I hate scavenger hunts. Like really, really hate them. However, I'm really into history. The scavenger hunts were awesome because we got to visit these amazing, historically rich locations while hanging out with our friends and going to class. We got to visit Crown Heights, the Lower East Side, and Ellis Island, all of which are locations that are significant to New York City Jewish culture. These trips allowed us to engage with the physical history around us, as well as learn about different manifestations of American Jewish life. The scavenger hunt trips provided us with an opportunity to expand our learning at BCHSJS beyond the classroom, a unique experience which I will never forget.

## David Janowsky

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Five years have gone by faster than I could have imagined. It is not only the people I have met and the friends I have made that have defined my BCHSJS experience, but the friends I have kept. I started out at the Temple Emanuel campus with all my Hebrew school friends, and now I have finished at the Moriah campus with all my Hebrew high school friends.



Before I knew anybody at BCHSJS, I would go to all the overnights just to meet people. At the Temple Emanuel campus, I already knew most of the students, but none from the other campuses. After going to one event and meeting all of the students from the other campuses, I went to every event I could. If not for Hebrew high school, I would have never met some of my good friends. After five years at BCHSJS, I have taken classes as traditional as Laws of Kashrut and as outside the box as Tai Chi. I have taken classes at three different campuses. I have taken classes with teachers who no longer teach. But, all the way through, the one constant has been that I was surrounded by my many friends.

**Edan Kamara**

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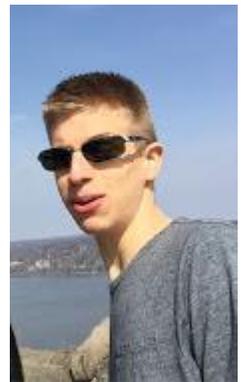
Some of my best memories come from several of the classes that I took over the last four years. One of my favorite classes was with Michael Alweis in which we got to learn about Jews in different parts of the world, from South America to Southeast Asia, studying the culture, fashion, and food. It was such an interesting class. I now have a better understanding of the Jews around the world. In one of the videos that we watched about Jews in Iraq, I recognized a photo of one of my great-great-great grandfathers who was the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad at one point, which was cool to see. Several of my friends from my elementary and middle school, Solomon Schechter Day School came to BCHSJS as well, and it was a great way to keep in touch and see them once a week.



**Daniel Kramer**

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I am grateful that the BCHSJS Leadership program provided me the opportunity to visit and see Israel in an entirely different way than ever before. It was incredible to listen to so many well informed speakers and visit various important historic sights. I enjoyed all my classes at BCHSJS!



**Joshua Lesser**

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My favorite memory was the Shabbaton at Camp Ramah when I was in ninth grade. I will definitely miss all the friends I made at BCHSJS. When I go to college I hope to take all the great things I have learned and apply them so I can become a Jewish leader. I will be attending Dickinson College.



## Jonathan Levin

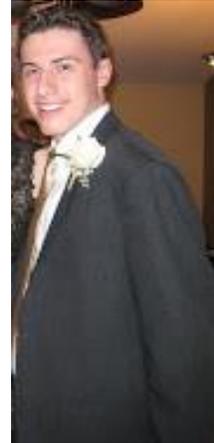
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I have never been fond of change. I always enjoyed maintaining the status quo. For that very reason attending the Bergen County High School of Jewish Studies was not an easy adjustment. It took some time to actually enjoy my classes, but in time I began to see the value. It allowed me to meet new people and branch out of my comfort zone. Not only were the classes enjoyable, but the social experience was unique. I truly believe that it was so vital for me to continue my Jewish education.

One of my fondest memories from BCHSJS was the Young Leadership class. The class changed me as a Jew, a leader, and a human being as I became a much more confident public speaker and more knowledgeable about how to impact others.

I remember vividly when we had just gotten off our Young Leadership flight and touched down in Israel. Our international friends were there to greet us with smiles, food, and hugs. This memory is something that I will cherish for the rest of my life as it taught me the impact of fostering relationships with people from around the world. It has also showed me the infinite amount of great experiences BCHSJS can lead to. While this interaction may seem small to many, it has meant so much to me.

At the end of the trip I won a group award recognizing me as “The Diplomat”. I won this award because of all the values I picked up at BCHSJS. Hebrew high taught me how to communicate with others no matter their background. Hebrew high taught me how to balance Jewish values with my secular values. Hebrew high taught me how to cherish the small amount of time I have with my peers. Although I am graduating this spring, I know that I will never forget BCHSJS. Sunday mornings (and even Monday nights at one point) were made better by being with Jewish teens. I wouldn’t trade these last five years for anything.



## Benjamin Novick

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My favorite memory from BCHSJS was the ninth grade Shabbaton. At first I did not want to go, but it turned out to be the best decision I made. I met a lot of kids whom I bonded with and it changed my experience throughout my four years at BCHSJS.

I will take this moment with me. Attending BCHSJS was something I did not want to do, but it turned out to be the changing moment for me. It shows that you must try new things even if you don't want to.

I am attending Rutgers New Brunswick Business School, majoring in finance.



## Joshua Pasternak

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For the past four years BCHSJS has been my main connection to the Jewish community after I left Schechter. I'll never forget sitting with all my Schechter friends in Rael's class kibitzing about Talmudic law, I'll never forget, at my first Shabbaton, becoming even closer to my old friends and even making some great new additions to the team. I'll never forget showing New Jersey to my new friends from Israel and then they showed me around Nahariya. I'll forget how hard it was to wake-up on Sunday mornings, but I'll never forget my time at BCHSJS.

I will attend the State University of New York at Buffalo.



## Ariel Sabo

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Someone once said, "Life is like a box of chocolates...You have to eat some bad ones in order to get to the good ones." I believe that if I never joined BCHSJS, I would never have had so many memories that I will cherish forever. My all-time favorite memories will forever be the Shabbatons my sophomore and junior years. For those who don't know, each year the Shabbatons were usually at a camp, but my sophomore year we went to a hotel...it was quite the experience of a lifetime: running up and down hallways, going crazy and having a blast. Every Sunday when I wake up early in the morning and go to BCHSJS I think to myself that this is a place that I can be myself and I don't have to be afraid to show who I really am. I'm so grateful for the amazing teachers who have made my experience even more memorable. In the future, I hope to continue my Jewish traditions. I plan on joining a Hillel at Quinnipiac University, which is where I will be studying Journalism and Sports studies...I would like to continue to participate in all the Jewish holidays. I hope to raise my children with all the values and lessons Judaism has taught me. Thanks BCHSJS for the best and unforgettable memories that I will never ever forget.

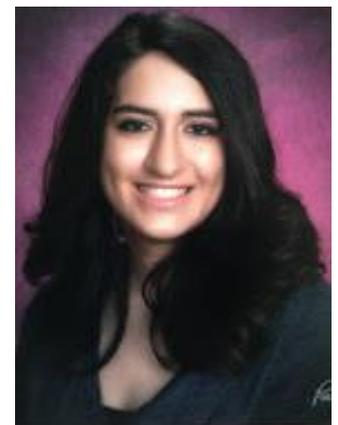


## Alyssa Seigel-Laddy

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The bonds formed through BCHSJS are some of the strongest, similar to those made in math class, an exclusive club, and family. These bonds forged by our group will withstand all time, distance, and life choices that we make in the future. BCHSJS became our common place where we knew we could always see each other. We have teachers, as well as students, that are part of this group. Our connection is so strong that a number of us went to Heather and Matt's wedding (there's photo proof!).

My favorite memory that came from BCHSJS was Heather and Matt's wedding at Temple Beth Shalom. A group of us showed up dressed far better than we would on any normal BCHSJS day. Heather was stunning in her wedding gown, and I don't think she stopped smiling that entire time. We took pictures, met some of her family, and I think Emily was crying



even before the ceremony started. We saw her and Matt sign their ketubah, and then the ceremony started. It was beautiful, and I'm so privileged that I got to be a part of it. When Heather started crying during her vows, we *all* started crying, so tissues were in high demand. No matter what happens after graduation, I will always cherish these memories and know that what we all share will never vanish.

## **Jesse Sifre**

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My most fond memory of BCHSJS is when the Israeli students came to visit the school. Two Israeli students came to each class and shared Israeli culture with us, such as their favorite snacks and games to play in groups. I reminisce of the time when they taught the class to play "Bulldog". It is an icebreaker game that combines rhythm and general silliness. Ever since, I've shared the activity at multiple events and built numerous friendships. During the break, the Israeli students had five stations set up that involved Israeli geography, masked pictures, and candy! Being engulfed in Israeli culture was such an eye opening experience into the daily lives of Israeli children.



## **Michael Silverman**

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My time at BCHSJS has changed me as much, if not more, than many other experiences I have had. I started going because my parents told me I had to go to Hebrew high school and continued to go because I wanted to. Going to BCHSJS is no longer an obligation that I have. I don't mind waking up at nine in the morning every Sunday to go learn. I would choose to be here anyway. I stay because the classes are fun and interesting. I learn new ideas about Judaism and interesting bits about Jewish history in fun classes by great teachers. And of course, I stay for my friends - for the people who I have spent time with over the past five years, the people that I wake up on Sundays to see. They are my reason for going to BCHSJS.



One of the best memories I have of BCHSJS is the Shabbaton I went to in eighth grade. Of all the other trips I went on at BCHSJS, this was the one I remember the most. Even though I had been at BCHSJS for almost a year, it was on this trip that I got a true sense of what the BCHSJS community had. I remember all the students, coming together and enjoying ourselves. I remember the camper run game of manhunt that was organized by older students. No teachers, just kids; the best kind of game. I remember staying up late with my roommates, bothering the people below us and having a good time. This was when I first felt that I truly had a home at BCHSJS.

## Rachel Silverman

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When I entered BCHSJS, I was a tiny, shy, unsure, and uncertain eighth grader. Although my size hasn't changed all that much (but I would like to point out that apparently I've grown an inch this past year), my demeanor has completely flip-flopped. I would be lying if I said that this change of self-awareness is completely a result of BCHSJS, but I would also be lying if I didn't attribute much of this gained confidence to my experiences here.



It was a total chore. In the beginning, I didn't know anyone and I was pretty against branching out, mostly because of my timidness. My mom forced me to go on the Shabbaton, which I felt 110% certain would prove to be a terrible and lonely experience. But there, I was introduced to a friend I am privileged to have met, and she introduced me to all her friends. Soon enough I found myself feeling welcomed and strong in my new squad.

So, every Sunday I would be excited to reunite with these people who soon became my family. The challenges of my public high school became forgotten when I came every Sunday. In my classes we engaged in discussions together, and then laughed and chatted over bagels and KitKats at break. I felt like I belonged and I had finally found my place. And that hasn't changed.

There have been a lot of classes at BCHSJS that have helped me look at new perspectives and have housed discussions that have changed me. I learned about other religions, analyzed books, appreciated life from those reflecting on theirs, became an ethicist, became angry, elated, conflicted, during discussions and most notably became the Jewish woman who is eager to venture the world with all that she has learned.

I wish I could pinpoint more specifically what memories in particular have caused this growth. But I don't think there are a few that have done this. It is truly the overall experience that has really (truly) given me this new confidence in who I am. Coming to a place every Sunday where I feel like I belong, feel like I am worthy to learn, speak up, laugh, and smile, has given me the ability to feel ready to start my adulthood. Without my Sunday mornings being spent this way, I am scared to think about who I would've been as a person. Certainly I wouldn't have the same self-worth as I do today.

I thank BCHSJS for everything. For giving me an education, experiences, and people that I, with no hesitation, call my family. I feel broken to leave but also eager to take the person that it has helped me become out into this crazy world.

## Jake Slomowitz

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My favorite memory from BCHSJS was when I finally realized how grateful I was for choosing to go to a school that not only helped form new relationships, but also a school that strengthened my love for Judaism.



## Alex Sobel

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BCHSJS has helped me to connect with my Jewish heritage and gave me a better understanding of my ethnic roots. I loved meeting and interacting with other students, with whom I have become friends. We share a common interest in Jewish life, past, present, and future.

I will be attending Union College this fall.



## Sydney Sokol

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I have not really done much with BCHSJS throughout the years. I have been here since eighth grade, but I only really made friends in about tenth grade. My mom forced me to come for the first two years, but once I made friends and found my group, everything was good.

I finally became close with a group during senior year, which was a little late, I know. I became close with them because I figured out who my friends were. The Israel trip with the delegation really made me very close with a few of the people in my class.

What really brought me closer to my friends was the Shabbaton senior year. Only about eight students in the senior class went on the trip, so it was a close group. The best part was when we all went out at night. Barnett wanted to start a tradition to do something with just the seniors on the Shabbaton, and since he loves us, he wanted to start the annual senior stargazing with our class. He brought all eight of us onto the stage at the camp at midnight to just reflect on BCHSJS and our time together. Even though we got very scared at the sound of something hitting a door, it was a lovely time together. We stood in a circle and looked up at the stars and just talked about things that we usually would not on a simple Saturday night. It was so pleasant being with people with whom I have spent the past five years. It made me think about my past and how I really want to keep in touch with my friends from home. I have been through a lot with them, so it would not make sense to not make more memories with them.



Very recently, I was in the Jewish Volunteer Corp class with one other friend and Barnett. It is the class that goes to a retirement home to talk to the elderly.

It doesn't matter if the group is at camp, hanging out at BCHSJS, or in whatever building BCHSJS is in, we have fun. So many memories were made from different kinds of rare occurrences or something a little different. When I first started BCHSJS, I did not think I would enjoy it as much as I did. It really brought out my social side and I will definitely keep in touch with the friends I have made here.

## **Joshua Speck**

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During high school, we look back on moments and realize how special they are. One of my greatest moments being involved with BCHSJS was during the leadership trip to Israel.

I was lucky enough to be hosted in the house of the student I housed during his visit to America. I had kept in touch with that student and we had become good friends by the time of the trip. This was also my first time visiting Israel.

On the first morning in Nahariya, he asked me if I wanted to walk his dogs with him. I don't have any pets myself so I said yes. We each walked a dog along the beach since his house was so close to the shore. As we walked we talked about school, our goals, the qualms we have with our governments, and everything in between.

It was remarkably eye-opening. I never would have had the chance to understand life in Israel without this trip because of the connections it allowed me to make. Because of BCHSJS, I've stayed close to my Jewish friends in the area, and made connections halfway across the world.



## **Samantha Tanchel**

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I started BCHSJS with my friends on the Temple Emanuel campus where we had all been going to Hebrew school for the previous seven years. We weren't really exposed to all that BCHSJS had to offer because it was just us, and the class choices were very limited. The next year we moved to Ma'ayanot and that all changed, starting with many group chats trying to pick classes to ensure that we stayed together.

Having the opportunity to be part of the Young Leadership class in my sophomore year taught me how to be an effective leader-not only in the Jewish world, but in my other communities as well. I especially enjoyed being able to connect with Israelis my age via Skype in addition to getting to know them more personally during their visit to New Jersey. Once in Israel, I found that despite the obvious differences in our lives, we had a lot in common with the Israelis.

My time at BCHSJS has allowed me to stay connected in the Jewish world throughout my time in high school. I know that in college I will take what I have learned from my teachers and



stay involved in Hillel or Chabad. BCHSJS has performed an important service in helping prepare us for ways to defend Israel and to make sure that we preserve our Jewish identity in college.

## **Gabrielle Taubefeld**

My favorite memory from BCHSJS is meeting up with all my friends during break.



## **Tova Tencer**

In the fall I will be attending Emerson College.



## **Samuel Vladimirsky**

The night was ideal for two things that cold March by the lake – star gazing and getting scared to death. It was our last Shabbaton as BCHSJS seniors, a heartfelt moment that warranted something special. Our beloved chaperone, Barnett, had something in mind. After celebrating our friend Cayla’s eighteenth birthday with chocolate cake and s’mores, the eight of us gathered by a lakeside pavilion at Surprise Lake Camp; oh, the irony of that name.



Barnett informed us that there was something we just had to see at the camp, a privilege of sorts, so the journey began. We, being the innocent teenagers that we are, coffeeless and exhausted at just past midnight, freely followed our chaperone into the New York woodlands, further and further from our peers. After a few minutes of huddled walking and hushed complaints from the bitter cold, we found ourselves at an old winding set of stairs. The adventure continues.

Staying true to his word, the opposite side of the threshold was indeed something of wonder: an enormous theater pavilion with mounted lights, hundreds of ascending benches, and two twenty foot storage garages on either side. In the distance, we could see the twinkling trail lights, but the darkness around the stage absorbed all surrounding light pollution. The lake facing the theater was silent, the birds were dormant, the Hebrew high Jews were loud, but far.

After a few failed Instagram pictures, Barnett uttered his first phrase that broke the crystallized silence: “Look up”.

And indeed, after looking up, we saw what we were truly there to see. It wasn't the amphitheater that he aspired would captivate us. Rather, it was the purest night sky any of us ever had the privilege to gaze upon. Stars upon stars, constellation after constellation - we saw it like never before.

"That's Virgo!"

"I see Jupiter!"

Serenity enveloped us from all ends. Then came the first of that night's dark omens: our silence was shattered by a swooping screeching bat flying several feet above our heads, then disappearing back into the night...confusion plagued us.

"Was that a bat?" We didn't know what to do with ourselves, were there more? Did we find ourselves in a vampire refuge? If so, did these vampires crave kosher blood?

"It's just a bat, relax", assured Barnett, nothing will come to you. "Just appreciate the view."

Our heart rate returned to its normal pulse, our breathing eased. All was well again. Then came the second blow. A sudden wind punched the giant storage unit doors on either side of us. A half second of deafening silence was promptly followed by a few minutes of panic, screaming, tears, and eight morons running in opposite directions, off the stage, down the stairs, bolting back to camp. The night concluded with a meaningful collection of embarrassing stories, laughs and Ilana's pranks. And though we were scared for half of it, it's a BCHSJS story I won't forget any time soon.

## **Jerry Vogel**

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BCHSJS truly made a mark on my life. It showed me that continuing my Jewish education did not have to be boring. I made friends, participated in many interesting classes including Game of Thrones and Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse, and most importantly, rekindled a Jewish identity I'd felt that I'd lost. In college, I plan to continue being a "good Jew", by being active in Hillel, and by making sure I celebrate all the holidays correctly. However, most importantly, I'll need to stay in touch with my close friends in this great place. If I had to name one teacher who I grew closest to, it would be Michael Alweis. He taught many of my favorite classes, including Game of Thrones and Islam, but we also talked a lot outside of class. Whether it was a new Game of Thrones theory, or just about music, he was always there. Another teacher I could not end this without mentioning is Stacy Greenblatt. She teaches the theater classes. However, our mutual interest in performing arts is not the only thing we have in common. She is friends with some of my USY friends, and I even saw her during a USY program a while back. We always talk, sometimes about theater, and sometimes about our friends. Overall, BCHSJS has been an important part of the last five years of my life, and I will never forget it.



## **Cayla Whittaker**

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I chose to extend my religious schooling after my Bat Mitzvah because I was interested in learning more about Jewish morals, history, and culture. For the past five years, BCHSJS has provided me with classes about ethics, art, current events, archaeology, comedy, and more—all relating to Judaism. And while learning about my religion in such breadth, I have met kids from different towns and schools in this hub of Jewish youth. But aside from what I learned in the classroom, I discovered that the most knowledge to be gained is found when you ship fifty kids to a sleepaway camp without technology for the weekend. We call this a “Shabbaton” and my first and last experiences on these trips have shaped what I consider my most important memories at the school.



I went on my first Shabbaton in my freshman year of high school. I had not made many friends in BCHSJS yet, and of the few I had, none of them were attending the Shabbaton. My mother thought it would be good for me to go by myself and meet some new people, and of course, I was reluctant. But as soon as she dropped me off at the bus stop in Paramus, I met Rachel Silverman, my first friend of the trip. By the time we were eating Shabbat dinner that night, I already had several new friends, all of whom I am still close with today. That weekend, I was able to make new friends without the social crutch of a cell phone.

My senior year Shabbaton signified a closing to my BCHSJS experience. The whole week leading up to the trip, I looked forward to escaping college applications and congested streets for a weekend in the mountains. By March of 2016, I had many close friends and new friends from BCHSJS who were going on the trip with me. On Saturday after Havdalah, we celebrated my birthday and then the seniors went stargazing with Barnett. It was truly a bonding experience, especially when we were convinced that there was a murderer in the woods! We shared a lot of laughs and memories that night; it was a great way to end my senior year at BCHSJS.

I've had an amazing time at BCHSJS, from fascinating teachers and classes to awesome new friends. But my most important memories came from spending time with my peers at the Shabbatons.

## **Jeffrey Zachem**

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My best memory at BCHSJS is when Alex Sobel was hypnotized. It was one of the funniest moments I've ever been a part of. BCHSJS has meant a lot to me. It has given me the chance to continue my Jewish education and to make new friends along the way. I think I'll bring with me to college the ideas of how to continue my Jewish education, which can be implemented by my joining Hillel. The class I will always remember is the sports class I took my freshmen year. The reason for that is I love sports so it was nice to take part in a class that targeted my interests.



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