

SPOTLIGHT

Once Upon a Time a Community

Coverage by
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Bais Yaakov of Baltimore Hosts Annual Technology Program



The Opening Activity

This year's opening activity, held on Rosh Chodesh Nisan over teleconference, featured presentation of a special theme song and a special address by Mrs. Shifra Rabenstein, a teacher at Bais Yaakov and popular speaker, who spoke to the girls on the theme of "Once Upon a Time." A week later, another special event of twelfth-graders encouraged the girls to participate, building up the momentum by relating how the program has impacted them over the past few years.

Specially designed calendars were distributed to all the students, with a checklist of certain suggested *kabbalos*. Each day, the girls chose from one or more of the *kabbalos*, and different *kabbalos* could be tried each day. These included a *machsom*, with one hour free from technology and turning off of the phones by 12:30 a.m.; a full day of no social media or secular movies; or a full day with no texting or WhatsApp. For each *kabbalah* successfully completed, the girls gave themselves a check on that day on the calendar. Students earned raffle tickets based on the number of checks received for entry into an end-of-year raffle for a free final.

A View From the Discovery Heads

The program was coordinated by the four student heads of Discovery, Miri Neuberger, Chana Fraida Berger, Sora Traub and Tirtzah Sondhelm, who worked tirelessly on developing it. They described the impact of the program.

"This program really brings out the idea that with small manageable steps, great accomplishments can happen," said Miri Neuberger. "As I once read, 'True life is lived when tiny changes occur.'"

Chana Fraida Berger shared, "Although challenging, this program leaves a long-lasting impact on all who participate. The students walk away with tremendous tools for life, and much to think about. It is not uncommon for girls to continue to implement the technology guidelines, or some takeoff of them, long after the program has officially ended."

"This experience opened up my eyes, showing me that whenever I'm bored, I use technology. I feel accomplished knowing how many times I didn't use technology, instead being more present."

"I pushed myself and I didn't realize how much I could achieve! This year during the technology program I switched to a dumb phone because I realized how little I need my smart phone! You've changed my life!"

These were just some of the comments received from students at Bais Yaakov High School of Baltimore, after participating in the school's recent technology program.

For the past five years, Bais Yaakov's acclaimed Discovery Program, under the leadership of Mrs. Yehudis Feldman, has featured a special technology program during Chodesh Nisan.

Discovery is a highly successful extracurricular program at Bais Yaakov High School. Each year, a fundamental theme is chosen, which is developed with special lectures, programs and activities throughout the year. This year's theme was "*Vih'yisem li segulah mikol ha'amim*"; the theme for the technology program was "Once Upon a Time," with an emphasis on the value of time and the importance of using one's time properly.

"This year was definitely more challenging to run the program, but all the more necessary," explained Mrs. Feldman. "We also know how much the girls wait anxiously for the program. They crave guidelines and boundaries, and here, we are handing them over on a silver platter. We are saying, 'We are giving you the opportunity to grow; we are showing you how to do it.'"

Name: _____ Grade: _____
 My School day Machsom is: _____
 My Vacation (Yom Tov) Machsom is: _____ בניסוח עתידין להגאול
 My Buddy is (optional) _____

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SHABBOS
				26 מ' א' 26 MARCH	27 ב' 27	28 ג' 28
29 ד' 29	30 ה' 30	31 ו' 31	1 ז' 1 APRIL	2 ח' 2	3 ט' 3	4 י' 4
5 י"א 5	6 י"ב 6	7 י"ג 7	8 י"ד 8	9 ט"ו 9 PESACH	10 ט"ז 10 PESACH	11 י"ז 11 SHABBOS CHOL HAMOED
12 י"ח 12 CHOL HAMOED	13 י"ט 13 CHOL HAMOED	14 כ' 14 CHOL HAMOED	15 כ"א 15 SHVI' SHEL PESACH	16 כ"ב 16 ACHARON SHEL PESACH	17 כ"ג 17	18 כ"ד 18
19 כ"ה 19	20 כ"ו 20	21 כ"ז 21	22 כ"ח 22	23 כ"ט 23 ROSH CHODESH	24 ל' 24	

POINT SYSTEM FOR TICKETS:

- 1-7 Checks = 1 ticket
- 8-14 Checks = 2 tickets
- 15-25 Checks = 3 tickets
- 26-35 Checks = 4 tickets
- 36-45 Checks = 5 tickets
- 46-55 Checks = 6 tickets
- 56-65 Checks = 7 tickets
- 66-74 Checks = 8 tickets
- 75-84 Checks = 9 tickets

A MACHSOM
(non school daytime hours)

- 1 hour technology free: No cell phone, No device, No computer
- Phone shut off by 12:30am and put in a public place overnight.

B FULL DAY

- No Social Media (for example: Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, Simcha Spot, Only Simchos, Yeshiva World & the like.)
- No Secular movies or shows (including streaming)

C FULL DAY

- No Texting
- No Whatsapp

I sign that as marked above, I honestly wrote my royal story by using each moment to the fullest.
 Signed: _____

Specially designed calendar used for Bais Yaakov's technology program.

"This program took place during the height of the restrictions," noted Sara Traub, "and so although it was even harder this year, everyone rose to the challenge. Girls have told us how much this program has changed their lives. Many girls are continuing their technology *machsom*, even after Nisan is over. Others have made their own charts for the following month, and [still] others have deleted their social media accounts or even gotten rid of their smartphones."

Tirtzah Sondhelm similarly remarked, "It is really amazing to see how everyone can participate in this program in some kind of way, no matter what kind of devices they or their family [have]. This program is really helpful because it shows the girls how to take advantage of their time. Especially this year, we were shown how to [ensure] that the extra moments don't just slip away."

The Grand Finale

During most years, girls who receive at least 20 checks for the months qualify for a special trip. However, this year the directors had to come up with something else. Ultimately, it was decided to create sweatshirts, designed with a customized logo reading, "Once Upon a

Time – I Did It!"

Distribution of the sweatshirts took place during a drive-through event on Monday, June 8. Teachers were present to hand out the sweatshirts and wave to the girls. Amazingly, over 95% of the students participated in the program on some level, and over 75% (310 girls) received sweatshirts.

"The girls were super excited about the sweatshirts," Mrs. Feldman emphasized. "They felt proud that they had earned them; they accomplished something very special."

Mrs. Feldman also commented on the program's long-lasting impact and shared that post-seminary girls have called her and described its continuing impact on their lives.

Rabbi Yechezkel Zweig, *Menahel* of Bais Yaakov High School, described the success of the program. "We are amazed at the remarkable *ruach* of our students! So many participated in this program, thus expressing their desire to improve in the area of technology use.

"*Ashreinu* to have such wonderful *bnos Torah* in our midst. And thank you to Mrs. Feldman's wonderful Bais Yaakov Discovery team for working so hard to produce such a vibrant program!"