

"DANCING IN THE RAIN" BY SHOSHI FARHI



~ CIRCA ~  
MARCH - SEPTEMBER  
2020

# MHS CHRONICLES OF COVID-19



# Principal's Foreword

It is Monday, September 21st, 2020, just days before Yom Kippur, and we are taking a final look at this publication before sending it off to print.

Editing a journal is typically an intellectual process; we look at protocols for grammar, layout and content. Editing this journal, though, has been much more of an emotional experience. The pages in your hands hold the raw feelings of our students and teachers as they experienced the initial stage of the pandemic, and feelings don't follow a process or protocols. Rereading the submissions — we are awed by the strength and spirit shared by our students and teachers over this challenging period. The art and writing reflect both personal vulnerability and precious insights.

Forced to close the doors to our schoolhouse on March 6th, we watched our students and teachers open their hearts in a magnanimous way. With humor and sensitivity, collaboration and creativity, we persisted in satisfying our learning goals and we completed the semester with great success and true honor. With empathy and compassion, we nurtured one another through illness and loss and we emerged from the school year as kinder and more capable.

The *MHS Chronicles of Covid-19* is a tribute to our students and teachers who accessed energies they did not know they possessed and poured those energies into our school community for the purpose of nurturing each of us. The art and writing in this journal resonate with the vibrancy of life, and reminds us of the power we each possess for the betterment of our personal world. We are each capable of putting a smile in the heart of another and to lighten the darkness. As we prepare for Yom Kippur and reflect on the past year, we humbly ask Hashem to pour His generosity over each of us, and may we merit being inscribed in the *Chronicles of Life*.

With overwhelming appreciation to our selfless teachers, supportive parents and exceptional students,  
*Gmar Chasima Tova,*

*Estee Fuchsman-Hefner*

# A Message from Our Menacheles

I am writing this letter during עשרת ימי תשובה, תשפ"א, a truly historic time in the annals of modern history. We are experiencing an unprecedented pandemic, economic contraction and cultural upheaval. The Founding Fathers of America would truly be stunned by the deformed structure of our government, its polarization and instability. In terms of Covid-19, even our youngest children have incorporated statements such as flattening the curve and social distancing into their lexicon. The virus is the stuff of mystery and fear, which enters the body, finds its way inside the DNA and commandeers it to make more copies of itself. הכמה בגוים האמין - in 2015 Bill Gates was prescient in pointing out that countries carried out table-top exercises planning for nuclear war, but did not prepare nearly as well for the inevitability of pandemics.

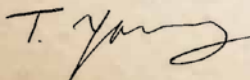
As אבינו מלכנו מנע מגפה מנהלתך, עמ' ה', during these days, we implore Hashem with our impassioned pleas of מנע מגפה מנהלתך. HaRav Chaim Kanievsky *Shlita* poses the following question: why do we ask Hashem to *eradicate* pestilence and the sword from us, but in regard to plague, we beg that He *withhold* it? He explains that since a plague is spread by natural causes, we ask Hashem to withhold it from neighboring countries, lest it spread to us as well. This response particularly resonates with us today, when globalization has eradicated all borders and allowed a lurking virus to spread explosively worldwide.

During these challenging times, with everything swirling around us, MHS students continue to persevere, and yes, to thrive. They have returned to school with renewed vim and vigor, eager to imbibe the lessons of their beloved teachers. They enjoy the camaraderie of their friends, while trying to practice social distancing. They romp in Central Park, our very own backyard. They have adapted to changes with remarkable resilience.

Presently at MHS, we are focused squarely on getting through this time of turmoil, but one day this digest will serve as an inspiration.

When Dovid *Hamelech* wrote about the eventual return from exile (*Tehillim* קכו) he foresaw that we would be like dreamers, היינו כחולמים. According to Ibn Ezra, this means that the relief of returning to a normal existence will be so immense that we will no longer take life for granted. It will all seem like a wonderful dream. May your keen observations, sketches and musings herald that dream-like existence and may our entire school community and all of *Klal Yisroel* merit גמר חתימה טובה.

Kudos to my wonderful and creative partner, Estee Friedman-Stefansky, who proposed and executed this wonderful journal. It will forever serve as eloquent testimony that Mrs. Friedman-Stefansky is never one to pass up on an opportunity to encourage our students to express themselves. Even during a pandemic. May she be blessed.



Mrs. Tsivia Yanofsky

# Editors' Foreword

## DAY 113 OF QUARANTINE

Covid-19. The word that crashed into our lives a couple of months ago and changed everything. A little over three months ago, we were all diving headfirst into a ball pit at our very own Purim Chagiga. Less than 24 hours later, we became one of the first schools to shut down, thus beginning the neverending quarantine. March 6, 2020, was the beginning of a new era. We began living a life without any yellow school buses, cabs, and subway cars. Family dinners turned into family breakfasts and lunches too. Our backyards became our classrooms. With the simple click of a button, we could be silenced while our mouths were still in motion.

Amidst this time of extreme change, our publication, the *MHS Chronicles of Covid-19*, has given us an outlet to express our thoughts, feelings, fears, and frustrations using humor to help convey them. As you leaf through the pages of this journal, you will find a wide range of work – from poetry and short stories, to artwork and comics. During a time of limited interaction, we have built a creative sanctuary, allowing us to navigate and communicate our emotions.

As editors, we have had the privilege of browsing through every single submission and have gleaned a new insight into the lives of our classmates and teachers. Their creative renditions have given us a new perspective into the coping mechanisms of each individual when confronted with an entirely new way of life.

This chronicle was written by the students for the students, because as firsthand witnesses to this pandemic, it is incumbent upon us to produce an everlasting souvenir. The events of today are the history of tomorrow, and while this journal is something to enjoy now, it is also a part of history and will be reflected upon for generations to come.

There you have it. 2020. A year that never ceased to amaze.

*Shoshana Brunner, Nili Kushner & Chana Povarsky*

# *Not All Heroes Wear Capes*

*by Yael Weinberg, Class of 2020*



This drawing signifies the bravery of our healthcare workers who are sacrificing themselves to work on the front lines and battle the virus. The mask with a superhero symbol shows the importance of our health care heroes.

# *Rapping for Rona*

*by Ilana Lesser & Nili Kushner, Class of 2021*

Virus, virus my oh my  
Attach it to a host cell and let it divide,  
Although I have DNA, I'm not alive  
But in others, I can thrive  
I come with many mutations  
which happen in many situations  
I can pick  
Who will get sick  
Wear masks and wash your hands  
If you do this, I will be banned

## *Seeing the Light*

by Malka Ostreicher, Class of 2023

Ever since March fifth, our last day of school, all I've been hearing from every teacher, relative, and friend is that the best way to get through this is to look at the light. My teachers tell me that this semester it's so easy to get a good grade — my main task is to be present in classes, but staring at a computer screen is exhausting and feeling accomplished only happens in my dreams. My relatives tell me that I have the greatest gift of spending time with family, and, while I love them, if my little brother follows me into my room one more time I might just explode. My friends say that I should avoid the news and relax because the news will only put me in a bad mood, but I don't find staring at the wall makes me much happier. Even after all they tell me, the only light I've been able to see is the slim ray of sunshine that floods my room at eight forty-five in the morning through the inch of space between my window shade and windowsill. While being thankful for waking up two and a half hours later than the time I woke up on March fifth might not be the intended purpose for the speeches of encouragement, I realized that they're right: it's truly great to see at the light.

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## *Genomic Sequencing of Sars-CoV-2*

by Chava Bamberger, Sara Strauss, Malka Hirsch, Class of 2021

Genomic sequencing is when all of the genes in an organism are written out in terms of their bases and nucleotides. The sequence looks like a lot of letters that have no meaning to regular people but scientists understand the random order of the specific letters; A, C, T and G. The purpose of the sequence is to see how the genes come together and make up the organism. The information is organized into a phylogenetic tree, which is a model of the collected data. The data found from genomic sequencing is stored on a website called GISAID, the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data. Generally, the website focuses on influenza data, but being that there is a pandemic, the website's focus has shifted to collecting data about Covid-19. There are many advantages to decoding the specific RNA. First of all, we can track the spread of a virus, along with revealing any mutations. In addition, it can help scientists discover vaccines to prevent future outbreaks, which we hope to discover one in the near future that will end this pandemic.



# *Sad Yet Hopeful*

*by Faigy Eisen, Class of 2020*



In this sketch, the single tear signifies sadness surrounding the Corona era, but the mask offers protection which is hope. The woman portrays a strong character who stands strong yet in touch with reality.

# Zoom School - From the Top View

by Mimi Rubin, Class of 2021



I created this project with the items that are the most valuable to us during this Zoom school. You get to see a top view of what a student's daily school desk (or dining room table) looks like. I used items that will most likely be on your desk throughout the day during quarantine school.

# *Dancing Flowers for My Mother*

by Michal Englander, Class of 2021



I chose to paint flowers because I really miss going outside and being able to enjoy parks!

# *Although the Grass Grows*

*by Chaya Trapedo, Class of 2022*

Most often I hear  
People say that they wish  
They had done something  
In the past  
That they can no longer do  
In the future.

“I wish I had gotten to know him better”

Or

“I wish I had cared more”

Or

“I wish I didn’t forget that”

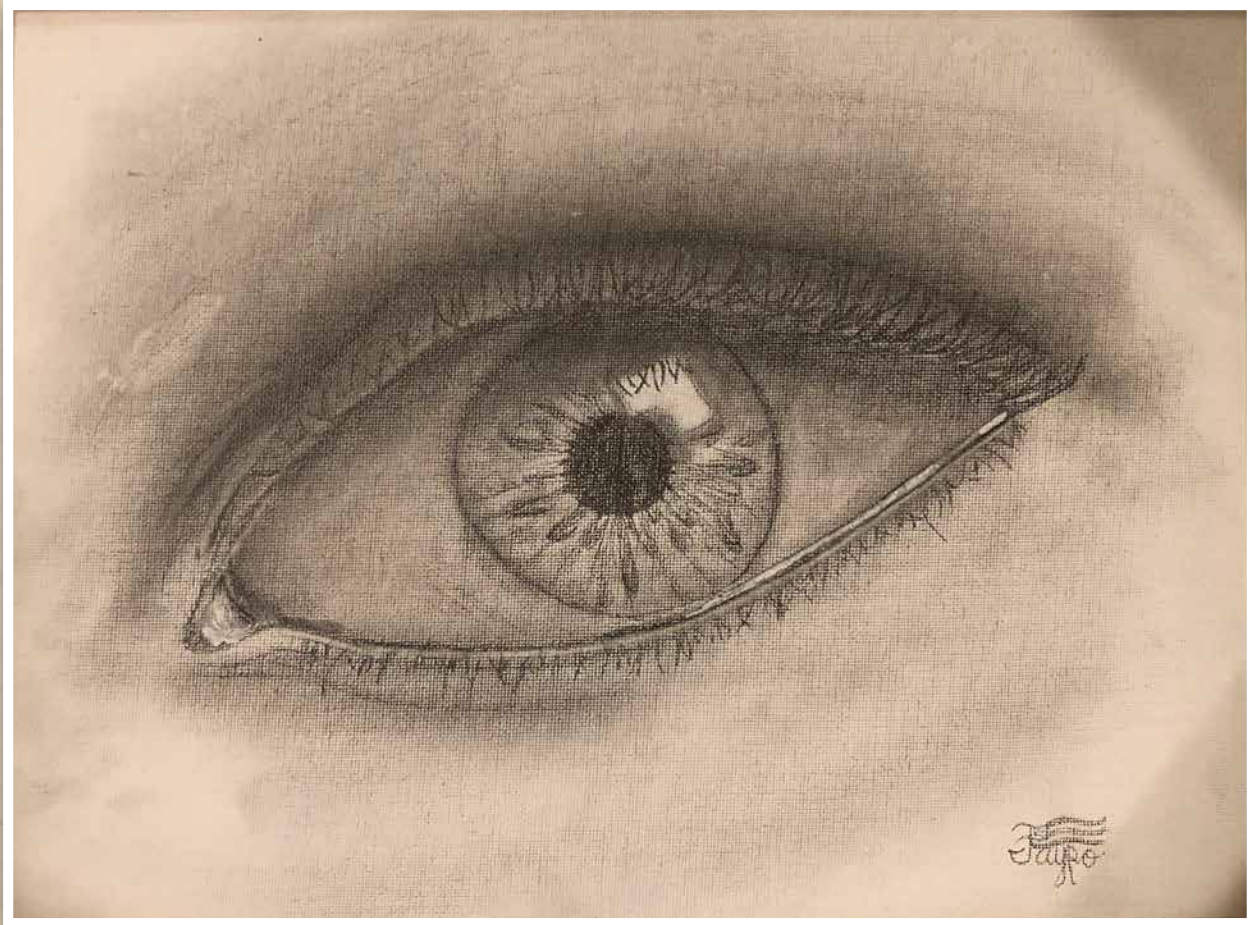
But the wisps of dandelions that  
carry the wishes  
Circle around  
In a new disguise

And force a new wish from the innocent flower picker

Hindsight blinds foresight,  
So there is no discerning between a blossom and a weed  
And gardens fill with thorns.

# *Watching and Waiting*

by Fayga Tziporah Pinczower, Class of 2022



Eyes bear testimony to the chaos, and all we can do is watch and wait.

# *“Just” Sisters*

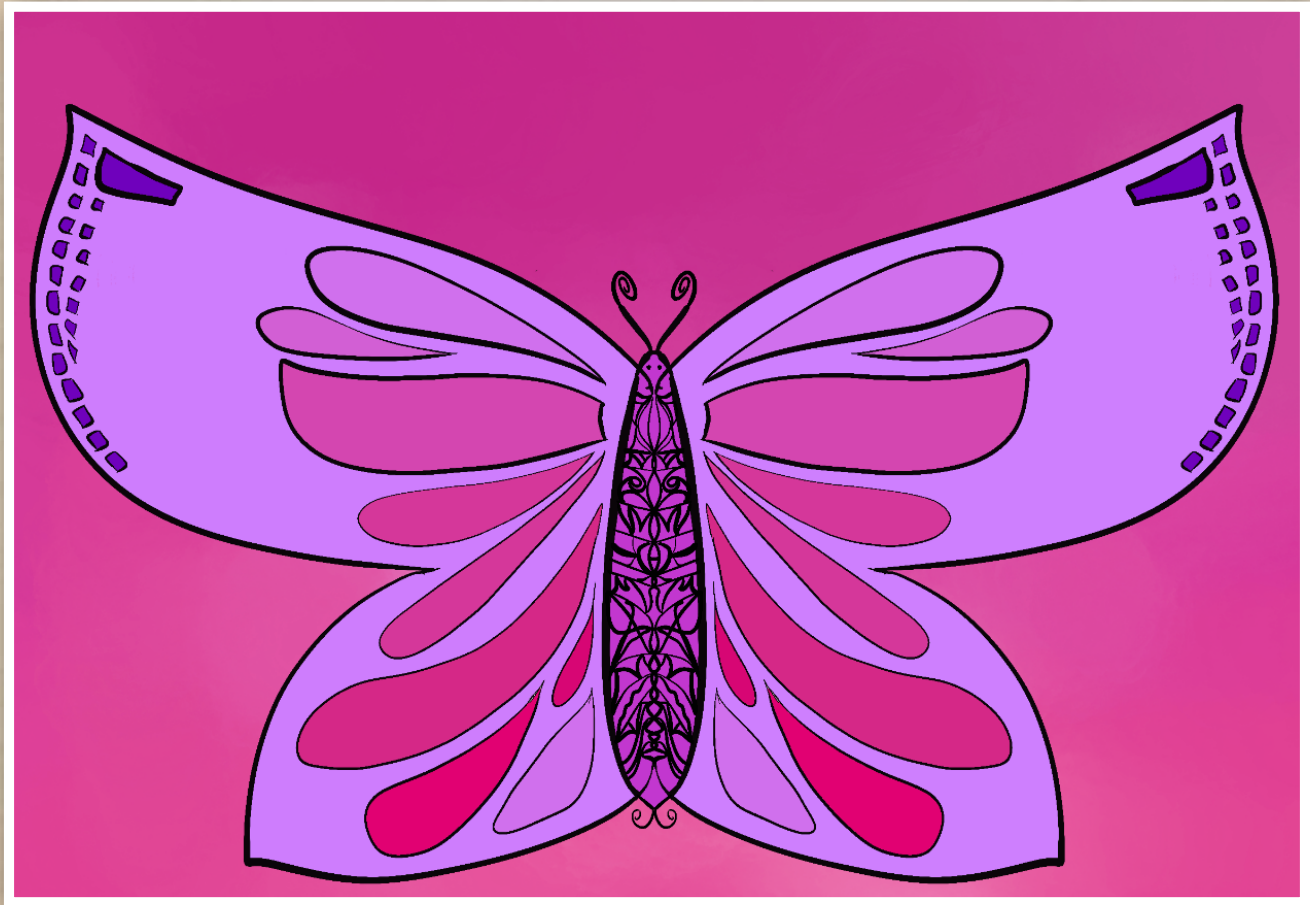
by Leah Harris, Class of 2021



I believe that during these trying times, it's very important to focus on what we have rather than what we are lacking. Although we likely feel that we are missing that sense of structure that we perhaps unknowingly, rely so heavily upon, we have to look at our current surroundings and recognize what we do have in order that we can properly appreciate it. This is why I decided to draw a picture of my sisters for our Studio Art Class. In our busy routines, we are so caught up in achieving our goals, that sometimes we forget to stop and recognize the people we love the most. We are being forced to take a break for a reason, perhaps it's to learn to appreciate the people we take for granted.

# *Butterfly for My Little Sister, Fanya*

*by Musia Kirschenbaum, Class of 2021*

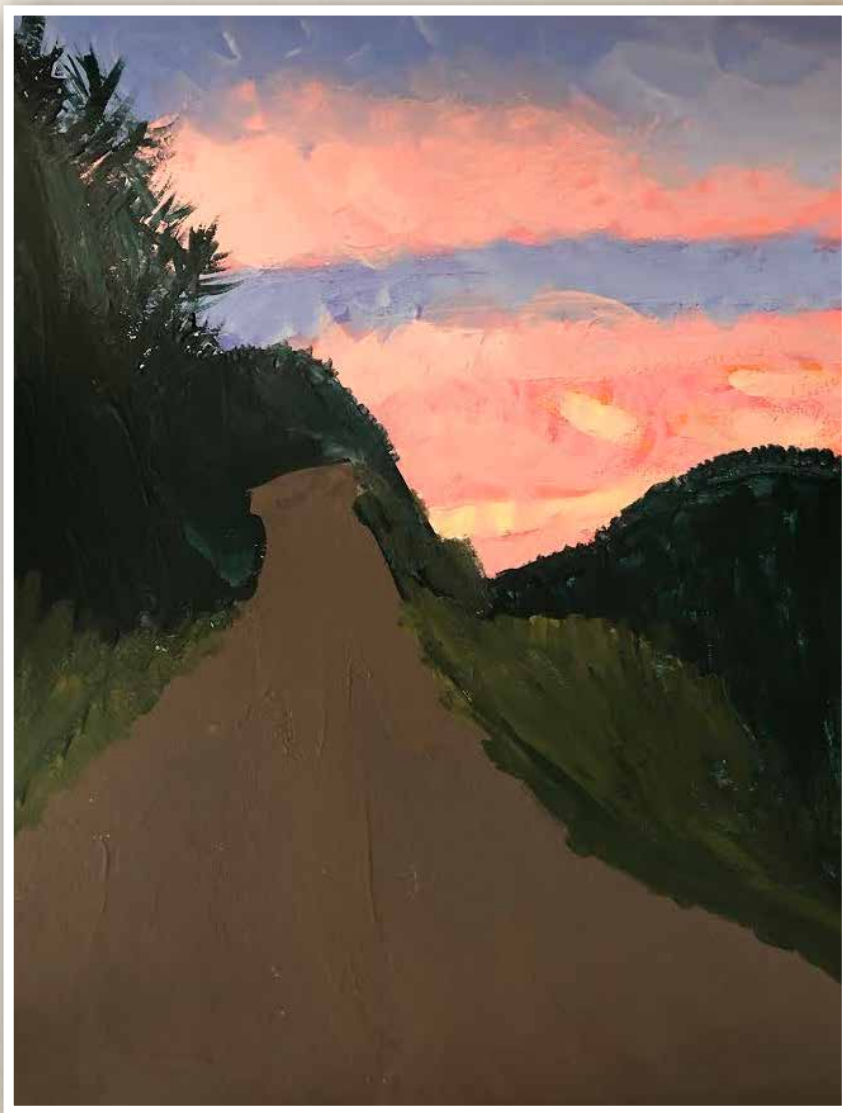


I made this art as a gift to my little sister who, after raising three caterpillars and watching them through the chrysalis process as a quarantine activity, became completely obsessed with them.

# *Beauty on the Edge*

*by Zahava Laufer, Class of 2021*

This is a painting of a beautiful scenic route along the edge of a cliff. When looking at the view from afar you notice the beauty of the sunset and the overall picture. When experiencing the picture from close, it can seem scary, as driving along the edge of a cliff is. During this time we are experiencing a pandemic from up close, and everything seems scary. But, when we stop and take a step back, and try to find the small positive things in our everyday life, we can learn and grow from our experience. We will come out of this pandemic as a stronger and better people, instead of just “falling off the cliff” because the journey is too hard. We need to look at the full picture, and we will see the beautiful view.





# Forever Intertwined

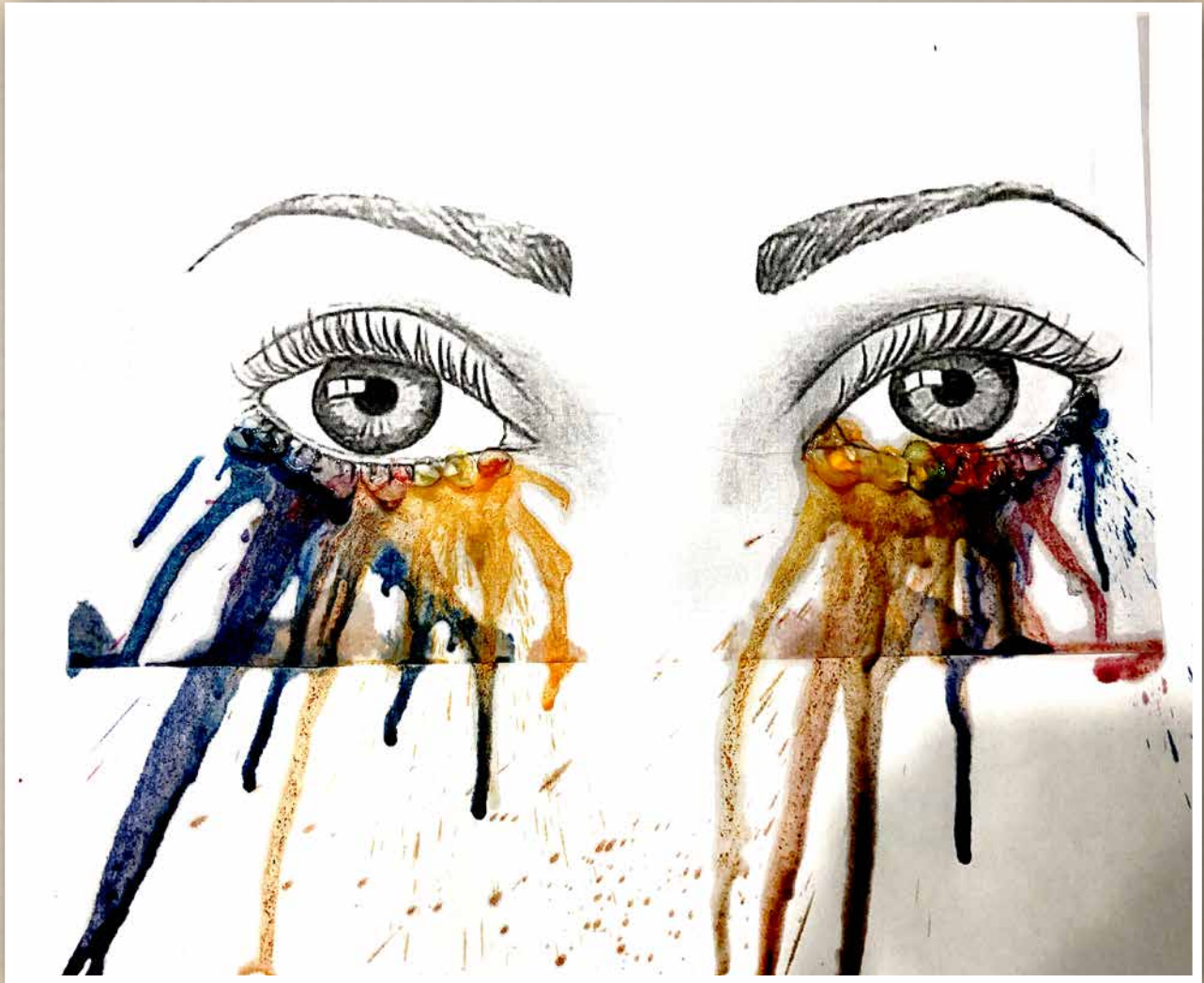
by Ahuva Mermelstein, Class of 2020



I titled my painting “Forever Intertwined” and I made one image spread out on two canvases and I’m giving half the project to my best friend, Tamar. Even though we’re in separate high schools and with everything going on now, it’s harder to see one another, I know that Tamar will always be there as a constant in my life. I painted this piece especially during these times to serve as a reminder that no matter where we go in life, we’ll forever be connected and our friendship will never be severed.

# Melting

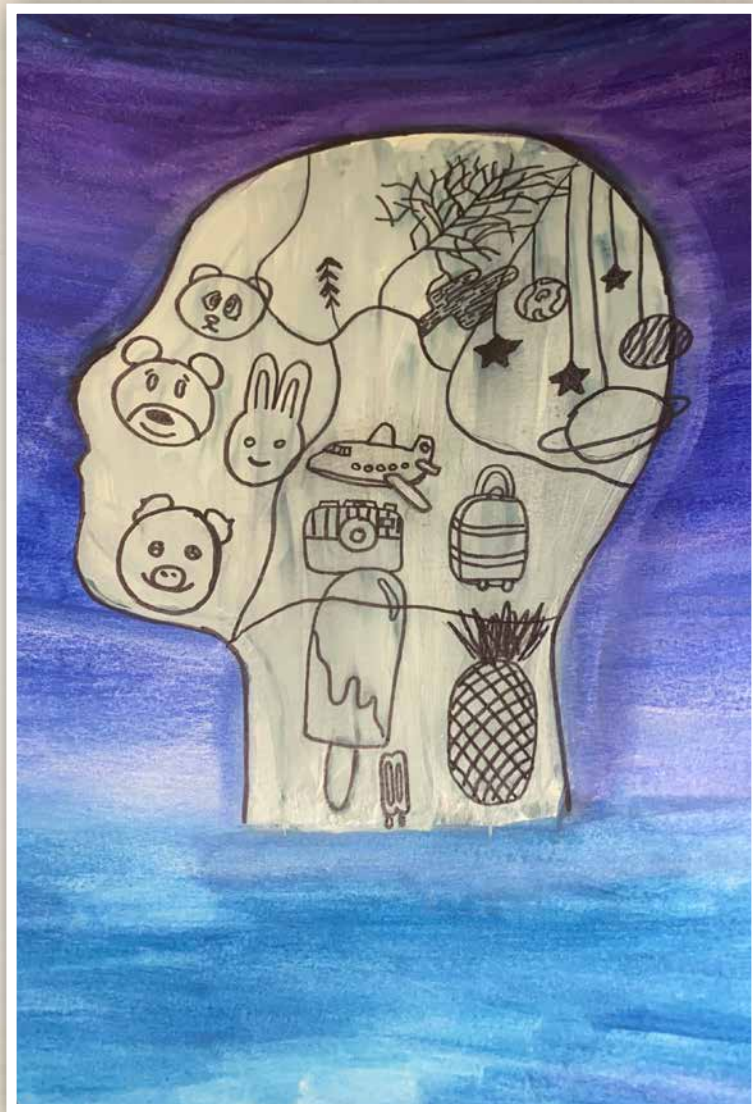
by Esti Schreiber, Class of 2020



During this overwhelming time we may feel anxious and sad as if our emotions are melting. However, we must remember Hashem is with us and that everything He does is for the good. I melted crayons with a hairdryer as my medium to mimic the feeling of the piece.

# Out of My Mind

by Nava Schwalb, Class of 2021



For my project, I decided to depict what's in my mind, as the project is also called "What's on your Mind." Everyone during these times is just feeling a bit restless and I just want to go out and see different things. So in my mind, I drew different things such as food and the outside. Everyone just wants to go and do anything, so what I drew depicted how I feel.

# *Missing 154*

*by Rikki Genack, Class of 2023*

Without all the stress  
Of assignments and tests

I have to confess  
I miss MHS

I miss the smiles  
At one fifty four

I miss the miles  
I can't travel anymore

I miss the dark mornings  
And dark afternoons  
I miss the warnings  
That ring "class will start soon"

I miss the table

With coffee and cereal

I miss the teachers

Waiting with new material

I miss the dress code

Collars and sweaters

I miss the familiar roads

That I grew to know better

I miss "the store"

Before I went home

I miss period four

When we learnt about Rome

# Twilight

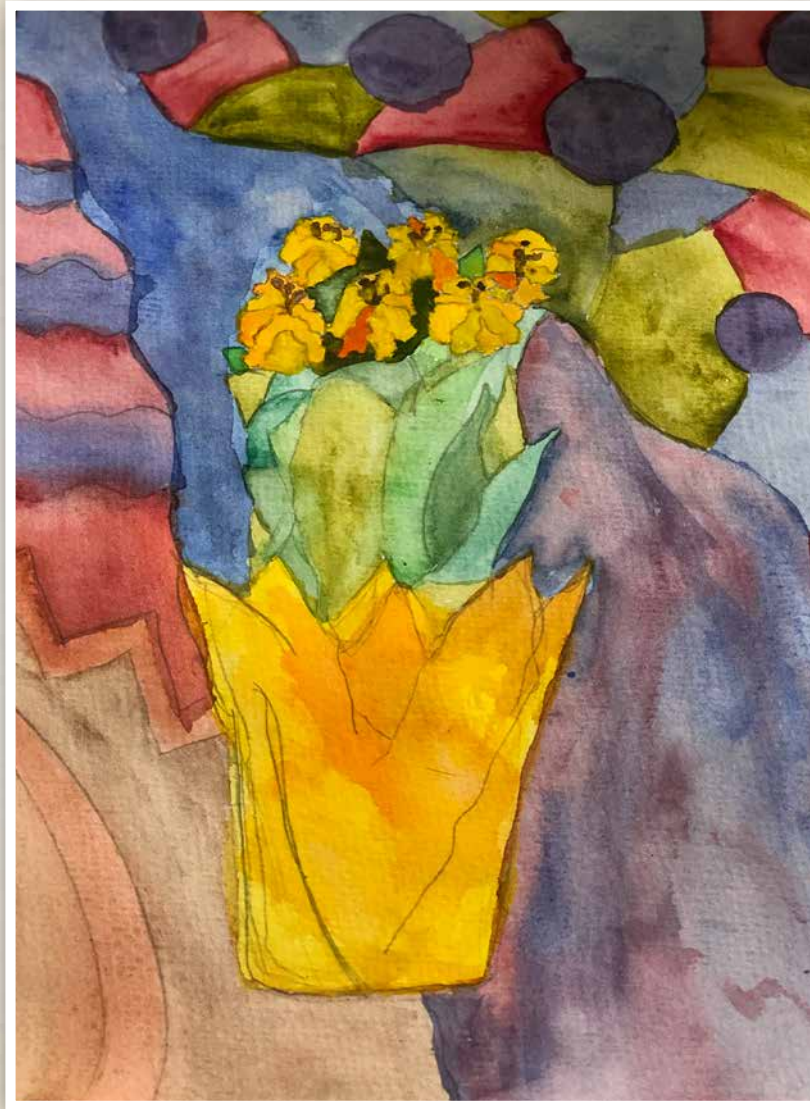
by Shoshana Brunner, Class of 2021



I chose to paint this image and title it "Twilight" because ever since quarantine I have been up almost every night to see twilight. Before quarantine I could be sleeping before sunset, now I'm up to basically see sunrise.

# *Yellow Pot*

*by Naomi Hymowitz, Class of 2022*



My painting is called “Yellow Pot.” I chose this image because of the bright yellow colors of the flowers and the pot. This is just a vase of flowers but if you focus you can see the details of every petal and how it has multiple colors in each one, and then when you zoom in closer or look at it from various different angles, it looks like a yellow cloud.

# *Masked*

by Yael Feygin, Class of 2020



I titled my artwork *Masked* because of the masks that we now have to wear due to Covid-19. These masks were originally only worn by medical professionals, but now some stores won't even let you enter unless you are wearing one. Although no one is sure if these masks do anything to stop spreading the virus, we are still required to wear them and are waiting for the day that we no longer have to.

# Tales of the Indoors

by Avigail Hammer, Class of 2022

Over the past few days, I've been reflecting on my time at home and the people who kept me and continue to keep me grounded, focused, and sane. My adjustment to isolation and confinement at home was one I adapted to with relative ease. I owe this to the school's immediate response and the way in which classes began so soon. They say that teenagers love to lay in bed all day. Maybe, maybe not. MHS's immediate initiation of virtual school afforded me a bit of extra sleep while at the same time provided a schedule which engaged me in my studies throughout the day. The faculty continues to make themselves available despite having their own families to attend to. The special programs and activities offer a balance to the rigor of schoolwork.

During this time with my family, I realize I am learning so much about each person individually and about all the relationships. Hearing stories about my parents, grandparents, and great grandparents gave me a stronger understanding of where I come from. While my siblings and I each have our own space for work, we tend to gravitate to each other and I recognize we really enjoy spending time together. All is not perfect, but perfect would be boring. My youngest sister, fourteen years my junior, has become my closest companion. I don't know if I contributed to the growth in her vocabulary or if this would have happened naturally. We spend hours talking and I feel good having the opportunity to teach her new things. I watch my mom manage all of us, the housework, the meals and snacks, and my dad who is working remotely as well, and I appreciate her role even more.

When around our table, I frequently hear my dad on the phone discussing the chessed our community is doing. Frequently, our neighborhood gets a bad rap for being a community with a focus on *gashmius*. I now see them through different lens. On a basic level, drive around and take note of the signs on doors, in driveways and in storefronts, thanking essential workers. The seniors in the community are getting phone calls from shul members just checking in on them. Pre-Shabbos flowers are sent to them as well. On a daily basis, meals are being packaged and delivered to hospitals for healthcare workers. Donations to the local food pantry as well as to neighbors in need are abundant.

Some of my greatest takeaways from this experience are the importance of structure, learning that you don't have to physically be together to demonstrate achdus, everyone needs a lifeline and the importance of a community's understanding of its needs. We will all come away from this experience changed. It is my hope that even as we go about rebuilding our normal lives we will take these positive lessons learned and continue to value them.



# Breathe

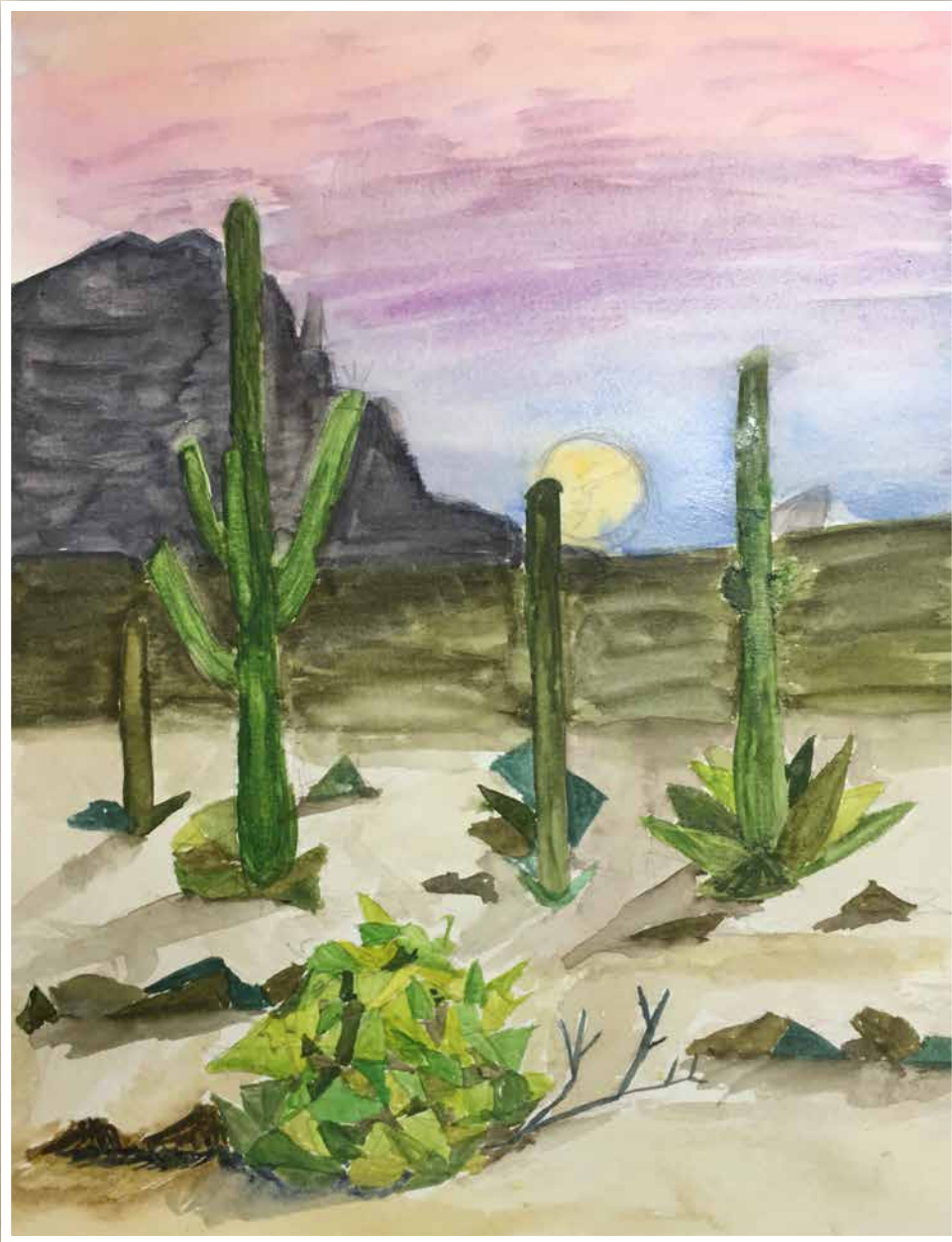
by Shoshi Farhi, Class of 2020



I decided to piece together two things I am passionate about, anatomy and nature. Since we are living through Corona I thought it would be befitting to depict a lung and trees. I did this for a few reasons: first, because CO<sub>2</sub> comes from trees, and second because sometimes when it gets hard, you look at the beautiful nature all around you, and you could breathe again.

# *Warm Summer Nights*

*by Orly Setareh, Class of 2022*



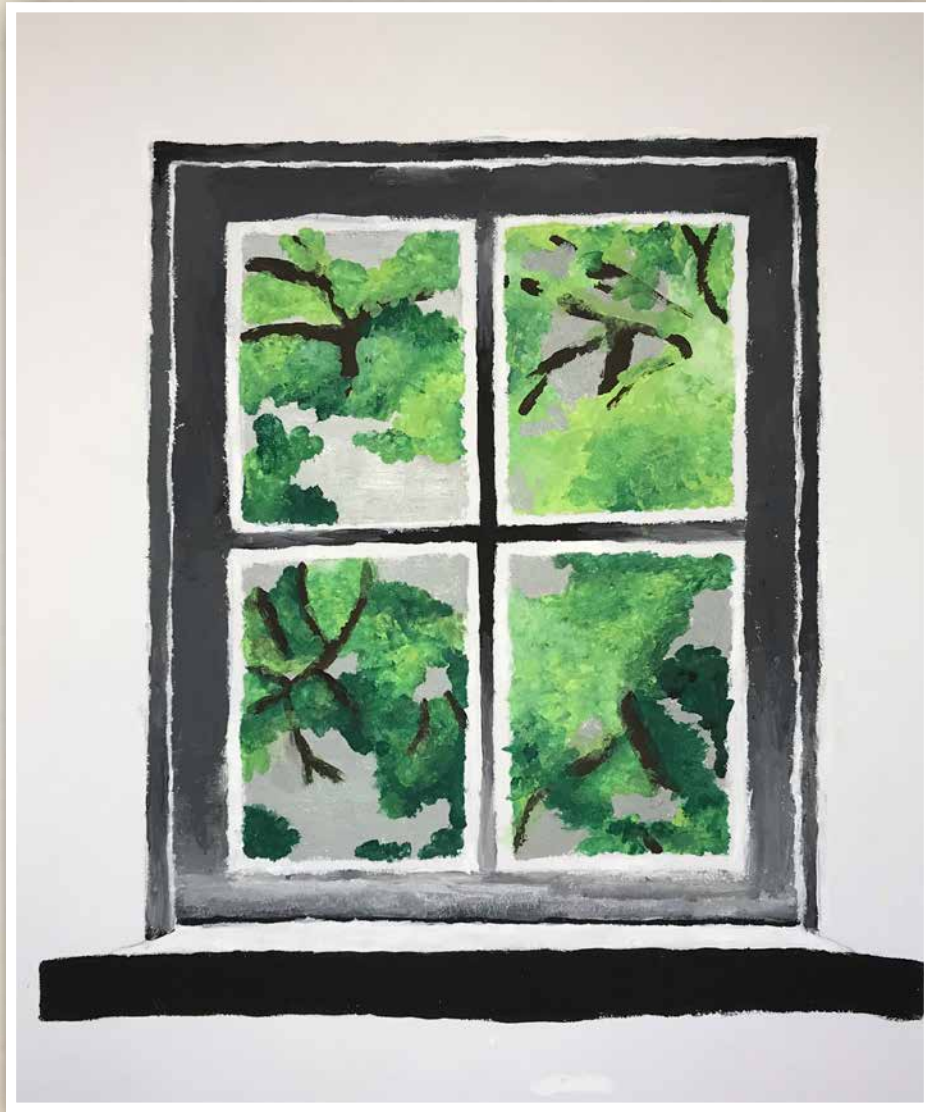
# *Journey*

*by Rachel Fogel, Class of 2020*



# Looking Out

by Ilana Katzenstein, Class of 2021



To me, isolation means being inside and alone. I chose to paint a window to portray the feeling of being stuck on the inside and only being able to see the world through a window or screen. During these challenging times, we are forced to be isolated and must look through a window to view the outside world.

# *The City That Never Sleeps is Finally Taking a Rest*

*by Dassi Mayerfeld, Class of 2021*



New York City is known to never rest — a city where there are always people out, no matter what time in the night. Now, you can drive into the city in only 27 minutes, park the car in the middle of 5th Avenue, and stand in the middle of the street. Because the city has finally taken a rest.

# *Greeting*

*by Rivka Notkin, Class of 2021*



This drawing was inspired by the isolating feeling one gets when having to cover their face. The two friends are a reminder that no matter what there will always be a friend who recognizes you and helps you through your situation.

# *This Too Shall Pasta*

*by Malka Hirsch, Class of 2021*



# *The Effects of the Coronavirus on our Mental Health*

by Yehudis Ginsberg, Class of 2023

Living during these unprecedented times, alone and apart from friends and routine, lead me to question to what extent COVID-19 is affecting our mental health. To get more insight on this subject, I sat down (via Zoom, of course) with Eva, a crisis counselor who works for the municipal, government-sponsored, mental-crisis hotline NYC Well. When people are struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges, they can call NYC Well for guidance. As a crisis counselor, Eva's job is to empathize with and assist the people who anonymously call in to talk about their challenges. She has been working at NYC Well for well over a year while simultaneously pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Peace and Conflict Resolution.

We talked about the effects that COVID-19 can have on emotional well-being and mental health, even though life will return to normal in the days to come. Eva said that since the virus began, there has been a significant increase in the number of callers. The callers have primarily been asking questions about the effects of the virus and how to know if they've contracted it or not. Of course, people have also been calling because they've lost a job, a loved one, or even because they are no longer able to afford food. The calls mainly come from people suffering from anxiety or depression, conditions that are typically worsened by being in isolation. Eva, along with many health-care professionals, predicts there will be long term effects on the population regarding mental stability and that some will definitely feel traumatized after the pandemic passes. NYC Well is beginning to hire more counselors to prepare for what lies ahead.

My interest piqued, I started to do more research on the effects that the epidemic can have on our mental health. Research shows that the loss of a job can lead to increased depression and anxiety, which could potentially lead to more substance abuse and even suicide. Anxiety from the virus is also mainly caused by the fear people have for themselves and for their loved ones. And of course, social distancing from one another puts another load of stress on us – it can even lead to suicidal ideation, since being isolated is a known risk factor for suicide.

Physiologists explain that fear is a response to a known and expected threat, while anxiety is caused by a vague and unclear threat. Dr. Alexander Sanchez, a psychiatrist who works in New York City, said, "This is a new challenge and the most worrying aspect is the uncertainty." The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) recommends keeping some sense of routine and normality. This means that we should keep our life's daily patterns to help counteract the uncertainty.

Joshua Gordon, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, suggested that anyone who is feeling anxious should write down their fears and then step away from them or leave them behind on the computer. That very physical act can help one understand their fears and let one feel some freedom when they walk away from them.



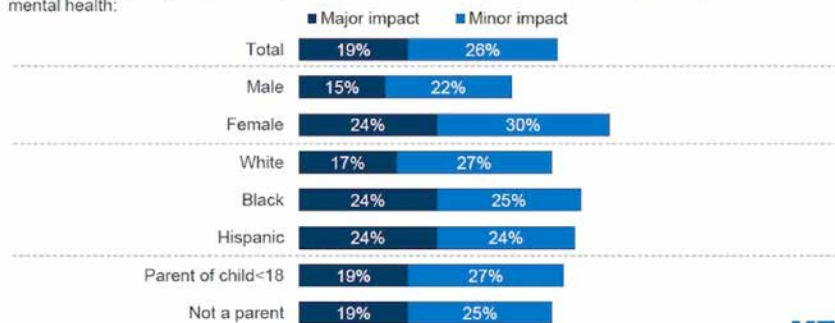
In recognition of the serious threat to mental health posed by the virus, The World Health Organization has given many suggestions for improving the mental health of the general population and many high-risk groups such as children, healthcare workers, and some adults. The CDC additionally shared recommendations on how to cope with sudden stress on its online COVID-19 resource page. Dr. Alexander Sanchez stated that “We need to remember that this is temporary -- we have been challenged before and have met and exceeded those challenges as a society.”

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### Significant Shares Say The Coronavirus Has Had A Negative Impact On Their Mental Health

Percent who say they feel that worry or stress related to coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health:



SOURCE: KFF Health Tracking Poll (conducted March 25-30, 2020). See topline for full question wording.





# *Memoir Writing*

In Ms. Lakritz's grade ten English class, students learned how to capture their feelings and experiences during this pandemic. They integrated the techniques and skills of memoir writing to craft the memoir of their choice. Although some students selected to preserve unique COVID-19 experiences, many preferred sharing other experiences.

# Open Wide

by Nechama Schwartz, Class of 2022

“MOMMYYYYYYY!! NOOOOOOOO!!! HE’S HURTING MEEEEEE.” I flail and squirm, but to no avail. I’m stuck. My mother flinches. I can’t tell if it’s because she’s embarrassed or because she feels bad. She offers me her phone as a distraction, which I decline. I’m mad at everyone in the room.

\* \* \*

Like most kids, I never liked going to the dentist. It’s not a pleasant place. It smells of teeth and mouths and the cleaning products they use to try to mask the smell. But it’s one of those things that you just got to do, so I never felt it necessary to avoid going or give my parents a hard time about it.

\* \* \*

July, 2016.

I hopped off the bus, happy to be home, even if it was only for a day. I searched the crowd for my mother, and upon seeing her, embraced. I loved coming home for the day between the first and second halves of camp. Most full-summer campers had to stay for that day, but my mother usually got permission for me to come home because switch day was the week of my birthday. My mother had a surprise for me. We were going to the dentist. I was obviously less than excited, but my tooth had cracked in camp. I was annoyed at my mother for not telling me before, as I was excited to go shopping with my mom because she would always spoil me on switch day because she had missed me so much and it was around my birthday. Going to the dentist was a minor annoyance, but still. Today was supposed to be my special day.

Dr. Scheinberg was a pediatric dentist. His walls were covered in colorful murals of cartoons and animals, and the TVs were perpetually playing either Disney, Nickelodeon, or PBS Kids. He had a nice receptionist who would paint our nails after we were done, and a prize box shaped like a giant tooth. In accordance with the decor, Dr. Scheinberg talked to everyone like they were a five-year-old. As an almost twelve-year-old, I hated that. Twelve was part of that in-between phase in which, if I was treated like an adult, I felt special; if I was treated like a kid, extremely mad.

After poking and prodding, Dr. Scheinberg concluded that he was going to pull the cracked tooth out. Now I was really annoyed. How would I go shopping with half of my mouth swollen and numb? He proceeded to numb my mouth and after waiting, checked if it was numb. It wasn’t, and I told him. He started to approach my moth with a wrench. I told him again, “it’s not numb.” He told me he was just checking. “Checking? With a wrench? I’m not dumb, you know,” I replied.

He wasn’t checking.

He was about to yank my molar out while it wasn’t numb— even worse, he was lying about it. At this point I was screaming and crying, and my poor mother had to hold me down. “STOP, STOP, STOP, I’M NOT STUPID

YOU'RE GOING TO PULL IT OUT?"

I was right.

He went in there, clamped the wrench around my tooth, and yanked it out. It wasn't numb, nor was it already loose. The pain was excruciating. I felt betrayed.

\* \* \*

I never trusted dentists again after that. I developed an intense fear of any medical professional going near my mouth. I would panic and scream and tantrum at nearly every dentist visit. As luck would have it, I had to have numerous oral procedures done in the two years following the incident. So, we found an oral surgeon who gave the option of anesthesia. I couldn't bear to see anyone going near my mouth with anything. I refused to go back to Dr. Scheinberg, so to this day I schlep thirty plus minutes every time I need to go to the dentist.

\* \* \*

I think of myself as pretty independent. I can navigate New York City myself, make and spend my own money, and even make my own appointments for some things.

Never the dentist.

Time and time again, my mother comes and suffers through it with me. She's my lawyer, dental consultant, and cheerleader. She always sits in the chair across from the dental chair and offers me her phone. She squeezes my hand as we hear the dreaded words: "Open wide!"

# What's in a Name

by Adina Feldman, Class of 2022

"You should have been in the chamber with your ancestors who taught you that what's not yours belongs to you."

I stared at my screen in disbelief. I read it again. A typo maybe? Even user84783 wouldn't say something like that. My heart beating against my chest, I shut off my phone. That's enough internet for today.

As much as I tried, I couldn't understand it. I mean the hate, the hate I understood. Anti-Semitism is not a foreign concept to me, a Jewish girl growing up in American society in 2020. But how could someone be so bold? How could someone shamelessly scream their prejudice and ugly bigotry for the world to see? And how could I be the one left embarrassed and silenced?

It's times like these I think of my *elter-Bubbe*, my great grandmother, a Holocaust survivor. Her name was Adina. Adina is the Hebrew word for "delicate" or "refined." Adina is my name too. I never met my great-grandmother, though with the stories I'm told I have tried to piece together who exactly I am representing.

"Refined." Ironic, considering living in an underground bunker for years, living off foraged potato peels from garbage cans classically would not work with that definition. When I am reminded of my family's story, looking death in the eye just for the right to exist, daring to live another day in the face of unspeakable and illogical evil, "delicate" is not the word that comes to mind. Poorly made underground bunkers with not enough oxygen to keep a match lit, let alone to breath. Being forced to dig your own grave and shot in the leg. Being ripped away from your family and shipped off to a ghetto. Desperately muffling your baby's cries with the wild fear that maybe, just maybe someone would hear you. The images these stories conjure in my mind do not evoke "refinement" or "grace."

If my name was really in honor of my great grandmother, did "delicate" really truly represent her? Wasn't it almost insulting to her memory to name me something so... so weak when she was clearly so strong and brave? Her name itself, I felt was a contradiction to everything she stood for to me and everything she had experienced and represented.

Over the last couple of months, things had been changing. Ever since December when a wave of violent Anti-Semitic attacks rippled through my hometown, things hadn't been the same. Now every morning I walked into school and said thank you to the police officers at the entrance as I shielded my eyes from the bright flashing lights of their patrol car. Every Saturday and holiday I waved a stiff hello to the armed guard at the entrance of my Shul and kicked myself for always forgetting the code on the new combination locks barring my entrance to a building that was supposed to make me feel at home. Newcomers, who were supposed to be welcome to join our community, were now looked at suspiciously and harshly questioned of their intentions by cautious Shul members.

I hated how in the effort to protect us, I still felt victimized, I still felt like I was losing the part of me that had

always felt blessed to be Jewish, been proud to be different. The warm and welcoming ambiance that Shabbos was supposed to bring, the peace and serenity of that walk to Shul, was just another thing that had been taken from me along with my innocence. The place where I felt that I most belonged, where I was truly home and within the warm embrace of my community, the place that was supposed to be my refuge, was now just another possible target on someone's hit list. As comforting as it felt that these things were there to protect me, I couldn't help but feel ashamed that I needed to be protected at all. People really wanted to hurt me? They didn't even know me! I wanted to face them. Dare the people who wanted to hurt me or thought less of me to stare me straight in the eye and see if they were still so brave. Still so unashamed. I wanted to yell at them. To kick and scream and somehow make clear how fiercely proud I was of my heritage. How much I loved myself and where I came from and how their hate had only made me stronger. But I couldn't do that. And that made me feel weak. It made me feel that I had already lost a battle that I hadn't even been given a fair chance to fight.

All these thoughts were on my mind a few weeks later as I went back online. I had gotten myself into a conversation with another, non-Jewish user. They had said that in their opinion, people of color suffer from racial discrimination and since many Jews look white, they are not victims to such kinds of bias. After I pointed out that, while some Jews may appear to be white or have classical European features, many Jews, especially Orthodox Jews such as me, are visibly Jewish by our names and mode of dress. Therefore, we could also be subject to discrimination based on our appearances.

"Yes, but you can change your name and the way you dress. You choose to continue to present yourself that way," they had responded. Then it hit me. He was right. I had been faced with a choice. I could make the decision to proudly represent my culture and my heritage, as my ancestors had done, regardless of who tried to silence me, or I could cower in fear, and hide the most important part of my identity as a courtesy to those who wanted me gone. It was so clear to me then, that to do that, to be ashamed or embarrassed of my heritage, would be a betrayal of all my name gave me the power to be. My reactions and responses to racism didn't have to be loud, didn't have to sink to the level that bigots wanted to bring me down to. In fact, continuing to show up, showing my face every day unabashed and unashamedly, with quiet dignity, was a clearer declaration of pride in oneself than any back and forth insults or screaming fits could ever be.

Refinement does not equal passivity. Gentility does not mean unassertive or defeatist. Sophistication and grace are not weaknesses or vulnerabilities. All these things require a fierce sense of confidence and pride in one's identity. Just because someone spits, just because someone tries to bring you down and attempts to reduce you to nothing more than your identity, it's not an insult. It's an opportunity to prove to them, but more importantly, to prove to yourself that that aspect that they are trying to insult you with, your faith, your beliefs, and your history, is a strength, not a weakness. Quiet dignity is not silence. It is a statement, loud and

clear as day that you, and only you, get to dictate who you are. Being “graceful” or “refined” does not go hand in hand with fragility. In fact, as I came to realize, the very opposite was true. Elevating yourself, making the choice to show up and be yourself, not letting someone else’s values dictate who you are going to be and having the courage to stay true to your highest self, is perhaps the strongest and bravest thing you could do.

The next Shabbos I walked to Shul like any other. I waved a warm hello to the police officers and stood patiently by the door so someone could see me and unlock it. While my mindset may have changed, my ability to remember combination lock codes had not. I made the conscience decision to see the police car with its flashing lights interrupting the peaceful atmosphere that used to be Shabbos, to see the security guards with their weapons strapped to their belt, to see that hideous grey lock crudely screwed in the middle of that beautiful mahogany Shul door, not as my punishment for daring to grow up Jewish. Rather as a necessary precaution to take against those who were less sure of themselves, less confident in their own identities than I, and would try to take that feeling of unworthiness out on others. Every time I walked into that building, I made sure my head was held high, shoulders up, back straight and eyes piercing. I was careful to make certain that everything about my body language bespoke grace, dignity, and pride.

It’s times like these I think of my great-grandmother, a Holocaust survivor. Her name was Adina. Adina is the Hebrew word for “delicate” or “refined.” It connotes royalty and pride and a crystal-clear self-image. Though my experiences may never compare to hers, and may I never need to suffer the way she did to prove this point, all her life she had made the same conscious decision. The decision to not let other’s opinions of her affect who she would become. The choice to keep surviving, to keep showing up unapologetically as herself. It did not take a bullhorn to make that statement. She did not need to get down in the mud and scream or yell or lash out as was being done to her. All she had to do was stay proud and honorable. Making sure that being “dignified” in whatever she did, spoke volumes to everyone around her. This was someone who clearly took pride in who she was and was strong enough and brave enough to never let anyone forget that.

My name is Adina, too, and every day I pray that I am deserving enough to do my name justice.



# My Brother's Coronavirus Wedding

by Sylvie Jacobowitz, Class of 2022

My brother's engagement party on December 15, 2019 was a magical night filled with happiness and excitement. The evening passed in a blur of dancing and music, as we shared our *simcha* with family and friends. I looked on as my brother and his future wife basked in the love and joy surrounding them in the room. The event hall was transformed into a winter wonderland with trees sprinkled with white orchids and snow encrusted leaves. Brilliant crystal vases overflowed with white blossoms, gleaming gold trimmings shimmered throughout the room while the guests buzzed about, wishing their blessings to the new young couple. The collective group commented that it was a night fit for a wedding and joked that they could have gotten married on the spot!

I could not have imagined that in a few months' time, we all would have wished that they would have done exactly that.

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Fast forward three months and the world had radically transformed. COVID-19 had begun rapidly spreading across the world, along with the race to contain it. Our government braced for the pandemic with little knowledge of what they were dealing with. Fear and panic left many people struggling to make sense of it all.

All I could think of was my brother's wedding in just over a week. I had been eagerly counting down the days until the wedding which was set for Sunday March 22, 2020. My parents had been in full planning mode for the past three months and our family was elated over the upcoming nuptials and festivities. I could not wait for it all to begin; it was so wonderful to have a special *simcha* to look forward to. I loved my brother so much and cherished our closeness, and therefore I felt incredibly emotional over his approaching wedding. However, I comforted myself with the knowledge that I was not losing a brother but rather gaining a sister. Getting acquainted with my future sister-in-law was especially easy because of her happy, relaxed and carefree nature. They were a couple made in heaven. They both possessed equal measures of kindness, inner strength and unwavering faith. These qualities would soon serve them well, with the challenges that lay ahead.

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It was right after Purim when life started to unravel. Coronavirus cases threatened New York while state leaders struggled with the right response while trying to keep up with the spread. Our mayor and governor clashed over which restrictions to impose on their residents, which sent out confusing and chaotic orders, as they themselves grappled with the many complications of the virus on both a medical and economic level. The media induced panic, our citizens started hoarding supplies, all while communities were being ravaged. In the midst of all this fear and anxiety was uncertainty of the future. I overheard the hushed voices of my parents discussing the wedding. Words like "reducing guest lists," and "new location," swam in my head. As soon as my parents considered a new plan, another statewide order dropped, requiring them to rework the

format once again. I watched them repeatedly adapt the wedding, shrinking it from the original nine-hundred guest count, to five-hundred, two-fifty, one-hundred, and lastly to the ten members of our immediate family as was mandated by the state's lockdown measures.

It all had happened so fast, and in the blink of an eye my brother's wedding was reduced to just us. There would be no loving grandparents, adoring aunts and uncles, cherished cousins or dear friends joining the *simcha*. The wedding would not take place in a wedding hall, it was scheduled for Thursday, March 19 at the home of the bride. I was shocked into sadness.

I wanted my brother and sister-in-law to have the perfect wedding which they so richly deserved. That clearly wasn't going to happen. I could not wrap my head around the fact that their wedding as I knew it had vanished. This was supposed to be the happiest day of their lives, and I could not imagine it so. One night as I lay in bed attempting to sleep, which eluded me, my mother sat down next to me and said: "Our family was chosen for this, this was preordained to happen just as it is unfolding before us. Nothing happens by chance. We must rise to the challenge and find the strength deep within ourselves to celebrate wholeheartedly. We can do it as a family." It was only then that I felt a sense of peace wash over me and just like that I had gained a new perspective of their upcoming wedding day. I awoke on that morning of March 19 with a stomach full of butterflies, unsure of how the day would play out. One look at my big brother, so handsome in his elegant black suit and silver tie, and I knew for certain it was going to be alright. He had an aura of happiness about him, his excitement for the day ahead was palpable.

We went through the motions of normal pre-wedding day preparations, which involved hair and makeup appointments, which honestly felt anything but normal. But, with my mother's words still ringing in my head I pulled myself together and focused on my family and their happiness. We needed to rally for one another, as there is strength in numbers. As the day went on, it became easier, and we slid into a natural groove and posed for family pictures, while sweetly reminiscing childhood memories and looking forward to the night ahead. It was a special time for us cocooned in our home, sharing these precious moments together.

Nothing could prepare me for the surprise waiting outside our front door, as we left for the wedding. Our entire street was lined with cars, wedding music blasting from the speakers as our family and friends waited joyously to participate in our *simcha*. My father and brothers danced together in the middle of our street, absorbing the energy of the moment. There are no words that can accurately describe what I felt at that point as it was so emotionally overwhelming. The genuine outpouring of love and support was profoundly comforting.

As we drove up to my future sister-in-law's house, we immediately took in the magnificent *chuppah* standing majestically in front of their home. The planters brimming with graceful flowers flanked the front door and were so welcoming. The house was transformed, and became the most elegant wedding venue, offering us a

sense of contentment. It was surreal and so real at the same time, and we floated through the evening freely. All my worries melted away as my brother danced his way in to meet his bride. My brother and sister-in-law set the tone for the evening; their pure happiness was contagious. Watching my parents proudly walking him to his *chuppah* while escorting him so lovingly was memorable.

*Mazel tov!*

We erupted in tears and cheers of joy as they became a couple. We danced and celebrated the night away, enjoying a festive meal complete with love and laughter. What we lacked in numbers we made up in energy and spirit. I wanted my brother and sister in law to have the perfect wedding, and so they did.

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It might not have been what we expected, but who is to say that what we expect has any merit? I have experienced firsthand that we cannot assume we are in complete control of our lives. Our willingness to accept and understand that there is a greater force beyond us is part of our faith. When things don't appear to be going our way it is important to remember and trust that it is all for the best. My brother and sister-in-law understood that, and that is their everlasting lesson to me.

# Day, Then Night

by Ahuva Horowitz, Class of 2022

The afternoon was slow and lazy and peaceful. The choir of crickets hummed their rising crescendo, and the hot air settled into everyone's bones. I realized there was a chance to make things exciting, so I rushed outside, the white gleam of the sun engulfing me, a sure sign that summer wasn't leaving yet.

Then I heard them whooping, and I raced across the width of grass. Right over the parched road and tearing up the stretch of hill. I saw the trampoline, and them on it, and I ran to that arena where I could fly with them, and we flew together under the great blue firmament, the giant sky.

These were the days when the sky was like an entire world unto itself. It seemed so vast to me. I believed it was infinite. The feeling of wonder and security I felt when I was under that blue sky with them, those neighborhood friends, was one of the purest feelings I ever had, and that is still true to this day.

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I was with some school friends, the four of us trudging up a drive one balmy evening in August's dying days. Summer was settling gingerly to rest after its long months of shining; it was the winding-down time, the calm to follow the high.

We reached my house. Looking across the street, I saw that other house I knew so well, sprawled over the hill as it always was. As we plodded onto my lawn, I realized I hadn't been inside it for a long time. Through the branches, in the shade of the trees, I caught a glimpse of that old trampoline.

Something surfaced in me. For a fleeting second my limbs relaxed, and my arms hung loosely, my eyes fixated on the house. It wasn't numbing, and it wasn't overwhelming... It was a kind of heaviness that flooded me, a weight.

Then the sensation left as quickly as it had come, and I traipsed down the grassy slope with my newfound comrades, those friends from school.

As we went inside, there were two colors in the sky. That azure I knew from past summer days, filling the western heavens, and to the east, a new one— a twilit periwinkle. They met and bled into one another. Slowly, the purple dusk consumed the little blue left from the day. Then the mountains swallowed them both.

The infinite blue had ended. The new purple had overtaken it. The twilight signified another era, the one where I had formed new friendships. Then the sun set, which meant the end of those short-lived friendships, along with the ones I'd unknowingly neglected: my very first ones.

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I opened the door and stepped out into the dark and the cold. No shivers came, no anticipated tensing of muscles; it was like I was impervious to the temperature. I just put my hands in my pockets and breathed sort of slowly.

I was looking purposefully at that house across the street as I heard the creak of the front step and a stifled "Ow" come from the doorway behind me. My father hobbled up on my left, a foot or two away. His teeth chattered audibly, and he rubbed his arms fervently, then stilled. There was silence for a bit. My father sighed. Then he spoke.

"Did they move already?" I didn't respond. "I think they moved." He glanced at me, nodding in the direction of the empty house. "You know they moved?"

"Mm-hm," I said.

He returned to gazing around at the dark street. He went inside a minute or so later, giving another one of his theatrical shivers as he did so.

I stopped forcing myself to look at their house. I turned my eyes to the sky instead.

There was nothing to see. There were no shadowy clouds. There were no deep navies or indigos. No stars winked. It was just black.

More time passed, and I went inside too because no puzzle-piece feelings were coming to me anyway.

# Chatterbox

by Chaya Trapedo, Class of 2022

The blue house on Northumberland Road in Teaneck, New Jersey, is the eighth house I have lived in since I was born. Maybe it was just the frigidity of winter, but this house had an air of permanence to it. This time, the moving boxes didn't go into the attic. They were emptied, folded up, and left out for recycling on the curb. The next morning, they were gone.

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California will always be a part of me, from my freckles to my "LA accent." I don't remember much from before I was five, but I remember using my recess time to talk to my teachers, never feeling cold unless it rained, and going to Disneyland on Sundays. Being a girl was easy when I was little, and also fun. In the pool I pretended to be a mermaid, and on land I was a princess. In Disneyland I would wear my princess dresses, Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty. I would explore the park in my pretty pink gown and tiara. We would visit the castle, and go to all of the princess rides, and take pictures with every princess, my favorite being Belle, because she liked to read. "It's A Small World" was my favorite ride in Disneyland, but at that point in my life, the world felt anything but "small" to me. I had barely seen any of it yet.

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"I thought there would be snow," I pointed out to my mother as we drove from Toronto Pearson Airport to our next home in Thornhill. It was the coldest I'd been in my life, but the ground was bare. It didn't take long until we arrived home.

The boxes were neatly piled in the middle of my room. My bookshelf seemed so bare...it was begging for books. I found the box with the books in it (it was the heaviest one) and carefully arranged all of my favorite titles, including *Matilda*, *The Trumpet of The Swan*, and *Who Was Steve Jobs?* In a new place, these books were old friends, giving me an outlet to escape the change and embrace something comfortable. And books don't tell you that you're doing something wrong, or that you're dumb, or asking you why you don't know something already. Books are there to give you a new perspective, a new side, and an opportunity to see things differently. Other people's or characters' lives were often more interesting than mine.

Third-grade girls are tricky. They hold on to any remnants of being little that they have as time forces them to grow up. Throwing something, or someone new into that mix can disrupt the balance. Breaking into a clique of girls who were friends since they were able to talk was hard. They liked jump rope and Rainbow Loom. I was unable to do either of those things, despite my various attempts.

I passed the time by talking to teachers. They told me I was "so smart" and I liked hearing it. Other middle school kids didn't call me smart or let me talk about what I was interested in without cutting me off to talk about shoes or headbands. But adults did. They let me talk about how the Touch ID on the iPhone 5s would change the tech game and how climate change is underrated. Mrs. Verzov, Mrs. Pugen, Mrs. Lipschutz and other teachers over the years gave me their time and attention. And when they were busy, I would go visit

with Sara Raizel, our secretary, who became a frequent recess companion. Sara Raizel was the first person I told when my mother called school to tell me I had a new brother.

When they were too busy to indulge me, I took out a book, and I escaped to the Secret Garden with Mary, Collin, and Dickon. Other times I would join Harry, Ron, and Hermione on their adventures in Hogwarts. Books never changed the subject or ditched me for someone else. Plus, they were never too busy to hang out. They were always right there, on my shelf. One of the things I've learned about moving is that it's harder when you know you won't be missed.

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Packing up to move from Toronto to Teaneck was easier in some ways and harder in others. It would be easier to take less stuff. I had outgrown my princess dresses and My Little Pony. I labeled my moving boxes with words like "shoes," "Books: Contents Fragile!" and "Why am I keeping this stuff?" It all followed me back across the border.

Breuers was very different from Bais Chaya Mushka. For one, the girls were older, more mature, and more open. It was easier to talk to them, but I still had to make sure not to overdo it. I was determined not to go wrong. To avoid becoming friends with teachers by default, I lived by three conversational guidelines to get through lunch and recess with my classmates:

- 1) Is this something I should say?
- 2) Is this someone I should say it to?
- 3) Is now the right time to say it?

It was hard to adjust at first, but eventually I got the hang of these rules. Not everyone likes talking about math and coding as much as I loved to, so I learned to find topics well suited for Washington Heights middle schoolers. Basketball was popular. Girls liked to complain about the amount of "work" we had. The graduation trip itinerary was controversial, but always up for discussion. Purim shtick planning always made us laugh (even in June). And after three fun-filled years with the Class of 2018 at Breuers, my yearbook stands testimony: I would miss my class, and my class would miss me.

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To some people, moving boxes are a nuisance. Even though they're surprisingly costly, they don't hold up over time. Just one heavy downpour and the bottoms give away. You can, however, repack and relabel them as often as you want. "Playroom" can become "Library" without anyone raising an eyebrow or making you feel bad about your choices. Since we'd never thrown out moving boxes before, I didn't know what to expect. I couldn't tell whether discarding these boxes was a good or bad thing.

Throwing out cardboard containers might seem trivial, but for me, it was a paradigm shift. All the "boxes" I'd been put into and stepped out of—princess, chatterbox, reader, and perhaps someone who tries too hard—have served a purpose. Boxes are good for saving and storing things, but at the end of the day, we shouldn't hide parts of ourselves that are immovable and meant for display.

# *You Are What You Eat*

*by Hindy Hamburger, Class of 2022*

“Can I eat you?”

“What?”

“I said,” the little girl drawled, looking back at her friends for support, “Can I eat you?”

I stood there and sighed, my small hands nervously fiddling with the pleated uniform skirt.

“Why?” I responded, knowing the answer that was coming.

“Because you’re a hamburger,” she giggled, and they ran off to play on the swings before recess was over. That wasn’t the first time I’d heard the greatly unoriginal insult, and it sure wasn’t the last. With a last name like Hamburger it is expected.

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The year of the big jump between kindergarten and first grade was the year I had to switch schools. I’d have to leave my friends and everything I found familiar.

I boarded the bus with all the older girls, my bag clearly bigger than my size. I sat the whole ride, quiet, clutching the folder my mother and I had put together the previous day. When we arrived at school the teacher was prepared for my plan, my mother must have called her prior.

She spoke to the class, talking about my ancestry and who had lived in Hamburg, an attempt at getting the first-grade girls to, instead of mocking my name, admire it. There were two possible outcomes, and if any girl had actually cared enough to tease me, they could have utilized this speech perfectly.

No one did.

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“I bought you something from the store.” My mother’s voice could be heard from the doorway. My siblings and I ran to her to help bring in the bags, definitely not because of the gifts.

“What is it?” my sister and I asked inquisitively.

“Lunchboxes,” she answered us. Our faces dropped as we investigated the bag’s contents.

The lunchboxes were no ordinary lunchboxes.

They were lunchboxes shaped as hamburgers.

“Thanks,” I smiled, clearly not too excited about my new accessory.

The next morning, I packed my books for fifth grade and headed off to school with the new lunch bag.

“I love your new bag!” The amount of praise for my new lunch box was astounding.



“Thanks,” I beamed, proud to carry not only my lunch, but a name that would always belong to me.

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Seventh grade is when you turn twelve, and all I could talk about was my Bat Mitzvah. We planned a party for my friends in my house, and spent time clearing out the living room so we could dance and set up tables to eat in the kitchen.

“Happy Birthday! You look so pretty! Great party!” echoed throughout the house and through my mind.

After we ate and completed the activities it was time for dancing. The music played loudly as I joined my mother to distribute the party favors. As I turned around, wearing my hamburger hat, I noticed my friends happily dancing with their own hamburger hats while enjoying the party.

A crowd of hamburgers.

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“Aren’t you Hamburger?” The girl asked, her vaguely familiar face resurfacing.

“Yeah,” I smiled. We hadn’t talked much, and we didn’t know each other, but she remembered me. Well, she remembered my last name. It made an impression, something that stood out. That wasn’t the first time someone knew me by my name, and it does not bother me.

# Man Plans but Hashem Plans Better

by Emma Cohen, Class of 2022

“Daddy, why does Mommy look gray?”

The blazing red and blue flashing lights and the wail of the ambulance rapidly faded away as my father gathered his three sons and two daughters into the family room. Shaken up, my father announced, “Let’s say some *perakim* of *Tehillim* together for Mommy, and then we’ll talk about everything else.” Words cannot begin to describe the sheer pain, panic, agony, and fear we felt in that half hour of begging Hashem to return our mother to us. Tears, choked up throats, and whispers are all I remember from that hazy night.

We sat spread out in our family room as we worked through all we needed to consider and to think about what we could do. During this time, my father answered all of our questions about what was happening and told us, “It’s a good thing that Mommy is in the hospital because the hospital has at least two things that I can’t give her; oxygen and an I.V.” Despite the fact that my father is an intensely private person— and was initially very hesitant to do so— he explained why we should and need to tell as many people as possible that our mother is in the hospital. Immediately, my nineteen-year-old brother, Zevi, got two *Tehillim* WhatsApp chats booming. At all hours of the day and night, people begged for *rachmei shamayim* for my mother. From Teaneck to California to Five Towns to Chicago to Passaic to Maryland to Lakewood to Cleveland to West Orange to Israel to New York City to Virginia to Staten Island to Atlanta to Queens to Denver to Monsey to Pittsburgh to Brooklyn to Florida and back to Bergenfield. People we know, people we don’t know. It didn’t matter. All that mattered was that another member of *Klal Yisroel* was in dire need of *tefillos* and *rachmei shamayim*. Aside from the emotions that kept me up at night, I could hardly fall asleep because my phone just kept pinging from the *Tehillim* chat, reminding me that my mother was still not home. I have never felt the *koach* of *Am Yisroel* like I did then.

With all the chaos and commotion of my mother being swept away to the hospital, we didn’t immediately notice one major problem; the glue of our house when it comes to preparing for Pesach, whether it is the cooking, cleaning, or just the general being there, was suddenly missing. The need for a sense of normalcy drove us to clean better than we have ever cleaned before. Emptying out drawers, organizing closets and cabinets, mopping, sweeping, wiping, vacuuming, spraying, changing our countertops, *kashering* the oven, sink, and stove— it all happened. But whenever one of us sat down for just a minute to take a break from all the hustle and bustle of the Pesach preparations, we remembered. We remembered our mother, and we remembered Hashem. We remembered that Hashem is the only One in control and that He has the “master plan.” We remembered that Hashem can bring a *yeshua* in any situation at any time. We just had to believe He would. And then, once again we were back to the exhausting routine of cleaning, depriving us of any time to think.

Despite all the havoc surrounding us, there is always one guaranteed staple in a Jewish home; Shabbos, and with it its sense of stability and its own unique mayhem. But everything was different. Nothing was the same without our Mommy. The cooking, the candle lighting, and the gaping hole where she normally sits at the

Shabbos table. With four younger siblings armed with cleaning spray and mops, my brother, Zevi cooked up a storm: chicken soup, deli roll, roast, and meat pizza were just some of the delicious foods on the menu. Minutes before the arrival of Shabbos, I quickly threw on a black velvet Shabbos dress, tights, and Shabbos shoes, and hurriedly brushed on some make-up. I had to do something that I had never ever done before in my life, and I hope to never have to do it again until I am married. I had to light the *neiros Shabbos*. I ran out of my newly cleaned bedroom and dashed down the stairs to the dining room. I took one good look at the Shabbos candles, took a deep, deep breath, lit the candles, made the *bracha*, and davened to Hashem that this should be the last time I have to light the *neiros Shabbos* in place of my mother.

“Aw man, now I have mascara all over my face from covering my eyes and *davening*, it better be worth it!”

We davened *kabbalas Shabbos* together as a family, just like everyone else does during this pandemic, except we were missing our Mommy. Later, while we were all sitting and eating at our *Shabbos seudah*, no matter how hard we tried, we just could not seem to get past the massive void next to my father’s seat at the Shabbos table. While we were trying to conduct as normal of a *Shabbos seudah* as possible, my father could not help but say, “Do you kids see that? All of the Shabbos candles are burnt out, but there is one candle that barely has any wick or wax left, yet it is fighting. It is fighting so hard. Despite all that is going against it, it still remains shining bright. Kids, that’s Mommy. Mommy is that fighting candle.” Shabbos day was as normal as it possibly could be for our family despite being told that Shabbos encompassed part of the most crucial and critical forty-eight hours for our mother’s recovery. We *davened*, ate the *Shabbos seudah*, took some very necessary Shabbos naps, went on a family walk through the neighborhood, and some family friends even walked over to our house to check in on us. But there was one very different event that took place on Shabbos: my father answered the phone.

“H-h-helloo?”

“Hi, Mr. Cohen, this is Dr. Elias calling from Englewood Hospital,” he could sense the panic in my father’s voice. “Don’t worry, we are just calling all of the patients’ families to give them updates. Although your wife does not seem to really be improving, she has not ‘slid back’ and that’s a good thing.”

“Thank you so much for letting me know,” my father said as he drifted back into his Shabbos afternoon nap.

On Sunday, at just the right time, Aharon, my younger brother, and I decided to FaceTime our mother in the hospital in order to escape from the zoo of the preparations for Pesach. On the fifth day since she was admitted for pneumonia and coronavirus. We talked about the new Ripstik that my brother got, the fast pace of our cleaning, and that we had just *toved* our new, kosher for Pesach, Insta-Pot in a river; normal things. Suddenly, while we were chatting with our mother, trying to lighten up the mood, both for her sake and ours, one of our mother’s nurses came into the hospital room to check up on her and clean the room, since the

hospital was extremely short on cleaning staff. They say that “seeing is believing” and I didn’t think much of that phrase before this but all of a sudden it hit me like a ton of bricks; it really had a profound impact on me seeing my mother’s nurse there taking care of her, I just blurted out in a sheepish fashion, “Thank you so much for taking care of our Mommy for us.” For me it was so obvious to thank her for what she was doing for our Mommy but when I spoke with my mom later on, she told me that after we had hung up from our call, her nurse almost broke down in tears.

“Don’t make me cry! I’m gonna fog up my hazmat suit and then I’ll have to change it, and it’s a whole to-do! I just can’t handle all of this emotion anymore. There is absolutely no way that this whole pandemic is just nature and for no reason, there is no question that this is Hashem. I don’t know what message Hashem is trying to deliver to us, but there certainly is one. We need to change. Perhaps Hashem is trying to teach us to stop driving at a one-thousand-mile speed, sometimes in life we just need a slowdown, to teach us what is really important and to take stock of our lives. I just wake up every morning now and pray to Hashem that He should help me to be successful in healing all of my dozens of patients, and I apologize for anything that the universe and mankind may have done to upset Him.”

Bombarded with boxes of Pesach dishes to bring up from the basement, counter tops that still needed to be put on, an oven, sink, and stove that all needed to be *kashered*, we were running into Pesach. The scene was pandemonium; cardboard boxes, newspaper, and paper towels were everywhere; it felt like time was speeding up without any possible way for us to catch up. Outside of our home, dozens of *shiurim*, given by some of the world’s most renowned *mechanchim*, had been dedicated in our mother’s *z’chus*, a caterer reached out to us and offered to make all of *Yuntif* for us, and friends from all over were out running errands for us while they still had *Yuntifs* of their own to make. But then, time stood still for a few minutes; everything froze. We dropped everything we were doing. It was happening. Everything that we had been davening for. “Mommy is coming home from the hospital before *Yuntif*.”

On Wednesday, April 8th, at exactly 5:13 pm, just a mere two hours before *Yuntif* was to start, my father snapped a picture. It was a family picture. That picture means more to me than any other picture, our Mommy was in it! I remember the scene so vividly. The house was sparkling clean for Pesach, the fridge and shelves were stocked with delicious Pesach food, and suddenly that sense of urgency that existed for those days evolved into an air of serenity. After days of *tefillos* and agonizing pain, our mother finally did it. She stepped foot in our home. It was the happy ending you wait for at the end of an action movie, just this was real life.

“Daddy told me, and I know because I have spoken to all of you, how hard everyone has worked and how much everyone has done, and I am just so proud of you. I am so relieved to be home, and happy and glad that you somehow managed not to kill each other and get everything done for Pesach and I didn’t know what I was going to walk into, so I was just like ‘okay, whatever it is, it is, and however it looks, it looks,’ and the house couldn’t be more beautiful and everything couldn’t be more perfect and I just want to thank everybody so much for everything.”

In life we think we know what we need, but we don’t. Only Hashem does. We thought we were going to prepare for Pesach like any other given year and we had planned out how we would spend our *sedarim* and

*Chol Hamoed.* Well, we were severely wrong. When it all came down to it, we were over the moon to have our family whole again, that the way we spent *Yuntif* was just icing on the cake. On *Yuntif*, when our aunt asked us what we would want for our *afikomen* present, we said, “We already have everything we could possibly want, we have our Mommy back, and that’s all that matters.” This entire ordeal has ingrained in my mind a new mantra, “Man plans, but Hashem plans better.”

While our mother was still not in tip-top shape, nevertheless she was at the *sedarim*, with her oxygen tank and pulse oximeter handy. We went through the whole *Haggadah* and made many stops along the way to tell funny stories that happened while our mother was in the hospital. For us, it felt like we had gone through our very own *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

Whenever I witness my mother walking up the stairs on her own, or I see her oxygen levels at ninety-five, I am eternally grateful. I am grateful to Hashem for the test He blessed our family with.

It really gave a whole new meaning to something I once heard Charlene Aminoff, the owner of Gali’s Couture Wigs, say: “Hashem doesn’t want you to stress. He just wants you to stretch.” And boy, is this true. I don’t need to believe her; I know she’s right. This taught me that Hashem owes you nothing, and that even a single breath is Hashem’s way of saying “I love you.” After these eventful, rollercoaster weeks all I can say is, “Thank You Hashem!”



# Jetlag

by Cherri Citron, Class of 2022

My mother is sort of from New York. She was born in Brooklyn in the same neighborhood I live in now. As a baby, her family moved to Nice, France where she grew up. That's where my grandparents still live, and some of my aunts and uncles and cousins. I guess she's from New York because she's lived here the longest, and her accent doesn't sound anything besides American, except for when she forgets an English word or two, and she tells me to cut around the mango's bone when she means pit. Most flights to see her family are pretty uneventful. There are the constants, like the suitcase that's over the weight limit, the one that we open up in the middle of the airport floor so we can rearrange and redistribute a few pounds so as not to pay the extra twenty bucks. There's the plane we always have to be on long before it actually takes off. The food sealed in plastic which I pick at and decide is inedible. The missing sleep. The run from one flight to another. We always arrive in the morning; the sun is always too bright. My mom tells me to speak up when we talk to the flight attendants as we exit the plane. She says "*merci*," I say, "thank you."

When the flight is almost at its end, you see the blue of the Mediterranean Sea and the crescent shape of the *Baie des Anges* through the tiny airplane window if you were lucky enough to get a window seat, my most coveted position on a plane. When my mother was around five years-old, her parents took her to Paris for the first time, which she found to be quite the disappointment. It was cold and dismal, unlike the year-round warm weather of Nice. Worst of all, no beaches, which my mother found to be unimaginable. When she asked my grandfather where the beach was, he took her to the shores of the Seine. "This is their beach?" my mother asked, "I feel bad for the people of Paris." She does not like the winter and she does not like the Atlantic Ocean and the things New York City calls a beach.

Nice always looks the same in my head, but it is not a time capsule. You could call it stupid that I'm shocked when it changes because that's what cities, like any living things, do. In my head, my grandparents still live in that hundred-year-old house with the courtyard where I played soccer with my cousins. In reality, they live in a new apartment, just a street away, with air conditioning.

My idea of Nice surrounds these few streets. Next to my grandparents' old house is my uncle's pizza shop. Here, is where I claim they make the best pizza in the world, or at least the best pizza I've ever tasted. Five minutes away is the Kineret Bakery, where my mother happily buys croissants and baguettes on the daily (she claims they never make them right in America). Down the street from my grandparents is my great-grandmother's apartment. It's here that arises the problem of my dismal French skills. That seems to surprise and disappoint a lot of people. When someone asks me to speak French, I am forced to tell them I can't say much besides "*parlez Anglais s'il vous plaît*." Despite countless efforts and announcements that "I am actually going to learn this time," I never make it happen. So, I sit on the couch of my great-grandmother's living room and we smile at each other, but we don't speak. It seems wrong to say the blockade to our communication is her lack of English when she speaks French, Russian, and Yiddish, and it's me who only knows one language. Sometimes, my mother tries to work as a translator between us, but that is a tiring and strange way to try to

speaking, and it never lasts long. My mother does not let me use this as an excuse to spend less time with her. It is in that apartment that I discover there are things that do not care about language barriers, like dominoes, which my great-grandmother is obsessed with, that we play on long afternoons, that always make me think of her. There is also the swing on her porch, the one that for long was synonymous with a visit to Nice for me. It is this swing that is no longer there because all things break, but for me, everything about Nice is still encapsulated on that swing on my great-grandmother's porch.

My grandparents' house is loud, really any place where my family congregates is. They technically have an empty nest, but you wouldn't know that from the mix of children and grandchildren stopping by every day.

They shout.

In French, and English, and Hebrew, and I can never quite catch what is happening. I can't really tell if they're always angry or just passionate. There is always a heated discussion going on that I'm never a part of. That might be because I am a child to them, the conversation is never for me. If I understood French, I could at least be a fly on the wall (and be caught up on the family gossip). My mother has thirteen siblings, so the sound might just stem from size. They live all across the world, from Detroit to Corsica to Kyiv, but we tend to come back to Nice in the summer months. We are rarely all there at once though. There's always a couple of new baby cousins who I never met before, and by the next time I see them, they'll have grown so much I won't recognize them. I don't usually have anyone to talk to. Either there's no English speakers or no one my age, and then somehow my mother gets angry at me for hiding away in my room.

The hardest part of traveling is usually the jetlag. The first day is always the worst. I say I'm going to stay awake and I end up crashing on the couch. As a result, I am up late into the night. In my head, I keep calculating what time it is back home, six hours before French time, keeping track of when my body will actually feel like it's nightfall. I don't get up before noon for at least a week and I can't help but feel like I'm wasting time. These are the few weeks I am with my family in this beautiful city, and I can't get out of bed. The jetlag always takes me by surprise, like I've done this so many times my body should know what to do immediately by now. But it never gets easier, it still comes those first nights of every visit, and all I have to comfort me is the idea that this will end, that my body will adjust and I will feel like I belong. Time always goes by too fast. Three weeks is almost nothing. As soon as I'm sleeping at night and rising with the sun, it's time to leave. It's never hard to adjust back to home time. Sleep comes the first night and it's like I never even left.

New York City is home. There's nothing quite like its bustle and noise, the kind that makes everywhere else *too* quiet. That's not to say it's the only place I enjoy being, but it's the only place I can imagine living. Other places are nice for a week, a month at most, but they're just a vacation, a distraction from my real home. I never know what Nice is to me. It is not some ancestral homeland. My mother was not born there, nor were my grandparents or great-grandparents. I feel out of place there. How could I not when I dress and talk and look so different from everyone else. It's a place I miss sometimes when I'm in the city in the summer and the concrete is searing hot and I dream of the beach. In those moments in my head, there is no trash in the streets of Nice. No litter on its stone covered shores. No shouting at family dinners. My great-grandmother and I can communicate simply through smiles. I am not a tourist. Nice in my head is a postcard, but a postcard can only fit so much.

# Four Different Skirts

by Miriam Gluck, Class of 2022

It's spring, and I'm sitting in the front room of my house doing homework one day after school, when I hear a knock at my door. I smile, knowing exactly who it is, but then sigh, because I still have a lot of work to do, as well as a test to study for. Nevertheless, I open the door for my neighbors, who are standing there expectantly, and tell them the bad news.

"I'm still doing homework," I confess. This encounter happened almost every day. However, most of the time I was able to hang out with them. I would invite them inside, and we'd usually head to my backyard to toss a ball around, sometimes even getting my older sister to join in.

That's how my afternoons were spent, playing with these girls, who I happened to live next to, and soaking up the warm weather together. Since we all attended different schools, gossip was swapped in the first few minutes we got together, bringing each other up to date on all the drama that was happening at each of our schools.

\* \* \*

I don't remember meeting the girls from down the block, I just remember that I was friends with them throughout elementary school, and after three out of four of us graduated, our friendship, for the most part, stopped.

The block I live on is very long, and since I'm from Brooklyn, it's filled to the brim. Most of the families are Jewish with kids all around the same age, which meant that growing up on that block gave me automatic after-school friends. We'd do everything together, from riding our bikes all around the neighborhood, to playing *Chopped* with the plastic toy food that we found in someone's house.

I can still vividly remember the four of us, all in our different pleated uniform skirts, scootering down the block in the specific formation we created, every so often calling out to each other using our very special code names. At that moment, I wasn't thinking about how in the very near future, I'd be coming home from school much later, with much more homework, and the friendship that filled up most of my childhood memories would just disappear in a matter of months, without any of us noticing. No, all I was thinking about at that moment was how nice the scented spring air felt on my face as I scootered down my block.

It's been almost two years since we stopped getting together, but now, when I'm walking my dog down the block and pass one of my old friends standing on their porches, I *do* stop to say hello, because we're not mad at each other. We didn't stop being friends because of a fight. It's just what happens sometimes, people grow apart, especially kids.

\* \* \*

"How's high school?" I ask one of my neighbors, trying to strike up a conversation.



"It's alright," she responds, but then quickly gets distracted by the dog jumping all over her excitedly.

"He misses you!" I tell her, even though that's quite obvious by the greeting she's receiving.

"I know, I miss him too!" and we both know why. We were all an important part in each other's childhoods. If even one of us weren't present in the other's lives, there would be less laughter, less smiles, less inside jokes, and less failed sleepover parties that were horribly planned.

Looking back, I realize that even though my friendship with these girls ended when elementary school did, our relationship is still so important to me. I believe that every person you meet has the potential to impact your life in some way, you just have to let them. It's okay to move on from people and grow apart, because moving on from a relationship doesn't take away its importance or how special it is to you.

# Welcome Home

by Zahava Schwartz, Class of 2022

I used to say how when I grew up, I would move to the suburbs.

I despised the city. The noise disturbed me, and I needed quiet. I used to lie in bed trying to fall asleep, but the sirens that blared across West End Avenue, and the music blasting from people's cars at 8 o'clock at night prevented me from having my full twelve-hour, school night, third-grader beauty sleep. With the sirens, the cars, the engines, the people each doing their own thing, I knew that there would never be a time of peace and quiet.

Visiting my grandparents in Englewood was a gift from heaven. Every time we visited, I savored the tranquility. The freshly cut grass backyards and the crisp smell of clean air brought me joy and satisfaction. The ability to sit on a swing without the pressure of kids waiting impatiently for my turn to end was a dream come true. Sleeping was a breeze. No blaring sirens, no cars on the street, and the people there actually went to sleep at a reasonable hour.

Over time, I have come to appreciate my city life as it granted me the gift of independence that most kids have to wait until they can drive a car to get.

By the time I was ten, I walked to school by myself and was able to cross the big avenues. Through seeking out my new power of independence, I soon found myself with more responsibilities. Soon I was responsible for picking siblings up from schools, dropping them off at birthday parties and Fairway, and CVS run-ins became regular.

But with this newfound independence, I no longer needed parents to bring me everywhere. I was free to roam the city by myself, and my friends and I would go on frequent trips to ice cream shops or clothing stores alone. We would walk around the city always finding new places to visit or interesting things to do. One long spring Shabbos, we spent the whole day wandering Central Park. We circled the Conservatory Water pond, marveled over the greenery, watched the busy people as they went about their lives and observed the tourists as they stared dumbfoundedly at the Big Apple skyscrapers.

\* \* \*

Graduating eighth grade prompted the opening of a new chapter in my life. Until then, I have attended my previous school for twelve consecutive years. I had my best friends, my group that I felt comfortable with. My graduating class was thirteen girls. Majority of my class chose to go to high school in New Jersey, leaving me to fend for myself entering Manhattan High School for Girls. I'd now be forced to embark on this new journey alone.

The first day of high school arrived. Walking into orientation, people sat comfortably with their friends, talking at ease to those they've seen all their lives. These faces were new, I had nowhere to go, no one to sit next to.

I soon adapted, found my place, made new friends, and felt somewhat at ease.

Lunch always confused me though. I didn't understand why people couldn't walk into the lunchroom alone, get their lunch from the table by themselves. To be honest, I liked that I didn't feel the need to be completely dependent on another's company to do simple things. I liked that I felt secure enough to walk in the hallways alone and that I didn't need escorts to the bathroom, as I am fully capable of embarking on those journeys alone.

Now, I am proud that the green awning held up by two brass poles that display the numbers 277 marks my home. Though the city lacks the smell of freshly cut grass, I've grown to love the two trees that stand alone outside my window, which go bare in the winter, yet grow full in the spring. I've found comfort in the cold, brisk, winter, city nights and the embellishment of the small twinkling lights hanging from the awnings as substitute for the missing stars. Although the suburban silence is calming, the city noise revives me with its uniqueness and sense of individuality. I am no longer irritated by the late-night noises, as I have developed the ability to sleep peacefully through anything. Through my journey, I have learned to find comfort in myself and in my home, as the city delicately crafted my character and personality.

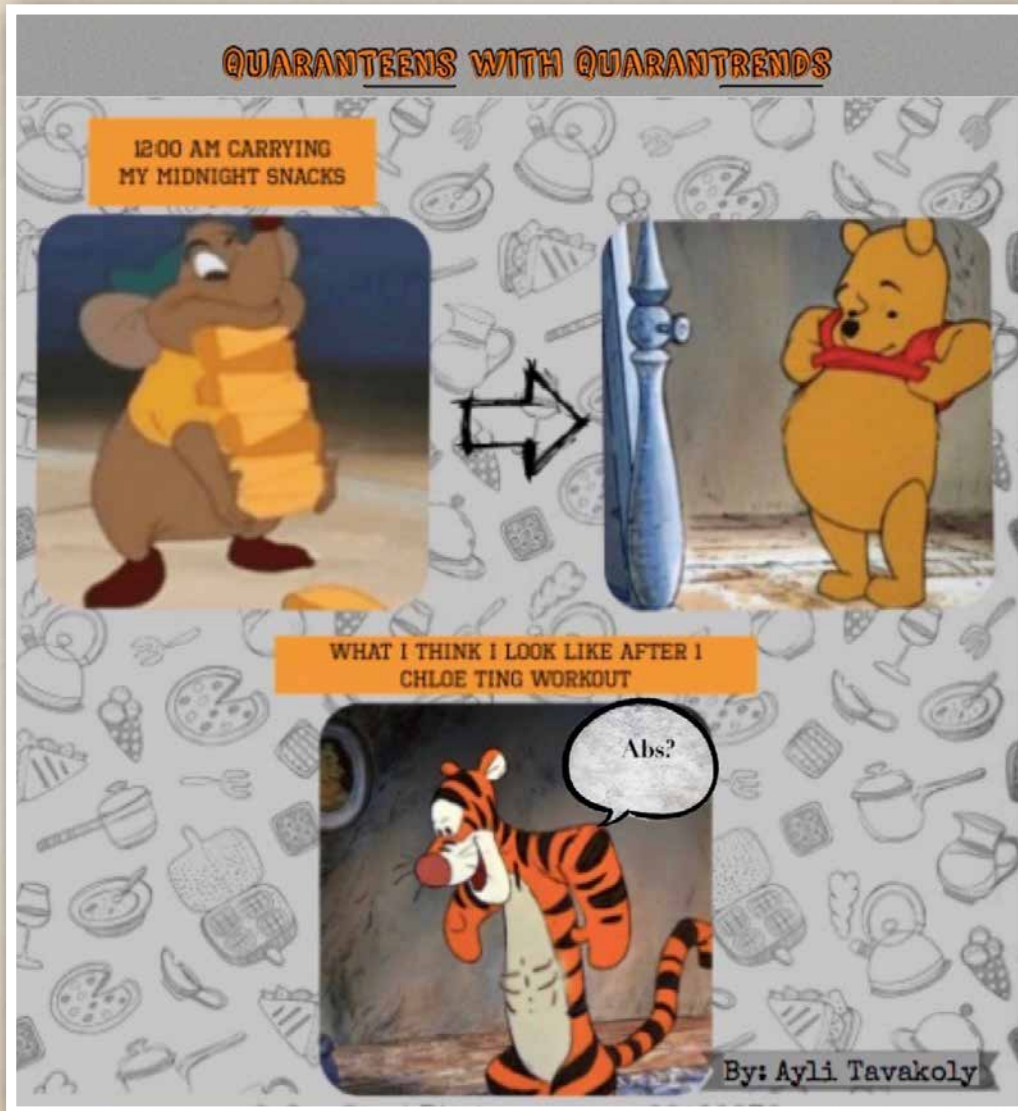
# *Waving through a Window*

*by Rachele Gelbtuch, Class of 2020*



# Quaranteens with Quarantrends

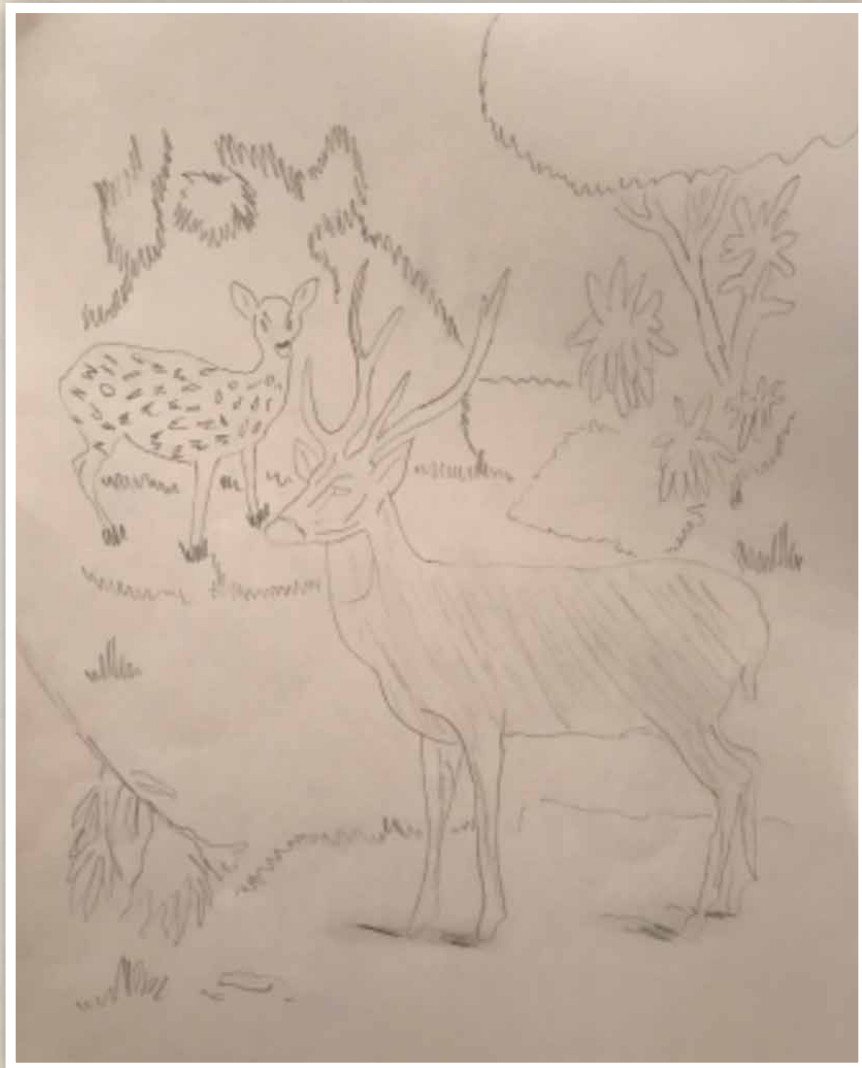
by Ayli Tavakoly, Class of 2020



This comic sums up one of the struggles of being quarantined. Since we are stuck at home, we are less motivated to exercise and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Ever since quarantine, there has been many different trends to help this struggle. One of them is Chloe Ting.

# *Happiness in Nature*

*by Sara Lamstein, Class of 2021*



I chose to depict deer because I live in a suburban area and there are many deer. A week ago, a baby deer began dwelling in the gardens of my home and it brought great joy to the entire family seeing this beautiful innocent creature. Especially in today's day and age, we often fail to see the beauty in the more simple aspects of our lives but this baby deer really reminded me that the most beautiful parts of our world are found in the simplest of things.

# *The Lonely Flower*

*by Ilana Lesser, Class of 2021*



# *A Sister is a Girl's Best Friend*

by Anna Gross, Class of 2020

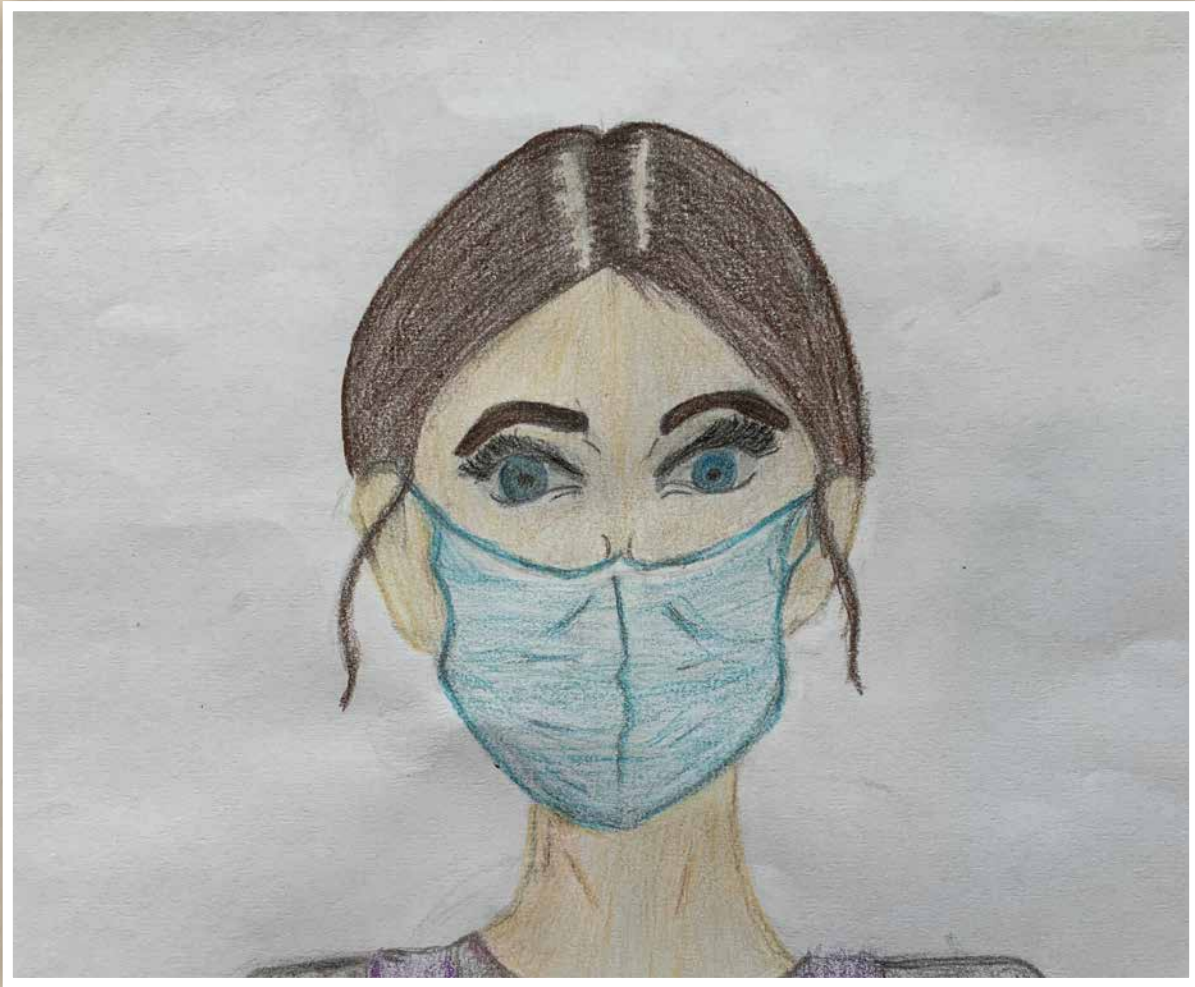


I drew this picture of my sister, during Painting and Sculpture class, where I was tasked with creating a realistic drawing.



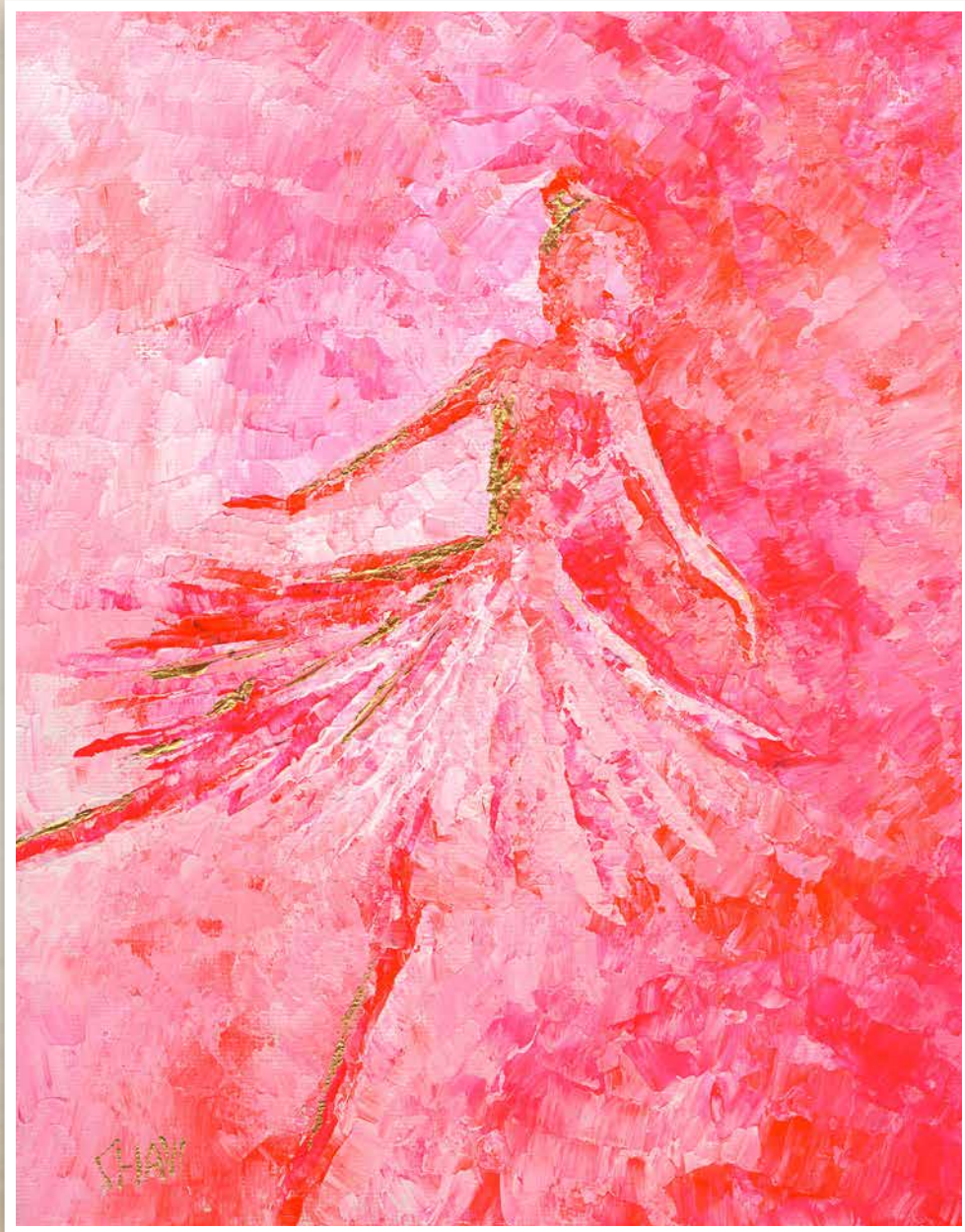
# Conceal

by Tzirel Shteierman, Class of 2021



During this time, it is hard to remember to wear a mask, and most of the time it is inconvenient, but one just has to remember that by wearing a mask they are protecting others which is the right thing to do. This is because by wearing a mask one is concealing themselves from the germs of others as well as not passing on any of their own germs.

*That Dress, the One in the Picture*  
by Chavi Golding, Class of 2021



# *A Playground's Perspective*

*by Noa Klein, Class of 2020*

It was February 2020

The children all laugh and all smile

I hope they do stay for a while.

The sun shines bright on their cute heads

As they build in the sand bed.

It was March 2020

They still come now, though less and less

And when they do, their parents stress.

Rarely now, and I don't know why

Since the sun still shines in the sky.

It was April 2020

There's no one now, my gates are closed

Something about some danger posed

The only danger I know, though,

Is those kids have nowhere to go.

Was it 2020?

The children are back, and their toys

So many children, girls and boys.

They're on the swings, I shine with glee,

As they again play around me.

# My Quarantined Life

by Dina Rothman, Class of 2021

## MY QUARANTINED LIFE

Expectation

REALITY



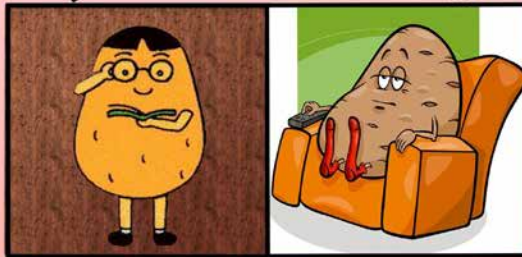
Expectation

REALITY



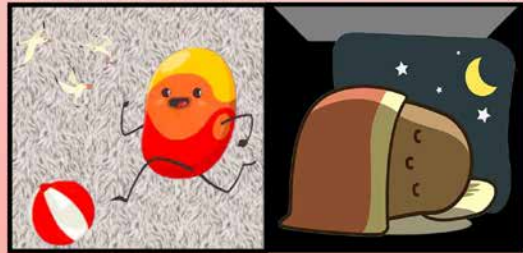
Expectation

Reality



Expectation

Reality

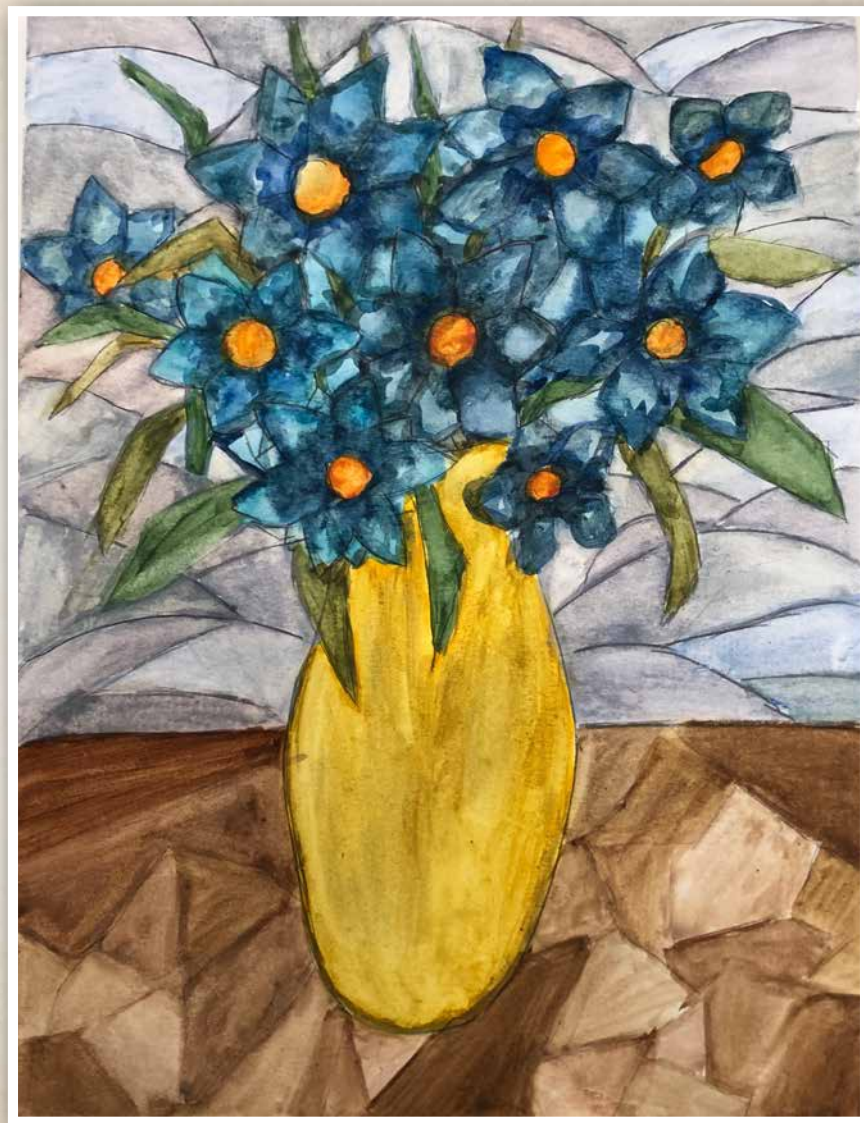


Dina Rothman

My comic strip was created because in the beginning of quarantine many teens including myself had goals to reach and everyday it would keep on being pushed off. I would say I will do it tomorrow and days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months. Finally, I was able to start reaching my goals and all that I wanted to accomplish while in quarantine, even though it took around 3 months to start on them. This is the story of a typical teen in quarantine.

# *The Blue Flowers*

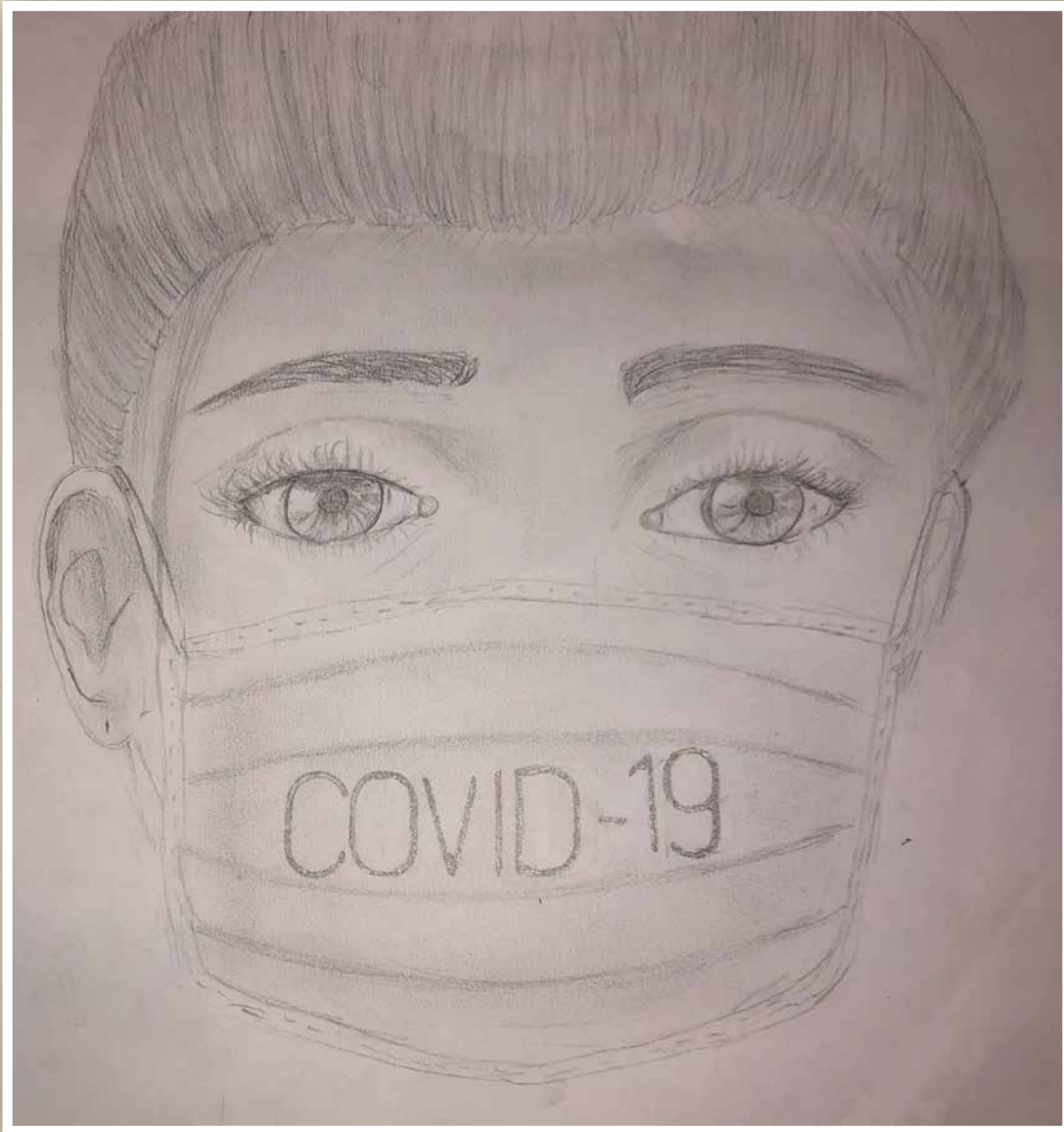
*by Zahava Schwartz, Class of 2022*



Although the table may look like it is falling apart, it is really the base of a beautiful outcome, the vase of flowers. So too, just as these times are hard and people may feel as if their world is falling apart, these times may be a base of a beautiful outcome.

# *Who's in Control?*

*by Tamar Newhouse, Class of 2023*



This drawing is portraying any one of us. We are amidst a pandemic that changed the world, but it's up to us how to deal with it.

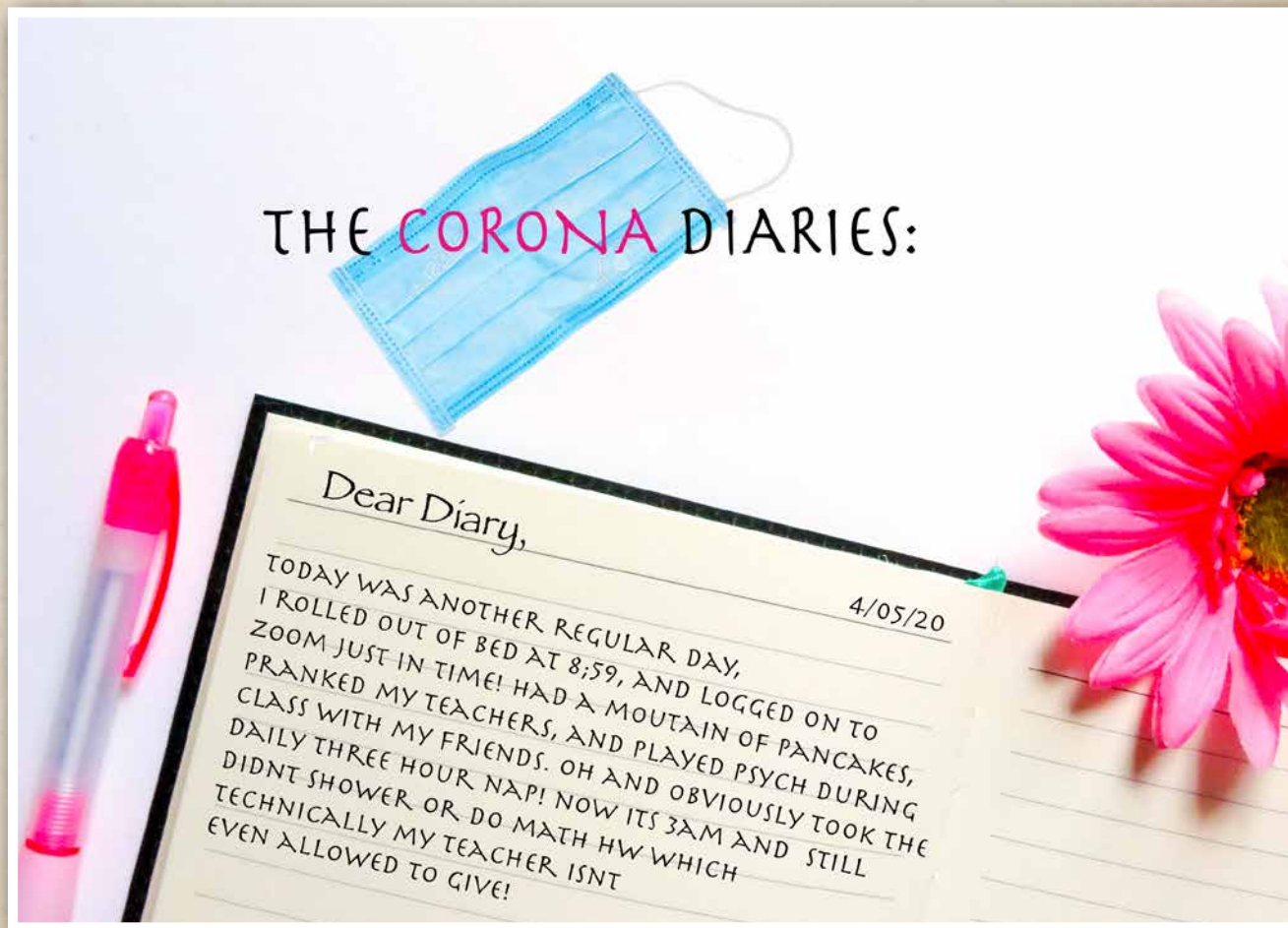
*In this Together*  
by Miriam Mermelstein, Class of 2020



This painting portrays our diverse society coming together to overcome the tragedies this pandemic has caused, and finding the beauty and unity behind this feeling of terror.

# The Corona Diaries

by Nava Stefansky, Class of 2021

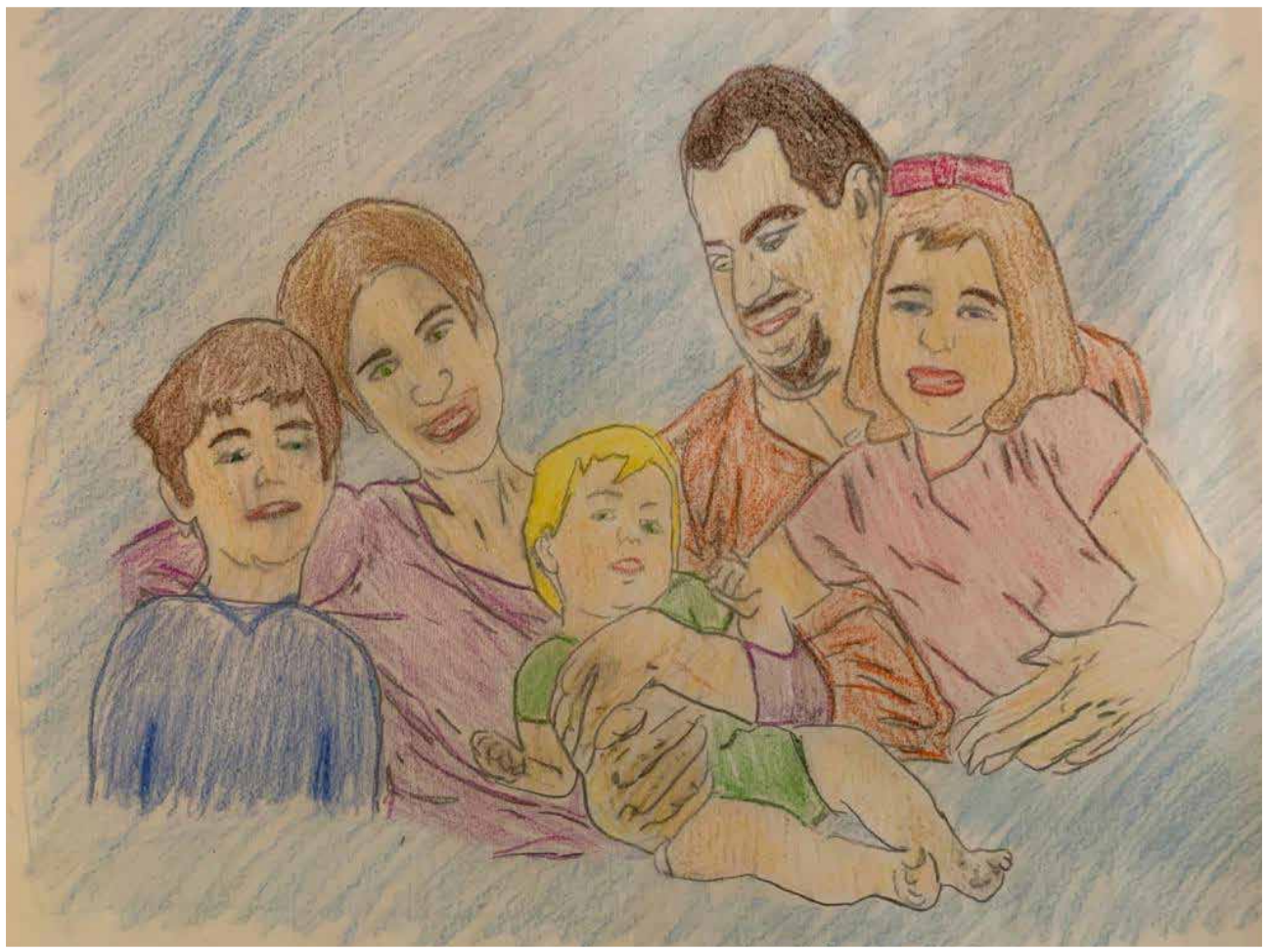


In the beginning, we all did not know and expect this pandemic to drag out for as long as it has. So as teenagers, being quarantined at home and having no school, we took advantage of our new high-carb diets and used our creativity to make our virtual communication the most exciting it could be. This is the daily schedule of an MHS girl at the beginning of quarantine. I'm sure many can relate!



# Family

by Esti Samel, Class of 2020



In Modern Art class we were instructed to draw something that signifies what the Covid 19 experience has been like for us. I believe that the amount of time spent with family and the strengthened relationships are something that I along with many other people will remember fondly.

# *King of the Jungle*

*by Bracha Lewittes, Class of 2022*



I painted a lion to represent Hashem. Just like a lion cares for its cubs, Hashem cares for every Jew and does everything to protect us.

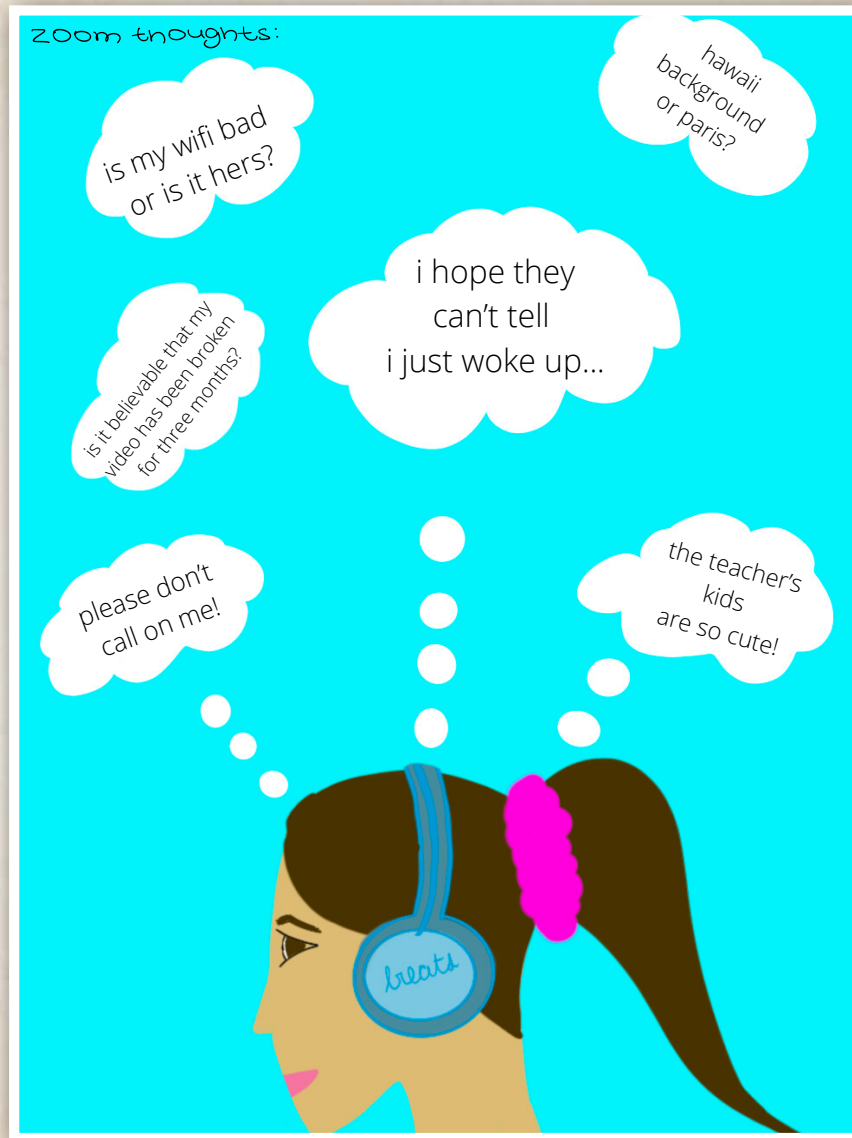
# *Family in Quarantine*

by Kayla Koenig, Class of 2021



# Zoom Thoughts

by Musia Kirschenbaum, Class of 2021



This graphic art is a description of my thought process during Zoom classes. Zoom School has replaced regular school and I thought it would make sense to illustrate something we experience every day.

# QuaranTEEN

by Yvee Rosenthal, Class of 2021

Four months ago I didn't know what quarantine meant. I woke up at 7 A.M., "the crack of dawn," paraded around the school and hung out with friends. Now I am confined to my bedroom, aside from the hours I spend with my head stuck in the fridge. I go to sleep while my dad is making his morning coffee. If I want to socialize it's through a screen, just like the rest of my other activities. At first, being in quarantine felt like a teenager's dream, no school, staying in bed all day, eating, sleeping, repeat. But when MHS postponed their hopeful open date, the reality of the situation hit home. People are suffering, people are dying, worldwide! I feel helpless, I am not a doctor, and I definitely don't hold the skill-set to cure Covid-19, but what I can do is focus on being positive and productive. Even if it is just to lift my spirit and distract myself from the new reality we face today.

If given the choice I would way rather be fidgeting in a class, or pulling an all-nighter to complete a project, or even studying for a final. According to the New York Times article, "*A Positive Outlook May be Good for Your Health*," Jane Brody claims that, "When facing a health crisis, actively cultivating positive emotions can boost the immune system." During this global pandemic, it's natural to be negative, but I will make the choice to see this through positively. To dance in the rain (inside of course). Instead of focusing on what I would be doing if not for this pandemic, I must concentrate on living in the best way possible. How? By enjoying the meaningful moments and being appreciative for what I do have.

Understandably, when the world around us shuts down, we also feel the need to shut down, making for an easy excuse to be unproductive. However, productivity is extremely important in our everyday lives especially during quarantine. Over the last few months, I have discovered that good weather is my new best friend, that I probably should not be baking, and that I possess some hidden talents I never knew. Being positive and productive has let me achieve some things I may have not considered doing before, such as submitting this essay to the *Covid Chronicles*.

# *The New Greeting*

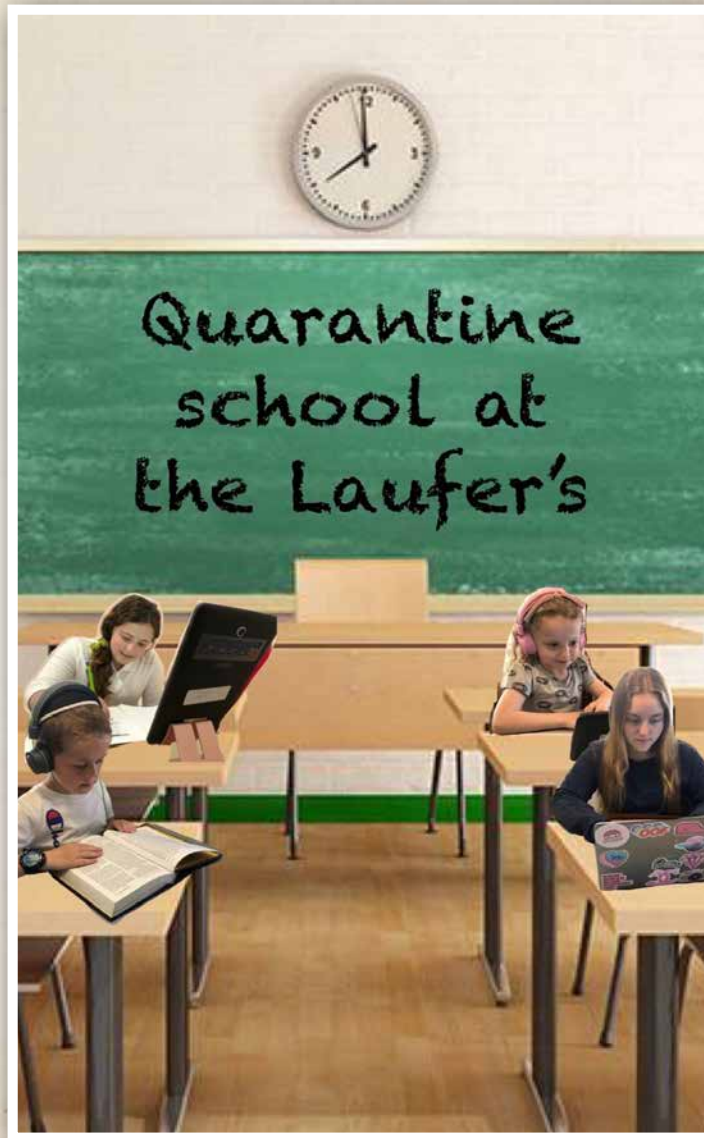
*by Zahava Schwartz, Class of 2022*



This drawing displays the new way to greet one another, despite our inability to embrace those we care about.

# Quarantine School at the Laufer's

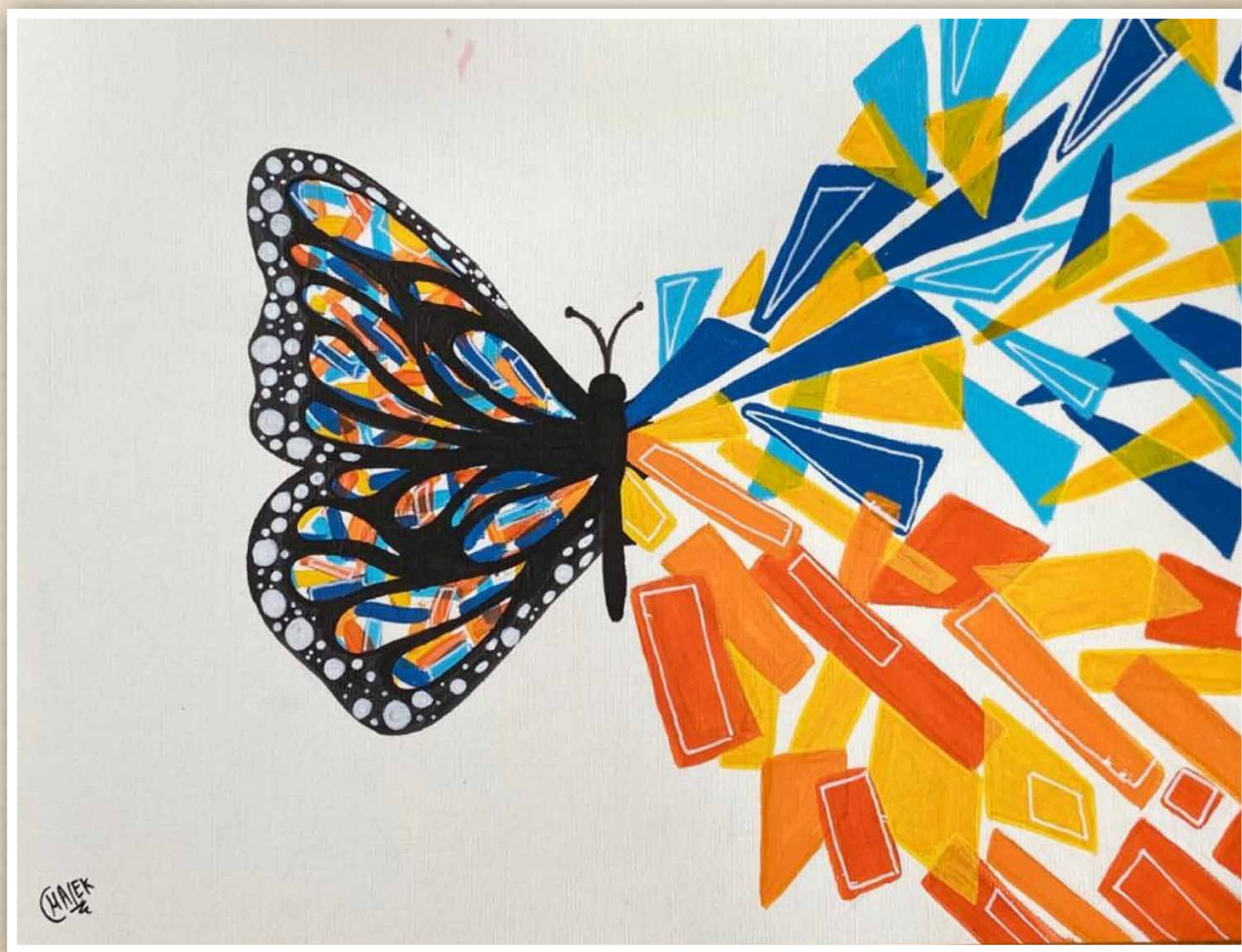
by Zahava Laufer, Class of 2021



During Covid my house turned into a school. My siblings and I have each taken over a different room, which we occupy the entire day. I get to see them when I leave my room at 12:45 for a brief 35 minute lunch break. Having school gives us a sense of normalcy and a purpose to our long days in quarantine.

# *Fly Away*

by Chanie Malek, Class of 2022

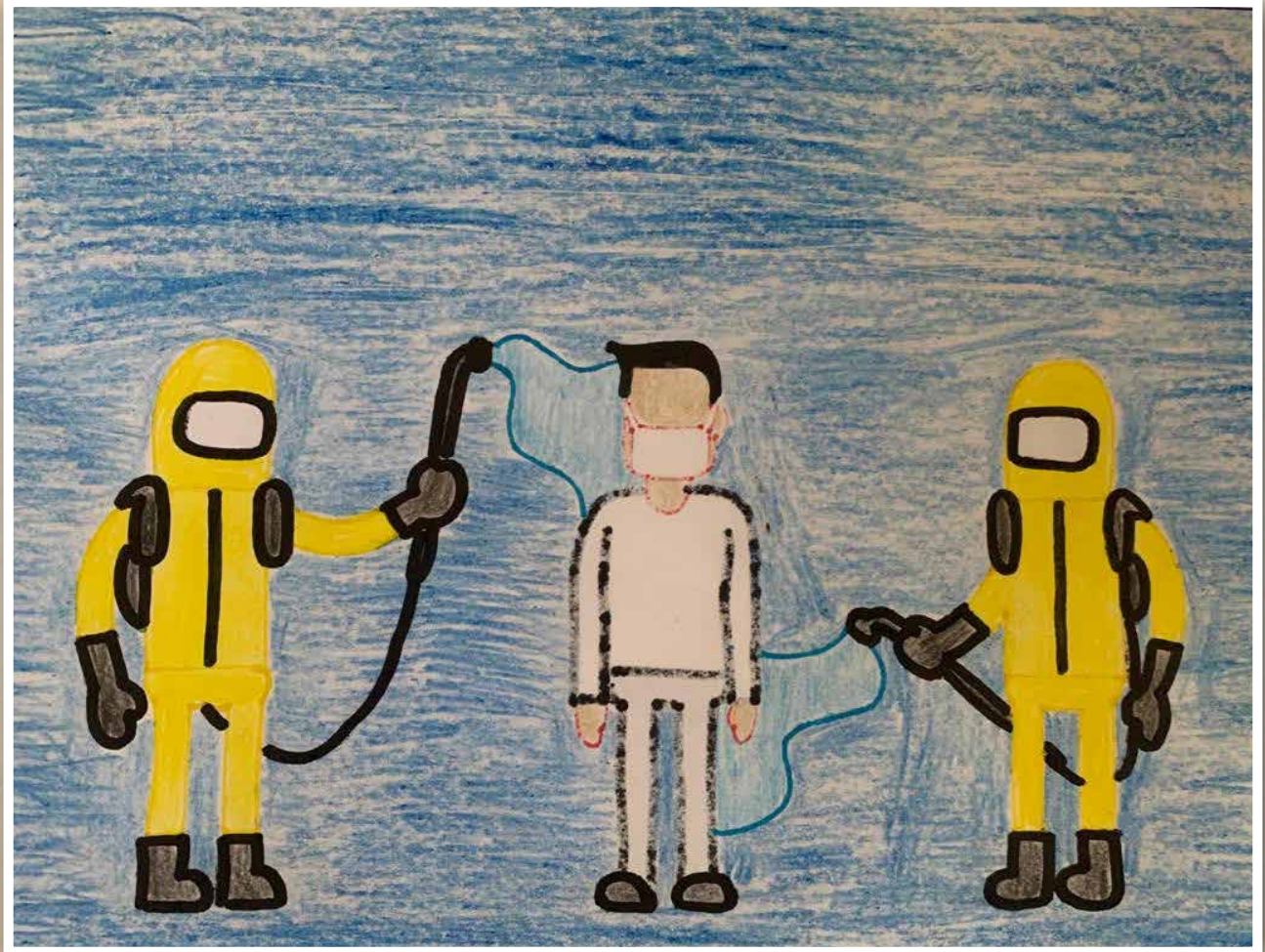


I chose to paint a butterfly, because butterflies have always been a symbol of hope for me and during these unprecedented times I think that we all need a little bit more hope in our lives right now. Just like the butterfly I wish that I can fly away from all that is going on in the world right now to a more peaceful place.



# *A New Reality*

*by Rivky Samel, Class of 2020*



This drawing represents the new reality we are all being faced with. Masks, gloves, and social distancing are our new norm.

# Alone Together

by Sara Nordlicht, Class of 2020

Alone in our homes, we are together.

We are together in our shared experiences. We are together in our knowledge, and our lack of knowledge, of all that is going on around us. We all had our moments of shock, of anxiety, of worry, of denial, of anger, of fear. We also all had our moments of hope, and joy, and being amazed at our ever-changing world, and the kindnesses of mere humans among it all. The varying tapestries of our lives are all telling entwined stories right now, we are living through the same story, hour after hour, month after month. Though it affects us in different ways, we are united through it.

Now, more than ever, is the time to socially connect. Though we are physically distancing from one another, we should not be socially distancing. In a time of so much uncertainty, when we know that *ein lanu mi l'hisha'ei ela al avinu shebashamayim*, now is the time to take out our *siddurim* and *tehillims*. It is also the time to pick up a phone, or get onto Zoom, and connect with and be inspired by one another. At a time when everyone is lauding and inspired by the “healthcare heroes”, I am inspired by the amazing girls at MHS, who are always seeking inspiration and growth and positivity. Now is an integral time to connect with them, and our extended families, and our community, who all have so much to offer.

We will emerge a changed and united people.

# Moma

by Dina Rothman, Class of 2021

## MOMA

### Food Display System

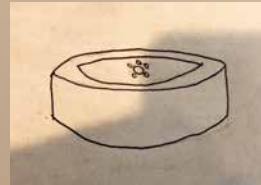


Inlight of Covid-19 the restaurant will make a few changes:

- Less tables will be put out to keep social distancing
- More space at each table/bigger tables
- Couches that are against the wall will be longer
- Pickup and Delivery will be a big part of the restaurant

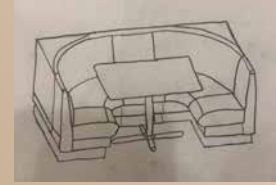
By: Dina Rothman

### Refurbished Furniture



Tire → Ottoman

### Semi Privacy



Seating area



This is my presentation for a restaurant called Moma. This restaurant is designed with brown walls and a nice seating area. My inspiration image shows the overall look of the restaurant. I designed an ottoman for the restaurant by repurposing an old tire. To give the guests some privacy, I will have square couches along the wall. In light of the Coronavirus I will make a few changes to the restaurant including:

1. There will be less tables in order to keep social distancing.
2. The tables and the couches along the wall will be bigger.
3. Although this restaurant is for sit down, now pickup and delivery will be available.

# *Surviving the Flames*

*by Shoshannah Ovitsh, Class of 2022*



I created this painting because it shows the power of music. Even during these trying times, music always survives the flames and hardships we experience, continuing to bring happiness to the world.

# *Par-Par*

*by Rina Szpilzinger, Class of 2022*



I chose a butterfly specifically since I felt it represented the exact opposite of quarantine. In quarantine we tend to feel stuck and trapped so I decided to paint a butterfly which is something that's more free and represents freedom. It's so important to do as much as you can during quarantine to keep yourself energized and busy with things that make you feel accomplished and not only like you're stuck at home.

# *Early Morning*

by Raquel Nissanov, Class of 2022



I chose to recreate the sun setting in my own creative way. I personally love sunsets. It's one of Hashem's magnificent creations, and it would be a shame to not acknowledge its beauty. I love how each and every sunset is unique in its own way. The bright colors blend so beautifully with each other and it just blows me away. I'm that girl who gazes into the sunset and forgets about everything else in that exact moment.

# Magic Hour Rooftop Grill and Bar

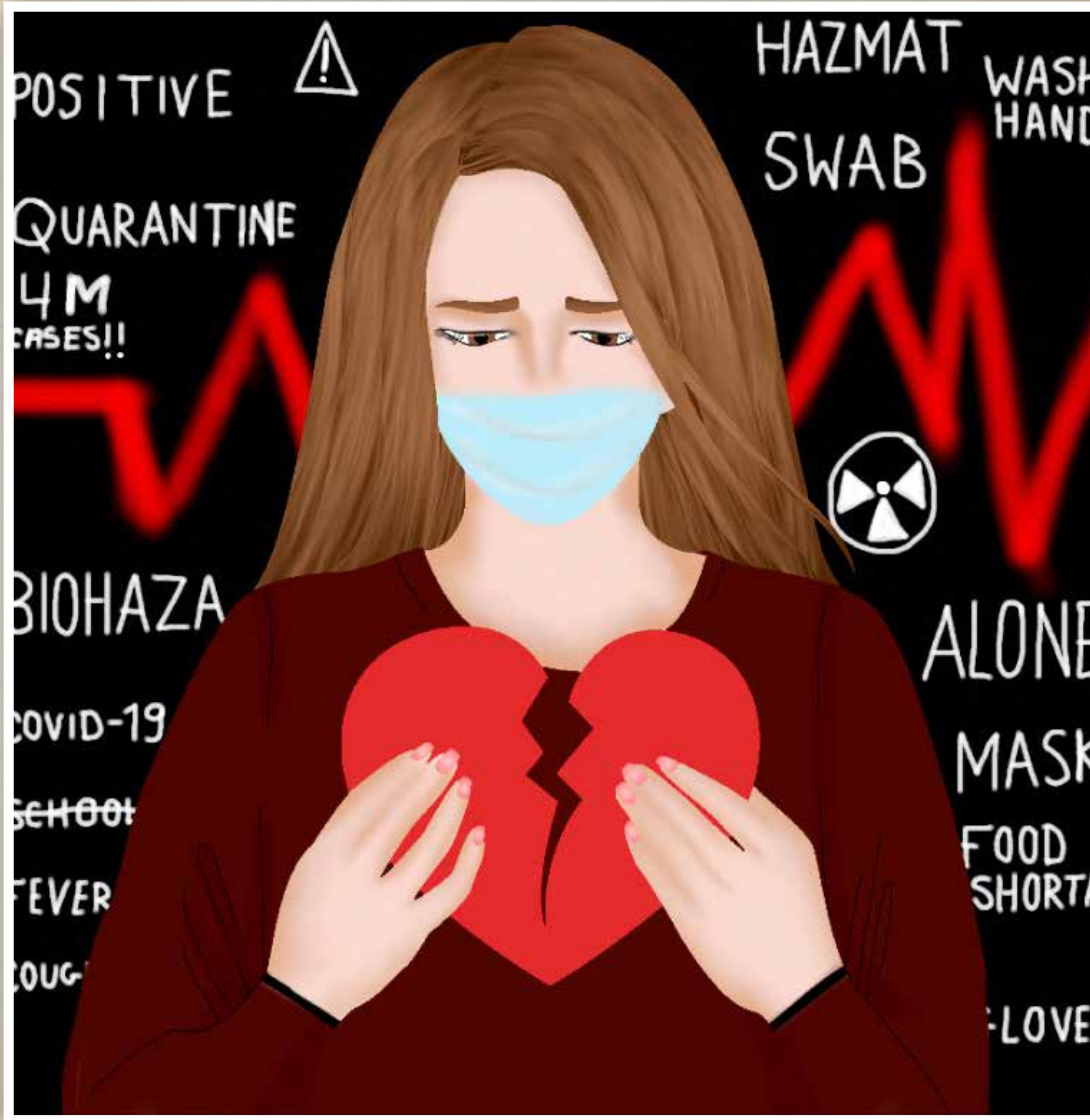
by Ayli Tavakoly, Class of 2020



This is an interior design proposal representing the changes that restaurants will be making after Covid-19.

# Quarantine Life

by Reggie Klein, Class of 2023



During this difficult time we have all been adjusting to our new lives in quarantine while also having stressful thoughts about the future. I wanted to show what some of these thoughts might be in my artwork.



# *Pythagorean's Identity*

by Golda Schuster, Class of 2020



# *I Lie Awake*

*by Fayga Tziporah Pinczower, Class of 2022*

I lie awake  
It's silent here  
But I know the deafening sirens are just blocks away

They keep me up  
They blare in my mind  
How can I sleep when so many will never wake up?

We are three months into the war,  
Combatting an invisible enemy  
Who is constantly claiming lives.

It's a game of Russian roulette  
No one knows who will win  
But only one can survive  
Every trip we make may be the last  
and we will never know the stakes

I lie awake as others perish  
I lie awake as the world becomes a battlefield  
I lie awake as our brave doctors fight for strength

I drift off as souls ascend to heaven  
And I close my eyes and try to forget the horrors.

But I know this is a luxury so many are denied  
I choose to enter a land apart from this one-  
caught in the clutches of COVID  
I choose to float above the clouds  
and escape from the madness  
While they fight to stay here  
but are pulled towards heaven  
They wish to keep their feet firmly  
planted on the ground  
as it is removed from beneath them

What is our anchor?  
Who is the captain we call to when  
our ship is wrecked by a storm?  
Alas, no human can save us  
But heroes try.

To the doctors that save lives as we save supplies  
thank you

To the grocery store owners who open  
their stores as we shut our doors

thank you

To all those making an effort to save lives,  
we say thank you



MHS Teachers'  
Covid-19 Messages



*A personal pandemic message  
from Rabbi Jolley*

Thank you for this marvelous idea.

“Jewish history isn’t the past, it’s the road map for the future.” Permit me to share with you some of my observations, experiences that have reshaped my own and family’s life.

First and foremost, we see the awesome control and mighty power of Hashem’s Hand. We in the USA were the envy of the world. A robust economy. Very low unemployment, soaring Stock Market. The army being rebuilt and judges who stand for morals and principals being placed in powerful positions. The long awaited American embassy which was finally moved by our current President to Jerusalem.

Legislations passed that will help individuals and families for decades to come. We were on top of the world, and suddenly an unknown virus from an unknown province in a country thousands of miles away, a country that is decades behind in development, has leaked into the world, a virus that is one sixtieth the width of a hair ... and all our accomplishments are dead!!

Trillions lost in the market, people wiped out for good, unemployment worse than the Great Depression

אני השם...

I’m the One who says when Yes and when No.

I’m the One who decides who lives and who doesn’t.

Very young, middle-aged, old, healthy and compromised people were all victims of this deadly virus. We see so clearly that we are powerless; we are all in the Hands of Hashem.

The rich, poor, powerful, and prisoner alike were all lumped together. There was no discrimination between gender, ethnicity or religion. It is all אני השם.

Who would have dreamt that in the land of the free, we were ordered to close down our beloved shuls, our beloved minyanim! In AMERICA—never, but alas yes, no minyanim.

Who would have thought in the land that personifies freedom of religion, we can’t learn Torah in yeshivas or schools.

Who could have imagined that on the greatest day for a Chosson and Kallah, they would be permitted a wedding celebration in their living room or back yard accompanied by parents and siblings only.

Inconceivable a few weeks ago but very real right now.

It could bring you to despondency and depression or it could build you and give you strength. We are the children of Hashem the children who You brought out of Mitzrayim.

We saw you then decimate a superpower and we see it now once again.

We were a downtrodden nation who left with raw dough slung over our shoulders and developed into “the chosen nation,” a nation that hasn’t stopped excelling since then.

Between Pesach and Shavuot this year, Hashem has done it once again. What a chizuk to see the yad Hashem.

There are certain times that are personal in a person’s life, times that are yours and cherished. One of them is being able to stand by a parent’s grave and perhaps reconnect to the loss, connect in a better way to Hashem .

A solemn yet reviving time ... I was denied this special time on the Yartzeit last week of my beloved father as the cemetery was locked.

I just wanted to cry at my father’s gravesite, nothing more..... but again, my beloved Father in Shomayim makes the call—when I can cry and when not. In a twist of emotions I was uplifted not downcast.

On a different note, I also see the resilience of Klal Yisroel. How under such conditions we not only stepped up to the plate, but rather, we reinvented the plate.

How our Hatzalah members put their lives into jeopardy time and time again, how the Chaveirim organization was available 24/7. How the wealthy gave beyond their capabilities.

Just last night a fundraising for Hatzalah yielded close to 8 million dollars in a few hours..... unprecedented.

How under such strain and anxiety our precious children are learning and accomplishing without their physical teachers.

The Noshim Tzidkonious have now become super heroines.

Getting up at the crack of dawn to avoid crowds when they shop.

Coming up with fantastic original ideas how to keep the family happy.

Becoming almost magicians in substituting basic commodities in the home.

I see the **לֵב יִשְׂרָאֵל** live and well.

Hashem ..... we all see You. Perhaps we needed to wake up from some type of spiritual slumber but let me tell You, we are now wide awake!

Like we see You in Your full glory and appreciate You more than ever.

**מִדָּה כִּנְגַד מִדָּה** please look at us too, and see what a special people we are. Bring us back to being able to function fully. Give all those who need a **רְפוּאָה שְׂלֵמָה**, a speedy recovery, restore prosperity to us all so that we can serve you.....

**עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן אֱלֹהִים**

We eagerly await, not only the return of our personal **מִקְדָּשׁ** but the final **גְּאוּלָּה** where the sanctuary of Hashem will be forever, and the difficulties we are experiencing will be nothing more than a page of **מוֹסֵר** in the history of Klal Yisroel.



*Personal pandemic Messages  
from Mrs. Badrian*

*Women “Stepped Up To The Plate”*

Can a woman become president of the United States? Maybe the Covid19 experience will persuade Americans to resoundingly answer yes.

Nations led by women were most successful in mitigating the tragic effects of this pandemic. Let’s examine the record.

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, who holds a PHD in quantum chemistry, understands and respects scientific knowledge. She spoke to the German people, explaining the pandemic’s ravaging potential and the need to immediately shelter in place. The proportional death rates and hospitalizations in Germany were far below that of the United States, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and many other countries.

Jacinda Arden, liberal Prime Minister of New Zealand, partnered with the conservative government of neighboring Australia, to order an early lockdown. Only twenty-one Covid deaths were reported in New Zealand according to John Hopkins University. New Zealand was declared the world’s third safest country.

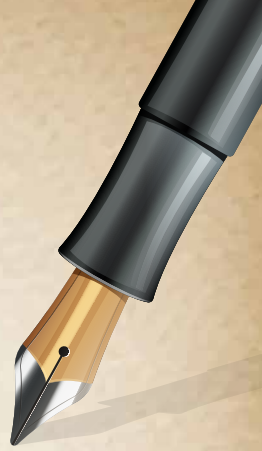
Matten Frederiksen, Prime Minister of Denmark, Tsai Ing-wen, President of Taiwan, Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway and Sanna Martin, Finland’s Prime Minister and the world’s youngest head of state, all imposed early quarantine measures and border lockdowns. They were successful in significantly reducing the spread of Covid 19.

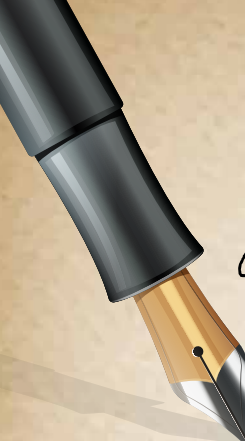
Women leaders can be credited with effectively managing the novel Coronavirus pandemic. Women have certainly “stepped up to the plate”.

## *Trees & Hope*

I look outside my bedroom window. My cherry tree is in full bloom, its delicate white blossoms delight my soul. From another window I see another tree in full bloom; a canopy of pink flowers providing an inviting home for nesting, chirping birds. My street is peacefully quiet. Or is it eerily silent? No human in sight. But wait...here comes a man, masked and gloved, rushing by. I hear a distant sound, more audible as it nears my house. A recording urging people to come to their windows. A flatbed truck with a potted fruit tree slowly passes by. I see my neighbors and they see me. We recite the traditional, seasonal blessing on the fruit trees. Then suddenly the shrill wail of an ambulance speeding by. I think of those who could not come to their windows, of those who will never be able to come to their windows. I look at my trees – symbols of hope, blessing and rebirth.

~ *Mrs. Badrian*





## *A personal pandemic message from Rebbetzin Fink*

I have the distinction of being the first MHS person to contract COVID-19. I was not looking for that distinction. I look back at that time and find different points to ponder and lessons from what happened.

One moment that stands out boldly in my mind is my trip home from school on Monday, March 2. Monday seemed like an ordinary school-day except for the fact that on the previous day, Sunday March 1, the first Coronavirus case had been diagnosed in New York. As I left my house Monday morning, I wondered what the streets and the city would be like after this revelation. I was surprised to find that everything seemed business as usual. One or two people on the subway were wearing masks and other than that, nothing was different. There was not even an eerie silence that I had expected; just people entering and exiting and reading newspapers and conversing. Very routine.

My day in school was busy and I could feel the excitement of Purim plans for the following week. I remember leaving school feeling good and no longer cautious about the COVID-19 situation. However, when I boarded the train for my return trip home and took a seat, I immediately became aware of a woman sitting across from me who was coughing nonstop. 'Oh my!' I thought to myself. If there is Coronavirus in New York then there could be Coronavirus on this train. 'It's irresponsible and reckless to stay in this seat and be exposed to what might be Covid!' So I jumped up, paying no attention to the fact that it might appear impolite, and quickly moved across the car to its opposite end. As soon as the train pulled into the next station, I ran off and into the next car of the train. I found a seat and traveled home. The rest of the trip was uneventful.

The next day my husband was not feeling well and seemed to have exactly the symptoms that were being described as Coronavirus. That day we also found out that someone in our Shul had been diagnosed with the virus. My husband knew he had spent time with this person and our doctor decided to have my husband tested. Back then it was so very unusual! I remember officials from the New York health Department coming to our home with hazmat suits and serious faces and conducting the tests (nose and throat). They were quite nice and sensitive, yet they left us with dire warnings about the effects of the virus and how contagious it was. The day my husband received his positive diagnosis I developed symptoms and I was tested. That same day I found out that many people in the neighborhood had symptoms and all were being tested. I and almost everyone else tested positive.

I so distinctly remember my first reaction! I thought of that lady on the train. There I was running away from what I thought was a potential hazard (and maybe it was) but what is ordained to happen to a person will happen; there IS no running away. I thought of Yona Hanavi. I reminded myself that even though someone must do their best in life situations (in my case it was trying to stay healthy), ultimately it is **עצת ה' היא תקום**!

I am so grateful **ה' הסדי ה'** to have fully recovered and I wish everyone else who may still be struggling with this virus or it's after-effects a **רפואה שלימה**!



# A personal pandemic message from Mrs. Szenberg

## Thoughts on the Pandemic

Like everyone, I have been reading many articles, both *kodesh* and secular, during the last few weeks. We all want to attempt to make some kind of sense of this pandemic. There is of course the obvious; we are not in control. As quickly as Hashem brought the virus He can destroy it. I have said numerous times over the last few weeks if there is a human being out there who still does not believe in a G-d he is completely insane. Everywhere one looks, both in the tragedies and in the recoveries, it is clear that Hashem is orchestrating it all. Personally, my *emunah* has been strengthened and I hope that it will continue to grow even when *bezres hashem* this is over. There is one specific lesson that touched me greatly that I would like to share. The major sacrifice that almost the entire world has had to endure is the separation. Whether it's separating from family, colleagues, friends, fellow shul goers, *chavrusahs*, teachers, *rebbeim*, we have all had to take part in some kind of social distancing. I believe that since we were not able on our own to separate from the ills of the secular society that we are all in some way connected to, Hashem had to do it for us. What makes us an *Am Kodesh*? The fact that we are separate from the other nations of the world. This is what defines us. So many mitzvos we have is to ensure our *kedushah*, *kashrus* being an obvious one. Unfortunately as we have become more and more connected to the secular world, in ways I don't think I have to specify, it has become more and more difficult to maintain our *kedushah*. Hashem has given us an opportunity to reflect on our special *kedushah* so that He can be able to bring the *shechinah* back to us with the rebuilding of the *beis hamikdash bekorev*!





*A personal pandemic message  
from Mrs. Shifra Ferber*

There is a banner hanging in my dining room. Silver letters on blue paper proclaim אין עוד מלבדו. The letters are decorated with stickers, colored straws and pie cleaners. I made this sign with my children at the start of Corona when I was looking for productive activities that I can do with the family while in quarantine.

The sign is a meaningful symbol to me. On חג השבועות, after מוסף. I reflected on the message of the sign. I thought back to 2½ months ago when we created the sign. Those were emotionally and spiritually charged days. Days when a weekday עשרה עשרה moved me to tears. Days when I awoke each morning listening out for the שופר of משיח.

And on *Pesach*, we all opened the door on ליל הסדר anticipating greeting אליהו הנביא himself, heralding our return to Eretz Yisroel.

And now, here I was on *Shavuos*, not in ירושלים, but davening מוסף in my home in New York.

A lot has changed from *Pesach* to *Shavuos*. Many of the restrictions have been lifted. The tension has relaxed. *Hatzalah* calls have diminished. This brings great relief. Relief that I can visit my parents and my in-laws. Relief that my children can play outside freely. Relief that shuls can begin to open. (And yes, relief that my cleaning lady will hopefully return soon!) Reopening has generated a lot of ease compared to sheltering in place, and I am so grateful.

But there is one area that I don't want to ease. The tangible yearning of "אהבה לו בכל יום שיבא", the sweet taste of קרבת אלקים לי טוב. I don't want it to go away.


I hope that long after our sign gets taken down, I will be able to tap into the clarity that I once felt of אין עוד מלבדו. I daven that this will never ease.

## *A personal pandemic message from Mrs. Leitsman*



It feels silly, but I am crying about hugs. A hug. That is something I definitely took for granted before the Coronavirus hit. A hug is a way to show someone you love them without saying anything. One of the greatest paradoxes of this time is most of us are feeling more tender and afraid than we ever have and want nothing more than to pull close to the people we love, to seek reassurance and comfort. Being unable to hug my elderly parents, I feel that the fierce love I have for them just cannot be fully expressed without that tight squeeze to tell each other that everything is okay and will get better. When asked the first thing I will do when restrictions are lifted, my beloved parents come to mind, and I tear up imagining the moment when I can open my arms wide and embrace the people I care so much about in my life. Who can say that they have not changed as a person through this whole COVID-19 era? The absence of so many little things in life makes me realize how grateful I need to be for everything big and small.

THANK YOU HASHEM!



## *A personal pandemic message from Dr. Trapido*

### *Eyes, Ears, and Empathy*

Not long into the coronavirus pandemic, when people began sheltering at home, two seemingly unrelated trends caught my attention: sharp increases in bible sales and a spike in Shakespeare streaming. In the modern era, which of the two do *you* find more surprising?

Contemporary challenges have long sent those seeking wisdom, hope, and solace to the texts of their faith and to classical works of literary and intellectual merit. From Lamentations to Lincoln, Job to J.R.R. Tolkien, or Rambam to Rembrandt, the intellectual heritage of the West is stitched out of the fabric of such works and is stretched through our ongoing reflections and discussions.

While the general expectation is that great works of literature provide timeless answers about the human condition, I think Shakespeare's cultural longevity is located in his ability to craft a timeless question. When Shylock the Jew attempts to elicit kindness, if not basic civility, from his Venetian persecutors, he rhetorically asks: "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.1.57-59). Shylock's solicitation seems to fall on deaf ears in the play, but perhaps Antonio and his entourage were never Shakespeare's intended audience. In posing these questions on the Elizabethan stage, Shakespeare challenges us to reflect: *Where, in fact, do our differences lie? What is the logic of hate? What compels us to treat each other differently? To judge others more or less favorably?*

As several scholars have pointed out, most of the bard's questions aren't Shakespearean inventions, "they have sources in the Bible, classical and European vernacular literatures, and in proverbial language" (Curran). Indeed if Shakespeare sought a narrative template that engaged its audience and spurred meditation on identity, belonging, and purpose, he needed look no further than the Hebrew Bible, which saturated Renaissance culture. Before Shakespeare earned his living as a playwright, he was a poet, and I believe as a poet he often sought inspiration from the most prolific and profound of lyricists: King David.

In Psalm 94, Dovid Hamelech meditates on Hashem's role as creator and judge of all mankind, focusing in particular on how He adjudicates when one group of His creations is silenced and suppressed by another. The psalmist directly addresses the "brutish" offenders—*בְּיָנוּ בְּעֵרִים בְּעָם*—and prompts them to reflect on the implied consequences of their actions by asking: "Shall He who implants the ear not hear, He who forms the eye not see? Shall

He who disciplines nations not punish?... For the G-d will not forsake His people; He will not abandon His very own.” (94:9-10, 14). Although the interrogation is directed at those inflicting harm and perpetuating strife among the Jewish people, the message is dually meant for those feeling afflicted and forlorn. Time and time again, we are called to remember Hashem’s covenantal promise: though we may encounter difficulty and discomfort, we are not alone. Hashem sees and hears us always.

I think this message is more palpable now than ever before. With masks mandated in all public spaces, all that is available to us when we encounter others— in the street, in the supermarket, or in socially distanced shul seats— are eyes and ears. Perhaps the challenge is for us to speak less and observe and listen more. In emulating this divine practice, of seeing and hearing the suffering and loneliness of others, we cultivate the empathy needed to transform the landscape and soundscape of this brave new world.



*A personal pandemic message  
from Mrs. Rosensweig*

*Non-Victory Garden*

What season is more beautiful for a pandemic,  
G-d forbid,  
Than springtime?  
I actually said that  
To the kids at some point.

And for one hundred days of March  
Whenever the house became small and noisy  
I turned to cultivate our garden  
For it was our first spring in a home with a yard.

“Garden” was putting it charitably:  
A postage stamp of steep, decaying terrace  
Overgrown with vines, and weeds, and pushy  
maple saplings  
And also some ivy.

Relatives said it needed professional help.  
But in the pandemic, that idea became blasphemy  
(No, not because of social distancing fears);  
The weeds were a goal in need of a person  
And I, a person, happy for a goal;  
It would be surrender  
To acknowledge defeat  
To nature’s brutish forces.  
Surely I could conquer some weeds and vines  
In a tiny square of dirt?

Surely.

The March skies were transparent blue  
And the air carried clear, empty stillness  
Silence until then unknown to the City  
Punctuated only by the faraway wail  
Of an ambulance, every eight minutes or so  
And then more deep silence  
In the sparkling cold air,  
The weeds growing imperceptibly, inexorably,  
below.

Here I could brunt the ivy and knotweed  
Forces of a pernicious nature  
Eradicate some and prune down others  
Feel like I had gone somewhere each day  
And show Mother Nature who gets the last laugh;  
Focus on a mundane victory  
Of something under control,  
However defined the space may be.

And on the day before Pesach  
Thirty tulips opened in blushing unison  
And I delighted in a holiday gift to myself  
(And to the neighbors who enjoyed it  
Across ten feet of distance)  
For something, even small things,  
To make this spring look normal.

But  
As March inched on to May  
(Perhaps April was in there,  
but perhaps it was a decade)  
It wasn't I who got that last laugh:  
It was the weeds and vines  
Who grew back faster,  
As tall as the wilted tulips  
And especially the ivy,  
Previously, painfully, misidentified,  
Actually poison ivy.

My mitigation effort  
Could not suppress  
Their indomitable spread  
It could only flatten the curve  
And offer an illusory flash of control.  
The tiny postage stamp of nature remained  
Contained, but not defeated.  
Indeed, the tulips were never my own victory either;  
They grew with little assistance of mine.

I could only make peace with my valiant vain efforts  
Continue to mirror the ivy's relentlessness  
Return each day  
Laugh along with it  
And pretend to take credit with G-d when the results  
looked pretty  
And the silence in the air held still  
For a few minutes longer each day.

May 10, 2020



# *A personal pandemic message from Mrs. Rachel Benchimol*

**March 2020**

Today as the Coronavirus keeps spreading bringing anxiety to all, I would humbly like to share some Torah ideas that come to mind as I reflect on the state the world is in.

As we know, Torah is the source and within it is the answer to all of life's blessings and challenges. The first idea is that everything in this world comes through the channel of Chochma, Bina, and Daat: Thought, speech, and action.

We as a society have become entrenched in social media, coining the term, "it went viral!" In essence, we thought that we spoke and made the world "viral." It has followed suit in the physical realm, too. Perhaps the time has come for us to rethink what we would really like to go "viral." Regardless of affiliation, color, ethnicity, the world at large is craving peace, health, and happiness. Perhaps it is time for those messages to go viral... to counterattack the negativity, the Lashon Harah that now fills social media.

Second, the idea of "quarantine" reminds me of the idea in the Torah that compares Avraham Avinu's life's mission to that of Yitzhak Avinu. The Rebbe of Lubavitch explains that Avraham's life was characterized by being "in the field," the work outside, to help prepare the world out here for the service of Hashem. Yitzchak, by contrast, was "in the tent" representing the work inside of ourselves. The Rebbe further explains that this is a microcosm of our own lives. Our time out there is the time when we have to elevate our surroundings just like Avraham Avinu. And then Hashem chooses the times in our lives for us to be "inside, at home," corresponding to Yitzchak Avinu when our service is within, to elevate our home and our selves, to take the time to spend quality time with our families, to empower them.

**April 2020**

As I sit in my kitchen and write a long Pre-Pesach to do list ( which I could share if you like) - while I see the mountain high list of things to get done. And try to get a head start with my cleaning...

I can't help but think how much all of our lives have changed in the last few weeks...

How everything we once worried about and hold dear, our homes, work, and *Shlichus* has completely changed and we are all forced into living a new reality...Where the worries are so real — the health and well-being of everyone we know — everyone we love — our worries and choices are also so crucial, do we bring the cleaning lady



in, or not? How can I possibly do all I do, and also all she does? Do we go out shopping for the holiday or not?

We run from our new daily demands and the overload of thoughts that fill our minds: Zoom, davening, cooking, laundry, planning, who is delivering to Manhattan, who can we help in our communities, responding to everyone's Pesach Halacha questions who for the first time are experiencing how to improvise Pesach....while we dash to the news, the updates, the What's App groups. And so it goes...

I have found the only way to keep sane, positive and productive and harness the greatest challenge we all have now (to have good thoughts ) is by remembering a story that goes something like this:

The story of a group of strong young men who wanted to climb an icy mountain and they kept sliding down. After a few hours, they decided to wait as the night was approaching, then an old, frail man holding a cane passed them by, climbed and disappeared onto the mountain. Worried for him, the young men decided to camp at the bottom of the mountain, so they could climb the mountain next morning and "save" the old man.

As the sun rose and the young were waking up, the old man descended the mountain. So one young fellow asked him, "Sir, Please tell me how did you do that?. If we strong young men couldn't?" His response: "When your eyes connect above... you don't fall below..."

Yes we are all living through challenging times, the endless unfortunate news can blur our vision. Our task is to keep our eye connected above and not dash from one update to the next, to negative news. Interestingly, I saw that APPLE NEWS has a new section called GOOD NEWS. Let's pair that with upbeat music, learn Torah while we clean to keep our mind and soul elevated, have a schedule, and get dressed. Seems to be the only way to stay afloat!!

For some, this seems at times to be the hardest thing, when everyone is out of work, when our families are bound to us under one roof, when we need to figure out all their "school schedules" and device-sharing while endless meal-prepping, cleaning, online teaching.

Yet to me all this seems like an opportunity. In the 26 years of *Shlichus*, I have never experienced a Pesach Seder with no guests, with the Pesach preparation entirely produced by my family with the sweat of our own foreheads — it really makes it so real. To be kind, nice, positive, to have faith, patience, to be attentive and loving to the real *Shlichus* we all have — to our beautiful families.

# *Fly Free*

by Rebecca Gold, Class of 2021



The gift of a butterfly that I painted is for everyone because even through this tough time, we have to be aware that soon, we will fly free and we just have to wait patiently and do what we can to achieve that freedom.

# *April Showers Bring May Flowers*

*by Hannah Setareh, Class of 2022*



I was inspired by the flowers outside of my house to draw this picture. With the new time at home, I have learned to appreciate these type of stuff.

# *My Father on the Front Lines*

*by Chavi Weiner, Class of 2023*

While these are difficult times for everyone, some are risking their lives everyday to help others. Many people feel challenged to occupy their days, while others are filling their days with saving lives. My father is one of those people on the front lines. He is a doctor that is working day and night keeping people safe. He is not only my father, but also my hero. He is someone who is putting others before himself and performing things others could not even imagine. Managing a Covid-19 ICU, he has seen many things which people don't want to and can't picture.

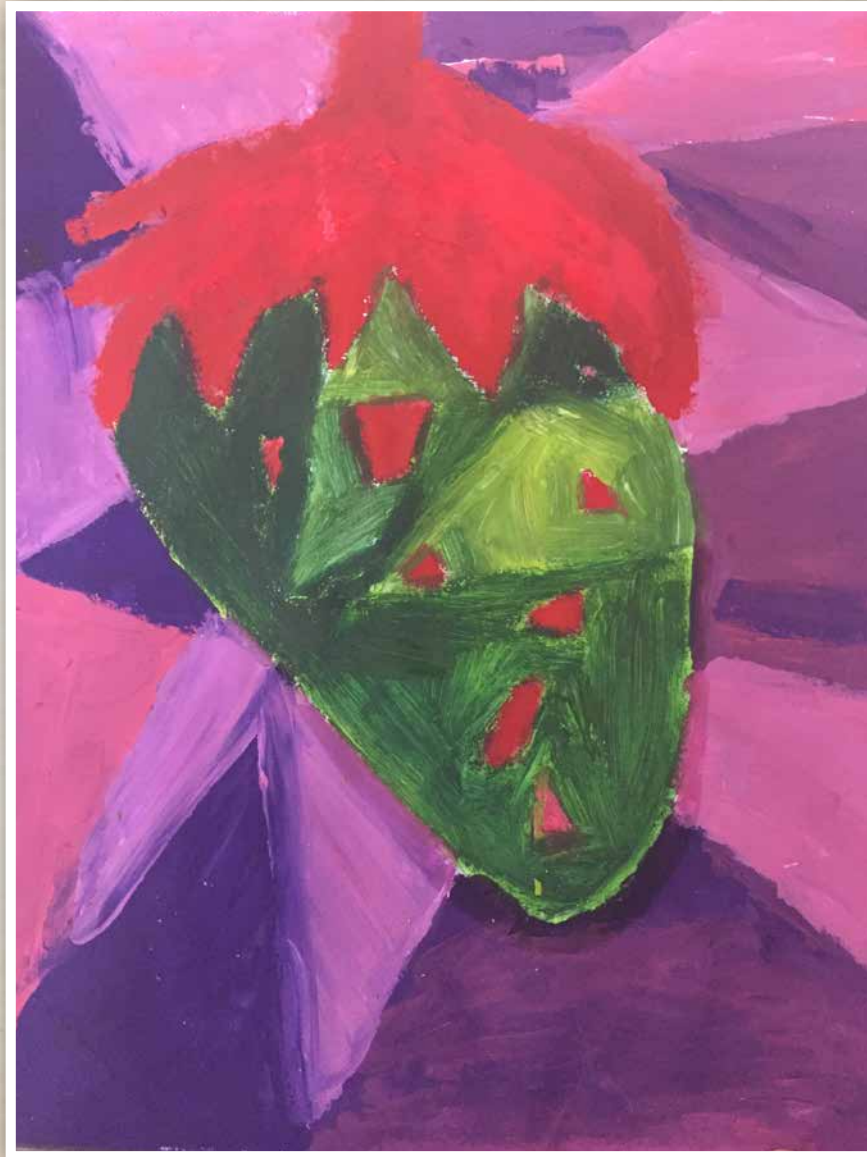
My glimpse of what is happening in the real world is when my father comes home from work. He is wearing a mask and gloves (with Purell on his hands and on the gloves), taking all possible precautions to keep himself and others safe. While I express my appreciation directly, others do so in a unified but socially distant way. At seven o'clock there is a nightly celebratory air that fills the deserted streets. A hearty cheer and a round of applause to the essential workers who are still working. For about five minutes, residents break the eerie silence that has consumed New York with applauds, hollering, whistles, and even some singing. This is something I look forward to throughout the day. To know that people appreciate all the hard work that my father and many others have put in.

While my father has shared very little about what he experienced in the hospital during the pandemic, he shared two stories from his work during the crisis that he says are the most meaningful to him. While working at the hospital one Sunday afternoon during the peak of the pandemic, he received a phone call unlike any he had ever received before. A Jewish religious man was dying in the ICU from Covid-19. As his family was not allowed to be there, they were looking for someone who could recite the end-of-life Vidui for their husband and father. They asked various organizations if they knew of any Jewish religious doctors in the hospital who could say the tefillos. My father received a phone call from a neighbor who asked if he was at work today and could do this. After consulting with a Rav to confirm which tefillos to say, my father went to the particular ICU and said them for the patient. He then spoke with the family who told him that he had brought them great comfort in this extremely difficult time. This was certainly one of the most difficult things he had ever had to do in his life and tears still come to his eyes when he thinks about it (and he suspects this reaction will continue for a while). However, he believes that he will one day also be able to look back at this episode as extremely rewarding and appreciate the special zchus he had to bring comfort to this Holy Neshama and to his family.

A few days after this, a very different opportunity arose. It was Erev Pesach and shortly before leaving to go home to celebrate the Seder and the Geula from Galus Mitzrayim, he was passing through the ICU. There was a patient there who just a few days earlier had been close to death. However, with extreme Rachamei Shamayim, he was miraculously on the road to recovery. He was now awake, the breathing tube had been removed, and he was awaiting transfer out of the ICU. Before leaving for the day, my father took the opportunity to wish this man a Good Yom Tov and a Refuah Shleima. Hodu LaShem Ki Tov, Ki Leolam Chasdo, my father kept repeating to himself as he walked away. May it be Hashem's will that this terrible Machla end and that all those who are suffering have a Refuah Shleima and all those who are mourning find a nechama. Amen.

# *Change Your Perspective*

*by Adielle Rosenblum, Class of 2022*



I have crafted a Cubist picture of a strawberry. This strawberry has opposite colors of what a typical strawberry looks like. This piece is simply a change of perspective. Who said green strawberries don't taste as good as red ones?

# Quarantine

by Etta Feuer, Class of 2020



I wanted to portray how even though this time is very difficult for many, we are able to spend more time with family.

# *Just Keep Riding*

*by Michali Rosenberg, Class of 2023*



During quarantine, people have taken advantage of the great outdoors. I was inspired to create this painting after watching toddlers, kids, and parents ride bikes together as a family enjoying life during these turbulent times.

# *Calculus and Covid: The Math Behind Flattening the Curve*

by Shira Zelefsky, Class of 2020

Having recently completed our AP Calculus exam, I'm sure most of my classmates are now thinking "I'm glad I got that over with" as they dump out their notes, planning to never use calculus again. I, however, have opted to save my own calculus notes.

This may just be a result of my slight hoarding tendencies or my lackluster cleaning skills, but I like to think it goes a bit deeper. Contrary to popular belief, calculus is not some monstrously complicated form of math invented to make calculus students' lives harder. Rather, it was invented to solve real math problems with real world applications. It was invented independently by both Issac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, which just goes to show how important and practical it really is. Without calculus, architects wouldn't be able to measure the amount of material needed under a curved structure (area under a curve can be found with integrals), chemists wouldn't be able to measure the rate of reactions (rate of change can be found with derivatives) and most importantly, (at least it seems this way nowadays), epidemiologists wouldn't be able to track and analyze pandemic data.

If we were to take a look at a graph of the total number of Covid cases, we would see that, at least for the first few months, the graph has exponential growth. This means that as we go from one day to the next, we multiply the value for the previous day by a constant called the growth factor, which for the beginning of the outbreak, was around 1.15-1.25. The amount of new cases on any day is evaluated from the amount of cases that already exist, multiplied by the average number of people exposed to these infected individuals and the probability that the exposure becomes an infection. As each of these values grow, the product also grows. This explains how we get the exponential nature of the graph; each previous day's product -- the total amount of cases that already exist -- is then multiplied by the other two factors, which make up the growth factor.

One of the scary things about exponential growth is that they seem to grow slowly in the beginning, but as it progresses, they start to grow increasingly quicker. If we look at the total worldwide cases so far, it only took 20 days to go from 100 to 1000 cases and 13 days to go from 1,000 to 10,000 cases. This roughly follows a pattern of multiplying by ten every 16 days. If we extend this pattern using only data from the first three months of the outbreak, we would reach a million cases worldwide on April 5th. Ultimately, the world hit one million cases on April 2nd, only three days off from this projection.

Fortunately, this trend doesn't just continue on forever until the entire world is decimated. If we were to continue this trend, we would expect to hit ten million cases by April 22nd and one hundred million cases by May 9 and one billion by May 26. Fortunately, thanks to our social distancing efforts, we have been able to successfully "flatten the curve" and as of June 1st, we only have six million total Covid-19 cases worldwide.

But then how does this "flatten the curve" phenomenon fit in with our beautiful exponential curve? If the curve starts to flatten out, it no longer has the shape of an exponential curve. Obviously, at some point, this exponential curve has to slow down. However, that can happen sooner depending on how we handle the pandemic.



If we go back to our original equation, we see that the three factors that affect how many new cases we get each day are: the amount of existing cases, the number of people exposed to infected individuals, and the probability that each exposure becomes a new case. Since we can't lower the amount of new cases without first lowering the other two factors, we are left with the last two factors, which together are the growth factor of the graph. When we lower this growth factor -- which we can

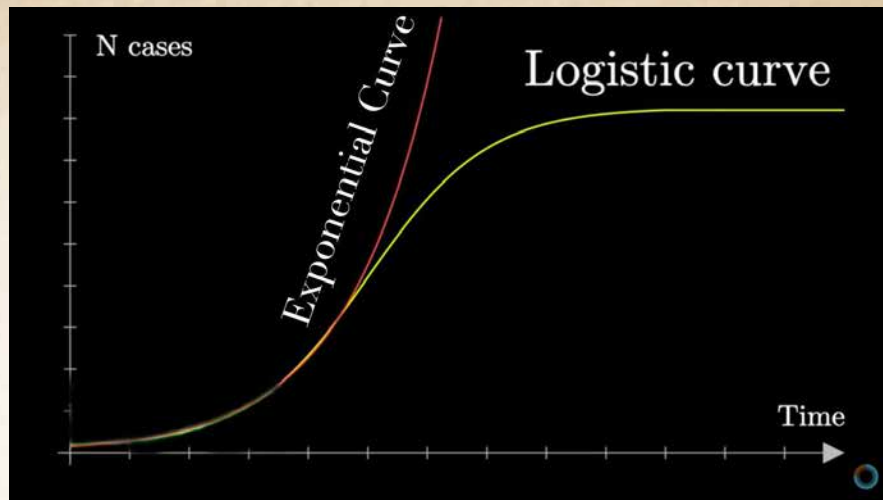
do through social distancing, which lowers the second factor and frequent hand washing, which lowers the third factor -- we lower the rate by which the exponential grows. Once this rate is lowered, the graph starts leveling out. At this point, it's no longer an exponential curve, but rather, a logistic curve.

Up until now, we've managed to understand the data without needing calculus, but once our graph starts to flatten out, calculus comes into play. When we look at the logistic curve, we can clearly see that in the beginning, the graph is curving upwards and towards the end, the graph flattens out and starts to curve downwards. We know that this curve flattens out eventually, but we can't tell exactly where the graph switches from an upward curve to a downward curve. To solve this problem, we can use calculus.

With calculus, we can analyze this graph in multiple aspects. The first: looking at the curve itself, which can be positive or negative. The curve is positive when the y values are positive and vice versa. Since we can't have a negative amount of cases, the graph is constantly positive.

Since analyzing the positivity/negativity of the curve itself doesn't provide us with much insight, we can look at the first derivative. The derivative of a graph is the rate at which the graph is changing. So, if we wanted to look at the derivative at a specific point on the graph, it would be equal to the slope of a tangent line drawn on that point. When this slope of the tangent line at that point is negative, the derivative at that point is negative. One quick way to see the derivative on a graph is to look at whether it is increasing or decreasing. When the graph (specifically the y value) is increasing, the derivative is positive and when the graph is decreasing, the derivative is negative.

This is where many students tend to get turned away from calculus. Since it's a completely different way of thinking about math, it can get confusing. It's not important to understand why the rate of change at a specific point is the same as the slope of a tangent line. For the purposes of analyzing this graph, the important thing is to understand that when the the curve is increasing, the derivative is positive



Since the graph that we have is always increasing (since we can't subtract from the total cumulative cases without a time machine, the graph can never decrease) that means that the derivative of the graph is always positive. Once again, this doesn't provide us with much information so let's examine the second derivative.

For the purposes of understanding this graph, it's not crucial that we understand what a second derivative is. Essentially, a second derivative is if we were to take all the derivatives of all the points on the graph and plot them onto a graph of the differential (math terminology for derivative) curve and then take the derivatives of all the points on the differential curve. The important thing to understand here is that on the original graph, the second derivative can be seen in the concavity. Before we get scared away by my math jargon, concavity is determined by which way the curve is bent, whether upwards or downwards. For example, we would call the mouth of a smiley face concave-up because it opens up towards the top. A frowning mouth, on the other hand, would be concave down because the opening points downwards. When the original graph is concave up, the second derivative is positive and when it is concave down, the second derivative is negative.

So, now that we know how to see the second derivative, we can get more information out of our graph. The beginning of the graph is concave up, meaning, we have a positive second derivative. Yet, the end of the graph is concave down, meaning a negative second derivative. The exact point of inflection -- which is a fancy way of saying where the concavity switches -- can be found by calculating where the second derivative switches from positive to negative: meaning, where the second derivative is equal to zero.

Once we've passed the inflection point, that growth factor we discussed in the beginning drops to below 1. Therefore, when the growth factor is below one, this can be an indication that we have hit the point of inflection and the curve is starting to flatten.

If I have unintentionally lost you in this blur of math terms and calculus, I recommend watching the video on YouTube titled "what this chart actually means for Covid-19" by PBS Digital Studios' "It's Okay to Be Smart". This video explains the same concept with less of a focus on the calculus behind it all.

While we were able to deduce much insight from just looking at the graph alone, calculus was able to help us glean valuable and precise information from the graph. Without calculus, we wouldn't be able to know exactly when the curve started to flatten. Without this precise information, we wouldn't be able to know when we can safely start to reopen the country without causing unnecessary stress to the economy.

Sources:

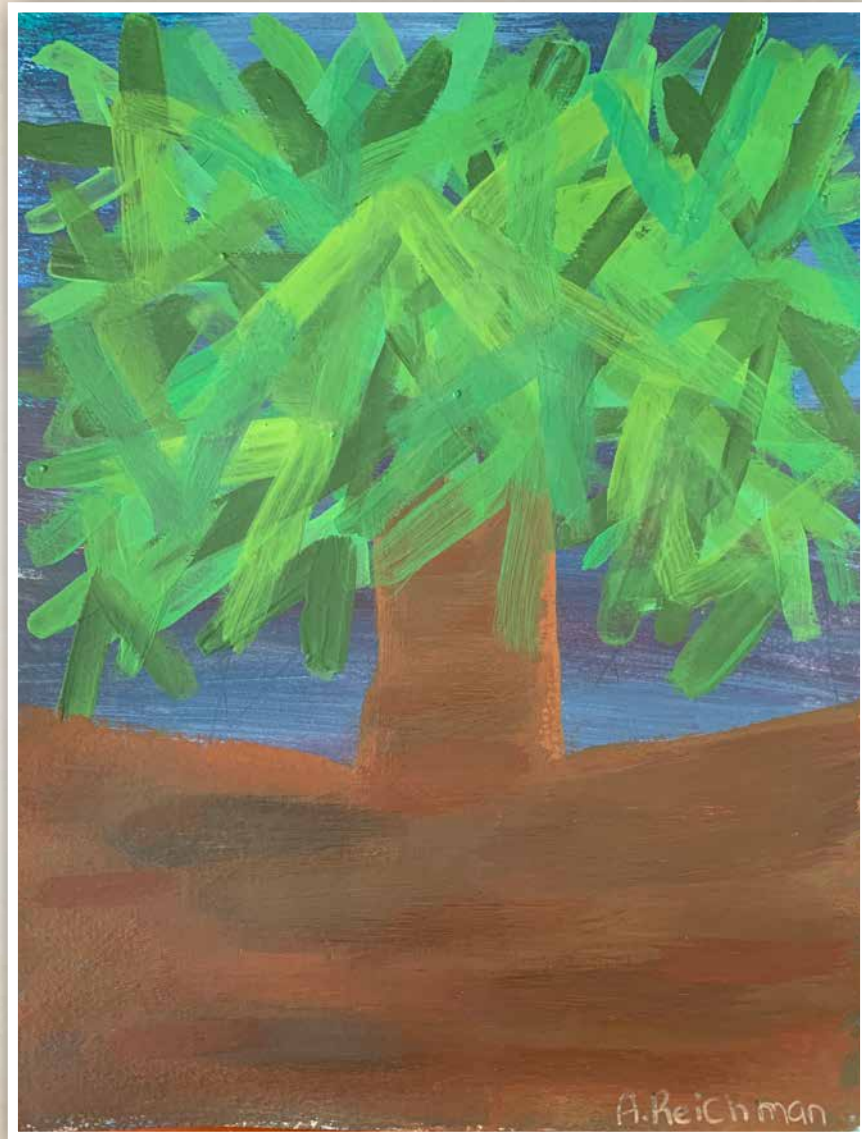
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Mrs. Feinberg's amazing AP Calculus class

# *Growing with Roots*

*by Ayelet Reichman, Class of 2022*



I chose to create this painting to illustrate a characteristic of my parents that I really admire. My parents are people who tremendously admire and honor their family and “roots”. I chose to illustrate a tree because my parents take their past and use it to guide us through everyday life, no matter “how big or small the angle.”

# Quarantined

by Ayli Tavakoly, Class of 2020



This drawing represents how Covid-19 spread so quickly in America. Our lives instantly changed due to quarantine.

# Hope

by Elana Spearman, Class of 2022



I created a Cubist painting from a picture I saw online of a girl trying to catch a balloon. Behind her four words were spray painted on the wall; "There is always hope." It inspired me to continue to stay positive and hope that things will soon go back to normal.

# *The Girl in the Red Dress*

*by Rina Rosenberg, Class of 2022*



The color scheme I chose were the primary colors, because I feel that simpler colors make a more elegant painting. I chose to paint the rain upside down and made my umbrellas in a very interesting way, by making multiple umbrellas instead of just one. These were the aspects that I feel made my piece more Cubist.

# Our Sweet QuarantEEN

by Miriam Abittan & Shani Brody, Class of 2022

Hugging my friends through a screen  
That was my birthday, my one sweet sixteen

A party Zoom background and a  
plastic birthday crown

Searched for an open bakery, unfortunately,  
I went home with a frown

Sixteen is supposed to be a special age  
But I wish I didn't feel like I was locked in a cage  
Alone in my bed, I spent most of the day  
Happy birthday to me, I sigh, what's left to say?

It's that time of year, I'm another year older  
Like our teachers keep adding another  
Google classroom folder  
Lonely I sat in my backyard with a mask  
Why does my birthday need to be in April, I ask?

My sister tried to make me a birthday cake  
Too bad she left it too long to bake  
We ran out of frosting, my favorite part  
Because Amazon said that we have  
too many items in our cart

My Grandma tried to arrange a  
family party for me on Zoom

But she didn't realize her camera was on  
while she was cleaning the living room

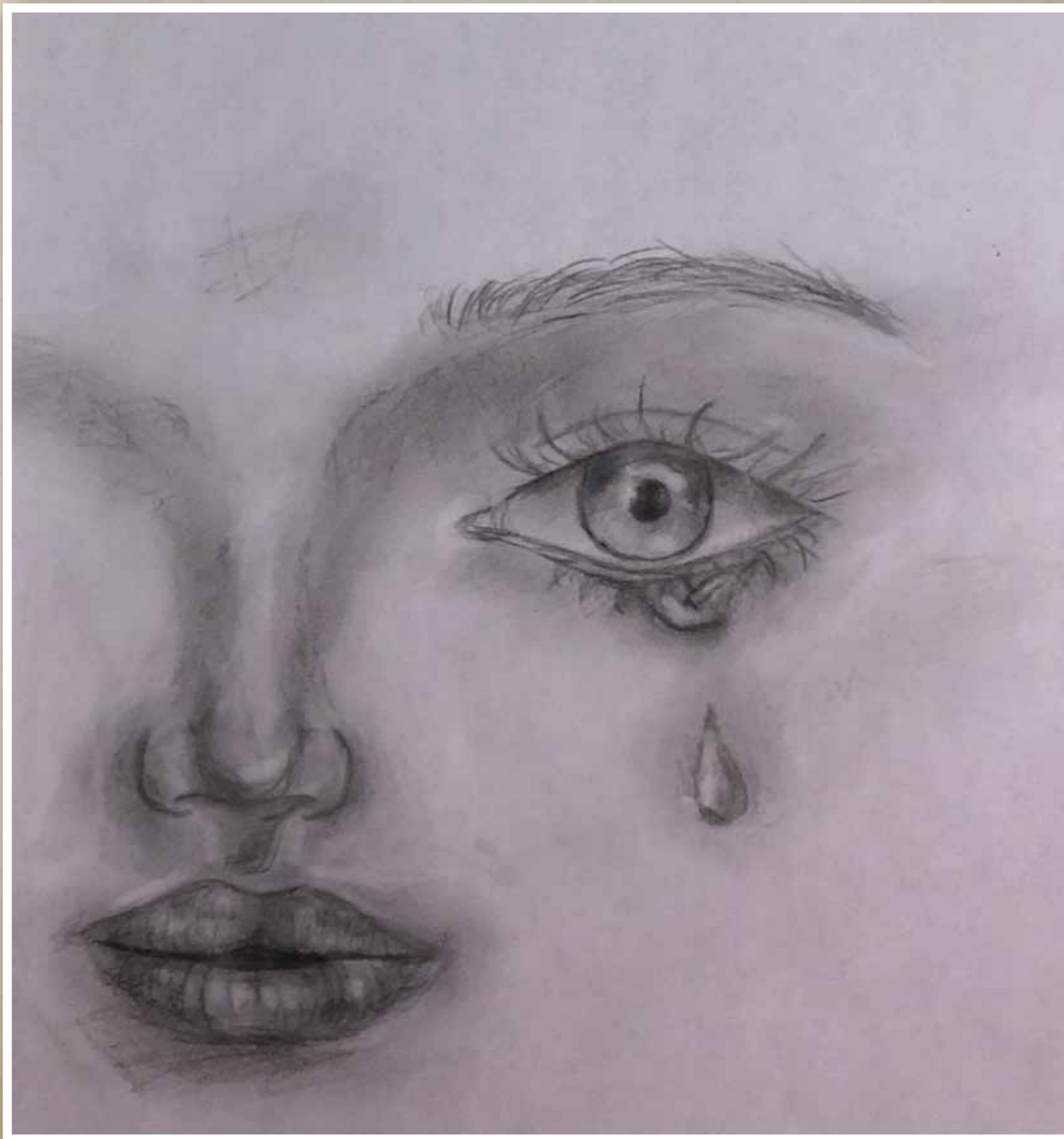
My cousins didn't realize they weren't on mute  
Saying that this party was far from cute

Suddenly I get an incoming call  
Saying the next time I'll see my friends is next fall  
These months of quarantine may feel bitter  
But at least on my MHS merch I added some glitter

Although this birthday was not as expected  
Why on my one special day should I feel dejected?  
Then I realized there are so many  
things to be thankful for,  
Like that I can go to the Kotel and the MOMA  
on one day, through a virtual tour!

The only birthday wish I have on my behalf  
Is that I can look back at my sixteenth  
birthday and just laugh  
I learned a lot from my quarantined birthday  
Whatever life gives you, you just gotta say HOORAY

*Eye of a Warrior*  
by Feigy Eisen, Class of 2020





# *The Power of Washing Your Hands*

*by Anna Gross, Class of 2020*



My painting represents the power of washing one's hands to protect against Covid-19.

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