



Hadar Halivni (SSDS '14):

"I have always been a STEM kid and loved learning the different sciences in middle school and high school," said Schechter alumna Hadar Halivni (SSDS '14). Hadar furthered her passion for science at Princeton University, where she majored in neuroscience. She currently works at the National Institute of Health (NIH) in Washington, DC., where she is expanding her research skills as a member of a team that runs an all-night simultaneous EEG-fMRI sleep study to better understand sleep brain activity.

"I am responsible for screening candidates, assessing each patient's eligibility, and keeping track of all the data," she said. "I am also in the process of analyzing data from a study about what areas of the brain are connected throughout the dreaming process. The goal of my analysis is to correlate the length of their dream report with their brain activity in the four minutes before we wake them up to see what areas of the brain are actively connected and related to how much of their dream they remember."

Following her graduation from Schechter, Hadar attended Rochelle Zell Jewish High School (RZJHS), where she was a member of the math, basketball, and cross country teams and was on *Va'ad T'fillah*, where she organized prayer services. When Hadar started college, she was determined to learn a new kind of science, so she signed up for a neuroscience course during her first semester. "It was fascinating to learn about the role of different parts of the brain," she said. "This was around the same time that I became interested in learning about the complex processes of sleep."

When looking back on her years at Schechter, Hadar said she is thankful to Schechter for inspiring her love of science and making science accessible through real life demonstrations that went beyond the textbook. "I remember in 7th grade when Mrs. Hakimian taught my class about the transfer of kinetic energy to elastic energy and vice versa by rolling an ordinary-looking coffee can towards the back of the classroom," she said. "As the coffee can rolled down the aisle, it stopped for a second and then rolled back towards the front of the classroom, like a boomerang. As it turned out, there was a rubber band inside the can, stretched from top to bottom, that twisted and untwisted when the can rolled."

Hadar added that Schechter fostered her love of Judaism and that she feels lucky to have the skills to read Torah. "It still amazes me how my Schechter teachers like Giveret Carmel-Levy were able to teach trope to a class full of 8-year-olds," she said. "She made learning tropes simple, fun, and memorable by giving personalities and backstories to each symbol and sound. I still remember most of those stories and have used them to teach my peers how to read from the Torah."

The knowledge of *t'fillot* from attending Schechter has been monumental to Hadar's personal and spiritual journey. "Knowing how to read Torah and learn an *aliyah* on relatively short notice allowed me to jump right in and participate early on in a traditional egalitarian minyan in DC," Hadar said. "A few months ago, I also joined the Gabbai Committee at my synagogue, which supports the logistics of *davening*. This is a role I certainly would not feel comfortable holding had Schechter not given me the confidence to *daven*."

Hadar said she is in touch with many of her Schechter classmates, and is thankful to the Schechter community for supporting her family throughout the past year when both of her grandfathers passed away. "It is so comforting and inspiring to be part of a community that is present in both the good and bad times," she added.

Outside of her work, Hadar loves to tap dance, an activity she started during her senior year in college. She is a member of an Israeli dance group that has performed at the DC Israeli Dance Festival. She loves to paint, meet new people, walk around the National Mall, and reconnect with old friends, especially during Shabbat meals that she frequently hosts with her roommate.

"I love living in DC," she noted. "There is a diverse Jewish community, though I have found my niche at the DC Minyan, an independent, lay-led, traditional egalitarian minyan."

Hadar's brother, Avidan (SSDS '10), graduated from Columbia University and currently works as the Jewish Learning Collaborative Program Manager at Moishe House. Avidan is engaged to Yaffa Fogel. Hadar's sister, Eliana (SSDS '19), is a senior at RZJHS and will attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the fall. Special thanks to Eliana Halivni for chairing the Class of 2019 Schechter reunion.

