

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS



Max Bamberger
Berkeley, CA

Hi! My name is Max Bamberger, I live in Berkeley, California, and I'm ecstatic to be a Bronfman fellow this year. When I'm not self-quarantined at home with my four younger siblings, I spend my time learning at the Jewish Community High School in San Francisco, rock climbing, acting and singing in the JCHS theater, and playing ultimate frisbee in the park. Some activities I AM able to engage in despite the current situation of immobility include writing, playing guitar, organizing the school newspaper and school literary magazine, attempting to teach my siblings all four parts of "The Longest Time" (which is, coincidentally, how long it has been since I set foot in the outside world), playing an unhealthy amount of Word Hunt on iMessage, and gazing longingly through the windowpane at the glimmering, beckoning San Francisco skyline in the distance. I attended Oakland Hebrew Day School for elementary school and the Yeshiva Tichonit Zichron Yaakov in Israel for 7th and 8th grades. On Shabbats, my family and I go to Congregation Beth Israel, Berkeley's modern Orthodox synagogue. I went to Kayitz BaKibbutz Shluchot summer camp for three years, and the past two summers I have interned for BimBam (formerly G-dcast), in Oakland, and for Koolulam, in Tel Aviv. I love learning Arabic, Hebrew, Literature, Math, and History. I am very interested in the stories we tell as cultures and if any story, character, or idea is "new" as opposed to remixed or repackaged. I like to think about and write about adaptation, archetypes, hidden magic, changing maps, Jewish symbolism, and language. I also strongly believe in music's unique and tremendous ability to bring people together.



Ava Berkwits
Chicago, IL

Hi everyone! My name is Ava Berkwits and I'm a junior at Walter Payton College Prep, a public high school in Chicago, Illinois. I love musical theater and singing (one of my favorite Jewish traditions is the Tisch, where everyone sings together), and enjoy painting in my free time (current project: coronavirus-break art journal). I'm really interested in politics, pursuing equity, and intersectional feminism, and I enjoy thinking critically about the issues facing America and the greater international community. I also love watching a good Netflix stand-up comedy special, taking BuzzFeed quizzes, and playing with my dog Suki. I truly believe that discourse and respectful disagreement are some of the most important catalysts for social change, and am incredibly excited for all of the discussions we will be having in the coming year!



Joshua Bock
Scarsdale, NY

My name is Josh Bock, and I am a junior at Scarsdale High School in Westchester, New York. I am also a member of Westchester Reform Temple. I love to play hockey and I come from a family of enthusiastic New York Rangers fans. I also love comedy, having seen 30 Rock and all of John Mulaney's specials several times over. Like Tina Fey and John Mulaney, I am also a fan of musical theater despite my lack of talent in

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS

both music and theater. My family covers a wide range on the spectrum of Jewish observance, and I am on the reform end of that spectrum. However, my sister came back from her Bronfman summer with a new understanding of her religious observance, so it seems that between now and August, nothing is off the table for me.



Tal Bresler
Silver Spring, MD

Hey, I'm Tal Bresler. I'm from Silver Spring, Maryland and I go to the Berman Hebrew Academy. I'm thrilled to be a part of this fellowship and get to know everyone! I'm not great at introductions, but hopefully, this will give you a bit of insight into who I am. I enjoy painting (watercolor and oil), reading (almost anything), helping other people (I tutor online), Israel activism, and hanging out with my friends and family (especially my adorable nieces and nephews). I'm interested in going into neuropsychology, therapy or research. Beyond such intellectual pursuits, I like playing guitar (I'm just starting to learn) and watching the Office. For me, Judaism is a pillar of my identity. My understanding of Judaism is constantly changing, but the basic aspects and practices act as constants that I can rely on. For this fellowship, I'm most interested in being challenged. I want to dissect the paradoxes intrinsic in Judaism. I want to explore a view that I hadn't even thought to consider. I want to talk about everything I've taken for granted my whole life. I want to learn. These are some of the questions I want to unpack over the summer: Where am I drawing my values from? What does it honestly mean to be a servant of G-d? How has Judaism shifted over time and how does it continue to change? I say I'm Modern Orthodox, is that paradox? Isn't existence simply reconciliation to living with paradoxes and uncertainty? Why Judaism when other religions have similar moral systems? I

have a million more questions and I'm sure so many more will come up over the summer.



Laila Brustin
Nashville, TN

Hey Y'all! My name is Laila (pronounced lie-lah), and I'm sorry to start off this introduction with a correction. I live in Nashville, TN and I guess at this point attended a public arts magnet school and worked part time at a movie theatre. Hopefully these will both resume shortly! For now I'm spending my time studying, baking challah, doing some embroidery, training the new foster dog, and practicing playing drums. Before moving to Nashville I lived in Austin, TX where I was both homeschooled and home-shuled. Most of my current Jewish activities revolve around the LGBTQ+ Jewish organization Keshet, and when I'm visiting family in Los Angeles, participating in Holiday and Shabbat programs at IKAR, a pluralistic Jewish community.



Connor Cairns
Glassboro, NJ

Hi, my name is Connor Cairns and I am 16 and live in Glassboro, New Jersey. My claim to fame is that I was born in an Olive Garden bathroom on 9/11 (not 2001, but 2003.) I'm the second youngest of four kids and there is never a quiet or dull moment in the house. I love all things music (I can play an assortment of different instruments and belong to every band and musical ensemble that exists locally.) Music is a big part of my life, so when I first moved to this town, the first thing I did was find out who to talk to about the school district's music programs. It helped me

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS

feel at home here from the very beginning and has been how I've met some of my closest friends. I enjoy gaming, tennis, football, martial arts, cooking, and making my mom want to vomit as I navigate life as a newly permitted driver. Before all this COVID stuff, I was really into archery. I really like having well-reasoned debates and discussion about the "heavier" stuff in life - religion, the meaning of life, and whether pineapple belongs on pizza (it does not and you can debate me if you think otherwise.)



Devorah Feder
Sharon, MA

I attend Maimonides School, an Orthodox day school with a dual curriculum. If I am not attending, commuting to, or doing homework for school, you can find me at a club meeting or sports practice. I devote much of my time to playing on the Maimonides varsity basketball and varsity tennis teams. My favorite classes are English and Talmud. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, kayaking, and spending time outdoors in addition to hanging out with friends. I also love painting and have taken many art classes over the years. I am deeply interested in social justice and have spent many hours volunteering at Rosie's Place, a shelter for homeless and impoverished women. I am eager to further develop my Jewish identity as a Bronfman Fellow and was able to begin doing so last year as a Diller Teen Fellow.



David Hidary
Brooklyn, NY

My name is David Hidary, and I was raised in the Sephardic Syrian community of Brooklyn, New York, where I now attend the Yeshivah of Flatbush HS. Everything STEM is my passion. I

love engineering solutions to problems, writing computer code, and discovering new concepts in mathematics. Moreover, I find physics fascinating in the way it seeks to explain the natural world through math and logic and I one day hope to work on expanding this frontier. Outside of science, I enjoy poetry and literature, especially that of Shakespeare and Dickinson. I am also a dedicated political activist and particularly passionate about matters that affect my future, my family, my country, and the State of Israel. I am also fascinated by complex discussions on philosophical ideas from God, to the Bible, to the modern world, and pure theory itself. In my free time, if I'm not doing schoolwork, I enjoy playing board games with friends, meditating, reading science fiction, playing jazz piano, and binge-watching shows like The Twilight Zone and Black Mirror.



Myriam Joseph-Schilz
Silver Spring, MD

Horses are kind of my thing. The four days a week I spend at the barn, riding or teaching, are unequivocally my favorite times of the week. My barn and show team are a community I value like no other. My love for baking comes from my nana, with whom I have almost always baked when visiting. My favorite recipe is cheesecake, but really, I'm down to make anything if it looks fun. Looking forward, I'm not sure what exactly I want to do, but I think I want to study social sciences and hopefully find a career in social justice, human rights, or health services. Being Deaf is obviously a huge part of my identity. I've been profoundly deaf since I was four years old, and received a cochlear implant when I was six. The two years I spent at an ASL-only school is a time I'll remember and cherish forever. I don't think I would be the person I am today, adapted to the hearing world, without those two years of Deaf pride instilled in me. In terms of my Jewish

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS

identity, I haven't been an active member of a congregation in the last two years, and thus, have felt that my Jewish identity hasn't fully found a home yet. I want (and need) very much to look into what my Jewish identity means to me.



Ryan Kassanoff
Dallas, TX

Hello! My name is Ryan Kassanoff. I am eighteen years old and I am a triplet! Before you ask, we are not identical! I have a brother

and a sister. Anyways, I was born in Dallas, Texas and have lived here my whole life. My dad is from Midland Texas, a small town in the middle of nowhere, where he often had pushback when he tried to express his Judaism. My mom grew up in the small town of Ruston, Louisiana in a protestant Christian family. Eventually, my parents crossed paths in Dallas, Texas. In Dallas, I grew up going to Hebrew school on one Sunday and Sunday school at church the next week. These experiences helped me grow in my passion for interfaith connections. Eventually, I made the decision to become a Bar Mitzvah. With the support of both my Jewish father and protestant mother, I had the ceremony with my siblings. This was the start of my Jewish adulthood. From then on, I have grown as a Jewish person in my synagogue, BBYO, AIPAC, and in various other roles. I spend a large portion of my time dedicated to BBYO, serving as the Regional Vice President of Judaism and Community Service, incorporating Jewish values into the lives of over seven hundred fifty teens. My story is very different from others which gives me an interesting perspective on my Jewish values and the world around me.



Samuel Libenson
Chicago, IL

Hi everyone! My name is Sam Libenson. I live on the south side of Chicago in Hyde Park, the neighborhood surrounding

the University of Chicago. I have lived in Chicago for most of my life, but I was born in Oregon and lived in Minneapolis until I was three. Until sixth grade, I went to Akiba Schechter Jewish Day School. In seventh grade, I started at Kenwood Academy, which is my local public school and where I go now. I have been doing ballet and modern dance, which I really enjoy, for 14 years. The dance school I go to has given me a great community. At school, I am most significantly involved in the debate team and Best Buddies, an organization that promotes friendship between students in general education and those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Jewishwise, my family technically belongs to a Conservative synagogue, but I don't consider myself as belonging to a denomination. I have many questions about Judaism and my own Jewish identity that remain to be answered. My dad is very involved in innovative Judaism, so I am exposed to many of those ideas. My mom works at the University of Chicago, and I have a 14 year old sister and a dog. I enjoy reading science fiction and fantasy (I am currently in the final stretch of the Game of Thrones series!). I'm not entirely sure where my interests lie for the future, but I have lately been enjoying the subjects of physics, math, and ancient Middle Eastern history. I'm a Sacha Baron Cohen fan, and am always happy to do a Borat or Ali G impression.

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS



Cara Lopatin
Huntington Woods, MI

Hi! My name is Cara Lopatin, and I am in 11th grade. I live in Detroit, Michigan and go to Farber Hebrew Day School. My family and I moved to

Detroit in the summer of 2018 from Riverdale, New York, where we lived for five years. Before Riverdale, my family and I lived in Chicago, where I was born, until 2013. In New York, my siblings and I attended SAR Academy and High School, and in Chicago we attended Chicago Jewish Day School. My father is the rabbi of a shul called Kehillat Etz Chayim, and my family and I are very involved in it. I have an older sister who was learning in Israel this year but who is now home, and two younger brothers, one in ninth grade and one in seventh grade. I love doing puzzles, playing games, and pretty much doing anything else with my family. I love everything Disney, and I know all of the words to almost all Barbie movies and the Princess Diaries movies:) I am currently very involved in Bnei Akiva and Friendship Circle in my community, and this year was my first year being on my school's varsity basketball team, even though I have almost zero athletic abilities. Every year, my family goes down to the Miami marathon to run on behalf of Team Cara which is part of Team Lifeline (except that I cheer instead of running because like I said before, I have no athletic skills). Last summer I went on an Israel summer program called Yad B'Yad, which I totally loved, but in past summers, I have mainly done volunteering camps and babysitting.



Imogen Lubin
Princeton, NJ

Hi, I'm Imogen, a resident of Central New Jersey, and a junior at West-Windsor Plainsboro High School North. I come from an

interfaith household and identify as culturally Jewish, with my only formal Jewish schooling taking place before kindergarten. I haven't had a traditional Jewish upbringing; I didn't have a Bat Mitzvah, I don't know any Hebrew (although I'm working to change that), and now that I think of it, the only Jewish people I regularly interact with are those in my immediate family. I've taken this pandemic-induced time off to rekindle some of my passions---passions that are often muddled by the demands of attending a high performing STEM driven school. Thus far, I've hiked daily with my two dogs, Olive and Bean, baked a cake, finished a prior knitting project, written creatively, painted, read some books that I've meant to start, and propagated my house plants (it's so rewarding!) When school is in session, I spend a lot of time writing for the paper about issues that are important to me, namely: queerness, politics, fashion, school/education reform, and various other activist issues. I also write about sillier topics, though, like a feature on Trader Joes and observations from coffee shops.



Max Miller
Brooklyn, NY

I am Max Miller, a Brooklyn, NY, resident. I usually spend my free time listening to music, playing saxophone, walking, or eating with my friends. I follow baseball and basketball pretty closely (go Sixers), and enjoy playing both, though I am not that good at either. As for my upbringing, my mom was raised conservative, and my dad was raised Catholic, but I grew up

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS

reform. The things that bring me most joy in life are long talks with my friends and a good deli sandwich. I'm super excited to spend a summer with a great cast of Jewish teens.



Oren Minsk
Chevy Chase, MD

Hi! My name is Oren, and I live right outside of Washington, DC. I'm a junior at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, and I attended Camp Ramah in New England for eight years. I have two older sisters who are in college, and we're getting a new puppy this month! I'm really interested in engineering and politics, and I'm also involved in student journalism at my school. I enjoy running and have been part of my school's track and cross-country teams for three years. I love traveling and am really excited to meet other Fellows from all over North America and Israel!



Kate Orlanski
Beverly Hills, CA

My name is Kate and I was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, where I attend the co-ed modern Orthodox Shalhevet High School. When not busy doing school work, my favorite school-related activity is Model Congress, which is my school's parliamentary debate team. I also enjoy writing creative feature stories for my school newspaper. On my free time, I can often be found catching up on the news, making TikToks (particularly history-related TikToks or Torah-related TikToks), listening to show tunes, having photoshoots with my friends, pondering an ethical dilemma, watching Crash Course Philosophy on Youtube, or hugging my very cute

dog. I am also very interested in politics and have been a passionate conservative for as long as I can remember. While I have spent much of my 17 years in Los Angeles, I have also visited all 50 states with my family, which has translated into my love of American history, and America in general.



Gideon Reiter
Woodbridge, CT

Hi! My name is Gideon Reiter. I come from an observant Conservative Ashkenazi family in Woodbridge, Connecticut. I am currently a junior at Choate Rosemary Hall, where I am active in both the Jewish and queer communities. In school, I'm passionate about Arabic, history, and psychology. This past fall, I spent three months studying in Jordan, where I enriched my Arabic and learned more about Arab history and culture. I'm very interested in issues of social justice in every field, and I love talking and learning about leftist, postcolonial, and queer theories. I am passionate about the arts, including theater, music, and visual arts, as well as fashion. I also love the outdoors and attended camp Ramah in the Rockies (the most outdoorsy of the Ramah camps) for eight years, where I started a queer group for both campers and staff and received Wilderness First Aid certification.



Esther Rella Robinson
Cedarhurst, NY

I'm Rella Robinson, I'm 16 and I live on Long Island. I go to Central. I think The Office is better than friends, I won the Hamilton lottery but didn't respond in time to get the tickets, my least favorite Subway is the F, I have a dog

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS

named Oscar, and according to Spotify I'm in the top 1% bracket of Lana Del Rey fans.



Marina Rosenthal
White Plains, NY

As a Bronfman Fellow, I look forward to meeting individuals from different backgrounds and being able to share experiences. I love reading and writing

about people with stories vastly different than my own. Coming from a reformed family, I have learned to value the diverse culture and ways to worship within the community, throughout all levels of Judaism. For me, worship and religious practice means giving back to my community. Most of my time is spent volunteering at local organizations and doing all that I can to support them. My favorite part of the work I do is being able to mentor and provide services for the Youth Court clients that are sanctioned with counseling or community service and want to learn more about getting involved. Additionally, I enjoy reading poetry, and am fascinated by different interpretations of similar works.



Eva Roytburg
Glencoe, IL

Hello everyone! My name is Eva Roytburg and I'm a junior at New Trier High School in Winnetka,

Illinois. I'm an active member of the policy debate team and an editor for my school's newspaper. I love to read and write, and recently I have been particularly fond of existentialist texts; think Kafka, Camus, Nietzsche. I'm very politically involved and often volunteer for the campaigns of my local congressman. Though I live in a rather Jewish town, I am not very involved in any Jewish community around here. I prefer to enrich my

Jewish understanding through independent study, which so far means reading the works of Jewish people. Many of the Jewish works I read come from the Jewish Book Council and the Jewish Woman's Archive, and I have been able to engage other Jewish thinkers through Goodread's Jewish Book Club. As you may have already deduced, I'm a little lacking in structured Jewish studies, which is a large part of the reason I'm so excited to enter this community.



Hillel Schwab
Bronx, NY

Hi! I'm Hillel. I live in Riverdale, NY (in the Bronx) and go to SAR High School. My favorite classes include my

traditional Judaic studies classes, Jewish philosophy, and Arabic. I love all things music: I am involved in a local community musical theater troupe, with which I have performed in about 20 musicals since I was in second grade, and I play the guitar both for fun and for spiritual connection. I am involved in many extracurriculars at school, including the debate team, college bowl, Yachad (a club that facilitates inclusion of people with disabilities), and extra after school text study opportunities, as well as serving on the school spirit student council and as a gabbai in the student-led minyan. I also helped found and lead the first ever GSA in my school this past year. I am a proud Hebrew grammar nerd, and have my own column, called **הדקדוק פינת** (grammar corner), in my school's Hebrew language journal. I am also a nerd about tekhelet, the lost (and rediscovered) blue string tied into tzitzit. I bought and tied my own tekhelet a number of years ago, and since then I have tied numerous other people's tekhelet. That is just one example of my strong passion for Judaism and all the beautiful values and precious minutiae that come with it. I am gay by birth and

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS

Orthodox by choice, and because of that, I think really deeply and intentionally about what I want my Judaism to look like. That's why I'm so excited to be a part of this Bronfman cohort! I can't wait to engage in conversations with so many different types of people who will agree with me, disagree with me, and push me on what I believe. I also can't wait to take in new perspectives which will only make my worldview more nuanced and robust. I am really excited to meet everyone and have an awesome summer!!



Andrew Shamailov
Staten Island, NY

What up homies. My name is Andrew Gavriel Shamailov. I am NYC born and raised. I am of Azerbaijani decent and my family lineage can be tracked super far back there. I love Kanye, Tame Impala, Earl Sweatshirt, Logic (he fell off but I have faith) and of course Frank Ocean he's just amazing. I'm always looking for new songs to hear and new chord changes and genres. These artists and music in general is a huge influence on me and just my outlook on things. It's almost an identity to be honest. I play bass guitar and guitar I am not bad at piano and learning drums at the moment. I'll play some tunes on my favorite guitar. I'm super family oriented. I like being alone and reflecting but I let in people I feel should be trust worthy enough to be let in. I love the Cavs the Indians and the Browns and LEBRON JAMES. My mom was raised in Cleveland after coming to America and so her brothers raised me as a Cleveland fan. I am a Rangers fan in hockey though. But Cavs rule and all Cleveland sports rule if anyone is from California and a warriors fan I will leave our differences aside (unless we play basketball then I'll school you). I have a weird obsessive personality where once I'm interested I can't stop reading or thinking about it. I love late

night talks so whoever my roommate is I hope you do too. It'll be super lit trust me.

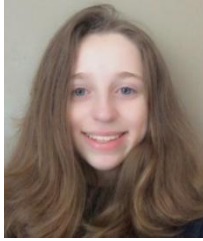


Daniel Shapiro
Albuquerque, NM

Hi, my name is Daniel Shapiro, I'm seventeen and I'm a junior at Albuquerque Academy in Albuquerque, New

Mexico. My favorite subjects at school are Japanese, History and Math. I love learning new languages and have had a blast learning Japanese over the past four years. Last summer I got to go on an exchange trip to Japan, which was an amazing experience. When I'm not at school, my favorite things to do are music, hiking, mountain biking, but most of all, spending time with my friends. Music is very special to me because I find both listening and playing music to be extremely meditative and introspective. I play guitar, both electric and classical, and I really love singing, although how good I am at it is up to debate :). I also love exercising outdoors, and in addition to hiking and biking in my free time, I'm on my school's cross-country and track teams along with the ultimate frisbee team. I am a member of the mock trial team because I like the mystery of the court cases, as well as the in-depth immersion into the case characters and the opportunity to act. I come from an interfaith family - my mother is Jewish, born in the former Soviet Union, and my father is Irish. The combination of cultural influences in my life has given me a deep appreciation of both cultures and a desire to learn more about my background. Up until now, I have been secular, but as I have become older, I have realized that being Jewish is extremely important to me. I would really like to broaden my knowledge of the Jewish religion and culture.

2020 BRONFMAN FELLOW INTRODUCTIONS



Leah Shvedova
Arlington, VA

Hi everyone! My name is Leah Shvedova and I'm from Arlington, VA, which is approximately 5 mins

outside of D.C. My entire family is Russian, so I am a fluent speaker always up for a conversation or to teach somebody a few words. In school, my favorite subjects are math, physics, and philosophy. Outside of school, I have been playing classical piano for 11 years and am currently working on Chopin's 21st Nocturne and Bach's 2nd Invention. In addition, I started my own small piano school, with 8 lovely students that I absolutely adore (most of the time). I love discussing all things music! In my Jewish life, I am active in BBYO and a proud member of Or Chadash BBG #2528. In my free time, I love to read, knit, play with my dog, drink excessive amounts of boba and ingest an unhealthy amount of caffeine. I love exploring new cultures and ideas and learning about anything and everything.



Kyra Siegel
New York, NY

Hi :) ! I'm Kyra and I am a junior at Trinity School in New York City. At school, I play on the tennis team,

do Mock Trial, participate in theater productions, perform in an acapella group, and am co-president of The Jewish Affairs Club, The Girls Math Study Group, and The Baking Club. In my spare time I do photography, mixed media art, write songs and short stories, and act. If you see me on the street, I am most likely petting a dog, singing louder than one should in public, taking pictures of everything I see, or having conversations with strangers. I love Robin Williams, A Gentleman's Guide To Love and

Murder, Sally Mann, Shabbat dinner, thrifting, rainy Sundays, Kate McKinnon, coffee ice cream, Chandler Bing, A Streetcar Named Desire, learning Chinese and Hebrew, discovering new artists with friends, playing chess (or any other board game), sending letters, and the smell of a just-opened can of tennis balls. I will almost always have paint in my hair. You can count on it.



Ruthie Weinbaum
Amherst, MA

Hi! My name is Ruthie and I go to Amherst Regional High School in Amherst, Massachusetts. I have an older brother and an older sister. My

favorite subject in school is history, and I spend most of my free time singing, playing cello, and participating in theater through my school. I also love to knit, and hope to have a dog and a cat someday. My favorite books include Giovanni's Room and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, and my favorite movies are Dirty Dancing and Lady Bird.
