

Hi, I'm Haley Rudnick and I am currently a senior at Rochelle Zell. I transferred to RZ second semester of my sophomore year. Up until then, I went to public school my entire life, including elementary school and middle school. The transition was big, but it was one that benefited me both socially and academically.

Walking in on my first day only knowing 1 familiar face, I was overwhelmed with the kindness of my new classmates. Without hesitation, people came up to me, introduced themselves and told me that I made the best decision. Soon I would realize that they were right. I quickly noticed how close everyone was. It didn't matter what grade people were in — people were friends across grades! I had never seen that my old school. I had entered a whole new world filled with new relationships and experiences.

One thing that I was nervous about entering the school was how Judaism would play a role in my education. Prior to me transferring, I did not have a strong relationship with Jewish life. But throughout Bible, Talmud, and Jewish thought classes, as well as Tefilah, I rediscovered who I was as a Jew and the connections that come with it.

In my Modern Jewish thought class, we recently studied a thinker named Martin Buber. In his book *I and Thou*, he suggests that there are two types of relationship in the world — I-you relationships and I-it relationships. In short,

I-it relationships are ones that are surface level and usually have a goal connected to them. In turn, I-you relationships are ones that are deep, mutual relationships that are only understood with one's whole being. It is safe to say that RZ has allowed me to develop deep, meaningful i-you relationships with my classmates and teachers, relationships that happen both inside and outside of the classroom. They happen because we trust each other. These I-you relationships have allowed me to become the outgoing person I am today. It would have been impossible otherwise. For one small example, I probably would have never agreed to speak to a large group of people if it weren't for my experiences here. My short time at RZ has shaped me into who I am today.

The tight-knit community that echoes throughout the halls of RZ are like no other. Whether that's everyone coming together on Friday mornings, cheering at basketball games, or saying hi to almost every person you walk past in the hallway, you are constantly surrounded by people who truly want you to succeed. Transferring to RZ was one of the best decisions I've ever made. My only regret is not enrolling here sooner. I am devastated that I only have about 4 more months left here, but I know I will forever be a part of this wonderful community.