

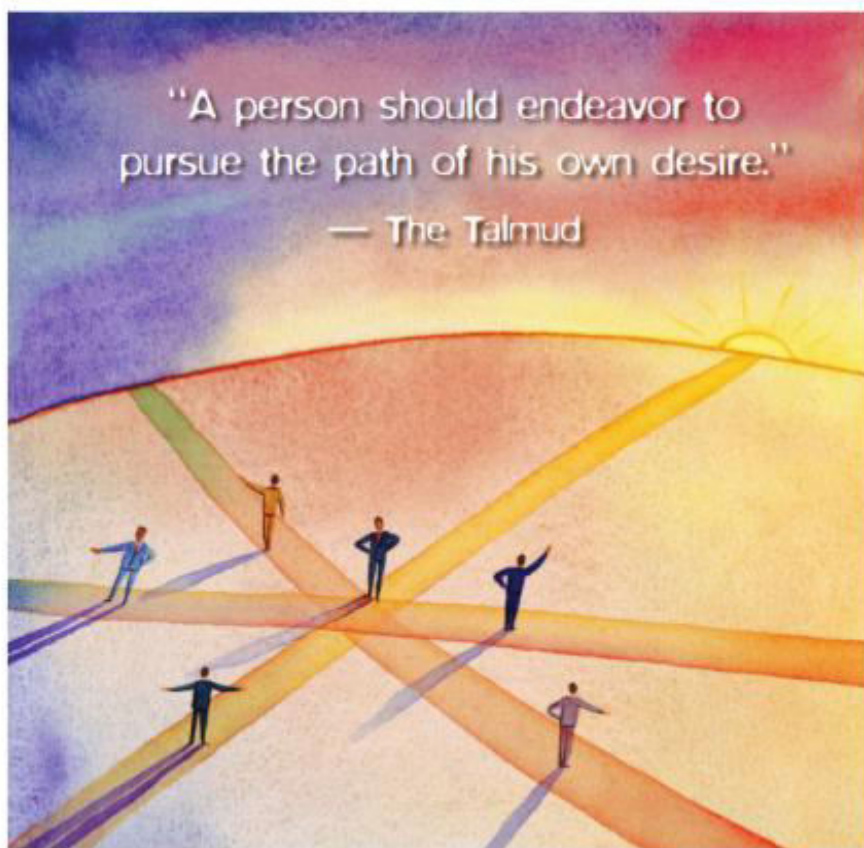
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# BAIS MENACHEM

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"A person should endeavor to  
pursue the path of his own desire."

— The Talmud



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## STUDENT HANDBOOK AND APPLICATION PACKAGE

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## *A Word from the Director*

Bais Menachem is a very unique Jewish institution. Our mission is to try to help those young men who have found it difficult to succeed in the traditional Yeshiva setting. Whether due to an inability to concentrate in a regular classroom setting, social issues at home or in school, lack of motivation, or a diminishing interest in religious values, we seek to clearly identify the problems, find a wholesome solution, and guide students towards achieving their goals.

We do this by focusing primarily on the student as an individual, and catering to his specific interests and abilities. In addition to Jewish learning, students can participate in a preparatory class for the GED High School equivalency diploma, accredited general studies courses (at high school or college level), vocational and recreational electives, and apprenticeships with professionals. Small class sizes, learning that is relevant and personal, an embracing, open atmosphere, road trips, volunteer activities, and a plethora of structured extracurricular activities form a holistic program that engages the students mind, heart, body and soul.

All of the above, and more, have contributed to a healthy atmosphere for change and growth in our students. We can proudly say that we graduate several students each year into other yeshivas, while many return for a second or third year. Many of our graduates go on to pursue professional training, enroll in institutes of higher learning, and join the workforce as productive members of society.

The specialization of our program is what makes it effective. Therefore, it is geared toward specific needs and may not be for everyone. While we review all applications and interview each applicant face-to-face, it is important that you read this handbook to assess whether you feel that Bais Menachem is the right school for you.

Yours truly,

Rabbi Uri Perlman  
*Director*

# I. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Bais Menachem, founded in 1999, is a pioneer institution in the field of Jewish education. Rather than impose a homogenous system of learning on all students, Bais Menachem focuses on the unique skills, interests and needs of each individual student, and develops a course of study that fits, helping the student find an academic comfort zone in which he can flourish.

There are many reasons why young men do not get what they need in a traditional yeshiva – distractions, troubles at home, learning disabilities, emotional issues, or simply a questioning, rebellious spirit that cannot be satisfied by a traditional parochial setting.

Bais Menachem provides a nurturing and welcoming environment, offering support and direction to young men seeking to find their way in the world. Our definition of success is when a student leaves Bais Menachem with a greater sense of respect for his parents, teachers, friends, and himself; when he expects more of himself than he used to – religiously, socially, and academically; when he has clarity in life and knows what he needs to do to succeed as a Jew, as a student, and as a person.

## What sets Bais Menachem apart?

Bais Menachem is, first and foremost, a place that encourages young men to accept who they are, to love themselves, and to discover what they can become – regardless of how alienated or disaffected they have been made to feel in the past. We don't view our boys as outcasts who don't fit in. We see them as gifted individuals possessing unique talents and vast untapped potential. Until they step through our doors, this potential was probably never given the opportunity to flourish.

Bais Menachem is, as the name suggests, as much a home as it is a school. Based on the premise that each student is a 'world of his own' and must be respected and treated as such, we accept no more than twenty students each year. The small size of our student population – along with four full-time and six part-time staff – is a testament to our focus on personal attention.

bais menachem vs. typical yeshiva		
Class Size	1-5 students	20-30 students
Student to Staff Ratio	3:1	25:1
Career Development	always	none or minimal
Organized Recreation	daily	weekly at most
Organized Class Trips	weekly	once/year at most
Informal Counselling	frequent & regular	infrequent at best
Professional Counselling	encouraged as needed	not available

## **Why choose Bais Menachem?**

The atmosphere and program at Bais Menachem are designed to provide a balanced approach that enables our students to flourish and become all that they can be: It is structured enough to provide the basic skills and stability they need, yet flexible enough to make room for alternative modes of learning and allow for individuality to thrive.

## **How long is the program?**

The Bais Menachem program is an individualized curriculum, so the length of a student's stay depends on the student. Generally, students stay at Bais Menachem for one, two or three years.

## **What age students does Bais Menachem accept?**

Young men ages 16-20.

## **What types of students attend Bais Menachem?**

Our students come from primarily from the east coast, but each year there are also several students from across the US and from other countries as well (see graph). Most students come from Chabad families, but about 15% come from other backgrounds.

The common denominator found in all our students is that they are struggling in the traditional yeshiva system. They share a desire to improve themselves, and are seeking guidance in doing so. It is not where you come from that matters. What is important is where you are going.

Students usually express their challenges in one (or several) of the following ways:

### ***Spiritual issues***

- ⌚ I want to be myself, not just conform to someone else's idea of Judaism
- ⌚ I am looking for my place in the Jewish community
- ⌚ I need some breathing room in my religious standards so I can come to it on my own terms

### ***Learning difficulties***

- ⌚ I want to learn, but I need more individual attention and tutoring to succeed
- ⌚ I feel I am lacking certain basic skills to advance academically
- ⌚ I need a more flexible and varied curriculum

### ***Social challenges***

- ⌚ I have difficulty accepting authority at school or at home
- ⌚ I lack self-confidence in my relationships with others
- ⌚ I have trouble cooperating and working with others

### **Student Requirements**

The only prerequisite to attend Bais Menachem is the desire to grow and take the program seriously. You must show respect for teachers and peers, and attend class diligently.

### **School Atmosphere**

Students at Bais Menachem are generally allowed to dress as they wish, and their privacy is always respected, as long as it does not interfere with the program or hinder the growth of other students. Students are encouraged to ask questions, to seek the answers, to discover Judaism, and to understand why we do the things we do.

### **Student Success**

Our impact on the lives of these young men is evident from the fact that stay in touch, keep coming back to visit and teach, and, when possible, generously support our school through an alumni-driven fundraising campaign.

Our mission to empower and enlighten creative young men by revolutionizing Jewish education is bearing fruit as we gaze with pride at our alumni – promising young men, who have gone on to advanced study, successful careers, and, most importantly, lives of fulfillment and contentment.

### ***Where students go from Bais Menachem:***



40% - Career

35% - Post-Secondary Studies

25% - Other Yeshivas

## II. TESTIMONIALS

As a teenager who was estranged from my community – or at least that's how I felt – a place of structure and academia was certainly not of my interest. Moreover, I was on a path that, to say the least, was not going to land me on the productive scale of society... The message I received at Bais Menachem uncovered the depths of my potential that lay dormant for years. They worked with me on my level and taught me to measure success not by where I stand, but by how far I've come.

From Bais Menachem, I was admitted into the Rabbinical College of America, where I graduated with a 3.9 GPA. I then went on to study for my rabbinical ordination with a select group of 10 students in the community of Bal Harbour Florida, after which I returned to Bais Menachem for a year as a student teacher. Currently, I work at a bank in New York and plan to apply to business school to get an MBA. Bais Menachem taught me to take pride in my accomplishments, and to always look up and demand more from myself.

**Shmuel Lieberman**  
*Student*

I first came to Bais Menachem as a 16-year-old rebellious student. I had no will power to do anything productive. It seemed like the only things I was motivated to do were things that got me into trouble. When I came to Bais Menachem I expected the same treatment I had received everywhere else - to be constantly degraded and yelled at, and told that what I was doing was wrong. To my surprise I was met with people who understood that I was a teenager, and knew how to deal with my rebellion without alienating me. They helped me understand that if I didn't get my act together my future was bleak.

**Levi Finck**  
*Student*

... the strictness [of Yeshiva] was unbearable and I never got answers to anything I asked about G-d or why should we not touch electricity on Shabbat. I decided I'd had enough and left in the middle. At that point, I was done with Judaism, I didn't care anymore. When I first got to Bais Menachem, all the alumni were finishing up their reunion Shabbaton. When I looked at them, I didn't see a whole bunch of black hats, I saw average day to day people putting on tefillin and praying to the One above. It actually felt like these people didn't care how you dress or how religious you are, it was more "welcome my Jewish brother"! From that point I realized that I am staying here, and staying here because I want to. I got more questions answered than in my entire life. Bais Menachem prepared me for the life outside the yeshiva walls!

**Mendel Pil, San Francisco**  
*Student*

I know my son had it in him I just did not know who, what and where would be the right catalyst to bring it out of him. After four years of seeing my son losing interest in both education and Torah, feeling discouraged, depressed and not in touch with his higher self, you have given me the best gift I could ever receive. Moshe needed the right yeshiva to help him continue to grow in the right direction. Baruch Hashem for Bais Menachem!

**Mrs. Leah Kahalani, Kensington, NY**

*Parent*

I do not have words to thank you and your staff... the improvement... I had such nachas to see my son. His advance in *mentschlichkeit*, *Yiddishkeit*, and *Chassidus* is the best proof of all the sensitive specialized input that my son is receiving.”

**Mrs. S.**

*Parent*

My son was having some serious problems in High School, questioning the direction of his life. Luckily, we chose Bais Menachem.

As an educator, I attribute the success to the fact that Rabbi Perlman and the yeshiva staff have remembered a cardinal rule of Judaism and education: *Yamin Mekareves U'Smol Dohek* (the right hand brings near, and the left hand pushes away). This teaches that the primary way to relate to students is through love and caring. Firm rules are necessary, but they are not an end unto themselves. As a parent, my thanks goes out to Rabbi Perlman. As an educator, I conclude by saying, keep up the good work.

**Rabbi Moshe Boruch Rodman, MA, Special Education**

*Principal, Desert Torah Academy, Las Vegas, NV*

Having visited Bais Menachem and having learned first hand about your program, methodologies, and the operation of the school, I must say that it is most impressive... I saw young men going about their daily lives with a sense of mission and with satisfaction. Clearly, they feel a sense of accomplishment. Your program showed them promise and possibilities and inspired them to achievement they could not have imagined only a short while ago.

**Rabbi Nochum Kaplan**

*Director of the Office of Education, Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch*



### III. OUR PROGRAM

Our goal is to help our students grow as people and as Jews. While we would like our students to focus on Torah learning as much as possible, we are also aware of the need for some to begin thinking about career or other alternatives.

The Bais Menachem program prepares its students for life in the real world by illuminating an approach to Judaism that is practical and meaningful, by teaching them respect for themselves and for others, and by setting sites on future goals in professional and personal development.

Our students are sincere young men searching for answers to existential questions and looking for their place in the Jewish family. We strongly believe that the only lasting answers are the ones that come from within. At Bais Menachem, much energy, time and resources are dedicated to personal growth and expanding horizons through community activism, recreation, road trips and private counseling. One of the keys to our success is the very high 3:1 student-staff ratio.

The result is a holistic program that addresses the entire student: Mind, Body, Heart and Soul:

1. Academics
  - a. Jewish Studies
  - b. General Studies:
    - i. High School: GED preparation
    - ii. Accredited College Courses
2. Vocational Electives
3. Recreational Electives
4. Community Activities (Mivtzoim)
5. Road Trips and Outings
6. Shabbatons
7. Counseling

## 1. Academics

Bais Menachem's distinct approach translates into a unique program of study that provides students with the opportunity to acquire basic learning skills. Students will advance their education in a personal way, and are asked for their input regarding what they would like to study – as our sages say, “a person learns best when his heart is in it.” By studying in small classes or groups (between one and five students per class), usually in a round-table discussion style, our students get the attention they need in order to succeed.

### a. Jewish Studies

Jewish learning is enhanced by utilizing an array of assisted learning techniques, including the acclaimed Gemara Berura computer assisted Talmud program. Our program of study lends itself to individualized courses of study that enhance skill building and comprehension in the following subjects:

- Chassidus
- Halacha
- Mishna
- Gemara
- Jewish History
- Parsha
- Nach
- Hebrew Reading & Comprehension



### b. General Studies

The Bais Menachem program also includes the ability for students to complete their High School diplomas by taking GED courses or enrolling in a correspondence class. We also offer accredited college courses for those who want to get a head start on their postsecondary studies, utilizing online course offerings from the Michigan Jewish Institute.

## 2. Vocational Electives

For students who have completed their GED, Bais Menachem offers instruction in different areas to encourage them to select a career focus that is of interest to them. Occasionally, students who have not yet received their GED, but are on the GED track and need an extra push, are also allowed to enroll in these electives. The goal is two-fold: Develop practical skills that will help when it comes time to enter the workforce, and build self-confidence through accomplishment. Though the options vary from year to year, some of the choices from the past that are generally available, as well as some that we are introducing this year include:

- Finance
- Vocational Training
- Computers
- Graphic Design

Bais Menachem makes arrangements for students to receive instruction from qualified professionals in each field. In some cases, these activities also provide students with the opportunity to earn some money.

### 3. Electives & Recreation

A key to confidence building, character development, and forging camaraderie among the students, is a schedule that includes recreation time and physical activity –from weight lifting and kickboxing to music and sports –as well as the social interaction that comes with it. These activities provide students with a healthy outlet, and time to reflect on the studies and progress.

Students choose their own pursuits, and we make every effort to provide them with access to facilities and instruction as requested. Recreational activities are considered a privilege, and recreational time is sometimes used as a reward for achieving academic or behavioral goals.

#### Recreation

A healthy mind is a healthy body. Each evening, students spend time at the local JCC letting off steam, getting to know each other, and having a good time.

In addition, weekly student outings (bowling, hikes, biking etc.) are a regular feature of the Bais Menachem program. The JCC yearly membership is \$125.



## **Electives**

Below is a list of Electives in which the students may enroll. A minimum class size of eligible students may be required for certain electives. (Students can sign up after they have been accepted by selecting their Electives options on the Tuition Agreement form. All fees must be paid in advance.)

### Tae Kwon Do / Hapkido

Biweekly hour-long session with Master Pete Canavan, a 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt, from the Hapkido Taekwondo Institute (htkdi.com). Testing to advance to a higher level (belt) is also available.

*Fee: \$360 for the year (plus \$50 for gi uniform, and \$25 per test. This fee includes a trophy and belt; a student can advance 1 belt every 8 weeks. )*

### Music

Music Theory and Instruction: \$100/month (\$850/year)

*Private Lessons in Instrument of Your Choice – call for more info*

### Kickboxing with Rick

Weekly session throughout the year.

*Fee: \$180 for the year (does not include protective gear)*

### Basketball Team

Join the Bais Menachem Basketball Team to compete against other high school teams in the local area.

*Fee: \$50 for the year, includes jersey*

### Photography

Weekly lesson in professional photography.

*Fee: \$125 for the year; you must bring an SLR camera*

### CPR/First Aid

Get certified by a professional instructor.

*Fee: \$50 for the year.*

### Art Lessons

Art classes available as well as private instruction.

*Call for more info*



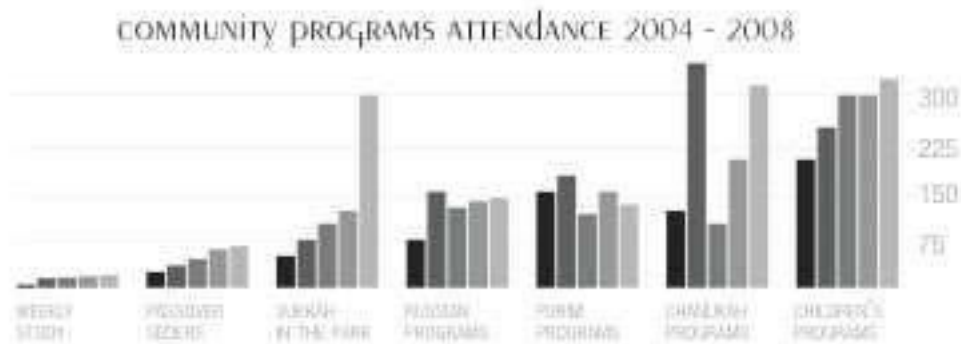
#### 4. Community Activities (Mivtzoim)

Students participate in what has evolved into an extensive outreach arm, with community holiday activities, public study sessions, and programs for the elderly and immigrants – all administered and run by the students themselves. The success of these activities can be measured through their multiple benefits: We provide essential social and spiritual services to the community at large, while our students develop the leadership skills and confidence that come with teaching and giving.

The hands-on experience of the impact of community and social responsibility also provides students with a sense of community awareness.

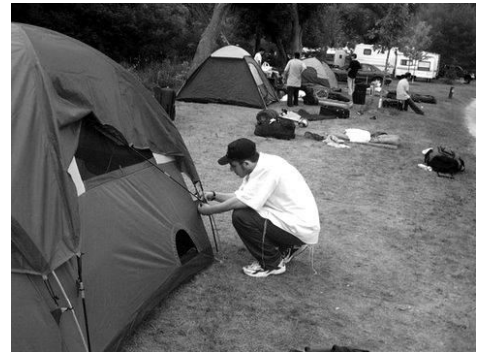
Some of our activities that benefit the community:

- Volunteering for the Jewish Family Services
- Hospital and Nursing Home Visitations
- Mitzvah Campaigns
- Holiday Workshops
- Adult Education (classes and one-on-one learning)
- Holiday Celebrations
- Youth Groups
- Russian Language Events and Study Groups
- Chessed Shel Emes Volunteering



## 5. Road Trips

In addition to local recreation, Bais Menachem embarks on group trips several times each year to various intriguing locations along the east coast, from Miami to Nova Scotia. Often, the trip will involve an exciting activity, such as skiing, hiking, paintball, and boating. These trips provide amazing opportunities to strengthen bonds among students and staff. It is these trips, perhaps more than anything else, that give students the freedom and opportunity to really open up, bearing some of the most dramatic transformations we have experienced.



## 6. Shabbatons

For inspiration and a change of scenery, Bais Menachem students participate in regularly scheduled Shabbatons with Shluchim throughout the region. Groups of 5-10 students go on Shabbatons every 2-3 weeks. When they remain in town, students are invited to spend Shabbat meals at the homes of their teachers.

## 7. Counseling

One of the special aspects of Bais Menachem is the love and attention that every single student receives. Private guidance counseling is provided by our caring and nurturing staff, who maintain an open-door policy and serve as surrogate big brothers, guiding students through personal issues and life decisions. These regular meetings assess progress and develop a course of action for attaining future goals.

When required, professionals are called upon to provide additional support. We work with local psychologists and social workers to work through emotional or real life problems. When needed, we have initiated a smoking cessation class to help students kick this terrible habit. When necessary, we help students make peace with their parents, helping them understand both sides of the relationship. We are committed to help students solve their problems, and show each student how to grow and mature in his own way.

## IV. LOCATION & FACILITY

### Living in Wilkes-Barre

The city of Wilkes-Barre is far enough out of the way to allow us to create our own space, yet close enough to offer easy access for trips back home and school adventures. The quaint, small-town atmosphere is decidedly laid back, and avoids the typical frenetic pace and distractions of large cities.



Wilkes-Barre is a welcoming community of 2,200 Jews, with a full infrastructure of a very active JCC, various *shuls*, a *mikvah*, a day school, and more. Bais Menachem sees its role in the community as one of bringing new energy and growth to programming and sharing our heritage with local Jews of all and any affiliation.

We are located near the Poconos with easy access to skiing, boating, hiking trails, beautiful scenery and much more.

The area near Bais Menachem provides a nice, quiet neighborhood for recreation and walking. The local JCC, where Bais Menachem students have access to sports and recreation facilities, is just around the corner. We are proud of our involvement in the Jewish community of the greater Wilkes-Barre.

### The Bais Menachem Facility

The Bais Menachem campus is housed in a spacious 12,000 square foot Victorian house in downtown Wilkes-Barre, PA.



The facility consists of

- Classrooms
- Library
- Computer Lab
- Dining hall
- Music/Game Room
- Workout Room
- Offices
- Dormitories

All of the rabbis live nearby, making them available to meet with the students often, and placing Shabbos meals within easy walking distance of the dormitories.

## V. THE HOUSE RULES

*Although our program is open and flexible, all participants are expected to obey the rules and regulations set forth by Bais Menachem to ensure that the program runs smoothly. This will also enable us to have a positive and productive environment for the staff and participants.*

*Upon acceptance, you will be asked to sign a Student Contract agreeing to the following rules.*

1. Our program is a 24-hour a day program. You are the responsibility of Bais Menachem at all times. A staff member must always know where you are.
2. You must be in the dormitory by no later than 9:00 pm. Curfew is 11:00 pm.
3. Smoking is not allowed in the dormitory, Bais Hamedrash, vehicles, or in front of the building of Bais Menachem.
4. Using speakers of any kind is not allowed. Only personal audio-only mp3 players with headphones are permitted. We don't want any student imposing his musical choice upon others. Speakers will be confiscated, and will not be returned until you leave.
5. Personal computers (laptops and tablets included) and video ipods, **or any device which has video-playing capabilities**, will not be allowed. **If you wish to use a laptop in Yeshiva for business or advanced learning, a special arrangement must be made in advance whereby you will have limited access your laptop or device. Any device found that has not been subject to special arrangement with the hanholo will be confiscated until the end of the year.**
6. **New rule pertaining to cell phones: While we wish to allow students to remain in contact with family and friends, experience has shown that there must be restricted access for students to remain “present”. Therefore, we will be adopting a new policy whereby all devices will be kept in the principal’s office with allotted times for usage.**
7. Students will be expected to wear button-down shirts to classes; shorts and t-shirts are not permitted in class. Otherwise, you can dress as you like, but please use your common sense. On Shabbos you will be expected to dress appropriately.
8. Any alcohol found in the possession of any student will be immediately confiscated, no questions asked. Repeat offenses will result in more severe consequences, possibly including mandatory therapy.
9. The above (8) also applies to any dangerous or illegal substance of any kind, including fireworks, knives, etc.
10. As a rule, we do not have “off-Shabbosim”. However, as joyous occasions do arise (and some guys just need a “break” at times), each student will be able to arrange a Shabbos off, as necessary. A phone call from parents, along with our permission, will be needed for each individual situation. Also, you will be allowed only one Shabbos off every six weeks at most. Shabbatons will be arranged by Bais Menachem quite frequently, and each student will be expected to participate unless he is specifically excused.
11. If you feel there is a problem with the way a fellow student or staff member is treating you, you are to speak with your principal or administrator, not take matters into your own hands.
12. If you are caught tampering with someone else's possessions, you may be asked to leave the program immediately.



## VI. APPLICATION & REGISTRATION

*Please note that all forms are available for download on our website:  
[www.baismenachem.com](http://www.baismenachem.com).*

### **Application & Registration Process**

1. Review the Application Checklist to ensure all criteria are met.
2. Complete the Application Form and mail or fax it to Bais Menachem.
3. An in-person or telephone interview may be requested.
4. You will be notified of acceptance by phone or email.
5. Upon acceptance, you will be asked to submit the items in the Registration Checklist, including tuition payment.

### **Application Checklist**

- ☞ Student and parent(s)/guardian should read the Student Handbook carefully to determine if they feel that Bais Menachem is the right place for the prospective student.
- ☞ The prospective student should review the House Rules and agree to them.
- ☞ Complete the Application Form and mail or fax it to Bais Menachem.
- ☞ \$100 nonrefundable Application Fee (make check payable to Bais Menachem).
- ☞ Await our response. Be prepared to schedule an interview.

### **Registration Checklist**

Send all the items below to Bais Menachem. Spaces will be reserved for registrations that are entirely complete, including tuition payments:

- ☞ Student Contract
- ☞ Tuition Agreement
- ☞ Tuition Payment - include check(s) or credit card information
- ☞ Medical Information Form
- ☞ Medical Consent Form
- ☞ Copy of Medical Insurance Card

## VII. SCHEDULE

Please read the following information carefully. We ask that you arrange all of your son's transportation to and from Wilkes-Barre with this schedule in mind. After breaks, students should arrive in Wilkes-Barre *the day before* classes resume.

Aug. 15	Arrival and Orientation
Aug. 18	Classes Begin
Sep. 12 - 28	Tishrei Break - students may leave for Yom Kippur after classes are over on the 6 <sup>th</sup>
Sep. 29	Students Return
Sep. 30	Classes Resume
Dec. 3 –Dec. 15	Mid-Winter Break - Special Winter School Trip (tentative)
Dec. 15	Students Return
Dec. 16	Classes Resume
Apr. 7 -Apr. 24	Pesach Break students may leave for Yom Kippur after classes are over on the 6 <sup>th</sup>
Apr. 24	Students Return
Apr. 25	Classes Resume
June 30	End of Year Banquet
July 1	Last Day of School – Trip to NY for Gimmel Tammuz

### **Airport Pickups**

We do not provide transportation from airports to Bais Menachem. For help in arranging a ride, please call our office.

### **Breaks**

If you would like us to arrange for your son to help a shliach during the Tishrei or Pesach breaks, please inform us at the earliest possible opportunity, and we will make our best effort to arrange this for him.