

An Update to YU's Finances

By Avishai (Jacob) Cohen and Etan (Alex) Neiman

It seems like it was just yesterday that Yeshiva University went from prospering and affluent to struggling to get a grasp of its budget deficit and mountain of debt. YU students have watched as their University got downgrade after downgrade from Moody's Investors Service, culminating with a fall to a B3 junk bond rating in March of 2014. Earlier this month, Moody's released a statement affirming this bleak rating, with a negative outlook. Hitting right at home, students have seen the inevitable budget cuts lead to, among other things, reduced course offerings, less club funding, and even the loss of their wrestling team. Some students are still in a state of shock, and some are angry, but most just want to know what is being done to fix it.

In an attempt to address this third group, The Commentator recently conducted interviews with several top University executives, along with independent research to shed light on the situation. Specifically, we combed through YU's 2015 financial statements, consulted reputable third party sources, and interviewed Provost Dr. Selma Botman, Vice President for University and Community Life Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Senior Vice President Rabbi Josh Joseph, and Executive Director of Communications Dr. Paul Oestreicher. Our goal being simple: give students the update they deserve regarding the administration's ongoing efforts, as well as address some of the most important factors relating to the state of YU's finances.

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Yeshiva University Student Leaders of the YUNMUN Conference. Read more on page 7.

Golan Heights Stops Accepting Yeshiva University Omni Dollars as Payment for Food Services

By Noam Feifel

Golan Heights stopped accepting Yeshiva University "Caf Card"'s omni dollars as payment for its food services.

The Israeli-style restaurant has been under contract with YU for almost half a decade, agreeing to let students spend an allotted amount of money, which YU calls "Omni dollars," from the school's meal plan at local participating restaurants. That is, up until this past week.

The news that Golan stopped accepting the Caf Card surfaced Monday evening, February 8, when University Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel sent an email notifying students of the development.

Students met the news with shock and curiosity--understandably so, as the restaurant is consistently filled with Yeshiva students. It serves hundreds daily for lunch and dinner on the Wilf Campus, and is an especially popular location for friends to grab a bite together on weekends.

"It's an unfortunate situation," shared Benny Aivazi, a junior in Yeshiva College. "Golan is a routine meeting place for me and my friends. Especially on late Saturday nights, the place is always packed with YU and Stern students." Benny added, "I'm also intrigued as to why Golan pulled out of their deal with YU. It seems like it [the deal] only brings them more business."

A student even more frustrated with the situation is Stern senior Molly Pocrass. She remarked, "I just don't understand how they could make such a decision that will affect them this adversely. That restaurant is a very big hangout spot and now, many people won't be able to go, including myself."

Of course, students will still be able to order their favorite meat dishes from Golan for an occasional meal or when they want to catch up with a friend. However,

they will now need to pay with actual cash, as opposed to utilizing the portion of the meal plan specifically allocated for use at various eateries nearby the Wilf and Beren Campuses.

Despite the recent removal of Golan from the Omni Plan, students will continue to be able to spend these funds at the other nearby restaurants -- Chop-Chop, Lake Como Pizza, and Grandma's Pizza --, in addition to Just Kosher Market.

The premise of the contract between YU and Golan, as with all other participating restaurants, was meant to create a "win-win" situation for both parties. By YU designating these Omni funds away from its own cafeteria's dining program, those outside businesses involved in the deal would surely see a spike in customer volume. In exchange, YU would take a 15% cut of every purchase made with Omni dollars, as the university was somewhat responsible for the increase of business that its students contributed to.

However, the real win, perhaps, belonged to the students, who now had access to more options during mealtimes, which would all be tax-free through the university's program.

While this joint meal plan has provided benefits to the university, the local restaurants, and, of course, the students, it has also fueled a conflict that is just now beginning to surface.

The relationship between YU and Golan was indirectly rifted by YU's Wilf Student Life Committee, or SLC, when it recently started providing students access to their Caf Card balances

and transaction history online. One of the SLC's Senior Co-Chairmen, Ariel Ancer, described the "eAccounts" as a way to help students budget their cafeteria money, and better keep track of previous food purchases that were made.

While those were the true intentions of extending accessibility of these accounts

SEE GOLAN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

"I AM IMPATIENTLY WAITING FOR THE DAY THAT I GET AN EMAIL INFORMING ME THAT GOLAN HAS REVERSED ITS DECISION AND IS AGAIN ACCEPTING CAF CARDS."

- SHLOMO ANAPOLLE

The EDITORIAL

Practicing Ethical Writing

By Yadin Teitz

There was time when writing was a skill, a coveted medium reserved exclusively for scribes of the very powerful, for the most lofty of thinkers, for the literary geniuses of the world, and for the mightiest wielders of the pen. For much of our history, large amounts of the world's population could not read, and certainly could not write. Over time, as books and newspapers and letter-writing became more and more common, and prices of paper and ink went down, literacy rates went up to a point that even average people could articulate their thoughts in writing. Today, in the computer age, it seems as though everyone knows how to write, and it seems like the whole world is taking advantage of this technological marvel to express themselves in print.

However, with the widespread adaptation of the internet, writing in the contemporary age has changed as well, and has definitionally become banal and commonplace. Think about it. The internet has birthed an environment in which anyone can write (assuming they have a basic level of education) and anyone can be a prolific "writer". But not only that. Newfound in our day is the ability to self-publish our writings in a variety of media and share them with the world. The emphasis on privacy, so visible in the handwritten letters between two lovers, kept strictly private, privileged professional correspondence, and perhaps the all-important "top-secret" diary of the past, has been replaced with a need among today's writers to mass produce their ideas.

Perhaps this is advantageous. Writing that is open and accessible to everyone is perhaps the greatest statement of democracy and equality, that everyone can have their voices heard. But another, less advantageous phenomenon has become apparent as well: people have capitalized upon writing as a wieldy vehicle of complaints. Perhaps it is precisely because writing has become

such an easy and effortless process that our approach to writing has become cheapened and less refined. We no longer view our writing as a reflection of ourselves, as a tiring attestation to our deepest and most significant thoughts. The ease and accessibility of technology trivializes our writing and makes us feel removed from its content. Therefore, people today are much more inclined to unabashedly and perhaps thoughtlessly share whatever comes to mind.

Browsing certain websites today, one might observe that the deliberate word choices and delicate prose of yore have been transformed into bold rhetoric and brash tones. As a society, we seem to have thoroughly violated and corrupted the beauty of writing by forcing it to become an instrument of our unhappiness. I refer not only to the world of blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and comments, but also to well-known sites like Yelp and TripAdvisor. Had a bad experience at a hotel, restaurant, or auto-repair shop? A short entry will help make you feel better- and make the establishment look terrible. Do you feel discriminated against, or do you particularly want to support the plight of some vulnerable group? Have you found an injustice that needs to be corrected or experienced an event was blatantly mishandled? Tell us about it, please. It has become ingrained in us that we have a voice, and that we have a duty to make ourselves be heard. And yes, while people do offer praise as well, nothing gets us so infuriated, so passionate, so eager to write, as the things that annoy or concern us, and it is on these things that we focus our writings. The result is that anything that happens to us that we disagree with, anything that we have an opinion on -- anything, anything at all -- will be broadcasted to the world.

Complaining is not new, of course. But as far as I can imagine, it used to be that people would tell their friends

and family members about an idea they had or about something that bothered them, and that would be it. Perhaps word would travel, but it would not get very far. If one made a particularly compelling case, perhaps one's point could be validated in the form of a letter to the editor or a small article in a local newspaper. But today? Perceived acts of unfairness, mistreatment, and personal grievances can be related and shared with the world within a moment. It is this new culture of mass complaining that is a strictly contemporary issue.

There is an inherent benefit to all of this, in turn: We hope that by complaining, something will happen, and the problem will be changed or eradicated in some way. Our greatest objective in all of this, I hope, is to accomplish change, not just to achieve notoriety. Consider change.org, a petitions website popular among students at Yeshiva. Gather enough support for a petition on change.org, and the White House, through its We The People platform, has committed to respond. Do we realize how surreal this all is, that one individual citizen can generate a petition based on something he or she believes in and demand a response? To provide some perspective, if one browses the change.org petitions, they range from "Tell Trader Joe's to Go 100% Cage-Free" and "Prevent the EPA from Banning Vehicle Modification" to "Protect Women Worldwide" and "Justice 4 Caitlyn," a plea for an abused dog in South Carolina. Justice 4 Caitlyn has over 440,000 supporters, while Protect Women Worldwide has 591,000, and Tell Trader Joe's to Go 100% Cage-Free has 84,735.

If we look at these statistics, it seems like internet-goers are far more concerned about women's rights and Caitlyn than they are about cage-free eggs. Which is good. Until one stops to consider the fact that there are actually petitions online which have been supported by tens of thousands of people against cage-free eggs, and hundreds of thousands against a single

abused dog. Carrie Tyler's brother was sentenced to life without parole for a nonviolent drug offense. She's got 403,300 supporters. Mariel Waters, from Stanford, NJ writes, "We want Jon Stewart to moderate a 2016 presidential debate." Her post has 339,499 supporters. While many of the issues raised are legitimate and strong, so many of them can be reduced into the category of idle chatter, which does nothing but obstruct what is really important.

But another problem, which is that thanks to the egalitarian nature of writing, is that people have made themselves into authorities on issues they know far too little about. There are times that I wish that we employed some sort of censor who would remove "stupid" comments from people who are just over-eager to have their voices be heard. This censor would determine who had a right to be part of a conversation, and who should be excluded because of a lack of credentials or seasoned, researched argument.

We often forget the impact that our words can have, and the way our simple ideas can resonate with people or alternatively, really upset them. The past few weeks at Yeshiva have again reminded us of the power of the written word, whether in a simple Facebook post or in a full-length article. We cannot abuse this power, and just as the Rabbis caution us regarding our speech, we must take the same precautions in our writing. Our culture and traditions place a high value on the influence of spoken words, and we must apply the same importance to our written words. We must be very careful in what we write, and we must preserve the refinement of this art. We must practice ethical writing.

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The Commentator

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The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 81 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah u-Maddah, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.



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1 WiFi in Furst

Class will never be boring again, as newly installed routers in Furst Hall now allow students to augment their classroom experience with supplementary learning portals such as Mental Floss and Sporele.



2 Bernie's Yearning

This new Ben and Jerry's ice cream flavor features mint ice cream with a chocolatey layer at the very top one percent of the container. It is then the eater's job to mix the chocolate in, evenly distributing the goodness to create an equitable mint chocolate chip.



3 Valentine's Day at the Sfarim Sale

Romance was in the air as these two events combined to create a potent love potion. Figuring that more shidduchim could only mean more future customers, the Seforim Sale launched a new online dating service called SawYouAtSetland.com.



4 YU Maccabees

Though they would go on to lose in the semifinals, our men's basketball team had their best season in recent memory, winning their first home playoff game in franchise history. And congrats to senior forward Shelby Rosenberg on reaching 1000 points!



5 Declare Your Major Day

Few days are more exciting here in YU than this joyous holiday. So everyone grab a megaphone, head out to the streets, and shout your preferred subject to the world.



6 New Security Formations

Whether you agree with that article or not, whether you think this incident has made us safer or not, you have to admit that the new stanchions and blue velvet ropes in Glueck make you feel like to go to a real college.



7 Facebook

Thanks for showing us that there are more available reactions on the human emotional palette than a simple thumbs up.

7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN

1 Slipping Flyers Under my Dorm Door

I don't care if you are my RA. This is an unpardonable violation of my privacy.

2 Golan

Let's get this straight. You're unhappy with your financial arrangement with YU so you decide to steal from students? Wait, you were keeping a tally in your head of how many times each student came to Golan? Where I'm from, we call that utter baloney.

3 Strenger Hall

Over the past number of years, few have entered this building and few have returned. But the brave handful who have made it out alive confirm our faith in the age-old maxim: what does not kill you only makes you Strenger.

4 "What Do You Mean?"

If she is nodding her head yes, then what makes you think that she wants to say no? And if your assessment is correct, then why is she nodding her head yes? Is there some sort of coercion involved? Justin, what do you mean?

5 The Scoreboard

In the middle of our playoff game, the scoreboard spontaneously decided to take a nap in the middle of the first half. After fifteen minutes of awkward fiddling, we finally got it working again. Maybe there's a reason why we haven't been allowed to host playoff games.

6 Waiting or Genetic Screening

Just when we thought life could not get any more awkward, the Medical Ethics Society ran a singles mixer event in which participants stood on a line for hours, staring at each other and wondering who might be a potential mate.

7 Library Floor 3A

Definitely the weirdest floor of the library. On the few occasions when I've spent a few brief minutes there, I've witnessed things so bizarre I'd prefer not to even describe them here. Avoid this place at all costs.



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editors,

When I saw the penultimate edition of The Commentator lying around (I originally wrote this letter to be published in the subsequent edition, but it was lost in cyberspace), the picture of the new library mural on the front cover caught my eye. I had been wondering what the obstacle being built in the library lobby was all about (as an aside, I completely agree, for multiple reasons, with the assessment in the previous issue that the Nagel Lobby gets a "thumbs down"). However, as I turned to read the article on page 14, I was shocked by the picture of the artist published there, and immediately closed the paper.

Beyond the slight letdown of not learning about the mural (although I did later find the well-written article online without the picture), I was extremely disappointed that The Commentator would publish such a picture. Besides the Halachik issues with featuring a picture of a woman dressed far below Halachik standards, it is terribly insensitive to produce something that a large segment of the student body will not, and should not, look at. I ask for an apology from the editors, and I hope that in the future they will make sure they are serving the entire student body.

Sincerely,
Reuven Berman

Moody's Affirms Yeshiva University B3 Junk Rating

By Yechiel Schwab

On Monday, February 9, the Moody's Investors Service affirmed Yeshiva University's B3 rating on its 2009 and 2011a bonds, with a negative outlook.

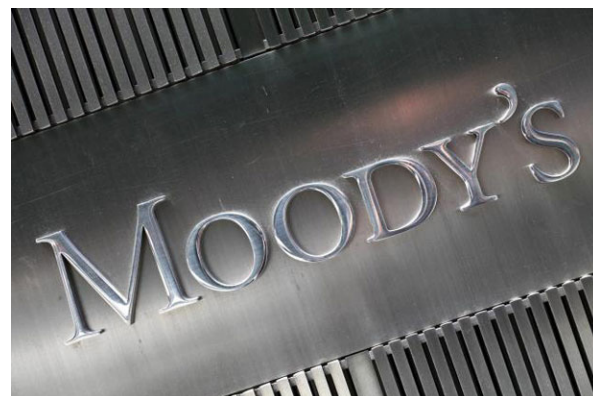
Moody's first downgraded Yeshiva to B3 in March 2014. Since then, Yeshiva implemented the "Roadmap for Sustainable Excellence," sold Einstein, and instituted numerous cost-cutting initiatives throughout the University. Indeed, upon the recent completion of the Einstein deal, sentiment appeared to change on campus, with many believing that Yeshiva's financial outlook had finally improved and that it had passed through the proverbial storm.

Despite these expectations, Moody's recent report affirmed its 2014 B3 junk rating. A B3 rating reflects a non-investment, speculative grade, with high credit risk. This rating significantly affects Yeshiva's ability to borrow more money.

Moody's noted that "despite the transfer of financial responsibility for its (Yeshiva's) medical school," they still expect "deep operating deficits" over the next few years. Compounding this issue, they cited the "limited pricing flexibility with its core market and a high cost educational delivery model." These combined issues may portend more cuts across the University.

The negative outlook of this B3 rating reflects the possibility that Yeshiva will deplete its extremely limited liquidity without managing to sell additional real estate. Moody's cited that substantial improvements in "unrestricted liquidity" along with progress towards reducing budget deficits could lead to a rating upgrade, while failure to accomplish these tasks could result in a further downgrade.

Though Yeshiva engaged in soul-searching budget cuts for most of 2015, Moody's recent credit rating may signal that financial streamlining is still a long road ahead, and financial woes may continue haunting the university even into the tenure of its next president.



New Eizenshtein Bakery Looks to Take the Cake

By David Rubinstein

Buying trendy baked goods will soon be easy as apple pie for residents of the Wilf Campus. Eizenshtein Bakery, set to welcome its first storefront clients within a week, will be located less than 100 feet from the Morgenstern Residence Hall on Amsterdam Avenue between 186th and 187th Streets. That block already has three kosher restaurants and a kosher food store.

Eizenshtein Bakery will sell a range of pareve (non-dairy, non-meat) baked goods, including challahs, cakes, and the upscale French confection, macarons. The new store will also sell a selection of vegan products, including donuts, babka, cupcakes, muffins, and brownies, as well as gluten-free cookies. In addition, the bakery will offer prepared salads as well as a coffee machine. Although seating will be limited, there will be a bar allowing a few clients to sit and enjoy their purchases in the store.

Named after proprietor Jonathan Eizenshtein, the bakery will also be owned Benjy Isaac, the famed owner of neighboring Israeli-style grill Golan Heights and Michael Knafo, a friend of Mr. Isaac and native of Morocco.

The idea to open a bakery came when Messrs. Isaac and Eizenshtein wanted to open something together. "We wanted something new for the Heights," Mr. Eizenshtein said. "It's 2016. I like the old stuff," he said, referring to another kosher bakery in Washington Heights, "but this is going to be for everyone, and it's going to be a nice place to hang out."

The vision for Eizenshtein Bakery is to serve quality, novel baked goods to all of New York City. "Nobody makes a brand new kind of pastry, but we all try to improve on the traditional," Mr. Eizenshtein said. He stressed that their target market "is not only kosher-keeping clientele. We want everyone to know us—not just religious Jews, not just Jews—we want everyone to be welcome here and enjoy our products."

Although its storefront is not yet open to the public, the bakery has already received and filled large catering orders. The bakeshop plans to have a delivery service for clients who cannot come to the storefront.

Despite the broad target market, the new bakery recognizes the prominence of Yeshiva University students among its clientele. Mr. Eizenshtein stated that he intends for his store to accept the Caf Card's Omni Dollars soon after opening. This may prove critical to drawing business

from the over 600 Yeshiva University students who live in Wilf Campus housing and are obligated to pay for 250 Omni Dollars as part of their meal plan.

Eizenshtein Bakery is opening its doors in the midst of a hubbub about the relationship between local restaurants and Omni Dollars. Recently, Omni Dollars stopped being acceptable currency at Golan Heights, which was charging tax on purchases made with Omni Dollars, which should be tax-exempt. YU refuses to allow Omni Dollars to be spent on taxed purchases and Golan Heights owner Mr. Isaac claims that unlimited Omni Dollar accounts breach his contract with YU and hurt his business.

Sophomore Eitan Lipsky, a pre-medical student majoring in biology, said that if the new bakery accepts the Omni Dollars he will be "excited" to have "a place in Washington Heights to buy baked goods. It will make life

**"WE WANT EVERYONE TO
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ENJOY OUR PRODUCTS."
- JONATHAN EIZENSHTein**

convenient."

Yoni Annenberg, an accounting major and resident of the Morgenstern Residence Hall, thought similarly: "a new bakery here would be great. It will be nice to have a new option for hosting gifts, especially if it would accept the Caf Card [Omni Dollars]."

Adir Pinchot, head resident advisor of the Morgenstern Residence Hall, seemed less concerned about the acceptance of Omni Dollars. According to Mr. Pinchot, the residents of Morgenstern "anticipate that the new source of delicious, fatty foods will lighten our wallets while adding extra weight to our bellies." Continuing in a light tone, he added that residents "are exceedingly excited" for the opening of the new bakery nearby.

The new bakery's proprietors have over twenty years of combined experience in the food vending industry. Originally from Afula, Israel, Mr. Eizenshtein said that when he was 14, he started attending high school only two days a week and the other days he would take a bus to Tel Aviv, where he was working as a dish washer in a restaurant. When he was in 10th grade, he started cooking. He stayed with his employers as they opened a restaurant

in Raanana, which exposed him to the process of starting a food vending business. At that restaurant, he was also exposed to baking for the first time.

"I fell in love with it," Mr. Eizenshtein said. "If you could taste the first cake I made and then taste the cake I made



Pastry Chef and Partner Jonathan Eizenshtein

two days ago, you would taste the gaping difference."

Mr. Eizenshtein immigrated to the United States two years ago, arriving with only a suitcase and a little money. Soon after arriving, he found work at a restaurant in Harlem owned by an Israeli. Currently, Mr. Eizenshtein bakes under Daniel Boulud, an award-winning French chef who owns seven restaurants in New York.

Despite his rich experience, Mr. Eizenshtein acknowledges that there will be challenges. He expects that the pareve aspect will be among the most difficult. "It's just not the same, baking pareve. It doesn't taste like the original recipes with real butter."

Looking to the future, the young baker and new small business owner dreams of having "a small factory for baked goods. This place [Eizenshtein Bakery's current locale] is too small for everything I want to do," he shared.

"It's going to be really busy in here," Mr. Eizenshtein warned with a hopeful smile. "Remember what I'm telling you: it's going to be crazy."

GOLAN, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

few weeks ago, when he astutely noticed that his recent Golan purchases had been wrongfully taxed. At first, he wasn't completely sure whether or not Golan was able to charge tax. After some investigation, he discovered the fact that universities, like all nonprofits, are exempt from paying federal corporate income taxes as well as state and local sales taxes. And because the partnership deal between Golan and YU is run through the university, any purchase made on a Caf Card at the restaurant should be tax-free.

The student described his discovery: "I found it very odd that I had been taxed on multiple instances by Golan in a short period of time. I would've understood if it happened once by accident because I'm sure they get many orders paid for by cash or credit card." He continued, "I grew very suspicious of the situation as the tax charges seemed intentional, but I didn't make any accusations."

Instead, the student notified the Office of Student Life and Dean Nissel, who then forwarded the message along to the Department of Food Services.

Dean Nissel commented regarding the situation that "the University simply wants to protect students' money."

Although Director of Food Services Bruce Jacobs and Director of Administrative Services Joe Cook, were contacted for comment, both deferred to Dr. Paul Oestreicher, the Executive Director of the Office of Communications and Public Affairs at YU.

"We became aware of students being overcharged when making purchases at Golan and discussed the situation with the owner," said Dr. Oestreicher. "Unfortunately," he continued, "Golan decided they no longer wish to participate in the Caf Card program." He concluded by stating, "We hope they'll

reconsider - the door remains open. We asked Golan to return the money to the students because the restaurant collected the money. At the same time, we are reviewing other means to reimburse students."

Benjamin Izsak, the owner of Golan Heights, sees matters quite differently. His stance, that YU has been claiming too much of his restaurant's revenue,



is based on the way the Caf Card operates, and on the way the deal between them was originally set up.

Students living on campus began this past semester with a pre-paid \$250 balance of Omni dollars on their Caf Cards. Those not on the school's meal plan started the semester with \$125 in Omni money. This wasn't always the case, however.

According to Mr. Izsak, YU was entitled to 15% of up to \$50 spent at his restaurant per student per

semester. When the deal was first implemented, YU only provided students with only 50 Omni dollars, in contrast to the much higher amounts provided now. After the \$50 were used up, students would have to pay with actual cash, and Golan would receive 100% of the revenue from their orders.

Over time, though, as semesters went by, Izsak saw that \$50 in Omni money balance increase incrementally, up until the \$250 that it is now. "At the beginning of every semester I am surprised to see how much money YU allows its students to spend at restaurants when I swipe Caf Cards and see the remaining balances," the Golan Owner expressed. "And YU never told me anything about students being able to reload their Caf Cards when they run out of Omni funds, essentially letting the cards reach an infinite amount of Omni dollars if desired."

Mr. Izsak couldn't confirm that original deal explicitly capped the Omni funds for his restaurant at \$50, but stated that the leap from \$50 to \$250 was never discussed with him and therefore unfairly caused him a financial loss.

Neither YU nor Golan have been able to provide the exact contractual specifications that would clarify the matter.

So in practice, it seems, without a proper system in place to regulate that \$50 limit, YU ends up with a larger share of Golan's profit than originally agreed upon in the contract. It is still unclear to what degree YU was aware that it was collecting excess funds when reimbursing Golan for money students spent there on their Caf Cards.

Izsak estimates that YU students comprise about 70% of his sales. This being the case, his business is

SEE GOLAN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Core Curriculum Rethought: Yeshiva College Announces Changes to Required Courses

By Benjamin Koslowe

The Yeshiva College Core program has officially been revised. Voted upon by the Yeshiva College faculty just two weeks ago, the changes affect both the Jewish Studies requirements and the general college requirements. There are three major changes, as well as a few other re-evaluations and adjustments.

The first major change regards the number of required Bible courses for Yeshiva College students. As Dean Fred Sugarman informed by email last December, the Bible department “eliminated the fourth BIB requirement going forward.” All YC students will now be required to take an introductory course (“Text, Context, and Tradition”) as a prerequisite, as well as two other courses. One of these Bible requirements will be a Nevi'im or Ketuvim course, focusing on a biblical text from the Prophets or Writings. The other required Bible course will have wide range of classes to choose from, with topics including, but not limited to, Pentateuch, archaeology, and the history of interpretation. This third Bible requirement can also be satisfied with a Nevi'im or Ketuvim course. All of these Bible courses will be two credits each.

The second major change is a new synthesis between the Core courses and earning a minor. Considered a “revitalization of minors” by the faculty vote, the new option allows for YC students to double-count up to two Core courses toward a minor degree. Minors will include those that are already offered by Yeshiva College, but students will also have the option to shape their own creative minors. New minors will go on the books as ones that other students can use in the future. Minors will each consist of at least five courses.

The third major change is the replacement of First-Year Seminar requirement with a “writing-intensive” course requirement. To be designated as “WI” courses, these courses will be found across many departments. Whereas Yeshiva College students used to take First-Year Writing and First-Year Seminar in their first year, both of which were writing-intensive in different ways, the breakdown now will be between First-Year Writing during freshman year and an official WI course at any point during college. The Director of Writing will distribute WI course guidelines. Starting next semester, students can expect to see three-credit courses in various departments (including Jewish Studies departments) labeled as “WI.” As the title suggests, these classes will have an added focus on written assignments, essays, research projects, and the like. Students who have already taken First-Year Seminar will be considered to have fulfilled the WI requirement.

The General Core requirements will remain the same. The six sections – Contemporary World Cultures (COWC), Cultures Over Time (CUOT), Experimental & Quantitative Methods (EXQM), Human Behavior & Social Institutions (HBSI), Interpreting the Creative (INTC), and Natural World (NAWO) – will persist. Yeshiva College students will continue to be required to select one course from each of these six sections at some point in their undergraduate careers. AP credits will not count toward fulfilling these Core requirements. Like before, Core courses will continue to be cross-listed at the discretion of departments. Core courses themselves may be allowed to count toward majors, but students will not be allowed to double count the same course toward both a Core requirement and a major.

EXQM will have specific EXQM Core courses, but there will also be designated courses in other departments that will satisfy the student learning objectives, based on the general learning goals, for an EXQM course. These designated courses will be approved by a faculty committee that includes both social and natural scientists.

The EXQM exemption will remain in effect. Currently, students who take one year of college mathematics and one year of college experimental science are excused from taking EXQM. Like the rest of the Core requirements, the natural sciences requirement for the EXQM exemption will not be exemptible with AP credit.

The language exemption will remain in effect as well. Elementary French or Spanish II can count as COWC, Intermediate French or Spanish I can count as CUOT, and Intermediate French or Spanish II can count as INTC.

Last week, Dr. Joanne Jacobson, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, met with several student leaders to discuss these recent academic changes. She emphasized how the student perspective was very important throughout the entire decision process, and how this perspective will continue influencing the Core.

One of the biggest concerns raised by students at this meeting (as well as before the meeting) was regarding the NAWO requirement. Indeed, the list of revisions states that NAWO “will be revised by the faculty in the natural sciences to address students’ comments and concerns.” Those in charge of NAWO, Dean Jacobson explained, are aware that students in NAWO courses range from having next to no science background to having already taken several advanced courses and labs. The science departments know about the concerns, and it is for this reason that NAWO tries to focus on issues that are not addressed in the standard science course.

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- PROFESSOR SHALOM HOLTZ**

The new breakdown for Jewish Studies requirements falls into six categories. The first is Hebrew language education, which consists of a sequence of two or three courses, to be titled “JHEB.” The introductory Bible course will be titled “JTCT” (“Text, Context, Tradition”), the Nevi'im/Ketuvim section will be titled “JNAK,” and the third Bible section will be titled “JTNC.” Jewish History remains at two courses, with one “JHSS” survey course (“Jewish History Survey”), and one “JHST” in-depth course of a particular geographic area and/or time period, or the study of the historical trajectory of a particular Jewish cultural phenomenon (“Jewish History”). The Jewish History requirements are three credits each.

Dean Jacobson, as well as Professor Shalom Holtz, Chair of the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies, expressed enthusiasm about the Jewish requirements now being part of the overall package. “What’s new about the Jewish Studies requirement,” explained Professor Holtz, “is that we are thinking in terms of categories like the Core.” Dean Jacobson explained that “although the number of required Jewish Studies courses has not substantively changed, I feel that the integration of Jewish Studies into the common Core approach is a welcome step forward into an integrated Yeshiva College curriculum.” Professor Holtz noted that “the courses will remain titled HEB, JHI, and BIB [in the course catalogue] like always. But the new requirements will also be in the notes.”

Professor Holtz related that the Bible department feels that “we are able to achieve the same curricular goals with one less course. We agree as a department that we can. Last year we faced certain pressures, and we agreed to reduce and reconsider. We were encouraged to cut down required courses.” He added further that “the consensus was that we don’t want to burden students with more Bible three-credit classes, which are offered only after 3:00 for most YC students. This means that we couldn’t rejigger three Bible courses that are three credits. We remained with the Bible slots as they are, two credits each.”

When asked about the quantity of Bible courses going forward, he answered that “there will probably be fewer courses because of the smaller demand. I expect to find Bible Jewish Studies faculty in a number of places other than Jewish Studies courses.”

Although most intimately involved with Jewish Studies, Professor Holtz had much to say about the Core revisions as a whole. “We see ourselves as contributing to the

broader Core program,” told Holtz. He feels that this is true for the Hebrew, Jewish History, and Bible departments. “The Hebrew courses,” said Holtz, “represent some of the most serious curricular thinking about what we should be teaching. They are most tailored to the needs of the individual incoming student. We feel very strongly that the Hebrew program thought this through much more thoroughly than we had until now.”

When discussing Jewish Studies and Bible, Professor Holtz explained how these Jewish requirements and general Core requirements go hand in hand. “We’re not just taking one course in historical methods,” described Professor Holtz, “but actually three. You have one through Cultures Over Time, and two through the Jewish History courses. Similarly, there is literary analysis of works of literature/art with Interpreting the Creative on the general Core side, and you also have Bibles on the other side. We see that as added value.” This sentiment is expressed on the official list of revisions, which explicitly states that “Jewish Studies faculty will be encouraged to teach INTC, CUOT and COWC courses where appropriate.”

Professor Holtz hopes as well for such a crossover with the new Writing Intensive courses. “One of the more exciting things for the Jewish Studies,” noted the professor, “is that we expect to take a lion’s share of the WI classes. I’d like to see the majority of Yeshiva College students take the WI requirement through Jewish Studies, so that we can say that one of the things that makes Yeshiva College unique is that students learn how to write in a Jewish Studies class.”

Dean Jacobson expressed about the revitalized Core that “I’m also hoping that there be less isolation about the Core in general. It shouldn’t just be a set of boxes that you tick before going on to ‘real college.’ Rather, you should be able to take a class like ‘Books on Books/Films on Films’ and put together a minor that you didn’t realize you were interested in. Or perhaps a health minor based on taking the ‘Medical Sociology’ course. Likewise for Jewish studies.” Professor Holtz related similarly that “the thinking here is for us to constantly be thinking about not ticking off boxes. We are thinking about you, the student, as a product at the end of college. No matter what your major is, thinking about the overall impact of this Core curriculum on you and how it transforms you.”

“Minors are an optional part of the degree,” explained Dean Jacobson when discussing the new option to double-count two Core courses toward a minor. “I see this as a win-win. Students can start with the Core and build interests from there.” Professor Holtz as well feels that this new policy “makes imminent sense. If something sparks your interest, why not give you credit for what you’ve done already?” He added that “we imagine that the minor will encourage students to take Core classes, hopefully without cannibalizing departmental classes. This is why only two Cores will count toward the minor.”

One change that Professor Holtz highlighted was that the Jewish History department will create mid-level courses that can fill the requirement. “We found that students were annoyed by having to sit through introductory courses twice,” described Holtz, “taking a survey course with the same types of people even though you took one survey course already. So we are creating several courses that will presume having taken the survey. We hope to attract majors and non-majors to those courses. They will offer credits to the major, and they will offer Core credit. This will be subsumed by the new JHST. In this class we will talk about something more specialized. It will be somewhere in between a course for majors and a course with general education. It is ‘general education and a half.’ The major change in terms of offerings is going to take place in Jewish History.”

At the meeting with students, Dean Jacobson related how some of the faculty responsible for the revisions voted to require students to take only five out of six of the Core requirements. One motivation was to allow students to opt out of a Core that they may feel is redundant given their major or focus. The ultimate resolution was to maintain the requirement that YC students take all six of the general Core requirements. As Dean Jacobson explained, the “faculty clearly preferred to retain the commitment of the

SEE CORE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Jacob Hecht Pre-Law Society Picks up Steam in Spring Semester

By Eitan Lipsky

It's that time of year again. No, not midterm season. It's the time when the Jacob Hecht Pre-Law programming kicks into full gear.

On Thursday night, February 11th, the Pre-Law Society hosted the first event it organized of the semester on the Wilf Campus, featuring a panel of three recent YU graduates currently in their first year of law school. In front of a large crowd of over 40 students, the panel, consisting of Columbia Law's Daniel Klein, NYU Law's David Weiss, and YU affiliate Cardozo Law's Sarah King, provided tips and insights about all things law school and fielded questions from curious pre-law students.

The many topics covered in this meaningful discussion included: how to figure out whether law school is right for you, the different aspects of the law school application process and hacks on how to best prepare for them, and lessons learned from the panelists' new experiences in law school.

"The panel was quite informative for me," said Adam Brodsky, an economics major in his second year, "I appreciated that the panel was very relatable and made it seem like law school is not as daunting as I had thought. They also gave great advice, such as connecting with professors who may be able to write recommendation letters down the line."

This successful pre-law event was just the tip of the iceberg for what is in store this semester, as pre-law functions will be playing a prominent role in interested students' lives. Typically, the fall semester programming is generally designated for information sessions run by law schools from around the country hosted on our campus, which this year included Harvard, Notre Dame, Penn, Columbia, UCLA, and Cardozo. In contrast, the spring semester is focused on having events of a different nature.

Events that are set to occur in the coming months include the Careers in Law night, where students will be able to hear from and speak to attorneys that work in a plethora of areas of law, in the hope of learning more about the options one has in the field of law. Additionally, the annual Langfan Constitutional Oratory Competition, which pits YU undergraduates against each other in a speaking competition on a law topic with cash prizes, will be happening soon. The two forces that run the pre-law branch at YU are the Jacob Hecht Pre-Law Society, headed by its Presidents, seniors Joshua Mermelstein and Shira Huberfeld, and the pre-law advisor, Ms. Dina Chelst, Esquire, are always in close communication with ideas for events and more diverse programming.

In addition to working the logistics of the events, most of which are arranged by Ms. Chelst, the society provides advice and perspective to students.

The Pre-Law Society is run by a dedicated board of students. "We generally have a bottom-up approach, focusing on taking student input and feedback to enhance programming on campus," said David Rubinstein, a second-year philosophy major who serves as one of the society's vice presidents. The board is also looking to



expand their role in the upcoming months by creating an unprecedented type of pre-law event. "We will be running at least one social pre-law event this semester," said Elie Lipnik, a second-year political science major, and a society secretary. "Unfortunately, due to a lack of common major, curriculum, or internship opportunities, it is easy for a pre-law student on campus to feel isolated. Therefore, we want to create a pre-law community where students who plan on going to law school can come together in a casual and relaxed environment to meet each other and discuss the law school process. In this way, we hope to find the common language that already exists for many other majors."

"WE WANT TO CREATE A PRE-LAW COMMUNITY WHERE STUDENTS WHO PLAN ON GOING TO LAW SCHOOL CAN COME TOGETHER... AND DISCUSS THE LAW SCHOOL PROCESS!"

- ELIE LIPNIK

This semester, the pre-law experience will be invigorated by the reemergence of the Beren Campus branch of the Jacob Hecht Pre-Law Society. The society has always existed on both campuses until recently, when board members from the Beren campus graduated and were unable to find a new group to take over the helm. Seeking to restart their Beren Campus counterpart, the

Wilf Campus board sent an s-stud inviting candidates to apply for positions on the board. After interviewing the qualified applicants, a new board of women has been formed. The new board at Beren, will service all needs of the students on campus. They will work together with the Wilf board as well as independently to design programming best suited for the women of Yeshiva, with a special focus on balancing the events between the Wilf and Beren campuses.

Another hallmark of the spring semester at YU is an abundance of student meetings with the pre-law advisor. Ms. Chelst, in her second year as the pre-law advisor for both the Wilf and Beren campuses, previously worked for several years at various positions in the law profession. While she does play an integral role in creating the pre-law events, she feels that her most important role on campus is helping out students with whatever they need to be able to achieve their goals. Last semester, Ms. Chelst worked personally with over 100 students, including a small percentage of YU alumni who sought her assistance. As law school application dates begin to loom, she anticipates that this number will increase this semester. Ms. Chelst encourages all pre-law students to make an appointment to meet with her.

As pre-law advisor, Ms. Chelst sees mostly Juniors and Seniors who are seeking help in completing their law school applications. However, she also meets with many underclassmen, some of whom are seeking help in selecting the appropriate courses and finding internships that will allow them to take the next step towards their futures, and others who are interested in assessing whether or not they should pursue a career in law. "I feel privileged to work with an amazingly talented group of students," said Ms. Chelst. "My goal is to try to make everyone realize that you don't need to be a 4.0 student to succeed, and I am there to celebrate with all students when they ultimately do succeed."

In addition to conducting advisement meetings, Ms. Chelst also spends time in the spring organizing YU's Judicial Internship Program, which sets up qualified YU undergraduates with New York state judges for a summer-long internship that can prove invaluable in giving students a rare undergraduate law experience that also looks great on any law school resume. "The program gave me exposure to how the legal system works from a judicial perspective, which is an opportunity most people don't get until they get to law school," said Ari Tepler, a student who completed an internship through the program last summer. "Most of the judges are Jewish and are willing to give students valuable one-on-one time from which I personally learned a lot."

The stars are all aligned for what should be a very successful semester for pre-law at YU. It may be difficult to improve on last year's staggering numbers, when a perfect 100% of students were accepted to law school, nearly all into one of their top two choices. Nevertheless, the pre-law team anticipates matching these results this year while also improving in all areas that they can to make the experience an enjoyable one for students.

CORE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

original Core to a broadly shared, common 'Core' across the curriculum."

Another area of concern was the elimination of First-Year Seminar. "From the start of the 2008 YC curriculum review," told Jacobson, "the area of greatest consensus among faculty was the importance of writing skills to a good college education—and everything that follows college. I regret that we were unable to sustain the First-Year Seminar that initially followed First-Year Writing, but a second writing-intensive course can help to sustain that commitment." She explained that First-Year Seminar was cut because "we lost funding for the full-time lecturers in the Department of English who were teaching most of those courses, and we did not want to hire a revolving set of part-time instructors in their place for this key Core course."

Professor Holtz expressed similar hesitations. "I really liked the First-Year Seminar as being part of shaping the first year experience. I think it's important, especially at a

place like ours, to have a formal acknowledgement on the part of the college of managing the transition to college. Now we have just First-Year Writing, which is occupied with writing more than anything else. With First-Year Seminar there was room for more things." He envisions for the freshman experience going forward that "you'll still have Bible 1000 for most people. We hope that they'll take it in their first year. People should also think about taking a Jewish History course when they come in. All of those things are what shape the first year experience."

But the overall sense from those behind the Core revisions is one of optimism and excitement. Dean Jacobson described several times to the student leaders that the revisions allowed for original thinking and connections on the one hand, while also strengthening the system that is already in place. Core program policies will be administered by an elected Core Committee of four members from four different divisions, and Dean Jacobson will be responsible for coordinating each term's Core course offerings.

Jewish Studies are working on improvements as well.

"We are encouraging the Jewish Studies faculty," remarked the department chair, "to look through their syllabi and make sure that they are tailoring them to specific points. In Bible, teachers should be focusing on text and on reading. Faculty should be asking themselves if they are reading with the students and if they are experiencing the text. With the general Tanach course, students should be getting some sort of taste of what modern Biblical academic study is about, and so on."

"On all fronts this is not a terribly new thing," reckoned Professor Holtz. "For those who are familiar with the Core, we did not undo it completely. The Core is still there. The Core is still alive and well, if somewhat trimmed. My take on it is that we are meeting the reality of a shrunken faculty. We don't have the staffing to do everything. Rather than cutting corners, we are finding economies and meeting the reality. The work that we did this past year has been meeting the reality of all this."

YUNMUN XXVI -- Another Success in the Books

By Elie Lipnik

On Sunday, February 21st, 2016, over 450 students from 45 cities across North America and around the globe entered the Stamford Plaza Hotel and Conference Center to participate in Yeshiva University's 26th National Model United Nations. YUNMUN is a YU student-led conference in which students from Yeshiva high schools worldwide engage in global issues outside the classroom, learning the importance of diplomacy and collaboration. For three days students learned the value of taking on a new perspective by representing and fighting on the behalf of their countries opinions on their UN committees. With 60 YU student staff members leading 15 committees debating topics ranging from women's rights to environmental issues, the conference was most definitely one to remember.

Sunday began with YU students arriving early in the morning for final meetings with co-chairmen, and to set up all of the conference rooms for committee sessions. By early afternoon, high school delegations were showing up and students from across the globe began to meet one another in attempt to discern who was in their committee. Opening Ceremonies began late afternoon with an address from YU Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Ms. Geri Mansdorf, followed by the keynote speaker, Mr. Seth Siegal.

Mr. Siegal, a writer, activist, and successful serial entrepreneur, discussed the pressing issue of our water starved world. More specifically, he brought to everyone's attention that if our world stays on its current track of water consumption, by the year 2025 there will be very little clean water remaining. Furthermore, he talked about Israel's potential solution to our ever-depleting global water supply.

According to Miram Pearl Klahr (SCW '18) chairman of CSTD: "Mr. Siegal was an extremely relevant speaker for a Model UN conference. He was engaging, and passionate and seemed to have caught the students attention." Mr. Siegal's speech appeared to be well-liked by all and truly sparked interest among all YUNMUN attendees, including delegates, YU students, and even chaperones.

As always, the conference officially began with a speech from the Secretary General, this years being Danielle Orenshein (SCW '16).

For nearly a day and a half, student delegates spent 11 hours in 6 sessions debating and arguing their committee topics. Students worked tirelessly to get their countries positions heard, demonstrating their oratory prowess, while also utilizing the art of compromise in passing resolutions and leading caucuses.

Each one of the 15 committees had two relevant topics that the students needed to debate on and pass resolutions on before the conference could end. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) chaired by Federico Zepeda (Syms '16), dealt with the two issues of water sanitation and



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-MICHELLE SABBAGH

the immunization gap in certain global populations. Another committee, the World Food Programme (WFP), was led by Akiva Marder (YC '18). They spent their committee sessions discussing the ramifications of genetically modified food and the questions of providing food for countries otherwise sanctioned by the international community.

All in all, it seemed every committee discussed extremely interesting and relevant issues plaguing the real-world United Nations. Moreover, at one point in every committee, a crisis broke out and the delegates would have to think fast on their feet to find a potential solution. For instance, the crisis on the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) began with a few YU staff members dressing up as Disney princesses discussing the ramifications of marriage. Through a short skit, they posed the question to the delegates as to whether or not marriage should be banned around the world. In a mere 40 minutes, all the students representing multiple countries had to effectively work together in preparing a resolution.

On Monday, the main day of the conference, students were able to hear from two more respected speakers with expertise in matters of global affairs. In the morning, Ambassador Danny Ayalon, a visiting professor of foreign policy studies at YU, spoke about the need for authenticity and transparency in the United Nations, without which will lead to its demise.

Akiva Koppel (Syms, '17) assistant chair of CTC, mentioned that "his speech really made me want to take action, I plan on taking a trip to the UN sometime in the near future."

Later on in the day, Dr. Selma Botman, Provost and VP

for Academic Affairs at YU, delivered a speech about the crisis in the Middle-East and the future path it might take. Delegates, chaperones, and YU students alike were enthralled with these two speeches, it really added to the entirety of the conference.

It was clear from the moment the conference began until closing remarks that every attendee had a smile on their face that simply could not be wiped away. Whether it be during committee sessions, a meal, or free time during the evening hours, there was constant excitement, exhilaration, and ambition in the air. Ayelet Marder, a sophomore at Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls representing the country of Jordan on COPUOS, said that "I had the best time of my life on YUNMUN. I never wanted to go to sleep, I just wanted to be in my committee meetings or hang out with my friends!" The feeling was reciprocated by virtually all of the YU staff members.

Marder's older brother Ari (YC, '17) chaired the International Maritime Organization committee. A veteran of YUNMUN conferences, he exclaimed "this is by far the best YUNMUN to date, every second is exciting and fun!"

The general chatter in the staff lounge revolved around their amazement of how professional and ambitious this year's delegates were. According to Michelle Sabbagh (SCW '16), chair of CTC: "I had a room of 28 intelligent, superstar high school students. Despite the intense competition, they really respected each other and honed their negotiation skills. They successfully articulated their solutions to complex issues in counter terrorism--my delegates completely exceeded my expectations."

The final day began with a speech from YU President Richard Joel, followed by the award ceremony. Each committee has one best delegate award and two honorable mentions and one high school is chosen as the best delegation with two runner ups. While presenting his awards, Akiva Marder (YC '18) creatively introduced all of the members of his committee by means of a "Miss World Food Programme" beauty pageant. He had all of his delegates line up and strut down the rows in the center of the hall wearing sashes and crowns. Other chairmen mentioned jokes that went on during committee sessions or mentioned major accomplishments their committees achieved while presenting their awards to delegates. This year's best delegation was awarded to SAR High School in Riverdale, NY. The first runner up award was given to Berman Hebrew Academy in Rockville, MD and second runner up prize was awarded to YULA High School in Los Angeles, CA.

Although not every committee arrived at a resolution, and not every delegate could compromise with one another, the one thing every individual at model UN this year could agree on is that they had a spectacular time and cannot wait until next year's Model UN--YUNMUN XXVII.

The Answer to Our Prayers: New Morgenstern Beit Midrash

By Darren May

One of the main political topics of conversation in this 2016 election year is America's infrastructure. With failing structures, roads, and bridges all around, it's not wonder that this is a hot topic. Any organization that wants to maintain its standards has to be constantly updating facilities in order to battle the power of entropy. Yeshiva University, too, is constantly updating its facilities. One part of the Wilf campus that needed improvement, the Morgenstern Beit Midrash, has recently been renovated.

There have been a number of significant updates to the study hall. The most significant change is sealing the entrance to the computer room. Previously, one had to walk through the Beit Midrash. Now, the computer lab is accessible by an entrance through the hallway. This is a truly significant improvement. By making this update

students will no longer have to interrupt davening to print their papers and use computers, and the general decor of the Beit Midrash is significantly enhanced.

Other additions include new table, chairs, a new paint job, new blinds, new lighting, clean air conditioning air ducts, and clean windows. They also sanded and painted the bima (central lectern) and Aron Kodesh (holy ark). All of these changes come together to create significant change in the Beit Midrash, change that has been readily welcome by the student body.

One student, Gabriel Gross, was very happy about the changes to the room affectionately called the Morg Beis. "It always seemed strange that one had to walk through the Beit Midrash to get to the computer room," said Gross. "I am much happier with the new setup. I also like that there is a dedicated women's section. I think that these are both steps that will benefit students and the YU

community at large."

One major change to the morning shacharit schedule this year was moving the 8:30 minyan from the Morgenstern lounge to the Beit Midrash. With the many new improvements to the Beit Midrash, this large daily minyan can be accommodated like never before. The students now have comfortable leather chairs to sit in. They also have enough chairs for almost every person in the minyan, whereas before, most students had to stand during davening. Finally, there is a place that women can pray without feeling like they are intruding on the davening, which was unfortunately the impression given by the old davening setup.

All in all, the renovations made to the Morg Beis are just one step forward in making YU a better place to be a student, and YU should be applauded for making improvement to campus life such a priority.

The Search for YU's Next President: Exclusion, Priorities, and (Limited) Progress

By Shai Berman

On September 10 2015, Yeshiva University President Richard M. Joel announced his decision not to seek the renewal of his contract, set to expire in less than 2 years. President Joel stated that The Chairman of the YU Board of Trustees, Moshael Straus, had been charged to "begin the process of transition and to identify and recruit" his successor. While many began to wonder who might succeed President Joel, there was another, related, subject on people's minds: the search process itself. As outlined in The Commentator's article on September 10th, the last presidential search, which began in 2001, was a protracted endeavor, spanning almost 2 years, often mired in conflict and controversy. Now, five months after President Joel's announcement, it appears that the University's Board of Trustees created for itself a rocky terrain through which it is now navigating in an effort to avoid repeating the events of 2001-2003.

Part I: A Turbulent Beginning

The story, this time, begins with the search committee. The first step in any process of hiring a new university president is to form a search committee. Though a university's Board of Trustees (or The Board's executive committee) is ultimately responsible for confirming the appointment of a new president, a search committee is often tasked with creating a job description, setting priorities, identifying and interviewing appropriate candidates (often via the help of a professional search firm), and finally, whittling the list of potential candidates to one or two (or more) finalists.

A little research reveals that, nowadays, search committees for university presidents are typically comprised of a combination of trustees and faculty, and sometimes include students, alumni, and university administrators as well. (For example, the current search committee for Colgate University's next president includes eleven current trustees, five faculty members, three current students, and one member of Colgate's senior leadership team.) In the case of YU, one might think it appropriate to add Roshei Yeshiva to the above list.

Thus, a couple of months ago, faculty members across Yeshiva University were shocked to hear that the Board of Trustees had decided that the search committee for YU's next president would be entirely comprised of Trustees (10 to be exact). No YU faculty, no RIETS Roshei Yeshiva, no students, and no alumni (aside from those Trustees that happen to be alumni as well); those major stakeholders would be excluded from the committee. Interestingly, the selection and appointment of the members of this search committee was not (and still has not been) publicized outside of some internal University communication.

In explaining the Board's decision to The Commentator, Dr. Selma Botman, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs of Yeshiva University, emphasized that the Trustees are ultimately the ones who "have fiduciary responsibility for the University" and thus must always be those most intimately involved in "hiring and firing presidents." She also stressed that the Trustees on the search committee are people who take their responsibilities very seriously and will consider all views. Moreover, she said, the Board wanted to be able to get "broad input" from all YU constituencies and believed that "hearing from one person" representing a constituency was not the best way to get that input. Dr. Botman also mentioned that the Board's concern for the confidentiality of the search process led them to limit the size of the committee since "the larger the committee, the more apt it is to breach of confidentiality." Mr. Moshael Straus, the Board's Chairman, denied The Commentator's request for comment.

Many, however, did not seem to share the Board's view. Dr. Shalom Holtz, Associate Professor of Bible at Yeshiva College, said he found the Board's decision "highly irregular." Similarly, Rabbi Yosef

Blau, senior Mashgiach at The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, expressed his skepticism for this decision stating that the search committee "should reflect the broader constituencies" that make up Yeshiva University which include "Rabbis, University faculty, students, and administrators, not just board members."

People across the University echoed this sentiment of the importance of including representatives from of the various stakeholders of the University. When reached for comment by The Commentator,

" THE DECISION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO NOT INCLUDE ANYONE BUT TRUSTEES ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE APPEARS TO HAVE CAUSED A FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS FACULTY!"



individuals affiliated with various University constituencies stressed that, it was not only their constituency that should have representation on the search committee but other constituencies as well. For example, Student Organization of Yeshiva President Tuvy Miller said he believes that "students and faculty" should be included on the committee, and Yeshiva College Student Association President Joshua Nagel added that both students and faculty can provide "a unique and necessary perspective to the conversation" regarding who should succeed President Joel.

Similarly, Yeshiva College Professor of Bible and Jewish History Dr. Moshe Bernstein commented that, in addition to University faculty, "Roshei Yeshiva should certainly be represented on the committee" and that it would "not be unreasonable to have student representation" as well. Though she was not certain that students should be on the search committee, Talia Molotsky, President of the Torah Activities Council, said she was nonetheless "surprised" to hear that there were no faculty members on the committee, stating that "it's important to have people on the committee that interact with students on a daily basis."

This last comment highlights a common theme that seems to run through criticism of the original decision to include only Trustees on the search committee: the important perspectives that would be missing from a search committee of only Trustees. Dr. Holtz emphasized that "students are the closest thing the University has to 'the consumer'" and therefore it would be appropriate to include them on the search committee. With regards to faculty, Dr. Joanne Jacobson, Professor of English and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Yeshiva College

remarked that "faculty know the most about what it means to be an educator at this institution," and thus "the faculty's direct input would be invaluable in making a decision about the next president" of YU. Similarly, Mr. Miller added that "faculty and Roshei Yeshiva have important institutional memory and are going to be the ones at YU to deliver the education and experience in the future" and therefore it would only make sense that they have "a significant role in choosing who should lead the institution."

With regards to the role that faculty (and representatives from other groups across the University) should play on the search committee, if included, Dr. Jacobson said that they would be involved in "evaluating and interviewing applicants and making recommendations" when anything would be put to a vote, adding that "faculty presence at interviews is crucial in sending the right message" to prospective candidates. Dr. Gabriel Cwilich, Professor of Physics at Yeshiva College, emphasized that's "it's not about power" but rather about giving the search committee "what the faculty has to offer." "We recognize we are not the 'top'", said Dr. Holtz, but the faculty's voice should be heard nonetheless. Though the search committee would schedule meetings to hear input from the various YU constituencies, Dr. Silke Aisenbrey, Associate Professor of Sociology at Yeshiva College, stressed that these sporadic meetings would "not be sufficient" to produce an optimal search. The search committee should hear "the voice of the faculty whenever it meets," said another YU professor.

When news of the Trustee-only search committee reached the faculty, the YU Faculty Council, the highest body in this university's faculty governance apparatus, reacted quickly. They made an appeal to the Board of Trustees to reconsider their decision and add faculty to the search committee; the appeal did not meet with success. The Faculty Council, led by its executive committee comprised of representatives from all Yeshiva University graduate and undergraduate schools, then made a second appeal. This appeal was accompanied with extensive documentation that attempted to impress upon the Board that faculty inclusion on search committees is a norm among universities in the 21st century and is recommended by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). This not only underscored the fact that faculty inclusion seems to be agreed upon as an important element of presidential search committees, but also that if faculty are not represented on this committee, YU may come to be seen as an outlier among other universities.

The decision of the Board of Trustees to not include anyone but Trustees on the search committee appears to have caused a further deterioration of the relationship between the University and its faculty. When asked about the symbolic significance of this decision not to include any faculty members on the search committee, one YU professor opined "The higher echelons at this university seem to be marginalizing the faculty yet again, reinforcing the sense that they view the faculty, not as an asset, but as a liability." Similarly Mr. Miller stated that "not putting faculty or Rabbis on the search committee likely perpetuates a feeling of distrust between the faculty/Rabbis and the University." It should be noted, though, that the Board recently added two faculty members to its Academic Affairs Committee (which is a separate committee of the Board of Trustees which focuses on tenure decisions and other academic matters). While these two faculty members will not be able to vote on any business that comes before this committee, Dr. Cwilich pointed out that this move indicated that "the administration is starting to listen a little bit more" to faculty.

Concurrently with the Board's ongoing back-and-forth with the faculty, the search committee selected and hired the professional search firm Korn

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Ferry to assist with the search. More specifically, the committee tapped Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, former President of George Washington University, the man behind YU's search for a new provost 2 years ago, and a consultant at Korn Ferry, to serve as chief headhunter. The search committee, with the assistance of the Office of the Provost, also arranged for Dr. Trachtenberg to meet with and gather input from different groups at Yeshiva University. These meetings were scheduled for February 2nd-5th.

In the days leading up to these meetings, the Board decided that it was going to "reconsider" its decision to only include Trustees on the search committee. However, the Board did not successfully communicate this decision to those who would be meeting with Dr. Trachtenberg, an oversight that ensured that Dr. Trachtenberg would have a very eventful visit to YU.

Part II: Dr. Trachtenberg Visits YU

On February 2nd, Dr. Trachtenberg's arrived on YU's Wilf Campus for his first day of meetings. The day began with a meeting with the Executive Committee of the YU Faculty Council. At this meeting, the members of the Executive Committee relayed to Dr. Trachtenberg the basic qualifications they believed the next president of YU should meet. These qualifications included being a respected academic and having experience as an administrator in another major university. Furthermore, they once again explained the importance of faculty inclusion on the search committee and requested and insisted that one graduate and one undergraduate faculty member be added to the committee. At a certain point in the meeting, the Executive Committee was told that the Board was reconsidering its decision to exclude faculty from the search committee. Thus, at the meeting's end the members of the Executive Committee were hopeful that the Board would soon rectify the situation. "I found the meeting very useful" said Dr. Cwilich, Yeshiva College's representative on the Executive Committee.

Once the Executive Committee concluded its meeting with Dr. Trachtenberg, a "town hall" meeting, open to any University faculty (or staff) who wished to meet with Dr. Trachtenberg, began. This proved to be the day's most tense meeting. Many of those who attended were disappointed when they realized that Chairman Straus would not be attending. These faculty members saw Chairman Straus' absence as an affront to both faculty and proper process and therefore considered the meeting incomplete and ill-planned. This fact, combined with their already standing indignation for the faculty's exclusion from the search committee, led some faculty members to walk out in the middle of the meeting. According to one YU professor, before the walk-out, "a majority of the room" seemed irate. The nature of the discussion at this meeting was similar to that of the meeting with the Executive Committee, with the faculty expressing their views regarding their expected qualifications for the next president of YU as well as their displeasure with their exclusion from the search committee. A common theme that was expressed at these first two meetings was that the next president must be somebody who respects academia and understands the central role academics play at any university, YU included.

Next on Dr. Trachtenberg's agenda was a lunch meeting with six students: the four Wilf Campus student council presidents and two head resident advisors. As one might expect, the meeting began with introductions. Dr. Trachtenberg then proceeded to ask the students what qualities they thought he should look for when searching for potential candidates.

After around 15-20 minutes of this conversation, the meeting took a somewhat peculiar turn. Dr. Trachtenberg began to tell the students some of his life stories, stories which were at best marginally related to the topic of YU and its next president. Only after around one half hour of this rather one-sided dialogue did Dr. Trachtenberg and the students

return to the task at hand, with the students using the last 15 minutes of the meeting to make a push to Dr. Trachtenberg to do his best to ensure that students and faculty be added to the search committee. Dr. Trachtenberg said that he understood the students' concern and that he would bring it to the Board but that it might be impractical and pointless to add more people to the committee.

After leaving the meeting Mr. Tuvy Miller said he felt "confused and disappointed;" to him, it seemed, the meeting was held only "to check off the box" of getting student input, but that that the input itself was less important. Mr. Josh Nagel expressed a somewhat more ambivalent view, stating he was "not sure what to make of" the meeting. According to Mr. Nagel, "Dr. Trachtenberg seemed to be attentively listening to our ideas" but "did not take any notes."

After the student lunch, Dr. Trachtenberg met with University Deans, and then with President Joel's cabinet. He then concluded his day with two RIETS meetings, one with Roshei Yeshiva and other RIETS faculty and one with the RIETS board. The meeting with RIETS faculty took a slightly different course than Dr. Trachtenberg's meetings with University faculty; rather than engage with Dr. Trachtenberg on the subject of their lack of inclusion on the search committee, the RIETS faculty instead chose to impress upon Dr. Trachtenberg the importance of the "Yeshiva" to YU.

According to Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger, a RIETS Rosh Yeshiva, the discussion centered on how, in their view, the Yeshiva is much "more than a centerpiece" to YU; the Yeshiva, the RIETS faculty told Dr. Trachtenberg, is the "identity of this institution, its *raison d'être*." They also spoke about the how the Yeshiva's role and influence is central, not just to the YU student population, but to an entire Modern Orthodox communal movement.

When asked why the RIETS faculty chose not to focus on their lack of inclusion on the search committee, Rabbi Blau said that the RIETS faculty believed that that it was much more important to take as much time as they could to stress the importance of the Yeshiva. This was especially important since that Dr. Trachtenberg is a relative outsider to the YU community, though he does consider himself robustly Jewish and deeply committed to the future of Modern Orthodoxy. Although he led the search for the Provost, that position is far more limited in its scope and its relevance to the greater Modern Orthodox Community.

Rabbi Blau added that, ever since YU officially became a secular institution in the early 1970s and RIETS (and its Board) became a separate, religious legal entity, there has always been a latent "concern that YU would go the way of Harvard and other colleges," who though, they began as divinity schools are now hardly recognizable as centers of religion. Thus, every time the University searches for a new president, who will serve as the leader of both YU and RIETS, the RIETS faculty must protect against that possibility that the University will see its Orthodox Jewish character diminished.

Dr. Trachtenberg's next day of meetings began at Cardozo where he met with some faculty and staff. He then made his way to the Beren campus where he met successively with a group of alumni, a handful of graduate and undergraduate students, some community leaders, and finally with faculty members in a similar "town hall" setting as he had the day before. In these meetings, Dr. Trachtenberg was joined by Kenneth Kring, another Korn Ferry consultant, and by Chairman Straus, who, on the previous day, had only been able to attend the RIETS meetings. At his meeting with students on the Beren Campus, it seems Dr. Trachtenberg made a better impression than he did at his student meeting on the Wilf Campus a day earlier. Ms. Talia Molotsky reported that she felt that "the students were listened to" and was "impressed with the way Dr. Trachtenberg led the discussion and provided feedback to the suggestions he heard."

Over the next two days, Dr. Trachtenberg held a couple of more meetings, mainly with donors and trustees. All in all, Dr. Botman, who attended most

of Dr. Trachtenberg's meetings, said she thought there was a "consensus of opinion" regarding what qualities the next president of YU should possess, although, expectedly, the constituencies varied in the priorities they set.

Part III: Recent Developments

Since these meetings, the search process has begun to further develop along two fronts. First, Dr. Trachtenberg has begun working with the Board and the search committee to assimilate all the input he gathered in his meetings in order to create a job description for the next president. This job description will be released to the public once complete. In addition to the information gathered at the meetings, the search committee plans to release an online survey, open to all YU students, faculty, staff, and advisory boards, in an effort to gather more ideas and have a better sense of different constituencies' priorities.

As part of this prioritization process, Dr. Trachtenberg and the search committee are splitting sought-after qualifications into two groups: "imperative and desirable." According to the Dr. Trachtenberg, among those qualifications deemed "imperative" are that the next president of YU be "Modern Orthodox, and committed to Torah and Jewish scholarship" and possess some sort of "advanced secular learning." Additionally, it would be desirable for the next president to "have Semicha, a Ph.D. and experience working in the world of academia." In terms of specific candidates, Dr. Trachtenberg reported that the search committee has not yet "considered any names."

Secondly, it appears as if some progress has finally been made in terms of the inclusion of other constituencies in the search process in a serious and permanent way. On Friday, February 12, the Chairman of the Board met with a faculty representative to discuss the outcome of the Board's reconsideration of their decision to only include Trustees on the search committee. Though the exact content of the discussion at meeting was not disclosed, Dr. Trachtenberg informed The Commentator that the Board of Trustees is open to the formation of a "parallel" search committee which will be comprised of faculty representatives of all of YU schools. This committee will provide its advice and opinion to the main search committee, as the search process progresses. Though faculty will not be added to the original committee, this parallel committee will give faculty a more regular and established role in the search process than one-off meetings, such as those described above, would provide. This two-tiered system will yield "a better process," said Dr. Trachtenberg, in part since there will be two "smaller, manageable committees" as opposed to one larger one. Additionally there will be multiple faculty representatives (nine to be exact) on the parallel committee as opposed to just having one or two added to the original committee. In the days after the February 12 meeting, the YU Faculty Council sent out an email inviting faculty volunteers to participate in this faculty search committee.

Though the main search committee will remain composed of only Trustees, Dr. Trachtenberg emphasized that this two-tiered system is "perfectly appropriate according to AAUP guidelines." A little research in to the guidelines posted on the AAUP website proves Dr. Trachtenberg to be correct. Though it points out that a single committee of trustees and faculty "is the most common standard, [as] such a committee provides an opportunity for shared perspectives and broader understanding," the website nonetheless stipulates that "there may be a two-tiered committee structure" one of trustees and the other of faculty (and perhaps other constituent groups).

However, if one looks more closely at the steps outlined by the AAUP and compares them to what has thus far transpired at YU, they will notice that the processes do not entirely match up. The

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Students Unite at Beren Campus for Sephardi Shabbaton

By Uri Shalmon

Beren Campus – On Shabbat Parshat Mishpatim, February 6th, 2016, the YU Sephardi Club ran their annual Sephardi Shabbaton. Advertisement for this Shabbaton, one of the most popular, started way back in December, before the semester even started, when President of the Sephardi Club Solomon Anapolle (YC '17) sent out numerous emails publicizing the event and the Sephardi Club. St. Giles Hotel, on 39th Street, hosted the YU men for the Shabbaton.

This was a Shabbaton of firsts. For the first time, YU scheduled an official time to sign-up. Registration for the shabbaton began at 6:00 PM the Sunday before the Shabbaton—a new policy that the office of Student Life intends to use for future co-ed shabbatons to ensure everyone has an equal chance to sign up. The Sephardi Shabbaton's 49 spots closed out in record time, filling up in 24 seconds. The rush to sign up left more than 100 students on the waiting list. The Tuesday before the Shabbaton, students who failed to pay for the shabbaton lost their spots to students on the waitlist, who had to wait by the OSL to claim one of the few reservations that became available. Some students waited over an hour and a half to ensure they could make it. A few students who didn't make the cut even rented their own rooms in St. Giles. Several Touro students attended as well, also renting rooms in the hotel.

For the first time, Graduate Advisors were posted in the lobby at the entrances to the hotel rooms – at the elevators and at the stairs – to stop women from going upstairs. However, the women were still permitted in the hotel lobby as in past Shabbatonim.

Friday night, after a beautiful Tefillah led by Yaacov Sultan, Rabbi Dan Cohen spoke a few words of Torah discussing Naaseh V'Nishmah, performing and listening to the commandments. Avi Kohanzadeh, a proud Persian, spoke about Bernie Madoff and the laws of Jewish slaves.

Following the meal and an Oneg led by Rabbi Richard Hidary, came the much anticipated and novel Sephardi Comedy Roast.

Yosef Nemanpour, a Persian participant of the Roast, thoroughly enjoyed it. "Although the Roast highlights our differences, it really allowed us to embrace our collective Sephardi similarities and experiences," he explained, "we all come from a similar background of delicious foods, intense facial hair, and a traditional lifestyle and on the

Roast we got to really see that first hand."

Facing a panel of a few Sephardic ethnicities, and of course, to be politically correct, an Ashkenazi delegate, Daniel Lazarev and Jacob Pesachov, the mediators, asked very pointed questions to the representatives which sparked heated – and sometimes hilarious – debate between all the groups.

The Roast elicited many hearty laughs from the crowd and a few gasps as well. According to Anita Levy, the women's president of the Sephardi Club, "the roast was definitely the most memorable part of the shabbaton, which Ashkenazim and Sephardim enjoyed alike." Among the Sephardim represented were Bukharians, Syrians, Yemenites, Moroccans, and Persians.

Shacharit, led by Meir Cohen, and Musaf, led by Ellie Takhalov, a Bukharian and the Sephardi Club President on the Wilf campus, brought everyone together again. Rabbi Yosef Bronstein spoke after Shacharit and Rabbi Cohen spoke again after Kiddush. Each of the meals featured Sephardi-themed food. "The Sephardi food and really the Shabbaton as a whole," commented Isaac Cohen, "gave students from other cultures a chance to see what Sephardi culture is all about, which is something they can only find at the Sephardi events."

Another highlight of the Shabbaton was Rabbi Elie Abadie's engaging Shiur about the trials and tribulations of Middle-Eastern Jewish refugees. "Hearing Rabbi Abadie's Shiur about the history of different Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, and especially hearing his own personal story and involvement in raising awareness of the Sephardic refugee issue really opened the eyes of many students, including myself," Ms. Levy said. Students filled rooms 101/102 in Lau Licht Commons and some even stood just to hear him speak.

Odeya Barayev starred at Seudah Shlishit, where she considered the two seemingly opposing Halachic aspects of following the majority and "fighting for what we feel is right." Yaacov Sultan recited a traditional Sephardi Havdala, highlighting a few favorite cantorial melodies. The Shabbaton concluded with a wonderful game of dodgeball and Bravo's pizza. "I really enjoyed the Sephardi Shabbaton," Benji Wajsborg explained, "it showed me much more of Sephardi culture and exposed a side of Judaism with which I was not as familiar."

Schneier Program Invites Local High School Students to Attend Campus Classes

By Josh Blicker

On the 17th and 19th of February, Yeshiva College opened its doors to a group of five local high school students from the Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School (WHEELS). The students attended a groundbreaking program called WHEELS at Yeshiva College, which allows YU to give back to the Washington Heights Community in a new, exciting way: Instead of sending YU students and faculty to the homes and schools of members of the Washington Heights community, like many of YU's other community programs, this program focused on giving this group of exceptional college-bound students an opportunity to learn more about college by attending classes at Yeshiva College. Headed by Dr. Ruth Bevan, the chair of the YC Department of Political science, and sponsored by the Schneier Program for International Affairs, the visiting students had the opportunity to attend and participate in classes such as Great Political Thinkers, Diaspora Literature, and Constitutional Law.

According to Dr. Bevan, the program was founded to help YU give back to the Washington Heights community in a way "that is more interactive and hands on," in addition to the number of other community building programs which YU currently runs. In her search for a school to partner with, she reached out to Mr. Rodriguez, the principal of WHEELS, who Bevan describes as a "fantastic and really interactive" educator. Bevan aims to use the program to "bring the Washington Heights Community to us, so the students [from WHEELS] can see what we do, and help them develop an understanding of what college is all about." Although the students from WHEELS will not attend YU, Bevan feels that the program is an excellent way for YU to help jump-start the university careers of a group of talented students.

Upon their arrival at YU, each student was assigned to a current YU student who served as a mentor during the visit. The mentors fielded the students' questions and helped make

them feel comfortable at YU. On the first day of the program, after having lunch with Dr. Bevan and their YU mentors, the students each received a copy of Plato's Republic, which they would be learning in one of their YC classes, with a letter from Dr. Bevan that was personalized for each student.

One of the visiting students, Hamlet Fernandez, a senior at WHEELS who has been accepted to Lehman college, stated that his favorite part of the program was "meeting different people in each class." Fellow WHEELS participant, Daniel Luperon, also "liked how the discussions were interactive, which helped people better understand the topics discussed." Another student named Rubert Vasquez commented on how differently the classes are structured in the university setting than in the traditional high school classroom. He felt that in "each class, it appeared that almost every question would spark an interesting conversation based on the text or information discussed."

When asked about the program, YU mentor Celso Winik, a junior majoring in political science stated that "this experience will help the [visiting] students feel more confident when they attend university; people are always more nervous about something" when it is more foreign to them.

On the visiting students' last day at YC, they joined Dr. Bevan, their mentors, and their principal in the Sky Café for lunch, where they reflected on the success of the program. A month from now, the students will return to YU where they will attend an evening film screening with Dr. Bevan, their mentors, and YU president Richard Joel.

In reference to WHEELS at Yeshiva University, president Joel stated said that "this program is completely consistent with YU's mission—Dr. Bevan's vision will definitely help encourage the [WHEELS] students to attend university and ultimately strengthen the community" in which they live. In the coming months, Dr. Bevan hopes to work together with YU to expand the program, which will benefit YU students and students at WHEELS.

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guidelines stipulate that the search should be "initiated either by separate committees...or by a joint committee." Additionally, the guidelines list "Institutional Analysis and Leadership Criteria" as one of the main roles of the search committee(s). This analysis is "needed in order to determine the type of leadership qualities" the university requires and what the institution's "priorities" are. In the case of YU, however, the search committee openly began this process of institutional analysis and priority setting when it arranged for Dr. Trachtenberg to visit the various YU campuses in early February, before the formation of the second, faculty search committee was even given the green light. Moreover, Dr. Trachtenberg and the search committee have already moved on to the next step of assimilating that information and beginning the prioritization process, as detailed above. Thus, judging the case of YU using the AAUP's standards, it appears that

the search process here was not jointly "initiated" by the two committees. Rather the first, Trustee search committee alone initiated the search process and now, over two months since the Trustee search committee's creation, and after sustained protest from the faculty, the Board has decided to allow a second, faculty search committee to be formed.

All things considered, though, Dr. Shalom Holtz said that he would be content "if the Board is now coming to include faculty in a serious way." In general, the faculty interviewed for this article expressed a similar view, indicating that they would be significantly less perturbed by the events of the past months if the search process going forward was, in their assessment, conducted properly.

The main concern for the faculty, and all YU constituent bodies for that matter, seemed to be that the search be done in a manner which ensures that the best candidate will be selected and that the candidate can expect to enjoy widespread support upon being chosen. Furthermore, the next president should be

able to learn a great deal about the intricate character and makeup of YU before arriving on the job. To these ends, many of those interviewed believed that the serious and regular inclusion of all constituent groups in the search process to be of paramount importance.

Interestingly, while the faculty seem to be on their way to obtaining that regular inclusion, students' standing in relation to the search process remains the same; they have relatively little. To be sure, students' opinions may continue to be sampled by the search committee(s), but students will have no assurance that their input will be seriously taken into account. For students and those who may be skeptical of the weight of the faculty search committee in light of its late arrival to the scene, then, it seems they will have to trust the Trustees to seriously consider all viewpoints and have faith in President Joel's conviction that "the search will yield a fine successor."

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susceptible to taking a huge hit given the way YU Caf Cards operate. When students reload their Caf Cards, they thereby can perennially avoid paying tax at Golan when using their tax-free Omni dollars.

For Izaak and Golan, however, this situation is financially disastrous. Assuming his estimate is correct, he only collects full revenue on a measly 30% of his sales. While this partnership with YU was intended to help increase customer volume and sales revenue at Golan, only the former appears to have been achieved.

In an effort to make up for some of the lost revenue being funneled to YU, Izsak stated he recently began charging tax on orders placed by students who frequented his establishment. If he felt a customer had been to Golan often, he explained, he would charge them tax under the assumption that they had used up their Omni funds and had replenished their cards. Although Izsak was willing to honor a student's Omni funds up until \$250, he felt that if a student refilled their Caf Card, it was as if they were using their own money, which should not be subject to the 15% cut by YU. Therefore, at that point, he felt justified in taxing the customer. Mr. Izsak stressed he distinguished these regular customers from students with unfamiliar faces, whom he assumes have not refilled their cards, and that he proceeds to ring up the non-frequent customers' orders tax-free.

And ever since that one student spoke up and notified YU, many others started noticing that the prices they were paying for their Golan meals seemed slightly raised.

"The prices I used to pay at Golan were always

rounded to the dollar or half dollar," said sophomore Noam Liss. "But recently, in the past couple weeks or so, my orders have been ending in other miscellaneous digits. I didn't make anything of it until the news about this started spreading; then I realized I was being taxed."

This past week, however, the Golan owner conveyed that "enough is enough," when he started declining Caf Cards in his restaurant to take a stand against a deal that from his perspective has become increasingly one-sided.

The decision has sparked angst and confusion amongst the student body. Sophomore Jack Kirschenbaum, for example, asserted, "Golan is my favorite restaurant in the Heights. No disrespect to other places around here, but Golan is way better in my opinion. The situation is definitely annoying because I should be able to use my card there, but for some reason, I can't."

Izsak expressed a similar sentiment to YU when discussing the possibility of rejoining the Omni plan--namely that he is open to figuring out a solution to this issue. He believes that a new agreement, more sensitive to his side of the deal, can ultimately prove beneficial to both his restaurant and YU.

In the meantime, the Golan owner is confident that his business will survive just fine without the partnership. People like Sy Syms sophomore, Jonathan Singer, are the reason why. Despite the card no longer being accepted at Golan, Singer insisted, "I know I will continue to support Golan. It is so convenient, and the food is so good that this change will not affect my spending habits there."

Even if Golan can still thrive without YU, and even if YU remains content without partnering with

Golan, it seems clear that a properly configured deal could be profitable to both sides.

Regardless, students are looking for answers.

"I am impatiently waiting for the day that I get an email informing me that Golan has reversed its decision and is again accepting Caf Cards," said junior Shlomo Anapolle. "I'm not interested in paying additional money at Golan when I know that I have a preloaded Caf Card that has the potential to be honored there as payment."

Avi Kerendian, also a junior in YC, doesn't feel quite as strongly as Shlomo or the rest of the students who rave about Golan's menu, but understands the craze. "I don't eat the restaurant's food that often," He stated. "But I often find myself there with friends, and they I know they really love it. No can deny that the restaurant serves an integral role on campus."

It remains to be seen how Golan's recent fallout with YU's Omni program will affect the other local restaurants involved in the same deal.

Even though YU and Golan are not currently seeing eye-to-eye regarding the terms of their joint meal plan, both parties have expressed sincere interests of reuniting in the future. That is assuming terms can be agreed upon, which, at the moment, the restaurant and university are finding to be a difficult task. But if and when they reconcile their differences of terms, the large majority of of YU students who lust for Golan's coveted food will be able to freely swipe their Caf Cards there once again.

Living to Live Longer: A Review of Big Hero 6

By Doron Levine

Big Hero 6 came out two years ago. But a few weeks ago I developed an uncomfortable itch for some good Disney animation and I had a feeling that this flick could scratch that itch. Released in October of 2014, it won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature and a Kids' Choice Award for Favorite Animated Movie, and has garnered a Certified Fresh eighty-nine percent on the Tomatometer. The film gods gazed down upon this cinematic creation and, behold, it was very good.

Galvanized by this overwhelmingly affirmative critical response, I hit the play button. But as the minutes ticked by, my smile of eager anticipation slowly transformed into a disappointed pout. Awards and accolades notwithstanding, the animation was just not animating. The movie was bad, my faith in the critics, broken. How could they be so misguided? I knew the reviewers were missing something (this suspicion was later reinforced by their cringe-worthy fawning over the newest Star Wars film), and, after some introspection, I figured out what it was.

Let's turn back the clock. The groundwork for my epiphany was laid last Thanksgiving, when my Facebook newsfeed was flooded with click bait articles detailing the health benefits of gratitude. Apparently, giving thanks is highly nutritious – the grateful enjoy lower risk of heart disease, decreased blood pressure, and psychological resilience. Reliable Internet purveyors of medical advice encouraged me to adjust my attitude to incorporate more gratitude: Healthline urged me to “keep a gratitude journal” and WebMD advised me to talk to myself “in a creative and optimistic manner” (presumably not in public). I was hooked.

Bizarre prescriptions notwithstanding, this scientific repossession of Thanksgiving came as no shock to me; health-fanaticism is not confined to the holiday season. The cozy crannies of the Internet abound with joyful revelations detailing the health benefits associated with quotidian things. Laughter, happiness, gardening, having a beard attached to one's face, living near trees, having a best friend, and finding purpose in life are just a few items on the rapidly expanding list of things with scientifically proven health benefits.

If only I had known earlier! But no matter – this newfound knowledge propelled me into a rejuvenated lifestyle regulated by the dogmas of dietetics. Newly acquainted with the nutrition facts on happiness, I began to include the recommended daily intake of joy in my diet. Armed with data demonstrating the health benefits of laughter, I more frequently made a concerted effort to giggle. And I indeed found purpose in life: health was to be my overarching goal. I lived in order to live longer.

This way of thinking is, of course, preposterous. But let us be charitable and assume that those who encourage us to laugh for our health really intend to make us laugh at the very notion of laughing for our health. Because sane people laugh at a funny thing, not at a healthy thing. Brussels sprouts are not humorous. Tofu is hardly a laughing matter.

The absurdity of these health recommendations can be partially attributed to their redundancy. Many of these suggested activities are things that people seem to do anyway, without being aware of their health benefits, because they are intrinsically good or enjoyable activities. You shouldn't have to be told that gratitude is good for your health in order to be thankful. And you shouldn't wait for researchers to demonstrate that having purpose in life is good for your health in order to seek out the purpose of life.

More importantly, it seems that some of these activities, if pursued for their health benefits, lose much of their value. Not only should these activities be pursued regardless of their nutritional ramifications, but pursuing them in order to avoid heart disease or to increase your projected lifespan seems to horribly undermine the very performance of these activities. Imagine thanking someone for holding the door open for you while silently congratulating yourself on slightly lowering your chances of heart

disease. Imagine seeking out friends in order to live a few years longer. Gratitude thus expressed is not gratitude at all. And I would not want to be friends with such a person.

Of course we ought to care about health, but we should not become deluded into thinking that health is a categorical aim. Our wellbeing is important only insofar as it allows us to pursue things that really matter, and this has an important consequence: if our pursuit of health interferes with our ability to achieve things that are intrinsically important, then we are better off ditching health and setting our sights on things with true value.

Remember this when you visit the doctor. When, after evaluating your physical status, your doctor recommends that you quit smoking and cut back on fatty foods, he is not presenting a moral imperative but rather a scientifically-proven conditional: if you discontinue these unhealthy habits, then you are more likely to live a longer life. A doctor's expertise qualifies

**“ARMED WITH DATA
DEMONSTRATING THE HEALTH
BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER, I MORE
FREQUENTLY MADE A CONCERTED
EFFORT TO GIGGLE.”**

him to evaluate and prognosticate a patient's physical health, and that is all. He can tell people what is good for them, not what is Good for them.

So a patient might wisely disregard his doctor's advice. A doctor might say that a fatty diet is likely to cause a person to live a shorter life. It is then the patient's job to answer the more important question of whether he should care. Maybe he would prefer to live a

Consider the safest way to spend a day – perhaps it involves sitting alone in a foam-padded underground nuclear bunker eating vitamins, salad, and whole grain biscuits. Why don't we spend every day in this manner? And if we must venture outdoors and expose ourselves to the dangers of car accidents, stray dogs, and banana peels, why don't we at least wear a protective helmet and Kevlar vest at all times? Because we value things other than health, such as friendship, happiness, kindness, fresh air, and looking normal. And we deem it worthwhile to put ourselves in situations of health risk in order to get these things.

The same might even be said for smoking. This habit comes with health risks, but many great thinkers have emphasized the benefits of smoking and its usefulness for relaxation and clarity of thought. Mark Twain lashed out against critics of smokers: “You never try to find out how much solid comfort, relaxation, and enjoyment a man derives from smoking in the course of a lifetime, nor the appalling aggregate of happiness lost in a lifetime by your kind of people from not smoking.” From a religious perspective, C.S. Lewis similarly claimed, “I believe that many who find that ‘nothing happens’ when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion, would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand.” These thinkers knew that smoking came with health risks, but they realized that the length of our years is much less important than what we do with those years.

How does all this relate to Big Hero 6? The movie involves a number of superheroes, but it centers on a robot named Baymax. Originally constructed by Tadashi Hamada, Baymax falls into the hands of Tadashi's brother, Hiro, after Tadashi tragically dies while trying to save his professor from a burning university building. A cuddly inflatable humanoid machine, Baymax is originally constructed as a health robot, programmed to scan the people in his vicinity and provide them with medical attention if necessary. He looks like a supersized marshmallow until Hiro dresses him in armored plates, transforming him into a bulletproof, jet-powered, torpedo-launching karate-kicking macho machine.

But something critical is missing from this superhero. Critics variously describe Baymax as “sweet, cuddly, and adorably innocent,” an “irresistible blob of roly-poly robot charisma,” and “impossible not to love.” One could take issue with any of these descriptions, but I can conclusively prove that the third claim is false: I do not love Baymax. I do not love him because I cannot bring myself to identify with a health robot. In fact, it seems to me that a health robot is a rather poor candidate for a superhero.

Sure, it would be nice and useful to have a robot that maximizes the health of people around it – health is often an important precondition for living a productive life. But I want my heroes to be driven by the things that really matter. I want heroes who fight to save their loved ones and to vanquish evil. I want heroes with real emotions and loyalties, heroes who swear revenge on those who wronged them and who struggle with loneliness and self-doubt. But instead of giving us someone with real pathos, Disney gives us a health robot. The heroes of old were motivated by vengeance and wrath, by love for their families and loyalty to their motherlands; the hero of Disney fights to lower his owner's blood pressure.

It makes sense that Baymax cannot feel basic human emotions, because Baymax is not a human. Physical health is mechanical, and therefore it is something that a well-programmed robot can figure out. But a robot cannot feel passion. Mr. Disney, I respectfully request that you make your next hero care less about health and more about things that make a hero heroic. And if you can't manage that, at least make it human.



shorter life on a scrumptious diet instead of stretching out his life interminably by pumping himself full of organic preservatives.

We all make this sort of calculation on a daily basis.

Is Buying Organic Worth the Cost?

By Kochava London

In 2015 alone, Americans spent over \$39 billion on organic products, an 11% increase from the year before. Studies show that many people buy organic food because they think it's healthier and more nutritious than conventional alternatives. Always cognizant of the latest health fads, food manufacturers know that labeling a product "organic" is likely to boost sales, which explains the myriad of organic products in grocery stores today. But what does "organic" actually mean, and do the health benefits outweigh the steep cost?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) certifies food organic if it meets a number of established criteria: The product must be at least 95% organic, free of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and genetically modified ingredients, and produced using sustainable farming methods. This means that farmers must use more natural methods to keep pests and weeds away from crops, like netting and crop rotation.

In terms of the health benefits of organic fruits and vegetables, the research is mixed. A 2012 review of over 200 studies concluded that organic produce does not contain any more vitamins and minerals than

"DON'T FALL FOR THE ORGANIC FOOD TRAP BY SPENDING LOADS OF CASH ON EVERY ORGANIC PRODUCT YOU SEE.."

conventional produce, although it does show fewer traces of pesticide residue. Other studies have found that compared to conventional produce, organic fruits and vegetables contain higher levels of Vitamin C, Iron, Magnesium, and Phosphorus. Nevertheless, the general consensus among researchers is that organic produce does not have a significant nutritional advantage.

Despite these findings, most researchers agree that eating organic produce can reduce your exposure to harmful toxins and pesticides, which are sprayed on crops to prevent mold and insect infestation. The FDA has approved over 600 chemicals for use in farming, which means that each person is exposed to about 16 pounds of pesticides every year. The National

Academy of Sciences found that over 90% of these chemicals have not been tested for their long-term health effects. Pesticides are not only toxic to pests; they can cause skin and lung irritation, neurological problems, hormone disruption, reproductive effects, and even cancer. However, it is important to note that pesticide residue that remains on fruits and vegetables is typically well below the limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Some people choose to buy organic because of the environmental benefits. Organic farming practices reduce pollution, conserve water and soil, and promote greater levels of biodiversity, which is important to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Avoiding toxic pesticides and herbicides prevents chemical runoff into nearby lakes and streams, thereby protecting wildlife. A lesser known benefit of organic farming is that ensures the health of field workers by eliminating their daily exposure to extremely toxic chemicals.

While the health and environmental benefits are certainly significant, many people are reluctant to purchase organic produce because of the higher cost. According to the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), organic food is more expensive because "the organic price tag more closely reflects the true cost of growing the food. The intensive management and labor used in organic production are frequently (though not always) more expensive than the chemicals routinely used on conventional farms."

If you want to reduce your exposure to pesticides but can't afford to buy organic, health experts recommend buying locally-grown, in-season produce, because it is fresher and cheaper than fruits and vegetables that have been imported from other countries (In case you're wondering, apples, oranges, sweet potatoes, and kiwis are all in season now, so stock up!). Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is a great way to reduce your exposure to a single pesticide. Research also shows that washing fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water can remove some bacteria and chemicals.



Another way to reduce your exposure to pesticides without shelling out your life-savings is to avoid the "Dirty Dozen." Every year, the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a nonprofit environmental research group based in Washington D.C., tests hundreds of samples and releases a list of the 12 items with the highest pesticide levels and the 15 items with the lowest. In 2015, the dirty dozen included apples, peaches, strawberries, grapes, nectarines, potatoes, bell peppers, celery, spinach, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and sugar snap peas. Shockingly, a single sample of grapes contained over 15 pesticides!

The "Clean 15" from 2015 are: mango, grapefruit, pineapple, kiwi, cantaloupe, avocado, papaya, sweet potato, cabbage, onion, asparagus, eggplant, cauliflower, sweet corn, and frozen sweet peas. Avocados were the cleanest of all, with only 1% of samples containing pesticide residue. Good news for all you avocado lovers out there!

In general, fruits and vegetables that have a thick outer skin, like watermelon and corn, are naturally protected from chemicals even if they are conventionally grown. So don't fall for the organic food trap by spending loads of cash on every organic product you see. Know which fruits and vegetables naturally contain fewer pesticides, and which ones are better to buy organic. Your body (and your wallet) will thank you.

From The President's Desk: SOY - Eyes Wide Open

By Tuvy Miller

Imagine the following scenario: You're brimming with idealism, all these great, optimistic ideas that you're just waiting to implement. After a solid two hour meeting with other members of student council, you've come up with a plan for moving a particular idea forward. So far so good. With their characteristic professionalism, the Office of Student Life staff shepherd the event through the planning process. You're feeling really great about the progress you've made. You sent out your first student two weeks before the event and get lots of positive feedback from your fellow students. Later that day, emails from several administrators appear in your inbox. Are the speakers you're bringing to campus really appropriate for our school? Have you thought about how this event will be perceived by certain elements within the campus community or within the broader community? Why were we not consulted about this ahead of time?

You sit there stunned. But this speaker is the expert in her field and the other speaker is really dynamic. You don't care about what other people will say. This is your event and you're going to run it however you see fit. You may even put this in an email (though hopefully you've at least shown it

to someone else first), to which the administrators respond that they would like to set up a meeting with you, other students council members and the Office of Student Life. At this meeting, you receive a tutorial on institutional and communal politics and are told why this event runs afoul of this rabbinic figure and that community organization. Finally, you see that



fighting for your original speakers will not get you anywhere so you go with the speakers suggested by

the group of administrators. They have fairly good name recognition but predictably will not say anything remotely controversial and will stay in the middle of the road. You contact your original speakers, apologize profusely and explain to them they you will be unable to host them at Yeshiva University. After reaching out to the new speakers, you redo the publicity, hold the event and are pleasantly surprised that it turns out well, though definitely not to the same degree that you had originally imagined.

This exact situation did not occur in real life, but I've experienced many of the elements over the course of the year. And I would crystallize the problem like this: how does a student leader, or any leader for that matter, maintain their idealism in the face of political considerations while at the same time realizing that these considerations often require serious attention? The answer is not clear cut and won't be the same in every situation. But one of the lessons that I've learned this year is the importance of realizing that tension and having to accomplish goals despite it. That isn't always easy. The need to negotiate between different constituent groups can be exhausting and deflating. Maintaining idealism is not the

SEE PRESIDENT'S DESK,
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Why The Breakfast Club Sucks

By Etai Shuchatowitz

When's the last time you saw the Breakfast Club? I don't mean, the last time you watched a scene from the Breakfast Club, or talked about it with your friends. I definitely don't mean the last time you made a reference to it, or read a BuzzFeed article about ten movie stars that defined our youth which featured Molly Ringwald as number six. I mean sat through the movie from start to finish. Because I did recently, and, was very surprised to find out that it's a terrible movie.

For those who haven't seen the movie, I'll summarize it very quickly here. Five teenagers, often broken down into their stereotypes of (1) the criminal (2) the princess (3) the brain (4) the athlete and (5) the basket case, all discover that each of them is deeper than their stereotype as they spend a day in detention together. Wacky hijinks and shenanigans ensue and it all ends when they share a really deep heart to heart that we've come to expect and love from high school movies. Especially those that take place in the 80's. The movies



represent a time for such contemplation and wackiness that it makes it easy to forget about the struggles in Iran, a gas crisis, rising crime and terrible terrible hairstyles that I still can't quite wrap my mind around.

It's often touted as one of "the quintessential 80's movies". It's Rotten Tomatoes consensus reads, "The Breakfast Club is a warm, insightful, and very funny look into the inner lives of teenagers". However, the one thing that everybody seems to overlook in their glowing nostalgia of a time with nylon and when people thought Duran Duran was cool for some reason is that the movie doesn't make any sense.

Let's start with Ally Sheedy - the basket case. Throughout the whole movie, the character is crazy. Not like fun crazy. Not the kind of crazy where you just laugh it off and go, "oh her" before wishing that you secretly had more weird quirks. Like, real crazy. Like random outbursts probably symptomatic of some larger disorder crazy. Like removing the salami from your sandwich and filling it with sugar and cap'n crunch crazy. The kind of person you don't want to be around. Almost like your weird grandpa, but not nearly as funny (or racist) in the way that it's evident that she should not be able to survive in functional society.

But then comes the last five minutes. She gets a makeover in which she lets her hair down and puts on a pretty dress, and we're supposed to forget all about the fact that she's insane and has magically transformed into a beautiful high school princess worthy of the attractive jock. She comes forward and while the music plays and Emilio Estevez's confusing jock looks at her with lust, we've come to realize that she's been beautiful this whole time. She's just been hidden by mental instability and crazy tendencies that are clear indicators of some real psychological damage. She wears a beautiful white dress, for reasons that are never really explained and Estevez approaches her and says, "What happened to you?" before telling her that "You're just so different. I can see your face...It's good."

I'm sorry...what?

Am I really supposed to believe this? Am I really supposed to believe that a character whom nobody wanted to spend time with all of the sudden becomes worthy of our attention because she's slightly more attractive in the last five minutes?

In fact, this is the whole movie. We have characters all acting exactly like their stereotypes would imply: Judd Nelson's criminal is a misogynist who sexually abuses (like, tries feeling up despite her protests) Molly Ringwald's princess. Speaking of, Molly Ringwald's princess is just that: an entitled jerk. Emilio Estevez's athlete is exactly the pretty boy you'd think he is. But yet, in the last five minutes, after they all have some weird heart to heart in which they bond over their collective daddy issues, we're supposed to believe that Molly Ringwald and Judd Nelson consensually wish to get together. If a woman who was, not minutes before, almost taken advantage of, decides to get with her abuser, I find this problematic.

This isn't even to mention the complete lack of a story that pervades for an hour and a half before this revelatory moment. Nothing happens. Like, nothing. I want you to think back and remove that moment at the very end where you hear, "Don't you...forget about me..." and what do you really remember about the Breakfast Club? What moment in this movie sticks out to you as worthy of being a "classic".

Which brings me to the important question: why do people love the Breakfast Club?

I'm going to propose a possible answer that is complete conjecture and based in nothing other than my own self-important theories of nostalgia and pop culture. I think that the Breakfast Club is a symbol. It's what people believe the 80's were. A lot of people who talk about the Breakfast Club either (a) were in high school when it came out (b) are younger and not alive

when it came out. For group (a) The Breakfast Club represents a time when they thought they could change. It was the after school special in which everybody learns their lesson quickly and becomes better for it. Now that you're in your 40's and terrified at what life actually is, there's this glimmer, this faint recollection of a past, in which people weren't defined by some title. They simply overcame their title quickly.

"THE BREAKFAST CLUB IS NOT, AS IT'S TOUTED TO BE, A MOVIE ABOUT HOW EVERYBODY'S DIFFERENT. IT'S NOT ABOUT HOW FALSE STEREOTYPES ARE. IT'S ABOUT HOW WE WISH THE WORLD FUNCTIONED."

But, for people of group (b) it's a little more complicated. I could argue that this is some romanticizing of a zeitgeist we never were a part of. As if that time had to be better simply for the reason that it's not now. Or maybe the movie was just built up by people in group (a) that it's become uncool to not like the Breakfast Club. Or, most likely, the movie contains merits of which I'm unaware of because I'm a cynical jerk who thinks he's smarter than everybody else. People genuinely like the Breakfast Club for some reason, and for some strange reason, I have a hard time dealing with that.

But, the thing I believe more than either of these is that the Breakfast Club represents what we wish life were like. Change is hard. In real life we're very rarely the person that we wish we were. At least, I know that's the case for me. I oftentimes look at my reflection wondering who that guy is, and why he did the things he did. And I wish I could just put on a white dress and let down my hair and all of my annoying foibles would just go away. Or, at least, do the equivalent for a male who definitely doesn't cross dress on the weekends. I wish I could find my Molly Ringwald and apologize to her before she loves me for who I am. I put my fist in the air, having conquered my problems, the credits roll and everybody goes home happy because I'm a hero.

But, that's never how the story ends.

It goes on. More sad moments pile on. More confrontations are avoided, more meaningless embarrassments happen, and I still don't matter. Change doesn't happen in five minutes. But, in movieland, it's the easiest thing in the world. And, we wish we lived there.

The Breakfast Club is not, as it's touted to be, a movie about how everybody's different. It's not about how false stereotypes are. It's about how we wish the world functioned. It's about a dream we have for the future. It's about us trying our best to make it in a world we don't understand.

But, regardless of any of that, it still sucks. 2/5 Stars.

PRESIDENT'S DESK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

easiest when you see other people whom you perceive as having abandoned theirs.

What I've come to is an understanding that the tension can be creative and that the political maneuvering, when done right, can work in service of the ideals. Sometimes, it might just be a question of branding and presentation, while at others I might choose a speaker who will perform just as well, but with fewer feathers ruffled in the process. When planning an event or initiative, I need to take into account the potential responses from different groups within the university. If I ignore that, I might get away with it, but it will likely backfire in most cases. There may be times when having a particular speaker on

campus won't cause any internal turmoil, but will send a counterproductive message to the wider community. As long as I recognize this from the outset and set my priorities in a clear and deliberate way, I can ensure that the politics don't muddy the ideals.

I've adjusted over the course of the year and spent many long hours thinking about how to balance these two forces. One thing I still wonder about is the burden that this tension places on the school administration. Often, I've found that while university administrators are excellent at navigating the political considerations and mentoring student leaders to do the same, they do not always take the idealism of student leaders seriously. There should be more give and take in this dialogue between student leaders and administrators. Unburdened by the daily political calculations, student leaders often have a clearer, more forceful vision for a particular cause.

While admittedly older and more experienced, university administrators could learn just as much from student leaders as we have learned from them. One way to facilitate this dialogue is to expand the offerings for student leader training. In addition to the excellent sessions already run by the Office of Student Life, there should be opportunities for student leaders and administrators to have open group discussions about how to best balance these two important realities. These initial sessions can serve as springboards for further conversations held in smaller groups over the course of the year. This will foster a continued culture of respect and mutual understanding that is so crucial to accomplishing our goals.

I feel lucky to have begun learning some of these lessons while still in school and look forward to thinking about them as I graduate and move into the world of Jewish communal service.

The Shocking Truth: A Review of the Milgram Inspired Play "Please Continue"

By Moses Dyckman

Science and theater aren't exactly typical bedfellows. After all, many people nowadays consider science to be something incredibly cold and emotionless, completely concerned with boring facts. Who would want to watch a play about a biologist testing the effects of different colored lights on plant growth? However, when an experiment ventures into the depths of human nature, the opportunities for drama are enormous. Frank Basloe and William Carden of Ensemble Studio Theatre clearly saw this potential when they crafted "Please Continue," a slightly fictionalized play revolving around the infamous Milgram experiments.

The play consists of two interspersed storylines, both dealing with Yale students, which occurred within a year of each other in real life. In the central storyline, a professor named Stanley Milgram convinces an eager student named James Sanders to run an experiment to see how much pain students will inflict upon their fellows at the orders of an authority figure. The experiment goes as follows: the subject is told to test another person's memory of certain pairs of words. Every time the person makes a mistake, the subject is required to deliver a shock, increasing the voltage each time. The person who is learning the word pairs, who is actually an actor who isn't even hooked up to the shock generator, screams louder with every successive shock, eventually yelling that he wants to get out. If the subject doesn't want to continue delivering shocks, the experimenter is supposed to respond with a verbal prod such as "please continue" or "the experiment requires that you continue" until he continues delivering shocks. The play depicts the subject's oscillations between morality and obedience so powerfully that it is almost painful for the audience to watch.

In the other storyline, uneasy student Francis Dunleavy talks to Reverend Coffin to deal with his guilt for succumbing to peer pressure and taking part in a gang rape at Yale. He recalls that he didn't want to do it, but fellow students kept chanting his name until he obeyed. Francis contemplates turning himself over to the police, but Reverend Coffin convinces him to seek something beyond punishment: atonement. Though neither the reverend nor the play explain what this atonement consists of, Francis is spurred to examine his guilt in greater depth.

By juxtaposing these two unconnected incidents, the play highlights what the two have in common. Francis Dunleavy inflicted pain upon someone else in the thralls of obedience, just like Milgram's subjects. He, like all those involved in the Milgram experiments, is left to grapple with the terrible knowledge that good people can do monstrous things when responding to social pressures. In a similar way, films sometimes juxtapose shots of unrelated events to highlight a unifying intellectual idea. For example, in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, the movie cuts from a shot of a moving flock of sheep to a shot of a crowd of people exiting a subway. The message is that the people, like the sheep, have no will of their own and are merely being

shepherded from one place to another.

However, Francis Dunleavy and the subjects of Milgram's experiment are not the only characters in the play to succumb blind obedience. The play ironically points out that James Sanders, who is running the experiment, is also obeying orders to cause others pain. In running the experiment, he forces students to follow his orders, refusing to let them leave even though they tremble, moan, and dig their nails into their skin from the stress. Since Sanders cannot debrief the students (lest they tell other students and ruin the experiment), the subjects are left crippled with guilt because they believe they tortured their fellow student. And why is he inflicting

"THE PLAY DEPICTS THE SUBJECT'S OSCILLATIONS BETWEEN MORALITY AND OBEDIENCE SO POWERFULLY THAT IT IS ALMOST PAINFUL FOR THE AUDIENCE TO WATCH."

all this pain on innocent people? Because he needs to obey his professor, Milgram. Reverend Coffin too has obeyed orders which ran against his morality. When he was in the army, he watched as Russian men joyously thanked the American army for their kindness, knowing full well that the next day, the Russians would be sent back to Russia to their deaths. Since he was in the army, he was required to obey.

Milgram, discussing his motive for constructing the experiment, mentions that, as a Jew, he always wondered how so many ordinary German soldiers obeyed commands to send the Jews to the gas chambers. The play provides more than enough side stories to prove that obedience plays a powerful role throughout human existence, outside of the artificial world of Milgram's experiment.

The most underwhelming part of the play was the ending. The audience expects the two storylines of the play to connect in a meaningful way. Personally, I predicted that Francis, the repentant rapist, would sign up for Professor Milgram's experiment. The experiment would give him a second chance, in which he would refuse to obey orders against his moral compass and he would rescue the "captive" student. This hypothetical ending would have been uplifting, because it would have declared that there is great good in humanity.

Similarly, one of the final sequences in *The Dark Knight* utilizes a social experiment to give humanity a chance to redeem itself. In that sequence, the Joker, who believes that humanity is, at its core, evil and selfish, rigs two ferries with explosives and tells the passengers that they must blow up the other ferry if they would like to survive. If neither ferry detonates the other, both boats will explode. The Joker believes that one of the groups will use the detonator. However, despite the Joker's hypothesis, neither boat activates the detonator. The people on the boats overcome the experiment's pessimistic outlook and declare that humanity, at its core, is good and selfless.

However, the play does not have a similar "faith in humanity" ending. Francis never really gets a chance to show that people can be stronger than social pressures. As a matter of fact, in the entire play, we don't even see the people who decided to walk away from the experiment before giving the learner the final shock. The two storylines of the play only converge halfheartedly in the final scene, in which James Sanders, the student experimenter, drinks tea with Francis and his girlfriend. Why didn't the play connect the two stories in a more powerful way? The play was not really bound by history in this regard, because, though there was an actual sexual abuse scandal at Yale, the specific character of Francis was an invention of the playwright. Thus, they could have placed Francis in the experiment if they really wanted to.

The reason "Please Continue" chose not to use the ending I was thinking of, or any other uplifting ending, is because it would have sugarcoated the terrible thrust of the Milgram experiments. Unlike drama, science doesn't care about individual heroes. After all, Francis acting heroic would not change the fact that, in the first round of the experiment, sixty-five percent of the test subjects actually gave the learner the full 450 volt shocks! The play stays true to the spirit of science because, instead of distracting the audience with a dramatic depiction of a lone heroic act, the play leaves both the characters and the audience wrestling with the moral implications of a very real dark side of human nature.





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Well That Escalated Quickly

By Benjamin Koslowe

Shabbos lunch. A few families are eating together and everyone is making pleasant headway through the food and discussions. Conversations transition between a single group exchange and several different temporary clusters schmoozing about this and that. As one conversation leads easily to another there is a pleasant hum of relaxed chatter. There's a general comfortable feeling.

At some point Mexican immigrants are mentioned, and the air suddenly grows heavy. Stomach muscles tighten. I suspect you too tensed a bit as you just now read the words "Mexican immigrants." The innocent little phrase just as well could have been about taxes, gun control, Obamacare, Planned Parenthood, or global warming. Just a small hint of politics. No one is arguing yet, but it is inevitable. Everyone at the table knows how these conversations go, and of course today is no different. Soon enough the motions of political arguing commence. The talking points will proceed predictably, almost verbatim the same squabble as from a previous meal. After a few minutes the ping-pong exchange will die off, and all will be quiet for just a moment. All exhale with relief at having made it through the topic of politics.

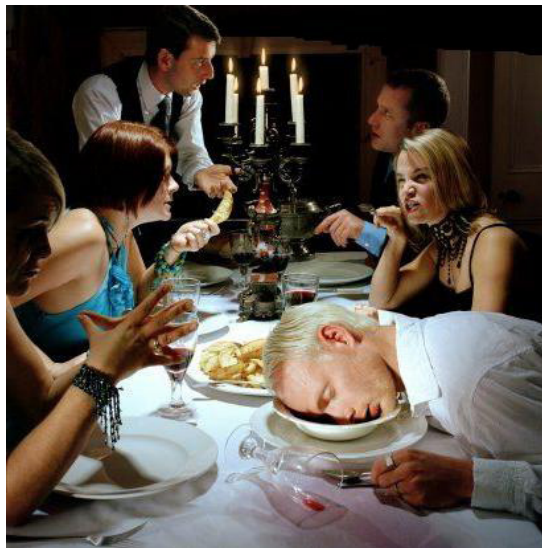
I used to assume that this phenomenon was unique to my circles. Then, a few years ago, I was browsing a certain news website and found on the front page an interesting advice article. It was about how to deal with family arguments during holiday-season meals. The author described the familiar scenario of relatives and friends arguing about politics, and I was amazed at how closely this description resembled what I've unfortunately experienced a few times for myself. The more I opened my eyes, the more portrayals I found of eerily similar situations, whether in TV shows, movies, or various online forums.

I was reminded of this phenomenon's ubiquity more recently while watching Saturday Night Live this past November. In one sketch, a family of six is sitting around a Thanksgiving feast. There is an older couple who are the parents of a middle-aged woman who has brought her husband along. There's also an aunt, as well as a girl who is seven or eight years old. Only a few seconds after the father-figure announces that he is thankful to have his family around, the aunt mentions the Syrian refugees. The younger woman becomes tense, and the screen flashes with the words, "Thanksgiving with family can be hard." A few more seconds and all of the adults are yelling cacophonously, and the screen flashes, "Everyone has different opinions and beliefs." Then, the little girl walks aside to a speaker device to play Adele's "Hello" for her family to hear, and they all begin singing and acting along together. Grandparents then walk in and, interrupting the music, briefly reignite the quarrelling. Luckily, though, the little girl blasts the song one more time to save the day. By the end of the absurd rendition all conflict is apparently resolved.

While most of us probably can't orchestrate elaborate

Adele parodies to restore mealtime harmony, I believe there is what to learn from SNL's parable. For various reasons, people often have remarkably strong feelings about their political opinions. Rather than looking to learn from each other, these discussions often become disputations where each participant's goal is to gain the moral high ground by outperforming the other's sharpness and wit. Less important than making a convincing case is catching one's opponent off-guard so that he or she has no quick response. Thus, the battle is won.

That this state of affairs is even recognizable is



unfortunate. Thankfully, it seems to me that most of these feuds happen between two or three people at a table, as the others more or less step back and wait for the conversation to move on. This happened to me a few weeks ago when I accidentally led a Shabbos meal conversation to the topic of whether or not American Jews should view Israel policy as the most important factor when considering a political candidate. A friend sitting next to me whispered sarcastically, "Great, you just brought up politics." And indeed, the next five minutes were wholly predictable, with the same old points and typical tenseness.

I'm not claiming that everyone's ideal should be to find most political discussions boring (though plenty I personally do). Nor am I suggesting to divert every political conversation to a lighter topic (though a few Mondays ago I diverted three different discussions from the topic of the Iowa Caucus to Punsutawney Phil). Only the most insular and narrow-minded among us would deny that there is any value in being an informed citizen with political awareness. The issue is not the existence of political debates, but the manner in which they are conducted.

It should be obvious that shouting matches are undesirable. But even when there is no yelling – and I like to think that there usually isn't – the problem is that a constructive purpose is lacking. Going through the motions

of an argument that everyone has heard many times is pointless. And when it creates even some level of hard feelings, it is detrimental. The solution isn't to pretend that there is some sweet middle-of-the-road solution to every argument. This just isn't true. Most of the time neither side of a political discussion is a fascist or an anarchist, nor a religious fundamentalist or a theophobe. There is usually validity to both sides of issues that are being maintained, and these issues are complex. There is not an obvious answer to every problem.

So why are we too often unwilling to even hear the other side of political issues?

One reason seems to be the polarized nature of politics. You're either a Republican or a Democrat. You're either for legalization or against. You either want Obamacare repealed or you think it's great. And so on. Of course there is gray area, but the image of two sides to every issue is pervasive. When the political system creates an apparent divide between black and white, it is easy to become obstinate about ever changing one's views. The other camp is seen as the Dark Side, seeking to destroy the Galactic Republic and all that is good.

Another apparent cause of this problem is that people argue prematurely, without being informed about what they are championing. Admitting that one is unsure how to respond is obviously a non-option, as is changing one's opinion, so the only alternative once one has started is to continue arguing (poorly). When multiple people are insufficiently informed they will likely switch sides at some point within the conversation, hopefully without being called out on such. In situations like these it is easy to become unnecessarily defensive and antagonistic, leading to overall unpleasant feelings for all.

A good place to start the healing is to become more informed about political topics. But this isn't enough. There also has to be a group effort to keep the environment relaxed and respectful when discussing political issues. Both sides should speak confidently; yet, at the same time, do so calmly, thoughtfully, and with mutual deference. We've all watched debaters of this kind, and they are undoubtedly more convincing and believable than the alternative. And perhaps more importantly, these types of rhetoricians usually don't leave anyone – on their side or against – with feelings of tension or awkwardness. People seem more intelligent when they refrain from getting angry or stressed, and sometimes even actually lead to others learning something new.

I welcome discussion about other solutions to the predicament of our political discourse that I have described. I'm sure that there are other resolutions out there. Just remember that arguments are okay. There's what to gain from good, constructive discussions with mutual respect all around. This election season, let's listen to and learn from the other side. At least try.

Thoughts on Sanders: Judaism and the Culture of Capitalism

By Yitzchak Fried

At a recent Yeshiva College Tzedek Society event, I heard Rabbi Saul Berman speak about income inequality. The Jewish nation's political economy, he pointed out, began with an equal distribution of economic resources. Every family received a plot of land of equal worth. Structural checks in Torah law helped preserve social equality: yovel ensured that all land sales were temporary, so that no family could fall into systemic poverty and class lines could never harden.

Economic inequality seems to be the issue of the day. I, as I'm sure others do, find myself torn between my sympathy for the economic justice advocated by Bernie Sanders on the one hand and ambivalence toward the feasibility of his policies on the other. Four prominent economists recently criticized Sanders, including Alan Krueger, economic adviser to the Obama Administration, and Paul Krugman, regular contributor to the *The New York Times*. Both are outspoken advocates of progressive economic policies, but find Sanders' economic plans far too costly. But for me, it's more than that. Let me acknowledge the elephant in the room. It's no secret that the Jewish community largely counts among the wealthy of American

society. For the Orthodox community this is of necessity: religious education, Shabbat and holidays, large families, and a plethora of other expenses associated with a religious lifestyle demand a lot of money to maintain. Granted, not all Jews are rich. But for many, especially in the Modern Orthodox community, maintaining a "middle-class"

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lifestyle alongside a religious life requires income normally associated with the affluent. Regardless of my views on income redistribution, it's hard to avoid the feeling that siding with progressive tax policies is betraying my community.

That's an issue everyone will have to work out for themselves. What interests me now are the voices criticizing Sanders coming from an unexpected quarter. New York

Times Opinion writers Thomas Friedman and David Brooks have come out as surprisingly strident against Sanders' vision of social democracy. Their argument, in essence, is that American success has always been rooted in an economy that favored individual entrepreneurship and risk taking – that this ethos and the corresponding tax reality is what allowed innovative industries and technologies to flourish. In his recent piece, "Livin' Bernie Sanders' Danish Dream", Brooks writes:

Sanders would change the incentive structure for the country's most successful people. He proposes raising the top tax rate to 52 percent. As Josh Barro noted in *The Times*, when you add in state, local and other taxes, top earners would be paying a combined tax rate over 73 percent...

It's possible that entrepreneurs, company founders and others would pay these rates without changing their behavior, but I wouldn't count on it. When you make risk-taking less rewarding, you get fewer risk-takers, which is exactly what you see across the Atlantic. When you raise taxes that high, the Elon Musks of the world find other places to build their companies.

The argument is not that social democracy would

SEE SANDERS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Defining Diversity

By Etai Shuchatowitz

A recent New York Times piece about what Justice Scalia would've wanted for his successor attempted to find some insight in his recent ruling on same sex marriage. In the piece, a reporter argues that "Justice Scalia was criticizing the lack of diversity of the court he sat on, and he did not exclude himself. He was right as a factual matter: Supreme Court justices these days are by many measures remarkably similar, giving the court the insular quality of a private club or a faculty lounge."

Here lies the buzzword that everybody loves throwing around nowadays: "diversity." It's a sexy word, full of inclusive and exciting connotations. It's a word that seems to imply the necessity of every single individual. People say we need diversity in the workplace and in education. In fact, in pretty much every facet of life somebody is arguing that diversity is a virtue worth pursuing.

But, the problem I find is that the word doesn't really mean anything of value whatsoever.

I'm not confused when somebody argues that blacks are underrepresented in Hollywood, or that the LGBT community has been marginalized. These are clear concerns that can elicit a particular response. What I don't understand is this broad word "diversity".

Every individual is different by definition. We are all diverse in a literally infinite number of ways. Otherwise, we would all be the same person. Some people are right handed, some are left handed, some are white, some are black, the list of differences goes on and on. But, for some reason, a few of these differences have become worthy of intrinsic inclusion.

In the case of the NY Times reporter's reading of Justice Scalia, the thing that matters is social upbringing and college education. Not what your dad did for a living, or what music you prefer to listen to when writing a term paper, but where you went to college. The Supreme Court has three women, six men, one black, three Jews, six Catholics, and one Hispanic. Not to speak of their taste in fiction, what attracts them to their partners or what they enjoy to eat for dinner. But, in this instance, none of these criteria define diversity. The thing - the single thing - that defines diversity is where they went to college.

I was recently listening to a podcast called Reply All, in which they were discussing the importance of the diversity in Silicon Valley. The story was about a black man doing his best to achieve racial diversity in the tech world. They spent awhile talking about how underrepresented blacks are in Silicon Valley - and I get that. I understand the issue and what they're trying to say. The problem came later when they tried to argue that diversity is, not just a point of moral correctness (a point I'll take issue with later), but when they argued that it makes business sense. One of the points they made was in regards to how your origins define what associations you make in problem solving. They used the example of where one keeps his ketchup.

They quoted an expert who said, "If you're British or if you're African American from the South... you're likely to keep your ketchup in the cupboard. If you're not British and you're not African American from the South, you tend to keep your ketchup in the fridge.... Suppose you run out of ketchup. If you're out of ketchup and you're a ketchup in the fridge person... you might use mayonnaise, you might use mustard because those are things you think of when what's next to the ketchup. If, alternatively, you're a ketchup in the cupboard person and you run out ketchup, what's next to the ketchup in the cupboard? Well, malt vinegar."

This example completely undermines the entire

argument about the need for racial diversity. This is saying that, from a business or problem-solving perspective, anybody who makes different associations should be hired. If making slightly different associations is grounds for hiring then, why is nobody arguing for more British people in Silicon Valley when they too keep their ketchup in the fridge and will therefore make these precious "different associations"? This ridiculously foolish line of thinking has conflated all diversity with racial diversity. This idea that, "This is probably the first time in my life that the profitable thing was also actually morally correct thing" just doesn't make any sense.

This notion also raises issues of the "moral correctness" of diversity. Why is diversity some intrinsic value laced with moral virtues? It certainly doesn't feel the same way as "Thou shalt not kill" or some other fairly

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obvious moral truth. Yet people walk around touting this as a virtue; as something that is inherently worth pursuing. This manifests itself when people hire a more diverse crowd in the hopes of attaining a moral cause.

I need to put forth before moving forward that I am extremely privileged. I don't really face many hardships because of who I am. I am a white male, born to a middle class family, who attended private school and never questioned whether he would go to college. That being said, I don't think that prevents me from having opinions about the world.

In order to analyze this idea, let's take the example of women in STEM. This is one of those places where people argue about this "diversity" claim and a need for more women in STEM. As somebody slightly involved in the STEM world, I fully endorse this claim, but I do think that we need to analyze things a little more closely.

It makes sense to think that trends in micro fields would follow trends of a larger scale. For instance, one

trends. And that raises the question of why not.

I need to admit that I am assuming that phenomena are either cultural or genetic. I am making an assumption (and I think a pretty safe one) that women are not born genetically predisposed to being bad at STEM. So, that means that any strange statistical anomaly must be cultural. So, there must be something cultural that has predisposed women to not pursuing STEM in the same numbers as men.

It's tricky. I don't know exactly what this is and where it lies. And, the fact that I can't locate it means that it must lay really entrenched in our cultural fibres. So, the way to solve this problem isn't to just approach women and force them to enter STEM. Nor is the fix to just hire women in order to fulfill some diversity quota. The answer is to try and figure out where and when we went wrong and attempt to rectify that hole. We need to dig deep. We need to really put in hard work and fix the places where we obviously are failing.

But, that's not what happens. Instead, people attempt to simply put a band-aid on a tumor and just run around screaming diversity. They yell that we need more diversity in this and that area - not realizing that they're not saying anything. They're simply advocating that people are different - an extremely trivial claim that ultimately means nothing.

The method people want to implement is a purely role-model based method - one in which we include more diversity, whatever that means, hoping to encourage others to follow suit. It's certainly possible that including more women in STEM jobs will remove some deeply ingrained stigma and change how the field functions. I don't believe it's the case that women look at the field, not seeing anybody who looks like them and therefore don't go in. If that were true, why would womanhood be the thing that people so define themselves by which they need to encounter in the field? Rather, I think it's something cultural lying way below the surface. Something that doesn't go away by just hiring more people.

Furthermore, this is asking business, a realm whose interests remain financial and commerce based, to make a decision based on non-financial interests. This is a little unfair. As I discussed above, I'm unconvinced that this is a moral notion, and therefore, businesses have no imperative to do this other than "It might end up being culturally beneficial. Maybe".

This gets back to what we should hope for the next justice of the supreme court. Not surprisingly, it's the same thing we should hope for of anybody who gets any job: that he or she is qualified to do so. If you keep your ketchup in the fridge it does not play any role in whether you can program. It doesn't mean that you can solve a problem. It for sure doesn't mean that you're going to be a great fit for that new startup. It means that you're different. It means you're a human being.

So, I hope that the next justice is very educated. I hope he or she knows what he or she is talking about. In fact, I don't care whether they're Asian or Jewish or Catholic or whether they listen to Tupac or Beethoven, or

what hand they write with. I care that they're able to think critically, willing to express their real opinions despite how unpopular they are, and that they're willing to stick up for what they believe is right. Most of all, I really don't care where they keep their ketchup.



would think that the percentage breakdown of men versus women in STEM would follow their corresponding trends in the general population: namely, it should be about a 50-50 breakdown. Similarly, one would assume that the number of black leading roles in Hollywood would follow percentages of blacks in the population. But, it's not. Neither of these follow their assumptive

The Logic Behind Checking ID's

By Shmuel Jacobs

The broken logic employed in some recent Commentator pieces leaves readers like myself wondering whether this deficiency is in a lack of honesty or in faulty reasoning. This knowledge lurked in my mind when I read an article entitled YU Security: Lights Are On, But Nobody's Home, by Moshe Blockman. In his article, Blockman complains about YU security's tendency toward laxity in checking IDs. While I acknowledge that the piece makes for great reading and sounds sincere, I'm not entirely confident that I can identify the logic employed anywhere. At first, the argument sounds like it's concerned with convenience. Says Blockman, "My irritation doesn't stem from security checking IDs; rather it is the lack of consistency that I find annoying. Because of the sporadic nature of the checks, 99% of the time I simply have no reason to carry an ID on me."

The article continues by explaining that students aren't accustomed to showing ID's, and are therefore bad at doing so. Our author suggests that his inconvenience upon failing to produce his ID and entering the building anyway after months of traveling the campus without ID outweighs the inconvenience of stopping and producing ID six times a day every single day. Be that as it may, if we voted, I'm confident that we'd find that random checks once a semester are perceived as more convenient than constant checks. Of course, the article is also full of references to safety, which leads to the implicit argument that we must be safer when security demands that we present ID's. Here's the logic:

1. The benefit of security is in its ability to prevent terrorist attacks.

2. Security is capable of preventing such attacks.

3. Attacks would hypothetically occur behind checkpoints rather than in the crowded and extremely accessible streets.

4. Terrorists would be incapable of producing ID's, despite the fact that programs like idNYC and state walking IDs guarantee official identification to almost everyone in America.

Although I disagree with some other minor facts throughout the article, like the idea that other universities are more vigilant (I personally know of a number of universities that seem less strict than YU when it comes to security), I take issue primarily with the implication that we have created an effective method of preventing terrorist attacks as a result of increased checking of ID's.

First, it's not like we encounter threats of terror on a daily basis. Judging by the security emails students get periodically, the biggest threat we currently face is from young men and women on dark street corners trying to forcibly rid us of our cell phones. I think consideration of how security has actually made us safer this year actually

centers on a factor irrelevant to terrorists. Rather, it is in that these strangers who threaten us on neighboring streets are afraid to pursue us into our campus. Perhaps this is due to our security vehicles or perhaps it is due to the frequent NYPD presence. In fact, I agree with Moshe Blockman about the NYPD: I feel generally intimidated when I see New York City Police Officers, and I'm happy every time I see one of campus.

Even the violent pranks that do occur only happen late at night, and rarely. Muggers don't follow students into the dorms, and fights that do break out generally don't extend into our campus. Any physical force that does occur between people with legitimate cause to be here is

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minimized by the security presence. All of the threats I address fall under guards' mandate to prevent violence, regardless of the offenders' enrollment statuses. Further, security guards everywhere need to be aware of the threat posed by spontaneous - and sometimes insane- strangers who wander around aggravated or lost and harass bystanders. I haven't heard any reports of that type from my y-studs, and a conversation with one YU guard made it seem that strangers rarely wander belligerently. If such a practice does become more common, vigilant ID checking will make far more sense to me. Regardless, security is far more important in its ability to prevent normal street violence, which officers do ward off and discourage.

I felt concerned for my safety last week when I walked through a group of students leaving George Washington High School, just one block outside of our campus. The students began hitting each other with a cane, and I considered that if one hit me, I would be unable to retaliate or evade all of them. I never considered the possibility that vigilant ID checking would protect me--after all, bad guys are also entitled to travel on Amsterdam Avenue. All I considered was that they wouldn't follow me into a YU building, because the guard would detect something different about this group of high schoolers, regardless of ID checks.

The same theory of security is behind the policy relating to people who have cause to be

here but no valid YU ID to back up that cause. They often are allowed in with a good story and any official photo ID. That makes sense when we consider that YU is very open to the community around it, many people have good reason to be in the Batei Midrash, and security has some credibility about its experience and 'feel for' deciding who can be let in. Consider the same policy with its terrorist threat implications. The policy for visitors is that they must show some form of photo identification, apparently because it's important to know that they do have legal names and did once present proof of address to someone. I know that faulting this system for being imperfect isn't fair criticism, but what is a check supposed to achieve? In fact, Oregon and Virginia Tech, the campus mass shootings committed during my memory, were committed by attackers who had valid ID's.

Now that I've presented my impressions of security and of incomplete reporting by sincere people whose writing I genuinely enjoy, I must offer my own form of back-pedaling. I don't demand that security cease its checks. In my mind, the inconvenience is small. Further, I believe that some increase in safety does exist and the potential damage avoided is tremendous. Of course YU is within its own reasonable rights when it demands ID from those entering school buildings. Of course some terrorists are deterred and thwarted by good campus security, including by ID checks. Of course I'm thankful to our security guards and glad to see them around. But I fear that the new procedures followed on our campus, as advocated by Moshe Blockman, will make little difference in changing the probability that those who choose to target us (G-d forbid) will succeed. We must have faith in the capable leaders responsible for our safety and wellbeing, and in the longstanding mechanisms employed by our security team that have protected us without fail until this point.



SANDERS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

destroy America, or that Sanders' vision isn't driven by real, pressing needs. But Friedman and Brooks balk at the idea of refashioning the economic ethos of American society. As Brooks says, "There's nothing wrong with living in northern Europe. I've lived there myself. It's just not the homeland we've always known."

Capitalist freedom is an important part of the American ethos. It resonates deeply with the American values of rugged individualism, with the proud grit of immigrants and frontiersmen. Indeed, its power as a cultural force can be seen as early as the Constitutional debates of the 1780s, when Anti-Federalist writer Samuel Bryan wrote in *The Independent Gazetteer*:

[I]t is here that the human mind, untrammelled by the restraint of arbitrary power, expands every faculty: as the field to fame and riches is open to all, it stimulates universal exertion...the unfortunate and oppressed of all nations fly to this grand asylum, where liberty is ever protected, and industry is crowned with success.

In peculiar ways, the message of capitalist liberty has a special resonance with the Jewish community. Jonathan Sarna has identified something he calls the "cult of synthesis" in the Jewish American experience. America was the first country where religion was not an

overt limitation on Jewish opportunity. Jews coming here were dazzled by the possibility of belonging – really belonging. A sense crept in – and more than crept in, was cultivated by American rabbis and lay leaders alike – that being American was somehow a natural complement to being Jewish. American values were equated with Jewish values. Sarna sums this idea up with a quote from the 1970 *American Jewish Year Book*: "[F]or a Jew, the better an American one is, the better Jew one is." While the author of the article – Charles Leibman – is writing from the perspective of Reconstructivist Judaism, Sarna argues that the sense that there is a natural merge between American values and Jewish values exists across denominational lines.

In my impression, many Orthodox Jews today are conscious of having identities that are greatly distinct from the American mainstream. This is especially true as the Orthodox world becomes more religiously right-wing, as more and more Orthodox men and women spend time in yeshivot abroad, and as American society becomes simultaneously more secularized. Nonetheless, I wonder to what extent our continued identification with capitalist freedom is a carry-over from our tradition of cultural synthesis. As one particularly rabbinic family member, who I've often heard preach on the value of being un-American, surprised me with: "I'm a patriot."

But like Rabbi Berman pointed out, Judaism has an

ambiguous relationship with capitalist freedom. Ownership of land in the Jewish economy is not absolute: yovel means that the fundamental ownership of land is not yours to sell, and peyah means that the poor have a stake in private real estate. Israelite land is beholden to supporting the priests and Levites that serve the community. This is in addition to the biblical obligation for charity. Americans today are reconsidering their society's economic structure, weighing the values and benefits of individual entrepreneurship against guarantees of collective economic security. American Jews, naturally, are doing the same. But they can also consider what their ancestral traditions have to say about the culture of capitalism.



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Popular Accounting Principles Review Classes Return

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

There is exciting news for the roughly 260 Sy Syms students enrolled in either Accounting Principles I or Accounting Principles II. After going on hiatus for a semester, the popular student-led weekly review classes have returned. For the duration of the semester, an Accounting Principles II review class will be offered every Tuesday night, while an Accounting Principles I review class will be offered every Wednesday night. Though the exact location is subject to change, the sessions currently run from 10:00 to 11:00 PM in Belfer 823. Both of the classes are open to Wilf and Beren students. The relaunch comes as the result of a joint push from student leadership along with a dedicated accounting peer tutor to the Sy Syms Academic Advising Department.

Attending an accounting review class presents a student with the chance to get a leg up on homework, prepare for a test, or to just generally keep pace with his Accounting Principles class. The return of this opportunity is of particular importance in a year where it is harder than ever to schedule a peer tutor. "The entire tutoring landscape has changed," notes a frustrated second year Sy Syms student who preferred not to disclose his name.

"While last year I was able to schedule a peer tutor on a near weekly basis, I have rarely been able to get a peer tutor this year." That student's sentiment is indeed supported by the numbers. Though at one point last year there were seventeen students who were offering their services to the popular peer tutoring program, that amount has been whittled down to eight, an astounding reduction of over fifty percent.

One of the students who, due to the accounting review sessions, no longer has to worry about whether he will be able to secure a peer tutor for his Accounting Principles class is Andrew Freudenberger, currently in his second semester at Sy Syms. Freudenberger credits the review classes with going beyond simply helping him "understand the material." He has found that the student teacher



provides patient and clear "clarification of the difficult problems, leaving me way more confident for my tests."

Nobody is perhaps more excited about the return of the accounting review sessions than peer tutor Shlomo Frishman, who was instrumental in reviving the classes and leads both sessions. Frishman finds that "a lot of what has made these review classes work so well is that the students who come do so on their own volition. This creates a great environment for learning that is a little more chill than a traditional classroom." Frishman emphasizes that students should not consider this an opportunity strictly for those who feel they may be behind in class. "There is room to benefit no matter where a student is standing in his understanding of the concepts. Even if someone feels as though he has a solid grasp on the material, one never knows what type of questions could be asked which he didn't think of." In short, "The students who take the time to come to the sessions will see the results reflected in that effort."

Looking forward, the return of these two review classes lends hope for a possible relaunch of last year's popular Principles of Finance review class. There is unquestionably the student demand. All that is needed is for a dedicated peer tutor to offer his availability.

FINANCES, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

YU's most conspicuous efforts to overhaul its finances is their previously reported contracting of the services of Alvarez & Marsal (A&M) about one year ago, a leading restructuring consultancy for struggling institutions. At the beginning, a team of five dedicated consultants worked with YU full-time, with the team continuously being whittled down until the engagement officially ended as of December 31, 2015. A&M gave YU a target amount of money to save and specific recommendations to reach that goal. Vice President Joseph said that each recommendation in the plan had a vice president assigned to oversee it. There are weekly meetings to discuss the list and focus on moving items forward, with the plan divided into four tiers: projects in progress, projects just starting, projects in the pipeline that are nearing approval, and projects being considered or that have been dropped from consideration. Joseph said that the primary reasons a proposal would be nixed are due to a contractual conflict, it required further research, or it did not actually save money.

One such example of a nixed proposal which A&M suggested "early on" was that YU merge the undergraduate campuses. Joseph placed that proposal in the category of "not under consideration." Mainly, "It's not in the planning stage or on the bottom of the list or anywhere on the list right now." On a similar note, one area where Joseph reported that YU attempted to make cuts and changes was to the security department. However, after complaints from students and others, they restored the cuts. Joseph reasoned that in the current environment, it was unwise to reduce the body count of security guards. YU is instead looking for an outside donor to finance a full survey and overhaul of the security program. As far as a recommendation which has been implemented, Joseph reported that as of December 15th, facilities and maintenance have been outsourced to the cleaning services company Aramark. This is a classic example of contracting out an operation which a company specializing in that area can do cheaper and more efficiently, resulting in savings to the University's bottom line. "There are going to be things out there that people could do better than we can," Joseph said. While he did not offer other specific examples of recommendations nixed or implemented, he stressed that savings from a particular change are not always realized as soon as the change is completed.

Provost Botman did address academics, which is perhaps the most concerning area of the budget cuts to students. Botman told The Commentator that her office's work with A&M was predominantly focused on the undergraduate programs' budget. In all, the total cuts to academic programming were \$6-8 million (in line with President Joel's comments at last spring's town hall meeting). Botman suggested that this was achieved

more through strategic management than cutting course offerings. Specifically, Botman reported that YU is hiring fewer contract and adjunct faculty, while shifting increased teaching loads to tenured faculty. While some students may view this change negatively, she framed this as a net gain for the students. "We want those people who are most experienced...in the classroom teaching you," Botman said. Seeking to soothe any concerns of students, Botman posited that the "rumors of draconian things that would happen were not (ultimately) true. You could talk about student success and it seems very glib and syrupy,

"THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS WILL BE CRITICAL IN SHAPING THE IDENTITY OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY"

but I think it's true that at Yeshiva University, it's a principle and a priority. What we are focusing on is your education, and that's what we care about."

Moving on from what YU has generally been doing about addressing the financial situation to the hard numbers, many students have questions about YU's fundraising and endowment, which combine to represent a significant portion YU's annual revenue. Some students saw the recent Forward report that YU ceded nearly half of their approximate \$1 billion dollar endowment to Einstein as part of the joint venture with Montefiore Health System. YU's latest financial statements do, in fact, confirm that Einstein's share of the endowment was about \$465 million. The financial statements also indicate that about \$146 million of the endowment are RIETS and high school interests, while about \$528 million of the endowment is attributable to the University. Some of the endowment's substantial investments include about \$210 million in hedge funds, \$25 million in venture capital, \$65 million in private equity, and \$7 million in Israel Bonds. Joseph said that endowment revenues typically represent about 10% of the annual income and that YU does not spend more than 5.5% a year. With regards to fundraising, as of June 30, 2015, YU has about \$65 million in contributions receivable (donations expected to be received within the year) after discounting to present value and deducting Einstein interests. Interestingly, about 59% of the gross contributions receivable come from just five donors.

In addition to fundraising and the endowment, one of the fundamental aspects of YU's financial health is the state of its admissions, which typically accounts for about a fifth of revenue (net of scholarships). As this newspaper has previously reported, YU retained the consulting firm Noel-Levitz to help strategize net tuition revenue. The engagement with the firm is scheduled to last one more year. Forbes magazine praises this firm as "the most

influential force in higher education pricing that you've never heard of." The Director of Admissions and the Director of Student Finance meet weekly to strategize about matters related to Noel-Levitz consulting.

Speaking to the progress Noel-Levitz has helped YU achieve, Vice President Brander reported that net tuition revenue has increased by over \$5.5 million in the past two years to over \$40 million. Brander also noted that the rate by which tuition is discounted (due to scholarships, financial aid, etc.) decreased from 58% to 52.7%, which was primarily achieved by more effectively distributing merit-based aid. Brander said that YU still spends about \$44 million on scholarship aid annually and that even with the new emphasis on effectively distributing financial aid, "no student who has financial needs...was turned away due to a lack of funds." Brander stressed that YU "prides itself on ensuring that students aren't compromised by coming here." It is also worth noting that the already very low default rate of student loans has seen a substantial drop from just over 5% to about 2%, per a report from the Department of Education.

In terms of student enrollment, this spring there are 129 new students on the undergraduate campuses, up from 98 last year. Specifically, Brander said that "on this campus [Wilf], the number of students has grown, while the Beren campus has gone down a little bit." Brander attributed the decline on the Beren campus to a reduction of the number of female high school graduates and students in Israel programs.

Lastly, getting back to the previously addressed news of Moody's affirmation of YU's B3 junk bond rating, this is unquestionably troubling. Many students had excitedly anticipated an improvement to YU's all-important Moody's rating. The affirmation and negative outlook calls into question YU's ability to further borrow money. Dr. Paul Oestreicher, YU's Executive Director of Communications, issued the following statement to The Commentator regarding the Moody's report: "The recent Moody's report affirms their earlier rating and acknowledges our progress, in addition to some ongoing challenges. It's important to note, however, that the report covers only a snapshot of our activity; while it describes the transfer of financial responsibility for the Albert Einstein College of Medicine to the Montefiore Health System, this is part of a larger, ongoing effort. We expect to reach additional milestones in the periods ahead, which will further strengthen our financial position. Also, our enrollment numbers remain strong and our net tuition revenue has increased."

All things considered, it will be left up to the students, alumni, and the larger YU community to debate whether or not the University is indeed on a trajectory to "reach additional milestones in the periods ahead." One thing that is certain, though, is that much work remains to be done in rebuilding YU's financial health. The next five to ten years will be critical in shaping the identity of Yeshiva University. Only time will tell what that identity will look like.

Have No Fear, Parachute is Here!

By Benjamin Zirman

Davidson University, a liberal arts college in North Carolina, was the only college that offered free laundry service and delivery for its students from 1919 until 2015. But in May 2015, Davidson canceled its free laundry service, and Davidson students joined their peers in other schools in needing ranks of students who need to figure out a way to get their laundry done by themselves. For the many students who have never had to do their own laundry, this is quite the daunting task as many students have never been tasked with doing their own laundry and thought that clothes wash themselves. If your dreams were shattered when you saw your first washing machine, not to worry Parachute might be the best up and coming company to help you. A startup called Parachute, which has recently exploded in popularity, especially on the YU campus, is the simplest and easiest way for college students to get all the things they need, brought straight to their dorm room. The company employs students and turns them into Parachute Pilots—friendly and responsible students who deliver all the things you need stress free. By hiring current students, Parachute has access to parts of campus such as dorms, lounges, and lecture halls that no other company can reach. They operate currently on 6 campuses across New York including Yeshiva University, Stern College for Women, Columbia, Barnard, NYU, and FIT and employ over 70 students.

Parachute was the idea of Zev Lapin, who created the company alongside Ryan Haigh and Ryan Worl. Zev majored in marketing at YU, and graduated in 2011. He was born in Netanya, Israel but lived in San Jose, California from the ages of 5-18 and attended YULA high school for boys. Zev created his first startup while he was still at YU. He began his first startup initiative, called Storage Bucket LLC, with Jonathan Farazmand after they won the Sy Syms annual business plan competition. The winnings gave them some capital to test out the business and it ended up working out pretty well. Storage Bucket is a summer storage business for college students whose universities force them to move off campus for the summer. Since you can't leave or store your belongings in the dorms or residence halls, Storage Bucket picks up your packed belongings and then delivers them the next semester to your newly assigned room. Zev was then hired as the first employee for a venture-backed startup called MakeSpace, which was a similar storage-by-the-bin concept to Storage Bucket except not limited to only college students. MakeSpace currently offers storage space to city dwellers in NYC, Chicago, and Washington, DC.

In January 2015, Zev graduated from one of the top business incubators in the country, called AngelPad. A business accelerator is essentially a "boot camp for startups" - a program that concentrates an MBA curriculum into an intense four-month experience. Accelerators will typically select a small group of companies—in Zev's case he was one of twelve companies selected out of 2,500 applicants—that they've assessed to have a high potential for growth and provide them with mentorship, capital, office space, and a network of investors in exchange for an equity stake in the accepted companies. Some of AngelPad's biggest successes are Postmates (now valued at \$500M) and MoPub (sold to Twitter for \$800M in stock). While at AngelPad, Zev came in with a startup idea called CourseLoads and through the program's intense focus on rapid iteration, evolved his con-

cept to what is now Parachute. While CourseLoads was focused on being the most convenient laundry service for college students, Parachute was focused on being a marketplace between students seeking flexible income on campus and students who want things conveniently delivered to their dorm room. CourseLoads only lasted a semester and through the testing Zev ran at AngelPad, he realized something

"IT IS AMAZING HOW MUCH ONE OF OUR VERY OWN YU ALUMNI HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH IN LESS THAN 5 YEARS. HE HAS FOUNDED TWO STARTUP COMPANIES, BEEN SELECTED BY A TOP BUSINESS INCUBATOR, RAISED A SIGNIFICANT ROUND OF SEED FUNDING, AND DEVELOPED A FUTURE BUSINESS PLAN THAT IS VERY PROMISING."



critical to the launch of Parachute. The value of the business he was building was not in the service itself (laundry), but the infrastructure that facilitated the service; the student workforce. Businesses that deliver to not have the necessary clearance to enter dorms, which means delivery personnel must wait at the complete discretion of a (sometimes flakey) college student to meet them outside to accept their order. Additionally, many dorms don't have unique addresses, which means more time spent on coordinating the delivery and less time delivering. As the phrase goes "time is money", and there was a tremendous amount of time being wasted on deliveries to college campuses. Parachute is the solution to that problem. By hiring a network of students seeking flexible, on-campus work, Parachute is able to easily deliver various services and goods directly to

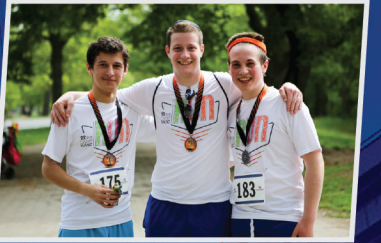
student dorm rooms.

When Zev decided to pursue his new business venture he recruited two partners to help him found the company, Ryan Haigh and Ryan Worl. Zev met Haigh at MakeSpace, where Haigh was moonlighting as MakeSpace's first designer. At the time, Haigh's full-time job was working at iHeartRadio as their Director of Product Design where he led three different product teams. Shortly after getting accepted to AngelPad, Zev convinced Haigh to leave his job at iHeart Radio and join him as a co founder at Parachute. Worl, Parachute's CTO, attended Purdue University where he developed an app similar to the popular app Postmates except limited to Purdue. He is a talented programmer who has been coding since he was a kid, having sold a number of his popular iOS apps. Worl joined Parachute as a cofounder shortly after Haigh. All three decided to start working full time on Parachute this past summer when they raised a seed round of capital. They raised an undisclosed round from some of the same investors in companies such as Lyft, Instacart, and Slack. They plan on raising their next round of financing this summer to fuel growth into new markets.

How does Parachute work? Parachute's Campus Pilots (current undergrad students who work for Parachute on campus) are notified via the Campus Pilot App of any opportunity to accept a "Mission," a task or series of tasks that currently entail making a pickup or delivery of laundry (for now) and distributing flyers. Similar to the Uber driver app, Pilots are able to see what a Mission entails, its payout, and estimated completion time before deciding whether to accept or reject a Mission. It provides one of the most flexible jobs on campus as Pilots only accept Missions when they are available to work and value the payout as worth their time. Parachute currently has a network of 70+ Pilots and aims to provide students with the most-flexible, highest paying job on campus. There are no extra costs for pickup from and delivery to the customers' dorm room as it comes as part of the service. Parachute washes your clothing by teaming up with a local laundry partner, which also handles laundry for American Airlines, DELTA, and the NFL, that separates all of your whites and colors for you, so that you don't have to. The standard wash is whites are washed in hot water with bleach, while colors are washed in cold water. But there are additional laundry services available such as low heat or delicate drying, unscented/hypo-allergenic detergent, or hang-dried clothing. Parachute will supply the customer with laundry bags that are designed to hold about 15 to 18 pounds of laundry. They don't cap the weight of the laundry but they do require that the bag be fully cinched closed without any clothing hanging out in order that clothes are fully protected. After a student creates an account on the Parachute website, the student can view available time frames for pick-up on your campus spanning from Monday to Thursday evenings. According to their website, Parachute's services are 25% cheaper than local Laundromats and obviously more convenient with the door to door pickup and deliveries. They have two pricing options: A flat fee of \$18 per load for a pay-as-you-go option or \$29 for two loads on their monthly plan with additional loads also being discounted. In addition, the only additional service that costs extra is hang drying, which is an additional \$3 per load, while all other preferences are free. In addition, they have a refund

*SEE PARACHUTE, CONTINUED ON
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policy of up to \$30 per article of clothing.

This writer asked Zev why he started with laundry as their first service and why NYC was their first college testing ground. Zev explained that the company started with laundry for two main reasons. First, there are two touch points, pickup and delivery, in a short 24-hour period. This is valuable because each one is a chance to bundle in additional services such as food or other essentials that students might need. Secondly, laundry is a very scheduled routine, which isn't extremely time sensitive by nature (laundry doesn't spoil), so the timing is very flexible. He told me that NY is the perfect testing ground because schools vary in terms of physical layout and relative levels of affluence on campus. For instance, housing at some schools is comprised solely of concentrated dorms, while other schools have both dorms and apartments, and still others have only apartments, as well as differences in whether these apartments are more concentrated versus spread out. The wide range of affluence present in various NYC schools will hopefully show results that this service is affordable and sensible for most college students. In addition, NYC has an abundance of local

Laundromat options so if Parachute can exhibit that it is valuable to students in this market, it'll be that much easier when they enter less saturated markets. He hopes that their success will prove their business plan can work across America to new potential investors.

There are many opportunities and possibilities in the future for Parachute. In the next two to three weeks they plan on growing to over 100 Campus Pilots, and in the next 4-6 weeks they plan on adding two more campuses to their operating roster: Fordham University and Pace University. After proving their concept in NYC and then approaching larger investors for capital over the summer, Parachute plans to keep expanding with their eyes set on Boston next year. After Boston, Zev wants to expand to Washington, DC as their third market. He sees Parachute as an infrastructure that can team up with local merchants, restaurants, and food services as well. Parachute provides merchants with both increased sales to a typically hard to reach market in addition to reducing a merchant's delivery cost by aggregating multiple orders to the same location; both value-propositions that merchants find appealing. They charge the same 15% for service as all delivery services do for the extra benefits they bring to the table. Zev doesn't want to replace competition of delivery services but he

believes Parachute can make the delivery process more efficient. For most dorm deliveries you have to wait outside for the customer to come and pick up his item which is a huge waste of money. Now their delivery people can team up with campus pilots who can do the rest. In addition, Parachute would order in larger demands and bunch different dorm orders together so it would only require one pickup for the Campus Pilot for multiple vendors at the same time. They will offer a few meal options based on the most popular dishes at a few local restaurants which will mean the food will be even cheaper than if you went yourself and ordered from the store because of the bulk ordering.

Students spend over 23 billion dollars on takeout food a year and the addition of Parachute is a win win for vendors and students alike. Another business venture that Zev told me about is distributing samples for new restaurants who want to enter into a marketplace. He envisions laundry, food, and promotional distribution as their first three services they will provide. It is amazing how much one of our very own YU alumni has been able to accomplish in less than 5 years. He has founded two startup companies, been selected by a top business incubator, raised a significant round of seed funding, and developed a future business plan that is very promising.

Israel Incubator Project – Bringing the Start-up Nation to the Wilf Campus

By Ben Fried

With recruiting season in motion for both full time jobs and summer internships, many YU students are feeling a great deal of pressure to ace their interviews and secure that lucrative position. Unfortunately, these students not only face the standard obstacles that business students attending non target schools face, but also additional obstacles by virtue of attending a school with a dual curriculum. For example, since students can end class as late as 8 or 10pm on some weekdays, attaining an internship during the school year is difficult, if not impossible. As a result, students lack prior work experience that could help them qualify for a position.

Additionally, many first year students coming back from spending a year or two abroad in Israel don't even have a GPA to put on their resumes when applying for summer internships during their first semester in the fall. This was the case for Joseph Sowalsky, an upper-sophomore currently studying mathematics and finance in the hope of one day becoming an actuary. Sowalsky explained that "most actuarial internships recruit early in the fall semester. As a sophomore with the working course knowledge of a freshman, and without a GPA to apply with at the time, I was at a big disadvantage compared to the other applicants." To further compound problems, while YU is known for its tremendous network of alumni, sometimes alumni find it difficult to assist students when their resumes are missing the vital component of work experience in a related field, or even practical work experience at all.

While there are certainly various approaches to how YU could address this issue, Dean Michael Strauss of the Sy Syms School of Business has thankfully been working diligently on his own creative and exciting solution. Dean Strauss, an Associate Dean, Professor of Management, and Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the Sy Syms School of Business, and Assistant to the Provost, has advocated for, and raised funds to create, an incubator

for Israeli startups on YU's Wilf Campus. After Governor Andrew Cuomo took a trip to Israel, Dean Strauss along with the general counsel of YU met with councilmen and senators to pitch their plan to start an incubator in Yeshiva University. From YU's perspective, this project was driven by the needs and recent growth in student interest in the entrepreneurship world, as well as the much publicized burgeoning Israeli startup ecosystem.

The plan as currently constituted is to partner with up to ten technology companies in Israel that

are not only looking for interns but are willing and dedicated to help them grow. These tech companies will be in their initial stages of growth and will likely still be developing requisite code and algorithms to build their products. After going through an intense screening process, eight to ten YU students will be selected to take part in this prestigious year long internship. These students will be given mentors not

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Dean Strauss: The Man Behind the Story

By Zachary Porgess

Dean Michael Strauss is the Associate Dean, Professor of Management, and Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the Sy Syms School of Business, and an Assistant to the Provost. Prior to joining Yeshiva University in 2008, Dean Strauss held numerous high-level corporate positions, ranging from Executive Vice President of the Travel and Related Services Division of American Express to CEO of Sherwood Consulting group and to Chairman of BSafe Electrix. His education includes a Bachelor's in Business Administration from City College of New York and an M.B.A from Baruch College Graduate School. All this and more can be found on his curriculum vitae.

Here's what you won't find on Dean Strauss's CV: He came to this country with nothing.

Michael Strauss was born in Israel and moved to New York at the age of fourteen without a cent to his name. Upon moving to the states, a young Strauss had high aspirations; he didn't want to merely break into the world of American business, he wanted to run his own business. In order to make that happen,



he knew that he would have to work hard and climb the New York City corporate ladder on merit rather privilege.

To the extent that one can plan their career, Dean Michael Strauss has done as good of a job as anyone else. After earning his M.B.A. from Baruch College he decided that if he was indeed committed to his dreams, he would first need an understanding of sev-

eral disciplines: Sales, finance, marketing, operations, and technology. Enter his first job at First National City Bank, now known as Citibank.

His initial responsibilities at the bank involved computer programming, which gave him the opportunity to focus on the technology component of his five-skill plan. At heart though, he knew he wasn't there to become a programmer; he was there to learn how to run a department of programmers.

After getting some experience with tech at City Bank, he sought to scratch another item off his list: sales. To that end, Dean Strauss left City Bank and took up a job as Assistant Operations Officer at Bank of New York (BNY). He spent his time there meeting with treasurers of publically traded companies who were clients of BNY, pitching them on using the bank's cash management programs.

After spending a total of eight years honing the skills on his agenda, Dean Strauss used his driven mentality, a solid recommendation, and a little bit of luck to land a job as an Assistant Treasurer at one of America's most well respected corporations, the American Express Company.

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only from within the school but also current alumni that span across many fields such as law, management, marketing, and venture capital. The students will be given the opportunity to hear from this tremendous professional network on a weekly basis either in person or through conference calls.

The plan is to build a state of the art area spanning three thousand square feet in Furst Hall where the interns can work and hold conferences and meetings with coworkers from halfway around the globe. This will give the interns an advantage given the time discrepancy and long distance from their actual firms. To go along with the amazing opportunity of interning during the busy schedule of a YU student, the program also hopes to offer an opportunity to extend the

"BY CREATING A VIBRANT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM, THE ISRAEL INCUBATOR PROJECT WILL LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD BETWEEN YESHIVA UNIVERSITY AND OTHER BUSINESS SCHOOLS THAT ALREADY HOUSE SUCH INCUBATORS."

internship into the summer where students would get the opportunity to live in Israel and work for the firms which they have been interning all year for.

Dean Strauss has long term plans for the program too, and plans to expand it in the future by adding many more students. Future plans will be to take some area somewhere in the Washington heights and find a space which is ten to fifteen thousand square feet and build a larger facility there. This will create a stronger base for the program, and will enable students to join local tech companies from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

By creating a vibrant internship program, the Israel incubator project will level the playing field between

Yeshiva University and other business schools that already house such incubators. As Dean Strauss explained, "It is very important to give students a chance to take what they learn in class and mesh it with real life experiences." This program is aimed to help the students gain first hand work experience in conjunction with their rigorous academic curriculum, all while providing them with a resume booster and something to use as a leverage point in interviews.

Lastly, the Israel Incubator Project will cater to all types of students, not just those planning on majoring in business related areas. Dean Strauss anticipates that many students with diverse academic interests will apply, and encourages everyone to learn more about the program and its offerings. According to Dean Strauss, those students who already have exemplified entrepreneurial leadership skills, either by working for startups in the past or by creating their own, will be given special consideration for acceptance into this program.

The sky's the limit for this program, and it really is up to us the students of Yeshiva University to ensure that this program is prosperous. With its anticipated success will come many benefits, not just for the students involved but for the university itself. Dean

Strauss already mentors high school students at MTA and SAR--he recently held a Shark Tank startup pitch event at MTA--and believes that this incubator program has the potential to attract high school students that are debating what college to attend, and will now be enticed by a leading startup mentoring program in the confines of YU's campus.

The program also gives the opportunity for current undergraduate students to help each other grow and learn more about one another. The goal is not to find one talented person who is good in all areas but rather a team that is made up of many students that show exceptional talent, interest, and drive in their specific areas of study. Dean Strauss explained that administrators and faculty are working diligently on many initiatives at Yeshiva University which will be rolled out over the next few years, all with the objective of enhancing students' experience and learning while at YU. From the perspective of improving students' business acumen and practical business experience, we should all be excited and thankful that the Israel incubator program will be part of these university-wide initiatives.



Get Ready to Get UNIMASHed: The Innovative App Bringing College Students Together

By Elie Lipnik

Often individuals have brilliant ideas and dreams that they never end up pursuing because they lack the courage, luster, or bravery to do so. However, the same cannot be said for two notable YU students, Elie Lefkowitz and Maor Shoshana. In January of last year, these two aspiring entrepreneurs made the decision to turn their dreams into a reality and began to create a phone app that would forever change the way in which college students across the country interact with one another.

Lefkowitz, a junior majoring in math, and Shoshana, an accounting major, are both juniors at YU, originally from Miami Beach, FL, and graduates of the Hebrew Academy. The longtime friends knew they wanted to create an app for quite some time and finally decided that the opportune time had arrived. In broad terms, the app is created for college students to meet one another virtually in a relaxed and low-pressured environment. According to Lefkowitz, the idea for the app came from his first-hand experiences observing the difficulty for male and female college students to connect with one another. He pointed out that “often college students are too shy or nervous to interact with the opposite sex, so we came up with an alternative way for them to communicate and meet.” Although this app may be considered ideal for students at Yeshiva University where the male and female campuses are miles apart, the app will improve the social lives of college students across the country.

Only college students are allowed to register for the app, and to ensure that other individuals do not join, one must produce a .edu email address. After providing such information, students can choose to sign in through their Facebook accounts or not. When creating a profile, the app gives students the opportunity to enter their college, year of college, major, gender, expected year of graduation, and an in-depth description of themselves. The app allows

for students to filter who they meet based on gender, year of college, and other colleges in their state. After all of the aforementioned information is entered, the app compiles a list of other profiles which match the entered specifications. Students can flip through their matches and give them a thumbs up or down based on their pictures and other information provided. If both students give each other a thumbs up then they “mashed” and can message one another. There are currently 185 UNIMASH ambassadors on 40 college campuses in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and many other major cities to promote the app.

For Lefkowitz and Shoshana, the app creation process has been long and tedious, but above all, a rewarding experience. They explained that the most

difficult aspect of creating the app has been time management with all of their other school work. Moreover, finding the right development team for their app was quite difficult, and it took a lot of trial and error to weed out the ones that would not work for them. The development team they ended up with has been “super professional and exceptionally helpful.” Above all, however, a supportive family has been the most essential key to success. Throughout the entire process, Shoshana and Lefkowitz’s families have been nothing but encouraging and cooperative, and it has made all the difference. The two boys have been friends since they were young and creating an app together has only strengthened their relationship. Although there have been arguments and disagreements, the two truly balance and compliment one another’s strengths and weaknesses.

Lefkowitz and Shoshana explained that “it has been really cool being treated like adults by other people in the industry. Realizing that you are not a kid anymore is a pretty surreal experience.” They have had to hire personnel, negotiate contracts, and so much more; it has taught them everything they did not learn in the classroom. Moreover, they described that their app is going to be the next big thing because “there is a huge demand for other outlets for students to make friends with students on different campuses, and there is nothing else quite like that on the market.” Lefkowitz said that he was actually in contact with Mark Cuban, from Shark Tank, in regards to his app. Although nothing materialized, there is still potential for conversation in the future.

The release date for the app is sometime in early March, and Lefkowitz and Shoshana cannot be more excited. They plan on having a huge celebration to honor their massive accomplishment. Their advice to other students looking to create an app is to “get out of your dorm room, do not be afraid, come up with a plan, and just do it.” To the entire YU community: Download. Do not be afraid to get UNIMASHed.

**“TO THE ENTIRE YU
COMMUNITY: DOWNLOAD.
DO NOT BE AFRAID TO GET
UNIMASHED.”**



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Upon arrival at American Express, however, Michael Strauss knew that he was different from his coworkers. He didn’t come from money, he didn’t attend an Ivy, and he didn’t have a big name father to walk him into the job. As always though, Michael Strauss saw it the other way around. He was driven to succeed because he didn’t have another option, and eventually he would make it all the way to the top because he had the work ethic and endurance to do it.

In a matter of a few years at American Express, Dean Strauss moved from staff positions to a manager role, and from there to a position as vice president. It was at that time, approximately eight years after receiving his M.B.A., that Dean Strauss elevated to the role of Vice President and was finally able to sit down in his large corporate office located hundreds of feet above ground, with a sign on the front door reading: “Michael Strauss: General Manager – Gold Card Division.” That wasn’t it for Dean Strauss while at American Express; he was still able to climb a few more rungs on the corporate ladder and ultimately secure a role as one of the company’s select Executive Vice Presidents.

Dean Strauss credits his success in business and in life to three things: hard work, perseverance, and, as he likes to say, “A little help from above.” Yet, as proud as he and his family are of his accomplishments, only now does he recognize the true cost of the sacrifices he had to make in order to provide his family with the opportunities he never had growing up. I could sense the emotion in his eyes when he remarked to me that “if I had to do it over again I would make sure that I spent more time with my family during my early years in business rather than travel almost all the time. I compensate now by attending all of my granddaughter’s extra curricular activities, and love it.” A comment like that usually invites the classic lesson: as important as your career is, always make sure not to let your life and loved ones slip by.

I drew something different from his words.

Dean Strauss, as he himself puts it, achieved success in business through his hard work, perseverance, and faith in God. Though these three traits surely helped him along the way, I believe that Michael Strauss has been successful because he has always led a life of context.

From a young age, Dean Strauss recognized the importance of stepping back and considering the

bigger picture. Where have I been. What have I done. What cards was I dealt. What do I plan on doing with them. His complex and challenging upbringing uniquely prepared, if not outright forced him, to consider life macrocosmically rather than through a harrowed, day-to-day lens. And this perspective, this uniquely Jewish perspective, is what I believe drew Dean Michael Strauss to Yeshiva University.

It is a historically Jewish notion to live a life of context, self-reflection, and most importantly, of vision. The Jewish belief in redemption, both in the individual and as a nation, confirms that. Judaism no doubt requires a hard work ethic and mental perseverance, and these are surely keys to success in any culture, but the underlying message that Dean Strauss has brought to YU is really nothing that we as Jewish students don’t (or at least should) already know: success in business and in Judaism is earned by taking yourself out of the rat race, by picking your head up above the daily grind of career advancement and considering the sweep of life rather than its constituent parts. Dean Strauss has gracefully demonstrated a lifelong commitment to this mission and has utilized it in his own journey of success. His story will hopefully inspire YU students to do the same.

Unlocking Buffett's Billions: Understanding his Investment Philosophy

By Evan Axelrod

You don't have to be a reader of the Wall Street Journal to recognize the name Warren Buffett. The "Oracle of Omaha," as Buffett is sometimes endearingly referred to due to his residence in Omaha, is known as one of the greatest investors of modern times and as one of the richest people in the world. But what about Benjamin Graham, ever heard of him? How about value investing? Without Benjamin Graham and his value investing philosophy, Warren Buffett would not be on the Forbes 400 list. I am not going to cite a biography of Warren Buffett- that's what Wikipedia is for. What I do hope to provide is a sufficient understanding of the investment philosophy that Buffett and many other legendary investors have used to create significant amounts of wealth for themselves and their investors.

Let us take a trip back to the 1950's, to the classroom of Columbia Business School, where a professor named Benjamin Graham taught a group of students about the investing philosophy known as value investing. Many students who took this class went on to become some of the most successful investors of the past century.

Graham's teachings have been around since the 1920's. At that time, speculation with financial markets was alive and well, and investing in stocks was deemed too risky for the average American. Graham believed in a more constructive approach to buying securities (stocks and bonds) and holding them for the long-term. He preached a method of due diligence and investing for significant periods of time as the optimal path to achieving investing success. As confidence in financial markets dwindled following the Great Depression, Graham refined his philosophy and wrote a textbook on value investing called *Security Analysis* to teach students how to identify and evaluate the highest quality businesses selling at the most attractive discounts to the market. In 1949, Graham wrote a book titled *The Intelligent Investor*, which is now known within investing circles as the "bible of value investing". Many investors have used Graham's methods to become successful, but no one was like Buffett. With the assistance of his long-time partner, Charlie Munger, and by adhering to Graham's teachings, albeit with his own refinements, Buffett became the world renowned value investor we know him as today.

What was this recipe that these investing trailblazers implemented that made them so successful? Was there a secret code or club required to become a successful value investor? The answer is NO. The basic idea behind value investing is as simple as this: buy a security when the intrinsic value of the security's assets is above the price being quoted by the market. Properly executing this idea and value investing in general can be broken down into three fundamental principles.

As the first principle of value investing, Graham emphasized that to avoid speculation, investing must be done with the mindset that when buying a stock, one really is purchasing a portion of the company. An investor is not simply buying something that shows up on his online brokerage account. He is buying a claim on the future performance of the company. There are two reasons one would buy this claim on a company: either because he believes that the company's eventual success will result in price appreciation, or because he has reason to expect dividend income (left over profits which a company will sometimes give back to the shareholders). Basically, the reason to buy into this business is because the market, or as Graham referred to it "Mr. Market," is offering an investor a low price for a business that is actually worth much more than today's market price.

You might ask, why would a profitable business be undervalued? Well, the answer is that markets are largely made up of millions of human participants. Since humans are involved, decisions are occasionally made without rational logic. In other words, people often overreact to news and trends. Because many market participants move in herds (a.k.a. peer pressure), the effects on market prices are often exaggerated in the short-term. This is where a value investor would swoop in and buy a great company with strong long-term prospects for cheaper than its actual worth. But notice how I said the prices are affected, not the value. This is an essential distinction for understanding the value investing philosophy. If one buys a stock of Apple at \$100, that is the price of the current market offering. The true intrinsic value of that stock is based on many variables (that I will leave for a

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different time), but is essentially the sum of all the future earnings of the company plus the fair value of all the company's assets.

This is where the second principle of value investing comes in. The difference between the intrinsic value of the stock and the current market price is called the margin of safety. Benjamin Graham in *The Intelligent Investor*, Chapter 20 calls the margin of safety "the secret of sound investment". The second principle which Graham taught was that whenever one buys an undervalued stock, it is vital to make sure there is a decent margin of safety to prevent downside risk. This provides the investor a humbling reminder that his estimate of intrinsic value is often subjective. Graham knew that investors would also be influenced by their own mental biases when calculating the value of a company, so he instituted the margin of safety, leaving a person with wiggle room if the stock isn't as highly valued as originally thought.

As an example, let's say an investor did his research and analysis of Company X, and concluded that the intrinsic value of the company (an estimate of the worth of all of the company's assets and future profits) is \$100. To his joy and excitement,

due to recent negativity about the economy, the price of Company X trades at \$75. This discount from the intrinsic value is what makes this company a legitimate bargain. After making sure nothing fundamentally has changed with Company X, he buys some shares. He then remembers Graham's margin of safety principle, and assigns a 30% margin of safety. This discounts the intrinsic value of \$100 to a \$70/share price. Now, let's say this estimation of intrinsic value was totally off because this is a young investor who is new to this and it takes making mistakes to learn a new craft. The margin of safety buffer essentially protects this investor from buying a company that wasn't a bargain after all.

Let's review: We have learned two out of the three major principles of value investing. One, an investor is supposed to buy and hold profitable companies that are underpriced in the market as a result of short-term market sentiment. Two, only buy these "bargain" companies when there is a decent margin of safety, so there's sufficient room for error. The third principle is the selling of value stocks, an essential rule to value investing for the long-term. Leaving a time horizon gives time for the stock to converge on its intrinsic value. Usually, a catalyst or event will increase the probability of this convergence occurring. If not, there's always the question of what will move a company's stock price up to its intrinsic value. Having a potential catalyst in mind is important to think about even before purchasing a stock. Patience and conviction in investment ideas are an imperative when investing

because often the market will go through many potentially painful fluctuations.

As long as the fundamentals and the investment thesis are in place, there really shouldn't be a reason to sell at a loss, but rather, one should consider buying more at the lower price, or averaging down (buying additional shares at the lower price, bringing down the average price of all the shares you've bought thus far). An important philosophy of Graham regarding the movement of the markets was, "In the short run, the market is a voting machine, but in the long run, it is a weighing machine." In other words, fundamentals are what drives a company's stock performance over a number of years. Therefore, the key to being a successful investor is to have the patience to tough out the market downturns.

These three principles are just a taste of what's required to be a successful value investor. The reason value investing is so important is because with it, anyone is capable of being successful, whether a seasoned banker or a college student. Although research and analysis will increase one's odds of success, luck will also play a role and will lead certain people to failure and lead others to success. Regardless of who is playing the market, it is important to keep in mind that aside from the dedication, having an area in which one is knowledgeable through experience (i.e. medicine, technology, retail, telecommunications, etc.) can offer a tremendous advantage and warrants the focus of the investor. This circle of competence allows one to identify top companies in an industry better than someone who lacks industry knowledge.

Finally, in addition to adhering to the three aforementioned principles, when doing research, always be sure to keep a long-term outlook, focus on what you know, and use critical thinking skills to analyze why a company is doing well or why it's not. Over 10-30 years, if you consistently find the winners, you won't only have amassed tremendous knowledge about companies and the world, but you will also be able to enjoy the fruits of your investing labor.

Happy Investing!

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