



President Berman and New York City officials inaugurate the 185th St Plaza. Article on Page 10.

## Vice President Rabbi Kenneth Brander to Leave YU

By Commentator Staff

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, current Vice President for University and Community Life at Yeshiva University, will leave his post around January 31st to assume a position in Israel. In an e-mail exchange with *The Commentator*, Rabbi Brander confirmed that he will be assuming the position of President and Rosh haYeshiva at Ohr Torah Stone, a network of 24 religious and educational institutions headquartered in Efrat, Israel.

Rabbi Brander's transition out of his current post will begin after the October holiday break. At this time, no replacement has been named for him and, according to one

SEE BRANDER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

## Yeshiva College Deans Ramp Up Efforts to Combat Cheating, Add Additional Proctors for Midterms

By Judah Stiefel

In a meeting between the Yeshiva College Deans and students on October 19th, it was announced that additional proctors will be added to various Yeshiva University undergraduate examinations beginning with ensuing midterms this Fall semester. In addition, classes will be moved to larger rooms for exams in order to create space between students who are taking exams and signs will be placed at the front of classrooms to encourage honesty.

Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, said, "Our intentions are not to identify and punish [cheaters], but to stop cheating from happening," suggesting that the additional proctors will preemptively discourage cheating. The new measures taken to upgrade academic integrity on campus stemmed from last year's dialogue carried out between students, deans, and academic advisors. Students had discussed the issues they had witnessed and heard about regarding students cheating off each other during tests, as well as the morality of test banks. Solutions such as extra supervision and modified tests were suggested.

SEE COMBAT CHEATING, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

# The EDITORIAL

## Chasing the Right Kind of Transparency

By Avi Strauss

Rare is it for a “good” concept to be absolutely good. Rarer still for something determined or voted to be good to only function for its intended outcome without unintended consequences.

So is the never-ending bid by undergraduate students for greater transparency from the university. Interest in, and a desire for, transparency may ebb and flow, but the underlying assumption of its pursuit is always aspirational: greater transparency will breed greater respect for the administration; greater transparency will lead to more student engagement in campus-wide activities; greater transparency will foster greater esteem by the students for undergraduate student institutions like the councils or the court.

Such was the subtext of last semester’s push for the “disclosure amendment,” requiring the release of the complete results, including per-candidate vote totals, from all future student council elections. It was also a key component of the desire by students to petition the student court to compel the

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### THE NEW TRANSPARENCY BIRTHED BY LAST SEMESTER’S AMENDMENT IS ESSENTIALLY SYMBOLIC, IN AN AREA WHERE CONCERN FOR STUDENT DIGNITY SHOULD BE PARAMOUNT.

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release of the Spring Election results, after the vagueness of the amendment allowed the Canvassing Committee and Office of Student Life to withhold such information.

I certainly sympathize with the general notion that transparency is good, and applaud most student efforts to pursue it. I also recognize that this paper is a unique platform in the pursuit of transparency, and believe we have a proven track record in that regard.

Nonetheless, I can’t help but feel that the disclosure amendment expended a tremendous amount of student-leader capital for an effort that will not noticeably enhance the student experience nor function as a real check on any power operating here.

For starters, it should be noted that the entire amendment process from last year was, ironically in this case, shrouded in secrecy. Although the student constitution calls for an open forum for amendments to be proposed and debated, last semester’s amendments were submitted online via google form and only became officially public on election day.

Anyone truly concerned about transparency in student government should have found that process troubling, as student leaders were able to hide potentially controversial changes to the student constitution from inevitable opposition. I know from conversations I had with amendment-proposers last semester that some of this was even done intentionally to inhibit opposition campaigning.

But I digress from lamenting the process to questioning the actual disclosure amendment itself.

Practically, the biggest short-term outcome of the entire amendment saga is that candidates and their peers may feel a sense of discomfort over the results—the winners are the winners whether by one vote or three hundred, but election losers will now have the quantity of their loss broadcast to the entire student body. Moreover, I find it troubling that, without an updated version of the student constitution prior to the time students had to declare their candidacy and no other prior informal, many of this semester’s candidates had no idea the results would be released after their election.

Yet even in the long-term, it is not clear to me what the purpose of releasing the results is going to accomplish. Yes, I am familiar with proponents of the amendments arguments that an awareness of the vote disparity between past candidates can inform future ones about their chances or how many of their friends and peers they need to rally to overcome past years’ deficits from similar candidates. But without any real metrics for quantifying votes outside of “Candidate X-297 votes, Candidate Y-283,” even with breakdowns by morning program and class, it will be next to impossible for candidates or their campaign managers to extrapolate meaningful data.

In such a small, and at times tribal undergraduate community, any given election may turn on a whole host of factors, from hometown to major to yeshiva to shiur to extra curricular activities to ystuds to elevator rides to likeability to, God forbid, qualifications and ideas. Any combination of these and other factors may influence any given election for any given position.

If that’s not convincing enough of an argument, because even understanding one of those factors slightly better would be “worth it” (a claim I’ll challenge shortly), I believe there’s a more obvious, practical impediment to the use of voter data for future student council elections. The majority of students in both undergraduate programs stay on campus for just three years. Additionally, with significant elements of the student body beginning and ending their undergraduate studies mid-year, the turnover from election to election is massive. By the time any aspiring candidate could try and connect any dots from year to year, the demographic makeup of the voters, and many of the reasons they voted for any unique candidate in any given year, will be entirely different.

Accordingly, the new transparency birthed by last semester’s amendment is essentially symbolic—a way for students to claim that our electoral process has now achieved a higher degree of “integrity” when the registration and voting system we already had, requiring a student ID number, was already more comprehensive than many voting protocols we use to elect the president of the United States.

And while gaining virtually nothing, we’ve shifted to a system that obligates transparency where concern for dignity should be paramount. Students running for council positions should be free to put forth their best effort without worrying about a crushing defeat or losing sleep over a slim loss.

But here’s the rub—this full appraisal of the consequences of newfound transparency on campus isn’t meant to criticize specific decisions or actions in a vacuum; rather, it should serve as a guideline for any student who seeks to generate greater transparency in any area on campus.

Clearing opacity requires concerted and sometimes relentless effort. And while it is every passionate student’s right to chase transparency and openness in their preferred segment of the university, it should be done with a degree of caution. Pause should be taken when new transparency may affect other students in ways the affected students can’t control (last year’s students, many of whom are now subject to a reality where election results are released did not get to vote on the disclosure amendment).

Similarly, the expenditure of valuable student energy towards transparency initiatives must be seen as a valuable asset. With only so much time on campus to learn who’s who and what’s what and how to actually push for and achieve change, those capable of making it happen need to train their fire wisely. Amending circumstances that may be susceptible to future student leaders whimsical change, like a decision to tear up the constitution and start over, may not be the most prudent use of our collective efforts.

Ultimately, we can’t become iconoclastic in our pursuit of transparency. While it remains an important aspect of legitimate student concern, and the path in which we typically achieve degrees of positive change, it also must be handled carefully and pursued in a thoughtful, judicious fashion.

# The COMMENTATOR

2017-2018

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*For 82 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.*

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**1 Dotard**  
Word that Kim Jong-Un calls Trump, meaning “an old person, especially one who has become weak or senile.”



**2 Autumn**  
The season where both the leaves, your grades, and your self esteem begin to fall.



**3 Torah Tours**  
Helping in-towners understand that Jews exist outside of New York since the 1990's.



**4 Fake Ari Berman**  
One of Business Insider's “50 most influential political pundits.” Perhaps YU hired the wrong AB?



**5 Neil Degrasse Tyson**  
Underratedly taught at YU in fall 2005.

**6 iPhones**  
Around for 10 years now and constantly making you feel insecure about your current phone.



**7 The Simpsons Season 29**  
Just wow.

# 7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN



**1 Yankees Lose in ALCS**  
After a stellar playoff run, their efforts in Game 7 deserve a non-sarcastic thumbs down.



**2 Rabbi Berman Allergic to Nuts**  
Presidents, they're just like us.



**3 Lulav and Etrog**  
Could possibly be the weirdest custom we have aside from when we smack the branches on the floor on Hoshana Raba.

**4 Three Day Yom Tov**  
Since we have had three three day Yom Tov's in a row it is now a chazaka, mandating all future Yom Tov's to last three days.

**5 Belfer Construction**  
Now might be as good a time as any to explore that not-so-secret underground tunnel between the Rubin Caf and Belfer.

**6 #BREXIT**  
The only Brexit that really matters is Rabbi Brander's unexpected departure.

**7 Shield News**  
The cornerstone of Yeshiva University broadcasting, a stud staple to our inboxes, and a former YU club that will proceed to be forgotten about forever.



## Fall 2017 Club Lists Released, Beren Adds 27 New Clubs

By Avi Strauss and Shoshy Ciment

The Beren Campus added 27 new clubs this semester, based on the finalized list of clubs released by the Office of Student Life. Some of these new clubs filled gaps left by the nine clubs that did not apply for renewal at the beginning of this year or were not renewed as clubs, while others represent new student interest areas of the Jewish community and the ever-changing technological front.

The newly-minted clubs bring the Beren campus club total to the highest it's been in at least three years. At 108 clubs, the total is up from 90 last year. Overall, the Wilf campus added three clubs, bringing its campus club total to 96.

Curiously, despite the increasing undergraduate student body of Sy Syms School of Business over the past five years, its club numbers have remained essentially flat over the last three years, and represent two of the three lowest totals amongst the seven councils.

The increase in clubs on the Beren Campus was the result of the Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) and the Torah Activities Council (TAC) adding ten and eight clubs, respectively. SCWSC accounts for the greatest share of clubs on campus, as the council sponsors 73 total clubs. This makes sense, given SCWSC shares many of the responsibilities of the uptown the Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) and the Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA), at the Beren campus.

Some of the new clubs that were added through SCWSC include the Diversity Club, the Movie Macs, Perspective Magazine, the Slam Poetry Club, and the Rube Goldberg Club. Amongst the terminated SCWSC clubs are Shield News, the Social Justice Society, and the Persian Culture Club. Although TAC's Eruv club was terminated this year, some of the new TAC sponsored clubs such as Arabic and the Rambam, Chabad Club Lamplighters, and the Meditation Society are up and running.

Clubs gain approval by submitting a petition with a minimum of 20 undergraduate signatures to the Office of Student Life. Those petitions are then voted on by the general assembly's of either campus (the council presidents and the Senior Chair of the Student Life Committee), who decide to approve or reapprove a club for official status based on a variety of factors like its performance in past semesters and its appropriateness for the YU undergraduate student body, among other reasons.

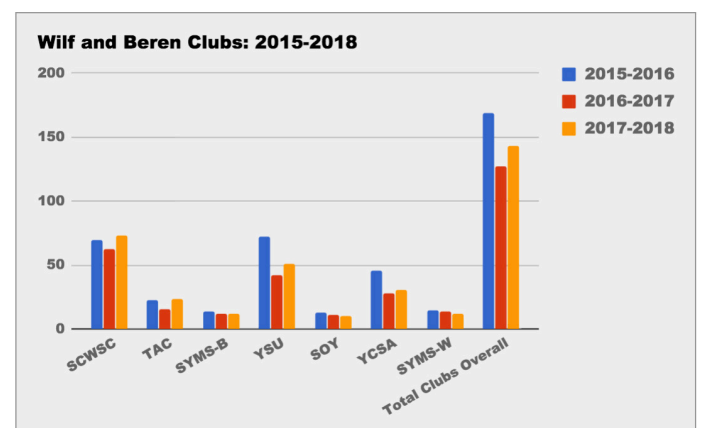
Once a club is approved, the presidents of the respective student councils work together to determine which clubs they will sponsor. Club sponsorship is a key way in which clubs acquire funding from the councils for their events during the year.

The number of clubs that have a presence on both the uptown and downtown campuses ticked up just slightly, to 56 from 54. Often, these clubs have co-presidents or liaisons between the campuses to coordinate larger, co-ed events like Sharsheret's Cake Wars.

Interestingly, it seems the notion of “co-sponsorship”—when multiple councils on the same campus commit to overseeing a club — has returned to the Wilf Campus. This year, eight Wilf clubs will be sponsored by at least two councils.

The only club with co-sponsorship at Beren is SHEM, the Student Holocaust Education Movement, which receives sponsorship from all seven undergraduate councils.

The Office of Student Life did not immediately return a request for comment.



## Zysman Hall Exterior to be Renovated, Honors Program Lounge to be Moved

By Ilan Hirschfield

Two renovation projects on the Wilf Campus will begin this semester as the facade and roof of Zysman Hall will be redone and the lounge for the Yeshiva College Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program will move from Furst Hall to Belfer Hall.

In an email sent in June to the YU community regarding the various renovation projects around the Wilf campus, including the 185th Street Plaza, the Amsterdam Mall, and Zysman Hall, Senior Vice President Joshua Joseph stated that “The roof of Zysman Hall is being renovated and the building’s facade continues to be reconditioned.” He also mentioned that “the sidewalk bridges [in front of Zysman

Hall] should be removed by the end of summer/early fall.”

The renovations were slated to begin around the end of the summer or beginning of the new academic year but have not yet started. When asked about the Zysman project’s status and what may have caused the delay, Matthew Yaniv, YU Director of Marketing and Communications, said that, “The project was supposed to begin over the summer but was unavoidably delayed,” he wrote in an email. “We hope to have it completed by year end.”

The Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program’s lounge will be moved this semester from the basement level of Furst Hall to the basement level of Belfer Hall. Dr. Shalom Holtz, the program’s director, said Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, notified him of the change at the beginning of the Fall 2017 semester. When asked why the lounge is being moved, Holtz explained that the university wanted to use the basement of Furst Hall for another project and therefore had to move the honors lounge elsewhere. YU will use money from a grant it received to turn the area currently used as the Honors Lounge into a technological research lab.

The Honors Program currently uses the space approximately every two weeks to hold “Honors luncheons”, events where various guests and YU professors speak to honors students about their academic work or other experiences, both personal and professional.

Holtz said that “I am very satisfied with the alternative we’ve been offered and we’ll use it to its full capacity.” The lounge was established after the program’s inception but has always existed in its current location.

These renovations continue the stream of infrastructure renovations the university launched on the Wilf campus this past year, including the new 185th Street Plaza, renovations to floors 5 and 5A of the Mendel Gottesman Library for Hebraica-Judaica, and renovations done to the original Amsterdam Mall.



## Makor College Experience Caters to Students with Intellectual Disabilities

By Avigayil Adouth

In Fall of 2017, Yeshiva University launched the Makor College Experience Program. The program was developed in partnership with Makor Disability Services, formerly known as Women’s League Community Residences, and aims to provide young men with intellectual disabilities a classic college experience.

The Makor College Experience is a three-year, non-degree seeking program which aims to mirror the classic Wilf Campus, Yeshiva College experience, allowing students who qualify for disability services to experience the full range of activities and programs available to students studying on the Wilf Campus.

The program has been in the works for two years and was spearheaded by Dr. Stephen Glicksman, an adjunct professor at Yeshiva College and Yeshiva University’s Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology. Dr. Glicksman is a licensed developmental psychologist and serves as the Director of Clinical Innovation at Makor Disability Services. He worked closely with Rabbi Penner, RIETS Dean and Rosh Yeshiva, to bring the program from concept to reality this past fall.

Makor Disability Services is an organization which seeks to meet the needs of the disabled community creatively and innovatively. According to Dr. Glicksman, when the idea to create a college experience program was first born, Yeshiva University was the natural choice. Makor’s administration felt that for many, Yeshiva University is a right of passage to which their parents, friends, and siblings had all been granted access.

“Going to YU is not the same thing as going to any college,” Dr. Glicksman explained. “It is really the next step in one’s growth within the Modern Orthodox Jewish Community, and we wanted to open that opportunity to people who until now might have been excluded from it.” This, combined with the fact that, according to Dr. Glicksman “there are a lot of people [within the

YU Community] who have experience working with individuals with specialized needs,” made Yeshiva University the perfect place to launch this revolutionary program.

The Makor College Experience is technically a day program of Makor Disability Services in partnership with Yeshiva University. This means that the organization pays YU for the rights to be on campus and benefit from their services. However, Makor students spend their days like any other student on the Wilf Campus. They live in Washington Heights, daven in regular YU minyanim, spend their mornings learning in the Beit Midrash, and attend specially designed classes in Furst Hall. Students have access to all YU facilities, as well as functioning dining cards, which include access to all of the restaurants on the YU meal plan.



The Makor Judaic Studies morning program, including its Beit Midrash component, is run by Rabbi Uri Feintuch a RIETS, Wurzweiler alumnus with a background in special education. The General Studies program, which takes place throughout the afternoon, adapts courses required by, or commonly taken by students on the Wilf Campus such as psychology, economics, and first-year writing, to make them more practical. Classes focus less on theory and more on the practical aspects such as developing interpersonal skills, money management, and resume or cover letter writing. In addition to formal classroom style learning, the General Studies program also has a vocational element. This added piece of programming is

designed to teach things such as workplace etiquette and interviewing skills, as well as to help students explore their career options. Dr. Glicksman told *The Commentator*, “At the end of the three-year program people are going to graduate with a certificate of completion, a resume of all their work experiences over the course of the program, and a letter of reference for a job, hoping to culminate in some sort of employment.”

Students will reside in an off-campus dormitory tentatively named Makor Hall, which is right around the corner from the Wilf Campus. The dorms opened immediately after the holiday break, which is expected to create an increase in the possibility for inclusion of Makor students on the Wilf campus social scene.

“So much of what the young men of Makor are looking for can be found on the Wilf campus,” said Rabbi Penner. “Most of all – their peers are here.” The program aims to create a sense of community and camaraderie for a demographic to whom this might normally be denied. The Makor College Experience program has put forth notices, via email and across campus, for YU student involvement opportunities in initiatives such as potential lunch buddies or dinner companionship programs and is trying to facilitate Night Seder *chavrutot* between Makor and Yeshiva University students.

According to Rabbi Penner, Makor Students “have already become a part of the fabric of the campus.” He said, “They can be seen at minyanim, in the cafeteria, in the *beis medrash* and in the new 185th street plaza. They bring joy to the campus, always smiling, so glad to be here!”

Dr. Glicksman mentioned that Makor feels that they “have been embraced by the community” and commented that “it is nice to see our students hanging out on the pedestrian mall with their friends in the college, from camp, home, and other programs.” Makor hopes to see Wilf Campus student involvement increase as the academic year picks up.

## YU Introduces New Joint Electrical Engineering Program with Tel Aviv University

By Yossi Zimilover

A new partnership between Yeshiva University and Tel Aviv University will now allow incoming electrical engineering majors to complete their studies at TAU's International School of Engineering. After the completion of their studies, students will receive both a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from TAU and a Bachelor of Arts degree from YU.

In a correspondence with *The Commentator*, Professor Ehud Heyman, Head of the International School of Engineering at Tel Aviv University, stated that "students will study for two years at YU, during which they will study the basic courses in Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science, in addition to their liberal art studies and *Limudei Kodesh*, and will then study for three years in TAU..."

Professor Heyman noted that the partnership is of similar nature to the joint program that YU currently runs with Columbia University, in which students receive a B.S. degree in Engineering from Columbia and a B.A. from YU. He suggested that the TAU program is intended for students who are interested in studying in Israel for a variety of reasons such as immigration, increased contact with the Israeli industry, or simply the desire to study in



*Eretz Yisrael.*

"The faculty and the university responded to this challenge with the strong desire to connect with the educated Orthodox stream in the U.S.," he explained. "The program is designed to provide these students with scientific and engineering education on the same high level used in the engineering faculty of Tel Aviv University."

Dr. Edward Berliner (Director of Science Management/Clinical Professor of Physics at YU) described what was behind the creation of the partnership and how the cooperative degree program came to fruition.

"We have always had some students interested in engineering and some interested in *aliyah*," he said. "The

problem we tried to address is that because industry connections are often local, attending engineering school in the US might mean that you would be on your own during your job search in Israel." Dr. Berliner detailed one the main benefits of the program as the opportunity to build a strong professional network while still in undergraduate years. This will allow for students interested in working in Israel to transition more seamlessly into the Israeli job market. He added that a few students have already demonstrated interest in the program, particularly those who are currently in Israel who were originally planning to remain there for college due to *aliyah* aspirations.

The partnership between YU and TAU is reflective of multiple goals that President Berman presented at his investiture speech on September 10. He stressed both the need to create new opportunities for students in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, known collectively as STEM, and to help build the modern State of Israel.

"We certainly encourage students to move to Israel and we encourage those who live outside of Israel to devote their time and resources to help Israel further its role as a shining light to humanity," Berman stated at his investiture.

## New Magazine "Perspective" Brings Positive Spirit to the Beren Campus

By Ilan Atri

Perspective, a new magazine on campus with the goal of providing a unique reading experience and outlet for the YU community, has just been launched at Stern College.

Perspective is a venue for students mainly on the Beren Campus to express themselves creatively in both a serious and fun way. The goal of the magazine is to bring a more positive spirit to the Beren Campus for both the writers and the readers.

While other magazines aim to inform or entertain their readers, Perspective is aiming for something greater than that. Rebecca Kerzner, the Editor In Chief and founder of the magazine, stated that her vision for the magazine was to "provide a space of voices for readers and writers to build a community upon the topics that are discussed in the articles." She was concerned that the image YU attempts to portray is a homogenous representation. Therefore Kerzner wanted to start a publication that omits the political and controversial aspects that she felt the current publications focus on, and instead aimed to depict the side of YU that is not usually publicized by the university. She aims to cater to the students that don't feel they are represented in the school's media or feel forgotten.

So far, Kerzner has received a lot of positive feedback. Beren Campus students have expressed a sense of relief and thankfulness for the articles that have been posted so far. These students, along with Kerzner, feel that the topics the magazine aims to focus on are topics that needed to be discussed and were required to fill a niche that has

long been empty on campus. A few of the articles include Modest Fashion, A Beginners Guide to YU/Stern, and Social Media: An Alternate Reality.

Sarah Gold, a senior in Stern College, commented, "Perspective is the breath of fresh air that the YU-sphere has been waiting for. Its genuine and upbeat vibe radiates

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**"WHILE OTHER MAGAZINES AIM TO INFORM OR ENTERTAIN THEIR READERS, PERSPECTIVE IS AIMING FOR SOMETHING GREATER THAN THAT."**

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off the page. I would compare it to reading a diary about the ups and downs of college life, that leaves me with the recognition that my experiences are universal, and that I'm part of something bigger than myself."

According to Kerzner, part of the inspiration for Perspective comes from other platforms of confessional media like Hercampus, Upwrite Magazine, Shine, and Collective Hub. These all follow an emerging wave of online media labeled confessional, which combines the experience of the author with their own feelings behind that experience. However, Perspective started as something different. At first, it was merely a class project created by Kerzner in a course called Magazine Journalism

she took last semester. It focused on maintaining stress and how to deal with it. But, after another student in the class displayed interest in continuing the magazine, the focus was broadened and Perspective went public.

The magazine is run by Kerzner, along with two head editing and design partners. They are Lilly Gelman, a junior majoring in biology and minoring in writing in Stern College, and Shira Feen, a senior majoring in graphic design and minoring in marketing also in Stern College. The magazine also has mainly junior or senior English majors on staff, and they supply the articles and images. Kerzner mentioned, "Perspective also accepts contributing authors for specific articles if someone has a topic they want to write about. The writing is open to both the women's and men's campuses." So far, the magazine has been mainly composed of female writers.

Perspective will be published online once a month with 5-10 articles each month. However the first two issues were released within a smaller time span. Currently, the editors run an Instagram and Facebook page and post daily articles, quotes, and inspiration. The handle for Instagram is @yuperspectivemag and the Facebook page is called PerspectiveYU. Additionally, the editors aim to publish a print version this year for collecting and cherishing purposes for the writers and readers.

Although the magazine gained approval from Dean Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students, over the summer, it has not received any official funding yet and therefore is not technically an official YU Magazine.



## ***YU's Assistant Vice President of Governmental Affairs Phil Goldfeder Departs to Work for Bank***

By Lilly Gelman

Phil Goldfeder is leaving Yeshiva University. Goldfeder joined YU in November 2016 to serve the newly-created position of Assistant Vice President for Government Relations. According to a YU News article from June 2016, Goldfeder was hired to “strengthen and develop relations between the University and federal, state, and local governments, and monitor legislation and policies that could have an impact on YU and its programs.” He departs after just over one year.

The Times Ledger reported on September 29th that Goldfeder will join Cross River Bank in New Jersey as their VP of Government Affairs, working to strengthen the bank's ties with government agencies. Goldfeder will rejoin the ranks of Cross River, albeit now with a different title than before, having previously worked as a consultant for the bank in 2015.

When asked about his decision to leave Yeshiva University, Goldfeder responded with warm words. “There is so much that I will miss at Yeshiva University,” said Goldfeder, “particularly my time working with



and mentoring students. I joined YU to enhance our government and community affairs efforts and we have far exceeded every expectation.” Goldfeder added, “My departure is bittersweet, but I intend to stay engaged to ensure that our foundation, framework, and progress we've created lead to continued growth and success for years to come.”

Mr. Goldfeder has begun his transition out of his role at YU, but there is no exact date for when he will fully vacate his position as Assistant Vice President for Government Relations at Yeshiva University.

Goldfeder began his career in public service as a community liaison for the New York City Council, continuing on to serve as Queens liaison for the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit under Michael Bloomberg as well as director of intergovernmental affairs for New York State Senator Chuck Schumer. Goldfeder in September 2011 was elected New York State Assemblyman. In this role he concentrated on improvements in education, transportation, and, in late 2012, on recovery efforts for Hurricane Sandy. Goldfeder left public service in 2016 to join Yeshiva University.

In a statement discussing Goldfeder's departure, Andrew Lauer, Vice President for Legal Affairs at Yeshiva University, said: “While we are sad to see Phil leave, we are proud of the success and growth he has helped us achieve. Phil is a caring, energetic and dedicated professional and has added so much during his time at YU. Though we have worked with our incredible elected officials for many years, Phil helped us expand and deepen those relationships. We will certainly continue to build on the momentum Phil set in motion and look forward to continued success in the future.”

During his tenure at YU, Goldfeder was responsible for bringing various New York City Councilmen and New York State Assemblymen to campus, such as Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, whose 10th district of New York City includes YU, and Councilman Mark D. Levine, who was the subject of an anti-Semitic, “greedy Jewish landlords” attack in a campaign last April. Goldfeder also helped student leaders coordinate programming with local public servants like the New York Police and Fire Departments.

Goldfeder also secured close to \$2 million in grants for Yeshiva University projects. In August 2017, the State Senator Todd Kaminsky Funds Program granted Sy Syms School of Business \$350,000 to begin the Israel Business Incubator program connecting YU students with Israeli

Startups, and, in September 2017, the Max and Celia Parnes Family Psychological and Psychoeducational Services Clinic of Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology received a \$1,025,000 grant from the New York City Capital Budget, allowing the program to utilize a newly renovated space and expand the amount of families it is able to serve. In addition, Goldfeder secured \$1 million

**“I JOINED YU TO ENHANCE OUR  
GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY  
AFFAIRS EFFORTS AND WE  
HAVE FAR EXCEEDED EVERY  
EXPECTATION.”**

**-PHIL GOLDFEDER**

worth of grants which has yet to be announced by Yeshiva University.

Goldfeder in May 2017 recruited YU students for a public use study of Fort Tryon Park in Washington Heights, for the purpose of helping with field research and data collection for New York City. That same month Goldfeder invited Yeshiva students to join the Community League of the Heights and Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez in a community cleanup project.

In December 2016, shortly after beginning his career at YU, Goldfeder was honored by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer at the Jewish Heritage and Culture Celebration. According to a YU News article at the time, the event recognized his “commitment to the Jewish community and the people of New York City, as well as his contributions to both over the course of his career in public service.” Goldfeder in March 2017 arranged for a guided tour of Sing Sing Correctional Facility for a group of YU students and faculty members. Goldfeder delivered a lecture to the men of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program in April 2017 entitled “Albany to Oklahoma: Being An Orthodox Jew in Politics,” where he discussed his experiences as a religious politician.

*This article has been updated since its original publication to include additional information.*

## ***Computer Science Experts to Lecture on Data Science***

By Yossi Zimilover

On October 25th, Research Director of Gartner Inc. Dr. Erick Brethenoux and Chief Technology Officer of Mayo Clinic Steve Demuth are set to headline an event on the Wilf campus on data science and its impact on the modern world. Dr. Brethenoux will lecture about “The Data Science Revolution: The Future of Analytics is on a Need-To-Know Basis,” after which Mr. Demuth will speak on the topic of “Realizing the Power of Data in Medicine.” The lectures will take place in Furst Hall Room 501 at 5pm that evening and are open to all.

Dr. Brethenoux plans to discuss the significant impact data-driven machines have on decisions and the additional influence of artificial intelligence systems in the future. He will also detail how organizations can position themselves for success within the current technological and economic revolution. Brethenoux currently specializes in machine learning, artificial intelligence, and applied cognitive computing.

Mr. Demuth will talk about the significance of data within the medical world. He will describe how using data science to harness large amounts of raw data can alter the world of medicine and help doctors, nurses, and patients. He previously served at IBM as Chief Architect and Senior Technical Staff Member in Decision Management.

Judah Diament, Program Director of Undergraduate Data Science and Co-Chair of the Yeshiva College

Computer Science department, stated “given that we are now offering both a data science track in the computer science major as well as a series of classes for non-majors, we want to give students the opportunity to understand if/why they should care about data science...[and] consider going into it as a profession...even if they are not going into it professionally, [they should] understand how it is impacting the industries/professions that they do plan to pursue and what skills they need to succeed.”

Diament added that Dr. Brethenoux and Mr. Demuth are both members of an Industry Advisory Board of “highly accomplished researchers and executives with whom we have created and reviewed our plans for computer science at Yeshiva College.” He explained that “Our goal is to provide an education that would make every one of these board members want to hire our Computer Science graduates. As such, we get input, guidance, and feedback from them to help insure that.”

He expressed appreciation towards Dean Karen Bacon and Provost Selma Botman for their “amazing support” and for making it “possible for us to do all that we've done so far and plan to do in the

next couple of years.” Diament also thanked President Ari Berman, claiming he “has been extremely supportive as well, [and whose] address at the investiture indicates that we can expect more good things in this area to continue to happen.”

The event comes shortly after President Berman's recent investiture, where he pledged to create new opportunities for YU students in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, known collectively as STEM, and highlighted the demand for data analytics in the marketplace of the future.



## ***YU Soccer Teams Receive United Soccer Coaches' Team Academic Award, Women's Team GPA Exceeds Men's by 12.4%***

By Chana Weinberg

The Yeshiva University's men and women's soccer teams have received the United Soccer Coaches' Team Academic Award for the 2016-2017 season. United Soccer Coaches gives this award to all college teams who are represented in the United Soccer Coaches association who have a grade point average above 3.0. The YU men's team GPA was 3.14 and the women's GPA was 3.53, 12.4% higher than the men's. This marks the



third season in a row that YU has won this award.

There were 837 teams who received the honor, but only 213 schools had both their men and women's team qualify. Of those 837 teams who won, 549 the women's team and 299 were men's teams.

"Our student-athletes are unique in that they have mastered the ability to excel on the field of play and in the classroom," Athletics Director Joe Bednarsh told *The Commentator*. YU student-athletes are especially unique because in addition to having secular classes and practice for NCAA-level athletics, student-athletes at YU need to balance in their Judaic Studies courses as well.

Mr. Bednarsh declined to comment on the wide gap between the men's and women's GPAs.

YU Men's Soccer Coach, Joshua Pransky, attributed the large gap between the men's and women's GPA's to the large amount of international students on his men's team. On the 2016-2017 men's roster, 10 out of the 22 players listed at YUMacs.com were international students coming from countries including Australia, Spain, Venezuela and Israel. That same year, the women's team had only two players of their 22 from outside the US and only one player, Anabella Berti (class of 2020) of Venezuela, came from a non-English speaking country.

"[Being from a foreign country] sometimes shows in their grades in their first few semesters on campus which shows up on our team GPA," Pransky said. Though the

men's GPA may have been weighed down because of international students adjusting to life in the US, Coach Pransky reminded *The Commentator* that "they keep

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**"OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES ARE UNIQUE IN THAT THEY HAVE MASTERED THE ABILITY TO EXCEL ON THE FIELD OF PLAY AND IN THE CLASSROOM."**

**-ATHLETICS DIRECTOR JOE BEDNARSH**

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their grades high enough to win awards," so, as a school, we should be "proud" of this accomplishment.

Women's soccer coach Marc Zarhest also expressed his pride in his team's accomplishment.

"The fact that they succeed both on and off [the field] is the real win," he said.

### ***COMBAT CHEATING, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE***

"It's time to act," asserted Associate Dean of Yeshiva College Dr. Fred Sugarman.

For now, two to four additional proctors will be added to the midterms of some of the largest YC classes, where midterms are just beginning. Classes in Biology, Psychology, Calculus, Economics, and parts of the YC Core will be receiving additional proctors to assist professors in monitoring the classrooms during the tests.

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**"OUR INTENTIONS ARE NOT TO IDENTIFY AND PUNISH [CHEATERS], BUT TO STOP CHEATING FROM HAPPENING."**

**-DR. KAREN BACON, DEAN OF UNDERGRADUATE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

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Many of the proctors will be semicha and kollel students, as part of an effort by the Dean's Office to explicitly make the connection between ethical Jewish behavior and academic integrity. Some midterms will also be moved to larger rooms in order to provide more space to separate students taking tests.

Dean Sugarman made it clear that the steps to improve the academic integrity in YU would not stop simply with the addition of new proctors. The Dean's Office plans to continue to upgrade and reinforce the system in place and to continue the active process of fostering integrity within the school. Another meeting will likely happen between students and administration near the end of the semester to perpetuate the initiative and evaluate its progress.

Dean Bacon, in coordination with faculty members, is preparing signs that will eventually be placed in the front of classrooms in order to foster an atmosphere of integrity among students. Signs will include a mix of Hebrew quotes from Jewish sources and English phrases intended to remind students that they carry a dual responsibility to act ethically from both an interpersonal and religious dimension.

Dean Sugarman said in the meeting, "The students here aren't just good guys but excellent guys. But sometimes when there's poison it spreads and affects

the water." The Dean's Office is attempting to improve the academic integrity system within YU, and Dean Sugarman emphasizes students have the greatest ability to create an environment of integrity. Dean Jacobson said, "The initiative is coming from students."

Over orientation for incoming students at the beginning of the academic year, a program was implemented in which students, rabbis, and faculty were placed in groups, given prompts with nuanced integrity related dilemmas, and discussed the prompts were discussed. The program was meant to begin a dialogue between the different components which make up the university and get participants thinking about what the word integrity implies. The Dean's Office believes it will provide greater clarity for students and faculty when faced with difficult moral decisions. Said Dean Jacobson, "We feel really good about a program during orientation in which we distributed scenarios [to groups of students, professors, and rabbis] which did not have simple answers."

While action is already being taken on this initiative

in the form of extra proctors, signs, and moving test locations, students and administration continued to talk about ways to improve schoolwide integrity further. During the meeting, Editor-in-Chief of *The Commentator* Avi Strauss suggested, "There should be some avenue for students to volunteer information and to see results come from that information." Discussion ensued regarding ways by which to encourage students to voice their concerns with regards to cheating. Pre-Health Advisor Lolita Woodhill posed the question, "How can we make students feel comfortable getting involved?"

Dean Sugarman said, "We are going to look at the existing [academic] integrity document", which was last updated in 2013. The six page document, which can be found on the YU website, states the school's policies towards cheating, plagiarizing, and other actions considered academically dishonest. As of now, no specifics have been given by the Deans as to how the document may be updated.



## Founder of Jewish Watchdog Group Accuses YU of 'Malfeasance of the Highest Order,' Protests Center for Jewish History

By Shoshy Ciment

Richard Allen, the founder of the Jewish Watchdog group JCCWatch.org that organized a protest at the Center for Jewish History on October 18, has been rebuffed by Yeshiva University for support.

The protest, co-sponsored by Americans For a Safe Israel and JCCWatch.org, was originally in response to an upcoming event in which the Center would be hosting the anti-Zionist organization Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) on Oct. 26 in a lecture entitled, "The Balfour Declaration: Support for a Jewish Homeland or Jewish State? Is there a difference?" Though the event has been canceled, the protest is calling for the dismissal of the newly instated President and CEO of the Center for Jewish History, David Myers, who Allen says "is working diligently to assist groups that push the BDS agenda."

BDS, or Boycott Divest and Sanctions, is an economic campaign led by non-governmental organizations that supports a boycott against Israeli goods and companies to help end the occupation in the West Bank.

Jewish Voice for Peace was named one of the ten most influential and active anti-Israel organizations by the Anti-Defamation League in 2013. When Allen reached out to Yeshiva University to support the rally against the Center for hosting the BDS-supporting JVP, he was met with what he called, "a deafening silence."

"We are very disappointed at the fact the YU has not taken a public stance and has allowed these nefarious activities against the state of Israel to take place in silence," Allen remarked.

To Allen, the anti-Israel events at the Center for Jewish History are all symptoms of the main problem that stems from the President and CEO, David Myers, who was announced as president of the Center in June.

"He fosters the climate that allows these programs to be planned, accepted and promoted," Allen said. "He must go."

David Myers is a highly regarded scholar in the field of Jewish intellectual and cultural history. In addition to



his position at the Center for Jewish History, Myers is the Sady and Ludwig Kahn Professor of Jewish History at UCLA and an elected Fellow of the American Academy for Jewish Research. Although Myers claims he opposes BDS, he is on the board of directors of the New Israel Fund, which does not oppose BDS, and is on the advisory board of J-Street, which does not oppose BDS that advocates for a two-state solution.

The Center for Jewish History is composed of five organizations and includes the Yeshiva University Museum. Each organization is involved with the selection of the President of the Center for Jewish History. Allen voiced his displeasure with Yeshiva University's involvement with the selection of Myers as President, claiming that the board of Yeshiva University must have known about Myers' anti-Zionist tendencies before they voted him in.

"For them to allow him to take that position is malfeasance of the highest order," said Allen. "They can't say they didn't know."

The Yeshiva University Museum released the following statement in regards to the appointment of David Myers:

"Yeshiva University Museum joins its fellow partners in the Center for Jewish History in expressing confidence in Dr. David Myers as its new president and CEO. Dr. Myers is an eminent and widely respected historian and scholar whose academic work and expertise in modern Jewish intellectual and cultural history make him the right person to lead the Center to fulfill its mission."

The Board of Directors of the Center for Jewish History has publicly reaffirmed its support for Myers on the Center's website. The website also features statements of support for Myers from world-renowned scholars in the

US and Israel.

"We call on all who believe in the importance of Jewish history to join us in us in supporting the Center and its distinguished President," reads the Board's statement.

Despite its support for Myers, Yeshiva University openly embraces Zionist ideals and a close connection to Israel. In his investiture address on September 10, President Ari Berman, an Israeli citizen, spoke about the importance of building the modern state of Israel.

"We certainly encourage students to move to Israel and we encourage those who live outside of Israel to devote their time and resources to help Israel further its role as a shining light to humanity," Berman said in his address.

Further, the Yeshiva University Museum is hosting Dr. Daniel Gordis, senior vice president and Koret Distinguished Fellow at Shalem College in Jerusalem, to discuss the meaning and significance of the Balfour Declaration on Monday, October 30.

While some view this as evidence of the same anti-Zionist agenda that seems to be a common phenomenon in the mainstream media and on college campuses today, Gordis, whose lecture will take place in the Center, will discuss a time where Zionism had the backing of the world.

"We are so used to Israel being on the defensive that we forget that there is an era where it wasn't like that," Gordis commented.

Regarding the rally that will take place at the Center, Gordis did not comment on the perceived anti-Zionist agenda of the Center.

"All important issues deserve to be looked at in a variety of different directions," said Gordis. "The value of discussion helps you see viewpoints on both sides that matter."

## YU Improves in WSJ/Times Higher Education Rankings, Places 119th

By Commentator Staff

Yeshiva University ranked 119th in a just-released report by the Wall Street Journal and Times Higher Education. This represented a significant improvement, as last year YU placed 141st in the same WSJ/Times ranking. Harvard University bested all other Ivy League and top-tier universities to take the ranking's top spot.



YU's improved ranking comes just two weeks after U.S. News downgraded the university 28 places to 94th. Yeshiva had consistently placed in and around the Top 50 for a decade in that ranking prior to last year's fall to 66th.

This improvement also comes on the heels of the investiture of YU's fifth president, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, whose inaugural address called for bringing the university into the "World of Tomorrow" by recognizing evolving industries and marketplaces that Yeshiva students must be prepared to enter.

YU's Office for Communication and Public Affairs did not immediately respond to comment on the improved ranking.

To produce the rankings, each school is assessed on four categories: resources, such as finance per student and faculty per student; engagement, measured in part by student recommendation; outcomes, including graduation rate and alumni salaries; and diversity among student and faculty educational, national, and ethnic backgrounds. Unsurprisingly, YU scored lowest in the diversity category, gaining a mere 3.8/10. Resources was its highest scoring category, winning 23.8 out of 30 points.

Data for the rankings was collected from directly surveying at least 50 students per college as well as from United States government data collections, such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

YU's increase was the result of mild improvements in its outcomes, resources, and engagement rankings.



## New Lounge on Beren Campus to be Opened in Stanton Hall

By Esti Kuperman

Yeshiva University is in the process of transforming part of the third floor of Stanton Hall into a student lounge, which will be accessible at all hours and available for use by all students.

According to Dean Karen Bacon, this new lounge came after a request from the Beren Student Life Committee for more lounge space in Stanton Hall. The Dean's Office helped create the lounge by repurposing a rarely-used computer room located on the third floor of Stanton Hall (245 Lexington) on the Beren Campus.

"The original conversion of the room was done by Mr. Joe Cook, head of facilities, with support from the SCW Dean's Office," Bacon explained. The room has been closed up for the past few years, and is being reopened specifically for the purpose of the lounge.

Stanton Hall, located on the Beren Campus, is one of two academic buildings that students occupy every day. Although the 245 Lexington café is often a great place to hang-out, it's hours are limited. It is not open from 3:15-5:00 in the afternoon and is closed for the evening starting

at 8 pm (Thursdays at 7).

"There really are no places on campus to really hang out with friends, talk on the phone, or study in a group," said Kira Paley, a SCW junior. "Even the downtown library is hard to be in because it's so quiet, and you can't hang out, have meetings, or study with others there unlike the uptown library."

Dean Bacon says the new lounge will be repainted and

was honored by Yeshiva University during last year's Chanukah dinner as a longtime supporter and donor to the institution. Her daughter, Esther Lerer, was interested in making a donation to Stern in her mother's honor. Lerer spoke to Dean Bacon and together they decided where her donation could be best put to use.

"I presented Mrs. Lerer with some options for the gift and she was excited about supporting the refurbishing

### "THE DEAN'S OFFICE HELPED CREATE THE LOUNGE BY REPURPOSING A RARELY-USED COMPUTER ROOM LOCATED ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF STANTON HALL (245 LEXINGTON) ON THE BEREN CAMPUS."

will include couches, tables, and window treatments.

The funding for the lounge came from Esther Lerer, a Stern College Graduate and daughter of Gita and Jack Nagel. Gita and Jack Nagel are longstanding members of the Yeshiva University Board of Trustees. They donated the Jack and Gitta Nagel Family Atrium, as well as Student Commons "Nagel's Bagels" and Mrs. Gitta Nagel

of the lounge," said Dean Bacon. The Beren Student Life Committee has already begun working alongside student affairs staff to completely furnish and design of the room to be the most fitting and comfortable for the students.

As for the expected completion date for the lounge, Becky Ciment, Assistant Director of Housing and Residence life, said that the university is working diligently. "I don't have an end date yet," Ciment said, "But it is likely it will be completed by winter break, although we are hoping for before!"

SCW junior Ilana Levy was ecstatic to hear about the new lounge. "As a commuter, the lounge is a great outlet to de-stress and organize my thoughts since I don't have a dorm room," she said. "Not only that, it's a great way to meet new people".

The new lounge will also add a social aspect to daily life at Stern, something many students feel is missing.

"I think it's perfect because there's no other real lounge in the school," said SCW junior Rebecca Yizhaky. "Sure, people go to the study room and hang out, or the *beis midrash*, but that's not their purpose. Now we finally have a place to catch up with friends in a voice louder than a whisper."

Photo Credit: Yeshiva University Plexxus



## Fall Wilf Student Council Elections Under Way as Full Election Results to be Released for the First Time

By Avi Strauss

With the onset of the fall student council elections on October 24th on the Wilf campus, the uptown student body is gearing up for its first election since the passage of three amendments to the student constitution last spring. This election marks the formal implementation of two of those amendments, the addition of a PR Secretary to the Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) board and the requirement for the canvassing committee to release the vote totals for each candidate. Last semester, in a test of undergraduate student civics, the Office of Student Life defied a Student Court decision which determined the amendment did in fact apply to the spring election, the same election in which the amendment was passed.

Seven student council positions are up for grabs in this election, an unusually high number for a fall semester. The glut of vacancies is attributable to several circumstances, including the creation of the aforementioned PR secretary position, and the absence of candidates or successful write-ins for the positions of Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) Vice President of Clubs, senior and junior class representatives, and SOY's JSS representative.

The other two positions up for election are Sophomore and Freshmen Class Representative, which are the standard fall semester positions, available mainly to First Time on Campus (FTOC) students.

Currently, however, three of those positions (Senior and Freshman Representative, and JSS representative) have no declared candidates. These positions can be filled by write-in candidacies, should a write-in receive a minimum of 20 votes and the highest write-in total.

While it is unclear the last time so many positions were

up for election in the fall, it is clear the seven positions up for grab is the highest total in the last five years.

Last semester, passage of the amendment requiring the Canvassing Committee, which runs student elections, to disclose details of the election results sparked controversy when students insisted the language of the amendment included the election (spring 2017) in which it was ratified. However, the Canvassing Committee understood the amendment as applying to future elections and not the election in the spring and simply released the winning candidates, as it had done in the past.

This ambiguity and confusion led senior David Rubinstein, Senior News Editor of *The Commentator* at the time and current Managing Editor of *The Commentator*, to challenge the Canvassing Committee in the Student Court, the relatively obscure, five member panel of upperclassman appointed by the YSU president charged with interpreting the student constitution and ruling on constitutional disputes between students.

While the court sided with Rubinstein, compelling the Canvassing Committee to disclose the full election results, ultimately the Office of Student Life declined to release vote totals for each candidate. The OSL, which was the only entity in possession of the full results of the election, said it would do so in all future elections, contravening the Student Court's decision.

Nonetheless, of the seven candidates currently running for a position, five were unaware that the per-candidate vote totals would be released after the election as a result of last semester's push for greater electoral transparency. The candidates' unfamiliarity with the new rule is due to the fact that the Wilf Student Constitution has yet to be updated to reflect the amendments.

Of those candidates, some expressed concern for the change. "It'd definitely be embarrassing to get blown out," said Akiva Clair, a candidate for the SOY PR Secretary position.

Daniel Ferber, a candidate for Sophomore Class Representative, echoed that sentiment when commenting "It can definitely be awkward if someone only gets a few votes."

Both candidates affirmed that they would have run for their respective positions even if they had known about the impending election disclosures prior to announcing their candidacies.

In order to avoid conflicts similar to those that sparked the court case last semester, the OSL turned over control of the election program used for student council elections to the student run Canvassing Committee.

"The Canvassing Committee now oversees all aspects of the election process, including the decision to fully disclose of all results. How and when the results are communicated to the student body will be their call," said OSL Director Josh Weisberg and Director of Student Events Linda Stone in a joint statement to *The Commentator*.

That determination will be made following this coming Tuesday's election, which will determine the rest of student council for this academic year. In this regard, the OSL was hopeful for a successful year, no matter the outcome or the disclosed results.

"We see every day the important role that student government plays in creating a campus environment reflective of our diverse student community. We look forward to continuing on this positive path, supporting and working alongside all Student Council members."

## YU Dedicates 185th Street Plaza with Opening Ceremony

By Nolan Edmonson

The 185th street plaza was officially opened in a ribbon cutting ceremony on the plaza on Tuesday, September 26 at 1:00 p.m. by President Ari Berman and various state, city, and local officials. The ceremony was conducted by Vice President of Legal Affairs Avi Lauer.

A crowd of students, administrators, and government officials gathered in the nearly completed plaza to incorporate the space into the Wilf campus and officially open the space to the public. During the half-hour ceremony, speeches were given by President Berman and NYC government officials including City Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, State Senator Marisol Alcantara and Assemblywoman for the 72nd district of New York Carmen De LaRosa. The speakers highlighted the significant relationship between the Jewish community of YU and the large Dominican population of Washington Heights, noting that both communities have been instrumental in shaping Washington Heights and the greater New York City.

In his remarks, President Berman noted that the plaza was the culmination of years of vision, hard work, and fundraising. He added that this plaza should not only

be viewed as an addition to the YU community but as an addition to the Washington Heights community as a whole. "It's a place for our entire community," President Berman said. "This is a special place," he added, "Yeshiva University is a special place and our mission of thinking [is] not just of ourselves but how we affect our larger community around us and our broader society." Rabbi Berman stated he hopes that the plaza will continue to be "a place of quiet and of peace and tranquility in the midst of this bustling city."

Many of the speakers noted the importance of the plaza for reasons beyond its ability to unite the disparate elements of the community. Councilman Rodriguez spoke about the importance of the plaza as a way of providing security and peace of mind to local residents. "This is not only about making a place for the pedestrians," Councilman Rodriguez remarked, "but about the safety of this institution. We have to be sure that we are prepared for [whoever may go] after any of us."

The project took over a year to complete and is still not entirely finished. It involved significant state funding as well as donations from private investors to fund the \$3.6 million project. Assistant VP of Government Affairs Phil Goldfeder, who has begun his transition out of his

role at YU, said that the completion of the plaza would be a fantastic addition to a growing campus and would give students and members of the Washington Heights community the ability to interact with each other in new ways.

**"IT'S A PLACE FOR OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY!"**

**-PRESIDENT ARI BERMAN**

YSU President Zach Serman gave remarks on behalf of the student population of the Wilf campus. Expressing gratitude for the efforts that went into making the plaza possible, Serman said that a communal space can speak volumes about the values and ideas of an institution. He noted that the plaza is a direct reflection of the school's and the community's value of safety and unity.

"This plaza is an integral part of the environment we have here and it sets the tone for what we can accomplish on the Wilf campus," he said.

## EXCLUSIVE: Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander's Letter of Resignation

The following is Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander's letter of resignation from his position as Vice President of University and Community Life at Yeshiva University. He will be assuming the position of President and Rosh haYeshiva at Ohr Torah Stone in Israel around January 31. This letter was sent to President Ari Berman and the YU Board of Trustees on October 3rd and was shared with *The Commentator* in its entirety.

Dear President Berman, Chairman Strauss and members of Yeshiva University Board of Trustees,

It is with very mixed emotions that I write to inform you formally that I will be leaving my position at Yeshiva University on or around January 31, 2018, in order to begin my new position as President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone Institutions in Israel.

While I am very excited about my new position and the opportunities it presents, I am saddened to leave Yeshiva University □□ an institution that has been so much a part of my life and has educated three generations of my family.

Over the past 12 years, we have accomplished a great deal together. We have impacted communities around the world, strengthened our rabbinic placement bureau,

developed a plethora of initiatives to educate rabbis and their spouses already in the field and worked to develop strong lay leaders. We created platforms to disseminate the Torah of YU including "YU Torah" and the "Holiday To Go". These platforms have successfully allowed hundreds of thousands to benefit from the wisdom of our Yeshiva. Through the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmud Studies for Women (GPATS) we have created opportunities for women to grow in their Torah knowledge and play significant roles in our community. It was a privilege to serve as the inaugural David Mitzner Dean of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future.

The student experience continues to become more dynamic with our student body engaged in the study of Torah and the pursuit of rigorous academics. We have created platforms in which students use their talents, learning and knowledge to make a difference in the world. We have created a multitude of opportunities for our students, whether in the public schools around the corner or in service to communities around the world. Our students continue to step up and I am proud of their accomplishments.

Finally, together we have turned around our undergraduate discount rate. We never turned a blind eye to those in need but we also recognized the value proposition of a YU education. This year, that change is more evident. Our enrollment is one of the best YU has had. It is coupled with a net tuition and ancillary revenue that is unprecedented.

Rabbi Berman, I wish you continued success and fulfillment in your presidency of Yeshiva, and will do everything I can to help assist you and orchestrate an orderly transition of my responsibilities over the next four months. I have enjoyed our time together and I am always available to help.

I thank each of you for being part of this wondrous period in my professional career and for your vision in navigating one of the most important institutions of our people.

Gmar Tov,  
Respectfully yours,  
Kenneth Brander

### BRANDER, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

source, the vacancy created by Rabbi Brander's departure will not be filled. Instead, his responsibilities will be assumed by other current administrators.

The announcement of Rabbi Brander's departure comes just weeks after the investiture of Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman as the fifth president of Yeshiva University, and just days after Assistant Vice President of Governmental Affairs Phil Goldfeder's intentions to leave for a position at Cross River Bank became public.

As Vice President for University and Community Life, Rabbi Brander oversees the offices of Student Life, University Housing and Residence Life, Admissions, the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS), and various student support services offices, including the Counseling Center. His role also includes various community work, such as continuing education at the Center for the Jewish Future.

President Berman's office released this statement in regards to Brander's departure:

"Yeshiva University is very happy to congratulate Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Vice President of University and Community Life, on his exciting new appointment. Rabbi Brander is a remarkable Jewish leader and we are very appreciative for all of his impressive accomplishments on behalf of Yeshiva University, primarily through his leadership at the Center for the Jewish Future of which he served as inaugural dean for nine years. In addition, Rabbi Brander played a significant role in a number of important areas including undergraduate admissions, the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies and the enhancement of student life.

"We are very excited for him and his family as they realize their dream of moving to Israel and we are confident that he will contribute greatly to Israel and the Jewish people as the head of Ohr Torah Stone.

"We have already begun our transition to our new administrative team and will be working closely with Rabbi Brander in the coming months to ensure that we will be poised to build on his very important work and move Yeshiva University forward into our next great era."

Rabbi Brander joined the Yeshiva University administration in 2005 when he was

appointed Dean of the Center for the Jewish Future. He assumed his current position in September 2013. Prior, he served as Senior Rabbi of the Boca Raton Synagogue in Florida. During his tenure in South Florida, he helped found several important Jewish institutions, most notably the Katz Yeshiva High School (formerly known as Weinbaum Yeshiva High School) in 1997, as well as Palm Beach County's first mikvah, a vaad hakashrut, and a kollel. Rabbi Brander graduated Yeshiva College in 1984 and received his ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1986.

"We in Boca Raton are the beneficiaries of Rabbi Brander's vision, wisdom and hard work," said Rabbi Efrem Goldberg, the current Rabbi of Boca Raton Synagogue. "He brought those same qualities to Yeshiva University where his transformational leadership led to great innovation, community building and enriched student life. I am confident that he will bring those same attributes to his new position and continue to have an indelible impact and influence on the Jewish world."

Ohr Torah Stone was founded in 1983 by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, the 1960 Valedictorian of Yeshiva University. OTS is comprised of a combination of institutions devoted to outreach, women's empowerment, and leadership development within the Jewish world.



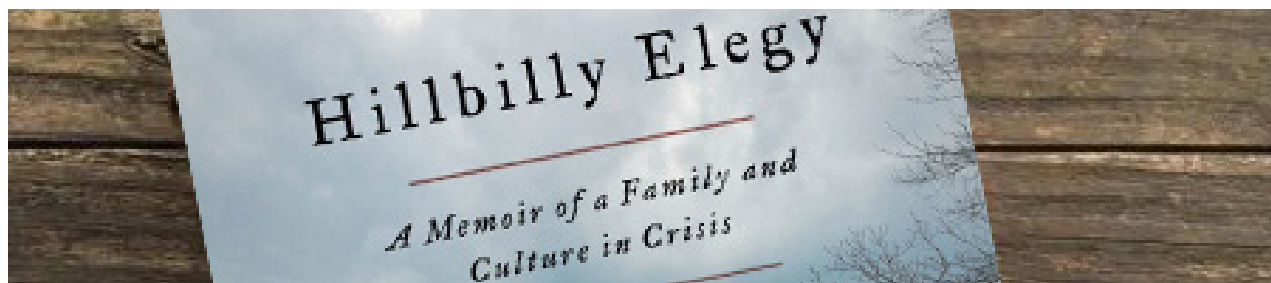
## Book Review: *Hillbilly Elegy*, by J.D. Vance

By Ilana Radinsky

*Hillbilly Elegy*, written by former marine and Yale Law School graduate J.D. Vance, tells the story of the poor, white, working-class communities living in the Rust Belt – a group frequently overlooked in discussions of poverty and disadvantage in America. These communities of what Vance lovingly calls “hillbillies,” are dispersed throughout the former Industrial Midwest, populating regions that suffer from extreme economic decline due to deindustrialization, population loss, and urban decay. Vance, having grown up in the mountains of Jackson, Kentucky and in steel-town Middletown, Ohio, was born and raised a hillbilly. In *Hillbilly Elegy*, Vance writes the personal tale of his childhood in working-class middle America, while attempting to explain the culture of the hillbilly community and the reasons for their continuing decline.

Subtitled “A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis,” this book provides interesting and often disheartening insight into this neglected population – filled with poignant stories of hard work, resilience, and family love and loyalty. Vance’s primary subject of discussion are the working-class whites who hail from Greater Appalachia, the area in the Appalachian Mountains spanning from Ohio and parts of New York in the North to Alabama and Georgia in the South. Through generations of social isolation in these mountain communities, a distinctive culture of aggression, family loyalty, and self-reliance developed. For these working-class whites, poverty is, and always has been, the norm. After World War II, millions living in the poorer regions of Appalachia chose to move west, to places like Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, towards flourishing industry and abundant factory work. As a result, entire communities of Appalachians were relocated throughout the Industrial Midwest as they secured good jobs, with their distinctive culture held largely intact. However, in later years, industry declined, and the factories that were providing honest work and stable income for entire communities closed their doors. After everyone with the wealth, education, or connections to escape left the deteriorating Rust Belt, all that remained behind were masses of poor people – lacking the resources to leave, trapped in towns devoid of employment opportunities or social support, and helpless to prevent the continuing decline of their communities.

Vance describes a culture plagued with alcohol and



drug abuse; family instability and single parenthood are the norm, and children see no hope in upward mobility. Communities suffer from widespread unemployment and poverty, lacking the large-scale support systems, including religious institutions, that could help families and children through tough times. Often angry and isolated from American society, these groups of working-class whites blame the government for the lack of jobs and support, while at the same time abuse the welfare systems established through government policy instead of attempting to provide for themselves – choosing to hide behind resentment of a world biased against them instead of taking personal responsibility for the welfare of their families.

Vance brings stories from his own childhood, growing up under a single drug-abusing mother who constantly cycled through boyfriends, and from previous generations in his family, which struggled with divorce, alcohol abuse, and violence within the home, as personal examples of these themes in hillbilly culture.

At the same time, Vance brings descriptions of a loving family and many lessons learned that show that hillbilly culture is not all bad. Vance highlights the more admirable features – their fierce family loyalty, patriotism, hard work and personal responsibility – which he learned from his aunts and uncles. Additionally, Vance expresses his deep appreciation for his grandparents. Despite a history of divorce, violence, and alcoholism as parents, Vance’s grandparents shielded him from the worst of the hillbilly culture during his youth, taught him the value of hard work, and made him believe in his own intelligence and ability to succeed. Vance makes it clear that without their positive influence, he likely would have never been able to escape the poverty and cultural denigration that is the inescapable fate of most of his peers.

Interestingly, Vance maintains that government policy

alone cannot solve the social and economic problems facing working-class whites. He explains that the problems plaguing these unfortunate communities stem from a place that government policy can’t reach – the home. These issues are caused by a culture of resentment and diffusion of responsibility, by childhoods filled with instability and trauma. Vance expresses the hillbillies’ unwillingness to honestly confront the problems inherent within their culture. Only once they do so, he argues, will they be able to make lasting changes within their communities.

Vance’s nuanced and intricate writing allowed the reader to appreciate both the good and the bad that he sees within his culture. Vance thoughtfully and respectfully balances his open love for his family and his admiration of their strengths with an authentic, critical, and sometimes heartbreaking discussion of their flaws. The bravery required to make such admissions about one’s own culture, and especially about people one loves, tells of an incredible inner strength and personal honesty. Additionally, Vance delivers an engaging and artful blend of personal memoir and social analysis. In explaining the culture and history of the community in which he grew up, Vance shifts between stories of his own childhood and family history, references to various sociological studies and historical works, and his own social analyses. By integrating the three, Vance weaves a tale of a “culture in crisis” that proves interesting, understandable, and personal. Vance’s stories of resilience and success fill the reader with inspiration, while his descriptions of the trauma and tragedy afflicting millions provide a sense of heavy grief.

Altogether, *Hillbilly Elegy* is an important and thought-provoking work that can give one a greater understanding of the lives and culture of this oft-neglected group of people, while also providing a plethora of timely and relevant lessons to be learned from his tales.

## Twin Peaks: Weird for Weirdness’ Sake

By Matthew Silkin

I’ve been in sort of a slump recently when it comes to entertainment. Everything new coming out in movies and TV was either something I wasn’t interested in or something I was WAY behind on (looking at you, three different cuts of *Blade Runner* that I would need to see before *Blade Runner 2049*). So I turned to older, shorter TV; stuff that I could consume in a day, maybe two. That would keep me entertained for a short while until Hollywood finally releases everything I would love to write a review about after the deadline of this Commentator article.

And that’s when, sifting through the offerings of Netflix, I found *Twin Peaks*. And I’m really glad I did, because it’s some of the best television I’ve seen in a good while.

*Twin Peaks* was originally a 1990 TV series for ABC created by Mark Frost and David Lynch (more on him in a moment), which was prematurely cancelled in 1991, and spawned a 1992 prequel film and later 2017 sequel series on Showtime. The show follows FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper, portrayed by Kyle MacLachlan, who is called into the eponymous Washington town of *Twin Peaks* to investigate the death of homecoming queen Laura Palmer. The show also spends its time focusing on the lives and interpersonal affairs – literally, in many cases – of the town’s residents, specifically on the effect of Palmer’s death on these relationships.

If I had to sum up my experience watching *Twin Peaks* in one word, I would choose “odd.” Which doesn’t surprise me, considering the attachment of director David Lynch. Though it’s more digestible to the average viewer than some of his more offbeat films such as 1977’s *Eraserhead* or 2001’s *Mulholland Drive*, the show still retains some of Lynch’s flair of surrealist themes and dark comedy, shown mostly through the characters in the show. For example, Agent Cooper is brilliant, but he’s also a weirdo with awkward mannerisms, offbeat investigative methods, and a taste for delicious food and coffee. His weirdness puts him right in place with the just-as-bizarre residents of *Twin Peaks*, ranging from the mildly quirky police receptionist Lucy (played by Kimmy Robertson), who has a tendency to ramble on in her high-pitched voice, to the truly weird Margaret (played by the late Catherine Coulson), known in the show as “Log Lady” due to the log she constantly carries around and occasionally talks to. Everyone in the town has a quirk and/or a secret, which is what makes *Twin Peaks* such a fun little town and the show so engaging to watch. Any faceless FBI agent is just another drone, but give an FBI agent a

pure, unfiltered love of black coffee, and you can only have Agent Cooper.

Narratively speaking, the show is pretty much flawless. The story – first focusing on Laura’s death, and then expanding to the rest of the town – gripped me in a way that few shows do. Agent Cooper and his interactions with the town are a large part of why I love the show, but this is not to say that the scenes without him are any less entertaining. Hell, Agent Cooper doesn’t even show up until maybe around three quarters of the way through the pilot episode, and everything leading up to that was one of the most well executed and heartbreaking scenes that I have seen in television.

Even beyond the quality of the acting and directing, *Twin Peaks* is also just a really well structured show. The show is unique among other television shows I’ve seen, in that it has a metanarrative woven through it in the form of show-within-a-show, *Invitation to Love*, which often has events within itself that mirror goings-on in *Twin Peaks*. For example, when an episode of *Twin Peaks* ends with one character shooting another in self defense, *Invitation to Love* will have an episode end with one character shooting another. Each episode also ends with enough information held back from the viewer to entice them to watch another episode, and the first season ends with such a devastating cliffhanger that it’s impossible not to immediately dive into the second season to find out what happens next.

*Twin Peaks* is not without its faults, though. A few of the characters are a bit too cartoonish to take seriously, in particular the more villainous character Leo Johnson, played by Eric Da Re and the quirky teen girl Audrey Horne, played by Sherilyn Fenn. The show also suffered from declining ratings during its original 1990-1991 run, which caused it to be prematurely cancelled after season two, which means that a lot of the questions that the show brings up surrounding *Twin Peaks* are left unanswered (as of writing this review, I have seen neither the 1992 prequel film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* nor the 2017 sequel season). While this hasn’t affected the overall popularity of the show nowadays – it is listed in TVGuide, TIME, and Rolling Stone as one of the greatest TV shows ever made – I do feel the need to point that out to people who expect closure for every aspect of the show.

Overall, I would recommend *Twin Peaks* to anyone who wants an offbeat, darkly humorous murder mystery. The production definitely has an aura of late 80s/early 90s around it, but the story and characters are timeless. has to offer.

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War and the unification of Jerusalem, The Commentator has decided to print a previously published interview from that time with YU students about their experiences in Israel during the war.

From the Archives (September 28, 1967; Volume 32 Issue 1) — Students Relate Impressions Of Israeli War; YU Mitnadvim Recount Personal Experiences

By Richard Chaifetz

This article is based on an interview with five of the many Yeshiva College students who were in Israel before, during, and after the recent war. They are Earl Lefkowitz '68, who spent the year at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; Chuck Abramchik '68, who worked at Kibbutz Yavneh for a year; and Milton Sonneberg '68, Howard Bodner '68, and Morris Berger '67, who went to Israel during the crisis as mitnadvim. A full documentation of Yeshiva's participation in the crisis will follow in a later issue.

meet us. The CBS cameramen followed us all the way even though we tried to escape.

After a small delay (three hours) we were taken to S'dei Eliyahu in Galilee. As we left Lydda there were several roadblocks; we said "mitnadvim michutz la'aretz" and were just waved through. We asked them whether they thought something was going to happen. They said that by the end of the week something would happen. It turned out that by the end of the week it was all over.

Berger: My group arrived on June 1. Those who wanted to go to religious kibbutzim were told to step aside. We were taken to Masuot Yitzchak, a moshav shitufi about ten kilometers from Ashkelon.

Q. Howie, you had an entirely different experience, didn't you?

Bodner: Yes, I got there in the middle of the war. We landed at Paris about 9:00 Monday morning (10:00 in Israel). When we asked when we would leave, we were told that war had broken out in Israel. We waited and waited. Then at 5:30 we left. The tourists and some mitnadvim got off in Paris. We filled up with armaments and reservists.

They (the airline) didn't know what was happening in Lydda, but we went ahead anyway. About an hour later we were told that we would land in Greece. This really scared everyone. We remained in Greece for a whole day until about nine Tuesday night. Then they told us that we would go to Lydda no matter what—unless we were shot down.

It was very quiet on board. About 30 minutes out of Lydda we were told that we would land, and we broke out in the singing of the Hatikvah. Finally, we landed amidst a blackout—no radio contact, plane shutters closed. Later we found out that four Mirages had accompanied us; they were the best protection in Israel.

Sonneberg: I've got news for you—at that point a Piper Cub was as good protection as a Mirage.

Bodner: They took us to Herzliyah for the night. Next morning we woke to an air raid which turned out to be the last one in Israel. They took me to Yavneh, but they had no more room. Eventually, I wound up at S'dei Eliyahu.

Q. What type of work did you do?

Bodner and Sonneberg: We dug ditches and trenches, communication and defense trenches. Between the end of the war and the grape harvest we did odd jobs. Then we worked on the grape harvest.

Berger: We started Friday morning. They took most of us out to the cotton fields to weed cotton. A few of us remained digging ditches, and I worked in the miyun—sorting fruit. We harvested milonim—a sort of honey dew—for a month. It was the height of the season. They gave us the worst jobs.

Sonneberg: We seem to have reached a consensus on that.

Berger: Oh, everyone. Abramchik: I'll explain that. The gesture on the part of the mitnadvim was very nice, but let's face it, they were not skilled laborers. They did most of the digging and they didn't have any tractors; all except one had been drafted into the army. They were disappointed with the work. They felt that they were given low, menial work, but there is no such thing on a kibbutz. Besides, they had to be given things that could be done without any instruction. They did the same thing day after day. They came with the attitude that they were going to save Israel; but they didn't feel they were saving Israel

with the work they were doing.

Bodner: On our kibbutz it was not that way at all. We really didn't care what work we were given. The only time we felt a little annoyed was when the people who were giving us the work sometimes stood by and, merely, supervised us. That really wasn't the way it should have been done. As a rule I did get dirty—hard work — but as a rule it didn't bother me. I was doing something that was part of the daily kibbutz routine. If I had to clean a chicken coop, it had to be cleaned. It didn't matter who did it; I knew it would be cleaned.

Q. How far from the border were you?

Sonneberg: On the morning of June 5, we had been working for three hours when they announced that war had broken out. About 10:30 a Jordanian tank column moved up to the border which was two kilometers away. They began firing at army emplacements in our fields. We stopped digging trenches because it was too interesting. We sat in the edges of the trenches watching.

Berger: I was about seven miles from Gaza. We could see the fighting; it was like fireworks.

We were also 1 1/2 kilometers from a major Israeli air base where they had a large number of Mirage jets—the Israelis call them Miragim. We saw them practicing from the day we arrived. We saw them the first day flying at tree top level towards Egypt. We couldn't imagine why they were doing it until about 10:00 when we heard that the war had broken out. It was quite frightening; we realized that something was going to happen if it hadn't happened already.

Lefkowitz: Monday morning I heard that fighting had broken out in Gaza. I thought it was a small skirmish and went into town to buy some things. I heard snatches of Dayan's speech on the radio and it seemed like he was preparing the people for total war. Three or four minutes

SEE ARCHIVES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



Q. During the spring the number of Arab incursions into Israel increased markedly. Did you notice any increase in tensions among the people?

Lefkowitz: I sensed something when he (Nasser) blocked the straits because then there was no way out of it. That's when you really saw concern; sixty or seventy people would be gathered around a radio at the University to hear news broadcasts.

Abramchik: We were on a tiyul in Galilee when the crisis began and didn't hear about it until we returned the next day (May 24). When we got back, there was a letter waiting for our truck driver—he and his truck were drafted. Almost every day people were taken away.

The kibbutz didn't start making preparations right away, digging trenches or things like that, but the feeling was that something was bound to happen—it was going to be big.

Q. Did you feel that war was inevitable?

Lefkowitz: No, I wasn't sure until I heard the shots. Abramchik: I didn't sense war, just that something was going to happen.

Q. When did you arrive in Israel?

Sonneberg: We arrived May 31 and were met by people from the Merkaz Kibbutz Hadati. They took us through the entry formalities. We felt pretty good having people

Students Give Their Impressions Of Six Day War. Includes photos of students and text from the original article. Features a sidebar for 'FREEDOM OF CHOICE' and 'RIVERSIDE MEMORIAL CHAPEL, INC.' and a 'LEARN TO DRIVE' advertisement for William Rubin Auto School.

## The Pulse on Campus- Thoughts on the Recent Plaza/Library Renovations

We asked several YU students and faculty for their thoughts on the uptown campus renovations, including the new fifth floor of the library and the 185th St. "Pedestrian Plaza". Here are some of their responses:

"Refreshing. A crisp new monument to the university community in the Heights"

- Gavriel Guttman, English YC '18 (on plaza)

"I'm really disappointed with the [library] renovations. I came to YU after the original renovations were done, so I don't remember the way [floors] 2 and 3 "used to be," but I really liked the cozy, rustic feel of the 4 and 5. 2 and 3 are really great and modern, but I really appreciated having the ability to just go and work in a warmer, more inviting space."

- Rivkie Reiter, English, Stern College '19

"These recent library updates have really put the 'Modern' in "Modern Orthodoxy"

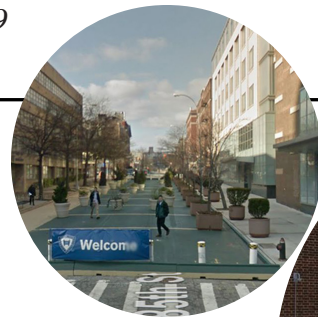
- Moshe Kurtz, Psychology, YC '18

"The sefarim are still there."

-Rav Baruch Simon, MYP Rosh Yeshiva

"This kind of promptness, efficiency and responsiveness is the exception in such projects whether at YU or elsewhere. The library administration and staff outdid themselves and responded effectively to the many small suggestions that came from interested faculty...Regarding the actual "aesthetic changes", moving the computers from 5A to 5 provides significantly better lighting for people working on the computers"

- Rabbi Shalom Carmy, Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Bible



Note: Thanks to Elliot Heller for his work in gathering the student and faculty quotes

### ARCHIVES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

after I left the store to go home shots started coming from the Jordanian sector.

I ran all the way back, but I should have gone into the first shelter. In the shelter we heard the BBC announce the first victories in Sinai (before *Kol Israel* did) and went around telling everyone. From then on it was just gaining momentum. Every hour we heard something better. WE expected them to keep on going and going and going.

Abramchik: We were about 15 kilometers from the Gaza Strip. We were out in the fields about 10:00 when we heard our first alert. Out in the fields there were no ditches so we just hit the ground. WE had a major air base near us. Planes were constantly taking off. We were scared of course. I, personally — I'll speak for myself—was very frightened because I didn't know what would happen.

#### Q. Were you ever fearful that these were enemy planes?

Abramchik: Yes, as the day rolled on, we thought "How many planes did Israel have?" Let's face it there's a limit. But you could see the *Magen David* and the blue and white. You could never know for sure.

#### Q. Did you feel any fear?

Berger: I did not fear for myself. I was in this atmosphere. I was too busy being happy—whatever happens, thank God I'll be here first hand to witness it and feel it. There was no room for fear. Maybe if I really understood what the situation was, I should have been, but I wasn't.

Lefkovitz: The first couple of hours, yes, because I was living right next to a mortar position, and I hadn't known about it beforehand. I heard these tremendous explosions; I thought they were Jordanian shells. When I learned to distinguish between when they were hitting us and when we were hitting them, which took a couple of hours, the fear seemed to vanish.

#### Q. What was the atmosphere when you arrived?

Berger: It was terribly tense there—horrible. They were warm to us, I think we sort of relieved their pressures and anxiety, even if for only a relatively short space of time. I didn't expect Kennedy Airport, but everyone was so tense. On the runway jets were lined up ready to take off. Everyone felt that it was only a matter of time until the war broke out.

#### Q. What was your reaction to the capture of Jerusalem?

Sonneberg: I didn't really realize what Jerusalem was until I visited it. I guess I was happy. My real reaction came when I saw it; that's when the strong reaction came. I wasn't very impressed by the Western Wall itself. Jerusalem has a tangible atmosphere; you feel at home there—more than in New York.

Bodner: Jerusalem has all of the atmosphere of Israel. It's a melting pot of the whole country.

Abramchik: That evening we felt something inside; it was really unbelievable. We hadn't had Jerusalem for 2,000 years; we had only visitation rights. Now it was ours. It is just a plain wall, but I didn't look at it as merely a wall. It was a part of the Temple.

Lefkovitz: When we were touring before *Pesach*, we had seen everything. We said for *Shavuot* we'll have to go over to the Old City. We just said this in jest.

Sonneberg: You guys put the *Ayin Harah* on them.

#### Q. Why did you go?

Bodner: Something compelled me to go. It wasn't that I felt that I was going to save Israel. This was an opportunity to do something right for the things I believed in. It was time to show that I believed in all the values that I'd been taught. Israel symbolized them.

Berger: I never was an ardent Zionist; Israel was nice for the Israelis. I never felt involved. I saw an impending holocaust; I wanted to do something. I suppose I was always very attached to Israel.

#### Q. Do you hope to live in Israel?

Sonneberg: Yes, I was thinking strongly of it before. I was only more convinced than ever.

Abramchik: I definitely want to return. As soon as I finish school, I hope to make it back as quickly as I possibly can.

Berger: As everyone says, "One day I hope I will be back," and I hope it will be soon.

#### Q. Permanently or otherwise?

Berger: Permanently. I made up my mind then. I have a moral obligation. I see how necessary aliyah is for the long term survival of Israel.



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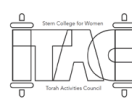


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## Atypical: Season 1 Review

By Nechama Lowy

Netflix has a new hit series on the rise, and it is bound to warm your heart, make you laugh, and open your eyes to a stigmatized topic. *Atypical* follows a relatively mundane middle-class family with two teenage children, one of whom, Sam, has autism. Sam, 18 years old, is extremely high-functioning, holding a steady job and attending a mainstream high school with his younger sister Casey, a sophomore track team star. Being a senior in high school and having never dated, Sam decides to invest his time in finding a girlfriend. While the show does center around this recurring storyline, Casey, the mother, and father each have personal screentime and their stories and personalities develop as the show goes on.

*Atypical's* producer, Robia Rashid, has been involved in other popular comedies, like *How I Met Your Mother* and *The Goldbergs*, and it is clear that she follows a certain pattern in production. Her productions are often entertaining, realistic, and usually revolve around a specific friend group or family with a strong affinity to one another. Each episode is a mere 30 minutes, which is plenty of time to fall in love with the characters and laugh out loud at their delightful personalities.

Although the title and description of the show might lead one to believe it is entirely about Sam, as a viewer, one really gets to invest in each storyline and empathize with the characters. Even Sam's therapist, Julia, has her own narrative, intertwining with the family at many points. Each character is relatable, likable, and shows a humorous side. No persona feels unnecessary or merely used as a prop and their drama never got boring and

rarely feels dragged out - the writer kept the plot moving and developing constantly.

While there are many aspects to *Atypical*, the show primarily focuses on Sam and his attempt to not just find a girlfriend, but keep her. However, instead of making the show into a quasi-documentary, Rashid beautifully normalizes the topic by creating an environment in which one does not feel estranged or uncomfortable, giving the show a unique twist. Similar to many boys his age, Sam focuses on schoolwork and works an after school job, all while attempting to survive the multitude of girl issues in which he has involved himself. He cares about looking handsome to impress the ladies, and has his passions, hopes, and dreams. Sam exhibits many differences from his peers with his monotone voice, strong sensitivity to noise, and particular obsessions that he cannot control, yet it is endearing to be able to relate to him on the level the show portrays.

The show challenges any stereotype that assumes people on the spectrum are not involved in everyday activities. The first episode opens up with a surprising statistic about marriage among people on the spectrum--nine percent get



married. Julia, the therapist, insists this low number is not due to lack of desire to get married but rather that they are never taught how to maintain and healthily deal with the social aspects of a relationship. Comprehending this information instantly sheds light on the importance that people view persons with autism as very similar to us, even if externally they may act differently. The show embraces this idea wholeheartedly by ensuring Sam dates a girl not on the spectrum, as it reinforces the idea there can be attraction and communication between two different

SEE ATYPICAL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

## To Jump or Not to Jump

By Ellie Parker

If you're looking to put your life in perspective, there's nothing quite like jumping out of a plane at 14,500 feet in the air. Dangling your feet over the edge and preparing to defy all laws of sanity and gravity is a sure fire way to get your mind working overtime. Skydiving is the great equalizer of opposites -- terrifying yet enticing, controversial yet mainstream, high-risk yet potentially life-changing. It embodies every known fear and thrill in one 3-minute freefall.

My fixation on skydiving began when I was 16. I would go on YouTube and watch hundreds of videos of people's various trips and teach myself different techniques to maneuver and position my body in the air for the full impact of the jump. My parents, not too keen on the idea from the start, fought to avert my attention to any other kind of adrenaline-packed activity, but my heart was set on nose-diving through the sky at 125 mph. For me, nothing else would suffice. Now a college student and capable of risking my life on my own terms, I decided to actualize my dream. I convinced my dad and brother to join in and the three of us bought tickets for the upcoming weekend.

It just so happened that Yom Kippur fell on the day before the scheduled jump. Nothing gets you in the mood to plead for your life in front of G-d like preparing to jump out of a plane headfirst the following day. I can hands down say that I have never read "Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die" quite like I did on this Yom Kippur. However, I rationalized that the best day to put my life in G-d's hands would be the morning after my clean slate and, with

that validation, I finished Neilah and studied up on my previously researched skydiving tips.

I did not sleep at all that night. My mind went from worst-case scenario to even worse-case scenario, and I wondered if I was making a mistake. But, I had hyped it up so much that I felt I couldn't back out now, and, as we got ready to embark on this journey, my Dad got a call from the skydiving center. Apparently, winds had picked up and they had canceled all skydiving trips that day. As we looked up at what appeared to be the bluest and clearest sky, I debated whether or not this was a sign. Of all days, this one looked perfect for the experience; there wasn't a cloud in sight. And, in the 19 years that I have lived in Atlanta, I cannot remember a single time that I had even felt a consistent gust of air, let alone wind strong enough to keep us from skydiving. But weather is unpredictable and, since next week looked just as clear, we rescheduled the flight and marked our calendars.

Two weekends went by with the same outcomes: we

would schedule the session for that day and then we would get a call an hour before to find out it had been cancelled. The woman on the phone, sympathizing with the strange sequence of events that we had encountered, informed us that these were the most cancellations they'd experienced in years. So what is to be gleaned from an episode such as this? Judaism instructs us not to believe in signs. But, in that case, how does one label such a series of events? Is this a dream that is better left unfulfilled, or were those weekends simply not the right time for such an endeavor? And how can I ever be sure one way or the other?

As of now, I am scheduled to fly at the end of November. And if the weather abides, I will, G-d willing, be actualizing my ambition. However, the events of this past month have left me with much to ponder as I work toward a decision -- one way or the other. To jump or not to jump? I guess only time will tell.



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## From The President's Desk: Innovation in Unlikely Places

By Yehoshua Zirman, SSSB President

On one lonely subway ride last year, I was listening to my favorite podcast series called "How I Built This," which interviews founders of successful startup companies. That morning I was listening to an interview with the founder of 5 Hour Energy, Manoj Bhargava. When discussing why he went into the energy drink industry he explained, "I had no interest in going into the energy drink business, I just didn't understand why every single energy drink had so much liquid? Who wants to drink 24 ounces for the sole purpose of energy?" Through careful product placement (it can always be found at the register of the store) and rectifying a gaping hole in an industry (making sure that his energy drink was only one shot), Bhargava's product quickly hit 1 billion dollars of annual sales. Bhargava's explanation of the innovation that helped him succeed really stuck with me. He said "You do not need to be a genius or an expert in a field to innovate, you just can't accept the status quo. Innovation isn't

**"WHEN THINKING ABOUT RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT OF SYMS, THIS LINE KEPT POPPING BACK INTO MY HEAD: 'DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT.'"**

inventing something more complex or developing a new technology, rather, thinking differently than everybody around you." When thinking about running for President of Syms, this line kept popping back into my head: "do something different." Now, as I sit here today, almost two months into school and my term as a president, I realize

the one thing I never calculated: how much people hate change. Change is a synonym to risk and humans are naturally risk averse.

I have now been a part of the university's bureaucratic system for two months, and I have watched good ideas (by my council as well as other councils) get squandered for reasons that scream "we don't want to change the status quo." I think about other companies that failed because of an inability to take the leap of faith and change. For every Warby Parker and Tesla there are hundreds of companies that fall through the cracks. IBM created the first hard disk drive and Kodak made picture-taking accessible to the masses, but today neither is close to being a leader in its industry. I think about the future of YU and can't help but wonder, are the glory days of YU behind her, or is the future brighter than ever before? Although nobody can answer that question definitively, I have seen sparks of hope. From the TEDx Yeshiva University initiative on campus to TAMID and the new entrepreneurship major on campus, there is innovation all around us. Students are buzzing about ways to fix the YU student emails (ystuds), help students secure high level internships and jobs, and make Shabbat life on campus more enjoyable.

Whenever I think about innovation, I think about a man who I pass by every day along the streets of Washington Heights. There are many individuals on the streets giving out advertising pamphlets for restaurants, barbers, and bars, and I typically keep walking, never glancing at the advertisement. However, one man does something a bit different. As people walk by he hits pamphlets against his hand very loudly, causing people to instinctively turn to him and make eye contact. At that point, he wishes them a good morning and asks them to read his ad. I take his ad every morning, not because I am interested in his product, but simply because he does something different than everybody else. This is not exactly what you think of when you hear the word innovation, but it hammers

home the point that being different can be incredibly effective.

I conclude with a challenge to every student. Don't be satisfied with the status quo. If you don't like something, change it. People like you will make YU a better place



when you leave than it had been when you arrived. If you need funding or support for your pursuits, just email me or one of the other councilmen and we will do our utmost to make your dreams a reality. Innovation is not just a word for business and startups, it's a way of life.

## Know your Representatives: An interview with YSU President Zach Serman

By Judah Stiefel

*I sat down with Yeshiva Student Union President, Zach Serman, in an exclusive interview to glean what we may expect from him and the student government this ongoing year.*

**Judah Stiefel: What are your main responsibilities in your role as student council president, and how does this fit with your idea of what you should be doing?**

Zach Serman: My largest job involves the technical aspects of managing the student council. Ensuring that these events are logistically planned, well funded, and fun. I also work on managing the budget, approving clubs, etc. Those are the more technical responsibilities. I feel that in past years what the student council hasn't focused enough on is their role as the representatives for the student body to the school's administration.

**JS: In what ways do you see yourself as a representative of the student body?**

ZS: Are the voices of the students being heard by the administration? There needs to be a channel of communication between the student body and the administration, so hopefully we're going to establish more channels that they can speak through.

**JS: How much time each week do you put into the job of operating as the President of YSU?**

ZS: In terms of meetings we have at least one weekly meeting...between all of the Wilf Presidents and the Chairman of the student life committee, but there are a lot more meetings that come up. There are meetings with the canvassing committee, meetings with club heads, meetings with the other presidents to discuss things... And then there's a lot of time spent just thinking about these things, and trying actively to think of things that we can add and things that they can do differently."

**JS: You gave a speech in a cafeteria the other night during Shabbat dinner (first in shabbat of the Fall 2017 semester). Some felt that it was controversial while others were empowered by it. Could you reiterate the message you gave that night? Why did you feel the need to quote the Buddha?**

ZS: As for quoting the Buddha, I felt that it was a very relevant quote. It was less about making a controversy and more about making a point. The quote was, "Use these lessons not to be a better Buddhist, but rather to be a better version of yourself." What I meant was, that you should extract the good from everything that is around you. I felt this message was very relevant to YU students. When you're in college and when you're in YU you've got these two worlds of Torah and of Maddah and secular studies that we're trying to bring together at YU and sometimes there's a tendency to do them both while you're here but they're compartmentalized. I do Torah in the morning and in the afternoon I do Maddah. What I was trying to convey is that there's sort of a way of blending them so that the secular studies that you're doing, the Maddah isn't separate but is rather for the purpose of enhancing your Torah perspective. The information you learn is not just in a vacuum.

**JS: So now that we've touched on the official responsibilities of YSU President, Zach Serman, let's delve into the depths of who is Zach Serman? What are you studying? What do you hope to go into?**

ZS: So I am majoring in political science and minoring in marketing. I had an internship this summer in an advertising agency, and I've definitely been considering that as a career option. I've been caught in between that and taking the LSAT this summer and going to Law School.

**JS: You're known for writing a rather well circulated satirical newspaper on campus, The Scope. Do you think you'll be able to separate your satirical persona from you more serious role as president, or will the two leak into each other?**

ZS: Well I take my responsibilities seriously, so I certainly don't make a joke of them. I make sure they remain separate..One thing I'd like to add about The Scope... that sometimes gets overlooked is that in the end we are conveying messages in a sarcastic way, in a way that makes people laugh, and almost all the time there is some underlying truth that is serious. So that's a real commentary on the events that happen on campus. Even though it is something that is by nature funny, there is real content there.





## “Bumping” Up Firearm Regulations

By Rachel Lelonek and the Board of the College Democrats

"I think it would be a good time to have a hearing. Just find out, 'How does this technology work?' and is there a legislative solution." These are the words of Lindsey Graham, a Republican senator from South Carolina, in reference to closing loopholes in some firearm regulations following the devastating Las Vegas shooting earlier this month which killed 59 and injured over 500 people. Graham, along with other politicians, is currently part of a national bipartisan effort to explore these regulations following the deadliest mass shooting in United States history, particularly in investigating "bump" stocks. Even Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan has stated that bump stocks are "something we need to look into." But not all Americans are so happy about this sentiment.

In order to understand the debate, it is important to recognize the different types of firearms that exist: single-shot, semiautomatic, and fully automatic. Single-shot firearms are manually-loaded weapons that fire one round at a time and cannot store a second bullet. Semiautomatic firearms fire a single round per pull of the trigger and automatically reload themselves. These weapons make up a majority of the firearms in the United States. These differ from fully automatic firearms, which fire multiple bullets with a single pull of a trigger, with some firing up to 98 shots in about 7 seconds. Because of the devastation that could result from the use of automatic guns, these weapons have been tightly regulated since 1986 and are currently illegal for civilians to own. But if that is the case, how was Stephen Paddock, the gunman of the Las Vegas shooting, able to implement such destruction? This massacre was made possible by the use of bump stocks. A bump stock - a replacement "stock" of ammunition - lets the rifle body slide between the shoulder and the trigger finger of a semiautomatic weapon, catching the finger on each rebound and allowing the shooter to fire about 90 rounds in about 10 seconds and hundreds of rounds per minute, mimicking the effects of a fully automatic firearm. This accessory is legal and inexpensive (a bump stock is only about \$100), and as *New York Times* writer Drew Jordan claims, can "eas[ily] make a powerful weapon [a semiautomatic firearm] even deadlier."

It is also crucial to understand a brief history behind the emotionally charged debate surrounding the Second Amendment. In an address given at Princeton University in 1995, the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia said to his audience: "What I look for in the Constitution is precisely what I look for in a statute: the original meaning

**"HOWEVER, REGULATING - AND PERHAPS BANNING ALTOGETHER - THE USE OF BUMP STOCKS ISN'T A COMPLETELY BIPARTISAN ISSUE THAT ALL POLITICIANS AGREE ON"**

of the text, not what the original draftsmen intended." Scalia, a staunch conservative justice, believed strongly in reading the Constitution the way the Founding Fathers originally understood the text. So why does this approach change when it comes to the Second Amendment and "the right to bear arms"? Traditionally, for over two centuries, the Second Amendment was interpreted in a more literal way that the Founding Fathers intended in terms of allowing firearms for the use of "a well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State." This changed in 2008 with the monumental Supreme Court case *District of Columbia v. Heller*, which turned the previous notion on its head. The Court ruled that the Second Amendment had two distinguished thoughts, broken up by the second comma in the clause. This redefined the definition of the Second Amendment and changed its meaning to need firearms because "a well regulated Militia" is "necessary" - which was not the original interpretation of the Constitution as the Founding Fathers had intended. Surprisingly, this majority opinion was delivered by Justice Scalia, a known originalist who, as noted earlier, was outspoken about using the text of the Constitution the way its authors designed.

So why is this - an interpretation of the Constitution that necessitates firearms - important, especially when it comes to the Las Vegas shooting? This goes back to 1986, when Republican President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Firearm Owners Protection Act (FOPA). With the goal of

protecting firearm owners (as the name suggests), the act ended the recordkeeping of most ammunition sales and limited gunshop inspections to once a year. Most notably, the act banned the transfer or possession of new automatic weapons to non-military, non-police civilian personnel. This included machine guns, and - in the act's defense - Reagan said: "I do believe that an AK-47, a machine gun, is not a sporting weapon, or needed for the defense of the home." FOPA also banned "any part" or "combination of parts" designed to convert "a weapon into a machinegun." This act, however, did not ban attachments to the exterior of semiautomatic weapons, such as bump stocks, and to this day, they remain legal.

Like Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, San Bernardino, and the many other shootings before it, Las Vegas involved the use of semiautomatic weapons. This heinous crime was only made more

horrific by the transformation of semiautomatic weapons into makeshift automatic firearms using bump stocks. Since the Las Vegas shooting, politicians have been vocal about stepping up regulations - and even implementing laws - surrounding bump stocks. Even the NRA has spoken out about bump stocks and said via executive vice president Wayne LaPierre that it is "illegal to convert a semiautomatic weapon to a fully automatic one."

However, regulating - and perhaps banning altogether - the use of bump stocks isn't a completely bipartisan issue that all politicians agree on. While California Senator Dianne Feinstein is calling for a law to be put in place to ban the use of bump stocks, many Republicans who are opposed to any congressional action whatsoever on bump stocks stand in her way, including Louisiana Representative Steve Scalise - who was wounded by a gunman this past June. Yet, throughout this entire debate, the usually vocal President Trump has remained silent. In a statement made by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders, President Trump is currently focusing on efforts for "uniting our country" during this "time of mourning." Meanwhile, uniting the country will not avenge the lives of those murdered in the Las Vegas shooting and will not secure preventative measures to ensure such a massacre never happens again.



ATYPICAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

types of people.

The cast contained some unfamiliar faces, including Brigette Lundy-Paine (*The Glass Castle*) and Amy Okuda (*The Guild*) that are relatively new to the limelight, possibly contributing to some of the dry and empty acting scenes. Surprisingly, the experienced actors including Jennifer Jason Leigh (*Weeds*) and Michael Rapaport (*Prison Break*) were not much relief from the poorly executed roles. There were moments in which the actors could have put more emotion into their performances, and it was disappointing when it seemed the characters were more concerned with fitting lines in than presenting them as realistic. Anger and frustration often seemed apathetic and dull, and, while reading from a script works for practice, it does not sit well in the actual performance.

To Rashid's credit, she did a remarkable job casting

Kier Gilchrist as Sam, the main character. Gilchrist prides himself in playing unusual and challenging roles, portraying a teen in a psychiatric ward in *It's Kind of a Funny Story* and the son of a woman with multiple personality disorder in *United States of Tara*, and for good reason. Playing a character on the spectrum means he will have to realistically feel overwhelming emotion and respond to social cues in an abnormal fashion, both of which take practice and focus. Gilchrist put much heart and devotion into his character, taking great care to maintain communication with the audience about what is going on in Sam's head.

Bad acting made some of the characters dislikable, but, for the most part, there were no antagonists that ruined the fun and warm environment of the show. That is not to say that the show was boring in anyway-- rather that the family and friends were humans with flaws, and that was

apparent throughout the season.

All in all, it was an entertaining show that could make one question their previous beliefs about how an atypical family might appear, leaving one guessing which path the storyline would take. The protagonists were amusing while still containing depth, and, while the acting left a little to be desired, overall, Rashid and the crew did a wonderful job. While I hope Season 2 brings more talent, I would highly recommend taking the time to watch the first season of *Atypical*. If anything, you will undoubtedly get a good laugh and explore an important conversation.

## When Football Gets Political

By Molly Meisels

I don't know much about football. If you asked me to discuss the differences between Tom Brady and Eli Manning, I would struggle to find the right answer (unless, of course, one was clutching a deflated football.) I've never paid much attention to this aspect of an all-American world, full of team pride and fantasy football leagues. But,



when Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the national anthem back in August of 2016, football had my full attention.

Here was a famed athlete, kneeling during the national anthem to protest racial inequality. He had everything to lose when he made that move, and he must've known it. One cannot comment on race in this country without a considerable amount of backlash. When asked for comment, Kaepernick said, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color." That statement was bold, and it resonated. Across the country, people were divided on Kaepernick's peaceful protest. Some believed that this protest was the embodiment of our democracy while others thought it was dishonorable. But Kaepernick is just one man in a sea of thousands. How much of an impact could he really have?

Fast forward to the present day. Kaepernick can't get signed to a team. He is too controversial. He stands for something. No owner would risk hiring a player who has a political agenda and upsets much of their fanbase. Many NFL owners want nothing more than pawns on the field: obedient, non-controversial bodies, who will play, entertain the public, and leave. Kaepernick, by taking the knee, proved that he is interested in being more than a body. He wished to use the platform he had been granted to make a statement about America's racial oppression. With today's rising political tension, no one will give him that platform any longer, as they are afraid of the repercussions from the conservative American football fans. The NFL is fine with signing domestic and sexual abusers to their teams since assault on women won't keep the football fan base away. Apparently, though, what will keep them away is a man standing up for his value system without hurting anyone in the process. I guess this is indicative of the priorities of the NFL and America at large.

As Kaepernick's 'knee' was becoming increasingly

politicized, it was only a matter of time before President Trump chimed in on the issue. President Trump criticized Kaepernick and others like him at a speech in Alabama, saying, "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a b\*\*\*h off the field right now. Out! He's fired. He's fired!'" He then went on to complain about the rule changes in the NFL, making the games less violent, and attributed this to the dip in football game ratings.

Trump didn't end his attacks in Alabama. He went on a Twitter tirade (and continues to go on one) demanding that fans boycott the NFL, that the NFL set rules prohibiting 'taking the knee', and promising that this issue has nothing to do with race. But it does. It has everything to do with race. The protest started due to race, and Trump is berating the protesters due to race.

After the comments made by Trump, NFL players across the country began 'taking the knee' during the national anthem. Entire teams, owners, and coaches started kneeling together and locking arms in solidarity. Players who were afraid to join Kaepernick's demonstration before jumped at the chance to do so now. When the President attacks the right to a peaceful protest, the game changes. It doesn't matter if all those kneeling

agree with the premise of the original protest. What they do agree on is that all Americans, whoever they may be, have the right to protest our government and our system.

As a broader issue, it seems like many Americans don't want black Americans to protest oppression at all. Many are infuriated when Black Lives Matter takes a stand in the streets to dispute police brutality, and see the group as a band of recluses searching for trouble. They say that if you want to protest racial oppression and unfair police brutality, do it peacefully. If you have a peaceful protest, you'll have the attention and full support of America. But when an athlete like Colin Kaepernick 'takes the knee' during the national anthem, our country is up in arms. This isn't the peaceful protest they had in mind. How dare Kaepernick and the other athletes disrespect the flag our veterans fought to protect?

So where should black Americans protest? If they can't make a commotion and they can't kneel, what would those against Kaepernick's protest like them to do? The answer is nothing. Many Americans don't want black activists to protest the flag or the country at all. They see this country as a beacon of freedom and hope that has protected and served

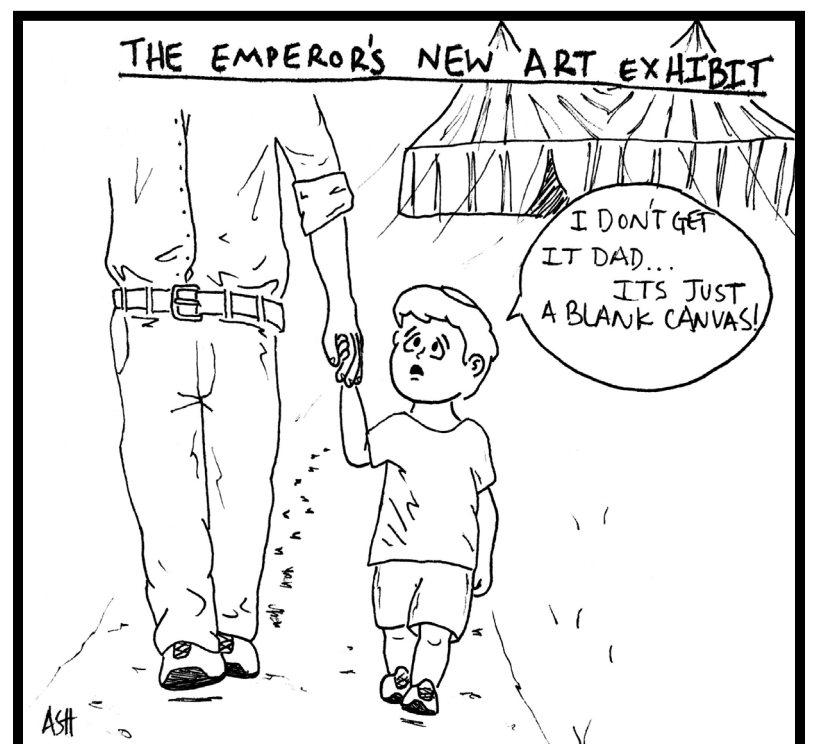
all who dwell here for centuries, and they are offended that anyone would believe otherwise. However, for many, this is not the case. African-Americans have fought for centuries to obtain equal rights in this nation. They have fought for economic and cultural equality, and the right to be treated humanely by our police forces.

It isn't up to white Americans to say that they're in the wrong, and that America has given them all the opportunity in the world, because we don't know what another's persecution looks like. If they are pleading with us, we need to listen. But many refuse to. Many refuse to listen when protesters make a racket, and many berate the protesters who take a stand silently and peacefully. It is a reenactment of the Civil Rights Era. Malcolm X was viewed as a danger and a threat to the equality of black individuals. Work within the system, they said. So, that's precisely what Martin Luther King Jr. did. He worked in the system and protested peacefully, yet was still met with the same backlash. The problem isn't the method of protest, the problem is with us.

We've shoved African-American protesters out of every arena. We've refused to listen to their cries for help and their rallying for change. So, for them, the only means of protest left was kneeling during the national anthem at a football game. Fans were livid, how dare these athletes politicize football? Get your issues and your values out of sports. Find another space to hold a demonstration. But there isn't any. This is it. Football isn't a safe space anymore, lacking all politics and social justice, solely because many Americans don't have the tolerance to listen to the pleas of the persecuted.

The players on the field, protesting, have been entertaining Americans for decades. They work for years, perfecting their skills so that we can have those Sundays, with a game and beer, that we love so much. It's our job to listen. It's our job to realize that the national anthem and the American flag are symbols, representing something infinitely larger than themselves. They are symbols of hope and democracy, not only to white Americans who are content in this country, but to the black Americans who feel systematically oppressed. They have every right to protest the anthem, because this democracy has given them that right. The women and men who fought for this country have granted them that freedom. When we were gifted "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" it wasn't accompanied by a disclaimer saying: unless it's Sunday football, in that case just shut up and play. Sports will remain political as long as it is a viable platform for players to voice vital opinions. It is their right, and not Trump, nor anyone else can take that right away from them.

### COMIC



## GOP Signals Hope on Tax Reform

By Nolan Edmonson and the Board of the College Republicans

After failing to repeal Obamacare, Republican lawmakers in Washington turned their sights to tackling an equally daunting task: tax reform. Last month the Republican leadership released a tax reform framework much to the excitement of the Trump administration. The one question that seems to have dominated the conversation around the Republican tax plan is whether or not middle class Americans will wind up taking on a lionshare of the tax burden that would come from reform.

### A Confusing Policy

Answering this question is not entirely simple. A major reason is that the Republican framework, praised by Paul Ryan as a “game changer” for the economy, does not include crucial information which makes it harder to model an accurate and precise analysis. For instance, the plan states that the existent tax brackets would be simplified to 12 percent, 25 percent and 35 percent but does not specify what income thresholds those rates would apply to. If you earn \$34,000 you could be included in the 12 percent bracket or the 25 percent bracket; the plan does specify. Similarly, the plan fails to indicate whether or not the deductions--or amount the IRS will allow you to subtract from your taxable income--for heads of households would stay the same or increase as it does for single filers and married filers. The deductions for single filers and married filers is clear enough, though. Those deductions would increase from their 2016 numbers to become \$12,000 and \$24,000, respectively.

Additionally, the plan increases the non-refundable child tax credit--also to an

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### “REDUCTION OF TAXES IS A VERY NECESSARY OBJECTIVE OF GOVERNMENT”

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unspecified amount. This seemingly bodes well for many lower-middle class Americans as it allows for them to increase their deductions and provides a much needed tax credit to households with dependent children. At the same time, however, the Republican plan calls for an elimination of personal exemptions which no doubt will raise the tax bill of the average taxpayer. If the GOP does not wish to raise taxes on the middle class, they will have to be very scrupulous in the income thresholds they attach to the newly proposed tax brackets.

Beyond the question of whether taxes will increase for the middle class, it should also be asked what impacts a Republican tax plan would have on the growth and vitality of the economy.

### Who Really Wins from Cutting Corporate Taxes?

A common talking point on the Left is the flawed notion that Republicans seek to cut corporate tax rates so as to line the pockets of the richest Americans. This claim ignores

the fact that much of the burden of the corporate tax is not borne by corporations. While it is true that corporations technically “pay” the corporate tax, it must not be forgotten that the real burden of the corporate tax is carried by consumers (through higher prices for goods), workers (decreased wages) and shareholders (by retaining lower dividends).

American economist Arnold Harberger asserted in his 1962 study, “The Incidence of the Corporation Income Tax,” that it is very possible that workers bear the brunt of the corporate tax and that that possibility becomes more within an open economy. The reality is, however, that we live in an open economy and within an open economy there is less scope for corporations to bear the brunt of the corporate tax. A study by the National Bureau for Economics stated that “high [corporate] tax rates are likely to be associated with high pretax rates of return and correspondingly reduced capital investment.” This essentially means that higher rates of return on capital investments are more likely to be taxed at higher rates--the more money you make on an investment the more likely it is to be taxed. This discourages capital investments which, in turn, “depresses labor productivity and therefore wages, effectively shifting the burden of corporate taxes onto labor.”

This is not only seen on the national level but can also be observed on the state level. Economist George Zodrow observed that higher corporate tax rate would induce capital flight, thereby decreasing wages in the state imposing the tax and encouraging the increase of wages in states that do not impose that tax. Zodrow similarly found a positive impact is seen among consumers in states with higher corporate taxes versus states with lower corporate taxes. Consumers in states with lower corporate taxes face lower prices than their higher taxing counterparts.

### Getting the to the Heart of the Issue

President Eisenhower once said, “reduction of taxes is a very necessary objective of government--that if our form of economy is to endure, we must not forget private incentives and initiative and the production that comes from it.” His warning is as true now as it was when he gave it in 1953. The strength of our economy is determined in part by how our government tackles issues of tax reform. Perhaps more importantly, though, our economy is strengthened by how much value our policy makers give to private incentives. In valuing these incentives, Washington sends a very clear message to the middle class: the growth of your wages and the relief of your tax burden matters.

The details of this reform, or the lack thereof, leaves plenty to be desired. That can prove to be a blessing or a curse. The plan could include provisions that would even attract the support of some Democrats who have felt the sting of being in higher tax brackets. Senators Manchin (D-WV), Heitkamp (D-ND) and McCaskill (D-MO) have all agreed to engage in talks with prominent Republican senators about how best to move forward with reforms. Paul Ryan has worked diligently to unite the party behind sound and responsible reforms and remains committed to the idea that legislation can be passed by the November recess. Sound and responsible tax reform--the opportunities it creates, the wages it increases and the burdens it lifts--has always been and continues to be a moral imperative. We cannot afford to see it any other way.

## Returning Home

By Shmuel Knoller

I am writing this because perhaps I can have an affect on even just a single individual. Perhaps I can help open someone's eyes and heart, the same way that mine were opened. We Jews are part of something bigger, something greater than ourselves. We are all part of *Am Yisrael*. We are all part of *Am Hashem*. We are one unit, and each individual is responsible for one another, which is what compelled me to write this piece.

I am not going to focus on the *halachic* aspect and the *mitzvah* of living in *Eretz Yisrael*, or the topic of *kedushat haaretz* (holiness of the land). I am not going to focus on the *issur* (prohibition) of leaving *Eretz Yisrael shelo al menat lachzor* (not on condition to return) (regarding these subjects, see *Eretz Chemdah* by Rav Shaul Yisraeli z”l, *MeAfar Kumi* by Tzvi Glatt hy”d). I am not going to focus on what *chazal* say regarding the reason for the obligation of *mitzvot* outside of *Eretz Yisrael* (see Rashi, Ramban, R' Bechaye on Devarim 11:18), or that *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* is equivalent to all of the *mitzvot* in the *Torah* (Avoda Zara 5:2, as well as Sifri Re'eh 53). Although I am perplexed as to why the Roshei Yeshivot of YU, and *Rabbanim* in America and *chutz la'aretz* (outside of *Eretz Yisrael*) as a whole, rarely speak about these topics.

Rather, I will focus on the broader perspective.

I think that we, the Jews of America, have become so used to living in America, to calling it our home. We have become used to living in the state of *galut*, of exile, which came upon *Am Yisrael* as a result of our sins almost two thousand years ago. We have become used to living outside our own land, the land given to us, to *Am Yisrael*, by *Hashem*.

Thank G-d, America is a country that is comfortable for Jews to live in. Life is easy in America; the land, culture, and lifestyle is comfortable and familiar to us. America is what we have become used to. However, we must remember that it is not our permanent home. *Am Yisrael's* place is in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Maharal explains in *Netzach Yisrael* (ch. 1) that it is an unnatural state for *Am Yisrael* to be in *galut*, for us to be outside *Eretz Yisrael*.

As Rav Kook explains in *Orot*, the relationship between *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* is much deeper than just a safe haven for an oppressed people. Rather, Rav Kook explains, *Am Yisrael* has a deep inner connection with *Eretz Yisrael*, one that is beyond rational comprehension (*Eretz Yisrael* chapter 1). Yet we have become so used to the *galut*, to the point that there are still millions of Jews living outside of *Eretz Yisrael* in a time when *Eretz Yisrael* is so easily accessible to us. We have forgotten what it is like to be home. We have forgotten our roots. We have forgotten ourselves.

Since the destruction of the second *Beit Hamikdash* more than 1,947 years ago, which marked the beginning of the final *galut*, we have continued to beg *Hashem* “*vi'sah nes likabetz gelyotenu vikabtenu yachad mei'arba kanfot haaretz*” (raise the banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth) every single weekday, three times a day. And now, we can see with our own eyes that slowly but surely, Jews from around the entire world are returning to *Eretz Yisrael*. *Kibutz Galuyot* is happening before our very eyes! After more than 2,000 years of not having control of our own land, *Hashem* has allowed us to regain control as of 1948. We must try to open our eyes and see how amazing it is to be living in this time period in history! As Rav Soloveitchik harshly states in *Kol Dodi Dofek* (p. 24), “Woe unto the beneficiary of a

miracle who does not recognize it for what it is, and whose ear is deaf to the echo of the imperative that arises out of this metahistorical event.”

We must try to open our eyes and realize that we are living through *nevuah* (prophecy). The Gemara in Sanhedrin (98a) tells us that the tell tale sign that the *geula* (redemption) is near is when *Eretz Yisrael* begins to sprout again from its state of desolation (in the Gemara's words: “*Ain licha keitz megula mi'zeh, shene'emar vi'atem harei yisrael anpichem titnu uferyichem tisu liami yisrael ki keirvu lavo*”) (see Rashba *ibid.*). We can see with our own eyes how the Land of Israel has sprouted, how a land which has been barren, has been reborn, and is now bursting with vegetation and greenery. If we take a look at the history of the State of Israel over the past 69-plus years, if we pay attention to the details of its creation, of its wars and of its progress, we will be able to see clearly the *Yad Hashem*, the hand of G-d. To me, it is so clear that we are living through the beginning of the *geula* process. *Ain licha keitz megula mi'zeh* (there is no more of an explicit manifestation of the end of days than this) (Sanhedrin *ibid.*).

Perhaps the reason we are still in America is because we feel that we have some important role here to help *Am Yisrael*. Even if we are not able to return home to *Eretz Yisrael* for valid reasons, do we have the desire to? Do we really mean it when we pray three times a day, “*lishuatcha kivinu kol hayom*” (we hope for Your salvation all day long)? Will we be able to answer “Yes” when we reach *shamayim* (Heaven) and we are asked, “*Tzipita Liyishua?*” “Did you yearn for the salvation?” (see Gemara Shabbat 31a). Do we truly want to return to *Eretz Yisrael*?

Or, is it possible that we have forgotten *Yerushalayim*?

HOME, CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

## Let Football Be Football

By Yosef Friedlander

“Wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, say, ‘Get that son of a b\*\*ch off the field right now, out, he’s fired!’” These are the words of President Donald Trump regarding the recent escalation of football players protesting the national anthem and the red, white, and blue flag of the United States.

When one thinks of the National Football League of America, thoughts of grown men grimly giving up their bodies in bone-crushing hits, breathtaking displays of athleticism, and adrenaline pumping action come to mind. Well, those are the thoughts that used to be conjured up.

Nowadays, instead of discussing whether or not the Kansas City Chiefs are finally a team to be taken seriously, people are ranting about President Trump and the complete and utter lack of respect for the national anthem, the flag, and everything the United States stands for. Things that should never even be remotely correlated with the most popular sport in America.

The flag protest spiraled from one which had meaning to a petty bout of immaturity between players in the NFL and President Trump. Trump makes a comment and more players take a knee. Trump retaliates with additional

**“MEN AND WOMEN DIED FOR THE FLAG OF OUR COUNTRY; SURELY PLAYERS AND COACHES CAN FIND A BETTER MEANS OF CREATING CHANGE THAN BY DISRESPECTING THE HEART AND SOUL OF AMERICA.”**

childish tweets and teams stoke the fire by skipping the anthem completely. These protests are beginning to resemble a playground squabble more than anything else.

How did this entire fiasco begin in the first place? On August 14th, 2016, Colin Kaepernick of the San Francisco 49ers sat for the national anthem during a preseason game to protest what he considered racism in America. Kaepernick’s movement spread throughout the league like a wildfire on a dry savanna; more and more players linked arms or knelt as the national anthem played to prove their point, sparking up controversy and igniting anger in the hearts of fans and people across the country.

“I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a



country that oppresses black people and people of color,” Kaepernick told NFL Media in an exclusive interview on their website. “To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way.” The entire protest should’ve stopped after these words were uttered. Kaepernick said it himself: “This is bigger than football.” For this reason, why bring politics into the sport at all!?

NFL players are among the highest regarded athletes, wielding influence as well as high levels of cash. Just look at J.J. Watt of the Texans who raised \$37,098,248.00 for Hurricane Harvey relief. Men and women died for the flag of our country; surely players and coaches can find a better means of creating change than by disrespecting the heart and soul of America.

Many have appeared to jump on the Trump bandwagon of the NFL protest debate. To put things in perspective, social media shows fans burning their jerseys, destroying season tickets, boycotting their teams, and cancelling their

non-refundable NFL Sunday Ticket subscriptions (there are rumors that DirecTV fully refunds people who complain about the anthem protests). Fans are on the side of the flag and its honor; the current best-selling NFL jersey, according to CNN, is none other than Alejandro Villanueva of the Pittsburgh Steelers, a former captain in the United States Army who stood alone for the anthem with his hand pressed against his heart to honor the country he served, the only man from his entire team.

Should Trump have opened his mouth about what he felt to be a colossal disrespect to our country? The point is debatable at best. But the protests shouldn’t have entered the league in the first place. Maybe somehow the tide will shift and changes in the country will be made, effectively eradicating Kaepernick’s legacy. But as that doesn’t seem to be happening any time soon, the protest should be taken somewhere else by the players who can make it happen. It’s time to clear the turf of politics and let football be football.



HOME, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

(see Tehillim 137:5)

Our lives become so busy that we don’t have time to think. We just go, we just do. I have seen and heard of so many people who were once so passionate about returning to Eretz Yisrael. For whatever valid reasons these people were unable to at the time, and eventually, as life hit, they got caught up and stuck in America. We must have a sense of “im lo achshav, eimatai” (if not now, then when?) because practically, as we grow older, it becomes more difficult to pick up and move.

It is definitely not an easy leap to leave a place that is so comfortable and so familiar to a land that has a different culture and language. It is extraordinarily difficult to leave family, friends, and everything else that we are used to. The Gemara (Berachot 5a) states that Eretz Yisrael is one of the three “matanot tovot” (precious gifts) that Hashem gave to Am Yisrael, all of which are acquired only through suffering. We must, however, try to internalize and understand that Eretz Yisrael is a “matana tova,” a precious gift, that is worth acquiring. It is time to return to the land that Hashem gave to us, to Am Yisrael. It is time

to return home.

May we all merit to see the complete fulfillment of Yirmiyahu’s *nevuah* (31:17) of “Vishavu banim liqvu lam” (and the children will return to their borders), and to see the completion of the *geula* and the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

## Happy Death Day: *Cheap Thrills at Best*

By Benjamin Koslowe

True, *Happy Death Day* is narratively nonsensical. True, the acting is subpar, the dialogue is weak, the conflicts are not compelling, and even the scant romance is tacky. But the real flaw in this recent Hollywood slasher film is that it fails even at what it sets out to achieve – to be scary.

Not that *Happy Death Day* exactly aimed for the Oscars or sophisticated critical acclaim. The \$5 million budget film follows college student Tree Gelbman who is a mean person and – well, that's pretty much her only

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**“THE NOTION OF AN INSANE PERSON  
MURDERING YOU IN A DARK ALLEY IS HORRIFYING,  
BUT COMPLETELY UNREALISTIC.”**

---

significant feature. Following the shtick of *Groundhog Day*, the film has Tree trapped in a world in which she wakes up every morning on the same October 18th, as if her own personal “yesterday” that she lived through never really happened. The Halloween-style twist, à la the 1996 *Scream*, is that a masked psychopath stabs Tree to death at the end of every day in this Kafkaesque predicament.

*Happy Death Day*'s rising action revolves around Tree's attempt to identify her murderer and to live one day where she successfully shirks pointy weapons of death. Along the way she learns that being nice is good, reconciles her fraught Daddy relationship in around five sentences of conversation, and falls in love with some random bro who picked her up at a frat party the night before.

If the film sounds stupid, it's because it objectively is such. But the film at least excels in scaring the bejesus out of viewers, right?

Not right. And here's why: The notion of an insane person murdering you in a dark alley is horrifying, but completely unrealistic. Jump-scares in a dark theater might engender heart thumping or even a small shriek, but the fear, like a sneeze, dissipates quickly and leaves little impression on anyone's consciousness. And that's really all that *Happy Death Day* has going for it. The content of the film belongs to the same set as shark attacks, zombie apocalypses, or evil spirits: scary prospects to be sure, but too ridiculously absurd to merit enduring anxiety.

Surely the creators of *Happy Death Day* don't deserve too much slack. After all, the success of similar scary movies like *Friday the 13th* or *When a Stranger Calls* suggests that there is some market for the genre. Perhaps there is a sufficient amount of young

couples looking for an amusing, cheap, mildly thrilling date night to fill enough theater seats and help studios earn back their small budgets.

But it is important to realize that these films are the muck of horror stories. Putting aside cut-rate psychopath slashers, there is good storytelling to be found in this realm.

In the *Saw* film series, victims of the eponymous Jigsaw Killer are forced into gruesome torture apparatuses that relate to the characters' personality flaws and basic fears. While there is a personified villain, the real horror of the films derives from relating to characters forced to combat their own evils. This truer type of horror strikes a deeper chord whose relatable echo lingers in vulnerable viewers long after the credits finish rolling.

Stephen King, the undisputed master of horror fiction, likewise skillfully taps into real, natural fear in his many novels. While his heroes (and antiheroes) often face supernatural enemies, the monster is never just some unconnected psychopath, but is rather always somehow symbolic of deep qualities or traits within the characters. Jack Torrance in King's *The Shining* faces some spooky stuff in the haunted Overlook Hotel, but the horrors all in some way or another represent the very real and stronger demons – which are, unfortunately, all too common in the lives of many

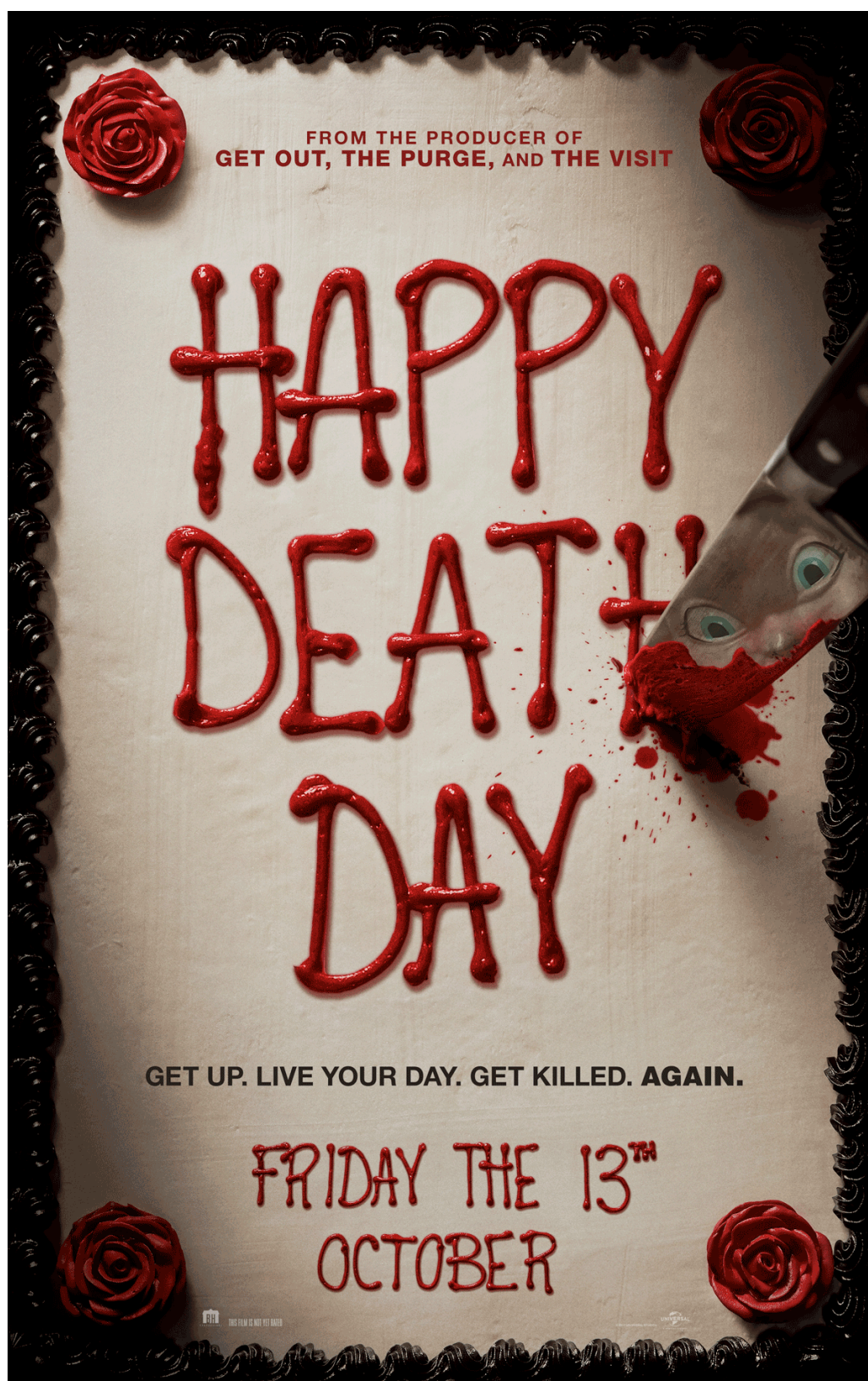
readers – that are his temper and alcoholism.

The shapeshifting clown in *It* (subject of a recent good film adaptation) never sneaks up from behind with a bloody knife, but rather embodies different forms that touch on the protagonist children's deepest insecurities. *It* is scary because, after all, who can't relate to the terrors involved in growing up?

And to finish off the logical extension, consider horror stories completely devoid of psychopaths or supernatural monsters. In King's *Apt Pupil*, a perfectly normal high school boy rapidly descends into the depths of moral abhorrence after befriending an elderly ex-Nazi in his community. The novella is not only compelling, but also *extremely* scary. The only “monster,” as it were, is the evil within the fabrics of the human condition. *What if I were in the protagonist's shoes?* the reader asks. *Would I too become like that?*

Readers and viewers hold onto fearful stories, and society makes them endure, when they are relatable. *Happy Death Day*, failing to do so, will most definitely be forgotten.

1/5 Stars. 0 Screams.



## Don't Let Them Fool You: How Israel Lost Her Soul or False Promises of the Promised Land

By Aryeh Schonbrun

A little over six months ago, I boarded an El Al flight to Israel and began the ugly process of immigration. Immigration does not generally confer feelings of homecoming and acceptance. Immigrants worldwide and from time immemorial have needed to undertake the difficult task of re-acculturation, absorption and assimilation. My case, while still in its relative infancy, has not differed from the myriads of similarly afflicted men who have set out for a new land. I have suffered over the past few months, straining to adjust to a strange new place, and while I persevere, I uneasily await what the future may bring.

Before I continue, I wish to begin with a disclaimer. I do not harbor ill will towards the subjects of this essay. I do not feel as if I have been conned or forced into making a decision that has jeopardized my current state of mind and future prospects. I undertook this mission with nearly full consciousness of the ensuing consequences, and I have only myself to blame for it. However, I would be amiss, if not myself an accessory, if I were to sit silently and suffer. I feel that, as well as writing this might bring me closure, it may help others understand the situation. To that end, I invite you to hear what I have learned of Israeli society in my encounters with it and attempt to understand what I now deal with daily. I do not ask for your sympathy, just for your discerning ear.

Since its inception, Israel has defined itself primarily as a Jewish-centric country. There does not exist any constitutional basis for considering Israel as chiefly a Jewish state, though some of its laws do prove conducive to *yiddishkeit*. The Law of Return, for instance, guarantees the right of any Jewish individual (including myself), anywhere in the world, to immigrate freely and gain automatic citizenship in Israel. The Central Rabbinate, a governmental authority, still retains [largely] ceremonial control over the marriage registry, controls the kashruth and rabbinic certification in Israel and still forbids most Israelis from travelling on public transit on the Sabbath. Most Israelis continue to feel a connection to traditional Judaism, to the ritual, religious and spiritual aspects, and the general public does seem to endearingly cling to some of our traditional practices and beliefs. Circumcision remains widespread, resisting the onslaught of the neo-Hellenism that now sweeps through the West, and people tend to be down to Earth and value-driven. Compared to the West, many indicators still signal that Israel has remained vital and healthy (low mental illness and high fertility rates continue to surprise experienced anthropologists), a functioning society, that considering the challenges it must face, appears to succeed against the odds. Israel's economy grows slowly but steadily, having recovered from the shocks of conflict, and the Israeli population has known no quieter times. Terror still retains a presence in the Israeli psyche, but the numbers of either armed or civilian casualties dwarfs the earlier wars in Israel's history. We do not expect the loss of thousands of



Soldiers protest settlement policy at their swearing in at the Western Wall (2009)

young men as we had experienced in the wars past, nor do we fear to travel freely in our cities and on [most of] our roads.

The world and Trump have given up for now on the Palestinians, dismayed by years of conflict and disorder that have followed any serious negotiations, and distracted by their own severe domestic issues. The settlements continue to grow, albeit impeded by soft domestic policy and strong opposition from abroad, but, even so, new housing tenders continue to issue from the government and the settlements have more than doubled in size since the signing of the Oslo Accords. Even the Left has realized that the Palestinians cannot offer a realistic peace. Avi Gabai, the head of historically dovish Labour announced recently that he will not agree to evict settlers from their homes. It appears that all the forces in the world have converged to validate Israel's existence, allow its continued growth and have even let Israel off the hook from what some claim constitute human rights violations. Israeli society appears as strong and permanent as ever--all appears swell.

Don't let that fool you, though. Israel does not experience these feelings of acceptance and power in a vacuum. Israelis have begun to feel the effects of increasingly hostile political forces threatening Jews abroad and in Israel. The IDF has not forgotten the stockpiles of rockets lying in wait in the North (*Hezbollah*) and the South (*Hamas*), nor have they found closure from the scars of Arab terror. A month into my residence here, I attended the funeral of a young soldier, Elchai Taharlev, murdered by an Arab terrorist whilst protecting fellow Jews. My friends knew him well, and we all mourned the loss. As much as we try to forget the conflict and focus on our *real lives*, we cannot fully disconnect from its destruction.

And that fact weighs on the Israeli conscience more than anything else. Israelis in general don't care much for the *naqba*, nor the *naqsa*, nor the continued occupation of the West Bank. Israel has painfully learned that nothing can be done. Failure after failure to reach a compromise, to assuage our guilt, to encourage coexistence with our gentile neighbors, have led to more bloodshed and a loss of our faith in ourselves and in humanity. One can say much about the ignorance of Oslo. One can ridicule the anti-democratic manner in which it came about, the utter illogical thinking that fostered its promotion and promise, but you can't argue with the fact that those in favor of trying at least had hoped it might succeed.

Micah Goodman, in his book *Catch 67*, writes that the socialist idealism of the early settlement and state gave way to the pacifist fervor of universal peace. The utopian drive for a better society drove the kibbutznikim to return to Israel, to further the development of Israel and eventually formed the economic and strategic basis for forming a state. When the socialism of Mapai and Ben-Gurion wavered in the 1980s, Goodman claims that the Left could not bear the reality of the status-quo. Their desperate attempts to bring about the end of all wars did not bear fruit, and, thus, they have despaired of both utopian dreams.

The Israeli Right, as Goodman points out, also suffered setbacks. The Right does not demand all of Trans-Jordan anymore, nor does it demand even the biblical cities of Hebron, *Shchem* (Nablus), Bethlehem and Jerusalem. No politician from the Jewish Home party would argue that it makes sense for Jews to live in Bethlehem, as much as most serious politicians from the Left would not voice their support for a significant disengagement. . The inability of Israel to gain political/demographic traction in most of the West Bank has made the Right helplessly lost and so too despaired. Instead, I propose that the Right has become mainly a surrogate for the failed policies of Supply-side economics, as they have become the most vocal supporters of tax-cuts and austerity.

Additionally, the religious revival that plagued secular society towards the end of the last century has largely dissipated, and we witness increasing rates of secularization from within historically traditional and religious communities. Children leave religion, secular Jews have less and less to do with anything nominally Jewish, and religious tensions, long simmering, have begun

to take hold of society. It ranges from the Inquisitorial cries of *hadatah* (forced exposure to religious training), to overtly caustic gestures by public institutions (e.g. the IDF) to impose a secular moral code on society, clearly intended to further inflame the situation, to media-driven witch-hunts on the part of an "enlightened" elite, and the parallel closing-off of religious societies to vast swaths of humanity in order to escape it all (with it the severe economic consequences of failing to educate the youth). As we have seen in America, chaos and dysfunction can only lead to corruption and baseless hatred, and I can bear witness to this breakdown in Israeli society that has now widened and threatens its future.

More concisely, and to paraphrase Shakespeare: Something is rotten in the State of Israel. To be fair, the world in general suffers from lack of stability. In response to Brexit, Trump, Catalonia, Syria, ISIS and on and on, we have accustomed ourselves to expect less of humanity, and of ourselves. It should not surprise you, then, that these forces of chaos and destruction have come to infect Israeli society as well. Why should Israel be any different?

In response to this existential confusion, Israelis (and, as it would seem most of the West) have doubled down: Israel must remain a Jewish state, though a state that accepts all forms of Judaism, all "Jewish" immigrants, never mind their *halakhic* status, and, above all, *medinat kol ezracheha*, a pluralistic, universalist state. Out of frustration, and in an attempt at keeping some coherent identity, Israelis as a whole have become less Jewish and more Israeli over the past two generations, and, as a result, have foregone much of what historically made Israel Israeli. A secular Jew may now have more in common with an Israeli gentile than with me! What is Israel without Judea, what is Israeli without Judaism? How can I consider myself Israeli if my peers do not concur? Personally, I do not maintain high expectations for most, but when I observe that an Israeli Jew, overtaken by his inability to identify as a Jew, in fear of reprisal from the gods of pluralism and conformity, condescends and regards me in a xenophobic light as an "other," it pains me. It drives a wedge between us, and leaves me cold, isolated and lonely. I feel alienated by much of Israeli society, as I have become aware of my differences, and upon encountering the skyscrapers of Tel Aviv or the Bourgeois societies of the *Mercaz*, I feel a compelling sense of disaffection and anomie. I lack identity and familiarity.

Not that I feel so homesick. The anomie and loneliness that characterizes a young man abroad in Western society finds a parallel in almost all aspects of our lives, anywhere we live, a universal ailment. I know deep down that I feel the lack of brotherhood in expectation of greater holiness. In Israel, I experience the twin poles of instantaneous acceptance and immediate rejection. I get invited to strangers' houses, meet and connect with amazing people, but also feel the cold rejection of greater Israeli society. I count myself lucky that I speak Hebrew well, feel comfortable culturally and religiously, and have wonderfully helpful friends, but I also know that I am privileged. Privileged to have actually paid attention in Hebrew class, to have experienced authentic Israeliness in ways most don't. Privileged to have met people who care about me and help me along, and privileged that my parents have, for now, decided to support me in my crazy adventure. I also know that most don't feel comfortable when they come visit. Most don't even feel comfortable after living here for years. Some think that the army might allow me entrance into Israeli society, but they err. The army would just reinforce what I already know: Israel needs help.

So to my friends still entrenched in the depths of exile, I offer my sympathy. Sometimes I even envy you for having avoided this conflict. For those crazy enough to join me here, I have only one thing to say: Let us together rebuild society! Let us hasten the redemption!

## If You WILF It, It Should Be No Dream

By Esther Stern

The woman told me that mine would be \$21, which was fine. There was a lightness in my knapsack, both tangible and otherwise, a void that my acheless shoulders knew could only be filled by the likes of a *shas Vilna hachodosh*. \$21 would buy me a front seat to the *Shakla Vetarya*, the give and take of the gemara, and an inside view of our mesorah on each page, pages whose columns could be filled with my own 'kuntrus' scribbles. I also needed one for Rav Kahn's shiur and *shtelling tzu*, joining in, would be difficult in the

**"[Y]OURS IS \$21 AND AT WILF ITS \$18. YU  
SUBSIDIZES THE COST OF GEMARAS FOR THE MAIN  
SHIURIM." I LAUGHED AT HER.**

absence of my own gemara. The investment would surely pay off many fold. This gemara was mine. My mind was made.

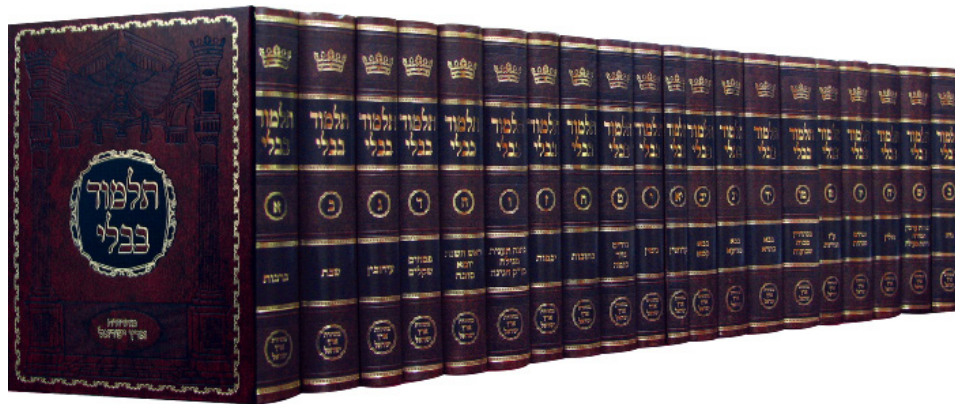
And then the woman continued talking, for brevity is certainly the soul of wit, explaining that "yours is \$21 and at Wilf its \$18. YU subsidizes the cost of gemaras for the main shiurim." I laughed at her, wondering why she was continuing to explain herself, which was certainly rude, as if to say, "quite a joke God has performed" (Bereishit 21:6). Bless her heart, the woman who was clearly no fan of my micro mockery continued saying, "What?! it makes sense," trying to protect her territory! "YU is *Torah U'maddah*, naturally they would subsidize the cost of gemaras for the boys."

And about that she couldn't have been more right. YU is the real embodiment of *Torah U'maddah*. It's not only the tagline, but they practice what they preach, supporting Torah learning and secular studies. Their motives behind subsidizing gemara Suckah are clear, meant to inspire others to further develop their place in *avodat Hashem*, and that's a big deal. They've made it so clear, in fact, that they've hung their banner high, in the highest of Heights actually, unreachable to the midtown laymen, so that the entire

world world should know "*Torah U'maddah*." And maybe that's a good thing. People should know that *ki mi-YU teitze Torah*, that it is from YU that Torah emanates.

I just wish that someone would do some cost benefit analysis on those three dollars, cost as in the non-monetary cost. Seeing as there are 57 women registered for advanced and regular Talmud classes on Beren campus, it would take a whopping \$171 to prevent the overcharging of the Beren students at the expense of their self worth. A campus where although I am a First-Year, has extended outstretched arms to welcome me, and one which I am proud to say that I attend as a third generation SCW student. Yes, my Bubby is very proud of me.

I know that I'm not the only one writing about the need for this kind of change in YU, but behind my spilled ink is the impetus to continue the conversation. I'm not saying it should be *shagur b'finu*, to have a fluency in our mouths, to revolt against the impending peril of patriarchal ideals. But given things go in and out of vogue, it is important that this topic not fly away with the winnowed chaff, mysteriously disappear like the people of Roanoke, or be tossed out like Beren's meat leftovers.



## Are You Crazy?

By Michelle Naim

I think I've been called crazy approximately 43 times in the last two years. Let me explain. See, I come from a Middle Eastern background. For those that don't know the connotations of this, imagine *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* on steroids.

My father left Iran when he was thirteen and started high school in New York, and my mother left Iran when she was eighteen years old to live with her aunt, uncle, and cousins in Sunnyvale, California. Like most Persian families, I was brought up with traditional Jewish values such as a love for Israel and being with family during prominent holidays such as Passover and Rosh Hashana. I went to Jewish school because my parents valued Jewish education. However, when it came to observing Judaism in my home, my father worked on the Shabbat and we drove to my grandmother's house for Shabbat dinner.

So of course, when I told my parents I wanted to spend a year in Israel with the rest of my classmates, one can imagine that it didn't go over so well. Many of my Persian counterparts were moving on to four-year universities or community college so my idea of where I'd be spending the year after twelfth grade wasn't the norm to my parent's standards, to say the least.

Before I decided to take the step to go to Israel, though, I asked myself if this was really worth it. Do I really want this, and more importantly, why do I want this? And although I was (and still am) too proud to admit it, I knew exactly why I wanted to go so badly.

I confess that even after ten years of Jewish education, I still didn't get it. I was in all the higher-track Torah studies classes and I could open up a Chumash or Navi and intellectually understand Rashi, but I couldn't answer bigger and more fundamental questions such as: Why Judaism? Why is this important to me? Is this even true? Can I even prove that God exists? If I was Christian, Muslim, or Hindu would I still believe as strongly as I did in my religion? Do I only take it as truth because it is the only truth I have ever known? I had all this education under my belt and yet I could not answer these basic questions. If I met an atheist on campus could I defend or have a rational argument about my beliefs? Could I have an honest conversation about my faith with Jews and non-Jews alike?

I pleaded and fought to go to Israel for months- it was not a given for me like most Jewish day-school graduates. After many "tea meetings," which I organized approximately three times a week to speak to my parents, I also brought one of my greatest influencers to the table. One of the many ways I tried to convince my parents was by asking my Rav, Rabbi Lieberman, to speak to my parents. Once Rabbi Lieberman, a trusted Rav in my high school community and one of the many reasons I am who I am today spoke to my parents, they began to open their minds to the possibility that their only daughter might spend the next year of her life in the Land of Israel.

In the fall of 2015-2016, I attended Sha'alvim for Women, and I think I can call it one of the best experiences of my life. I made life altering and long lasting relationships with some of the greatest minds in Torah, and I was introduced to teachings of Rav Soloveitchik, Rav Lichtenstein, Rabbi Lamm, and Rav Kook. I made a siyum on *Sefer Hakuzari*, one of the most important Jewish philosophical works, and began observing new *halachot* after reading *Halachic Man*. Despite the attacks in Israel and the numerous calls from my sobbing grandmother begging me to return to Los Angeles, I refused and finished my learning in good health.

After my year in Israel, I hesitantly returned to Los Angeles to begin college. I quickly discovered, however, that I didn't belong there. I missed my friends, I (surprisingly) missed having Jewish studies courses embedded in my schedule, and realized that I really took my Jewish education for granted. This was my last opportunity to take advantage of a post high school education when I wasn't just doing it for the "A" but because I really wanted to understand and hold on to these sacred teachings. The realization that I wanted to continue learning post high school led me to the decision to transfer to Stern College for women this fall.

My year abroad also showed what I had missed in my high school years. Although I had an positive high school experience, I believe lower division schools can and must do better. Studying in Israel made me realize how much I, as one of the children who came out of Jewish high school, took my Judaism for granted. If lower division Jewish education systems catered to their students by opening the floor to deeper philosophical and theological questions, I would be willing to bet that kids graduating from high school will come out with a deeper sense of their Jewish identity. Either I am one of the few who questioned many teachings about Judaism, or others are feeling just the way I did and aren't speaking up because they fear judgment. Although valuable and necessary, Chumash and Navi classes can only go so far. If our high schools opened up to more difficult questions, challenged their students, and believed in their potential instead of just teaching the "norm," I would like to think the population of high school graduates would look and act differently than they do today.

While my high school taught me Torah, they didn't teach me Judaism. Jewish education begins after high school when one is (hopefully) mentally and emotionally sophisticated enough to think, ponder, and question these huge topics that, although seemed very fundamental to me, are some of the most complex questions in Judaism. I hope that one day this will change, that one day our schools will be able to engage with their students in the way that the Yeshivas and Midrashot in Israel do with theirs. Until then, though, it seems as if the moment a child doesn't have to go to school anymore is the moment that he begins to take responsibility for his Judaism. Crazy, right?



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## The End of the Movie Industry?

By Sarah Torgueman

When was the last time you took a trip to the movie theater? People are less interested about going to the movie theater than ever before. As a result, movie theaters across North America are experiencing significant declines as the film industry is being forced to revolutionize itself. The domestic box office has seen lousy returns this summer, indicating the dire need for Hollywood to take action. According to the media measurement company comScore, North American box office revenues were down more than 14% this summer compared to last year. For the first time since 2006, movie ticket revenue during the summer failed to top the expected annual \$4 billion, according to Box Office Mojo. This slowing movie market has resulted in consequences across Wall Street, as well. Fortune's technology newsletter reported that stock prices for America's top three movie theater chains have plummeted by the end of summer 2017. It indicated that AMC Entertainment's stock dropped by almost 56%, Regal Entertainment dropped by 33%, and Cinemark dropped by almost 23% since the start of Hollywood's summer season, which spans from the first Friday in May through Labor Day weekend. Further, the IMAX company has plummeted nearly 40% over the same period of time. This summer's box office disappointments substantiate the growing trend of fewer people buying movie tickets or going to movie theaters. To compensate for low movie ticket sales, movie theater chains have been raising ticket prices over the past few years. The Motion Picture Association of America indicated that the average movie ticket price jumped 60% since the year 2000. The increasingly higher prices have resulted in even fewer ticket sales.

The film industry has contributed significantly to the overall United States economy. According to the Motion Picture Association of America, the industry contributed \$131 billion in sales to the overall U.S. economy in 2015. Moreover, its research pointed out that as an American dominated industry, film and television production has been one of America's most powerful exports, with nearly \$18 billion in worldwide exports in 2015. These figures represent sales generated by various distribution channels for film and television. They include box office sales, which continue to diminish over time.

Modern film has been revolutionized while movie theaters maintain their traditional movie model. In the past, films would open in theaters for a few weeks, then they would be distributed as VCR tapes or DVDs, and later they would be exported for international showings. In the instance that the movie would evolve into a media franchise, producers would release additional movies such as prequels, sequels, or reboots and those would undergo the same process as the traditional model. This was the single most popular movie distribution channel as of about a decade ago. This movie paradigm is characterized by distinct steps and movie theaters haven't budged from it.

Media technology has and continues to develop in the new digital age and has changed movie distribution tremendously. Movies began bypassing theaters altogether as producers released their films directly to television outlets like Video On-Demand. Most notably, movie producers have been distributing films to the streaming service, Netflix, where consumers view movies and television series through the application on a subscription

basis, as well as to other streaming services such as Hulu. Streaming services have replaced the almost extinct DVDs that used to be a mode of distribution after a film's theater debut. Producers have bypassed movie theaters, showcasing their films directly on streaming services, too. Additionally, Netflix has produced its own media for its subscribers. It aims to have its forty feature films lined up

few thousand dollars to produce a quality film ready for the big screen. These films tend to be distributed directly to streaming services, while bigger film production companies such as Sony Pictures and Warner Bros. maintain agreements with theaters.

Digital media distribution makes it easier to distribute and switch films at almost no cost. Producers used to ship physical copies of their movies to the box offices. However, that is not the case today. Films are sent through a click of a button. This allows for flexibility with substituting relatively unsuccessful movies with successful ones based on revenues generated by the film. Streaming services change their selection of films relatively often, while movie theaters have been sticking to outdated distribution methods, continuing to showcase films that appear to be unsuccessful on opening weekends. Globally recognized for his extensive research on the film industry, Professor Abraham Ravid, Sy Syms School of Business's Chair of the Finance Department, provides insight:

"In principle, I think that they could and should change this [the traditional film model] and do a much more dynamic flow of films. If I open a new film and no one comes to see it, I should be able to close it the same day and if I see people want to see another movie, I should be able to just close another and show this one, instead. This is a revolution that hasn't happened yet and the main reason is because of the agreements between theaters and studios that haven't been revamped the way they should be."

While modern entertainment channels have been continuously emerging, they open the door to uncertainty. Producing a film has become increasingly difficult with these new distribution channels, especially streaming services. Due to the fact that streaming services are relatively new to the movie industry and some don't have a sufficient infrastructure yet, producers aren't certain of the projected income for their films that are distributed via streaming services. The uncertainty from streaming services has made estimating revenues unreliable, which has in-turn made financing and budgeting films difficult tasks as well. Additionally, since many of the production companies are publicly-owned, the increased uncertainty has affected how public market investors view their prospects.

While box office ticket sales were significantly slow this summer, the film industry has been undergoing much change throughout. This has required Hollywood and movie theater chains to adapt and remodel their distribution structures in reaction to the ever expanding world of digital media technology. If these efforts are successfully implemented, the movie business may experience a comeback and regain its stature as an important business and cultural industry within America.

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for release by the end of this year.

The new age of media technology has created substitutions for film distribution and diminished the relevance of movie theaters. By competing in the crowded media marketplace with Netflix and other digital entertainment options, a movie at the movie theater doesn't seem as attractive anymore. While movie theater chains try to compensate for declining sales by raising ticket prices, streaming services have expanded their market share by providing more cost-effective options. For example, according to the Motion Picture Association of America, the average adult movie ticket at the AMC Entertainment chain is almost \$14, while the monthly subscription fee for Netflix's "Standard" plan is about \$10 with unlimited access to Netflix's digital media selection of movies and television shows.

The steps within traditional movie distribution have also changed due to piracy. Illegal distribution of recently released films have aggravated declining box office revenues. When a movie is pirated, it is copied and distributed illegally and people almost everywhere have access to viewing, usually for a fraction of the price or even for free when uploaded online. The traditional method of showcasing a movie in theaters and only then moving to other distribution channels hurts the movie. Instead, shortening the film's transition time between its showing in theaters and its showing through other distribution outlets may generate more sales for the film and diminish piracy benefits, according to Vulture Entertainment News.

Another way the film industry has been revolutionized is the availability of equipment today. It's cheaper and easier to produce and shoot a standard film today. What used to require tens of thousands of dollars to purchase movie equipment about 10 or 20 years ago is now only a



## Surging NYC Market Becomes Biotech Hub

By Nathan Feifel

New York City, the nation's most populous metropolis, is in the process of undergoing a biotechnology renaissance, and is quickly making a name for itself as a hub for the future development of the life sciences field. Just last year, the city generated over \$139 billion dollars from biotechnology companies that are situated within the city. Historically, New York City's biotechnology presence has taken a backseat to many other U.S. regions, namely the Bay Area and Greater Boston. However, the Empire State's emergence in the biotech playing field has been up and coming for many years, and now it is finally in competition with the other industry mainstays that have received most of the national recognition until this point.

New York City might be a little late to the scene, but it has slowly developed into a location that boasts one of the most thriving venues for creating breakthrough products and technologies that combat the world's diseases. Like any industry hub or cluster of a specific discipline, decades are necessary to build up a legitimate market that is able to compete with the predominant industry hubs already in existence. While the growth of the biotechnology industry sped up in the mid 1970s and 1980s, New York City didn't really establish its footing until the past couple decades, largely due to a lack of state and city funding, in addition to the limited affordable lab space the city had to offer. Though these issues still exist to some extent, both the state and city have come a long way in providing better funding and more accessible workspaces, ultimately leading to the birth of the latest biotech center in America.

Two recent life science investments have aided the growth of New York City's biotechnology sector. At the end of 2016, Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio joined together to commit over \$1 billion to advance the biotechnology businesses and medical technology in the Big Apple. Their joint effort intends to assist in developing new biomedical labs,



aiding universities conducting research, helping startups successfully grow, providing tax incentives to biotech work, and creating more industry jobs all around.

Now that New York City, namely Manhattan and Brooklyn, has gone through its growing pains, it is finally reaping the benefits of the industry and establishing itself as a biotech center in the modern world. Many unique city attributes allow for the life sciences industry to blossom there, and the area has been the recent beneficiary of developments congruent with its success.

"New York City has three things going for it in the race to attract new biotech firms", said Zachary Prensky, CEO of Manhattan-based LB Pharmaceuticals. "It has a deep

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talent pool from traditional big pharma located across the river in NJ and elsewhere throughout the region, it has more than a dozen 'top tier' universities nearby with large teams working on basic research, and it is the pre-eminent center of risk capital in the country. Biotech companies need access to equity capital like truckers need fuel. It's a completely natural fit", added Mr. Prensky.

Financial metrics strongly suggest that the New York City's newest startup scene is rapidly growing. The share of U.S. venture capital funding invested in the city's young life sciences companies rose from 0.8% in 2010 to 2.3% in 2013, and the New York City life sciences field continues to collect financial backing, pulling an aggregate of \$437.2 million in VC funding last year alone. Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology News recently ranked the New York City area as the best U.S. region to secure a biotech job due to its rapid growth, surpassing other major biotech focal points such as Boston and the Bay Area.

One seminal establishment that is largely responsible for the city's surging biotech market is the Alexandria Center for Life Science, a world class innovative complex that specializes in building facilities for technology and science companies, and which currently provides workspace for many pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms. Situated on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the center developed by Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc. boasts a state-of-the-art collaborative campus that serves as New York City's epicenter of biotechnology

advancement and is proximate to the R&D, medical, technology, and financial institutions of the area.

The Alexandria Center holds paramount value to the city's continued progress in the biotech market, as the complex alleviates much of the burden that the city's biotech market faced with limited lab space coming at the premium prices that New York City real estate demands. Occupied by both domestic and international firms, it houses reputable life sciences companies such as Pfizer, Eli Lilly, and Roche, and also offers more affordable leasing options to aspiring startups that would have been otherwise unable to practice in the city.

Plans for many more facilities to join the Alexandria Center and the host of other life sciences properties along the East-Side are already in the works. Construction is expected to start next year on the New York Life Sciences and Biotechnology Center, which looks to be an attractive landing spot for everything from seed stage companies to major establishments. J Labs@NYC and BioLabs@NYULangone are two other notable projects expected to be finalized in the near future. Crossing over to the West-Side, developers Taconic Investment Partners and Silverstein Properties revealed development plans to invest \$20 million into a life sciences facility called the Hudson Research Center.

Other valuable biotech assets in New York City include the Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., and hundreds of other biopharma companies, universities, and research sites.

New York City is also notably becoming a popular destination for European life sciences companies looking to shift operations overseas. Two main reasons behind the move are the city's renowned corporate reputation and its East Coast location. Operating out of New York, multinational companies have conveniently shorter trips back to their native countries than they would if they had set up shop in California. While this has been an advantage to the Greater Boston Area for some time now, the emergence of New York City's biotech scene has largely stolen that appeal due to the city's supreme commercial reputation.

While Boston, San Francisco, and other longstanding hubs in the industry have kept themselves at the forefront of biotechnological research and business, in the recent past, no area has made larger strides than New York City has. Since 2009, the city's life sciences sector has experienced a job spike of 16% and the Alexandria Center plans to allot about \$25 million in funding to create startups in the city.

New York City has solidified itself as a legitimate biotech hub in America and is becoming one of the hottest regions in the industry for related research and business ventures. With its continual growth and pioneering attitude, look for the city's biotech scene to keep trending in a positive direction.

## Flying High: Checking-In with Southwest's Secret

By Akiva Frishman

"Welcome to Milwaukee!" is not among the phrases a person would like to hear on an airplane—assuming your intended destination had been LaGuardia. But this and a variety of other amusing one-liners and pleasantries are frequently offered by the spirited and upbeat flight attendants on Southwest Airlines.

The Dallas-based company and its friendly staff have consistently ranked amongst the highest in customer satisfaction—which is far from a given in the airline industry—and has grown into the 4th largest airline in the U.S., servicing 100 million fliers a year. The secret to its success appears to be an employee-focused philosophy stressing that happy workers leads to happy customers. As the airline industry works to improve its flier-experience, it is worthwhile to consider some of the company policies that have contributed to Southwest's success in this regard.

What exactly motivates a SW flight attendant to be "happier" or more "upbeat" than other airlines' workers? One might be tempted to suggest economic factors; that wage and employee-attitude are sufficiently correlated and thus, Southwest provides their employees with greater

incentives for stronger performance. Indeed, according to data found on "Glassdoor", a website that provides salary information for various firms, Southwest does seem to offer the highest hourly wage for flight attendants compared to American, Delta, and United Airlines (\$34, \$31, \$30, \$30, respectively). However, lacking more comprehensive income details, it is impossible to say that the apparent wage-gap cited by Glassdoor is not closed in the form of other employee benefits like vacations or bonuses provided by other airlines. Further, if customer satisfaction and employee-attitude were only a function of salary, it is difficult to imagine how a low-cost operator like Southwest is able to rival far more expensive companies like Delta and United who could seemingly shell out the extra dollars for stronger employee-performance.

Instead, it is Southwest's commitment to hiring the right people, valuing their ideas, and instilling a sense of appreciation within its workers that most strongly contributes to its employee performance and by extension, customer satisfaction.

It would be too ambitious to argue that the "bags fly free" airline somehow makes its flight attendants into compassionate comedians, but they still deserve

recognition for recruiting such a crowd. According to Julie Weber, a Southwest Executive Vice President, "we talk about hiring not for skills but three attributes: a warrior spirit (that is, a desire to excel, act with courage, persevere and innovate); a servant's heart (the ability to put others first, treat everyone with respect and proactively serve customers); and a fun-loving attitude (passion, joy and an aversion to taking oneself too seriously.)" For the 50-year-old airline, an employee's personality is often worth more than a resume or technical knowledge. Due to Southwest's commitment to hiring such individuals, it is not surprising that passengers still find a way to smile after a long delay or a lack of overhead space.

However, a group as exceptional as this deserves to feel like their opinions matter, and Southwest accomplishes just that. For example, in redesigning its company uniform, the airline did not seek suggestions from an outside firm or even from members within the boardroom. Instead, all 40,000 employees were asked to submit a drawing of his/her idea. Later, each of them voted on their favorite

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**SOUTHWEST, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26**

designs and their artists—comprised of pilots, technicians, flight attendants, and crew—sat down to produce the new uniform.

By promoting this culture in which all of its employees feel respected and valued, Southwest ensures that its workers are happy and motivated to stand out. The effects echo throughout the entire corporation: If the servicemen sense that they are appreciated, then naturally they will work as efficiently as possible and with maximum effort, in order to ensure the flight can take off on time. The same reasoning holds true for the custodians, operators, pilots and staff. And while it is the flight attendants who are ultimately remembered for their wisecracks and compassion, their attitude can—at least somewhat—be attributed to the benefits of a clean and functional aircraft provided by other employees. The company values each of its many “links” and the end result is a flight full of passengers who in turn, feel valued.

Finally, in line with the southern values from which the company draws as its core principles, the company always remembers to say “Thank you” to its workers. The 50 year-old company has remained committed to job security and according to CNBC has never issued a pay-cut. In addition, SW has always structured its finances to allow for its employees to take part in the company’s profits. This past year, that number amounted to \$586 million, or an average of a 12.6% pay increase per-employee. The company culture seeks to impart on its employees that each of them are vital to the team’s success and this philosophy encourages them to always play their best.

There is evidence that other airlines in the industry are seeking to adopt Southwest’s commitment to customer satisfaction. For too long, fliers have rightfully

complained about delayed flights, irritable personnel, and luggage weight limits and its possible that these grievances have finally met the ears of those in the boardroom. A 2016 study conducted by Wichita State University and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University found that the likelihood of lost baggage or a delayed flight has dropped along with the quantity of customer complaints and that these improvements have contributed to higher customer satisfaction (It is worth noting that Southwest receives the lowest number of customer complaints among the major airlines). Dean Headley, the co-author of the report, writes “People don’t look at numbers. They just care about what happened to them.” In other words, the staff, gate check workers, and flight attendants all contribute to the actual flight experience which could determine if a flier chooses

a specific airline. It seems to be the case that a passenger’s experience is inextricably linked to the behavior and actions of the employees on board.

In an economy that has been wholly transformed by automation, the airline industry remains one of the few that is still very much dependent on quality, face-to-face, employee-customer relations like those of Southwest. And while some airlines have taken steps to improve their flier experience, there is still a long way to go. If airlines want to ensure that their clients are satisfied, they ought to implement—or build upon—a system that encourages the highest degree of employee performance. Attention Airlines: Southwest’s philosophy is ready for take-off.

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