

The COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University



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Married Housing: Fake Invitations, Maternity Leave, and Lots of Ambiguity



By Shoshy Ciment

For its current married students and alumni, Yeshiva University offers a limited number of apartments in Washington Heights. There are about 75 apartments available on Laurel Hill Terrace for married couples that have graduated or are currently studying at YU, according to Matt Yaniv, the Director of Marketing and Communications of the Yeshiva University Office of Communications and Public Affairs (CPA).

“Interested students and alumni must properly complete the application process before they are added to the waiting list,” explained Yaniv. “Undergraduate students are given priority based on a variety of factors, including their date of application, wedding date, and specific unit requested.”

Married housing is open to YU undergraduates and students in any YU graduate

SEE MARRIED HOUSING, CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Following Shiur Cancellation, Rabbi Klapper to be Scholar in Residence on the Beren Campus

By Esti Kuperman

Following a controversial visit to YU last March and a shiur cancellation on December 20, Rabbi Aryeh Klapper is expected to return to Yeshiva University's Beren campus as the scholar in residence for the shabbos of December 29-30, Parshat Vayechi.

Rabbi Klapper, who has a Masters in Bible from the Bernard Revel Graduate School, and was ordained by RIETS in 1994, is returning to Yeshiva University for the second year in a row after a controversial reaction to last year's visit. As reported in The Commentator, when it was announced that Klapper would be speaking on March 29, Rabbi Hershel Schachter, a YU Rosh Yeshiva, was seen tearing down posters publicizing the event, which was sponsored by SOY. Schachter referred to Klapper as an “*apikores*” (which he later took back), explaining that his views did not coincide with the values

SEE KLAPPER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Following Backlash, Ayalon's Course to Count for Political Science Major Once Again

By Commentator Staff

Ambassador Danny Ayalon's spring 2018 course, “Topics: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” will count as an elective for Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women political science majors.

In an email sent to The Commentator, Dean Karen Bacon, the Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, wrote, “In response to the strong student desire to have Ambassador Ayalon's course count in fulfillment of political science major requirements, Professor Luders has been working with the Ambassador's office to revise the syllabus and broaden its scope.”

According to Bacon, the amended course, which counts for two credits and is set to run only through March, will need to be supplemented with “an approved independent

SEE AYALON'S COURSE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

The EDITORIAL

Who Gets to Insult Students?

By Avi Strauss

Around two years ago, I stopped to talk with three peers tabling in Rubin Hall in support of education reform and school choice. The students were hoping to spread awareness about charter schools, advocating that schools are a legitimate way to improve public education in the U.S.

Within minutes of my arrival and discussion of the issue with them, a tenured professor, whose background is not remotely related to political science, sociology, or economics, approached the table and interrogated the students about their advocacy. The professor's questioning rapidly descended into disparagement and insults, as he accused the students of racism for supporting charter schools.

The students, for their part, remained respectful throughout the interaction, despite the professor's verbal aggression.

As a student in my fourth year on campus, I've witnessed several interactions like the one described above in the classroom as well, in which students expressed opinions contrary to that of the professor. In these instances, the professor either directly or implicitly described their comments as regressive, unbecoming, immoral, or irrational.

To be sure, these interactions are few and far between in the Yeshiva University classroom setting. Most discussions and debate between students and faculty remain respectful throughout. But debate can get heated, and investment in an issue occasionally descends into pejoratives.

It is in this context in which I would like to address some of the concerns expressed by students and faculty with the appearance of people like Dennis Prager and Ben Shapiro on campus.

There is a consistent theme of students suggesting that inflammatory speakers not come to campus because they may insult students. They argue that as a university, YU's priority should be to protect students from verbal attacks and, by allowing these speakers to lecture, the university has abdicated this critical responsibility.

I find this curious on two accounts:

- It is well accepted amongst university students that certain professors subscribe to very different opinions on social and political issues. While disagreement is welcome, it may also come with a sprinkling of injurious language.

- The Prager and Shapiro events were voluntary affairs.

And, critically, both of these points are upended by a simple recognition of our adulthood. College-aged students can think for themselves and make rational decisions about if and when they wish to engage in debate, and what their sensitivity tolerance level is. And they don't distinguish between outside speakers and those salaried by the university.

We can choose whether staking out an opinion diametrically opposed to a professor's in class is worth our time, and we can handle confronting the fact that the professor knows more than we do and is going to explain why we're wrong. We can also choose when we want to publically voice our opinions in newspapers and at events, and whether or not we go to events where our political sensibilities may be challenged, or even rudely talked over.

Being a college student shouldn't entail a protective insult-barrier bequeathed to us by our university staff. We don't need protection from coarse language or coarse views, nor do we need to be guarded against using our mental faculties to determine whether or not a speaker will insult us. On the contrary, students should understand that insults are the mark of inferior substance—using insults to advance an argument or tear down somebody else's typically betrays a lack of confidence in oneself or a lack of respect for the person expressing contrary opinions.

Nonetheless, if we are willing to join the public debate, we are willing to accept the public's scrutiny, even when lowbrow and dim, or at the very least, should be.

This is why the students tabling for school choice didn't flinch when the professor confronted them. By tabling, and affirming support for a sometimes controversial issue, they accepted that they could be scrutinized. The unnamed professor, who wished to challenge them as professors often do, simply seized the opportunity to open up a debate, which the students welcomed.

To suggest that students be protected the moment they finish their sentence expressing an opinion is antithetical to the very core of what college education should be. The very notion of "opinion" implies that there is another side that stands in opposition, waiting to disagree.

Is it unfortunate that some of those disagreements result in insults and personal slights? Of course. But do we need to be protected from them? Not if we want to seriously engage in public debate like adults.

How President Berman Should Replace Town Hall Meetings

Dr. Berman recently told The Commentator that he will not be holding Town hall meetings. We call upon him to do the following in order to promote transparency, accountability, equal access, and community.

First, he should mandate that departments hold their own town hall meetings. Perhaps Dr. Berman should invest his time in loftier questions than those about the proverbial water pressure in the showers, but the literal water pressure in showers is exactly where Jonathan Schwab, Associate Director of University Housing and Residence Life for the Wilf campus, should invest his time, something he did by holding a Housing Department town hall. We urge Dr. Berman to make this practice mandatory for other departments, such as academics, student life, and student finance. For those interested in the relevant topics, these localized town hall meetings will provide the transparency, accountability, and equal access that presidential town hall meetings were meant to promote.

Second, Dr. Berman must meet students at predetermined and spontaneous times. We suggest three specific contexts: First, in the fall of last year, President Richard Joel scheduled several meetings with open signups. Students who wanted to meet with the then-president simply filled out an online form and met him at the assigned time. Dr. Berman should do the same. Second, Dr. Berman must also spend several

Shabbatot on both campuses. Last, he should continue to make unplanned - or at least unannounced - visits to campus and student events. When he makes rounds in the libraries, watches the SCDS play, and hands out swag on Swag Day, Dr. Berman gains invaluable insight into how young men and women live and learn at Yeshiva. Just by "showing up," students can receive impromptu audience with the university president. Through these kinds of engagements, Dr. Berman and students can have real dialogue about real campus life.

In addition to addressing transparency, accountability, and equal access, this new model for administrator-student discourse has a particular upside: community building. Town hall meetings with President Richard Joel were at times impressive shows of his capabilities in politically correct verbal sparring matches. Dr. Berman has a different talent. He can not only ask his audience for their thoughts on any given matter, but also hear them, internalize their words, and respond to them thoughtfully.

We call upon Dr. Berman to join us in our mission to promote transparency, and meet with students in the same way that made him so welcomed when he first arrived: by hearing their voices and making them feel like they are all on the same team.

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 83 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

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

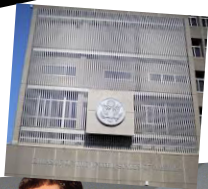


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1 Top Comments

No joke, this historic new initiative of the YU Commentator media conglomerate spreads the voices and opinions of students on campus.



2 U.S. Embassy moving to Jerusalem

You know what this means: no more schlepping to Tel Aviv when your passport expires in the middle of Shana Dalet.

3 Adam Sandler's "The Chanukah Song"

This song was definitely missing from the Chanukkafest's playlist. We can never be reminded enough times how many famous people are Jew-ish.

4 YU Memes for On The Derech Teens

The new meme page to which you should be added immediately. We hope this lasts longer than YU Dates (look it up).

5 Chanukahfest

Free swag, free food, and free awkward co-ed interactions over loud music.

6 December 31, 2017

The last day we'll ever have to live in 2017. Also, deadline for all year-in-reviews.

7 Roy Moore Lost Senate Seat

Faith in humanity restored...at least for a little while.

7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN

1 Don't Cheat Signs

Problem solved.

2 Dennis Prager

If the phrase "sexual object" wasn't in your vocabulary before, it sure is now.

3 Swag Day

President Berman handing out swag was a much better way to connect to the people than taking the subway. Looking at you Hillary.

4 Smell on 185th

Is it coming from the fertilizer used for for the new plants or is it the product of those thou\$and\$ SOY has spent on Thursday nights?

5 Winter Break

I don't know what's shorter: the break or my patience for finals.

6 Snow on Weekends

Enough of these cute winter wonderland weekends. If the school won't shut down, we don't want it.

7 Class Evaluations

In case studying for finals didn't keep you busy enough, you'll spend half an hour just deleting all the emails reminding you to grade those who grade you.

Letter to the Editor:

To the Editor:

Professor Joseph Luders' decision, as reported in The Commentator this past week, that a political science course required more academic design was probably correct. He should not be blamed for that position.

What should be an issue of criticism is his apparent inability to set matters aright without cancelling the credit as a first step. A few short hours of thinking and cooperating with Ambassador Ayalon behind-the-scenes should have been enough to avoid controversy. Indeed, that is the reason academics assume administration duties. Perhaps administration, not the academic profession, is his problem.

Yisrael Medad
YC 1967, Political Science
Shiloh, Israel

Letter to the Editor:

To the Editor and the YU Community:

In response to Avi Strauss' recent article ("Are the Humanities Disappearing on Campus?"), I will start by commending him for establishing some context that I hope we use to ask pointed, if complex questions, individually and collectively, about what college is and why we are here.

In her 2015 elegy of neurologist Oliver Sacks, writer Michiko Kakutani explained that it was "no coincidence that so many of the qualities that made [him] such a brilliant writer are the same qualities that made him an ideal doctor: keen powers of observation and a devotion to detail [and] deep reservoirs of sympathy..." The year after Sacks' death, I kept this remembrance of him taped outside my office, often stopping on my way back from the copy machine to reread it.

For as trite as it may sound, those words served as a reminder – in part for how I aspired to teach (detail, sympathy), but more so for *why* I aspired to teach. I taught (and still teach) writing. And I teach writing because I believe that how you write reflects how you are in the world: how you can be both empowered and humbled, how you can come to understand your own interdependence, and how you can make use of your own unique perspective. Teaching writing, therefore, has been not only how I hoped to equip students to more clearly embrace the potential of their own voices, teaching writing has also been how I hoped to encourage students to be more attentive in general.

If you have taken First Year Writing with me, you will

*SEE LETTER TO EDITOR,
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Editor's Note: On the Age of The Commentator

By Benjamin Koslowe

The Commentator has deemed it prudent to update its volume number from 82 to 83.

Recently, when poring over old Commentator archives, I was perplexed to find that the newspaper was founded on March 1st, 1935. The first governing board, led by Moses I. Feuerstein, published several issues during the Spring 1935 semester. The same governing board stayed with the paper the next academic year, publishing successfully throughout the Fall 1935 and Spring 1936 semesters. This first full year of The Commentator was 82 years ago, which means that the newspaper is currently in its 83rd year of publication. This raises the question: Why is the newspaper only up to volume 82?

Attempting to sort out this mystery, I carefully went through old archives dating back to 1935. I found that for most of The Commentator's history, each academic year featured two volumes. Thus, the newspaper in Spring 1935 was volume one, in Fall 1935 volume two, in Spring 1936 volume three, and so on. This pattern

*SEE AGE OF THE COMMENTATOR,
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Cardozo Law School to Accept GRE as an Alternative to the LSAT

By Shoshy Ciment

Those applying to the 2018-2019 academic year at Cardozo Law School will be able to be considered for admission having taken the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), instead of the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). Cardozo Law School is the 14th law school in the country to allow applicants to take the GRE as an alternative to the LSAT.

The decision, announced on December 8, is part of a movement to attract students with a strong background in science and technology to Cardozo's programs in intellectual property and technology law, according to the Cardozo website. Whereas the LSAT features sections that test students' logical reasoning, analytical reasoning, and reading comprehension skills, the GRE tests more broadly and has sections that test students' analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning skills.

Cardozo follows Columbia, Brooklyn, and St. John's to be the fourth law school in New York City to allow either the LSAT or GRE from its applicants. Harvard Law School, ranked the 3rd best law school in the country by U.S. News, announced that it would be accepting the GRE in addition to the LSAT from applicants in the fall of 2017. This change was implemented after a study at Harvard Law school showed that a high score on the GRE was a valid indication of a law school student's performance in their first year.

A survey conducted in 2017 by Kaplan Test Prep, a company that provides test preparation services, showed that an increasing number of law schools are open to the idea of accepting the GRE as an alternative to the LSAT. According to the survey, this move gives law schools a larger pool of applicants from which to select, perhaps combating the downward trend in law school admissions as of late. In the fall 2017 admissions season, the Law School

Admissions Council (LSAC), the body that administers the LSAT, announced that the number of law school applicants decreased by 0.5%.

Cardozo Law School was founded in 1967 by Yeshiva University. According to its website, Cardozo's is ranked number 14 in the nation for practical training and 1st in New York by The National Jurist. The U.S. News and World Report ranks Cardozo as the 65th best law school in the country.



Office of Student Life and Housing Office Hold "Star Wars" Film Festival

By Judah Stiefel

In preparation for the newest "Star Wars" movie, "The Last Jedi", the YU Office of Student Life (OSL), along with the Housing Office, ran a "Star Wars" Film Festival with screenings of the previous movies on the Wilf campus. The festival culminated with a showing of "The Last Jedi" on December 25th at the Union Square Theater.

The showings began on November 18th with a showing of "Episode IV: A New Hope," and the movies were then shown in chronological order. Attendance at the events varied, reaching ten at the busiest showing.

For the showing of "The Last Jedi", the OSL and Housing Office rented out a theater and charged students a reduced rate of \$5 per ticket. According to Levitin, the theater rental cost \$3,700. The theater seats 200, and, as of December 23rd, roughly 145 tickets were sold. Overall, 175 tickets were made available for purchase while students were able to win the rest of the tickets by either spinning the Chanukah wheel in the OSL or by answering "Star Wars" trivia questions.

Tzvi Levitin, Stanton Fellow in the OSL, said, "The idea was to give students a fun way to hang out and have fun." According to Levitin, the idea for the event was developed by OSL Student Life Coordinator Natan Bienstock and Director of University Housing and Residence Life Jonathan Schwab.

Yeshiva College Junior Gabriel Baron, who won a ticket by answering trivia questions, said, "I won a ticket and if there are two things in this world I can't say no to, it's 'Star Wars' and free stuff."

Schwab stated that the OSL and Housing Department are planning to run similar programming involving movie marathons and theater rental leading up to the movie

"Avengers: Infinity War." Before running the future events, the OSL plans to gauge interest by asking students which movies they'd like to see and which times would be best for the students interested. They also plan to keep the location and time of the movie showings consistent in the future.



Annual YU Hanukkah Dinner Raises \$4.3 Million, Marks a 10% Increase From Last Year

By Ben Strachman

The 93rd annual Yeshiva University Hanukkah Dinner on December 3 raised over \$4.3 million, marking an increase of 10% over last year's event and constituting the largest sum in at least five years. The dinner is the university's main yearly fundraising event.

In his address, President Berman called the event "one of the most successful dinners in its 93-year history." In 2012, the dinner raised \$3.8 million before dip-

"THIS MARKS THE FIRST DINNER AFTER THE NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT ALYSSA HERMAN, AS WELL AS PRESIDENT BERMAN, TOOK OFFICE."

ping to \$3.5 million the next year. Since 2014, the dinner has averaged \$4 million. This marks the first dinner after the new Vice President of Institutional Advancement Alyssa Herman, as well as President Berman, took office.

It was revealed in a report last year by The Commentator that former Vice President of Institutional Advancement Seth Moskowitz resigned from his position the morning after last year's dinner. The dinner had brought in "close to \$4 million," according to the YU News Blog.

New York Times columnist Bret Stephens served as the keynote speaker for the dinner, receiving an honorary degree alongside Chair of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law Board of Overseers David Samson. YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Meir Goldwicht received the Presidential Medallion. Past honorees of the dinner include President George W. Bush, Governor Andrew Cuomo, and mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat.

Hanukkah Dinner	Total Raised*
86th (2010)	\$4.1 million
87th (2011)	Unable to obtain
88th (2012)	\$3.8 million
89th (2013)	\$3.5 million
90th (2014)	\$4.2 million
91st (2015)	\$4 million
92nd (2016)	\$4 million
93rd (2017)	\$4.3 million

*Approximations reported by YU News Blog



KLAPPER, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

and ideals of Yeshiva University. He was also quoted as having said that inviting Rabbi Klapper to speak at YU was "like inviting a Reform rabbi."

The morning after the shiur, Rabbi Penner, Dean of RIETS, addressed students to try and ease some of the tension that had arisen as a result of the event. When asked to comment on the return of Rabbi Klapper, Rabbi Penner said he had no particular comments to make.

On Wednesday, December 20, Rabbi Klapper was scheduled to speak on the Wilf Campus in an event hosted by Kol Hamevaser, the Jewish thought magazine of YU. He was scheduled to speak about "Retzon Hashem, Human Experience, and Lomdus: A Philosophical Agenda for the Beis Medrash." According to Doniel Weinreich, an organizer of the event, the Office of Student Life claimed that the event was only originally approved due to an overlook of details. Since the event required a lot more time and preparation than was allocated, it was cancelled.

"With the reaction so strong from students and Roshei Yeshiva, it is surprising to see that Rabbi Klapper is now being welcomed back less than a year later," said SCW junior

Miriam Cohen.

Rabbi Aryeh Klapper is the Dean of the Center for Modern Torah Leadership and Rosh Beit Midrash of its Summer Beit Midrash Program, Instructor of Rabbis and Medical Ethics at Gann Academy in Waltham, Massachusetts, and a member of the Boston Beit Din. He has published in *Tradition*, *Meorot*, *Dinei Yisrael*, *Beit Yitzchak*, and other journals. Rabbi Klapper has been published in several newspapers and has given countless shiurim focusing mostly on issues of Jewish law. He also served as the head Rabbi at the Hillel of Harvard University for a decade.



Dennis Prager Speaks at YU, Fans Flames of Political Discourse on Campus

By Nolan Edmonson

On December 4, radio host and political commentator Dennis Prager spoke on the Wilf Campus to a crowd of roughly 230 students in an event hosted by the YU chapter of the Young America's Foundation (YAF).

This was the second time the Young America's Foundation hosted an event at Yeshiva University. In fact, Prager's talk that evening occurred exactly one year and a day from when radio host and conservative pundit Ben Shapiro addressed the student body at YU. Shapiro was brought in with the help of the Yeshiva University College Republicans and sponsored by YAF before it was officially recognized as a club on campus. Last year, Shapiro drew praise and criticism alike when he said transgender people are suffering from a mental illness.

Prager too has drawn criticism for many of his comments, including those against breastfeeding in public and about women's sexuality. Prager's speech, like

"PRAGER'S SPEECH, LIKE SHAPIRO'S TALK BEFORE IT, DREW THE IRE OF SOME IN THE STUDENT BODY!"

Shapiro's talk before it, drew the ire of some in the student body. Before the event took place, the YAF chapter's founding chairman Elliot Fuchs advertised Prager's talk in the Facebook group YU Marketplace, drawing intense criticism when he wrote "SNOWFLAKES BEWARE: White Male coming to campus!"

In his speech, Prager addressed an article published in *The Commentator* that was written by Stern College sophomore and Co President of the YU Feminists club Molly Meisels. In the article, written before Prager's appearance at YU, Meisels criticized Prager for his "belligerent rhetoric" and cited some of his controversial opinions on women and feminism.

Perhaps the most controversial moment of the evening was when Prager, addressing Meisels' article, stood by his conviction that a woman's mood should not be the only factor in her willingness to have sex with her husband. "If a married woman loves her husband and he is a good man...and she loves him, she should not allow mood to be the only thing to determine whether or not she has sex with him," Prager said.



In the question and answer segment of the event, Prager addressed a question from Meisels, claiming that her leftist positions represented "the majority of media opinion today," and added that he welcomed her on his show should she decide to go on.

In addition to labelling Meisels' article "inaccurate," Prager spoke extensively on how the Torah stands in clear opposition to Leftism without explicitly saying that the Torah sides unequivocally with conservative thought. "The Left is the opposite of the Torah and I'd like to give you a few examples,"

Prager stated, citing multiculturalism, moral relativism, secularism, and social justice as just some of the values held by the Left but rejected by the Torah. After his talk, Prager fielded questions from students on topics ranging from affirmative action to American foreign policy.

Fuchs pointed out that for him, the most significant part of the evening was the question and answer portion. "It highlights the important message that ideas—no matter whether or not you agree with them—should be questioned and debated in an entertaining an[d] intellectually stimulating format," Fuchs explained.

As with Shapiro, Prager garnered mixed reactions from the students present. Sy Syms Junior Adam Livi thought that Prager's talk was fantastic. "[It was] utterly amazing. I'm glad YU can bring speakers like this without protest," Livi said. Livi thought that Prager gave sound points and hoped that YAF would bring other conservative speakers in the future.

YC Junior Doniel Weinreich was not so enthusiastic. Weinreich noted that almost every statement Prager made was a blanket condemnation of "the Left." Weinreich went on to say, "I generally believe you shouldn't believe what one group of people have to say about what another group of people believe. Especially when it's in broad sweeping terms." For Weinreich, rhetoric, not content, came out on top that evening.

Getting Prager to speak was the culmination of many months of planning, Fuchs said, with the help of many within the national YAF organization. He remarked that he hoped students walked out of Weissberg Commons with "the realization that opinions that are completely foreign to them—ideas not typically found on a college campus—exist."



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Singing at Sundown Aims to Bring Spirituality to Wilf Campus Shabbat

By Eli Weiss

On Saturday, December 2, a new co-ed Seudah Shlishit program was piloted by Dovid Simpser, the President of SOY. Entitled "Singing at Sundown," the program will continue to occur every few weeks on a trial basis in order to test out the demand for the new program.

The program attracted about 50 people its first time around. It began with 15 minutes of food and socializing followed by singing that was "emotionally expressive" and "intense," according to Simpser. The food that was served is the same food that is served at the Seudah Shlishit run by RIETS in the Cafe every week.

Simpser expressed that the program was designed to fill a spiritual need in the Yeshiva University Shabbat experience, in contrast with the current Seudah Shlishit programming offered by RIETS. "I am trying to create a model of dual programming so that everyone feels religiously engaged and satisfied," said Simpser. The

Seudah Shlishit program offered by RIETS in the Cafe is only attended by men and usually features a large Dvar Torah with limited singing.

Simpser expressed that the process of creating Singing at Sundown was a natural progression from the founding of Klein at Nine, a new minyan on campus for morning services on Shabbat that is designed to mimic a community shul where there is value on both speed and singing. He explained that with the success of Klein at Nine each week, both "RIETS and the Office of Student Life (OSL) recognized the need for something that wasn't the current programming."

Klein at Nine celebrated its one year anniversary with the founding of Singing at Sundown.

Simpser conveyed that he experienced pushback from RIETS and OSL, both of whom were concerned that the new program would fragment the YU community, which is unified at the current Seudah Shlishit program. Simpser responded by saying that while a unified program sounds

nice, the reality is that "The people that fit [the program] will enjoy. And the people that don't fit [the program] just won't come."

An attendee of Singing at Sundown, Amitai Glicksman, described his experience: "Singing at Sundown [is] special [because it] focuses on strengthening our connections. We connect with our friends and fellow community members through togetherness, and with Hashem through song and tefillah."

Noah Marlowe, Vice President of SOY who also spearheaded the program said "Singing at Sundown is a new religious outlet available for YU students to express themselves in a way that is similar to...NCSY, Bnei Akiva, and Yeshiva/Midrasha."

The next Singing at Sundown program is scheduled to take place on Jan 27, 2018 during the next SOY in-Shabbat. Men and women are invited to attend.



LETTER TO EDITOR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

not be surprised to see me invoke the words of Dr. Martha C. Nussbaum, who has articulated three urgent and timely "capacities," essential for the "survival" of democracy, all of which are fostered by the study of the liberal arts. Firstly, Nussbaum claims, each citizen has the responsibility of self-examination, which includes the willingness to reason, to question, and to doubt, all of which happens in academic inquiry and all of which can translate into resisting autocracy and collectively rallying against cruelty. Furthermore, by studying subjects such as history and literature, Nussbaum maintains, we can also develop what she calls "narrative imagination." In other words, by learning about people separated from ourselves by time or geography or the economic schisms of our own city, we stand to better recognize our shared humanity. In addition, Nussbaum encourages students to draw on their education to inform their sense of "global citizenship." Regardless of your political views, there's no denying that we live in multinational world, where cross-cultural communication and cooperation are more essential than ever. I whole-heartedly agree with Nussbaum, and I

encourage students who have not previously encountered her writing to take her ideas into consideration.

But I especially agree with Nussbaum as a result of my work with YU students. Over the last decade of teaching, I've learned a lot, and one thing I know for sure is that you guys work really hard. Time and again, I have been so impressed by how responsible and determined YU students are, grounded in rich tradition but always with an eye toward the future. (To be frank, I often *wish* I would have had half the foresight at your age.) But my point is this: I have no doubt that the vast majority of YU students will go on to have meaningful, productive, and lucrative careers. But no matter how much you work, how much you like your work, or how much money you want to make, you owe it to yourself to not only think of yourself as a future employee. And, quite frankly, you owe it to everyone else, too.

There will be many hours of your life not spent at your desk. And in between or in addition to taking care of your families and enriching your communities, you will often be in the company of your own mind. Your years as an undergraduate can be essential in helping make sure that you are a person with whom you want to spend time. To that end, whether through your Core requirements or through a possible Major in the Humanities, you have the

opportunity to learn about, reflect on, and participate in this world we share, all of which can meaningfully impact your understanding of that world – at your job, but also in your life.

At age 81, when Oliver Sacks learned he had terminal cancer, he wrote an essay confronting the suddenly close end of his own life. "Above all," he wrote, "I have been a sentient being, a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet, and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure." I make the case for the Humanities with these words in mind, along with the reminder, after all, that Sacks' most important work was as a doctor. I'm grateful to all my students, over the last ten years, who have enriched my own time as a sentient being. What I wish for you in turn is that you arm yourselves for all the beauty and all the sorrow to come with the curiosity and the responsibility that the adventure demands.

Sincerely,
Liesl Schwabe
YC Writing Program Director

Changes in the Wilf Campus Hebrew Requirements

By Benjamin Koslowe

The Wilf campus undergraduate Hebrew department has approved a modified curriculum for its 1100 level. While retaining the six credits of requirements, the courses will now be spread over three semesters rather than over two semesters.

Beginning in Spring 2018, the Hebrew Intermediate track, which has consisted of the Hebrew 1105 and Hebrew 1106 courses, will instead consist of three courses: Hebrew 1104, Hebrew 1105, and Hebrew 1106. The total credit amount will remain the same, but going forward, the courses will be spread over three semesters instead of two. These courses, worth two credits each, will meet twice a week. For students who took Hebrew 1105 in the current system, Hebrew 1106 worth three credits is being offered one last time in Spring 2018.

“The faculty had found that it was just going too quickly,” said Dean Karen Bacon, the Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Yeshiva University, reflecting on the current Hebrew Intermediate track curriculum which is being modified. “It was too intense for students to really be able to succeed as [the faculty] wanted them to.” Bacon justified the change to spread out the new curriculum over three semesters. “Language instruction takes a while to internalize and to practice,” she said, “so the faculty feels that this is going to be more effective.”

“We are excited about the changes to the 11 Hebrew track,” wrote Professor Sigal Shalom, the Wilf campus Hebrew Program Coordinator. “We are always trying to make the learning experience as effective and beneficial as possible for our students. These changes will allow students to learn successfully at their correct level.”

Yeshiva College and Sy Syms School of Business students are required to take a minimum of six credits of Hebrew language as undergraduates. Before beginning undergraduate studies, most students take a YU-administered placement examination to determine their level: Elementary, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, or Advanced (some very advanced students place out of all Hebrew requirements). In the current system, students placed in Elementary take Hebrew 1004, Hebrew 1005, and Hebrew 1006, each of which meets four times per week, over three semesters. Students placed in Intermediate take Hebrew 1105 and Hebrew 1106, each of which meets three times per week, over two semesters. And students placed in Upper Intermediate or Advanced take Hebrew 1205 and Hebrew 1206 (Upper Intermediate) or Hebrew 1305 and Hebrew 1306 (Advanced), each of which meets two times per week, over two semesters. Each one of these individual courses is worth three credits.

Yeshiva University students enrolled in the James Striar School (JSS) Program, whether concurrently enrolled in Yeshiva College or Sy Syms School of Business, are required to complete an Elementary Hebrew curriculum which is satisfied by completing the Hebrew 1203 and Hebrew 1204 courses. Students with minimal Hebrew background may also be required to take the Hebrew 1101 and Hebrew 1102 introductory courses. These courses are worth five credits each and meet four times per week.

Women undergraduate students on the Beren campus take Hebrew courses as part of the Rebecca Ivry Department of Jewish Studies requirements. Effective Fall 2017, women are placed into one of four Hebrew tracks—HEBR 1101, HEBR 1102-1104, HEBR 1105-1107, or HEBR 1108 or above—which consist of four, three, two, or one required course, respectively. According to an email sent by Dean Ethel Orlian, the Associate Dean at Stern College for Women, students who completed requirements by Fall 2017 may take additional Hebrew courses to strengthen their skills, but need not do so.

The modifications to the 11 track are the only official change that will take effect next semester for the undergraduate Hebrew curricula on the Wilf Campus. However, the Hebrew professors and Yeshiva University administrators have also been discussing possible ways in which the Advanced track, which currently consists of Hebrew 1305 and Hebrew 1306, might be reshaped.

“We are piloting a synchronous online course this coming semester for the 1300 level with a small group of students,” wrote Professor Aaron J. Koller, the Chair of the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies. “The key advantage is flexibility, as such classes can in theory take place any time of the week (Sundays, late at night, etc.)”

Koller explained that this trial course will consist of a handful of students who placed into Hebrew 1305 and volunteered to take an online course for Yeshiva College credit. The course, which will be supervised by Koller, will be taught by eTeacherHebrew, an online language academy that offers live online instruction with flexible hours. The curriculum and one example syllabus are available online at eteacherhebrew.com. “As that progresses,” wrote Koller, “we will be in a better position to take stock of what we do particularly well already and where we can further improve the program.”

Dean Bacon explained that the motivation for rethinking the Advanced curriculum is to find the best possible learning goals for these students. While the Hebrew 1305 and Hebrew 1306 courses currently emphasize Hebrew grammar, an imagined redesigned curriculum might deemphasize grammar and instead focus on improving students’ conversational skills. At the same time, she emphasized that she and other faculty very much value the current curriculum, which focuses on grammar.

“I know that for some students language is not at the top of their hit parade and they don’t necessarily enjoy it,” said Dean Bacon, “but I have a feeling that in years to come when they look back, they will be very proud of what they know because they’re going to find themselves able to contribute to conversations or to understand things in ways that other people can’t because they don’t have that rigorous grammatical background.” She added, “Hebrew is our language. The grammar is so critical to the Tanach. You can change the whole meaning of the Pasuk by understanding the grammatical form or misunderstanding the grammatical form.”

Dean Bacon also emphasized that students at any Hebrew level should not feel limited to taking only requirements. “If you seriously see that there is a gap in your ability to understand the text because of your limitations in Hebrew, there’s nothing to stop you from taking another Hebrew course. And in fact, I think, unless I’m mistaken, you can take it P/N, because it’s not towards any particular requirement. So you don’t have to

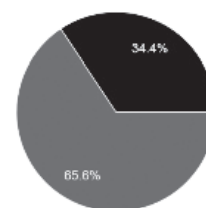
worry about your grade.” She added, “you can probably even audit it.”

Both Dean Bacon and Professor Koller expressed interest in surveying Yeshiva University students as to what their own personal goals in learning Hebrew are, and what they think they have gained from the Hebrew courses they have taken here. To this end, The Commentator organized a short opt-in survey for students who either took Advanced Hebrew last year or who are currently taking Advanced Hebrew. The survey generated 32 responses.

Of those who responded, 65.6% approved of the current curriculum which focuses on grammar. The other 34.4% expressed that they would prefer a curriculum that would focus more on conversational Hebrew and less on grammar. The vast majority—87.5% of those who responded—indicated that they feel that their Hebrew grammar has improved from Advanced Hebrew. Of those, 32.1% (i.e. 28.1% of all respondents) also feel that they can speak and comprehend the language at higher levels than before they took the course. Only 12.5% of all respondents indicated that they haven’t really gained much from Advanced Hebrew.

Which of the following most accurately reflects how you feel about Hebrew at YU?

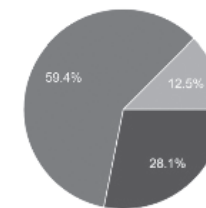
32 responses



- I like that the Hebrew 1305/1306 curriculum focuses on grammar. I think that these skills are important.
- I would prefer if the 1305/1306 curriculum would focus more on conversational Hebrew and less on grammar.

How do you feel that Hebrew 1305/1306 has improved your Hebrew?

32 responses



- A ton -> I can speak and comprehend at higher levels than before I took the course.
- Somewhat -> I know more grammar rules, though my conversation ability is not much changed.
- Not much -> I haven't really gained a lot from the course.
- Total waste of time

Most of the respondents included short comments in the optional “anything you’d like to add” section at the end of the survey, ranging from general thoughts about their curriculum preferences to broader gratitude and concern about Advanced Hebrew.

“In general,” wrote Ariel Raskin, a second-year Yeshiva College student currently taking Hebrew 1306, “the pace of the class and just being exposed to and engaged with this level of Hebrew conversation on a regular basis is what really helps raise someone’s skill in the language.” Akiva Schiff, a third-year Yeshiva College student also currently taking Hebrew 1306, figured similarly. “I don’t really think that we should attempt to focus on conversational Hebrew skills,” he described. “The average YU graduate encounters Hebrew in religious settings, or maybe reading news articles from Israel. For the minority that make Aliya—they will acclimate and learn the language quickly enough. If an individual has not learned the language from twelve years of day school education and time in Israel, it is not reasonable to expect YU to teach them that ability. YU can, however, focus on grammar (either Biblical or Modern) which aids their comprehension of written language. My experience of prayer and religious study has been augmented and enhanced by my studies in YU Hebrew.”

Other students conveyed different perspectives. “We have spent almost the entire semester on grammar, which I think is great,” wrote a second-year Yeshiva College student currently taking Hebrew 1306 who preferred to remain anonymous, “but conversational Hebrew is far more important, especially considering that one of the five Torot of President Berman is Torat Zion, preaching the importance of Israel and the Jewish future there. If we are to fully follow this ideology then conversational Hebrew should be of just as much importance as grammatical Hebrew.”

Regardless of what might wind up happening, Dean Bacon, Professor Koller, and Professor Shalom all strongly emphasized that students placed into Advanced Hebrew should assume that the curriculum will stay as is. “As for the 13 classes,” wrote Professor Shalom, “we are exploring our options and it is not yet clear whether there will be any change.” Hebrew 1305 is being offered in Spring 2018 and Hebrew 1306 is being offered in Fall 2018, so students graduating in Spring 2019 or beforehand are, by their circumstances, locked into the current curriculum. First-years and second-years who anticipate remaining on campus at least through the end of the Fall 2019 semester can in theory push off taking Advanced Hebrew if they wish, but they do so at their own risk, since the current small online trial and administrative discussions might not pan out into any restructuring whatsoever.

Dean Bacon offered another rationale for taking Hebrew sooner rather than later. “The problem with holding off,” she considered, “is that the further you are from Hebrew, assuming you learned some Hebrew in Israel, the more you forget. Also, if this is a tool, then you may as well have the tool early on. I am not a big fan of telling people to hold off on a skill course. But that’s a matter of personal choice.”

“As always,” wrote Professor Shalom, “we encourage students to complete their Hebrew requirement as soon as they can and wish everyone ‘Hatzlacha!’”

Interim YC Political Science Chair Discredits Course For Being “too pro-Israel” and Lacking Academic Rigor

By Avi Strauss

Editor's Note: After this article was written, the administration decided to re-evaluate the course in order for it to count towards political science major requirements. The details preceding this change can be viewed in the following article.

Ambassador Danny Ayalon's course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will not be counted towards a political science degree next semester. According to a petition circulating amongst Yeshiva College political science students, interim chair of the political science department Dr. Joseph Luders cited the course being “too pro-Israel” and “too politically-biased” when explaining its new status.

Dr. Luders also cited the supposed lack of academic rigor in Ayalon's past courses as part of the reason for the decision, although he declined to elaborate on the “precise details” in print.

Ayalon served as the Israeli Ambassador to the United States from 2002-2006, served in the Israeli Knesset, and is frequently a contributor to the Jerusalem Post and the Wall Street Journal.

This marks the first time since Ambassador Ayalon started teaching at YU in 2014 that his course will not count towards the political science major.

According to the online course listings, Ayalon's course at Stern on the same topic will also not be counted towards their political science major.

The course itself, entitled “Topics: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” will be worth just two credits, as Ambassador Ayalon can only teach through March. He taught courses worth two credits in Spring 2015 and Spring 2016 that counted towards Stern political science major requirements.

“On two occasions the Ambassador did not have a co-teacher and the abbreviated format [the Ambassador departed in March] earned two credits,” said Dean Karen Bacon, The Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences. “Nevertheless, we allowed the course to count towards a three credit major requirement by making an exception... as the Ambassador will not have a co-teacher [in Spring 2018], the course will be a two credit elective.”

Dean Bacon did not address why the upcoming course will not count towards a political science major.

According to Dr. Luders, “there were reports from some students in this class at Stern that they felt the instructor had fostered the impression that their grades might be influenced by how pro-Israel they appeared to be” and that “competing perspectives” were “treated in a dismissive fashion.”

Although Dr. Luders did not deny making the alleged comments, he insisted “being ‘pro-Israel’ is...not the problem,” rather it was the course's lack of academic rigor. Further, he said “instructors should not foster the

impression that a student can guarantee herself an A by doing little more than repeating a political perspective that is congenial to the instructor.”

Dr. Ruth Bevan, the recently retired and longtime chair of the Yeshiva College Political Science department, claimed that it is “illogical” that such a course should not be counted towards the political science major.

“Political Science departments across the country run

earn A's based on hard work and a serious engagement with arguments and evidence.”

The students' petition also states that Dr. Luders claimed the course is only worth two credits and that the political science department does not count credit from such courses.

Bevan confirmed to The Commentator that there is no rule disallowing two-credit courses from counting

“THIS MARKS THE FIRST TIME SINCE AMBASSADOR AYALON STARTED TEACHING AT YU IN 2014 THAT HIS COURSE WILL NOT COUNT TOWARDS A POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJOR.”

courses conducted by national and international politicians and bureaucrats,” she explained. “Their importance lies, not in their ‘neutrality,’ but in their decidedly political experience and vantage point. They give students an ‘inside’ view of the political world.”

She added, “Is this not what political science students should come to know? Should we now say Senators should not teach in the Political Science Department of Yeshiva College?”

“It would seem that we underrate the ‘smarts’ of our students to grasp a ‘political perspective’ when they hear it. And we do them a disservice by not exposing them to this ‘real world.’ The real story here, it seems to me, boils down to the simple fact that the Department was unable to find an academic who would co-teach the course, as has been done in the past. The students should not be made to pay for this.”

Many students expect a degree of political bias when registering for political science courses. Some say Dr. Luders teaches his own courses in a politically biased fashion.

“There is no question he [Luders] presents information in a completely slanted way,” said a current student in one Dr. Luders courses on the Beren campus, who wished to remain anonymous. She also said Luders “doesn't acknowledge any conservative opinion as valid.” When asked if she feels her grades might suffer if she doesn't agree with Dr. Luders' perspectives, the student said “yeah, absolutely.”

Another current student remarked that Dr. Luders spends time in his Intro to American Politics course “lecturing his opinions” and “assigning articles that he likes” to a class that does not yet have “the background to distinguish between his opinion and objective theories.”

When asked about whether or not his classes are biased, Dr. Luders stated “students do not earn A's in my classes by agreeing with me about anything. Instead, they

towards the political science major and wondered why it is this course is now under new scrutiny by the current department, disallowing its credit to be used for political science majors and minors.

Yeshiva College political science majors are required to complete 33 credits within the major to graduate with a political science degree.

Since Ambassador Ayalon started teaching at YU, he has taught eight courses on topics like Israeli Statecraft and U.S.-Israeli relations. Four have been at Yeshiva College and four at Stern College for Women. Dr. Luders has been the David and Ruth Gottesman Chair of the Political Science department at Stern since Ayalon began teaching.



Luders got his Ph.D from the New School for Social Research and his research interests include American racial politics, social movements, civil rights politics and policy, and American political development. He's published a book entitled *The Civil Rights Movement and the Logic of Social Change* (Cambridge University Press 2010).

Office of Student Life Holds Second Yearly Free SWAG Day

By Avi Strauss

The Office of Student Life held a second yearly SWAG day on December 20, in which undergraduate students were given free YU apparel. This year, SWAG Day featured three sweatshirt options: one hoodie, one zip-up, and one crew neck. All were designed specially for the event.

The abbreviation “SWAG” stands for Stuff We All Get, an apt name for a day where boxloads of outerwear is distributed, free of charge. Last year's event was widely considered a success, and students could regularly be spotted wearing the YU apparel on both the Wilf and Beren campuses.

When asked about the reason for repeating the event again this year, Senior Director of the Office of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg stated, “After seeing the success of SWAG day last year and the pride it generated amongst the student body, Dr. Nissel and the OSL felt strongly we should do everything we can to make sure it happened again.”

Although Rabbi Weisberg could not confirm if the event will be replicated every year going forward, he said he hopes that all the pieces fall into place in terms of funding so SWAG day can be done again in the future.



Wilf Campus Student Government Holds Forum to Discuss Amendments to Student Constitution

By Ben Strachman

On December 14, the Wilf campus Student Government held an open forum for students to propose and discuss potential amendments to the Wilf campus Student Constitution. Despite the Constitution's requirement of a semesterly Amendment Convention, this marks only the second Convention that has occurred since the Constitution was amended extensively in 2014. The event was announced in an email to the student body the day before the forum by the Student Government Presidents, and was attended by seven students.

The hour-long event was run by Yeshiva Student Union President Zach Serman and Student Life Committee Senior Co-Chair Jesse Silverman, both members of the General Assembly, the governing council of the Student Government. The majority of the event was spent discussing amendments that were submitted by students via email prior to the forum. Attendees voiced their opinions on the proposals in an open conversation with Serman and Silverman, as well as fellow students. In the latter part of the gathering, participants suggested and discussed their own amendments to the Constitution. According to Serman, the General Assembly currently

plans to hold the General Student Body Amendment Vote, where the students will vote whether to ratify proposed amendments, after the winter break.

“DESPITE THE CONSTITUTION'S REQUIREMENT OF A SEMESTERLY AMENDMENT CONVENTION, THIS MARKS ONLY THE SECOND CONVENTION THAT HAS OCCURRED SINCE THE CONSTITUTION WAS AMENDED EXTENSIVELY IN 2014.”

Proposed amendments discussed include a new requirement for Student Government to be more transparent about their budgets, a clause allowing students to apply for club status at any time during the academic year, and removing all mentions of The Commentator, the WYUR radio club, and the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society from the Constitution.

The Wilf Campus Student Constitution states that the Student Government “shall convene a Constitutional Amendments Convention each semester with the purpose of raising any potential amendments to the Student Government Constitution. All students shall have the opportunity to state opinions with regard to specifics of the Student Government Constitution, as well as to propose their own amendments.” The Amendment Forum event was born out of a desire by members of Student Government to offer students such an opportunity to publicly share their thoughts on proposed amendments and the Constitution.

Serman stated, “I

thought the forum was very positive. It's important to discuss and amend the Constitution, and, more broadly, it's important to have opportunities and open channels for discussions between student council and student body.”

Yeshiva College Junior Yair Lichtman, who attended the event and proposed amendments, stated, “I found the event productive overall. We discussed the Constitution frankly, acknowledging its limitations while exploring ways in which it can be improved, and I found President Serman and Co-chair Silverman to be receptive to the perspective of other students...For my first few semesters on campus, no amendments convention of any kind was held. Last semester, the 'convention' was held online, and the whole process felt shrouded in secrecy. I hope that the transparency and openness to student input continue throughout the process—especially in the General Assembly's decision on which amendments to put on the ballot.”

According to the formal amendment process outlined in the Constitution, the General Assembly must create an Amendments Committee, which is tasked with running the semesterly Convention. During the Convention, students are given an opportunity to submit amendment proposals, after which the General Assembly votes on which proposals will be voted upon by the entire male undergraduate student body in the General Student Body Amendment Vote.

In the Spring 2017 semester, the first Convention since 2014 resulted in controversy after an ambiguity arose regarding the implementation of a ratified amendment requiring the Canvassing Committee to release the full, detailed results of Student Government Elections. In a case held in the Student Court after the ratification vote, the Canvassing Committee argued that the amendment only applied to succeeding elections, not the election vote during which the amendment itself was ratified. The Court ultimately ruled in petitioner David Rubinstein's favor and required the Canvassing Committee to release the results. However, the Office of Student Life was the only body in possession of the full results, and released an abridged version of the results after the court decision. YC Senior David Rubinstein, currently the Managing Editor of The Commentator, also penned an opinion piece in the paper last year casting doubt on the historicity of the original ratification of the Constitution, writing, “the constitution, and as a result, any amendment to it, is invalid.”

Rubinstein stated, “Regardless of whether the student constitution does bind students, there is serious unawareness of what the constitution says and there is repeated violation of it. I welcome the student council's attempt to spread awareness of the constitution and to encourage student participation in its amending...[and] I hope that the drafters of any future constitutional texts are clear about the date that it will take effect.”

Constitution



of the Yeshiva University
Undergraduate Student
Government

AYALON'S COURSE, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

study or internship” in order to properly count as an elective. This elective can then contribute to the 33 credits required for the political science major.

Previously, The Commentator publicized that Ambassador Ayalon's course was not going to count towards the political science degree. According to a petition circulated by political science students, Dr. Joseph Luders, the interim chair of the political science department, was responsible for this decision, citing undisclosed

“YESHIVA UNIVERSITY IS A PRO-ISRAEL, PROUDLY ZIONIST INSTITUTION.”

-PRESIDENT BERMAN

departmental rules against counting two credit courses. Additionally, the petition quoted him as saying that the

course was “too pro-Israel” and “too politically-biased.” Luders did not deny that he made those comments, after multiple attempts to clarify what he said.

When asked about the course not counting towards political science degrees, Luders stated that his decision was due to the course's lack of academic rigor, citing student complaints that the course treated “competing perspectives...in a dismissive fashion.”

In a comment to The Commentator on the matter, President Ari Berman stated:

“Yeshiva University is a pro-Israel, proudly Zionist institution. Through our stellar faculty, we offer a rich education that emphasizes the dual importance of theory and practice - *talmud* and *ma'aseh*. Our students are fortunate to study with and learn from Ambassador Danny Ayalon who combines an engaging and thought provoking teaching style with a wealth of real world experience in applying the insights of his field. We are honored to count him as a member of our faculty and look forward to welcoming him in the upcoming semester.”

President Berman also stressed that “Students at Yeshiva University, and throughout higher education, should be secure in the knowledge that they are being tested not on their personal politics but on their depth of

engagement with and mastery of the material.”

Students have reacted positively to the reversal and were relieved to hear that the course will count towards the political science major.

“I am obviously very happy to hear that Dr. Luders is reconsidering his earlier decision and working towards making Ambassador Ayalon's course a reality for political science majors,” said Nolan Edmonson, a current Yeshiva College student majoring in political science. “The Ambassador has a wealth of knowledge to offer our students and I thoroughly look forward to the course being offered next semester.”

Another student, second-year political science major Ariel Goldman, said, “It's good to know that [Ambassador] Ayalon's class is now a reasonable option for political science students, who won't have to decide whether taking a course will come at the expense of their major.”

“On his previous visits,” wrote Dean Bacon, “Ambassador Ayalon attracted a diverse group of students, political science students and others.” She figured, “I expect to see this same phenomenon when Ambassador Ayalon returns to campus this spring, and we look forward to welcoming him and benefiting from his wisdom and experience.”

Despite Efforts to Curb Cheating, Cheating Incident Disrupts YC Calculus Exam

By Benjamin Koslowe

On Friday, December 1, Dean Fred Sugarman, the Associate Dean of Operations and Student Affairs of Yeshiva College, emailed the students in Professor Wenxiong Chen's Calculus I course that the previous day's midterm examination would not be graded due to "students who acted inappropriately in terms of conduct in a testing environment." He added, "These students have given the Dean's Office and Dr. Chen reason to believe a new test needs to be administered.

With 72 registered students, Professor Chen's Calculus I course is one of the largest of all of Yeshiva University's undergraduate courses for the fall 2017 semester.

This cheating scandal followed recent efforts by Yeshiva University deans, faculty, and students to crack down on cheating. It also occurred several weeks after a midterm

exam was cancelled at Stern College because copies of the exam were stolen in advance of the test date.

Dean Sugarman specified in his email to the students that the retest "will be proctored." He also expressed disappointment and wrote, "I believe the class should consider offering Dr. Chen an apology for behavior not becoming [of] a Yeshiva College student."

Several students in the course, who preferred to remain anonymous, stated that they knew in advance that the exam would take place in the Belfer 218 lecture hall, which can seat roughly 110 students. Already before the exam, students feared that some peers would hide notes under desks or in between seats. Even though the first midterm exam back in October was proctored, they knew that this second exam would not be. During the most recent exam, according to students in the course, Professor Chen mostly sat in front of the room, while students were seated without

"WE ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO UPHOLDING THE INTEGRITY AND GOOD NAME OF YESHIVA COLLEGE."

- DEAN FRED SUGARMAN

space in between desks. Phones were not taken away.

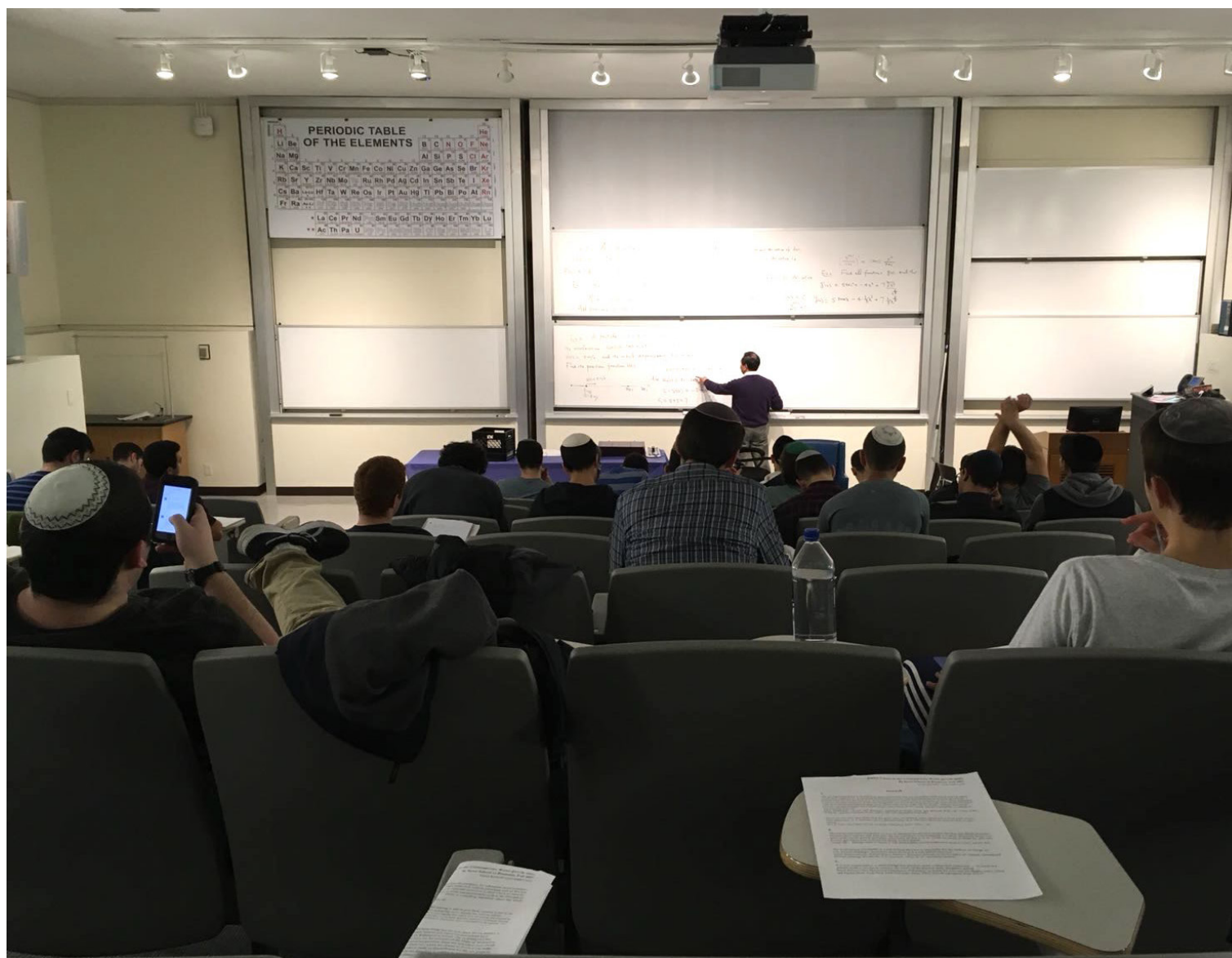
"We are fully committed to upholding the integrity and good name of Yeshiva College," Dean Sugarman told The Commentator. "Administration and faculty are committed to having a school of honest scholarship and fair outcomes for all students. We need students to help ensure that all work is honestly done. Academic Integrity needs to

start with our students." Dean Sugarman declined to comment on the details of how the cheating was reported or on any other specifics about the incident. Professor Chen also declined to comment.

Several students speculated that the incident was reported by students who witnessed the cheating. Professor Chen later confirmed that this was the case.

"It's important to keep in mind," said one student in the course who spoke on condition of anonymity, "that while there may be allegations that a few students cheated, the vast majority of students remained upright and honest despite the temptation to cheat." Several other students expressed frustration at the insinuation that they all needed to apologize for a crime committed by only a few. Many more were frustrated simply at the prospect of having to take another test after having put in legitimate effort.

On December 5, in Calculus I lecture, Professor Chen told his students that the retest would take place on Thursday, December 7 in a different room that would be announced shortly before the exam. He said that the material would be the same, but that the questions would be different. He then proceeded to teach class as normal.



YU Employees Required to Retrain in Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies

By Commentator Staff

On Tuesday, December 5, YU's Chief Human Resources Officer Julie Auster notified employees of the university that they were required to take an e-learning workshop on sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace no later than December 20. The notice included faculty and staff, as well as student employees.

In the notice, Auster cited the wave of "publicity surrounding workplace harassment" alongside YU's "commitment to providing a safe learning, working and living environment and to adhere to the Five Torot that form the basis for our university's collective values" as the reason for the new training. The Five Torot refer to five fundamental principles President Berman outlined in his investiture speech this past September.

All YU employees were obligated to take an online course that details what is considered sexual harassment in the workplace as part of the process of becoming

formally employed. This course was meant to augment the training already given.

The hour-long course, entitled "Mosaic: Prevent Discrimination and Harassment Together," is offered by EduRisk, an online portal which "deliver[s] solutions for safe and thriving academic communities." It covers workplace basics as it relates to potential harassment and discrimination. It includes a combination of videos and scenarios prompting the viewer to answer questions at specific intervals. The scenarios cover topics like unwanted sexual advances and different groups that are covered by anti-discrimination laws.

In addition to the required module, Auster also recommended another course entitled "Mosaic: Prevent Sexual Violence Together."

Auster's notice also included a link to YU's 36-page Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy & Complaint Procedures manual and reminded all employees that they can report any abuse to Renée R. Coker, Sr. Director, Talent Management & Title IX Officer at YU.

YU Agunah Advocacy Club Joins ORA in Rally Against Get-Refuser

By Yossi Zimilover

On December 10, the YU Agunah Advocacy Club (AAC) joined the Organization for the Resolution of Agunot (ORA) in a rally against Chaim Hoffman, a man who has refused to give his wife a *get*, a Jewish bill of divorce, for over 12 years.

The rally took place in the Brooklyn neighborhood where Hoffman is currently living. Despite the cold weather, approximately 20 people attended, around half

“DESPITE THE COLD WEATHER, APPROXIMATELY 20 PEOPLE ATTENDED, AROUND HALF OF WHICH WERE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, ACCORDING TO YESHIVA COLLEGE JUNIOR DONIEL WEINREICH, WHO ATTENDED THE RALLY.”

of which were Yeshiva University students, according to Yeshiva College Junior Doniel Weinreich, who attended the rally. Attendees held signs and chanted messages such as “Chaim Hoffman, Stop the Abuse!” in order to pressure him to give a *get*, Weinreich stated.

According to ORA’s website, Chaim and Debi Hoffman married in 1997 and had two children before the two separated in October 2005. He has refused to give her a *get*, which has prevented Debi from remarrying according to Orthodox Jewish law and has made her an *agunah*, a term referring to a “chained woman” who cannot leave her marriage. In 2014, the Israeli Rabbinate issued a decision requiring Chaim to give a *get* immediately, but he has not complied with the ruling.



The rally was the Agunah Advocacy Club’s first event of the semester. Stern College for Women Junior Liat Clark, the president of the club, described that the AAC “works to educate the YU campus about the plight of *agunot* in our community and the ways in which we as college students can advocate for current *agunot* as well as prevent the further creation of *agunot*, namely through the signing of the Halachic Prenuptial agreement. We work closely with ORA to create opportunities for students to educate and be educated, and to get involved.” She noted that the club’s past events included a panel on the “*agunah* crisis” that took place on the Wilf campus in Spring 2017 and other events that have been run in conjunction with the YU Counseling Center about abusive relationships.

The rally took place by a busy intersection near where Hoffman lives and attracted the curiosity of many local residents. Shoshi Trombka, a Stern College for Women Junior, explained that a woman who was previously unaware of the rally joined the group after hearing

the crowd from her window and provided valuable information to ORA members regarding Hoffman and his whereabouts as a result.

Stern College for Women Junior Michal Laub stated that, “seeing that people feel strongly enough to rally, in conjunction with the importance of the rally’s content, will hopefully motivate Jewish communities...[to pressure] men like Chaim Hoffman to do the right thing and give their wives a *get*.”

“Many additional students, although unable to attend the rally, did not hesitate to vocalize their support for ORA and their hopes that Debi would be given her *get* soon,” added Stern College for Women Junior Chasya Klafter.

RIETS Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Hershel Schachter encouraged people to attend the rally in a video posted to the AAC’s Facebook page on December 7. He stated that, “we should all follow the encouragement of the *Rabanut* and participate in the rally. Whoever has a few hours free, it’s a big *mitzvah* [to attend].”

RIETS Press Opens Bookstore in Glueck Building

By Chana Weinberg

RIETS Press, the publication arm of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, opened a bookstore on December 7th in the Glueck building on the Wilf Campus. The store offers books on subjects such as *hashkafa*, *gemara*, and *tefilah*.

“THE NEW RIETS STORE PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE TALMIDEI HAYESHIVA TO PURCHASE THESE SEFORIM IN A CONVENIENT WAY AND AT A DISCOUNTED PRICE; SAID RABBI MENACHEM PENNER, DEAN OF RIETS AND UNDERGRADUATE TORAH STUDIES.”

Those who wish to buy books must go and ask to gain access to the store in the RIETS office on the 6th floor of Glueck. They will then be brought to a room with the books and a list of the prices, which range from 5 to 30 dollars.

As a division of the Michael Scharf Publication Trust of the Yeshiva University Press, RIETS Press was created as a platform to publish works of YU Roshei Yeshiva and Torah Studies faculty. It produces volumes on subjects ranging from *Lashon HaRa*, laws of Shabbat, and contemporary laws of *Niddah*, as well as numerous *seforim* on different areas of Talmudic analysis.

Rabbi Yona Reiss, the Director of RIETS Press, former Deans of RIETS, and current YU Rosh Yeshiva, stated, “It is our hope and intention to keep the RIETS Store open as a haven for top notch Torah scholarship in our midst.”

“The new RIETS store provides an opportunity for the *talmidei hayeshiva* to purchase these *seforim* in a convenient way and at a discounted price,” said Rabbi Menachem Penner, Dean of RIETS and Undergraduate Torah Studies. “The RIETS Press gives the YU community – and the Jewish world – a window into the Torah of one of the greatest Torah faculties in the world.”

Noah Marlowe, Vice President of the Student Organization of Yeshiva, shared Rabbi Reiss’s excitement for the opening of the store, though he was somewhat

disappointed when the books that he was hoping to find there were not in stock.

“I was hoping to find old Yeshiva University Press books that are out of publishing, such as the English translation of *Orot Hatshuva* by Rav Kook and Rabbi Norman Lamm’s *Orot Hachayim*. I guess the store is just for books printed recently.”

As for the future, Rabbi Reiss stated, “The long term vision is to provide the community with a far-reaching range of Torah publications that are representative of the scholarship in our Yeshiva, and the broad-based erudition that informs and inspires our worldview.”



An Inspiration from the Recent Collapse of the New York Giants

By Mayer Fink

The recent hot mess that is the New York Giants is only a fraction of what has been a total disaster. If fans think that this is the climax of what has been a rough stretch, and that the Giants will quickly bounce back, they should realize that the problems run quite deep, and might result in the team being very bad for years to come. The Giants look like they are entering into a sort of pit of misery (dilly dilly). Let's take a look at how the Giants sunk to this level by giving the steps for how a contending team can become a laughing stock.

Step 1. Draft poorly and acquire players that aren't valuable

Any general manager can take the best of franchises and run them to the bottom with a couple of years of bad draft picks. There are, of course, multiple ways that a GM can draft poorly. One is to correctly identify the position at which the team could use young talent, only to select players who are subpar. Alternatively, they can draft the best available player, while ignoring the team's actual need. To be fair, drafting a player out of college is a crapshoot, so the GM can't take the full blame for picks that don't meet their expectations. Nevertheless, if we look at the Giants last 6 years of drafting, we can see why ex-GM Jerry Reese is to blame.

In the past 6 drafts, the Giants have only drafted 2 pro-bowlers, wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. and safety Landon Collins. Additionally, Reese drafted three notable offensive linemen who have not met expectations. Ereck Flowers appears to be a total bust, and Weston Richburg and Justin Pugh have been average at best. What's worse, the team can't claim to feature even a decent right tackle, and their juggling of personnel to attempt to put forward a blocking unit has not worked.

The storied Giant defense, which shut down the powerful Patriots offense in their two Super Bowl victories in the last decade, has really deteriorated. Nevertheless, Reese chose to address this problem by bring in unreliable free agents instead of drafting promising young defensive players in the early rounds.

In terms of offensive talent, Reese's acquisition of wide receiver Brandon Marshall and drafting of pass-catching (read: can't block) tight end Evan Engram gave the Giants some flashy players, but didn't help in creating a sensible offensive scheme. All of this poor drafting and misguided offseason acquisitions have been exposed this season, and the Giants personnel looks as weak as it's ever been.

Step 2. Get rid of a great coach. Replace him with a terrible one.

You might argue that a NFL team's success rests in its players and not in its head coach. Let me be the first to tell you that this notion is incorrect. For example, in 2011, the 49ers found a coach that could connect with and motivate his players in Jim Harbaugh. By creating this team culture, Harbaugh was able to bring his team to 3 straight NFC championship games and reached the Super Bowl in 2012. The true testament to Harbaugh's coaching genius was what happened when he left the team. When the 49ers let him leave to coach Michigan, the team was left without its leader, and they have failed to eclipse the 5-win mark since. The front office tried to replace Harbaugh with others, but they were never able to get close to where they had been under Harbaugh.

The Giants had a similar situation. Tom Coughlin is a hall of fame coach who motivated his team to 2 Super Bowls. When he made the decision to retire, the team mishandled the coaching situation. Ben McAdoo had been the offensive coordinator of the high-powered Green Bay Packers, and thus looked like a great candidate for the job. However, little did the team know that the Packer's scheme was mostly designed by head coach Mike McCarthy and executed by world class quarterback Aaron Rodgers. When McAdoo first joined the Giants as offensive coordinator, the offense had some success, but it was not a product of any schemes that McAdoo implemented. The running game was dead under McAdoo, and much of their production came from the talent of Odell Beckham. Since the "offensive minded" McAdoo became head coach, the Giants have not put up 30 points in a game.

What's more, McAdoo simply did not show good leadership. He was hated by many of his players, some of whom even anonymously called for his firing. This was shown clearly in McAdoo's decision to bench Eli Manning



for Geno Smith. This was clearly not something that the ownership approved of, and the fans strongly disapproved as well. McAdoo likely would have been fired at the season's end anyway, but this move accelerated the process and caused the Giants front office to uncharacteristically fire McAdoo mid-season.

As they are now searching once more for a head coach, the owners should ask themselves the following questions before making their selection: are they looking for an innovative coach or a motivational one? An offensive wizard or a defensive mastermind? Should the next Giants coach be someone who can connect with his players or a no-nonsense disciplinarian? Their decision can set the tone for how the next several years will go for the franchise.

Step 3. Have some bad luck.

In addition to Harbaugh's leaving the 49ers in 2015, the team also experienced a terrible string of luck. Three of their best defensive players were forced to retire, and two of their starting offensive linemen were gone as well. Additionally, their best wide receiver and starting running back left in free agency. The nail in the coffin to the 49ers upcoming season was when one of their best defensive players was arrested, leading to his subsequent release.

While the Giants also experienced a lot of unforeseen challenges. The bad luck for the Giants season started before the actual regular season started. Star wide receiver Odell Beckham injured his ankle in a preseason game, forcing him to sit out in week 1 as his team was dominated by the rival Cowboys. The bad luck continued into week 3, with the 0-2 Giants desperately needing a win against the Eagles, when rookie Eagles kicker Jake Elliott hit a miraculous game winning field goal from a full 61 yards away. The next week they also lost on a last second field goal, this time to the Buccaneers. Then began the team's injury problems, which ultimately reached its climax in week 5 when receivers Beckham and Marshall, and kick returner Dwayne Harris all suffered season ending injuries, and wide receiver Sterling Shepard also sustained an injury. Injuries are out of your control, they just happen in the hard-hitting sport of football, and this season it was just the Giants luck to have to deal with many of them.

The current state of the franchise and how to recover

I'm not sure when you are reading this. It could be week 16 and the Giants will have suffered another defeat as the dreading season winds down. It could be that the season is over and the Giants have lost every game on their way to a top 5 draft pick. As of now they are in search of a general manager, a head coach, and need to fill up a lot of positions on their personnel.

A lot of news sources are claiming that the Giants want to hire former Carolina Panthers general manager Dave Gettleman as general manager. Gettleman had an inconsistent tenure with the Panthers. He drafted relatively well in the few years with the Panthers. In his first year, he drafted Kawann Short and Star Lotulelei to give the team a strong defensive line. The next year,

Gettleman drafted pro-bowl guard Tria Turner and defensive end Kony Ealy, each major contributors in the Panthers 2015 super bowl run. Then, Gettleman brought in solid starters who filled positions of need, such as outside linebacker Shaq Thompson, wide receiver Devin Funchess and cornerbacks James Bradberry and Darryl Worley. His final draft with Carolina was highlighted by his landing of star running back Christian McCaffrey. In terms of his offseason moves in free agency, he made several questionable decisions, such as releasing Steve Smith and getting rid of cornerback Josh Norman. If he becomes the G.M. of the Giants it is a risky move but not a crazy hiring. If the Giants decide against Gettleman, they should at least go with someone who has experience, and should not hire an outsider to build their roster.

The head coaching hire will be from the general

"LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HOW THE GIANTS SUNK TO THIS LEVEL BY GIVING THE STEPS FOR HOW A CONTENDING TEAM CAN BECOME A LAUGHING STOCK."

manager's vision and also part of how the owner wants to see the team. Notable offensive coordinators to potentially hire are Jim Bob Cooter, Frank Reich, Josh McDaniels and Mike Shula. Notable defensive coordinators are Leslie Frazier, Matt Patricia, Todd Wash, Jim Schwartz and Vic Fangio. The Giants also might utilize a popular trend of hiring a head coach to run the one side of the ball, while bringing in a coordinator to run the other side

The Giants have many positions they need to fill on their roster and they should do so in the draft and not in free agency. It may be tempting to dump a ton of money at a once in a lifetime talent like Le'veon Bell or a top level defender like Demarcus Lawrence, but they won't be successful if they go that route. The good news for Giants fans is that this horrible season has given the Giants a top 5 pick. They can either try to draft the quarterback of the future in Josh Rosen or Sam Darnold, or the transcending talent from Penn State Saquon Barkley. They should use their subsequent picks to reload on some positions that currently lack depth in, as the prevalence of injuries in the NFL this year has taught us that in order to succeed you need roster depth. They currently are very thin at offensive line, linebacker, and in the secondary, and should use the draft to stock up..

As a fan, I'm hoping the Giants remain a laughing stock for years to come. If they recover and become a respectable franchise it would be a surprise and disappointing, but I must say that it was fun while it lasted.

What It's Like to Live With Post-Concussion Syndrome

By Rachel Lelonek

It's another morning. I wake up and the room is spinning. I'm nauseous again, just like the day before. I don't want to get out of bed, but I have a class at 9 am and a busy schedule today like everyday. It's been nearly two months since my accident and life's been returning to normal. My left arm and shoulder are healing and I won't need surgery like the doctors initially thought. Most of my bruises and swelling have gone down too, and scars have formed on my left wrist and knee. Life has almost returned to normal — externally.

But internally, something's wrong. My head pounds with a low drum beating most of the day. I'm nauseous most of the time and I'm either unable to eat or stuffing my face to overcompensate in order to take my medication. I can no longer think straight. It's my small concussion and secondary whiplash that doctors thought would heal speedily. It's still here, however, and it does not look like it's going anywhere anytime soon. But you wouldn't know that simply from looking at me.

For two months, I've lived a disjointed life. Though I put a wide smile on my face, I've been unable to function normally. Everything from having a simple conversation, to taking a test, to even sleeping through the night has become difficult and sometimes nearly impossible. I'm unable to think clear thoughts; I'm unable to focus; I'm unable to get the proper words out without stammering or stuttering. I'm embarrassed to have serious conversations with friends, family, and loved ones. I'm usually so collected and can gather my thoughts rather well, but I can't do that right now.

Normally, I'm a good student. I work hard for good grades and love stacking my school schedule so I can do optimal things outside of the classroom. Nowadays, I can barely get through readings for class, so I skip them. They make my head pound a little too hard; they're the cymbals that add to the steady beating drum. I spend double the time I should on papers and haven't been able to hand them all in on time because my thoughts are too disconnected and fuzzy. I can't study because I can't collect myself so I failed an exam. This isn't the ordinary me.

When I failed my exam, I tried to explain to my professor what had happened and if there was an opportunity to improve my grade.

"Professor," I pleaded, "you know I'm a good student!

I've been trying to get back to normal. Can I please potentially have an extra credit assignment? Just to boost my grade a few extra points!"

"Rachel," he said, "I apologize and I know that you missed several classes recovering. But you had a lot of time to study. Perhaps you should have read the textbook more carefully; you ask a lot of questions in class that could've been answered if you looked closer at the text."

Not all professors have been that way. Some have been very understanding and given me a few special accommodations because they know I'm trying. Some ask for documentation though, and I've accumulated a file that's larger than one of my textbooks.

"Which would you like? I have documentation from the ER, my orthopedist, physical therapist, and neurologist. Or maybe you would like to see the results from my x-rays, CT scans and MRIs!"

They rest their cases.

For two months, I've been unable to concentrate. If I'm able find the stamina and energy to focus on something, it takes all of my brain power and means I'm forgetting about something else. I've forgotten my house keys at home, my phone charger on my bed, if I davened or made a blessing before or after eating and everything in between. It has gotten so bad that I sometimes forget mid-conversation the statement I made prior, no matter to whom I am speaking or what I am talking about. I've begun to doubt myself and have resorted to questioning my sanity on a daily, and often hourly, basis.

Then there's the fatigue. For the last two months, I have been exhausted. I've been unable to both fall asleep and sleep through the night - whether it's been because of the nausea, the headaches, or because I had too much schoolwork to do the night before. This sheer exhaustion has led me to be unable to stay awake in classes, at my internship, or while doing homework. I doze off without even realizing it, and no matter how hard I try, I cannot keep myself awake. It's also one of the factors, along with my physical injuries, that has kept me from driving and restricts me to public transportation and the assistance of others. My peers are not always so understanding of this.

"Why are you taking the elevator? You live on the third floor!", one girl snarked a few days ago as she pressed the button for the fifteenth floor. She continued to whisper to her friend, "She does not have a heavy package and isn't even injured."

MARRIED HOUSING, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

school, explained Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel. Further, only one spouse has to be a YU student or graduate for the couple to be eligible for married housing.

According to students who live in married housing at YU, the apartments offered are usually one-bedroom, not recently renovated, and cheaper than apartments of that size in Washington Heights. The apartments also vary in price and can range anywhere from \$900 to \$1,200 a month, according to the students.

According Rita Greenberg, a real-estate broker in Washington Heights, the market rate of most one-bedroom apartments in the area is between \$1,500-\$1,700 or more a month.

Despite the low prices that characterize those apartments offered through YU married housing, Nissel and Yaniv affirm that YU believes that these apartments are offered at the regular market rate.

For many students, the process for being considered for YU married housing is ambiguous. In fact, there is no indication on the YU website that this option exists at all.

"It's really sketchy," said a student at Stern College who is currently on the waiting list for married housing and wishes to remain anonymous. "You Google it and absolutely nothing comes up. You have to have an in with someone who is in married housing to give you the contact information."

The contact, in this case, is Marcy Reiz, the person who speaks to students about being considered for married housing and runs the list of all the students who have applied. Ms. Reiz is currently on maternity leave.

According to people who have gone through, and are currently going through, the process, getting on the list is not simple. After filling out the preliminary application,

candidates must send in a wedding invitation and a letter from the rabbi who is officiating the wedding confirming that the date of the wedding is true in order for the application be processed.

"You have no idea where on the list you are. They don't tell you," said the previously mentioned student. "You could be last on the list and have no idea and you're definitely not getting housing or you could be first on the list and they are not going to be tell you so you basically have to have like 12 other backup options."

In addition, the student added, "Once you're in housing, you're in for life...You could theoretically stay in your 1-bedroom, rent controlled, \$900 a month apartment for the rest of your life." CPA declined to confirm or deny this fact.

Another student in Yeshiva College, who also wishes to remain anonymous, expressed a similar sentiment regarding the ambiguity of the process for YU housing. "In terms of how the process works from my understanding, so I think this is a general assessment, which is I have absolutely no idea," he said. "Once you are on the list, you have absolutely no idea what's going on."

For students looking for housing now, the procedure is especially difficult. Since Reiz is on maternity leave, applicants must contact other people and be persistent to get their foot in the door and move the process along.

"My impression is that it's a one-person department but that one person is on maternity leave, so things are a little complicated at the moment," explained a recently engaged YC student.

Students also noted that producing a wedding invitation is often an impossible task for many students to complete, especially if the wedding is more than 6 months away.

"We got on the list the day after we got engaged. We had to make a fake invitation to get on the list," related another married student in Stern College. "We got married

I wanted to scream back, "I'm exhausted and in pain—if only you could see it." Of course, I only thought this to myself and didn't dare argue or cause a fight.

So each day now goes. I feel helpless and at the mercy of my drowsiness as it determines when and to what extent I can do normal activities and operate my daily life.

The worst of all is the nausea. Everyday, without failure, it is like the sureness that the the sun will rise in the morning. I wake up with nausea and am unable to eat for hours, sometimes not until the latter portion of the afternoon. Often I must force myself to eat something -- anything -- to be able to take medication in the morning. Other times, despite my efforts to keep the food down, I throw up and then am less enticed to eat for another couple of hours for fear that I won't be able to stomach anything edible. By the time that I am finally able to eat food again, I'm starving and cannot help myself from stuffing my face to compensate for the extreme hunger, resulting in more nausea from overeating and throwing up again. It's a dangerous, annoying cycle, and it drives me crazy.

While this entire situation has been a living nightmare for me, there have also been others indirectly affected by my concussion. Firstly, my family has to put up with my forgetfulness, as well as my inability to focus or to drive. I've become as dependent on my parents as I was in high school, and I feel like an imposition and a burden. There are also my friends who I no longer get to see as often as I'd like because I've been too busy catching up on various forms of work, while also participating in regularly-scheduled extracurriculars. Unfortunately, this injury has caused my social life to suffer in the process, and to those friends that I've become too busy to have time for because of it, I truly am sorry.

Finals are coming and I'm terrified. While Disability Services has gone above and beyond to try and get me the accommodations I need, my neurologist told me that he thinks I should consider taking medical leave for the courses I need to put excess effort into -- even if that would risk me not graduating on time. I feel trapped in my own mind, as if I am unable to escape from a prison my own brain has trapped me in. While my sling has been hung up in my closet and most of my external injuries have healed, my injuries are still very real, and there, unfortunately, is no healing in sight.

on a Sunday and we got the email about our apartment on Thursday before our wedding."

The low prices of the apartments are a major draw to current students and recent graduates who might prefer a cheaper alternative to regular rent for an apartment in NYC.

"People want it since it's...so much cheaper than normal rent," said Yael Bernstein, a married student at Stern College who currently lives in married housing. Bernstein explained that although the apartments are not "luxurious," they are nice and convenient for young couples looking for a cheaper place to live.

"My building is almost all Jews, which is really nice. It's a nice experience of having neighbors who are mostly all Jewish," said Bernstein. "It's gives a nice community feel to...be able to be living with everyone you know, kind of in the same boat."

Some students question why marriage is the key to obtaining a cheaper apartment through YU. "Why do you have to be married to be eligible for a cheaper housing option?" questioned Eli Weiss, a junior in the Sy Syms School of Business who currently lives in an apartment in Washington Heights. "Cheap housing is something all students need and want."

To its unmarried population, YU strongly recommends that its students remain in the dorms. When asked why YU strives to create a community for its students and alumni while simultaneously pressuring students to live in the dorms, Nissel responded, "Our strong preference is that undergraduates reside in university housing, which provides a higher level of security, greater participation in on-campus activities, and ultimately greater student success." "Our research shows that undergraduates who reside in YU housing have higher GPAs."

From the YCSA Vice President's Desk: Pallet Town and Klein @ 9: Chromatic Considerations of Communal Confluence

By Akiva Schiff

As I exited the mall, my head was spinning. More options existed than I could possibly consider. I was through weighing all the possibilities. So, I went online, found the brand that I knew fit perfectly, and scrolled through the color options. Interestingly, the ski-helmet industry was no longer content with manufacturing simple colors, like black, matte-gray, and blue. Yet, more than the colors themselves, their names really captured my attention. Instead of gray, there was "titanium"; instead of blue – "marine"; and instead of orange – "vermillion."

But that term *vermillion* echoed in my mind. I had never encountered it before as the name of a color. I supposed it sounded vaguely orange. Why not?

Curious, I asked some friends if they had heard of the term. One particularly confident individual declared that it was a shade of pink. Unconvinced, I googled it. The internet immediately directed me to a Wikipedia description that reads as follows: "Vermilion is a brilliant red or scarlet pigment originally made from the powdered mineral cinnabar, and is also the name of the resulting color."

Dumbfounded, my heart started racing. Vermillion? Cinnabar? Were these actually real words? My memory instantly flooded with content – I knew where I had heard *vermillion* before. It was the name of a city in the original Pokémon Gameboy games! So was Cinnabar. I paused, flipping through the channels of my childhood (and high-school) memories. The names of all the cities were rushing through my mind, like a mischievous Pikachu running ahead of his trainer. Cerulean. Pewter. Fuchsia. Saffron. Lavender. Although not used in everyday parlance, clearly the name of each of these cities correlates to a color.

Even the more obscure terms, like Celadon and Viridian, it turns out, refer to colors (jade green and blue-green, respectively).

Finally, I realized with a shout, "Oh! That's why the game starts in Pallet Town!" Undeniably, the game is crafted around an artist's palette. Each stage of the game is a new level, a new type of Pokémon with which to contend and, apparently, a new color.

Gingerly, I allowed my thoughts to spread out to other aspects of the game. Didn't this colorimetric trend also exist in the second-generation game as well? With cities named Goldenrod, Mahogany, Ecruteak (ecru is a type of beige), and Violet, this could not be an accident.

How could I have spent so many months and years playing this game without noticing? I realized it had been in front of my eyes the entire time. What are the names of the games? Pokémon Red, Blue, and Yellow. Gold, Silver, and Crystal. Ruby, Sapphire, and Emerald. Every generation of the game was labeled with a new color.

I wondered that day outside of the mall, "What could be the purpose of all this?" Surely, the wise men who designed the game which, in a very literal sense, escorted me through my childhood could not have done so without reason, capriciously deciding that colors were a cute way to frame the game. There must be a deeper purpose.

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Jewish life exists, and always has existed, in communities. Not only are communities a natural consequence of the halachic obligation for daily prayer with a quorum, but they must exist to support the many institutions that are so central to Jewish life. *Shuls*, *Yeshivot*, *Mikvaot*, *Eruvin*, *Kashrut* – the list of resources shared and subsidized by the broader Jewish community seems to encompass every facet of life. And it does.

Kids need friends to hang out with on Shabbos afternoons. Families need each other for socialization and support. And, more than ever, people need their institutions of religious life to root them in their beliefs and values as they weather their interactions with the broader world.

Let's consider the YU Community. Certainly, it would be foolish to pretend that we are all identical in our beliefs and values. But, I believe, it is equally foolish to ignore how much we have in common. Our campus includes people from many distinct communities. These same people progress through YU, graduate, and ultimately become the builders of our Jewish future and the pillars of their communities: Teaneck, Los Angeles, Memphis, Efrat, and everywhere in between.

My question is thus: Should we, as an institution, focus on our unity or on our differences? During the past year, our campus has seen the development of a few programs that, while encouraging some sense of community, implicitly undermine the very community that we should be trying to build. The predominant example is the Klein @ 9 club/minyan.

Now, this program was conceived during the Fall 2016 semester, and has steadily grown. What began as an experiment to provide a community or a "Hillel" feel to the YU campus has blossomed into a robust operation which boasts weekly attendance of over a hundred students, a private Kiddush for its male and female attendees and, recently, a corollary Seudah Shlishit program for members of its "community."

Of course, many love this minyan. The acoustic features of the Klein Beit Midrash encourage singing, the minyan is student-led, with no pressure to follow the pace of Rebbeim, and the frequent studs keep all students abreast of their community's goings on. (As an aside, it was not until reading flyers for this club that I realized that



"community" is a code word for a co-ed event.) To be clear, all are officially welcome to show up; but, as it exists today, the minyan clearly caters to a certain subset of the student body.

Perhaps, though, it's worth considering the risks of establishing programming like this. These programs do not exist in a vacuum. There are at least five other campus minyanim that take place each week (not including other options around the Heights) that existed before Klein @ 9 was created. Like in any shul, when a breakaway minyan forms, the preexisting minyanim all suffer. Minyanim, like so much else in Jewish life, thrive in numbers. For example, every Shabbos, at 9 AM, Ruben Shul has a minyan which existed well before the Klein minyan began. This student-led minyan caters to many students who want a nice, efficient minyan that does not give off certain judgmental vibes that exist in other campus minyanim. However, in the past year, the number of attendees at the Ruben minyan has dropped significantly, to the point where it is increasingly difficult to find volunteers to read the Torah and to lead the service. Yet, as is clear from their frequent studs, Klein also struggles to find volunteers consistently. Our campus cannot comfortably support both minyanim.

Quite understandably, people decide to go to Klein because it offers them something that they did not have in other minyanim. However, it detracts so much from the established infrastructure. Wouldn't it be better to consider the complaints that people have with the Ruben minyan, and work on addressing those? For example, some left the Ruben minyan because there was talking in the back, or not enough singing. If the talking bothers you, sit in the front. If you would like the Chazan to sing more, volunteer to be the Chazan and sing! Others objected to the lack of a "community" feel to the space. If "community" means women, then there is no reason why the Ezrat Nashim there cannot be expanded, and that women cannot be made more comfortable. If community means a setting where people greet you and smile, then (decide if talking is really an issue for you, and) start greeting people. A community is made of its constituents. Be the change you want to see in your community.

Richard Joel, our esteemed former president, always referred to YU as a "big tent." I agree that our campus has many different types of students with varied needs. But shouldn't we attempt to bring people together instead of

creating fringe programming for each narrow sect? Jewish communities need unity to survive. At YU, we should be educating our students to compromise and interact with each other, not to abandon the *Kehila* when they have minor complaints.

Similarly, the new Seudah Shlishit program obviously overlaps with the established Seudah Shlishit that exists in the YU Caf. I don't know if there is intent to make this a weekly occurrence; but, if so, it will certainly detract from the Caf program. Both socially and acoustically, it is more satisfying to be with a larger crowd. Sure, there are improvements that can be made to the existing Seudah Shlishit, and those should be considered and implemented. But, again, we should work within the established system to improve the existing programs and to make more people comfortable and happy. We should not encourage small groups to break off and compete.

The YU community is home to a broad swath of Jewish sensibilities and praxes. If given the opportunity, each type of student would probably organize things in a slightly different way. However, the campus community

thrives through our shared interactions, not by catering to specific groups. Yes, we should try to appeal to as many as we can; but when people prefer things another way, they should not abandon the community to form their own. They should improve their shared space.

Unity is rare in our world, but it's worth striving for. Interestingly, it's rare in the Pokémon world as well. Each town in the Pokémon world is dominated by its "gym." The objective of the game is to pass through all the towns, and to defeat the Pokémon Trainers in each gym. The idea that violence, competition, and enmity define each town surely reflects the chromatic disparity of each locale. The cities are not united. Each is pitted against the others, with the hue of its name highlighting its distinct shades.

Valiant Pokémon Trainers progress through the towns, spreading discord, and ultimately fade from memory and from history. Yet, interestingly, the games are not the only manifestation of the Pokémon world – there is also a TV show.

Whereas in the games, the goal is to defeat each gym and its trainers, the show constantly reiterates Ash's desire to "catch 'em all." This theme is hardly mentioned in the games. Even when a player does capture all 150 Pokémon, the game does not recognize the accomplishment – I would know, I did it.

Xenophobic tropes do not exist in the show, as in the game. The mission to "catch 'em all" assumes the value of each and every creature, regardless of background and personality. Each Pokémon is valued simply for existing.

Yeshiva University should encourage this attitude of acceptance. We should not allow our campus to be divided into different "gyms," or into minyanim or programs. As a member of student council, I strive to hear everyone's voice. When conflict arises, we cannot just ignore those who are hurt. Their voices should be heard. The new programs have certainly facilitated growth for their constituents, but they damage the existing ones as well. This is a conversation that should have been held a year ago, but it is not too late. There need not be a brewing conflict that stew until one side gives up. Let us discuss our agendas, our needs, and our complaints. We should aim to include all in our endeavors, and to see the value in each member of our community.

Zapdos.

Tiny Beautiful Things: *Entertainment, Emotion, and Advice*

By Matthew Silkin

Is everything adaptable?

It's a fair question. With the sheer amount of consumable entertainment in New York City, let alone the rest of the United States and the world as a whole, it's no wonder that writers, for both the stage and the screen, are looking toward books, news articles, TV interviews, and other random stories -- both true and fictional -- to supplement what seems to be a drought in originality. Of course, non-traditional storytelling methods, such as Chris Ware's odd graphic novel *Building Stories* -- a collection of printed works, all housed in a box set, that looks more like a complicated board game than a novel -- would definitely be tough, nigh impossible, to bring to life with actors. But even more traditional stories seem to be stuck in the pre-adaptation stage that the media industry calls "development hell." *Watchmen*, a 1986 limited comic series written by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, was sitting there for the better part of two decades until Zack Snyder directed an adaptation in 2009. Other projects, such as an adaptation of John Kennedy Toole's uproariously funny novel *A Confederacy of Dunces*, never even make it out; in fact, due to the deaths of several key names attached to the project -- including John Belushi, John Candy, and Chris Farley -- the project has been abandoned, with directors such as Steven Soderbergh considering the whole thing cursed. The problem of adaptation works the other way from movies as well, due mostly to scope. A movie with lots of action and chase sequences would be a fun watch, but it would be hell to adapt for the stage.

And so we return to our question: is everything adaptable?

Or, more specifically, how the heck did Nia Vardalos take a book of advice column excerpts and turn it into one of the most emotional plays I've seen?

Tiny Beautiful Things, adapted for the stage by Vardalos and directed by Thomas Kail, was based on a book by Cheryl Strayed, documenting the various advice columns she published for two years under the pseudonym "Sugar." Throughout the play, Vardalos, who also plays Sugar, gives advice and fields questions to her readers, portrayed onstage by Hubert Pont-Du Jour, Teddy Cañez, and Natalie Woolams-Torres. This is wherein I expressed my hesitation upon initially seeing *Tiny Beautiful Things* and my skepticism in Vardalos' adaptation of the book -- namely, the lack of a cohesive narrative. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against Vardalos; she's a fine actress and screenwriter -- heck, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, which she wrote, was nominated for Best Original Screenplay at the 75th Academy Awards -- but how exactly do you squeeze a narrative out of an advice column? The only thing I could think of is having her wander around an apartment reading from a computer for an hour and a half.

Well, I was half right. The play is set in Strayed's apartment for the duration of its 90 minute stage time, but Vardalos spends almost no time by her computer, save for the very beginning where she accepts the name and email of Sugar from the previous columnist who used the pseudonym. From there, Pont-Du Jour, Cañez, and Woolams-Torres waltz into and wander around her apartment, as if the authors of the letters were actually there -- raiding her fridge and cabinets for food, putting away her laundry, and sitting at her dining room table. While this keeps things simple, in that it solves the problem I addressed earlier of the play only having Vardalos read from a laptop, it has an added layer. Having the other characters invade her apartment is an overall statement

about how these people entered and affected Strayed's life the moment she took on the name Sugar. Quite literally the moment she sends a message back accepting the pseudonym, the questions start pouring in, and Pont-Du Jour, Cañez, and Woolams-Torres make their home in both Strayed's apartment and mind.

The questions and answers make up the meat of this

"THESE LETTERS ARE WHERE THE PLAY BARES ITS EMOTIONAL FANGS, AS STRAYED ANSWERS THESE DEEPLY PERSONAL QUESTIONS WITH STORIES OF HER OWN LIFE."

play. Sometimes they're outlandish -- one advice seeker in particular asks "What the f****?" at various points throughout the play, which Strayed eventually answer.



Other times, they're standard love-and-marriage advice column fare. A good portion of the questions, though, come from people in dark places in their lives. A woman who had a miscarriage can't stop thinking about what her daughter could have been. A transgender man is torn between forgiving his parents, who have apologized for their previous treatment of him, or ignoring them and moving on with his life. A woman who survived sexual assault wants to know when to bring the topic up with her new boyfriend. These letters are where the play bares its emotional fangs, as Strayed answers these deeply personal questions with stories of her own life. Whereas other advice columnists that I've glanced at in the past, such as *Ask Amy* (a famous advice column, run by American journalist Amy Dickinson), are sanitized answers to equally sanitized questions, Strayed, through Sugar, allows her raw emotion to pour out into her advice. She leaves no detail untold

in her stories, which range from a teenager who stole a makeup bag from her yard sale to her own experiences of sexual assault from her grandfather as a child. Every detail, that is, except her name. Every question begins "Dear Sugar..." and she ends every answer with "...Yours, Sugar." A few readers question her about this, and she responds accordingly -- to one who asks what a picture of her would look like, she tells them that it would be her naked, covering only her face -- because to her, it doesn't matter if she's Cheryl Strayed or Amy Dickinson or even Sigmund Freud. The only thing that matters is that she is Sugar, and that Sugar gives advice which can help the troubled reader for the better.

Due to the vast range of questions that Strayed received and that Vardalos decided to put into the play, some of the back-and-forth between Strayed and the readers was quite funny. I have conflicting thoughts about this. On the one hand, I appreciated the moments of levity in the play, as they helped make the more dramatic letters that Strayed received more digestible. However, at points, I felt that the shifts in tone were a little too steep -- going from a man talking about his girlfriend's Santa fixation to another man asking how to deal with his narcissistic and abusive father was somewhat jarring. There could have been a bit

more of a buffer between the comedic letters and the more emotional ones. Also, the play had a bit of a slow start. Vardalos shows Strayed going about beginning her day in somewhat intricate detail -- she eats a bit of breakfast, does the dishes, and stands around rubbing her eyes for a minute or two before finally opening her laptop -- which went on, in my opinion, for about a minute too long. Otherwise, though, I couldn't find fault in the production.

My advice? Watch this play. Read the book, even. If not to empathize and find some comfort or maybe advice in an anonymous individual who went through the same problem that you went through, to see that while not everything can be adapted, there are stories that transcend the limitations of adaptation to share their messages with the world. And one day, we might even get that *A Confederacy of Dunces* movie. Fingers crossed.



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The Maccabeats: So Much More Than Just Latkes

By Ellie Parker

On November 20, the Wilf Campus Housing Office held an open forum in which new iniOne would be hard pressed to find a Jew who hasn't heard of the Maccabeats. Their influence reaches far and wide and their music has touched hundreds of thousands of people. I would be lying if I said I didn't have a signed "I Flip My Latkes In the Air Sometimes" T-shirt tucked away.

On nights when I'm feeling a bit nostalgic, I recall the afternoon I spent hours standing in line waiting to meet my music icons. The first concert I ever went to was Matisyahu. It was different and loud and probably too sketchy for a ten year old. However, the night I heard the Maccabeats perform live for the first time, I was hit by a wave of wholesomeness. The Maccabeats knew what they stood for and they embodied it perfectly. So what is it that makes them so relatable and universal? Where did the Maccabeats begin and where are they now? What is the secret to their appeal?

The day after Candlelight was uploaded to Youtube in 2010, the world seemed to explode with latkes and Jewish pride. That next day at school my classmates and I played the video over and over again, reenacting their moves and memorizing their lyrics. There was something inherently likeable about the clean shaven and preppy heads popping out from every corner of the screen. As an impressionable middle schooler, the Maccabeats Jewish pride and enthusiasm always stuck with me. To this day, the Maccabeats taught me that you never have to skimp on your morals or beliefs in order to make it big. To me, that video was much more than an original rendition of "Dynamite;" it was a validation that religion and success aren't mutually exclusive terms.

Though the faces of the Maccabeats members may have changed from time to time, their music remains as powerful as it was in their first video. While many Jewish artists shy away from unconventional tunes, the Maccabeats thrive in their singularity. With mashups ranging from "Yesh Tikvah" with Benny Friedman to variations on the popular

"Brave" by Sara Bareilles, the Maccabeats know just how to spice up an album. However, one of the secrets to their fame is the fact that, while they love to change things up in their

"[THE] VIDEO WAS MUCH MORE THAN AN ORIGINAL RENDITION OF "DYNAMITE", IT WAS A VALIDATION THAT RELIGION AND SUCCESS AREN'T MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE TERMS."

music, they never alter their priorities. They sing, they dance, and they reform the far too well-established Jewish stereotype with each new song and music video.

Though we are blessed with countless talented Jewish musicians, the Maccabeats bring something different to the table. Their relatability, stage presence, and free-flowing genre allow them to stand out from the crowd. I am proud to say that they were and continue to be an inspiration to me and a reminder that being religious is never an excuse to hold yourself back.

So what is the secret to their appeal? It's all in the name-Maccabeats. They represent the notion that we should always be proud to stand up for what we believe in, no matter how small we may seem. The Maccabeats are Jews first and musicians second, and they always make sure to keep those two in the right order. This Chanukah, the Maccabeats rediscovered their roots in a video reminiscent of their first. As they sang of the ups and downs that many young artists face, past performances and clips rolled in the background. For fans who have been with the group from the beginning, it was a much needed reminder that while the road ahead is sure to be filled with fame and change, some things are destined to remain the same.



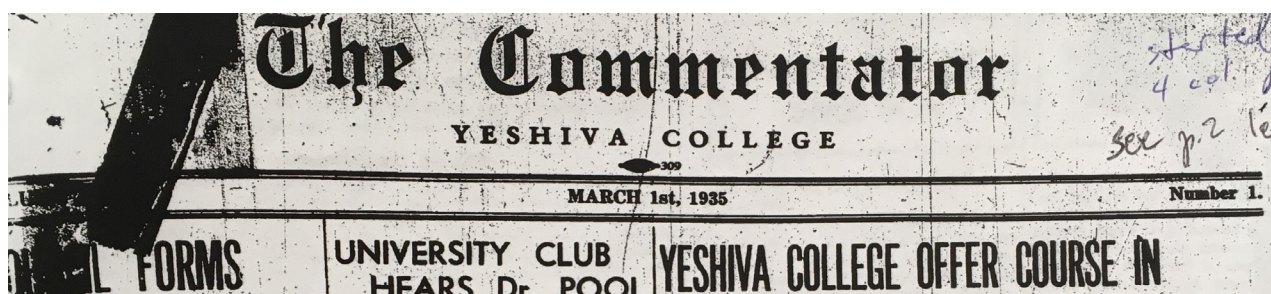
AGE OF THE COMMENTATOR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

of declaring two volumes every academic year persisted through the end of the 1982-83 academic year. The latter, keeping to the original count, covered volumes 96 and 97 of The Commentator.

The following year, for the first time in Commentator history, the newspaper kept one volume number for an entire academic year. Volume 98 spanned not only the fall 1983 semester, but also the spring 1984 semester. This pattern lasted for four years. From the beginning of fall 1983 through the end of spring 1987, The Commentator produced volumes 98, 99, 100, and 101.

Suddenly, in the first issue of the 1987-88 academic year, The Commentator became volume 52. This number was used for that entire year, and every subsequent governing board of the newspaper has kept to the count. It is for this reason that, 30 years later, The Commentator finds itself in volume 82.

No articles in the vicinity of the September 1987 numbering update write about the volume or age of the newspaper. I therefore deduced that the governing board at the time attempted to recalibrate The Commentator's volume based on the newspaper's age, and that, quite simply, they miscounted. It also seemed probable that the 1987 governing board was mistaken about when the newspaper was founded. Until recently, Commentator



archives were available only on microfilm or in the library's private archives collection. It is possible that the editors at the time possessed incorrect information regarding when the paper was founded.

I figured that old editors might recall the thought process that went into the volume recalibration. To this end, I reached out to Lance Hirt, Jonathan Katzauer, and Behnam Dayanim, who were Commentator editors-in-chief in 1986-87, 1987-88, and 1988-89, respectively. While all three expressed interest in the topic and shared fond memories of their times on the paper, none of them recalled relevant information that might clarify the volume mystery. "I will admit that I do not recall who made the decision to change or why," wrote Hirt. "I bet they meant to move to the annual count and just missed by a year." Katzauer similarly figured, "There will have been a reason for the change, but it will be lost in the mist of time. It

was something I agreed with the EICs of the previous year ... It's quite possible that we made a mistake on the volume numbering." Dayanim as well did not recall why the change was made.

I also contacted Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff, who was editor-in-chief of The Commentator in 2007-08 and has spent time researching Commentator archives for his books and articles. He told me, "You are absolutely correct on the problem ... I presume someone halved [the volume number] incorrectly but was intending to make clear the number of years since the founding."

Based on the evidence, the current governing board of The Commentator has decided to declare itself volume 83 for the remainder of the 2017-18 academic year. We invite anyone in the broader Yeshiva University community who has more information on the subject to reach out and share with us.

Our Town: Perfection in Simplicity

By Matthew Silkin

The first thing I noticed when I got to New York was the noise. I'm not from the smallest town in the world — heck, my backyard faces the Florida Turnpike — but it took a while to get used to hustle and bustle outside my dorm window at two in the morning, and that's just in Washington Heights! Friends in Brookdale have described having been woken up by the morning traffic along 34th Street as early as 5:00 am, which I don't think I would ever be able to get used to. And it's more than just the city — everything's getting louder, and that's not just the cranky old man in me talking. When I saw *Interstellar* back in 2014, I left the theater just short of a ruptured eardrum, and the volume really hasn't been lowered since — just watch any Michael Bay film and try talking over the yelling military characters and loud explosions every other scene. Even the library, ostensibly the last bastion of peace and quiet on Earth, has become a place of more than whispers and reading. If there's one thing that's been missing for a while, it's some good old peace and quiet.

And lo, like light shining down from a stagelight, my prayers were answered when I watched the final dress rehearsal of SCDS, The Stern College Dramatics Society, with their simple, beautiful production of *Our Town* this past Monday night.

Our Town, first written in 1938 by playwright Thornton Wilder, is about the inhabitants of the fictional town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, on three days — one in 1901, the second in 1904, and the third in 1914. There's no bombastic action. There are no epic scores, or roaring traffic, or even conversations in the library. There is simply the play on the stage, and the audience watching the three days unfold in front of them. There are no complicated set pieces either; Grover's Corners is not a place for complication. There are simply two tables, four (usually, sometimes more) chairs, and at one point, two ladders. The actresses mimed all other set pieces and actions, from lighting a stove to eating breakfast to walking a cow around town, a feat that I as an actor deeply respect — I'm not sure how long I would be able to last myself if I had nothing to work with in front of me, and I tip my hat to the actresses of SCDS for pulling off what I consider to be one of the tougher aspects of acting.

There's no real main character in *Our Town* either. As

implied by the title, the play is about a town, and each of the various people who inhabit it — the constable, the milkman, the paperboy — is just as important as the other. If I had to pick out main characters among the inhabitants of Grover's Corners, out of necessity, they would be Emily

“SCDS HAS TRANSFORMED SCHOTTENSTEIN THEATER INTO AN OASIS OF CALM, SMALL TOWN LIFE AMIDST THE CHAOTIC COLLEGE LIFE AROUND US.”

Webb, played by Shoshy Ciment, and George Gibbs, played by Leah Weintraub, mostly because it is the story of three days in their lives in particular — a day in high school, their wedding, and then the funeral of a loved one — which provide the frame in which the play is housed. And they were fantastic in their respective roles. Both brought a range of deep emotion that elevated *Our Town* from a simple “day in the life” story to the piece of timeless Americana that Wilder had imagined when he originally wrote the play.

Another character whom I cannot write this review without praising would be the Stage Manager, played by Liorah Rubinstein. I'm sorry to inform all you fans of the fourth wall out there, whoever you are, that *Our Town* doesn't have one. The Stage Manager — not actually a stage manager, that job instead belonged to Becca Epstein — inhabits a character in the play, as the conduit through which the audience experiences those three days in Grover's Corners. She brings in a guest lecturer, fields questions about the town from the audience, and even stands in as some townspeople at points. But most of all — and what Rubinstein nails in her performance — she delivers lengthy, introspective monologues about life, death, love, and marriage, especially within the context of small-town America at the turn of the 20th century. And Rubinstein was perfect in the role — she wasn't too flashy, she didn't go off-script, she didn't interject anything into the play that Wilder wouldn't have intended, except maybe reminding the audience to turn off their cell phones

in the beginning (though I don't think Wilder foresaw that aspect back in 1938, so I think I can give her a pass on this one).

But credit must be given where it is due, and the credit, much like the stage, belongs to each and every actress who inhabits a place in Grover's Corners. From the more important players in the story, like Menucha Schuman's portrayal of Emily's mother, to the more incidental people in town, like Racheli Moskowitz's milkman Howie Newsome and Dassah Cohen as a simple baseball player who mocks George at his wedding for growing old too soon, each and every actress brought to their character something memorable, something that made them feel necessary in Grover's Corners. There was not a wasted line in *Our Town*, no wasted action that took me out of the small town of the stage in front of me. For about an hour and a half, with two intermissions, I was out of New York and in a small, quiet town, watching the day's events unfold.

This all wouldn't be possible without SCDS's use of Schottenstein Theater. Much has been written in both *The Commentator* and *The Observer* celebrating this momentous occasion, and so I too shall throw in my two cents and say thank God they had it because it added so much to the experience of the small town feel that SCDS was going for. The professional lighting augmented the various times of day that transpired while also mirroring the emotions that the characters onstage were experiencing — bright lights in happy weddings, darker blues in somber graveyards. Even if one were to ignore the lighting, close their eyes, and imagine just what Grover's Corners must have looked like — and it's not that hard, Rubinstein's Stage Manager gives a lot of details about the town, down to the (and I looked this up) inaccurate coordinates of where it could have possibly existed — having it in a professional stage enhanced the whole experience beyond what it could have possibly been in Koch Auditorium or even Furst 501.

In short, simple terms, *Our Town* is the perfect, quiet remedy to the hectic weeks ahead. SCDS has transformed Schottenstein Theater into an oasis of calm, small town life amidst the chaotic college life around us. I'm so glad I saw it, and I can't wait for what SCDS has in store for their future in the theater. As long as there are no explosions. Save those for Michael Bay, please.



Photo credit: Tehilla Teigman

Almost 80 Years Later, "Our Town" is Still a Pillar of American Drama

By Shoshy Ciment

In 1938, Thornton Wilder published a play that would become a hallmark of American theatre. From its first performance on stage at the McCarter Theater in Princeton, N.J., *Our Town* went on to become one of the most acclaimed American dramas and one of Wilder's most frequently performed plays.

With its simple set and guileless script, *Our Town* does not dawdle on unnecessary distractions. In three acts, the characters, with the assistance of the play's narrator, the omniscient "Stage Manager," portray the life cycle of the fictional town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, focusing on the smaller, insignificant details that make up a daily life; French toast, birthday presents, the moonlight. All the while, the characters beg the eternal question that still gnaws at our souls today: "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? Every, every minute?"

Our Town helped Wilder pull in his second Pulitzer Prize, his first for Playwriting. However, *Our Town* did not immediately receive the praise and popularity that characterizes it today. After its run at the McCarter Theater, *Our Town* travelled to the Wilbur Theatre in Boston and gained the attention of Brooks Atkinson, the theater critic for The New York Times at the time. When the play finally made it to Broadway, Atkinson, having seen the show during previews, wrote a glowing review, calling the play "one of the finest achievements of the current stage," according to an article on Pulitzer.org.

Almost 80 years later, *Our Town*, remains a play that has truly withstood the test of time, culture, and technology. In an age where modern theatrical works have pushed and shoved their way into critical acclaim on Broadway through their use of innovative technology and elaborate sets, there is something about the minimalism and depth of *Our Town* that lingers, generation to

generation.

The simplicity of *Our Town* lends itself to being reproduced in varying forms. According to the Samuel French website, *Our Town* is currently playing at 67 different regional theaters, high schools, colleges (SCDS performed the play a few weeks ago), and conservatories across the world. Miami New Drama at the Colony Theater in South Beach kicked off their 2017-2018 season with a multilingual version of *Our Town* that featured a modified script that had characters speaking in English, Spanish, and Creole. In November, Scarlett Johansson organized a reading of *Our Town* with Robert Downey Jr., Mark Ruffalo, Chris Evans, Jeremy Renner, and Maximiliano Hernandez to raise money to support The Hurricane Maria Community Relief & Recovery Fund.

Perhaps Donald Margulies, the Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, said it best in the foreword to *Our Town* when he wrote, "indeed

the play's success across cultural borders around the world attests to its being something much greater than an American play: it is a play that captures the universal experience of being alive."

Like the Stage Manager says at the end of the play, there is something eternal about every human being. With the success and effervescence of *Our Town* almost 80 years later, Wilder's message about the human experience still resonates with audiences across the world, eternal in every way.



Photo credit: Tehilla Teigman

"Dead"

Courtesy of The Yeshiva University Poetry Club
By Chana Morgenstern, Co-President

There's no more to be said
Though there are words aplenty
It's done, It's did, It's dead

You never looked inside my head
I'd have given you my thoughts for a penny
But there's no more to be said

We should have spent more time in bed
And made love like we were twenty
Anyhow It's done, It's did, It's dead

I think of the vows when we wed
I wish now we had any
But there's no more to be said

Am I seeing green or red
Now that you say you love jenny
Is that why It's done, It's did, It's dead

You say seeing me fills you with dread
And of regrets I have many
But there's no more to be said
And I know It's done, It's did, It's dead.

"Endings"

Courtesy of The Yeshiva University Poetry Club
By Jacob Stone, Co-President

It may take less than a lifetime to mend
My absence. Reading this, they'll say
I hate it when suicidal poems end.

From another world, I'll make sure to send
My regards. Don't worry my friends, be gay!
It may take less than a lifetime to mend.

In the middle now, at an emotional bend,
That flux of health, though liminal, won't last until day.
I hate it when suicidal poems end.

And myself? I have a message, but, without amends,
My doubts deliberately silence my way.
It may take less than a lifetime to mend.

A ray of hesitation slowly wends
Into my mind. The lines left unwritten while I lay!
I hate it when suicidal poems end.

The tragedy of this one, though, won't portend
A worse fate for his verses. I whisper from faraway,
It may take less than a lifetime to mend,
I hate it when suicidal poems end.

Who Are You? A Glimpse Into The Human Microbiome

By Jonah Stavsky

Who are you? It is a seemingly simple question; yet, the topic of self concept is one that has been pondered for centuries. If your legs are swapped for someone else's, are you still yourself? What about your arms or kidneys or liver or heart? Have you considered who you would be if your brain was swapped for someone else's brain?

While questions of such a type are indeed complicated, to say the least, I'd like to focus on a bodily swap of a different category: the microbes that reside within you. For, although you may snicker, current data estimates the number of microbes within the human body to be roughly 40 trillion, as compared with our measly 30 trillion human cells. Granted, this approximation is down from the recently considered ratio of 10:1, microbe cells to human cells. Nevertheless, while the precise number is yet to be worked out, this idea carries an interesting notion: by biological unit, you are likely more bacteria than you are human.

Until recently, the unique array of microbes living inside us were considered simply as passengers along for the ride of human life. However, scientific research has begun to uncover an intriguing aspect to our partners in crime -- that is, the bacteria residing within and on our bodies have the ability to alter our biology and physiological systems.

The microbes' connection to our brain, for example, is of the most heavily studied. The connection provides insight into the ways in which bacteria can affect our psychology. The interaction between our gastrointestinal system and the brain is termed the gut-brain axis and it is far from a one-way street. The brain talks to the bacteria in the gut, and the bacteria talk back to the brain. This is all, of course, in the form of chemical messengers. But without getting into the precise mechanism of how a bacterium might use protons, neutrons, and electrons to speak, I'd like to focus on the macroscopic conclusions of this idea.

The vagus nerve (which travels down from the brainstem into our bodies) can be considered as a communication highway of sorts between our brain and many organs of the body. Researchers have uncovered the ability of microbes in our guts to stimulate the vagus nerve, thereby providing a communication pathway to the brain (Forsyth

et al, 2014). So too, microbes have the ability to activate this vagal pathway thereby providing a mechanism for their communication with the brain.

Multiple studies have been performed in an attempt

"SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH HAS BEGUN TO UNCOVER...[THAT] BACTERIA RESIDING WITHIN AND ON OUR BODIES HAVE THE ABILITY TO ALTER OUR BIOLOGY AND PHYSIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS."

to see how the microbes living inside us can theoretically alter our psychology. For example, a 2014 study published in the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* found that germ free mice (mice born and raised without any bacteria inside of them) responded more strongly to acute stressors and general anxiety stimuli (Crumeyrolle-Arias, 2014).

Studies on depression have seen similar results (yes, there are ways to tell if a mouse is depressed!). In one of the most fascinating studies on this subject (which simultaneously demonstrates both the complicated nature of human physiology as well as our current ignorance on this particular subject), researchers extracted the microbiota of 34 humans with major depressive disorder and transplanted their microbiomes into germ free rats. In comparison with the healthy control group, the rats with the "depression microbiomes" exhibited anhedonic (lost of interest) behavior. How is that possible? In short, while the details are still being worked out, certain strains of bacteria are thought to be communicating with our brain through molecules quite familiar to us -- neurotransmitters. As it would seem, our distinctly harbored microbiota influence our brains, and therefore our psychology.

But it doesn't just stop at depression and anxiety. Microbiota transplants are now being referred to by some as "personality transplants". The neurotransmitters that determine our mood state, as incredibly complex

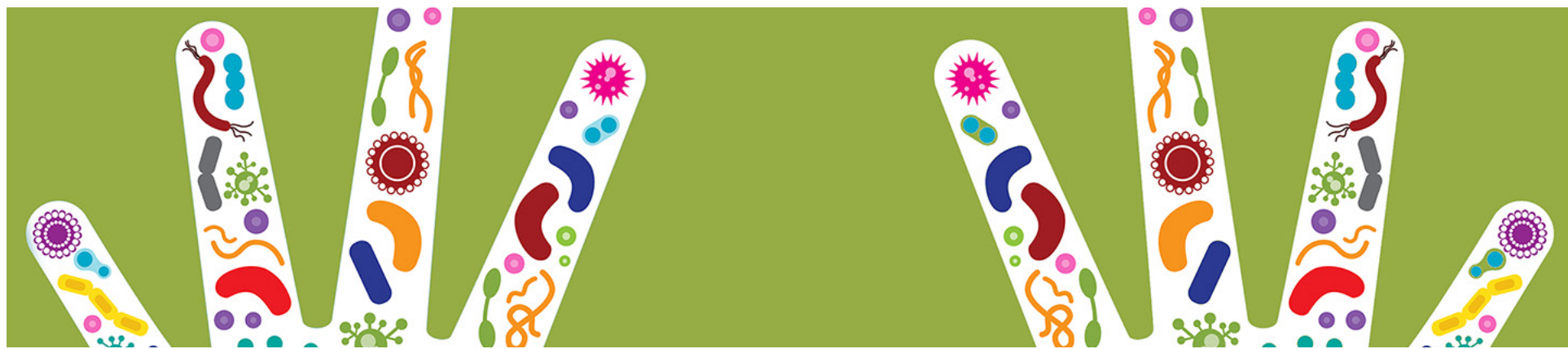
as the system may be, are seemingly influenced by our personalized microbiomes. Easy-going mice have different microbiomes than nervous mice. High cognitively scoring human babies have different microbes than low scoring babies (Alexander L. Carlson). This notion has been replicated again and again. At this point, however, our collective knowledge is premature on this subject. So too, the direction of causality has yet to be worked out. Do microbes contribute to depression, or does depression change our microbiomes? Time will undoubtedly uncover the precise mechanisms of this dialogue between brain and bacteria. What we do know, however, is that microbiome diversity is a common denominator in most advantageous psychological characteristics.

How does one then acquire his or her distinct and diverse set of microbes? There are many different factors, including whether or not you were delivered by cesarean section, how often you take antibiotics, and perhaps even your dog at home, with which you may be sharing microbes. However, one of the easiest ways to acquire a diverse set of microbes is to provide the bacteria a diverse set of food sources. What exactly do your gut bacteria eat? Fiber, and lots of it. According to an immense body of literature, including a 2017 study published in the *Journal of Obesity*, fiber intake was positively correlated with human microbiome diversity (C, Menni). Moreover, a 2016 study published in the journal *Gut*, showed that individuals following a vegan diet (a diet naturally high in fiber), demonstrated the most diverse microbiota profiles as compared with their omnivorous counterparts (Francesca De Filippis, et al). Multiple other studies have replicated these results.

Evidently, microbiologically altered neurophysiology is quite complicated. So too, the field lends particular interest to the area of philosophy.

I therefore ask again: who are you? Are you your brain? If you are your brain, and your brain is influenced by your microbiome, are you your bacteria?

If I swapped out your bacteria for someone else's, are you still yourself?



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: The Commentator has decided to reprint several articles—two editorials and one Letter to the Editor—written in three consecutive issues in this newspaper, over 70 years ago. Though those involved are long gone from Yeshiva University, the topic at hand is, amazingly, quite relevant these many years later. These archives call to mind the recent observed trend of YU's students' waning interest in the Humanities, and the discussion about this topic. The second article in particular is doubly fascinating, as it very prominently shows how students in YU balanced college difficulties with the ongoing realities of World War II.

From the Archives (May 4, 1944; Volume 9 Issue 12) — The Requirement of Philosophy

By Commentator Governing Board 1943-44

The removal of philosophy from the list of required subjects can lead to little but bewilderment on the part of the students. A liberal arts degree is well-nigh meaningless when one can blithely ignore the best that men have thought and said, to emerge, parchment in hand, and chaos in head.

This is even more true in the Yeshiva College; for, if synthesis is to have any value, it cannot come about through a miraculous, meaningless fusion of two disparate worlds.

Philosophy is the catalyst which makes synthesis meaningful and vital.

The action appears even more incongruous when we consider the Dean's recent statements stressing the increased importance of the social sciences in the College. Philosophy has always been in the social science field of concentration and has always had a large number of "majors". The past and present enrollments and interest in philosophy point to the need for additional courses, and instead we find it removed from the list of

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FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

From the Archives (May 10, 1944; Volume 9 Issue 13) – Maybe I’m Wrong: Philosophy Is Prerequisite To Intellectual Potency

By Isaac H. Friedman

Intellectual activity is a danger to the building of character. The intellectual side of things fills me with disgust. Philosophy? There’s a reactionary concept for you! I put on my helmet, I draw my dagger and declaim heroic verse.—Joseph Goebbels in his autobiographical novel “Michael.”

Whenever mundane “normalcy” is on the upgrade, intelligence and culture must perforce decline. Mediocrity and culture are opposing concepts which are contradictory, therefore the ascendancy of one is the destruction of the other. In time of war we may see this demonstrated quite clearly.

War is evil! This truism is one which deserves thought. All experience the horrors of war, regardless of position, intelligence or extent of education. The ravages of war convey a picture of physical suffering and destruction. That which is known as “mental anguish” stems primarily from this picture of physical suffering and material destruction. Naturally, we expect the same reaction to war from all type of people. A man need not be brilliant to appreciate physical pain.

A War Casualty

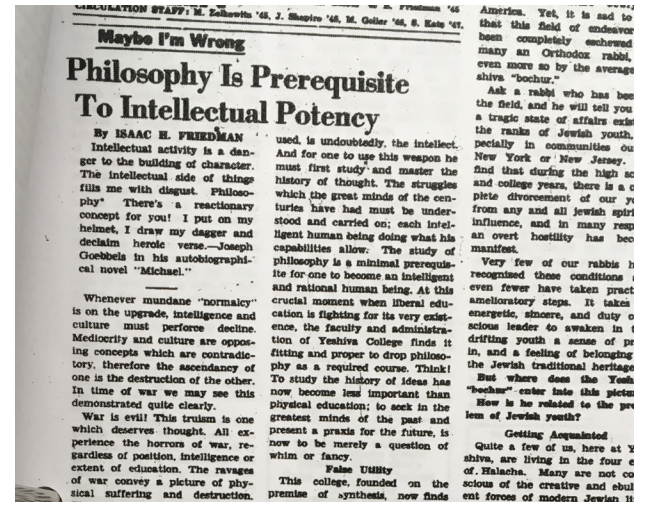
Without minimizing the aforementioned, there exists an evil of war far more subtle, but with much more catastrophic consequences than the physical abominations of war. The constant lowering of existing moral norms and the uncompromising annihilation of intellectual forces most certainly is the most damaging aspect of war. The disintegration of the liberal arts education is a reality which we witness. You may bring this to the attention of

the man in the street, but he will not understand it and most likely deny it; moreover, almost invariably, it will not be considered by him. The mass man of the present is mediocre (even the most ardent democrat will admit this to be so). Intellectualism is a meaningless concept for him and in a great number of cases he is hostile to the intellectual and without understanding him or his work is desirous of destroying both. It seems that during wartime, all wrongs may be committed against the student.

The Danger of Mediocrity

In such times one must look to the cultured, to the educated for support and guidance. The scholar will fight obscurantism and ignorance, if no one else will, and most certainly the college will be his bastion of defence. No one realizes dangers of mediocrity as the learned, and logically, no one will fight this evil as he will.

The most potent weapon to be used, is undoubtedly, the intellect. And for one to use this weapon he must first study and master the history of thought. The struggles which the great minds of the centuries have had must be understood and carried on; each intelligent human being doing what his compatibilities allow. The study of philosophy is a minimal prerequisite for one to become an intelligent and rational human being. At this crucial moment when liberal education is fighting for its very existence, the faculty and administration of Yeshiva College finds it fitting and proper to drop philosophy as a required course. Think! To study the history of ideas has now become less important than physical education; to seek in the greatest minds of the past and present a praxis for the future, is now to be merely a question of whim or fancy.



False Utility

This college, founded on the premise of synthesis, now finds it possible to achieve this “synthesis” without the aid of philosophy. A more sorry plight need not be asked for. To understand such a move either on a rational basis or in the light of one’s intellect, would challenge the composite minds of Plato, Aristotle and Spinoza. May one speak of the ignorance of the uneducated, when in a place of “learning”, philosophy becomes a mere elective?

Perhaps the only answer to this development, is that “modernism” is finding a home in certain “academic minds”. Those who found it compatible with their conscience to allow philosophy to be defaulted on the altar of false “utility” may indeed write a second “LIBERAL EDUCATION”!

From the Archives (May 25, 1944; Volume 9 Issue 14) – Letter to the Editor

To the Editor Of Commentator:

As a former editor of Commentator, I have been asked by many of my fellow alumni to lodge a formal protest, through this medium, with respect to the abolishment of philosophy as a required subject. If this action were part of a general policy to abolish all requirements from the college curriculum, there might have been some justification; but upon seeing that other, and far less important, subjects yet remain on the required list, we frankly do not understand the logic of this move.

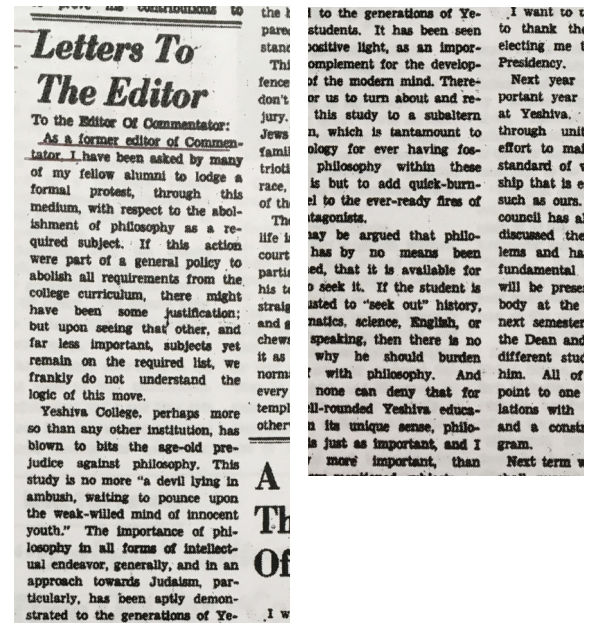
Yeshiva College, perhaps more so than any other institution, has blown to bits the age-old prejudice against philosophy. This study is no more “a devil lying in ambush, waiting to pounce upon the weak-willed mind of innocent youth.” The importance of philosophy in all forms of intellectual endeavor, generally, and in an approach towards Judaism, particularly, has been aptly demonstrated to the generations of Yeshiva students. It has been seen in a positive light, as an important complement for the development of the modern mind. Therefore, for us to turn about and relegate this study to

a subaltern position, which is tantamount to an apology for every having fostered philosophy within these walls, is but to add quick-burning fuel to the ever-ready fires of our antagonists.

It may be argued that philosophy has by no means been abolished, that it is available for all who seek it. If the student is not trusted to “seek out” history, mathematics, science, English, or public speaking, then there is no reason why he should burden himself with philosophy. And surely, none can deny that for the well-rounded Yeshiva education, in its unique sense, philosophy is just as important, and I daresay more important, than the above-mentioned subjects.

We therefore request the administration to reconsider its decision, and once again incorporate philosophy as a required subject.

Sincerely yours,
Joseph Karasick (Editor-in-Chief 1942-43)

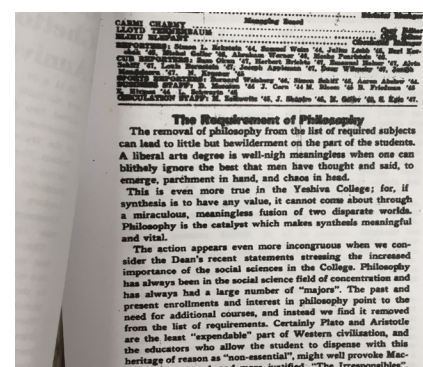


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requirements. Certainly Plato and Aristotle are the least “expendable” part of Western civilization, and the educators who allow the student to dispense with this heritage of reason as “non-essential”, might well provoke MacLeish to a second, and more justified, “The Irresponsibles”.

The elective system may serve as a liberating influence. Yet this liberty yields to confusion when the system is administered in indiscriminate doses. There should be some nucleus of required subjects which will afford the basic knowledge expected of any “civilized” man. Just as this nucleus is to include one year of science and two years of English and a language, so should it contain at the very least, one year of philosophy.

Philosophy needs no further defense; its disparagers do.

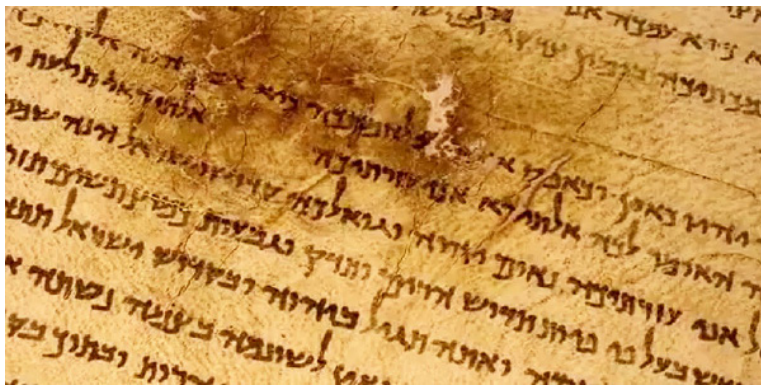


1305 Reasons

By Irwin Leventer

I walked into that room with a feeling of such confidence. It was obvious, set in stone: I was to be exempted from Hebrew 1305. I had been in an Israeli yeshiva for the most part of a year at that point, no longer terribly embarrassed to ask the cashier to repeat herself at the grocery store. I had toiled through many a Hebrew lecture and had finally broken that divide between having the ability to read and write and having the ability to converse. No longer was my Saba's incessant desire to speak with me in Hebrew a barrier to communicating with him. I had plans to bring novels home to read in Hebrew, to apply my new eyes to reading the *Parasha*, to find ways to keep up this proficiency on my own; no course was going to suck my love for Hebrew dry.

When that didn't happen, as many a that has not, I wasn't exactly so embracing. Outwardly I made sure to behave as if I had a savory anticipation, for emotions are



evaluations and behavior influences such evaluations. Hook me up to a lie detector, though, and I probably would have admitted to my begrudging acceptance of what was to come: Why me, why now! Should more of my credits to explore what we know of this world be forcedly spent on something so familiar and demystified?

I remember one of my first assignments was to explain

“[M]Y REGARD FOR THE [HEBREW 1305] COURSE WAS REPEATEDLY UPSCALED. THERE WAS NO DREADED REHASH OF WHAT I HAD KNOWN FOR AGES BUT A SYSTEMATIC REFINEMENT OF SKILLS THAT I WANTED TO REFINE.”

the meaning of my names. I wrote with my usual fervor of how the English meaning of my last name is lost to history, but when my family gave it a Hebrew spelling, we split it into two words: Lev Nattar- a watchful heart. My professor clearly put thought into her reading of each student's piece. From that point on I was no longer *Levnattar*, for my instructor insisted on exaggerating the Hebrew stress: *Levnattar*.

This was a local peak of interest. Despite my previous obdurateness, I had an instructor who was hardworking and thoughtful, sharing with me a subject so important to my identifying as Jewish. From there my regard for the course was repeatedly upscaled. There was no dreaded rehash of what I had known for ages but a systematic refinement of skills

that I *wanted* to refine. The classroom wasn't a closed system but open to the world, full of current events and dissections of quotes from Tanach, etymology of words so central to expression, explanation of important lines of prayer... rapture. This was no place where my love of Hebrew was to wither, but where it would flourish and extend to new areas, unfamiliar and beckoning.

So many of my classes are not exactly necessary to attend. I read my textbook diligently and with awe, and find myself at times going to class simply to ensure that I know what is focused on. The textbook isn't composing tests, after all (and to my dismay). It is sadly safe to say that there are class lectures I can simply do without. As I have made clear, the Hebrew courses I've taken here are far from this sorry sort of class. A language instructor gives live feedback to speech and a classroom makes for an arena to build confidence wielding a foreign language. A Hebrew language instructor, as this institution must surely recognize, can make Hebrew far more than just another set of papers to fill out. A Hebrew language instructor can bring students to fall in love with the language that echoes so sonorously through our history. To relinquish such a setting at this institution would be inconceivable.

To All the Aspiring Creators Out There

By Michelle Naim

Many of you might not know this about me, but I was dead set, one-hundred-and-ten percent sure, that I was going to pursue a nutrition major when I began college. Looking back to the beginning of last year, when I started college, I knew exactly what I was doing with my life. Now, however, I'm not so sure.

Well, I am, but it's complicated. Before I arrived at Stern, I attended community college in Los Angeles. Although I always had a gut feeling that I loved and appreciated English literature and writing, I was fairly certain that I was going to lead a career in the STEM field. In the middle of my first year of college, I was getting ready to take chemistry and physics courses in order to start fulfilling the requirements that other universities I would eventually transfer to demanded for their nutrition and dietetics program. A slew of mathematics, chemistry, biology, and physics



courses stood out to me as the main focus of the major. That made sense. After all, nutrition is all about food and the way in which it affects our bodies. It was obvious to me that I would be spending my time in college taking courses in the STEM field. Then the mid-college crisis hit.

Most college students experience a mid-college crisis at some point. It's most common after one's sophomore

“THEY CAN TOUCH A HEART OR MIND WITH ONE WORD.”

year, when he or she hits the mid-mark of the four-year experience. Usually, the crisis surrounds the fact that the student's college career is almost over. Mine was different in that it started in the middle of my first year of college

and was more about my future than about my college career coming to a close. However, like most others, my crisis came from a very deep place.

I consider myself a fairly physically active person, which explains my desire to pursue nutrition. My problem, though, was that I hated chemistry, physics, and math.

They were not only my poorest courses in school, but I didn't even like doing them, nor did I find them interesting. I was brought up with the expectation and knowledge that I was to pursue a career in the medical or STEM field because that was a “guaranteed job,” and most people in my culture pursued similar fields of work. That was just the norm. I don't know the last time I heard a Persian girl choose an English, philosophy, or any humanities major for that matter. Well, here I am.

I think I'm an English/journalism major now. It's weird to say and ever weirder to know that I started at such a different place. I think, however, that the main reason I was afraid to go with my gut was because I, and most of the world, do not understand the importance of expressing oneself through language and words. During the times of the Renaissance, and even not so long ago, topics such as philosophy, rhetoric, language, music, and art were

the “hot” areas of study. People who were gifted in these areas were some of the most brilliant minds. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Plato, and Mozart are just a handful of some of the great writers we have been gifted with.

I started doing some writing, and realized that I had been writing for most of my life. I kept a diary. In high school I was in all the honors and AP track English classes and one of the editors for my high school newspaper. Every night I looked forward to the hour I spent in my pajamas before bed with a hot cup of tea in my hands sending emails to professors, friends, and job prospects.

People do not realize the head scratching, the late nights, and the somersaults we writers have to go through to find some creative spark. People think that no hard work goes into being a musician, or an English major, and that it is the easy way out. It's the major for people that have no direction in life, those that have no talents that can be

marketed immediately. Well, I'm here to tell you that's a blatant lie. The deepest thinkers, those who can create and express themselves, have skills that many people going to medical or engineering school are not going to have. They know how to communicate effectively, but they are also passionate and smart, and most of them are just as capable of pursuing a career in any field (even STEM). Most of them have big dreams, and many of them are overachievers, always pushing the boundaries. They can touch a heart or mind with one word.

So to all the creators out there, I salute you. I salute you for the hardships you go through to prove to people that you're not “just an English major.” You take your craft *very* seriously and you put your entire being into your art whether it be a sport, instrument, or newspaper. Keep killing it.

The Crisis in Lebanon

By Adam Bandler

In 2004, King Abdullah II of Jordan warned other Gulf leaders that a Shiite crescent was developing in the northern arc of the Middle East; no one took his warning seriously. On November 4, 2017, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Saad Hariri, issued from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia a surprise announcement of his resignation, citing Hezbollah's growing influence in the nation and his fear for his life. Hariri's announcement triggered a geopolitical crisis that has implications for the entire Middle East. Lebanon is now another battleground between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as both powers vie for regional influence. Western leaders will now have to contemplate the next policy steps that will keep the Middle East stable, while still curbing Iranian influence. The warning King Abdullah II gave over a decade ago has now become a reality.

Iran is the foremost regional destabilizer in the Middle East and has been a thorn in the side of Saudi Arabia. In particular, Iran has been supporting various groups that threaten regional stability and who are directly opposed to Saudi Arabia. These groups include: Bashar al-Assad in Syria, the Houthi rebels in Yemen, and Hezbollah in Lebanon. In addition, Iran has sent advisors to aid the Iraqi government in defeating ISIS with the hopes of fostering a closer relationship with Baghdad while limiting Saudi influence throughout the country. In a recent video, one can see Qassem Soleimani, leader of the Iranian Quds Force, crossing the Iraqi-Syrian border, illustrating how far Iran's influence is expanding in the region. Saudi Arabia has recently started to push back against Iran's waxing regional influence by organizing a coalition of Arab states to impose a blockade on Qatar, which has been nursing a duplicitous relationship with Iran, supporting rebels in

Tony Badran, a scholar on Lebanon at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, gave this insight into Lebanon's current state: "In terms of the actual balance of power, the actual power on the ground, regardless of the politics, regardless of the cabinets, regardless of the parliamentary majorities: It's Hezbollah." Since 2008, when Hezbollah and the Lebanese government created a unity government, Hezbollah has entrenched itself in Lebanese institutions, including the Lebanese Free Army (LAF).

"THE SAFEST AND MOST PRACTICAL SOLUTION IS TO PUT GREATER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PRESSURE ON HEZBOLLAH, WHILE GRADUALLY DEGRADING THE ORGANIZATION IN THE EYES OF THE LEBANESE PEOPLE."

Since Hariri re-assumed his post of prime minister, Lebanon has been increasingly enveloped by Hezbollah, and Hariri's pseudo-resignation has opened up the international community's eyes to Hezbollah's dominance in Lebanon and throughout the region. In the year leading up to his resignation, Hariri agreed to return as premier of Lebanon and, once reinstated, allowed Hezbollah to win key appointments not only to the LAF but also to intelligence, security, judicial, and administrative offices. As a result of Hezbollah's entrenchment into the Lebanese state, Saudi Arabia cut off its aid to LAF and pulled its ambassador from Beirut. In addition, the Arab League assembled and declared Hezbollah a "terrorist organization." These actions vindicate Israel's strategic view of Lebanon, as Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's defense minister, stated earlier this year: "We're no longer talking solely about Hezbollah. We're talking about Hezbollah and about the Lebanese military."

What can the international community do to combat this troubling tide of events? The answer, as always, is complex. Regional stakeholders would be well served to keep the region stable; yet, at the same time, it must be recognized that Hezbollah will not relinquish concessions freely. Similarly, applying too much

pressure or rushing into rash decisions might accelerate open confrontation. If Israel, who is increasingly aligned with Saudi Arabia in its desire to curb Iranian influence throughout the region, were to decide to take military action against Hezbollah, it would risk fomenting a region-wide conflagration while only hardening Hezbollah's position in Lebanon.

The safest and most practical solution is to put greater economic and political pressure on Hezbollah, while gradually degrading the organization in the eyes of the Lebanese people. Saudi Arabia has the opportunity to withdraw \$860 million from the Lebanese Central Bank, which anchors the Lebanese pound, and ban Lebanese

nationals from working in the Gulf states, whose remittances make up around 15% of Lebanon's GDP. These are just temporary fixes, however. The United States needs to become more involved in the Middle East and develop a regional strategy where curbing Iranian influence is its chief priority. The Shia community in Lebanon suffered tremendous losses in Syria, as many Hezbollah fighters joined the war on the side of the Syrian government. One Newsweek estimate totals Hezbollah's fatalities in Syria at 2,500, with as many as 7,000 injured. This can prove crucial if Hezbollah's political base is not sufficiently prepared for more conflict. Hezbollah's many losses affect numerous Lebanon Shia communities, ultimately leaving Hezbollah with less leverage. This opens up the opportunity to restart the "March 14th" political movement to counter Hezbollah politically in the upcoming elections. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations can flood Lebanese airwaves and televisions in the hope of gaining a foothold politically at Hezbollah's expense.

Another strategy, which will demand political will from the international community, is UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which was adopted to end hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006. The resolution mandates that all weapons in Lebanon be held by the Lebanese government and that no other authority can legally possess them. Furthermore, the U.S. and European allies should review bilateral aid packages to Lebanon in light of the fact that this aid supports Hezbollah's activities in the region.

Regardless of the strategic soundness of this approach, Saudi Arabia and Western allies must be highly cautious in how they manage the perceptions of the Lebanese people. Over the course of many years, Iran and Hezbollah have developed an expertise in using U.S. attempts to sow sectarian divides in their countries in order to reinforce their support bases. An article which ran in a 2016 Shia Lebanese newspaper, "The Plague of Sectarianism: Made in USA," illustrates how Hezbollah has been able to galvanize grassroots support through a deceptive press. The article quotes the 2008 graduate thesis of Douglas Philippone, a U.S. based Lebanon analyst, on strategies for defeating Hezbollah. Philippone argued that the U.S. and its allies should not directly assault Hezbollah, but instead that the U.S. should disrupt Hezbollah's ability to conduct global operations by: *exacerbating internal Lebanese sectarian conflict*. This article caused an uproar in Lebanon and deepened the view of many Lebanese citizens that the U.S. employs the same strategies that former imperial powers used to rule their respective colonies, even though there is no evidence that Philippone's suggestions actually became official U.S. policy. Examples like these should serve as warning signs to all Western countries seeking to change the status quo in Lebanon and, equally important, should emphasize that any strategy put forward to counter Hezbollah should be executed through Gulf states, rather than Western countries.

The United States needs to develop a Middle East strategy focused on countering Iran. The Obama administration in many ways enabled Hezbollah to expand its operation in the region. Invoking United Nation Security Council Resolution 1701, applying financial pressure, and restarting the "March 14" political apparatus are effective tools in limiting Hezbollah's regional status. The Lebanese people will soon realize that the cause of their troubles is not the U.S. or other foreign actors, but rather Hezbollah.



Saad Hariri announcing his resignation from Riyadh

Syria and pursuing a punishing air campaign against the Houthis in Yemen. Along with regional and international allies, Saudi Arabia views Lebanon as an opportunity to curb Iran's influence. Lebanon has become a huge priority because Hezbollah, backed financially and militarily by Iran, has its hand in nearly every conflict throughout the region. At the same time, Saudi Arabia, under the aggressive direction of newly crowned Prince Mohammad bin Salman, is undergoing major reform domestically and will need the assistance of its Gulf and international allies to ensure a successful outcome in Lebanon.

An understanding of Lebanon's current condition is essential to recognize the difficulty inherent in this task.

Let's Be Real

By Michelle Naim

There are two things that I've vowed to stay true to and which I believe are integral to relationships. Two things that I believe are so important, especially for us, as college students, to consider and ponder when we are creating crucial, and possibly life-long, relationships. These include, but are not limited to, relationships with our peers, professors, significant others, and, most importantly, ourselves. When speaking about relationships, one word is constantly thrown around: communication. But really I believe that communication boils down to two

fundamental truths: honesty and trust. See, when we are honest with ourselves, no matter how painful the truth may be, we begin to trust our judgment more and more. This gives us the confidence to trust ourselves when we are faced with challenging decisions throughout our lives.

I began thinking about these two pillars of relationships when I realized, through my own experiences, how secretive and ashamed people are regarding where they come from and who they are, just because they fear that others would judge them. For example, Jane (for the purposes of this article I am changing names) came from a family in which her parents did not keep Shabbat or the laws of *Kashrut*.

She, however, had chosen a life that moved her closer to *halacha* and Torah. Every time I spoke to Jane she would tell me her worries about dating, and her fear of telling her boyfriend that her parents were not observant. What if no one accepted her because of her background?

Another one of my friends, Melissa, dealt with a similar issue. When I was discussing dating with Melissa, I asked why she believed she had not found her significant other yet. She replied that it must have been because her mother

SEE REAL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

Exploring Dennis Prager's Implications

By Nechama Lowy

On November 8, a post appeared in YU Marketplace with the headline: "SNOWFLAKES BEWARE: White male coming to campus!" A satirical post, no doubt, yet one that resonated enough to encourage me to attend Dennis Prager's speech, hosted by YU's Young America's Foundation and the Yeshiva College Republicans. Prager, deemed an academic scholar by the YAF chairman, brought in a room full of Yeshiva University students, both male and female, in what was promised to be an eye-opening and intellectual night.

In order to familiarize myself with Prager's beliefs, I spent hours watching a multitude of his videos and browsing his website to ensure I was somewhat prepared for his speech. Being aware of the high probability that I would disagree with most of his content, I sat anxiously awaiting his "reasonable" and "broad range of viewpoints" that would "expand my political horizons," as stated in an op-ed published recently in *The Commentator*. However, no amount of background knowledge could have prepared me for his aggressive speech, which encouraged hatred towards what he called "The Left," rather than intellectual educational discourse. Knowing the Yeshiva crowd that he was addressing, Prager ensured to fit words of Torah within his speech as often as possible. Among his many statements, Prager spoke about women's lack of ability to have meaningless sex, the universal, inherent desire within women to be seen as a sex object by her husband, and the women's "mitzvah" to have sex with their spouse, regardless of their "mood." He even went so far as to compare the women's obligation to sexually please her partner to his fourth grade religious prayer crisis: Your mood does not matter, because it is a *mitzvah*. Obligation overrides emotion.

While preaching such an idea about their sexual obligation to a crowd of both men and women is a problem within itself, as the Torah is a lot more complex and nuanced in regards to sexual obligations than Prager made it out to be, the focus of my distaste was on his assertive opinion as to what women want.

After his main presentation, during the question and answer session, I questioned his seemingly contradictory statements. How can it be that women want to be viewed as sex objects by their husbands, while, at the same time and as much as females love being treated as such, we also cannot sleep around or have meaningless sex. Without a substantial answer, Dennis Prager addressed me, personally, and stated, "I have no doubt at all that a woman would like her husband to think of her as a sex object," predicating this belief on the notion that he "has never heard in [his] life from a woman" that "my husband doesn't see me ever as a sex object and I'm thrilled." When I offered my objections on the basis that I, a woman, do not want to be viewed as a sex object, he merely questioned whether I was married, as if my spousal status was the deciding factor on my desires.

There is no positive or admirable definition of the term

"sex object." Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as "a person regarded especially exclusively as an object of sexual interest," and Dictionary.com gives a similar definition of "a person viewed as being of little interest or merit beyond the potential for providing sexual gratification." One does not have to be married to fathom how being viewed in such a crass and dehumanizing way is unwarranted and undesirable.

"SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION IS NOT BOUND TO MARRIAGE AND IT NEVER WILL BE. IT IS, SIMPLY PUT, A STATE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE, WHERE ONE FEELS THE NEED TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER THE OTHER."

Over the past few weeks, there has been speculation that perhaps Prager does not truly understand the meaning of sex object, confusing it with the term "sexy." How this helps justify his behavior, I am not sure, since that would imply he is simply uneducated on the topics he discusses. Regardless, the greater issue that lies at hand is Prager's ignorance, his complete denial of the movement initiated by women, demanding to be treated as more than sexual objects for men's gratification.

All one needs to do is scroll through social media to see the seemingly endless statuses of #MeToo, a worldwide sexual assault awareness campaign, jump-started by actress Alyssa Milano. These days, it is too often that a news headline will read of a once rich, powerful, and loved celebrity being fired or arrested on the basis of sexual

assault. In just a few weeks, Harvey Weinstein went from being a successful movie producer to a shunned suspect and Roy Moore, who was considered a shoe-in for the Alabama Senate, lost the recent election due to sexual allegations as well.

Women, everywhere, are asserting their rights to be valued for more than just their "alluring breasts," as Mr. Prager phrased it, and to be respected and adhered to. It is shameful and disappointing that Mr. Prager demands a married woman approach him and claim she does not want to be viewed as a sex object by her husband in order for him to cease this harmful declaration. Furthermore, his statement that I, as a woman, cannot speak on the topic of sexuality because I am not married leads to serious implications regarding the YU student body. Mr. Prager is being naive if he assumes that the only sexual activity on the YU campus is within a state of marriage.

Similar to any other college campus, YU has its share of couples, dates, and romances, as well as a hookup culture. I do not state that with negative connotations, nor do I wish to detail specifics, as it is not my business nor anyone else's. However, it is important to make the point as the fine line between sexual activity and sexual objectification is often a dangerous one. Sexual activity is fine. As long as the relationship is consensual, it is healthy and normal. Sexual objectification is not on that level, and for good reason. Viewing the other party in the relationship as nothing more than an object for one's gratification lowers their status in the relationship, allowing them to be dehumanized and disrespected, while the other party remains in control.

Mr. Prager is wrong. Sexual objectification is not bound to marriage and it never will be. It is, simply put, a state between two people, where one feels the need to maintain control over the other. A state that will not be eliminated until it is not only acknowledged, but condemned.



REAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

did not cover her hair, and people judged her based on that. There are many factions of Judaism that do this - even in our seemingly open-minded "modern orthodox" community. However, we must realize that just because one's family acts one way, does not mean that the child will automatically follow the same path. One should not make the judgement with that person until that conversation has been had. By doing so, not only is it a judgment on that one mitzvah, but it is a judgement on that person's Judaism and hashkafa as a whole.

A similar situation was the case with Charlie. When his friends asked him what happened with that girl he was dating seriously, he answered that his Rav didn't approve of her so they broke up. I look at this last example and wonder why someone else gets to make the call of who one is going to marry. The only person that is going to live with your significant other is you. It is integral to our development as college students and decision makers to own our lives, to stop letting our parents or Rav dictate our futures. I'm not saying not to take other people's advice or to keep your ears closed to the voices and opinions of

others. But you, and only you, decide your destiny.

Shadchanim want to know who your parents are, what you look like, your GPA, and how much money you have before they want to know *you*. I know that everyone hates the system, but what I cannot understand is why they are feeding into it. Don't like *shidduch* resumes? Don't make one. Don't like the coffee-on-the-first-date rule? Go play

"FINDING A PERSON TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE WITH HAS BECOME MORE LIKE SHOPPING FOR A NEW CAR AT THE CAR DEALERSHIP THAN THE HUMANE AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT IT SHOULD BE."

pool. Don't want to have someone be the in-between so that they can break up with the person you're going out

with so that you don't have to hurt them? Break up with someone the old-fashioned way (oh, and for the love of God, don't give them a stupid excuse why). Finding a person to spend the rest of your life with has become more like shopping for a new car at the car dealership than the humane and personal experience that it should be. I don't know about everyone else, but I'd rather live my life living by the mistakes that *I* made instead of making the wrong choices others chose for me.

The point is, we all started somewhere and, although the world around us tries to create a perfect image of what every Jew *should* look like, the reality is that no one is perfect. We all have thoughts, questions, and doubts. That's what makes us human, and that's what unites us. So next time we meet someone, let's not push them away because they don't check every box of what the "perfect Jew" looks like. Let us listen to their story because something can be learned from everyone. Everyone has a story. Find yours and share it. Proudly.

If I Recognize Thee, O Jerusalem

By David Aaronson

Earlier this month, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and that he would begin the process of relocating the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In doing so, the president won the praise of many in the Orthodox Jewish and Evangelical Christian communities in the United States, as well as Republicans and Democrats in Congress.

In addition to being applauded by Israel and its leaders, Trump's announcement was also welcomed by the Czech Republic, which has vowed to follow suit and relocate its embassy in Israel as well. Previous U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama had promised to do the same, but never followed through. Trump's campaign promise, however, might just have a different fate.

In making this announcement, the president used very vague terminology. He did not say "West Jerusalem," nor did he say "a united Jerusalem." He simply said "Jerusalem." This use of ambiguity was done on purpose, so as not to prejudge the outcome of the conflict.

Had Trump said "West Jerusalem," it would have implied that in a final agreement, Israel would have to surrender its sovereignty over Jewish sites like the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, or the Jewish neighborhoods of Gilo, Ramat Shlomo, and Pisgat Ze'ev. Had he said "a united Jerusalem," it would have implied that in a final agreement, a future Palestinian state would not be allowed sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods such as Shuafat, Silwan, and Wadi Joz. By simply saying "Jerusalem," President Trump is allowing Israelis and Palestinians to define the meaning of "Jerusalem" by working together in future peace negotiations to decide the city's final borders.

Many view Trump's decision as wrong, controversial, and alarming. Others view it as courageous, heroic, and prophetic. I disagree with both these notions. In my view, this decision simply recognizes reality; no more, and no less. It recognizes the reality that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel, religiously, historically, and legally. It recognizes the reality that Jerusalem has never been the capital of any other nation other than the nation of Israel.

Religiously, Jerusalem is the city where our patriarchs prayed, where our prophets preached, where our kings ruled, and where our temples stood.

In daily prayer services, we say: "Blessed are You Who Rebuilds Jerusalem." At Jewish weddings, we sing: "If I

forget thee, o Jerusalem." And at Passover seders, we proclaim: "Next year in Jerusalem." Jerusalem is the focal point of nearly all Jewish fast days. It is mentioned more than six hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, and it is the direction of prayer for all Jews around the world. The Talmud teaches that of the ten measures of beauty that descended upon the world, nine were taken by Jerusalem.

"IN MY VIEW, THIS DECISION SIMPLY RECOGNIZES REALITY; NO MORE, AND NO LESS. IT RECOGNIZES THE REALITY THAT JERUSALEM IS THE ETERNAL CAPITAL OF ISRAEL, RELIGIOUSLY, HISTORICALLY, AND LEGALLY."

Historically, of all the peoples who conquered and ruled Jerusalem, only one of them made it their capital:

- Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and ruled over it for many years. Yet he never made Jerusalem his capital, but instead chose to keep his capital in Babylon.

- Titus conquered Jerusalem and ruled over it for many years. Yet he never made Jerusalem his capital, but instead chose to keep his capital in Rome.

- The Ottomans conquered Jerusalem and ruled over it for many years. Yet they never made Jerusalem their capital, but instead chose to keep their capital in Constantinople.

- The British conquered Jerusalem and ruled over it for many years. Yet they never made Jerusalem their capital, but instead chose to keep their capital in London.

- The Jordanians conquered Jerusalem and ruled over it for many years. Yet they never made Jerusalem their capital, but instead chose to keep their capital in Amman.

The Jewish people also conquered Jerusalem and ruled over it for many years, both under the ancient Kingdom of Israel and under the modern State of Israel. And in both cases they made Jerusalem their capital for all of eternity.

Legally, Jerusalem was promised to the Jewish people under the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which was ratified and approved by a majority vote in the League of Nations.

The western half of Jerusalem was won over by Israel in 1949 and the eastern half was won over by Israel in 1967, both in legal wars of self-defense. In implementing the Jerusalem Annexation Act of 1980, passed by the Israeli Knesset, Jerusalem was formally incorporated into greater Israel, and all of its Arab residents were given the legal right to receive full citizenship.

Under Israeli rule, all faiths worship freely in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, passed by the U.S. Congress, requires the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The six-month waiver included in that law only permits delays moving the embassy; it does not allow for delaying the formal recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

While there is religious, historical, and legal evidence that clearly supports the president's decision, it still is only a unilateral declaration. Without any subsequent physical action, this unilateral declaration can easily be overturned by a future U.S. president whose administration might not recognize this reality.

On the other hand, physical relocation of the embassy would be much harder for a future administration to overturn. This is mainly because relocating an embassy back to Tel Aviv would be costly, as there is no federal budget allocation for this. Furthermore, it would also be deemed illegal under the Jerusalem Embassy Act.

The president's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital is a step in the right direction. If President Trump is serious about this decision, he should immediately match his words with actions. One idea would be to allow U.S. citizens to list "Jerusalem, Israel" on their passports, rather than just "Jerusalem."

While an actual embassy building will take some time to be built, the president can begin the process of relocation today. He can begin by having the U.S. ambassador and his staff work from a temporary office in one of the U.S. Government's four existing buildings in Jerusalem. Due to lack of space, the rest of the embassy staff would remain behind in Tel Aviv until construction is completed.

Moving the ambassador's office to Jerusalem, rather than the full embassy itself, would be a strong first step in this lengthy process. Certainly, the full relocation should be scheduled for completion no later than November 3, 2020, when the president is up for re-election. On that date, he will be held accountable for any promises on which he failed to deliver.

As of today, the president has not fully fulfilled his promise. But his recognition of reality is a good start.



Clash of Cultures: Facebook and Apple

By Yael Itskowitz

In today's competitive economic environment, companies need to find new innovative ways to differentiate themselves. How can they be more efficient, profitable, and successful overall? Developing a unique company culture has become an effective corporate strategy. Culture is the beating heart of a company. It's what drives employees to find meaning and inspiration in their job. Company culture includes a variety of elements, including work environment, company mission, value, ethics, expectations, and goals. Furthermore, the culture directs a company in challenging times and acts as the

“CULTURE IS THE BEATING HEART OF A COMPANY, IT IS WHAT DRIVES EMPLOYEES TO FIND MEANING AND INSPIRATION IN THEIR JOB.”

guiding principles for it to live by. Interestingly, whether management carefully crafts one or not, company culture will develop on its own. In order to be a successful business, it is vital for the company environment to synthesize with the work and mission it hopes to achieve.

Over the years, there have been many success stories and failures due to the intangible element of company culture. Facebook and Apple are two companies that have successfully harnessed this intangible asset in different ways, in order to elevate and differentiate themselves in their respective industries. Facebook is one of the most successful social media platforms, with approximately one employee for every 200,000 users. By fostering growth in their employees, Facebook increases creativity and promotes excellence. Since the beginning, Mark

Zuckerberg understood the importance of setting the tone for his company and promoting a culture of being creative, daring, unafraid, and “thinking outside the box.” Facebook's primary mission is to “make the world more open and connected.” In order to achieve this goal, the environment of the workspace must match the initiative. For example, Facebook offers its employees numerous amenities including an abundance of food, stock-option based compensation, open office space, on-site laundry, a focus on teamwork and open communication, and a competitive atmosphere that fosters personal growth and learning. The employees understand that it is acceptable to make mistakes as long as they learn from them and progress forward. Facebook truly values experimentation as opposed to simply striving for perfection.

Facebook's culture is starkly different from that of Apple. The culture at Apple has a direct correlation with the determinant factors of its success. At Apple, they strive for perfection and nothing less. This approach to company culture has worked well for Apple, which continues to produce top of the line technology and is at the cutting edge of innovation. The employees hired at Apple are picked from the “cream of the crop” and they are dedicated to working towards perfection. Unlike Facebook, you won't find signs that say “What would you do if you weren't afraid?” or “Done is better than perfect.” Apple has a track record of taking things that were already invented and trying to “do it better.” The fast-paced environment translates into the high speed innovation of their products.

In addition, company culture can make or break mergers and acquisitions. For example, AOL and Time Warner decided to merge in 2000 and it became one of the worst mergers of all time due to the clash of each party's culture. The two distinct organizations could not synthesize the old media and new media culture. The lawyers and investment bankers involved in the merger did their due diligence in assessing the success of combining the two companies theoretically but did not take into account the strikingly different cultures of

the two companies.

A Fortune Magazine article wrote “The aggressive and, many said, arrogant AOL people horrified the more staid and corporate Time Warner side. Cooperation and promised synergies failed to materialize as mutual disrespect came to color their relationships”

The bottom line is that companies today need to understand more than just the formal organizational structure of their business. They must devote time and effort in creating a growth oriented and productive informal environment that synthesizes accordingly with their mission statement. Not only will this give them a competitive advantage over its competitors, but a good company culture can provide the necessary incentives for each employee to excel in their work. Where there is passion there is power. Companies can use this power to push themselves to new heights and workplace culture is the power source.



Cryptocurrency Club Looks to Educate YU Community

By Daniel Elias

After dark, a mysterious man in a hooded sweatshirt walks out from a dark subway tunnel. He meets with someone who is waiting impatiently with his laptop. Seconds later, he slips him a brown paper bag. They hastily shake hands and leave through separate exits. The sketchy sale, of course, was conducted through Bitcoin.

In the past year, Bitcoin has become extremely popular and is something Yosef Kerendian, the founder and president of the Cryptocurrency Club at Yeshiva University, took advantage of. The Cryptocurrency Club here at Yeshiva University aims to make Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies a known concept around campus. Its mission is to inform students and businesses about the benefits of accepting different cryptocurrencies and their underlying technologies. The club plans to meet at least once a month to discuss new discoveries and news about cryptocurrencies. Kerendian also hopes to bring in speakers and investors to tell their stories, so that students can learn how to get involved.

In a discussion with Kerendian, I asked him about the benefits of Bitcoin. He explained that “Bitcoin users have the opportunity to exchange their coins instantly with the touch of a button, anywhere in the world.” He clarified that “one of its many advantages is that even face-to-face trades must be completed through an electronic device.”

Kerendian started researching and learning about Bitcoin in the summer of 2014 and founded the Cryptocurrency Club after tremendous growth in value of cryptocurrencies. “I overheard a peer of mine making some great points about Bitcoin and immediately decided to meet up with him and discuss some of our thoughts on cryptocurrency,” said Menajem Benchimol, VP of the Cryptocurrency Club. “The meeting was a success and we decided to form the club.”

Kerendian quickly notified the students at Yeshiva University and explained how Bitcoin works. Bitcoin is

known to be very mysterious. Most people know it can be used to buy things on the dark web, and therefore associate it with fraud. One of our clubs' goals is to inform people that Bitcoin can be used to buy daily necessities from websites like Overstock.com and Dell.com, and also to buy gift cards from Gyft.com. “As Bitcoin becomes an essential part of day-to-day life, it's important that the students and businesses around Washington Heights and all around NYC become aware of its many benefits,” said Kerendian. “Paper money will fade and die, and eventually there will only be one cryptocurrency which will run the world's money supply.”

A mysterious character known by the name Satoshi Nakamoto invented the first cryptocurrency, Bitcoin. As people began to realize that Bitcoin's initial investors were profiting from this phenomenon, interest grew in the cryptocurrency. Satoshi Nakamoto, as it turns out, is a totally fictitious name and the true identity of the inventor remains unknown. This only adds to the allure of Bitcoin. Users can buy bitcoin online for a hefty price, or “mine” the currency, which is a complicated process involving Blockchains. Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Ethereum, and Litecoin exist through a blockchain, which is an increasing list of blocks that keeps records of documents secured through cryptography. All transactions of cryptocurrency are logged in the blockchain, which provides readable access to the documents of the cryptocurrency. The blockchain is controlled by miners, who use their own software to “mine” the coins. They work to update the blockchain after every transaction occurs and to also authenticate transactions. Most miners get paid for their work in Bitcoin.

Another reason Bitcoin has become so valuable is because it is not regulated by any central government or superpower. It functions through its miners and contributors. When Bitcoin was first developed by Nakamoto, it had very little monetary value. Today, you will often overhear people fantasizing about how different

their lives would be had they owned just a few dollars' worth of Bitcoin in 2010. Less than 7 years ago, Bitcoin was worth \$0.06. Today it is worth over \$17,000. One quality of Bitcoin is that it can be exchanged for any currency with a few swipes on your smartphone.

Students here at Yeshiva University can benefit from cryptocurrency. Students from abroad have been subject to heavy transaction fees for USD which accumulate over time. Bitcoin, on the other hand, eliminates fees and is processed instantly.

“ITS MISSION IS TO INFORM STUDENTS AND BUSINESSES ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF ACCEPTING DIFFERENT CRYPTOCURRENCIES AND THEIR UNDERLYING TECHNOLOGIES.”

“Most store owners in Washington Heights refuse to use Bitcoin,” said Kerendian. “Part of the reason is because they don't really know what cryptocurrency is. In addition to educating our campus, a goal of our club is to inform different businesses in Washington Heights of the many advantages of accepting Bitcoin in addition to cash.” A perk of accepting Bitcoin through Coinbase is that there is no fee per transaction. Store owners can turn their Bitcoins into dollars instantaneously, which is more efficient than accepting credit and incurring fees.

*SEE CRYPTOCURRENCY CLUB,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 30*

Student Perspective: The Argument For and Against Cryptocurrency Investing

By Aaron Karesh

With the rise in popularity of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies in recent months, it is no surprise that there is a community of students at Yeshiva University who are either invested in the volatile marketplace, interested in learning more about it, or both. Some of these students are members of the new CryptoCurrency Club, while others are investing based on their own research and “feeling” as to how the market will move. Either way, it is a risky investment, and those who put money into the market should have zero expectations as far as seeing a return on their principal. While the value of bitcoin has shot up from just under \$7,000 per coin, and seen movements upwards of \$16,000 per coin, and back down to around \$14,500 in under one month, there are many skeptics — a notable one being Jamie Dimon, CEO of J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. — calling it a “fraud,” and those who invest in it “stupid.” Whether these claims are substantiated or not is still up for debate, but one thing is certain: the debate over whether cryptocurrency is raging hard, with very vocal supporters and detractors on campus.

Yosef Kerendian is a senior in Sy Syms studying finance and management, and is also the President of the YU CryptoCurrency Club. Their mission is to “inform students and businesses about the benefits of Bitcoin, Blockchain, Ethereum, and other cryptocurrencies and technologies.” Principal activities involve meeting to discuss bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, as well as bringing in speakers and investors to hear their stories and learn from them. In addition to meetings and events, Kerendian has taken it upon himself to keep his forty three club members informed by sending out bi-weekly updates on the state of cryptocurrency. Seeing as the value of all cryptocurrencies — particularly bitcoin — is so volatile, these newsletters are never the same, and always packed with fresh information for the club members.

Kerendian began researching bitcoin in the summer of 2014, and became hooked while ordering breakfast at a Coffee Bean in Los Angeles: “I met an older individual who bought and sold cryptocurrencies on a daily basis. He introduced me to Bitcoin and told me about the benefits to investing in it; I wish I remembered who he was. I started investing in September of 2017 with money I had made from a summer internship, and continue to this day.” While from the outside looking in it is easy for one to think “of course you’ve stayed in it until today, the value has more than doubled since you started investing,” it is important to realize how much of an impact the fluctuation of value can have on an investor. Few people who invested significant amounts of capital in bitcoin, would be able to stomach the financial rollercoaster, technically known as volatility, that is the bitcoin marketplace. Meanwhile, the introduction of bitcoin futures trading by Cboe Global Markets and CME Group may bring bitcoin into the mainstream investor portfolio — even this is merely conjecture — it will not do much to tame the sharp increases and decreases in value investors deal with on an hourly basis.

Kerendian is not your typical cryptocurrency investor. While I believe that the value of bitcoin and the other cryptocurrencies lies not in the currency itself, but in the potential the underlying blockchain system has to transform financial services as we know it, Kerendian believes strongly in the future of cryptocurrencies themselves: “Paper money will fade and die, and there will be only one cryptocurrency. Maybe it’ll be bitcoin, maybe it’ll be something else, but here’s how the ‘money system’ will work: There will be one universal digital currency, say bitcoin. People will use bitcoin to make everyday purchases, everyone will get paid in bitcoin.” The list goes on, but for the sake of brevity, I’ll give you the gist of it: everyone in the entire world will be using bitcoin, or some other cryptocurrency, for every single thing they do. Like Kerendian said, “paper money will die,” and cryptocurrency will be there to pick up the pieces.

While declining to share his exact returns to date — “they are somewhere in the two-to-three digit range” — Kerendian did share his cryptocurrency portfolio breakdown. In addition to trading a more typical asset class, stocks, through Robinhood, an app that allows customers to buy and sell U.S. listed stocks and ETFs with \$0 commission, Kerendian’s crypto-portfolio is made up

of about 60% Litecoin, 20% Bitcoin, 15% Ethereum, and 5% Ripple. Bitcoin is by far and away the most popular cryptocurrency to the public eye, followed by Ethereum and Litecoin. Neither of the latter two are valued anywhere near as high as the former, which is why Kerendian has invested in it. He believes that the value of Litecoin, like

“ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, CRYPTOCURRENCIES’ DEMISE IS INEVITABLE — BOTH AS A POTENTIAL CURRENCY AND AS AN INVESTMENT.”

Bitcoin, has the potential to skyrocket, and is therefore significantly undervalued.

Not only does Kerendian fundamentally believe in the future of cryptocurrencies as a universal currency, but he also has the stomach to handle the volatility associated with investing: “There is no uncertainty. Cryptocurrency is the future, and it will revolutionize the entire money system. The volatility makes for an interesting ride, and keeps me on my toes. Many like to stash their money in a traditional exchange traded fund maybe bury it in an index fund. I embrace risk and chase after it. It’s who I am. It’s my personality.”

While Kerendian, in a blog post on Quora, acknowledges that bitcoin may in fact be a bubble, he believes that it is not too late, nor too risky, to invest in the bitcoin market: “Is bitcoin a bubble, maybe. Maybe not. But here’s one piece of advice that goes a long way: The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

Eli Weiss is a junior in Sy Syms studying BIMA and finance; unlike Yosef Kerendian, he is extremely skeptical of the cryptocurrency market. Weiss began researching cryptocurrencies at the beginning of the semester, and has come to the conclusion that while there is certainly upside, it is not worth investing in the cryptocurrency market: “If you could ride the wave while it’s going up, then you can make a lot of money on the investment, but it’s important to know that it’s a bubble; for me, it’s not worth the risk. I wouldn’t touch something that volatile.”

Cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin are only as valuable as the market perceives them to be at a given point in time. At this point in time, there is very little — if any — inherent, tangible value to these digital coins, which is why we have seen the value skyrocket in the past few months; it is also what will lead to the popping of this cryptocurrency bubble. Proponents argue that this is not a bubble, and that it is not reminiscent of the tulip mania, the tech bubble, or the housing bubble. While Wall Street has made very clear the belief that cryptocurrencies are currently in a bubble, there are some who have struck gold by investing in bitcoin. When asked what he thought about the Winklevoss twins — infamous for suing Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg for taking their idea for a social media platform and turning it into what is now Facebook, and the most well known of the few “Bitcoin Billionaires”, publicly daring bitcoin skeptic and J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. CEO Jamie Dimon to short bitcoin, Weiss merely responded with “that’s funny because Jamie Dimon would never do that.” He has a point. While a skeptic, he acknowledges that shorting Bitcoin right now would come with a mountain of risk and potential to lose a large sum of money. He would,

however, purchase options to short Bitcoin: “I’d consider putting in around \$500 — enough to garner a significant return should the bubble pop when I expect it too, but not so much as to bet my portfolio on it — to buy options to short Bitcoin.”

While he is considering adding an option to short Bitcoin to his investment portfolio, for the time being, Weiss’s portfolio consists of traditional equities such as General Electric (GE) and Bank of America (BAC), two stocks which represent nearly everything that Bitcoin is not: stability and reliability, even when their stock price is down. For example, GE’s stock price is down 44% year-to-date, but historically speaking they have been a steady performer, and their decrease in value this year is due to a myriad of tangible factors. Bitcoin, on the other hand, is up more than 2,000% year-to-date, but its value is linked to nothing but public perception — a factor that can change in an instant, thereby leading to a decrease in the value of Bitcoin.

Recently, Cboe Global Markets and CME Group introduced Bitcoin futures, in an effort to stabilize the value of Bitcoin; it has not worked out that way: “We didn’t think there was going to be anything more volatile than Bitcoin; then we invented futures for Bitcoin,” Weiss said. It is interesting to note that while he acknowledges the volatility of the Bitcoin futures market, Weiss still believes that it is the safest way to make money on Bitcoin. A contrarian approach, maybe, but a valid one nonetheless — one that if timed correctly could yield higher returns than buying the cryptocurrency.

Weiss is not only a skeptic of cryptocurrency investing, but a disbeliever in the practical use of bitcoin, or any other cryptocurrency for that matter, as a true means of transaction. While Kerendian believes that there will one day be a single global cryptocurrency used for everything, Weiss believes that the idea of bitcoin becoming the currency for the entire world is “crazy”: “Cryptocurrencies are a great way for governments or high net-worth individuals who need additional security in their transactions to go about conducting business, but it is not there yet in terms of being a viable currency in its own right.” Weiss argued this point based on many factors, most importantly the inflated value of bitcoin in addition to the necessary regulation required should bitcoin or any other cryptocurrency become the globally accepted currency. While he was willing to admit that the future of transactions will be based on the blockchain technology — a digital ledger upon which cryptocurrencies are built — Weiss is not of the opinion that cryptocurrencies, even in their potentially ubiquitous form, are here to stay. Just like the gold-backed dollar was replaced by a currency that is only valuable because governments deemed them so, so too cryptocurrencies will eventually be replaced by something else. Neither Weiss, myself, or anyone else is in a position to say what that will be, but one way or another, cryptocurrencies’ demise is inevitable — both as a potential currency and as an investment.



YUIBS: Establishing YU's name on Wall Street

By Ezra Berman

Landing a job at an Investment Bank on Wall Street is one of the most difficult tasks to achieve as a college student. This is because students from the top universities across the United States are competing for such a small number of spots. Fortunately for Yeshiva University students, about three years ago Eyal Greenberg, a Yeshiva University alumnus, and former Goldman Sachs investment banker, started the Yeshiva University Investment Banking Society, also known as YUIBS. In short, the goal of the society is to provide a select group of students mentorship, advice, and learning materials that will help prepare them to land one of these lucrative and highly sought after jobs.

Although at first students may not recognize it, being a part of the Investment Banking Society is a tremendous opportunity. Since its inception in 2014, the society has grown not only by the number of students involved, but also by the number of alumni on Wall Street who recognize the success of the organization. This past recruiting season, the Investment Banking Society had its best year since its creation with members landing elite jobs at both bulge bracket and boutique investment banks such as Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Citi, RBC, Barclays, and Moelis.

When asked about YUIBS moving forward, one of the current president's, Michael Klein said: "YUIBS's game plan is to continue to help students break into the top firms on Wall Street. Every year we get more and more successful, and the future is extremely promising. As YU continues to improve its reputation on Wall Street, our acceptance rates should hopefully continue to skyrocket."

In order to further understand the success of the club it is important to outline how difficult it is to land an investment banking job on Wall Street. To put this into perspective, according to Bloomberg, Harvard University applicants who apply for an investment banking job have an acceptance rate of about 5.4%, while the acceptance rate of an elite firm on Wall Street is about 2%.

Despite the enormous challenge, the society has been able to be so successful is in large part due to YU alumni paying it forward.

After signing a full time offer at Houlihan Lokey, one of the top boutique banks, current Co-President Matthew

Stadtmauer said: "I would not have been able to procure the job I did without the help of the Investment Banking Society. Therefore, when given the opportunity, the least I could do is give back and help the current members. We are all one family, and possess the same background, and it would be my greatest pleasure to give back in any way possible."

This type of mentality is essential for the success of the society as current alumni in investment banking can provide valuable insight and mentorship to current YUIBS members.

Furthermore, the Investment Banking Society organizes

"THIS PAST RECRUITING SEASON, THE INVESTMENT BANKING SOCIETY HAD ITS BEST YEAR SINCE ITS CREATION WITH MEMBERS LANDING ELITE JOBS AT BOTH BULGE BRACKET AND BOUTIQUE INVESTMENT BANKS."

a number of exclusive events throughout the year. Last spring, YUIBS hosted an event with Henry Kressel, a Partner and Senior Managing Director at Warburg Pincus,

a major private equity firm. This fall, YUIBS members were invited to attend an exclusive panel hosted by Daniel Posner, Chief Investment Officer and Co-Founder of the Alliance Bernstein Energy Opportunity Fund. As a part of this panel YUIBS members got to hear from Gregg Felton, Managing Partner at Altus Power America, Eric Gribetz, Partner at Pegasus Capital Advisors, and Simon Brookim, Senior Analyst at Owl Creek Asset Management.

Opportunities like these are not available in an ordinary club at YU, and ultimately these exclusive events provide members of the society with the ability to learn from, and interact with leaders on Wall Street.

As an exclusive club on campus, the process of being admitted to YUIBS is similar to the application process of investment banks. Students that are interested in joining the society are required to submit their resume, and pass a series of interviews conducted by the YUIBS's current presidents and alumni currently working on Wall Street. While that process might seem overwhelming, investment bankers can often work 100+ hour weeks. The rigorous application process allows YUIBS to focus on attracting the brightest and hardest working business majors at Yeshiva University. This exclusivity has perhaps led to the success of the club as this year 90% of members received internship offers, which will hopefully lead to full-time offers.

As YUIBS continues to have success and help YU students find their way into Wall Street, it undoubtedly will benefit future society members.



Career Corner: Job Hunting over Winter Break

By Dana Simpson

So, it's winter break. That means it's time to binge watch your favorite Netflix show, catch up with friends, and of course, sleep until noon. But this vacation can also

"REVOLUTIONIZING THE INDUSTRY AND SPARKING EXCITEMENT IN LISTENERS WORLDWIDE, SPOTIFY IS GIVING MUSIC ENTHUSIASTS SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT!"

be the time to get a head start on the "Job Search."

Ah, the Job Search. Those two small words can seem overwhelming. It's especially difficult to manage and may cause unnecessary stress when you are busy with classes AND looking for a job. Below is a list that can help you organize your time effectively and ensure you meet your job search goals.

1. Work on your LinkedIn Profile and Activity

LinkedIn is a social networking website open to anyone, including students, employers, recruiters, independent workers, and professionals outside of the workforce, who want to look for a job, uncover new opportunities and network. When I ask students why they don't have a LinkedIn profile, they often respond that "LinkedIn is for 30 year olds and people who have already been in the professional world for several years." This is just not true. Use LinkedIn to research companies, connect with professionals and Yeshiva University alumni, and apply

for jobs. Over winter break, here's how you can easily improve your LinkedIn profile and use this platform:

a. Add to your "summary" section the type of internship/full-time role you are seeking! This way, people you connect with can easily identify what you're interested in, and recruiters can find you in a candidate search.

b. Add skills, articles you've published, media you've created, your profile photo, relevant coursework and academic work, and any volunteer/leadership experience you have. And of course, add any relevant work experience.

c. "Follow" companies and relevant people on LinkedIn to stay on top of industry and company news (which you can also use as talking points in interviews). This also allows you to see other professionals who "follow" the groups you join.

d. Browse the profiles of professionals and YU alumni with whom you want to connect.. This allows you to learn more about their day-to-day responsibilities and enables you to gather more information on career trajectories and companies.

Your profile has to exist to allow you to connect with people! 93% of recruiters today use LinkedIn. It's a tool that should be utilized by all college students even if graduate school is the next step in one's career.

2. Set up Informational Interviews

An informational interview is an opportunity to speak to a professional and gather and seek information about a company, role, and industry. You can do this with neighbors, people in your community, friends of friends, and of course, with professionals on LinkedIn. Conducting an informational interview requires that you prepare ahead of time.

a. Target 3-5 people you want to speak with and send a message/email to share a little about who you are, and

why you are interested in connecting with them. Have a specific topic/question in mind and elaborate on why you want to speak with them. You don't want to ask someone for a job outright, but you can say something like, "I see you have worked in XYZ and I would love to learn more about your day-to-day job," OR "I see you've been a X. How did you make the transition into Y, which is something I am interested in pursuing?"

b. Once you have a date set up, think through the purpose of your call/meeting. You lead the direction of the meeting to gain the insights you seek.

c. You can end the conversation with a question like "With whom might you recommend I speak to get even more information on this industry?" This way, you can show your interest in learning more, and continue to network and broaden your connections in industry.

d. Send a follow up thank you email. Note something you learned and found particularly helpful or insightful from the conversation. If relevant, follow up in a few weeks to speak or meet again to maintain the relationship and connection.

The Career Center can help set up meetings like this, too. **If you are going home to another state, this can be a particularly good use of your time if you are looking to intern out of NYC and you can connect with these people in person while you're home.**

3. Keep track of job prospects

It's important to stay hyper-organized in your job search. Keep a file on your job applications, contacts at each firm, follow-ups, job status, interviews, and more! This way, you can ensure you don't miss out on any

SEE CAREER CORNER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

Turn It Up: Spotify Clicks Play On The Music Industry

By Akiva Frishman

As an over-enthusiastic subscriber, “Follow me on Spotify” is a polite request I make of all acquaintances and a forceful demand of anyone even minimally connected. But no, this article is not intended to be a shameless plug aimed at expanding my social-musical network. Please, 70 followers are plenty. Instead, my near-obsession

“REVOLUTIONIZING THE INDUSTRY AND SPARKING EXCITEMENT IN LISTENERS WORLDWIDE, SPOTIFY IS GIVING MUSIC ENTHUSIASTS SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT.”

with Spotify has all but compelled me to go backstage to determine both the factors that have contributed to the streaming platform’s extraordinary success as well as how its growth is inextricably linked to the revitalization of the music industry.

Spotify’s development follows a troubling period for the music industry. While the tech-boom brought with it many winners, it was detrimental for artists and label corporations; the rise of the internet led to a proliferation of pirated music and services like iTunes encouraged listeners to abandon complete album purchases in exchange for single, 99 cent downloads. Indeed, according to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) the music industry’s revenue plummeted 66 percent from \$13.7B in 1998 to a mere \$6.87B in 2015.

Though the internet certainly took its toll on the music industry, the rise of streaming platforms like Spotify are recovering some of these losses. In the first half of 2017, marking a second year of consecutive growth, retail spending on music rose 17.7 percent, 62 percent of which was attributed to an increase in paid subscriptions to streaming services. While revenue is still far from its peak in the ‘90s, the uptick in paying listeners warrants a sense of optimism.

That Spotify is responsible for the bulk of this growth is clear: Over the past two years, the company has added 65 million active users, leading to today’s total of 140M.

Similarly, paid subscriptions are up 200 percent from 20M to 60M over the same period. More so than Apple Music and other competitors, listeners are grabbing their headphones (or stylish cordless earbuds) and tuning into Spotify.

The Swedish-based startup’s success can be attributed to a number of factors. Most significant is the fact that it was one of the first to arrive on the on-demand streaming scene. Back in 2008, the company revolutionized the music industry by offering an on-demand music library; this allowed listeners to choose a specific song which provided more user-control than services that only allowed them to select a genre or artist. Since then, many other streaming services have had to play “catch-up” in order to compete with Spotify.

The company’s careful attention to its playlist features has also attracted many users. Subscribers can select any number of songs from Spotify’s library and add them to a customized playlist that they can share with other users as well as on social media. Additionally, the platform offers thousands of employee designed playlists reflecting various genres, moods, and settings. Perhaps the most impressive feature is Spotify’s “Discover” playlist which implores an impressive algorithm that adjusts itself to a user’s taste and suggests songs and artists that are in line with his/her interests.



The streaming platform might also owe some of its success to a factor beyond its own control: The rising rate of music consumption. According to a study conducted by The Nielsen Company, the average person listened to 23.5 hours of music a week in 2015 and 32.1 hours just two years later, an astonishing 36 percent increase. While the correlation between music listening and the availability of streaming services would naturally be positive, if demand for music is simply higher today than just a few years ago irrespective of the growth in streaming platforms (hypothetically, this could be due to better artists, a stronger interest in relaxation etc.) companies like Spotify

could expect significant revenue growth.

Because of Spotify’s unique service and impressive features, it has garnered much interest from the music-listening community, consequently improving the viability of the industry as a whole. But its impact is not limited to the demand for music; Spotify’s growth is positively affecting artists as well.

Despite an initial reluctance to participate in streaming platforms, artists are recognizing that Spotify’s grip on the music industry can hopefully increase their profit margins. Not only does the accessibility of the service negate much of the incentive for listeners to pirate music, but the royalties paid by Spotify can also strongly contribute to a performer’s career. Roughly 70 percent of the company’s 4 billion-dollar revenue will go towards royalty payments for its various labels and artists. Though per-stream compensation figures are still low and the company must continue to support its performers, with a growing number of users—especially paying subscribers—artists can expect to earn more from their music.

Spotify is also taking steps beyond royalty payments in order to promote its artists. This past October, Spotify introduced a program known as “Rise”, which aims to discover up and coming performers and promote their work through advertisements, concert announcements, and by placing their music in high-frequented playlists. Furthermore, in an effort to provide artists with helpful music data, the company recently launched a new app that makes it easier for artists to stay on top of listener demographics and song popularity.

Despite all of these achievements, there are still areas in which Spotify could improve. For example, though the company posts consistent revenue growth, it is still operating under significant losses due to its high royalty expenses. To turn a profit, the company will need to find a way to either lower costs or increase subscription prices without deterring customers or label corporations. As the streaming platform looks to IPO in the coming months, adjustments to its business model are expected.

Revolutionizing the industry and sparking excitement among listeners worldwide, Spotify is giving music enthusiasts something to sing about. As it looks to expand even further, it can be confident that its product is one that will continue to attract much attention and certainly more subscribers—it only remains to be seen whether this influx of customers will help put me over the 70-follower line.

CRYPTOCURRENCY CLUB, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

Kerendian hopes that “Non-profit organizations and fundraisers can benefit as well. Donating money with Bitcoin will bypass the fees accrued through credit cards. This way, organizations can collect more money for their causes.”

“A main goal of ours is to bring in speakers to educate our student body on Bitcoin and teach them how to take the first step in getting involved. This past month we

had the opportunity to bring in Dave Friedman to speak about Bitcoin, and the event was very successful.” Dave Friedman is a principal at Yang Ventures and is an advisor to several crypto funds. He was an investment banker at Citi Group and worked at Bloomberg prior to that. “He’s working on an initial coin offering (ICO) backed by heavy real estate,” said Kerendian.

Kerendian is looking to have a meeting in which members will gain hands on experience by creating a wallet to start buying and selling cryptocurrencies. He believes that this experience will offer students a way to

learn about digital currencies and will ease their adaption to the future of money.

Although the Cryptocurrency Club believes in a bright future for Bitcoin, it is important to note that crypto prices are extremely volatile and you should err on the side of caution when looking to invest. Before purchasing any form of cryptocurrency, extensive due diligence and advice are highly recommended.

CAREER CORNER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

opportunities, and you can maintain close contact with relevant people and firms. Don’t be afraid to send follow up emails, and even get on the phone and call to check on the status of an application if you have not heard anything within 10 days, or if you have not heard back from an employer who said they would respond to you within a specific time period. If you have a recruiter or person you’re in contact with, make sure you show you are still interested in an opportunity. Beware of stalking, though! You don’t want to be too aggressive. If you have specific questions about a situation, feel free to contact the Career Center.

4. Send out a “Happy New Year” email!

The New Year and holiday season are perfect opportunities to reach out to employers, mentors, and your network to check-in and wish them a healthy and happy New Year and holidays! This does two things. First,

it reminds employers and people in your network that you’re thinking of them and wish them well. When you take an interest in someone, they are more likely to help you once you show them you care. Secondly, this allows you to re-establish a relationship you might not have been maintaining and/or continue to develop a relationship you were nurturing. It’s also an excuse to ask to grab a coffee or have a catch up call after the New Year. Be cognizant that most people are away and travelling during this time, so don’t expect to set something up before the New Year hits! It’s all about the follow up and follow through!

5. Re-evaluate and Reflect

They always say that gym membership skyrockets after the New Year. Americans make promises and commitments to themselves and hope that the New Year can be “the year” of change. Despite the low rate of success with such commitments, the New Year brings an excuse for pause, introspection and reflection. Are you enjoying your major? Are you interested in learning more about another field and profession, but aren’t sure where to

begin? Are you applying to realistic jobs? Should you be more targeted with your job or internship search? Don’t be afraid to ask yourself these questions.

6. Stop by the Career Center. We’re open!

You may be on vacation, but the Career Center isn’t! Meet with a counselor to review your resume and cover letter, conduct a mock interview, search for jobs, and more! We have so many resources to help you with your job search, and our career counselors are highly skilled and trained to help you through this process. And yes, it is a process, so if you learn how to manage and navigate the job search, you will succeed!

Be proactive and follow these steps to get ahead of the competition. We wish you continued success on your job search, and we hope we can continue to help you land your dream internship and job!

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Cryptocurrency 101 and Is Bitcoin a Bubble?

By Zev Levitis

The questions on everyone's mind the past few weeks has been – is Bitcoin a bubble? If it's a bubble, when will it burst? If it's not, is it too late to invest? Of course, there are no definite answers to the questions aforementioned. However, this article will attempt to shed some light onto the topic and hopefully be beneficial to those contemplating an investment into cryptocurrencies.

To cover just the basics, a cryptocurrency is a digital currency that uses cryptography. Cryptocurrencies are desirable due to their organic nature. They are not issued by any central authority which means there's no room for government interference or manipulation. This may be worrisome for some people due to safety reasons but the cryptography technology is used for security and protection from counterfeit.

The first cryptocurrency to capture the public's attention was Bitcoin. Bitcoin was launched in 2009 by an unknown individual or group under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto. It is the first decentralized digital currency – meaning it functions without a central bank or administrator as mentioned above. It is a peer-to-peer network as opposed to the traditional banking system because transactions are facilitated between users without an intermediary. Since its introduction in 2009, Bitcoin has taken the financial world by storm. By 2015, there were already 15 million Bitcoins in circulation with a market value of over \$3 billion and 100,000 merchants and vendors accepting Bitcoin as a form of payment. Its success led to many other competing coins such as Ethereum and Litecoin to come into existence.

For those who are interested in making an investment in cryptocurrencies, there are a few ways of doing so. The very first way of receiving bitcoins was through mining. Bitcoin mining is the process where transactions are verified and are added to the public ledger – famously known as the blockchain. There are less than 5 million Bitcoins left to be added to the blockchain and mining is the only means of producing them. To mine, one needs special computer software to solve algorithms and then are issued a certain number of bitcoins in exchange. A more straightforward outlet of receiving cryptocurrencies is by simply buying them. There are a number of channels to purchase coins - the most popular and trustworthy

service being Coinbase. Coinbase is extremely popular at the moment due to its simplicity and convenience but only sells Bitcoin, Ethereum, and Litecoin at the moment.

There's no surprise behind Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies making headlines around the world recently. In the past month, Bitcoin has surged beyond

“ALL THESE GAINS AND SPECULATIONS ARE SURELY IMPRESSIVE FOR THE TIME BEING, BUT WILL THE TREND CONTINUE OR WILL THE BUBBLE BURST?”

anyone's expectation – increasing 150% and hitting past the \$19,000 mark. Bitcoin's surge has created a lot of speculation which in result has carried along other cryptocurrencies to go up tremendously as well. Ethereum has gone up 120% in the past month and on December 11th, in just one day, Litecoin increased by 90%. Amid the surge in cryptocurrencies, the exchange Coinbase reached the top of the free app charts on the US app store while opening more than 300,000 accounts in a day - gaining more total customers than banking and brokerage giant Charles Schwab in the process. If all that is not enough, Bitcoin has even penetrated the Jewish world with Kollel Tamid (@TheStollel) tweeting “Bitachon אל תאמרו Bitcoin אל תקרא.” All these gains and speculations are surely impressive for the time being, but will the trend continue or will the bubble burst?

I asked Menajem Benchimol, founder of Mena Management – a cryptocurrency consulting and management service on his thoughts on Bitcoin. He said “Bitcoin is making history due to tremendous gains in the past months but there have been a lot of speculations claiming that the trend has to stop eventually. In my opinion, Bitcoin's rise will slow down at some point due to other coins gaining popularity. Newer and better cryptocurrency alternatives to Bitcoin such as Dash, Litecoin, Monero, Vertcoin, Zcash and Monetha have

seen favorable gains and are looking to compete with the behemoth that is Bitcoin. Bitcoin is hot at the moment and it may take a while for it to fall. However, when people will realize that there are far better coins out there, I believe Bitcoins price will fall but the blockchain market as a whole will thrive.”

While many economists say Bitcoin is a bubble that will burst any minute, Bitcoins have simultaneously gained a more legitimate reputation in markets and exchanges across the country. Just last week, Bitcoin historically attained US regulatory approval to make its debut on two major global exchanges. The Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) and the Chicago Board Options Futures Exchange (CBOE) are the world's largest exchanges for derivatives products and they have begun to offer contracts for futures of Bitcoin. In the first day of trading on the exchanges, Bitcoin futures surged more than 20% - forcing the CBOE to halt trading twice.

It is clearly hard to determine whether or not the Bitcoin bubble will burst or if it is even a bubble to begin with. However, one must take into consideration Bitcoin's price continuing to surge and its legitimacy getting closer to institutional acceptance when contemplating an investment into cryptocurrencies. I asked Yosef Kerendian, founder and president of YU's CryptoCurrency Club on his stance on cryptocurrency investing. He notes that “If you invested \$1,000 ten years ago, here's how much you'd have now:

Netflix: A \$1,000 investment 10 years ago would be worth \$51,966 today.

Amazon: \$1,000 investment 10 years ago would be worth \$12,398 today.

Apple: \$1,000 investment 10 years ago would be worth \$6,228 today.

Alphabet: \$1,000 investment 10 years ago would be worth \$2,922 today.

Bitcoin: \$1,000 investment 8 years ago would be worth \$137,649,000 today.”

Yosef continues “Is Bitcoin a bubble? Maybe, maybe not. But here's one piece of advice that goes a long way: ‘The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.’ – Anonymous”





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