



Yeshiva College Associate Dean Joanne Jacobson to Retire After Spring Semester

By Ben Strachman

Yeshiva College Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Dr. Joanne Jacobson will be retiring and leaving the university after the Spring Semester. The search for her replacement has begun, led by Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman.

Dr. Jacobson described that when she took the position in 2015, she signed a three-year contract, similar to other Yeshiva College Associate Deans in the past. She stated that at the time, “I wasn’t necessarily

looking for something longer at this point in my career.” “We accepted her decision [to retire] reluctantly because of her many contributions,” Dr. Botman said.

According to an online listing of the job opening, the new Associate Dean will begin their tenure on July 1. The listed responsibilities of the position include overseeing the curriculum, preparing the semesterly course schedule, and managing the process of promotion and tenure. In order to qualify for the position, applicants must possess a doctorate, three years of leadership experience in an academic institution, and “an understanding of how

academic programs are built, launched, and sustained, and the imagination to think outside the box about the future of small liberal arts colleges in the 21st century,” among other requirements.

Dr. Botman stated that individuals from both inside and outside the university are invited to apply to the position. “We will set a time period for the contract with the hope and expectation that the incumbent will

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Hot Tub Tentatively Reopened on Wilf Campus

By Shoshy Ciment

After about two years of idleness, the hot tub on the Wilf campus is operational once more. According to Executive Director for University Operations Joseph Cook, although the hot tub has not been completely fixed, it was reopened for the public at the start of the spring semester.

The hot tub originally shut down about two years ago after a leak was discovered. “Several companies have attempted to resolve the leak issue and the consensus now is that the leak is somewhere under the decking in the pool area,” explained Cook, who is still working on a solution to the broken hot tub. “For now we will simply refill the lost water. A long-term solution will be addressed at the end of the spring semester.”

The Wilf campus Student Life Committee has also

been involved in conversations about getting the hot tub fixed. “The Student Life Committee has heard numerous complaints over the last year and a half about the hot tub,” said Jesse Silverman, senior co-chair of the Wilf Student Life Committee. “Joe Cook was surprised to find out how many students were upset about the hot tub, but once we told him, he made it a priority. We have been in contact with him throughout and he has been extremely responsive.”

According to Silverman, even after the hot tub was refilled, it was discovered that the water was not heating up. “A broken coil was identified and set to be fixed,” explained Silverman. “To date, it gets warm, but the heater still definitely needs further fixing. The hot tub is open, but not warm enough to use.”

SEE HOT TUB, CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Jewish Studies Professor Condemns Trump’s Jerusalem Move, Draws Criticism

By Shoshy Ciment, David Rubinstein, and Ben Strachman

Jess Olson, Associate Professor for Jewish History, signed a statement of dismay at President Trump’s declaration that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and that the American embassy will be moved to Jerusalem. As of December 25, 177 Jewish Studies academics from various institutions had signed the statement. Olson, who received his doctorate from Stanford University and has published on early Zionism, among other topics, was the only signatory from Yeshiva University.

The statement emphasized the “religious and thus emotional” significance of Jerusalem to Jews, Muslims, and Christians and cited B’Tselem’s documentation of “systematic inequalities” that Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and the West Bank endure. B’Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, describes itself as working “to end Israel’s occupation.”

In an email to The Commentator, Olson stated that he signed the statement because “the decision by the Trump administration has likely inflicted a mortal injury to the possibility” of a fair and peaceful agreement between Israel and Palestinians. Olson sees himself as a “Zionist who desires in my deepest core a future of real, permanent peace and prosperity for Israel,” which he is convinced can only be achieved by negotiating a settlement with the Palestinian people.

For Olson, Trump’s statement on Jerusalem “has likely put the dream of the world community’s support of Israel with Jerusalem as its capital even farther out of reach. And whatever the motives for this decision, at the very least it has the appearance of a decision made in haste, with inadequate consideration of the broader implications.”

SEE OLSON, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

The EDITORIAL

Reading Week is Not for Class, and Other Syllabus Day Musings

By Avi Strauss

As the semester dawned for the 8th time in my college experience, I found my week filled with syllabus day musings.

Most first days begin the same: arbitrarily picking a seat that will become “yours” for the rest of the semester, figuring out if the professor is going to be ok letting you use your laptop, and then scanning the syllabus for grading criteria and due dates.

But first impressions are important, and some professors err critically when it comes to implementing and communicating course policies and schedules.

Before I begin, however, I should note that most professors do not commit the following mistakes and run clear, if otherwise routine and humdrum, syllabus days which prepare students for what to expect in their course.

Still, some professors, whether by word or deed, sour first day goodwill with detrimental course policies.

What I find to be the most egregious of these errors is when a professor pre-determines that Reading Week will be used for class time. According to the Dean's Office this is technically permissible, as reading week is part of the term, but I still find intentionally beginning the semester in this fashion problematic. Often, the professor will explain the reason why presentations “only fit” into the schedule during Reading Week, or why their own absence in the middle of the semester because of a prior arrangement necessitates a makeup class.

Yet, students don't have the same luxury. When we have weddings and family events to attend, we can't expect professors to cover the material for us on dates that fit with our schedules. It is unfair that a professor could impose on students to attend class, during a week specifically reserved for studying the material covered during the other 13 weeks of the semester. Class time during Reading Week has the double effect of adding material for a final, while sucking up time that could otherwise be used to prepare for said final.

To be sure, I don't believe situations like the one described above are inherently malicious. College courses are, in a way, a partnership between professor and student. Nonetheless, students are at the mercy of a professor when it comes to grades, those pesky and permanent determinants of our “worth,” and few, if any of us, can risk missing material at the tail end of the semester when finals are around the corner.

But the Reading-Week-is-class-time misstep is not the only first day blunder that some professors make. Another somewhat common syllabus day mistake pertains to attendance.

Occasionally, professors will require attendance in class, and threaten to deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for escalating absences, but *not* include attendance as part of the grading criteria. By this, I mean that a syllabus will outline where quizzes, papers, and exams will count and add up to 100% of a course grade, while leaving attendance conspicuously absent. Yet somehow, the professor insists that even though attendance does not officially compose part of the grading criteria, it is a part of the grading criteria.

I find this troublesome because there is an obvious fix—making attendance part of the grading criteria! Why do some professors insist on leaving attendance outside the scope of what we can earn credit for, but then manage to include its neglect as a potential demerit?

And still, there is another solution for professors when it comes to attendance. If every class leads to instruction on new and relevant material for papers and tests, attendance will surely rise, independent of its inclusion on a syllabus.

Science professors are very adept in this regard, teaching material related to their own research interests and that is best explained and learned directly from them, during class. Rarely can notes fully compensate for absences in classes like these.

Further, when classes are enlightening and full of new knowledge that can't be acquired elsewhere, professors develop a rapport with students, which in turn leads students to enjoy class time.

Yes, of course students should be expected to attend class. And yes, I also would agree that students can be required to attend most classes throughout the semester to ensure they learn the breadth and scope of the course's material, independent of what someone's notes or a textbook has to say. But that doesn't mean these professors cannot simply include attendance in their grading methods, or adjust their material to nudge more students into attending.

“CLASS TIME DURING READING WEEK HAS THE DOUBLE EFFECT OF ADDING MATERIAL FOR A FINAL, WHILE SUCKING UP TIME THAT COULD OTHERWISE BE USED TO PREPARE FOR SAID FINAL.”

And lastly (although I'm sure some would dispute my gripes or have challenged me to include more), I can't help but mention the issue of keeping students over time on the *first day*. As students, we understand you're passionate about the introduction to your course, but it sends the wrong message when even an introduction goes overtime. It certainly doesn't make students feel that the course will be a balance between being taught *at* versus being taught *with*.

To be sure, I think most times when a professor goes overtime is unfair to the students, who all have other obligations, be it classes, davening, meetings, work, or even just a breather. I can understand if a professor keeps students late once in a while—but I also think doing it on the first day is classless.

All of these gripes revolve around a basic premise for success in college—time management. The main way to succeed in our classes is to get a hold on time management and choose how we spend our time wisely. As college students, it would seem we have learned (or are learning) that basic competence.

If that means students choose to miss four sessions of one class to study for two midterms in a different class, so be it. It is on them to read, catch up, visit office hours, and speak to friends to learn the material expected of them. But it should remain their choice to do so if the professor hasn't explicitly marked “attendance and participation” as part of a course's grading formula.

If a professor can't fit all the material they think is important to know for their course into the slots that *they* are present for, it isn't reasonable for them to demand of their students to show up on their own time to make up for it.

And if a professor really needs to tack on time to every lecture, starting with the syllabus day introduction, they need to rethink how essential each bit of information they want to teach is, relative to how much students learn when they feel a course is built on mutual respect for time as opposed to a one-sided cram and memorize session.

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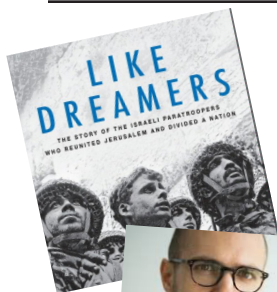
The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

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.





1 **DACA and the Border Wall**
The dreamers in "Like Dreamers" risked their lives for a wall, so I'm just confused why the DACA dreamers are so opposed to this one...



2 **A.G. Sulzberger**
Impressively, this young man (just 37 years old!) is the 6th member of the Ochs-Sulzberger family to lead The New York Times. While his Jewish grandparents would've preferred medical school, we're sure that they are still very proud.

3 **Spring**
The season of snow melting, sweet smelling flowers budding, and super-packs of Claritin to get us through these pollen infested months.

4 **New Israel Yeshiva/Sem Returnees**
You can spot these new YU students quite easily by their sudden reaching for the closest *sefer* whenever they hear the word "college."

5 **Humble Brags**
Just accidentally bumped into President Berman and knocked The Commentator issue that he was reading cover to cover out of his hands #SoEmbarrassing.

6 **Super Bowl LII**
Come for the commercials. Stay for the commercials.

7 **Rav Moshe Weinberger Returns From Sabbatical**
After his two-month absence, there better be a parade to welcome our beloved *mashpia* back to campus. Or at least one of those sketchy candle-lit MTA basement cult events.

7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN



1 **That Hawaii Missile Warning**
Probably the most terrifying thing to happen in that little island of paradise since Pearl Harbor.

2 **Larry Nassar**
Come on! Seriously guys!?

3 **HQ Technical Difficulties**
Maybe Scott Rogowsky is just TOO charming.

4 **PJ**
Who?

5 **Florida**
The hot vacation spot where Modern Orthodox Jews go to see people they already know in places they have probably already been.

6 **Government Shutdown**
Well this totally ruined my brother's 8th grade trip to Washington, D.C.

7 **Last Minute Final Grade Submissions**
In case being stressed during finals wasn't enough, these professors are kind enough to make it last for an extra two weeks!

Letter to the Editor:

To the Editor,

The signing a statement of dismay over President Trump's declaration that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel by Jess Olson, Associate Professor for Jewish History at Yeshiva University, is a disgrace and an affront to all Jews.

Olson makes the fallacious argument that "the decision by the Trump administration has likely inflicted a mortal injury to the possibility" of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. "Mortal injury" to what? With the Palestinians' showing time and time again that peace is not even on their agenda, Olson's statement is like saying that hitting a dead horse lessens the chances of the horse winning the Kentucky Derby.

Olson says that Trump's decision "has likely put the dream of the world community's support of Israel with Jerusalem as its capital even farther out of reach."

This is more of a pipe dream. The UN, throughout its corrupt history, has managed to get enough support from the world community to single out Israel for condemnation more than any other nation -- all before Trump's decision! The world community is obviously nowhere near supporting Israel for anything. How would not declaring Jerusalem the capital of Israel change this? The only time in modern history that Israel got widespread respect and support was in 1967, when it won a miraculous military victory over its enemies.

We have to stop deluding ourselves into thinking that giving up what belongs to us will yield world support. Let the world show us their support first, then we can think of what we're willing to give up.

Ironically, Olson says Trump's "decision [was] made in haste, with inadequate consideration of the broader implications." What's interesting is that this is exactly what Olson has done. Olson's signing that statement of dismay, despite his claim that he believes Jerusalem is Israel's capital, sent a message to the students of an Orthodox Jewish University that it's okay to lend support to the anti-Semites who use anti-Israel rhetoric to camouflage their anti-Semitic sentiments, and that it's also okay to disagree with the Torah.

For Yeshiva University not to see fit to take a strong stance against Olson's action in order to undo his shameful offense to the Jewish people and its values, would be tantamount to Yeshiva University being complicit in Olson's inappropriate behavior.

Josh Greenberger



Review of TA Employment Finds Three Times as Many TAs in Stern College Compared to Yeshiva College

By Avi Strauss

In the Fall 2017 semester, there were three times as many Teacher's Assistants (TAs) employed at Stern College for Women as there were at Yeshiva College. There were 45 student TAs across a wide variety of disciplines in SCW, including the sciences, Hebrew, and Studio Art, last semester, while YC employed 15 TAs, mainly in the biology and chemistry departments, according to the Dean's office.

Sy Syms School of Business employed 8 TAs in the fall, almost entirely on the Wilf campus. Five of the Syms TAs worked for Jewish Engagements courses, while two assisted in Jewish Public Policy, and one TA worked on both the Wilf and Beren campuses in the Executive MBA program.

TAs assist professors in a variety of ways. Some provide logistical support, like taking attendance and setting up lab equipment, while others hold office hours and even grade students' work.

Dr. Karen Bacon, the Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, believes strongly in the presence of Teacher's Assistants for lectures and labs. "I am a firm supporter of Teaching Assistants where justified. They assist the instructor and are able to develop a special rapport with the students in the classes they support. And, of course, the experience that the assistant gets, plus the small stipend, are very valuable."

According to Talia Edelman, a neuroscience major in Stern currently working as a TA in a lab for cell biology, being a TA involves supporting both the professor and the students. "I enjoy [being a TA] mostly because I can help alleviate some of the panic that students feel in lab." She continued, "I hope that giving students encouragement during the lab and giving reminders that it's okay if their

results aren't perfect can help them to have a positive experience."

Chayim Rosensweig, a senior in YC majoring in biology, felt similarly. "It was an opportunity to gain more experience and familiarity with the laboratory equipment

"SOME OF THE DISPARITY BETWEEN OVERALL TA NUMBERS CAN BE EXPLAINED BY STUDENT ENROLLMENT. IN THE FALL, THERE WERE 801 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SCW AND 523 IN YC. SINCE THERE ARE MORE STUDENTS IN SCW, THERE ARE MORE OPPORTUNITIES AND COURSES FOR THERE TO BE TEACHER'S ASSISTANTS."

and methods. And, it was a great way to give back to other students and help them throughout the course."

Some of the disparity between overall TA numbers can be explained by student enrollment. In the fall, there were 801 students enrolled in SCW and 523 in YC. Since there are more students in SCW, there are more opportunities and courses for there to be TAs.

Dean Bacon explained she believed that the larger number of Stern students registered for labs to accounts for the discrepancy of TA's between the campuses. She also noted that biology majors at Beren are interested in a wider array of career paths, like genetic counseling and occupational therapy, and that those preferences mean

a larger percentage of science students in Stern study biology as opposed to science students in YC. Since biology labs often require a TA, the prevalence of biology courses in SCW accounts in part for the large number of TAs there.

Course offerings and differing needs for students on each campus account for some of the difference as well. For instance, SCW employs 8 TAs for lower level hebrew courses, who support around 110 students on the Beren campus.

The Beren campus's wider array of major offerings also contributes to the disparity. Last semester there were 4 TAs for Art Studios, a major not offered on the Wilf campus. These TAs assisted around 60 students in various art

courses that utilized different mediums.

Stern students not majoring in a science must fulfill a science requirement by taking either introductory biology or chemistry, thereby requiring more TAs to cover a higher number of labs in both biology and chemistry. Last semester, 6 TAs covered biology labs composed of 126 Stern students taking either the pre-health track or introductory biology for non-majors course. Uptown, just 34 YC students took principles of biology in the fall. There is no non-majors biology course offering uptown.

In Fall 2017, there were 250 science majors in both SCW and YC, each, predominantly in biology.

Dean Bacon explained most often it is faculty who request TAs, based on the coursework for a class. "Generally faculty ask for assistants in full science labs so that students can get more immediate help to continue with their experiments without having to wait for the professor to reach them. In some large lecture courses, student assistants cover review sessions and the like."

Some student TAs report being asked by professors, based on their successful performance in a course, if they would be willing to work as a TA in subsequent offerings of the course. In some cases, students stated they were the ones who took the initiative, asking professors if they could fill TA roles vacated by upperclassmen.

According to Dean Bacon, all requests are formally approved by the Dean's Office prior to student employment.

TAs might work anywhere between 2-10 hours in a given week, and sometimes more, depending on the amount of class time they are responsible for, if they hold office hours, and time they might spend grading work. Students earn minimum wage for their time, which was recently raised to \$13 an hour for New York City employees.

"It was a good way to earn money doing something enjoyable," said Rosensweig.

Working as a TA can be a big boost to an undergraduate student's resume, particularly when it come to graduate school applications. When asked if employment as a TA is viewed positively on medical and dental school applications, Wilf Pre-Health Advisor Lolita Wood-Hill was emphatic.

"Absolutely. Without a doubt," Wood-Hill said. "Health professional schools want students who have the ability to communicate well with patients. Part of that communicating involves having students that can explain things clearly and directly."

Ms. Wood-Hill went on to add that working as a TA demonstrates a "sense of responsibility" as well as "leadership," given professors entrust the TA to assist in teaching as well as grading students.

Adira Koppel, a pre-med student in Stern, cited this as a reason for wanting to work as a TA. "I did it because I loved organic chemistry and am applying to medical school, so I figured it would help me keep up, as well look good for my resume."



SOY Spends \$4,000 on Hundreds of New Siddurim for Wilf Campus

By Yossi Zimilover

The Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY), the student council responsible for representing and serving male students in religious matters, has purchased 295 new *siddurim* for the Rubin Shul and the Klein Beit Midrash. The total cost of the *siddurim* was approximately \$4,000 and was completely funded by a surplus from last year's SOY budget, according to Dovid Simpson, the President of SOY.

The *siddurim*, which were bought from Koren Publishers, contain the *tefilot* for *shabbat*, and also include a complete *chumash*. Simpson explained that SOY has been focused on analyzing and improving locations on the Wilf Campus that need enhancement, and recognized a significant lack of *siddurim* in the Klein Beit Midrash and the Rubin Shul. He estimated that it had been at least 10-15 years since new *siddurim* were purchased for

these areas. Simpson stated that as began working on this project last year as Vice President of SOY with previous SOY President Shua Brick, but it only recently came to fruition.

SOY Vice President Noah Marlowe described a positive feature of the new *siddurim* that the older ones do not contain. "The Koren siddur has both the *tefillah l'shalom ha'medinah* and the *mishaberach* for *Tzahal*—two important additions that sit in the heart of the Yeshiva University student," he remarked.

Many students have expressed their support for the new purchase. "The new *siddurim* were a nice addition to the Klein at 9 experience," said Jacob Naiman, a Yeshiva College Sophomore.

"Klein at 9" is a SOY-run *shabbat* day minyan that takes place in the Klein Beit Midrash. However, others believe that a greater variety of *siddurim* is necessary. "While I appreciate the *shabbat siddurim* and the thought

that went into getting them, I also would have liked to see *siddurim* that have weekday use as well," commented Yeshiva College Sophomore Leib Wiener.

The purchase of the *siddurim* marks the beginning of a broader initiative by SOY to upgrade the Rubin Shul. Simpson referenced a 2012 Commentator piece entitled "Rubin Shul Needs a Makeover" to piece entitled "Rubin Shul Needs a Makeover" to emphasize the need for improvements. As mentioned in "Your Voice", the new newsletter for the Wilf campus Student Government, SOY plans to create more of a beit-midrash environment for the Rubin shul centered around english and philosophical works.

SWAG Day: By the Numbers

By Dov Teitlebaum

The Wilf and Beren Offices of Student Life just wrapped up their second annual SWAG day, a day in which an array of customized YU outerwear was given, free of charge, to YU undergraduate students.

According to Natan Bienstock, a Student Life Coordinator in the Wilf campus Office of Student Life,

76.82% of the student body, or 745 students, on the Beren campus received swag while 72.6% of the students, or 825 students, on the Wilf campus received swag. In total, over 1,200 items were distributed to students.

271 students, over 27% of Beren students, on the Beren campus claimed the zip-up jacket, which was the most popular item downtown. Hoodies were the most popular item on the Wilf campus, and were given to 396 students,

nearly 35% of Wilf students. On both campuses, the crew neck sweater was the least distributed item.

"Anecdotally, on Beren the crew necks ran out first, but that was primarily due to their being the item in which we had the smallest quantity," explained Bienstock. On the Wilf campus, all of the hoodies, over 200, were gone within an hour and a half, forcing the staff to bring additional hoodies from the Beren campus.

President Ari Berman, after being pressed in an

"PRESIDENT ARI BERMAN, AFTER BEING PRESSED IN AN INTERVIEW FOR HIS FAVORITE ITEM OF SWAG DAY, CONFESSED TO GETTING TWO SWEATSHIRTS."



interview for his favorite item of SWAG day, confessed to taking two sweatshirts. "I thought that the zipper would be more comfortable for me, but it wasn't," he explained.

"My fellow Yeshiva University students and I were overjoyed to hear that we would be receiving YU apparel. Yeshiva University really understands the passions of its students and caters to them," mentioned Efraim Shachter, a student in Yeshiva College. "In this case the passions being catered to were the widespread love of Yeshiva University and that of free things."

Photo Credit: President Ari Berman's Twitter

OLSON, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

"As we have seen," Olson added, "this has had the immediate and real effect of violence and bloodshed, with the promise of more to come."

Olson emphasized that he believes unequivocally "that Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel... it is not only the seat of Israel's government, but rightfully the place which represents the deepest spiritual and historical aspirations and identity of our people." Olson wrote, "in a perfect world, recognition of this fact by the world community would come as a matter of course, not be a matter for debate."

The professor said that the decision to sign the petition was his alone, which he made based upon his "internal convictions."

"I did not have any expectations, nor was I motivated in any way by a response one way or the other to my signature from my colleagues," he said. "I encountered the petition independently, read its contents, and felt that the issue and the statement was important enough for me to add my signature."

While Olson remarked that he usually avoids offering a public opinion on Israeli politics, he felt that the situation was different this time.

"I did so this time because I fear for the future of our

beloved State of Israel," he explained. "That, in my opinion, is very much resonant with my identity as a historian of Zionism, as a Zionist, and with the multifaceted intellectual history of Zionist thought itself."

Dr. Aaron Koller, Chair of the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies of Yeshiva College, of which Olson is a faculty member, welcomed Olson's action. "I absolutely support Dr. Olson's right to sign the statement," Koller wrote in an email. "On every campus and in every community, there are—and ought to be—different learned opinions, and certainly this is fundamental to higher education: our students must be exposed to different defensible views, and therefore be encouraged to think through issues deeply in order to reach their own views."

When asked why he did not himself sign the statement, Koller stated that he believes President Trump's motivations were "questionable at best" and there could potentially be negative consequences from the move, though he was pleased to see Israel gain recognition from a world power.

"Once the president announced it, the proper reaction, in my view, was a muted statement of thanks coupled with an expression of hope for more serious progress in the future," he said. "This balance was elusive, and as you saw, different Jewish groups and thinkers responded in different ways."

Olson's endorsement of the statement drew criticism from The Coalition for Jewish Values, a Maryland-based organization led, among others, by graduates of some YU schools. On the "About Us" page of the group's website, the coalition criticizes "American liberal Jewish movements" and "left-wing ideologues" and describes itself as advocating "for classical Jewish ideas and standards in matters of American public policy."

In a December 14 letter to Dr. Berman, six rabbis, the officers of the group, claimed that the statement "misportrays propaganda" as fact. They requested "that Yeshiva University publicly disavow this repugnant statement" and referred "Professor Olson's endorsement to the appropriate faculty committee for review."

President Ari Berman was featured in a video praising Trump's move but Yeshiva University has not yet made a public response to the CJV's letter.

"It is shameful that Yeshiva University Administration remains mute while their Associate Professor Jess Olson lobbies to disassociate Jerusalem from the Jewish people," said Richard Allen, the founder JCCWatch.org, the Jewish watchdog group that organized a protest at the Center for Jewish History in October. "There is no will to publicly defend Zionism within the school."

He added, "This is a wake up call for YU students to organize against this feckless YU administration."



RIETS Addresses Sexual Abuse in Orthodox Community

By Shoshy Ciment, Lilly Gelman, and David Rubinstein

On December 25, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary hosted a talk for rabbinical students on sexual abuse in the Orthodox community. The event, which was attended by over 50 students, rabbis, community members, and administrators, featured remarks from Dr. Norman Blumenthal and Rabbi Yosef Blau. Pizza was served and copies of the most recent issue of *Tradition*—the foremost Modern Orthodox journal of Jewish thought and law—which focused on sexual abuse, were distributed free of charge, courtesy of its publisher, the Rabbinical Council of America.

This event occurred amidst a tide of high profile cases centering around sexual abuse in the United States. In light of this, it was announced a few weeks ago that employees of Yeshiva University were required to complete an online course about sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. A few days later, a *mashgiach* (kosher supervisor) at Stern College was fired after an investigation into allegations of his inappropriate conduct.

Rabbi Larry Rothwachs, RIETS Director of Professional Rabbinics, introduced the speakers. He said that when the allegations of sexual abuse in the Jewish community first emerged, people were silent. Over the last two decades, however, “a lot has changed,” and the voice of “victims past, present, and future...exists now, and is protected now, and is given a safe space within our segment of the community.” Rabbi Rothwachs said that “we have every obligation as Torah Jews to go ahead and promote the interest of those who would otherwise not be able to protect and defend themselves,” referring to victims of sexual abuse.

Dr. Blumenthal, a senior psychologist at OHEL, a major Jewish social services organization, spoke about preventing sexual abuse. He emphasized the need for a Torah curriculum on sexuality. “The time has come for us to have a curriculum for the Torah approach to sexuality to make it such that if a 16-year old waiter at camp propositions a 12-year old camper, it is unthinkable.”

“A schmues in high school is not enough. We need a curriculum, and we need to teach from kindergarten through high school. If we can use those opportunities to train our children...there will be a healthier attitude,” said Dr. Blumenthal, who is also the Educational Director of the counseling training program for prospective clergy at Yeshiva University. “You can’t eliminate [sexual abuse completely], but we can make a significant difference in terms of children understanding that this is wrong. If we can inculcate an attitude of reverence and respect and the proper attitude within our community, when that 16-year old propositions that 12-year old it will be totally unthinkable.”

Rabbi Blau, Senior Mashgiach Ruchani, spoke next, addressing what the proper response of a rabbi should be to cases of sexual abuse. Rabbi Blau began by noting that rabbis are not trained as therapists or investigators and should therefore avoid acting as such in order to “not cause greater harm.” Instead, the role of the rabbi is to be the “*posek* (halachic decisor) of the community” and to be the “spiritual leader” who sets the “religious tone.” As the halachic decisor, the rabbi must be aware that, even if some acts of sexual abuse do not fall within formal halachic definitions, they are still sexual abuse.

Rabbi Blau also addressed the halachic dimension of reporting sexual abuse in the Orthodox community, arguing that halachic concerns with reporting sexual abuse are invalid. He taught that the halachic prohibition of *mesira* (accusing a Jew of a crime to secular authorities) applies only when the internal communal institutions are set up to address the case at hand. Since *beit din* (rabbinical court) is not set up to deal with cases of sexual abuse, the prohibition of *mesira* does not apply. The prohibition of *lashon hara* (slandering speech) does not apply, Rabbi Blau stated, because if talking about the evil things people have done will “protect people from being hurt, then it is not a problem [to say so.]” Lastly, he said that attempting to cover up abuse in the name of avoiding *hillul Hashem* (desecrating the name of God) is absurd, and that the true desecration would be the attempt to cover up abuse.

Rabbi Blau said that as future rabbis, the rabbinical students need to avoid the “misinterpretation” that

victims of abuse are “damaged goods” or are then going to become abusers themselves.

The Senior Mashgiach Ruchani said, “the most important problem is denial...once we acknowledge the problem exists then we can try to deal with it.”

Rabbi Blau told *The Commentator* he agreed to speak at the event because he thinks “it’s an incredibly important issue, particularly for *semikha* (rabbinic ordination) students who will go out to be religious leaders in the community.” He added that “giving someone a book to read often means they put a book on the shelves,” he said in reference to the copy of *Tradition* that was distributed. “But if they have a program and they say there are more details in the book they are more likely to read it, too.”

Avraham Wein, editorial assistant at *Tradition* and a RIETS rabbinical student, organized the event. “The goal of the program,” he wrote to *The Commentator* in an email, “was to use the recent publication of the sexual abuse symposium in *Tradition* as an opportunity for *semikha* students to learn about both prevention and treatment of sexual abuse from renowned leaders in fighting sexual abuse. Moreover, we wanted to provide students with free copies of the volume so they can read this important symposium.” Mr. Wein said that Rabbi Blau was “particularly helpful” in making the event happen.

Reactions from those present were positive, with audience members expressing that the panel was a glimpse into a larger issue.

Eli Weinstein, a RIETS student, attended the event because, as someone aspiring to “have a leadership role in the Jewish community someday,” he felt he needed to know “everything I can about this issue...to make sure I can help anyone who might be involved in it.” He thought, “it was a great job in getting the conversation going—I now have two people I can go to with any questions—but at the same time it’s just the beginning. It wasn’t all encompassing, but it is the beginning of the conversation.”

Lead Staller, a 24-year old student in his second year of rabbinical studies at RIETS, remarked that “having a formal panel where future leaders and educators in the Jewish community will be more informed about it is essential to fostering a healthy community.”

“This panel is not a one-time event but the start of a larger discussion. It definitely started the conversation,” he said.

Mr. Staller said he was concerned that it seemed Dr. Blumenthal was advocating a sexual education curriculum that presents sexuality strictly as “a religious idea, and not just a very basic human idea,” which could prove problematic for individuals who might be tempted to “put these values aside” if they are struggling religiously. But Mr. Staller said he asked Dr. Blumenthal, who said “he agreed; he was just giving an example.”

Ezra Epstein, an undergraduate in the Mazer Yeshiva Program attended because he was interested in the issue and wanted to become “more informed and educated.” After the event, he said he would have to “digest” because he was unsure if he “actually walked away with anything.”

Rabbi Shalom Carmy, editor of *Tradition* and assistant professor of Jewish Philosophy and Bible, attended the event. Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel, former director of the counselling center, also attended, as did Rabbi Herschel Reichman, a Rosh Yeshiva (dean) of the Yeshiva Program.



JACOBSON, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

continue beyond the initial period.” She also welcomed student participation in the hiring process, saying, “we want YU students to have a voice and an opinion about the candidates.”

Dr. Jacobson currently serves as one of two Associate Deans of Yeshiva College alongside Associate Dean of Operations and Student Affairs Dr. Fred Sugarman. Both work under Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, who oversees both Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women.

Dr. Jacobson first came to the university in 1990. During her 28 years on campus, she has served in a number of faculties in the university, including as a professor in the Yeshiva College English Department, Chair of the English Department, and Director of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program at Yeshiva College. She has also served two terms as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, first gaining the position in 2006 for a three-year term. Dr. Jacobson rose to the position for a second time in 2015.

Reflecting on her accomplishments as Dean, Dr. Jacobson stated, “I am extremely proud of the new faculty whom I’ve helped to hire over the last decade at Yeshiva College—and of the intellectual vitality and richness, and commitment, that these new faculty have brought to the College. I’ve also been proud of our development of the CORE curriculum at YC—and of the innovative teaching in the CORE that our faculty has done.”

Dean Jacobson also expressed gratitude for her colleagues and students. “Students who are constantly asking hard questions—working to make their lives spiritually and intellectually whole—make the classroom here a uniquely compelling, challenging place...Over my years at YU I have had wonderful faculty colleagues, who have consistently supported and encouraged my own evolution as a teacher and a writer in a very new direction...and I have been—so—lucky at YU to work with and learn from a group of administrative colleagues whose generosity and kindness to one another, and decency, is unfailing.”

“Dean Jacobson approaches every issue that comes

“DR. JACOBSON DESCRIBED THAT WHEN SHE TOOK THE POSITION IN 2015, SHE SIGNED A THREE-YEAR CONTRACT, SIMILAR TO OTHER YESHIVA COLLEGE ASSOCIATE DEANS IN THE PAST. SHE STATED THAT AT THE TIME, ‘I WASN’T NECESSARILY LOOKING FOR SOMETHING LONGER AT THIS POINT IN MY CAREER.’”

her way with care and concern,” Dr. Karen Bacon noted. “Intellectually honest and superbly humane, she champions the best interests of students and faculty. I truly value her as a partner, and I feel so fortunate also to know her as a friend.”

Dr. Sugarman also praised Dr. Jacobson for her tenure as Dean. “Dr. Jacobson, a gifted teacher, scholar and writer, is also a superb human being...her huge and

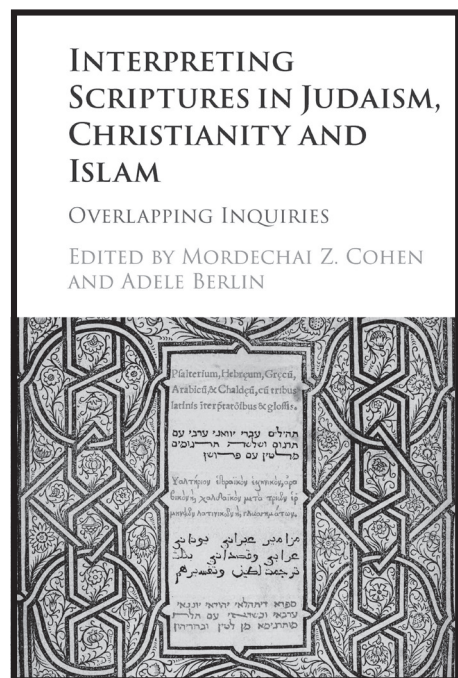
deep heart helped humanize the Dean's office, making it a salon for faculty and students who would sit and discuss their issues with her. Now, after her return some years ago to the Associate Dean position, I still share a large office with Dr. Jacobson. It is a privilege and a pleasure; a gift of wit and wisdom that has sustained and improved faculty, students and fellow administrators.”



The Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and the Yeshiva University Libraries invite you to a YU Library Book Talk by Professor Mordechai Cohen on

Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Overlapping Inquiries

Edited by Mordechai Z. Cohen and Adele Berlin (Cambridge University Press, 2016)



Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is the work product of a 14-member research group of distinguished scholars from America, Europe, and Israel that convened in 2010–11 at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem. Concentrating on points of overlap and intersection, this study brings to light aspects of interpretive approaches to sacred scriptures in the three faith traditions that remain hidden until set in relation to one another. For table of contents, illustrations, and further information about this volume and the project underlying it, see www.yu.edu/revel/cohen-berlin-interpreting-scriptures

In his Library Book Talk, Cohen will draw upon this richly diverse volume to show how the Jewish tradition of Bible interpretation (*parshanut ha-miqra*) is best understood when we consider how our great commentators, such as Saadia Gaon, Rashi, and Maimonides, met the cultural challenges posed by Muslim and Christian interpretation of scripture.

Mordechai Cohen is Associate Dean and Professor of Bible at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. His publications include *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to David Kimhi* (2003) and *Opening the Gates of Interpretation: Maimonides' Biblical Hermeneutics in Light of His Geonic-Andalusian Heritage and Muslim Milieu* (2011). Cohen is currently involved with an international project comparing Jewish and Chinese cultural, textual, and interpretive traditions. He has taught twice at the Center for Judaic and Comparative Religious Studies at the University of Shandong in China.

Sunday, February 11, 2018 | 4 p.m.

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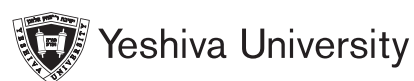
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Minimum Wage Increase Impacts Over 500 Student Employees

By Shoshy Ciment

On December 31, 2017, the New York City minimum wage increased from \$11 to \$13 an hour, affecting at least 500 student employees in various positions at Yeshiva University.

"All employees whose current salary is below that amount will be raised to the new minimum," explained YU's Chief Human Resources Officer Julie Auster in an email. According to Auster, YU typically employs between 500 and 750 students depending on the time of year and number of positions available.

The increased minimum wage follows the second step of a six-year plan to gradually increase minimum wage in New York City to \$15. "Big employers" like Yeshiva University with a staff of 11 people or more must comply with the new wage changes before smaller employers in New York. Last year, the big employer minimum wage in NYC was increased from \$9 to \$11 an hour.

Although certain student positions at YU, such as those in the writing centers on both

the Wilf and Beren campuses, have paid more than minimum wage in the past, it is unclear whether their pay will again be higher than the new minimum wage.

"Department heads will certainly look at the student jobs on a case by case basis to make sure the salary scales are appropriate, but we do not know if everyone whose salary is already above \$13/hour will be increased," remarked Auster.

At the lowest estimate, student employees at YU make up about 8.3% of the total undergraduate and graduate student population of YU for the Fall 2017 semester.

"As someone who works multiple hours a week at Yeshiva University, I am very excited about this pay increase," said Tamar Shemesh, a student at Stern College for Women who works in the package center.

Following the law to increase the minimum wage signed in 2016 by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, most of New York can expect to have a minimum wage of \$15 by 2021. Big employers, like Yeshiva University, can expect that by December 31, 2018.



HOT TUB, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Joey Jubas, a lifeguard at YU and president of the YU Aquatics Society, explained that the issue of the hot tub played a large role in his experience at YU. "It is amazing having the hot tub back, as many students have asked about it when coming into the pool for a swim," said Jubas, who has been a lifeguard at YU for the past three years. "I think once YU was truly aware of the issue and the impact it has on students' lives, they moved quickly and devised a temporary solution."

Other students are excited about the reopening of the hot tub on the Wilf Campus as well. "After putting in long hours in the library, there is no better place to unwind than the hot tub," remarked Benji Wajsberg, a Yeshiva College senior. "Myself and the whole *shvitz* WhatsApp group are very excited for its reopening."

The restoration of the Wilf Campus hot tub owes itself to the voices of the disgruntled students, explained Silverman. The steam room on the Wilf Campus has recently experienced some technical issues, but to the SLC, the hot tub was a bigger priority because of the

reaction in garnered from the students.

"We sincerely hope students continue to notice issues and think of new initiatives and bring them to our attention," said Silverman. "With an appropriate and respectful approach, real change can be made."

Genetic Testing: It's Not Just About Tay-Sachs

By Talia Kupferman

"What do you want to do when you grow up?" I abhorred this question. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I am interested in a lot of things: biology, history, musical theatre, media, cooking, and more! How was I going to choose only one thing to do for the rest of my life? I am told this is common for students, and students are given common advice in response: intern. By doing various internships in hospitals, a cancer center, my theatre group, and at a popular YouTube channel, I figured out what I liked and disliked and what I wanted to continue to pursue.

I have always been interested in women's health, but having both a brother and brother-in-law in medical school,

I have had enough exposure to know that process isn't for me. My sister, Elisheva, thought genetic counseling might be a good fit for me. So, of course, my next step was to get an internship.

This past summer, I interned at the Montefiore Genetic Counseling office. On the very first day, I learned that genetic counseling is relevant to the world population far beyond what I'd previously been exposed to: Ashkenazi Jews and our infamous Tay-Sachs. Over the course of my internship, I sat in on countless pre-natal and oncology counseling sessions as the genetic counselors helped the patients draw out their family trees and figure out what the next best steps would be in their situations.

On October 1st, I volunteered for the first-time for JScreen at the 92nd St. Y Fair. At the booth, I encountered

a young couple- maybe in their late 20s, noticeably Jewish- who seemed interested in JScreen. I explained to them that JScreen is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing Jewish genetic diseases through education, genetic testing, and genetic counseling. As I was explaining this, I could see both their faces showing not only interest, but a sense of relief. Unlike most Orthodox

"KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, AND KNOWING ABOUT YOUR GENETIC BAGGAGE WILL HELP YOU PREPARE FOR YOUR FUTURE AND FEEL EMPOWERED TO BE PROACTIVE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH."

Jews that seek out some sort of genetic testing prior to getting engaged, this couple had not previously thought of genetic counseling as something they needed to check off their "pre-marriage" checklist. As they filled out the basic information to receive their Spit Kit, I felt rewarded that I had just encouraged two people to plan for their future healthy family. They couldn't believe the process was so simple, convenient, and at such a low price that they left the booth smiling...and with some pretty dope JScreen swag too.

Later on, while feeling great about my work and contributions through my volunteering, a man asked me a question that completely changed my mood. He thought it was an unassuming question, but it was very alarming. He asked me, "have you done this testing on yourself?" I was caught off guard and embarrassed. At that point, I had not done genetic testing. I was promoting a subject that I care deeply for and was advocating for others to do too-but I hadn't done myself. I felt like a fraud. I responded to the man "No, not yet...but I will soon." I ordered my Spit Kit from JScreen that day.

The kit arrived about a week later and I got my results soon after mailing it back. Despite not having been seriously dating someone/ I was not "in the parsha," / any of that shtuss, I feel it was incumbent upon me that while I am advocating for people to be aware of what genetic diseases they may carry, I should do the same whether I am in a "serious" relationship or not. As a person who has completed the testing, I can now advocate for it and give testimonial too.

Knowledge is power, and knowing about your genetic baggage will help you prepare for your future and feel empowered to be proactive about your health. I am grateful to this fellow for holding up a mirror to me that day and unintentionally encouraging me to take the plunge. Now when people ask me, "Talia, TKup, T, what do you want to be when you grow up?" I confidently respond, "A Genetic Counselor!"



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FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: The Commentator has decided to reprint this article from over 50 years ago written by then-Rosh Kollel Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein Z"l on the topic of the relationship between religious and secular studies, a topic which still has great relevance in our times. Since its original publication, the article has been reprinted several times — Gesher 1:7-17 (1963); Shalom Carmy (ed.) Torah U'Mada Reader; Experimental Edition II (New York, 1985) pp. 33-38; Leaves of Faith, volume 1 (2003), pp. 89-103.

From the Archives (April 27, 1961; Volume 26 Issue 10) — A Consideration of Synthesis from a Torah Point of View

By Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein

Ed Note: This is the third in a series of articles devoted to a discussion of the synthesis of our religious and secular studies. The author graduated Yeshiva College in 1953, received his Ph.D. in English from Harvard in 1957 and was ordained in 1959. Dr. Lichtenstein currently teaches English at Stern College for Women.

Few matters concern us—both disturb and affect us—more than the relation of our religious and secular studies. As students committed to Torah and its study and yet deeply engaged in the pursuit of a general education, we feel—and should feel—a strong need for understanding their respective positions in our lives. The need is related to both our outlook and experience. Philosophically, we recognize the necessity of determining how these varied aspects of our pluralistic culture coalesce within our overall *weltanschauung*. Practically, we are often confronted with the need for reconciling the demands which these aspects make upon both our loyalties and our energies. The formulation of a Torah attitude towards this question thus becomes of paramount importance.

Torah as a Way of Life

How is such an attitude to be formulated? I think it must rest on three fundamental premises. The first must be a clear and unwavering recognition of the absolute primacy of Torah as a way of life. This we posit as the supreme value—in a sense, as the *only* value. Fulfilling our spiritual destinies, furthering—in ourselves and in others—the development of Torah, strengthening and deepening our consciousness and experience of G-d, stimulating our love, fear, and knowledge of Him—this is the alpha and omega, our first, last, ever-present goal. Religion demands axiological monopoly; *yichud hashem* means simply that religion alone has absolute and comprehensive value. Everything else—no matter how socially or intellectually desirable—has only relative and secondary importance. Its worth is derived solely from the extent to which it contributes, however remotely, to the fulfillment of the divine will. On this point there can be no compromise and should be no misunderstanding. A man's religion means everything or it means nothing.

Torah Study

Our second premise is that the achievement of *chayei Torah*, a Torah life, is dependent on *talmud Torah*, Torah study. *Yahaduth* has always held that the highest development of the Jew's spiritual personality is impossible without the fullest exertion of his intellectual faculties — *lo am-haaretz chasid*. And this is true for many reasons.

Most obviously, study is a necessary prerequisite to proper religious observance. The fulfillment of moral and ritual norms is hardly possible without clear and accurate knowledge of both their general nature and particular details. But—as was pointed out by the *Beth Halevi*, *talmud Torah* is not merely a preliminary to observance. It is itself a *mitzvah*—indeed, one of the most basic. Torah study—ideally conceived as both an intellectual exercise and a religious experience—has been imposed by the Halacha as a universal daily obligation. Insisting that G-d must be served with the head as well as with hands and heart, *yahaduth* has seen intellection as an integral aspect of the religious life of every individual. It has never seen religious study as the private preserve of an ecclesiastical hierarchy or of a privileged intellectual elite. On the contrary, it has posited *talmud Torah* as the duty and destiny of all. It has realized that great success in the exercise of reason as a part

of man's search for G-d cannot come to all — or to many — but it has considered this no reason for abandoning the attempt. It is precisely for the effort, the *process* of the *recherche*, that the Halacha has pressed most insistently. Of *y'diath hatorah*, the knowledge of Torah, *Chazal* had relatively little to say; but of *talmud Torah* they can never say enough.

The significance of Torah study *per se* is twofold. First, it gives the Jew and insight—as direct and as profound as man is privileged to attain—into the revealed will of his Creator. It affords us an opportunity to get (*salve reverentia*) a first-hand knowledge of the divine will, to deepen and broaden our minute understanding of G-d's infinite reason. In its essence, the Torah — particularly the Halacha — constitutes an immanent expression of G-d's transcendent rational will. Through the study of its texts, the analysis of its principles, or the development of its ideas, we are able to approach haltingly that unattainable goal towards which Moshe Rabbenu strove so desperately—*hodian na eth drachecha*, “let me know thy way.”

Insight into Divine Wisdom

Secondly, Torah study—where properly pursued—affects our total spiritual personality. Partly because it does afford us a better insight into inscrutable divine wisdom, and partly because it engages the mind—and with it the whole man—in pursuit of religious knowledge, it transmutes our innermost being. The knowledge we can acquire of G-d's will increases our consciousness—and subconsciousness—of Him; the very act of weighing His words or of analyzing His laws draws us imperceptibly nearer to Him and to them. *Shemaor sheba machziron Lemutav*. It matters not what segment of Torah we study. Provided that we approach it with an awareness of its true character, *Baba Mezia* will do as well as *Brachot* and *Ohalot* will affect us no less than *Avot*. As both the *Baal Hatania* and Rav Chaim Volozhin—respective pillars of *Chassiduth* and *Mithnagduth*—agreed, within the proper context, an analysis of the most technical minutiae of *miggo lehotzi* or *chometz nukshah* is, at bottom, spiritually uplifting. Torah study leaves an indelible imprint upon our total personality and, in the process, transforms it. Of course, it can only affect this spiritual renovation if we approach it with the proper attitude. If the fundamental awareness of the divine character of Torah is lacking, its study can have little force. Indeed, if negatively approached, it may even have a pernicious effect—*lo zachah* (*lilomdah lishmah ulekaima*—Rashi), *naaseth lo sam mitha*. But given this basic acknowledgement, Torah study becomes the prime agent in effecting a gradual spiritual regeneration. Paradoxically, through a constant reciprocal process, it both sustains piety and is sustained by it. Keener study leads to greater piety and more fervent devotion leads to profounder knowledge. The dialectical interplay of *talmud Torah* and *yirath shomayim* is the heart of Torah life.

General Studies

If our first two premises are an insistence upon the primacy of Torah, and the awareness of the overriding importance of its study, our third is the recognition of the great—albeit ancillary—value of a broad spectrum of general studies. Their practical value is of course obvious. They help provide both professional or vocational training and a general orientation towards the innumerable pragmatic exigencies of human life. These are, in themselves, matters of little moment; but I am presently rather concerned with general studies; directly spiritual significance. To begin on a negative note, secular knowledge is invaluable for the

understanding of the environment in which we all, willy-nilly, find ourselves. No matter where we live, we are in the midst of a society which is generally indifferent if not hostile to religious values, one in which advancing the development of Torah entails an almost perpetual struggle. “Paganism,” said Eliot, “has all the best advertising space.” And “paganism” (to adopt a remark once made about the “genteel tradition”) is best defeated “in the classical way, by understanding it.” We cannot combat worldliness until we know what it stands for; we cannot refute the secularist unless we have mastered his arguments. Furthermore, if we wish not merely to react to our environment, but to act upon it, we must be thoroughly familiar with its mores and its values. If *bnei Torah* are to exert some positive religious influence upon modern society, they must clearly maintain some contact with it. To this end, secular study is virtually indispensable.

Aids to Torah Study

Secular knowledge is not merely a tactical weapon, however. It possesses considerable intrinsic merit. We may consider it under two headings. First, secular studies are often invaluable as a direct accessory to *talmud Torah* proper. Consider simply the aid we derive, by elucidation or comparison, from semantics in *Amos*, history in *Melachim*, agronomy in *Zeraim*, physiology in *Niddah*, chemistry in *Chometz Umatzoh*, philosophy in *Yesodei Hatorah*, psychology in *Avodah Zarah*, political theory in *Sanhedrin*, torts in *Bba Bathra*—one could continue almost indefinitely. As the Gaon insisted, there is hardly a province of Halacha for whose mastery scientific, historical, and linguistic knowledge is not only helpful, but indispensable. If its pursuit is not *talmud Torah*, it is, at the very least *hechscher talmud Torah*. And contrary to the general assumption, it is precisely the weaker student who stands most in need of such auxiliary aid. While learning *Sanhedrin*, R. Chaim Brisker could evolve his own practical theory. Most of us merely fumble.

Develop Spiritual Personality

While the importance of general knowledge as a direct auxiliary in the study of Torah is great, it is perhaps even more significant in a third capacity. Secular studies possess immense intrinsic value insofar as they generally help to develop our spiritual personality. Time and again, they intensify our insight into basic problems of moral and religious thought. History and the sciences show us the divine revelation manifested in both human affairs and the cosmic order. The humanities deepen our understanding of man—of his nature, functions, and duties. In one area after another, a whole range of general studies sustain religion—supplement it and complement it—in a sense deeper and broader than we have hitherto perceived. Of course, we cannot always see how a specific isolated detail can have such an effect. One could easily seize upon a minor point—say, L'Hospital's Rule or the dates of Louis-Philippe—and ask how *that* will improve us in any way. We should remember, however, that knowledge is attained only by degrees—nay, but minutes and seconds. Whether a specific fact is sufficiently relevant to merit study is a question which must be decided with reference to a particular context. No doubt one may lose wisdom in the search for knowledge and knowledge in the search for information, but we shall continue to pursue all three. No one would contend that metrics or grammar have any intrinsic merit. Yet their value as instrument-knowledge

SEE ARCHIVES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

ARCHIVES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

led the Ramban and the Baal Hamaor to master the one and all gedolei yisroel to learn the other.

Realistic Problems

I have so far been dealing with our question on a more or less ideal, abstract plane, that at which the respective positions of Torah and maddah can be neatly charted and at which they can be seen as existing in easy, perfect harmony. We are all well aware, however, that no such easy concord exists. We are rather only too familiar with complex problems and recurrent conflicts. Certainly, these problems neither can nor should be ignored; we slight them only at our own peril. Indeed, they are so formidable that they have led many to question whether religious and secular studies can enjoy any fruitful relation; whether, in the life of a ben Torah, there is any room at all for serious general education. At Yeshiva, we of course take this for granted. Historically, however, the question has been persistently and fervidly debated—and at the very highest levels. Chachmei yisroel have clearly been divided. As the Rama put it, "zu machloketh yeshana bein hachachomim." In Chazal proper, references to the problem are relatively few and, taken as a whole, rather inconclusive; they can be—and have been—interpreted in either direction. Subsequently, however, two conflicting views have

gravest folly were we to regard this controversy (as I am afraid many of us do) as a remotely irrelevant issue, almost as a historical curiosity. I have referred to it briefly to underscore its seriousness and, at the same time, to remind us of its pertinence. A question gedolei yisroel could discuss with such fervent interest cannot be lightly dismissed. Even if we feel justified in rejecting the verdict of some—we cannot, after all, agree with all—the very awareness that some many of our greatest men, before whom the best of us can only stand with bowed heads, steadfastly opposed secular studies, should in itself prove a sobering influence. It may, above all, by giving us the proper perspective, enable us to grasp the basic problems. For in the course of the controversy, virtually all the major questions concerning the relation of religious and secular studies have been raised. They are so fundamental that any formulation of a Torah view regarding this question must not merely answer them but consider them as part of its basic frame of reference.

Danger of Secular Studies

What are those problems? The principle objections against secular studies will bring them into clear focus. It has been asserted, first, that secular culture, especially of a freethinking nature, may exert a dangerously powerful influence over its student, luring him from the fold of Jewish tradition. Hence, the discussion has tended to center around the question of studying philosophy.

Secondly, it has been argued

that the study of even innocuous subjects constitutes a waste

of precious time, time which

might — nay, must — more

profitably be spent in deepening

and expanding one's knowledge

and understanding of Torah.

Vocational training, so runs the

argument, might be necessary,

but every moment available for

spiritual or intellectual concerns

must be devoted solely to Torah

study. Finally, many have

objected that, quite apart from

the time which they consume,

secular studies weaken the

individual's religious position

simply by diverting his interest

and thus sapping his personal

resources. By focusing his

attention elsewhere, often

by riveting it upon trifling

vanities, they help drain him of

his intellectual and emotional

energies. Diversification leads to

both diversion and distraction; it

leaves the student involved

with irrelevant matters but

unmindful of his own vital

religious concerns, "weeping the

The Torah—the Basis

Secondly, Torah must be the subjective basis from which we, as students, shall judge all else. From a religious point of view, secular studies—especially the social sciences and the humanities—should derive not only their value but their meaning from a religious source. For us, Torah is at once the criterion of truth and the touchstone of value. Whatever the ben Torah reads, he will see through its eyes; whatever he studies, he must judge by its standards. Its weltanschauung becomes the prism through which everything is seen. The importance of viewing all subjects with a critical appraisal of their relation to Torah can hardly be exaggerated. Failure to do so can only lead, at best, to intellectual schizophrenia. Whatever the Hegelians may say about history, in education, the successive independent study of thesis and antithesis hardly produces synthesis. "Literary criticism," Eliot has written, "should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological viewpoint." The remark may be applied to virtually every field of study. Of course, it does not apply with equal force to all areas. Some subjects — the humanities, for instance — are closer to our religious life than others. Even within the same subject, some aspects are more significant—potentially both more enlightening and more dangerous—than others. In all areas, however, Torah furnishes at least a perspective. In some, its relation is much more direct, as it may give us specific guidance.

In a larger sense, the need for a religious approach to secular culture is universal. At one point or another, everyone is in contact with secularism. And critical appraisal in the light of Torah is particularly necessary precisely at those points at which we tend to lower our guard.

Primacy of Torah

The position I have been advancing suggests practical corollary. If secular culture is to be judged from a religious perspective, religious knowledge is an obvious prerequisite to its study. Ideally, the primacy of Torah should therefore also be chronological. This is, indeed, what the Rambam held — wenimuko imo. The student's understanding of his religious outlook should always be more perceptive and more advanced than his appreciation of corresponding secular viewpoints. There is, however, a practical difficulty. How is one to know when he is ready? There is no simple answer. The context of every student differs, and each case must be decided on its individual merits. With regard to the study of idolatry, Chazal established the principle of lo thilmad laasoth avol ata lomed lehovin ulhoroth — "you shall not study (if it may lead) to practice but you may study in order to understand and pass judgment." When can one venture, confident of his purpose? The question must be decided on the basis of individual circumstances. A second difficulty is that, in some cases, the lack of early religious training makes the priority of Torah knowledge almost impossible. Under these circumstances, the gap may be partially filled by guidance from friends and teachers (to some extent, such guidance is of course needed by all). But in any event, it is important that the principle be kept intact.

Some may find my position illiberal. Perhaps it is. But are we to sacrifice eternal salvation on the altar of untrammelled objective inquiry? The danger of having our faith undermined by our studies is one which we dare not underestimate. Ideas are potent. They are powerful agents, directly affecting the growth of our spiritual personality.

If nothing else, modern propaganda has taught us how naive was Mill's notion that the free clash of ideas must result in the triumph of truth. Falsehood does not always stick to the rules. We must be on our guard and we must not venture out of our depth. Objectivity is fine, but one should beware of indifference. If knowledge is to be meaningful, it must be approached with a point of view. In engrossing ourselves in the "objective" study of a subject, there is danger that we may forget why we wanted to study it in the first place; hence the need for seeing it in a Torah perspective. Absolute perishuth is the wrong solution, but zehiruth must be unrelenting.

Our second major problem, no less pressing than the first, is of a more practical nature—simply a matter of budget. Working within the bounds of limited time and

SEE ARCHIVES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

THE COMMENTATOR PAGE FIV
A Consideration of Synthesis from a Torah Point of View
Ed Note: This is the third in a series of articles devoted to a discussion of the synthesis of our religious and secular studies. The author graduated Yeshiva College in 1953, received his Ph.D. in English from Harvard in 1957 and was ordained in 1959. Dr. Lichtenstein currently teaches English at Stern College for Women.
—as was pointed out by the Beth Halai, in Mishkan, is not merely a preliminary to observation. It is itself a mitzvah—indeed, one of ideally conceived and a religious exercise and a religious experience—has been imposed by the Halacha as a universal daily obligation. Insisting that G-d must be served with the head as well as with the hands and heart, yet an integral aspect of the religious life of every individual. It has never seen religious study as a private preserve of an ecclesiastical hierarchy or of a privileged intellectual elite. On the contrary, it has posited talmud Torah as the duty and destiny of all. It has realized that great success in the exercise of reason and in the pursuit of science and in the pursuit of man's search for G-d cannot come about unless the effort, the process of the recherche, the process of the achsha has pressed most insistently upon the student. The knowledge of Torah, Chazal had relatively little to say; but of talmud Torah, they can never say enough.
The significance of Torah study is great. First, it gives the Jew an insight—into the rect and as profound as man is capable of attaining. The value it reveals will of his Creator. It affords us an opportunity to get (safeguards) a first-hand knowledge of the divine will—to deepen and broaden our minute understanding of G-d's infinite Torah. In its essence, the Torah constitutes an immense expression of G-d's transcendent rational will. Through the study of it, we are able to approach haltingly towards the attainment of that which Moshe Rabbeinu strove so desperately—hadani nu etz drachonim, "let me know thy way."
Insight into Divine Wisdom
Secondly, Torah study—where properly pursued—affects our total spiritual personality. Purely because it does afford us a better insight into inscrutable divine wisdom, and partly because it engages the mind—and with it the whole man—in pursuit of religious knowledge, it transmits our innermost being. The knowledge we can acquire of G-d will increase our consciousness — and subconsciousness—of Him; the value of weighing His words or of analyzing His laws draws us imperceptibly nearer to Him and to them. Sheamar sheba mekubalim Lemaitz. It matters not what segment of Torah we study. Provided that we approach it with an awareness of its true character, well as brachos, will affect us no less than does. As both the Rav Hatani and Rav Chaim Volozin — especially the latter — have pointed out, the study of the various parts of the Torah are inseparable. We may consider it under one heading. First, secular studies are often invaluable as a direct aid to talmud Torah study. Consider simply the aid we derive, by elucidation or compar-

developed and they have persisted, with alternate ascendancy, through the centuries. If the Sephardic rishonim were mostly in favor, the Ashkenazic were generally opposed. If the Maharal extolled philosophy, the Maharshel condemned it. R. Yisroel Salanter might send his prime students to the finest universities in Europe; but Volozin—easily the greatest Yeshiva of modern times—shut its doors rather than introduce the most limited of secular programs. We are dealing here with gedolei yisroel, not mere obscurantists. The problems arising from the integration of Torah and secular studies must have been pressing indeed if they produced such controversy—and they still are pressing. We would be committing the

plane, in the realm of value. The primacy of Torah is also logical, however, We recognize it as the basis upon which all human culture, all arts and sciences, must stand. This recognition is twofold. First, on the objective level, we see the Torah as the logical groundwork of all truth. Its principles constitute the premises to which everything else is related; and they provide a philosophic framework within which all knowledge attains meaning. Of course, the details of thermodynamics or of the declension of pes can hardly be referred back to a specific pasuk or halacha. In its totality, however, Torah constitutes the objective foundation of all ruth: istakal b'oraitha, bara alma.

"Influence"

First, the problem of "influence." Its consideration leads us back to our initial premise. We have so far been concerned with the primacy of Torah on the axiological

plane, in the realm of value. The primacy of Torah is also

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FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

ARCHIVES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

energy, we are constantly confronted by the need for balancing the conflicting demands imposed by various studies. We return once again to our fundamental premises. Thus, translating the primacy of Torah into pragmatic terms, we must make the study of Torah our principal intellectual endeavor. Especially during our formative educational period—the high school and college years—it is imperative that we devote the major

secular education for all students at all times. Conditions vary, and vary widely. The point of diminishing returns—that at which the loss due to time spent on secular studies exceeds their contribution to the cause of Torah—differs in every case. No doubt for some a double program at the college level is too much. Certainly, for many if not most, stretching the college program over summers, a fifth year, or both, would be highly advisable. The principle should be kept in mind, however—the student's development as a

practitioner, may admittedly have to shift his emphasis. However, the critical college years should focus upon our personal development, and this means upon our growth as *bonei Torah*.

Commitment

The final problem—that of diversion—must be met by a single word: commitment. Realizing the danger of possible distraction, we can avert it by sincere dedication. We must recognize that, deeply involved as we are in other fields, we are committed to only one thing—Torah. This commitment should be both profound and comprehensive. It cannot merely involve an occasional resolution. Commitment is the permanent recognition, both emotional and intellectual, that Torah is our principal concern. Whatever else we may be doing, we know that Torah and its study, the conscious development of our spiritual personality, is the main thing. Compelling reasons may temporarily force us to lay it aside; but we can hardly wait to return. As Rabbenu Tam said, there can be no *hesech hadaath*, no distraction, with regard to *talmud Torah*. Any other activity, whether auxiliary to Torah or independently necessary, we regard as incidental. We have only one spiritual destiny. *Lolecheth bohem*, says the *Sifrei*, *velo lipoter mitochom*. We can never be done with the study of Torah.

Hence, even in later life, when many will find it necessary to devote the bulk of their energies to earning a livelihood, *talmud Torah* can never cease. Indeed, one should always recognize that *toratho umanutho*, his *main* occupation is *talmud Torah*, all else secondary. As the Rosh pointed out, the primacy is not measured by the crude yardstick of time. Most likely, the financier or grocer spends more time working than studying. What is important is, first, the value-judgment, and secondly, the determination to devote one's *spare* time to the study of Torah. A person's avocation—that to which he turns with joy when the letters of obligation have been cast off—reveals more of his character than does his vocation. As *bonei Torah*, committed to a life of Torah, we shall know where to turn. Lifelong study, quite apart from its intrinsic importance, is what gives this commitment a focus. It provides us with an activity which indeed renders everything incidental. Only through study, furthermore, can our total religious life become meaningful.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I should like to place our whole problem in a somewhat broader perspective. Ultimately, one's view of the relation of secular and religious studies depends upon a corresponding attitude towards the relation of religious and secular life. On the one hand, there may be a dualistic conception which would set up a rigid barrier between the two; which conceives of man's purely natural life as intrinsically corrupt; which sees the religious as being established not upon the secular but despite it; which, in short, considers *kodesh* and *chol* not simply distinct but disjunct. On the other hand, we have a unified conception which stems from a deep-seated belief that life is basically one; that the secular and religious aspects of human experience are in fundamental harmony, the latter perfecting rather than destroying the former; that, finally, while *kodesh* and *chol* are neither identical nor coextensive, they are both contiguous and continuous. I think the attitude of Torah is clearly aligned with the latter view, with what a Canadian scholar has called "the principle of integration." Our whole *weltanschauung*—from eschatology to ethics—is firmly grounded upon the profound conviction that the physical, the natural, the secular, is not to be destroyed but sanctified. The Halacha stresses not rejection but inclusion, not segregation but transmutation. It never sought to mutilate life in some Procrustean bed. Rather, with its vitality, flexibility, and breadth, the Halacha has repeatedly proved to be as expansive and as inclusive as life itself. Its catholicity, its magnificent scope—these are of its essence. The Torah is neither world-accepting nor world-rejecting. It is world-redeeming. In the education of a *ben Torah*, therefore, there is room for both secular and religious studies. Not equal room to be sure—the obverse of integration is the hierarchy of value, and within that hierarchy, Torah reigns supreme. At the bottom, however, the comprehension of Torah's outlook establishes a rich education as the basis of a rich life. The final word is with integration and harmony.

THE COMMENTATOR Thursday, April 27, 1961

Proper Motivation Seen as Vital in Secular Studies

(Continued from page 5)

Hence, the discussion has tended to center around the question of studying philosophy.

Secondly, it has been argued that the study of even innocuous subjects constitutes a waste of precious time, time which might be spent in deepening and expanding one's knowledge and understanding of Torah. Vocational training, so runs the argument, might be necessary, but every moment available for spiritual or intellectual concerns must be devoted solely to Torah study. Finally, many have objected that, quite apart from the time which they consume, secular studies weaken the individual's religious position simply by diverting his interest and thus sapping his personal resources. By focusing his attention elsewhere, often by riveting it upon trifling vanities, they help drain him of his intellectual and emotional energies. Diversification leads to both diversion and distraction; it leaves the student involved with irrelevant matters but unmindful of his own vital religious concerns. "weeping the death of Dido for love to Aeneas, but weeping not his own death for want of love to 'Thee.'"

"Influence"

First, the problem of "influence." Its consideration leads us back to our initial premise. We have so far been concerned with the primacy of Torah on the axiological plane, in the realm of value. The primacy of Torah is also logical, however. We recognize it as the basis upon which all human culture, all arts and sciences, must stand. This recognition is twofold. First, on the objective level, we see the Torah as the logical groundwork of all truth. Its principles constitute the premises to which everything else is related; and they provide a philosophical framework within which all knowledge attains meaning. Of course, the details of thermodynamics or of the declension of *pes* can hardly be referred back to a specific *parashah* or *halacha*. In its totality, however, Torah constitutes the objective foundation of all truth: *istakal b'oraitha, bara alma*.

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If *talmud Torah* gets the lion's share of our attention, general studies nevertheless are left with a sizable portion. The purists of course see them as a waste of time. One must point out, however, that we are dealing with a quantitative rather than a qualitative problem—not a question of whether to study but how much. If the principle of *bitul Torah* were to be carried out consistently to its logical conclusion, in applying it to, say, mathematics, we should stop teaching children how to count. The suggestion has yet to be entertained. Where, then, are we to stop? With multiplication? Fractions? Square roots? Logarithms? Determinants? Complex numbers? Clearly, budgeting is a process of weighing *schar keneged schar*, advantage against advantage; and it should be obvious that again no single answer can be offered. It would be ridiculous to insist upon a uniform standard of so much or so little secular education for all students at all times. Conditions vary, and vary widely. The point of diminishing returns—that at which the loss due to time spent on secular studies exceeds their contribution to the cause of Torah—differs in every case. No doubt for some a double program at the college level is too much. Certainly, for many if not most, stretching the college program over summers, a fifth year, or both, would be highly advisable. The principle should be kept in mind, however—the student's development as a

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I have hitherto been concerned with the liberal phase of education, that which merely concerns our development as human beings. As Chazal recognized, however, education also has a professional aspect—*lelamdo umanuth*. This aspect presents a new problem. Of course, hopefully, many students—especially the better ones—will go on to find a career working for Torah, either in the rabbinate or in education. For these, professional study (one hates to call it that) will happily coincide with further intensive *talmud Torah*. Such a course cannot be followed by all, however; and for those hoping to enter other fields, the problem of budgeting time acquires a new dimension. Particularly in a period so dominated by specialization, placing the primary emphasis upon the study of Torah would seem to block the path to professional success. Our fundamental thesis remains unshaken, however, as liberal educators from Newman to Hutchins have argued, full professional preparation should come in graduate school rather than in college. The graduate student, like the

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The Sunny Side Up

By Ellie Parker

Southerners joke that our roads are hot enough to fry an egg. I had always seen the saying as more of a figure of speech than a quantitative chemical measurement. However, as I lied stretched out on the hot asphalt in early June, I felt the searing truth of that old southern expression. It had hit home; I was the frying egg.

Seconds after attempting to cross the street on the Shabbat of June 9, 2012, I was hit by a pickup truck trying to make a yellow light. I remember turning my head and seeing the headlights approaching. What followed was the purest and most immediate feeling of fear.

People always ask me what it felt like to get hit by a car. I usually respond with something along the lines of, "not great". But, in reality, the thing that stands out to me the most about that morning is the feeling of the hot cement

on my back. Everything else in that moment felt too surreal to conceptualize, including the impact of the pickup truck against my hip. The only tangible sensation I felt was the bumpy gravel and the heat rising up from underneath me.

"UP UNTIL THIS EVENT TOOK PLACE, I FELT THAT I HAD COMPLETE CONTROL OVER MY LIFE. GRANTED I WAS ONLY FOURTEEN, BUT I VIEWED MYSELF AS IMMORTAL."

It is difficult to describe the ways my life changed after that. I spent four weeks in the hospital followed by months of physical therapy. I have scars from the surgery and the accident. I have permanent nerve damage on my left knee. I have a bump on the side of my leg that will be forever indented from the impact of the car's bumper. But, more than anything, I was left with the recollection of the scorching earth.

I have always found crime shows entertaining. Not just because of the acting, but because you can always guess the ending. I would watch Law and Order and remark at how stupid the characters had been. I would think about how I would have done it differently--not have become a victim, solved the case faster, or committed the perfect crime.

Up until this event took place, I felt that I had complete control over my life. Granted I was only fourteen, but I viewed myself as immortal. I was reckless and dangerous and I loved to test the limits of anything conventional. In fact, the morning of June 9th, I had opted to jaywalk instead of using the designated crosswalk as I insisted that walking the extra ten feet was a waste of my time.

Few decisions in life are met with immediate repercussions. However, my teenage negligence had run its course, and its consequences were realized. More palpable than the pain of the injury I had suffered was the pain of the helplessness I felt. I was the egg.

The heat of the ground roused me into a new realm of consciousness. One in which I saw the value and fragility of my life and my actions. True, I had been flipped and fried, but the lesson I learnt was worth the scar it left -- sometimes the best way to prove mortality is to face it 'hip-on.'



"Wind, Unwind"

Courtesy of The Yeshiva University Poetry Club

By Irwin Leventer

I choose, precisely:
Evaluate,
Experience world
That I design.

Not thou, Sisyphus,
Hater of fate,
Wallowing deep in
Stars of mine.

Renew, reform,
Yes, contemplate!
Starting anew is
Quite divine!

Tread though with care,
Don't complicate
The world's harmonic
Wind, unwind.



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champions the inclusion of all Jewish individuals
with disabilities in the full spectrum of Jewish life.
Yachad is an agency of the Orthodox Union



Off to a Running Start

By Benjamin Koslowe

Stepping onto the treadmill. A hum of a dozen violins, not discernibly major or minor, in a distant recess of the mind. Arms stretch behind the back. Turn on the

new load of classes, still unclear how I will possibly balance my work this semester. Will I have to work like a machine. Feet begin to move, hastening smoothly to a trot in a manner of seconds; a few more seconds and—was winter break long enough? Am I relaxed right now?—they are rhythmically stomping. By compulsion, basically.

But the strings quickly assert their disorder. Horns and trumpets assist in a scurry of frenzied noise that hushes for a moment, only to spring up instantaneously in a nearly full orchestral counterpoint of tension overlaid with dread. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is still very far away from

any breather, Pesach vacation, summer, or even Elysium. A quarter mile now behind. Blood vessels sufficiently dilated to accommodate oxygenated blood. Inertial pain in the past, too, though lactic acid not yet an insufferable flood that will eventually end this trek.

Somehow the music doesn't progress quite linearly—*Another semester, somewhat closer to a set career path, though not quite*—as a hum of relaxed flutes, which interrupt the aggressive first movement more than halfway through, already float to mental surface.

And suddenly there are drums. *Middle of the second? Yeah, middle of the second movement.* Sneakered feet boom boom boom to the beat of timpani. A clarinet and oboe melody races along, almost impatiently. *Which readings to do, which to skip?* Speeding up by a pace and a half. And the frantic, screeching violins are back. *I just gotta get out of this prison cell. One day I'm gonna be free, Lord!* Just over a mile. *What does Queen have to do with German classical music?*

Arms waving like two spinning turbines. *Did I make a good impression in the first week of classes? Definitely could've been more precise in that logic proof. Could've been more convincing in that textual analysis.* Sometimes focusing on individual stressors is more effective management. *One, two, three.* And suddenly the blank wall ahead is a morning beach. Not a machine beneath, but sand, and fellow barefooted Olympics runners in front and behind. Running to the beat of an acoustic piano over a soft, yet audible surf. Synthesized French horns introduce Vangelis's sweeping piano theme, iconic from *Chariots of Fire* and countless running

not away from unease and concerns, no, that's not quite right, running with those things, I take them and run towards them, I am not their object, they are my

tributes. A feeling of neurons firing in the throat and skull. Muscle pain is good pain. No pain, no gain, I think they say. A sheen of sweat on forearms and forehead. Hands in the air, impossible not to beam from ear to ear.

Because the greatest symphony ever composed is back. No longer imagined sound alone, but a full concert hall too.

Eight miles per hour, why not nine, yeah, nine, seems apropos, no? A crash of violins; ten-second recollections of the first three movements; each movement duly rejected with a harsh screech. It's Beethoven conducting in 1824, but also Bernstein in 1989, Dudamel in 2018. There are no more confines, is no more danger. The word is

joy, sounds correct, joy, because the current apprehension is not unique, the collective history of me, the collective brotherhood of mankind, has managed, we've always seen through the misty early voyages the

FREUDE. FREUDE SCHÖNER GÖTTERFUNKEN, implores the bass soloist—joy, beautiful spark of divinity. The full orchestra, now accompanied by piccolo and contrabassoons too, majorly seconds the sentiment of the "Ode to Joy" chorales. Sprinting, soaring, darting, flying. By the woodwind-and-tenor dominated Turkish March, there's no question as to the imminence of runner's high, fully euphoric from feet up to temple. Things make sense now. There is order in the universe. Pacing along patiently, but not for long, because the full choir is about to sing and *I've made it this far, the music is almost done, DEINE ZAUBER BINDEN WIEDER WAS DIE MODE STRENG GETEILT, your magic binds again what convention strictly divides, the song always there to revisit, but for now, almost done, almost served its full purpose, hearing that*

its words are sincere. The coda is pure celebration. And then, with a standing ovation, it is over.

Outside now. Brutal cold, one of those winds that won't suffice for just the head-nod, insisting on a full-body embrace. The air howls over Rubin and Belfer Hall. January in New York. Eyes close, then, and there are hills, rolling green hills in every direction. The gale is music insisting on an encore. But there's no need. Look at the *real world outside, just some ugly buildings and streets, but, in a weird way, kind of nice. I can feel free, even in this*

cement jungle. Light pollution is only so thick a mask. *SUCH' IHN ÜBER'M STERNENZELT!*—seek Him above the canopy of stars! The air hints freshly mowed grass, Adirondacks quality air, sunny days, pleasant evenings. *FREUDE SCHÖNER GÖTTERFUNKEN, GÖTTERFUNKEN!*



I Wrote This at 1:12 PM

By Michelle Naim

My favorite place in the world is the airport. Yes, that's right, in all its glory—the TSA, the annoying passport lady, and the crying baby in line behind me. I'm sitting in the airport right now, as I write this. I'm waiting to take off Delta flight 458 to Los Angeles from gate B32. Take-off is at 1:50 pm, it is 1:12 pm right now. There's a guy sitting to my right with a maroon hoodie, and a baseball hat, fiddling with his phone -- probably texting his girlfriend. There's a woman sitting to my left wearing jeans and an olive-green jacket. She's carrying a Herschel backpack and wearing hipster eyeglasses--probably from Warby Parker. The escalator taking people to their other destinations, like gates B30 and A12, is directly behind me. Some people look tired, others look excited, a handful more have a distinct look of angst and anger from the long lines and delays on the perspective flight.

I can't help but sit in awe. It's amazing. Imagine how many stories exist in one place.

"IT'S THE PLACE WHERE I LOOK AROUND AND START TO REMEMBER ALL THE PEOPLE I'VE LOST, I'VE MET, ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE HURT ME, LEFT ME, OR LOVED ME. ALL THESE PEOPLE REMIND ME OF THE BIGGER PICTURE. THERE IS SOMETHING BIGGER THAN US."

Imagine the infinite number of places these people have been, the multitudes of places they've seen, the countless people they know, and the numberless amount of people they'll meet. It's just amazing. This guy's girlfriend of five years just broke up with him so he's trying to get away, this elderly man and woman have been married for thirty-five years and are going to visit their grandchildren, I'm going to see my mom, dad, and two brothers who I haven't seen in three months. I miss them so much.

This is the place that never fails to amaze me. It's the place that triggers me to start thinking about bigger parts of my life—my family, my friends, and the opportunity to

even get on an airplane. It's the place where I look around and start to remember all the people I've lost, I've met, all the people who have hurt me, left me, or loved me. All these people remind me of the bigger picture. There is something bigger than us.

This place is my favorite place in the world because people are here for all types of reasons, but ultimately, they're all just people trying to get somewhere. Some are entrepreneurs, some fathers, some daughters. But they are all here. And they are all trying to do the same thing. Get somewhere else. The airport, metaphorically, is the birthplace of embracing change, or sometimes, returning to where we once were. Sometimes we have to do that in life. Sometimes we are forced to change, or make a change, and other times we revert to our old selves. The airport is the place where we are literally leaving a place behind in order to reach a different destination. Or, at other times, we are going back home. The airport is also the place of connections—connecting flights and stop-overs. People stopping in between their destinations, maybe to admire a different city, or take a few hours to nap before they have to catch their next flight.

It is in places like the airport, the places in between, that matter. This place is the birthplace of growth. It's not so much about the destination, it's about the process. It's about the airport. The crying baby behind me in line, it's about her. It's about that tired and pissed off TSA lady. It's about the struggle of removing our shoes in line, taking our jackets off, raising our hands up in the air above our heads so that we can be scanned, checked, and rechecked with our backs to the hundreds of people waiting in line behind us. It's about all the spaces in-between our destinations. I love the in-betweens. I love the airport.



An Analysis of Trends in Major Selection on the Wilf and Beren Campuses

By Avi Strauss

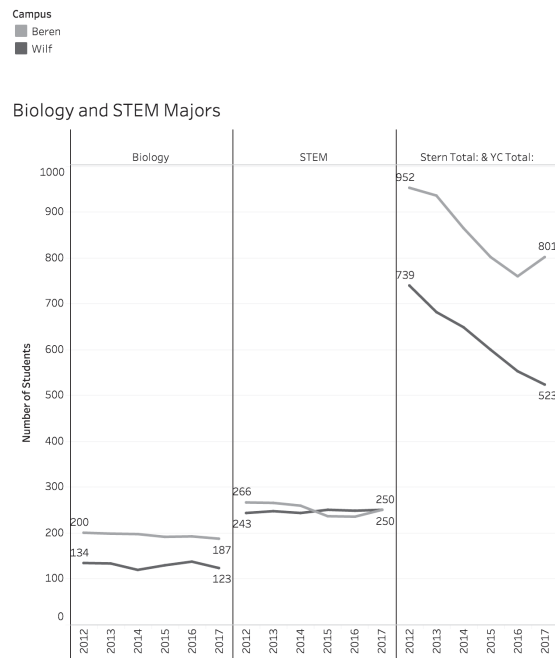
In an extensive review of declared majors on campus, it has become clear biology is the largest declared major on both the Wilf and Beren campuses, comprising 26.0% and 33.3% of all declared liberal arts majors, respectively.

At Wilf, Accounting was the second most popular major, with 104 students, followed by psychology in a distant third, with 59 declared majors. At Beren, Psychology took the number two spot with 123 majors, followed by shaped major with 52 declared majors, and English, with 41.

STEM

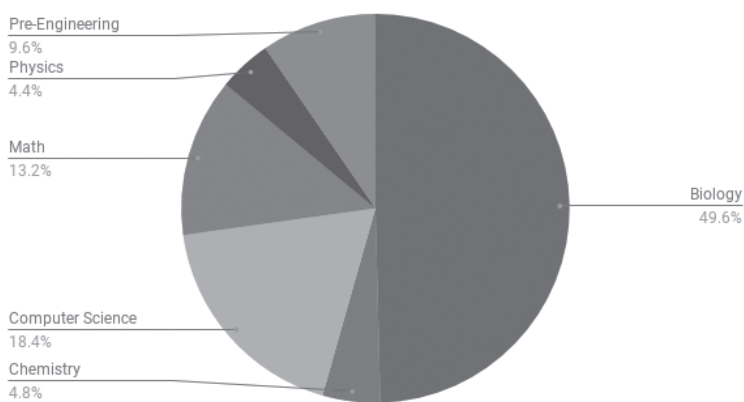
In terms of Yeshiva University's liberal arts undergraduate programs, the sciences, known by the acronym STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), dominate declared majors. At YU, STEM majors include biology, chemistry, computer science, math, physics, and the physical sciences. At Yeshiva College, STEM accounts for 60.0% of declared majors, while at Stern College for Women, STEM accounts for 42.7% of declared majors. Last semester, both undergraduate programs had 250 STEM majors, respectively.

However, these percentages must be tempered by noting that the vast majority of STEM majors are biology students, the largest major on both campuses. In Fall 2017, there were 124 declared biology majors at YC and 187



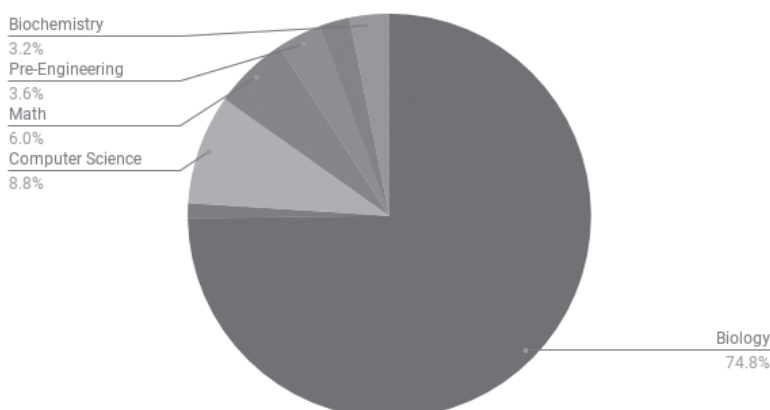
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Wilf STEM Breakdown, Fall 2017



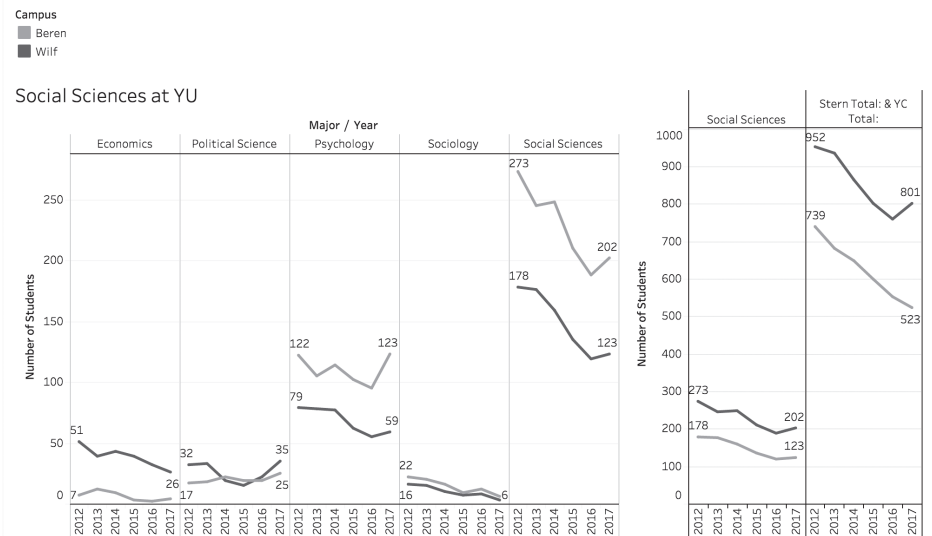
declared biology majors at SCW. At Beren, biology majors compose 75% of all STEM students, a percentage that has remained virtually unchanged over five years, even with the formal launching and growth of the computer science major downtown, in which there are now over 20 declared student majors.

Beren STEM Breakdown, Fall 2017



Social Sciences

The story of the social sciences on the two campuses is different both substantively and in terms of trends. At Beren, the percentage of social science majors is essentially flat, increasing just 0.4% in the last five years. The social sciences include majors like psychology, economics, sociology and political science.



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The number of students majoring in psychology, by far the largest social science major at Beren, has also remained flat (122 in 2012, 123 in 2017). Psychology accounts for 78% of the declared social science majors at Stern.

Currently there are just 4 economics majors at Beren, and there have not been more than 12 since 2013. Interestingly, the number of sociology majors has declined significantly from 22 to just 6 over those five years.

In contrast, on the Wilf campus, the number of social science majors has declined by nearly 36% in the same five-year span. The social sciences now comprise just 13.2% of declared majors at Wilf.

Like at Beren, psychology is the largest social science at Wilf, with 59 out of 114 students (51.7%), part of the more equitable distribution of social science majors at the uptown campus.

A significant part of the decline in social science majors uptown is attributable to a decline by half in students studying Economics since 2012. Currently there are just 26 economics students at Wilf, compared to 51 in 2012.

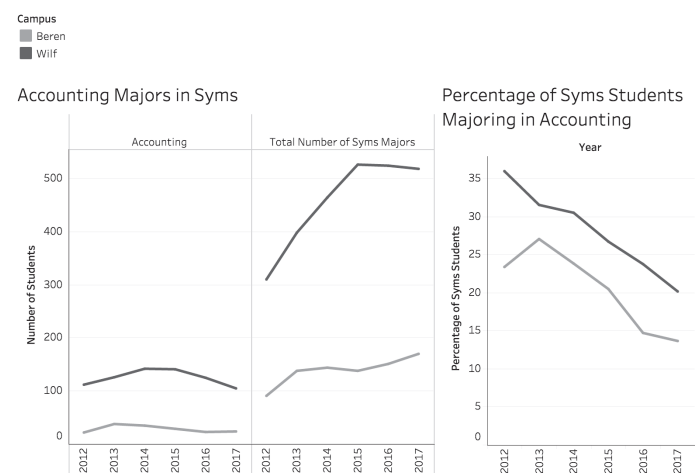
The remainder of the uptown social science majors is composed of 35 political science students, with little change since 2012 and 3 sociology majors, down from 16 five years ago.

Humanities

On a whole, the number of humanities majors have declined significantly since 2012, as reported by The Commentator in December. In Fall 2017, humanities majors represented just 4.7% of declared majors (44 students) on the Wilf campus and 10.9% of declared majors (82 students) at Beren. Majors like English, philosophy, history, the languages, and the arts compose the humanities disciplines.

SYMS

While there is less information available on the breakdown of majors in Syms at



Created by Shlomo Friedman

both Wilf and Beren, it is possible to determine the percentage of students majoring in accounting currently, and compare it the percentage since 2012.

At Wilf, accounting majors currently compose 20.1% of Business undergrads. The percentage of Syms students studying accounting has declined year after year since Fall 2012, when the percentage was nearly 36%. Interestingly, despite a dramatic increase of over 200 students in Syms since 2012 (to 517 students, from 309), the current number of accounting majors is less than it was in 2012, when there were 111 accounting majors.

SEE MAJOR TRENDS , CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

It's Not True, The Disaster Artist is Not a Bad Movie, It Is Not

By Matthew Silkin

The Room is a terrible, terrible movie. Ostensibly, it's a drama about a well-to-do man named Johnny whose fiancée Lisa cheats on him with his best friend Mark. I say ostensibly because the end product strays so far from the original intention of what director/writer/executive producer/main actor (yes, all four at once) Tommy Wiseau intended that the simplicity of the story is lost in the amalgamation that is the rest of the components of the movie.

The dialogue is atrocious; standout lines include "They betray me, they break their promise, they trick me, and I don't care anymore," "Leave your stupid comments in your pocket," and most famous of all, "I did not hit her, it's not true, it's bullsh*t, I did not hit her, I did not. Oh hi, Mark." There are multiple subplots that are introduced and never resolved, such as Lisa's mother revealing a breast cancer diagnosis that is never touched on again for the remainder of the movie. The acting nearly across the board is subpar - probably the best actor in the entire movie is Dan Janjigian, who plays Chris-R -- yes, that's his name, don't ask why -- a violent drug dealer who spends his five minutes onscreen demanding his money from side character Denny before being carted off to jail by Johnny and Mark. The camera work is shoddy, with several shots throughout the film noticeably out of focus.

Even if only one of the aforementioned components were terrible and the rest were fantastic, *The Room* would still end up in the history books as a bad movie. It is, however, the culmination of everything terrible that makes *The Room* much more than just a standard fare terrible movie, but an enigma: how did such a cacophony of awful ideas and components come together?

This is where *The Disaster Artist* comes in. Originally a book by Greg Sestero - the actor who plays Mark - and reporter Tom Bissell, and adapted into a film by James Franco, *The Disaster Artist* tells two stories in one: the behind-the-scenes look at the the making of *The Room*, and the more overarching relationship between Greg, played by Dave Franco, and Tommy, played by James Franco. Whereas the book presents these two stories in alternating chapters, thereby allowing for a separation between the behind-the-scenes material and the character study of Tommy, the movie is chronological, beginning with Greg and Tommy meeting in an acting class in San Francisco in 1998 and ending with the premier of *The Room* in Los Angeles in 2003. It is in this respect that I believe the movie somewhat edges out the book; having one running narrative allowed the two stories that Greg was telling to flow seamlessly into each other, rather than have the dramatic shifts in time that the book has. The storytelling is great... for the most part (more on that later). I never once felt disinterested by the action taking place on screen, even during what could be considered the duller moments of the film.

Another strength of the film lies in the acting. Dave Franco gave a great performance as Sestero, with other highlights being Seth Rogen as *The Room*'s script supervisor Sandy Schklair, Ari Graynor as Juliette Danielle (who plays Lisa), Josh Hutcherson as Philip Haldiman (who plays Denny), and, in a short but surprising role, Zac Efron

as Dan Janjigian. *The Disaster Artist* opens by interview various celebrities, including Keegan-Michael Key, Tina Fey, J. J. Abrams, and Zach Braff, about *The Room*, which added a documentary-esque element, helping the viewer

"...IF YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ALL THAT REAL LIFE STUFF, AND JUST WANT TO WATCH AN ENTERTAINING STORY ABOUT A TERRIBLE MOVIE AND EVERYTHING THAT WENT INTO IT, I WOULD HIGHLY SUGGEST THE DISASTER ARTIST!"

get into the headspace of how surprisingly influential *The Room* became within the Hollywood circle. But the standout performance in *The Disaster Artist* is, far and away, James Franco's portrayal of Tommy Wiseau. Franco perfectly captures many of Wiseau's ties and mannerisms, to the point where it was extremely difficult to separate the actor from the role. Additionally, while any actor can churn out an unintentional bad performance, it takes a great actor to intentionally be a bad actor, and Franco nails it in this film.

In fact, one of the most impressive aspects of the movie comes from the end, at the premier of *The Room*. The lights in the theater dim, the projector starts rolling, and it slowly dawns on the audience of *The Disaster Artist* that James Franco has painstakingly filmed near-perfect recreations of scenes from *The Room* - which are shown side by side with the actual scenes during the credits. This attention to detail leads me to one of my main criticisms with the film - its inaccuracy.

Of course, I expected that the film would make some minor changes in order to dramatize the plot, as well as cut some anecdotes from the book that, in retrospect, seem to be unimportant. But the changes that James

Franco made to the story, especially when he has a book that he can use to reference how the events actually took place, were jarring to the point where I feel that it was no longer an accurate representation of Greg's story. For example, the first big setback at the very beginning of *The Room*'s filming, and that Greg spends a good chapter and a half talking about, is Tommy replacing the original actor slated to play Mark with Greg at the last minute. In the film, this actor is nowhere to be seen, and Greg is cast as Mark from the beginning of production. Another major change that I felt was unnecessary comes from the end of the film, at the premier of *The Room*. Franco, as Tommy, becomes disheartened at the fact that the crowd is laughing at his film and not taking it seriously, but after a short pep talk from Greg, goes back into the premier and thanks everyone for enjoying what he has now accepted as a black comedy. In the book, however, it took several years before Tommy embraced the cult status that his movie garnered, insisting that people were misunderstanding the drama in the movie. To be honest, I'm not exactly sure why Franco decided to change those two aspects; the former would have added some more comedy and/or drama (depending on how they would have presented it), and the latter would have made Tommy's reaction to the premier a little more realistic, both from a storytelling sense and from real life.

If you're a fan of *The Room* and want an accurate representation of how exactly the movie came to be, I would suggest the book over the movie simply because of the accuracy problems I have with the film. However, if you don't care about all that real life stuff, and just want to watch an entertaining story about a terrible movie and everything that went into it, I would highly suggest *The Disaster Artist*. It might not be 100% faithful to the real life events, but I would be damned if I didn't have a good time seeing how my favorite bad movie came to be. And if you hate *The Room*, well, you can just leave your stupid comments in your pocket.



Shabbat in Amsterdam

By Nechama Lowy

“My alarm blared obnoxiously at 8 AM--a wakeup call to rub the sleep from my eyes and prepare for another day of my winter break travels in Amsterdam. Nervously tiptoeing around my sleeping friend and travel partner, I could hardly contain my excitement as I hurriedly showered and applied my makeup with the utmost precision. While I normally prefer jeans on a cold, rainy day, today was a special occasion, so I pulled on a casual dress and slipped out the door towards the train station.

The day was *Shabbat*, a day I do not normally choose to attend *shul*, yet, being in Amsterdam and curious to experience services unlike those that I had grown up with, to spend my morning sleeping would have been a waste. As the train whizzed by, looming buildings masked by

Attempting to appear casual and unsuspecting, I smiled and explained that I was on winter break from Yeshiva University, and, since it was Shabbat, I felt it was the ideal time to truly experience a European Jewish community. Satisfied with my apparent innocence, the guard unlocked the gate and pointed me towards the *shul*.

Walking through the courtyard, I came across an open door and proceeded to take my first steps inside what I expected to be a magnificent, breathtaking, ancient synagogue. Instead, I was faced with whitewashed walls and a narrow, stuffy staircase that led up to the women's section, a balcony that with barely enough space to clutch my siddur while awkwardly squeezing past the row of regulars, a sweet group of varied age women. In their kindness, each member offered to help find my spot in the siddur, unbeknownst that I came from a well educated

members. My first observation was how men and women sat side by side, *mehitzah* gone, leaving only friendliness and affability in its place. Not all male members were wearing kippot, and I wondered if that was a sign of non-Orthodoxy or merely just personal tradition.

I was clearly not a local, carrying my backpack and hesitantly standing around, so it was quite relieving when a member motioned me over to shake my hand and welcome me to the synagogue. First addressing me in Hebrew, he appeared amused at how uncomfortable I looked and invited me on a tour of the authentic Portuguese Synagogue-- to my utmost relief, as it would have been a shame to spend Shabbat abroad and not see a piece of Jewish history. Apparently, there were many more foreigners visiting than I thought, all eager to take in as much culture and life as possible, and we all gathered around the courtyard to begin the tour with our Amsterdamian guide.

Unlocking the massive door that led into the ancient building, I was in awe of the overpowering ceiling and simplistic yet embellished architecture. The guide explained that, wanting to preserve the authenticity of the *shul*, no heating or electricity had been installed throughout the years. During the winter, the temperature in the *shul* became unbearable, and eventually the congregation decided to lead services within the house next door. In addition to the lack of heating, instead of lights, the *shul* was lit with thousands of candles, an expensive necessity, but one that seemed to create an intense, more intimate environment.

Admiring the beautiful decor, I imagined davening in a place rich with history and feeling, such as the *shul* I was standing in. While there were no plush seating covers or comfortable armrests, while the floor was dusty and the interior anything but modern, there was a certain beauty that the environment radiated, one that was surely contributed to by the brutal past. The synagogue had a raw and rough history, once a beautiful community center, overridden by enemies in World War II to be used as a meeting place by the Nazis. Eventually returned to its rightful owners, the synagogue holds services to the Jews to this day, a symbol of preservation of the continuous Jewish life within Amsterdam.

I contemplated the community I was visiting. On a Shabbat morning, there

were Jews in black hats and Jews checking their phones, all in one room standing side by side, coexisting in such a natural way, it was almost inbred within their attitudes towards each other. Perhaps, what I gained that day was more than just the feeling of Shabbat, but a feeling of acceptance. Nuances and personal observances aside, the congregation created a feeling of togetherness and inclusivity in such an apparent way that no Jew felt the need to hide their struggles or beliefs. Beyond the feeling of comfort I felt, an inner peace was born within a constant conflict to balance observance of laws with reputation within the Jewish community. Struggling to not stand out within an Orthodox community is challenging and often exhausting, but perhaps, instead of focusing on differences, the emphasis should be on standing together.



the gray fog and my stop approached, I felt butterflies in my stomach reacting to the uncertainty at the community I was soon to encounter. No judgement was yet to be passed; I had the ability to present myself in any manner I chose, be that as the polite, withdrawn American girl or the stranger who befriended the locals and attempted to create relationships with foreigners.

Following the map on my phone, I could have easily missed the camouflage locked gate, barred shut to prevent intruders, had it not been for the young man guarding watch nearby. Noticing my confused expression or, perhaps suspicious of why I was lurking around, he hastily placed his coffee down to assist me.

“Where are you from and why are you at this synagogue?” he inquired.

Jewish background.

The dress was unnecessary, as it turned out. Many women were wearing jeans or regular pants, a refreshing stance on dress which seemed to matter less than the importance of ensuring that there was weekly participation by the members.

Services went by smoothly, and I was pleasantly surprised at how similar the performances of a European Orthodox *minyan*, such as the *Chazzan's* repetition and Torah reading, were compared to the classic Ashkenazi *minyan* I was familiar with back home. How refreshing it was, how reassuring of Judaism's tradition, that across the world, Jews live so differently yet pray so similarly.

Following *Mussaf*, the congregation gathered in a side room to recite *kiddush* and socialize with other

MAJOR TRENDS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Today, there are 104. This means that while Syms has grabbed larger shares of the overall Wilf undergraduate population, it has done so by attracting students almost entirely to Finance, Marketing, Management, and Business Intelligence and Marketing Analytics.

A similar but less dramatic shift is evident from the number of accounting students at Beren. While the undergraduate population at Syms-Beren has nearly doubled from 90 to 169 since 2012, the number of accounting students now is essentially the same as it was in 2012 (despite a rise and drop between then and now). The percentage of Syms-

Beren students majoring in accounting has dropped 9.7%, from 23.3% to 13.6%.

Editors' Note: The percentages and numbers listed refer to the number of declared majors. Students are able to declare multiple majors, and in these cases, both majors were counted. Additionally, students are given a three semester period from their arrival on campus to declare their major, so many current students in their first few semesters are undeclared. Only the declared majors of full-time students were considered.

All numbers were obtained from YU's Office of Institutional Research.

On Tolerance and Prayer

By Elliot Heller

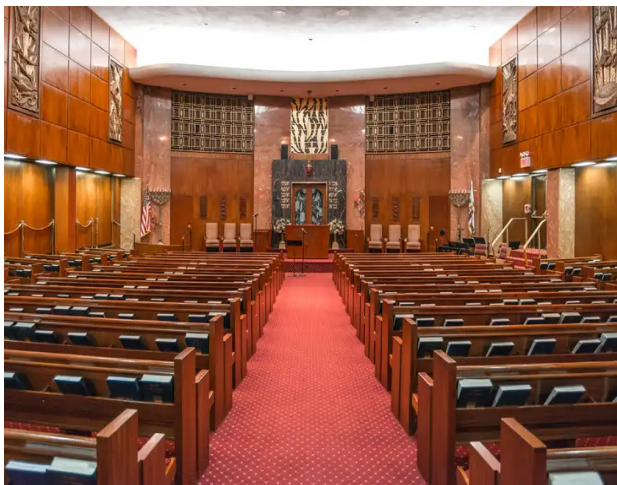
Our community prides itself on inclusion. From the existence of the Office of Student Disabilities, to the presence of a (now sign-protected) women's section in each of the batei midrash on campus, to the various cultural and political clubs and societies, diversity – as much as can be had in a Jewish university composed of mostly orthodox students – is encouraged.

One of the primary ways that a Jewish community expresses its diversity is through its religious practice. While the nature of *halacha* is to enforce uniformity, there exists, by design, much space for uniqueness and individual expression. “Just as their faces are unique, so too is their experiential knowledge” (Berachot 58b). Prayer in particular is one area in which this room for individual expression is evident. The *Da'at Zekeinim* lists seven different types of prayer; Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus counts ten. There are the shucklers and the statues, the enthusiastic and the introverted, the “Glueckers,” “Kleiners,” and “Rubiners,” if you will.

It is for these reasons that I was dismayed to read of two disapproving sentiments regarding new or proposed Shabbat minyanim on campus. The first was an opinion piece printed here, criticizing the “Klein @ 9” minyan for dividing our community unnecessarily. After a lengthy and puzzling Pokémon analogy, the author claimed that the difficulty in finding baalei k'riah for both Klein and the 9:00 minyan in Rubin since Klein's inception made keeping both minyanim unsustainable, and suggested that the ruach seekers (Pikachus?) of Klein would find the environment that they seek if they would but volunteer to be chazzan in Rubin.

Quite simply, this seems to be a gross miscalculation. The Rubin minyan is known for being brisk and to the point, rarely taking longer than an hour and a half. This isn't a matter of circumstance - many choose to go to Rubin because of its speed. Were a Kleiner to seize the amud and

lead a slower, song-filled service, it's hard to imagine that this would sit well with many of the regular minyan goers. Not to mention what the Kleiners would be giving up by disbanding – the more “heimish” environment that the Klein *beit midrash* provides – the reason many Friday night Carlebach minyan attendees insisted on keeping the minyan there even on weeks when it was met with overflowing crowds. If there is a leining problem, it ought to be addressed. And it can be. The Rubin gabbaim are welcome to follow their Klein counterparts' lead and send out Y-studs to ensure their Torah reading is covered. But



asking a dozens-strong, year-old minyan with a specific purpose to fold and try to crash someone else's party sounds like a lose-lose.

The second sentiment was more troubling. While I disagree with the author of the aforementioned article, I must credit him for crafting a well-written piece based on a genuine concern. The same cannot be said of the plethora of mocking posts that greeted a post on the Facebook group “Yeshiva University: In the Know,” from someone

who was looking to start an ultra-fast Shabbat morning minyan that would finish in about an hour. The posts varied slightly, but looked something like this: “looking to start an efficient shabbos morning minyan. We will finish in a half hour, skipping the k'riat hatorah, chazarat hash"tz and musaf (who likes korbanot anyway?).”

While the posts' authors will likely say that they were just joking, the implication of these posts (I speak of the first few – later ones were merely - and humorously - poking good fun at how the topic had become a meme) was clear – having an hour-long minyan while maintaining *kavana* and respect for *davening* is impossible, and anyone who seeks such a thing has some serious issues with *tefila*. A sincere request to create a space that would give some students a more meaningful *tefila* experience was met with scoffs and mockery.

While I would no doubt be out of place at such a minyan, it should not be inconceivable to us that some would be more comfortable in such a setting than in the current options. Some find it difficult to sit in shul for extended periods of time, and enjoy the fast, “get-your-blood-pumping” style of morning prayer. Some even find that davening a rapid *shemoneh esrei* actually helps with their *kavana*, as their focus on not skipping words forces their mind to stay focused. Others may be interested in the minyan because they are on call, for *Hatzalah* or a sick spouse or child. Others may simply wish to get home early (and get a good-night's sleep) and watch their children so that their wives can go to shul.

At the end of the day, our tolerance and universalism are woefully inadequate if they extend only to those whose viewpoints we share. It behooves us to remember that *tefila* is not one-size-fits-all, and to think carefully about what we “memify.” In the spirit of community and acceptance, I pray we do.

The Principle of Localization: Bringing National Politics Back Home

By Avi Strauss

In an age where we are always told to think bigger, the United States is losing sight of one of its founding governmental principles: thinking small.

From the origins of this nation, the Founding Fathers were faced with a pressing problem—how could a stable democracy take shape over such an expansive, culturally and economically diverse country, as large and as different as the 13 colonies? Delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 grappled with this question, especially as it relates to representation for large and small states, and disagreement over the proposed solution almost sunk negotiations entirely.

Fortunately, the Founders settled on a compromise—one that enshrined the notion of local governance, cooperative federalism, and the importance of the state autonomy over many social issues, cementing the long term stability and survival of the American experiment.

The Constitution is littered with clauses consecrating this notion, but the Tenth Amendment stands out amongst them all, reserving “the powers not delegated to the United States [federal government]...to the States respectively.” As a practical matter, this meant the states could legislate on all matters related to education, elections, healthcare, marriage, and criminal issues. Each state, with diverse religious, racial, and ethnic groups could decide for itself, within the general scope of federally preserved liberties, how to govern its own state. Should a citizen find a state's laws too burdensome or liberal for their sensitivities, they could easily move elsewhere while retaining their rights as a citizen of the United States.

And for around 150 years, this happy marriage between federal and state law ensured stability between the states and the overall survival of the nation as a whole. Yet, beginning with FDR's New Deal and spiraling with successive presidencies expanding the executive umbrella to include more powers, while Congress and the Supreme Court legislated and ruled more issues into the federal framework, the country has lost much of its deference for local governance and state rule. Cultural issues have been hijacked by the federal government. Our politics have been nationalized.

To see this, one has to look no further than the past year's special Congressional elections to fill seats vacated by the Trump administration.

The race in the Georgia's 6th district quickly became the most expensive special election in U.S. history when national interests groups associated with the Democratic Party poured money into the race hoping to flip a seat previously held by a Republican to demonstrate a backlash against the election of Trump. Together, candidates Jon Ossoff (D) and Karen Handel (R) raised \$28.3 million, the bulk of which (\$23.6 million) went to the relatively obscure, 30-year old Ossoff. In total, 96.5% of Ossoff's record fundraising haul came from out-of-state. That colossal out-of-state percentage was a record too. What should have been a small-time race became a bigtime national focus.

And this is despite the fact that Representatives to Congress are supposed to represent



the interests of their districts first and foremost. How could the citizens of Georgia possibly evaluate the candidates on those merits when national, out-of-state actors flooded the airwaves with their own special interests on behalf of their preferred candidate as a means to stick it to the president?

Special elections in Kansas, Montana, and South Carolina weren't much better in terms of remaining local when factoring in an inordinate amount of national media coverage for elections that didn't stand to change the makeup of Congress in any substantial way, other than to give the opposition party a chance to repudiate the president.

But worse than the recent explosion in national attention paid to local races is the significant trend in correlation between state legislative races and presidential elections. According to research performed by Harvard scholar Carl Klarner, since 1980, deviation between state elections and presidential elections have plummeted, meaning more and more voters are voting down the ballot for local officials based on who they think the president should be. This flies in the face of the intent of the cooperative federalist system of government laid out by the Founders, since presidential candidates have vastly different concerns than that of local and state candidates.

These issues should have never become federal issues in the first place, and the one-size-fits-all pressure from Washington is sowing greater rifts between states with competing agendas. The more this occurs, and the more voters are trained to focus on the national implications of their votes as opposed to the local ones, the greater the risk for destabilization and the more America loses its foundational character.

If we are to return to a greater state of political normalcy, we'll have to remember to think small once again.

From the Klein @ 9 Shtender: The Wire's Baltimore and Rubin: Intensified Insolence of Institutional Influence

By Samuel Gelman (Houston, Texas)

As I left the building, my head was spinning. I had just spent over an hour at the post office, waiting for my name to be called so I could renew my passport and get on with my life. Of course my appointment, called for 9:30, did not actually occur until 10:30, but that was to be expected of U.S. bureaucracy. Finally, my name was called and I approached the counter with my forms filled out and ready to go.

But, like many instances with U.S. bureaucracy, things did not work out as I had hoped. You see, I had made a small mistake on one of my forms, rendering it, and the entire process, invalid. The clerk informed me that I would have to reschedule my appointment for the next week and come back with a new, corrected form.

Confident that I could resolve this here and now, I asked the clerk if he could just print out the form for me, allow me to fill it out again, and submit it. After all, it was only a small mistake. Surely, it would be more practical for both of us if we solved this issue right then and there, as opposed to me returning a week later to waste another several hours of his life and mine.

Despite my seemingly reasonable request, the clerk informed that it would not be possible. When I asked why, he looked at me with a puzzled look, only to answer me the following in a neutral, indifferent tone: "Sorry, but that's just how this institution works."

Ever so defeated, I rescheduled my appointment and returned to my everyday life. I could not understand why such a simple request had been rejected so quickly and without any real reason. What do you mean "that's just how this institution works?" Why can't you change it?

Finally, the answer has come to me, although it has taken quite a few years. This past summer, I finally got around to fishing *The Wire*, perhaps the greatest TV show of all time (sorry *Breaking Bad*). The drama focuses on various institutions within Baltimore, including the Baltimore Police Department, City Hall, the public school system, and the city newspaper, looking at the lives of those involved in each specific organization and how they intersect and interact with others around them.

Granting the fact that all the organizations are different, covering different aspects of daily life in Baltimore, the show makes clear that each institution has one thing in common: they are all very difficult to change and reform. Throughout all five seasons of the show, many of the characters try to bring reform to their respective institutions. They believe that through their ideas and simple fixes they can be a real force for change.

However, despite their best efforts, every single one of them fails, underestimating the power of the institution. The politician trying to end corruption in Baltimore ends up being overrun by the system, eventually becoming corrupt himself. The police officer's unique ideas to help fight crime are rejected for the more familiar and safe police strategies that the institution has used for years. Whether it is the police, City Hall, or the shipping industry, these characters do not understand that institutions have rules, regulations, and cultural norms that have been engraved into the system and those in it. The show's depressing yet true message is that those that try to bring change will either be shut down by others within the system or just become a part of the system itself.

I bring all of this up in response to a recently published article: "From the YCSA Vice President's Desk: Pallet Town and Klein @ 9: Chromatic Considerations of Communal Confluence." In the article, the writer claims that Klein @ 9 is hurting the YU Community by creating another minyan, making it more difficult for the already established minyanim, as well as for Klein @ 9, to function. He believes that, rather than starting a new minyan that caters to a subgroup on campus, we at Klein @ 9 should have simply formed our community-oriented minyan within Rubin.

Judging by the specific proofs the author brings to make his argument, it is clear he does

not understand what Klein @ 9 stands for or the reasons why we do several things. However, I want to focus on one aspect of the argument that I believe encompasses it all. That is, the idea that Rubin could become Klein @ 9 and how that relates to the power of the institution.

Klein @ 9 was founded on many ideas and values: community, serious davening with singing and divrei torah, high levels of student involvement, etc. However, the founders were also very careful to make sure that the minyan would not affect any of the other programming. They were not seeking to change anything, but to create something new.

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Let's take the author's suggestion regarding Rubin. The author claims that many of the changes that Klein @ 9 implemented could have simply been inserted into Rubin, and that everyone would have been happy. Make the women's section a bit larger, introduce yourself to a few new faces, and behold! Klein @ 9 but in Rubin. Problem solved, right?

Most definitely not. While many at Klein @ 9 would like to see the above happen in Rubin, that approach forgets about those that like Rubin the way it is. Many of the Rubin attendees enjoy the fact that the minyan in fast and that they can talk in the back. They don't want to hear a dvar torah at the end of the davening or listen to schtick announcements by the S.O.Y board. They want a quick, no nonsense davening and they have every right to have that.

Now, imagine if Klein @ 9 started implementing all the unique ideas and changes I just mentioned above. Many students would get upset, and for good reason. Like the police officer in *The Wire* trying to bring new and unique ideas to the department, this decision would ignore the fact that Rubin is an institution with its own culture, ideas, and norms. One cannot simply change the way things are done. And just like the police officers who rejected their colleagues' new ideas, the students of Rubin would reject our innovations as well, and we would end up right back where we started. One cannot change an institution if there is no desire from the masses of that institution that it be changed.

Of course, the response to this is that you never know unless you try. You can't be sure that Rubin students won't enjoy Klein @ 9 style davening as you never implemented it in Rubin in the first place.

Point taken. However, several years ago there was a semikha student put in charge of the minyan to make Rubin a more "community oriented" davening by trying to quiet the room and add singing and divrei Torah to the minyan.

Quite understandably, the students rejected his innovations and ideas. He went against the cultural norms of the Rubin institution, trying to bring change when no change was necessary or wanted. This is exactly what would happen if we at Klein @ 9 decided to do the same at the Rubin Minyan, which is precisely why a new, distinct minyan with its own culture focused on community building was created.

Rocking the boat is a risky move, and we all know that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. We should spend less time focusing things that are not broken and start fixing the ones that are. Rubin is not broken, so there is no need to get involved in its affairs.

Still, one can push back further, saying that, despite all of this, Rubin and Klein cannot coexist. They are both suffering from a lack of Torah readers, as is supposedly evident from the Klein emails asking for people to read from the Torah, and Klein hurts the community by adding another minyan to an already oversaturated slate.

This, however, is just not true. Klein @ 9 is not suffering from a lack of liners. In fact, with the addition of Mincha and Singing @ Sundown, we have actually added the amount of liners we need. If we were truly suffering from a lack of Torah readers, then why would we increase the amount of liners we need? The reason we send out ystuds asking for liners is to give others the opportunity to lain and increase the community feeling. Furthermore, the idea that a campus of over 1,000 Jewish students cannot support another minyan in just ridiculous. Finally, if one wants to argue that Klein hurts the community, then what about the fact that Rubin takes away from Glueck? What is the line when it comes to minyanim and community, and who gets to decide where it ends? Why is Klein @ 9 hurting the community, but Rubin is not

Under its current conditions and leadership Rubin is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. It is supposed to be the fast minyan with little singing and a laid back atmosphere. And please do not misunderstand me. This is not a bad thing at all. YU should have a variety of minyanim that cater to all tastes. Of course, not everyone likes Rubin, but the same could be said for Klein @ 9, Glueck, or

SEE KLEIN @ 9, CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



Wake Up and Smell the Coffee

By Efrat Malachi

Whether it's an espresso, a cappuccino, or a latte, at its core lies a pure, simple ingredient – coffee. Although it seems harmless, the clever content marketed by Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts has stealthily wedged its way into our thoughts and morphed itself into a driving force within our lives. Recognizing its damaging psychological effects can help prevent problems from forming and developing further. This is not to say that the entire coffee enterprise in America is one big hoax, but it has stormed many frail wallets and robbed people of their hard-earned money and sanity.

I'm mostly concerned, though, with the fact that the cup of "coffee" most dream of nowadays is a magnified spin-off of the original. The focus has shifted to the minute features of a coffee drink. The main thing that matters is the grandiose appearance, which is ascribed to the whipped cream and caramel drizzle on top. Marketing teams across the country have enjoyed playing with our vulnerable psyches. As a consequence for the acceleration of capitalism and consumerism, it has become almost effortless for sellers to convince people of buying and investing in their promised products. And as consumers, we tend to lean towards the more expensive brands since high quality is important and associated with higher costs, but that's not always the case. For honesty's sake, there is no secret element within the mix of drinks we buy and no dramatic, fundamental difference between coffee beans at competing coffee houses, including big brand names.

That is not to say that the cuboid ice, smooth syrup, fresh milk, and sweet toppings don't appeal to the eye and delight our taste buds. However, they do take away from the coffee, turning the focal point of the drink into a minor detail. While this isn't necessarily wrong, it seems as if these "coffee" drinks are being portrayed in a slightly flawed light; its essence is masked by all the sugar and milk. Sometimes, keeping things simple with our coffee is better and more desirable. It allows us to indulge in its simplistic perfection.

To go even further, instead of caring about the coffee itself, what we really crave is the sophistication and respect it represents. One of the reasons why we all love to carry around a nice cup of iced coffee or a steaming, foam latte,

especially when we don't really care to have one, is because there is, to some degree, a sense of lacking and void that we millennials are trying to fill. We want to feel like an adult and somehow coffee is tightly linked with maturity, professionalism, and success, all things we desperately desire.

I must include that I don't discriminate between Starbucks lovers and Dunkin' lovers. Whoever you are and whichever "coach" you choose to motivate you is based on your own choice. One should not mindlessly go with the flow of societal standards and pressures. Not everyone needs to be a die-hard Starbucks fan just because of its prestigious symbol, and not everyone needs to rock the Dunkin' Donuts swag and receive all its benefits and perks.

"THE ORIGINAL CUP OF JOE ISN'T FOR EVERYONE. BECAUSE OF THAT, WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN REVOLUTIONIZING COFFEE, TURNING IT INTO A UNIVERSAL IDEA AND A VERNACULAR FOR INDUSTRIOUS MINDS!"

They each have their pros and cons, but what draws them together is this commonality of serving coffee. And just so you know, there is even coffee being sold on street corners and private shops that are highly underestimated.

These are all simply observations of behavior and how they are highly influenced by the media and social expectations. This does not mean that your morning coffee dictates your every move and mood throughout the day. It's only one of the many effects I've experienced, and seen others experience as well. A person can live a wonderful, happy, and fulfilled life with or without coffee. It's just striking to see how many people decline in their wellness for a drink that they don't always seem to need or enjoy. At the end of the day, coffee is a stimulant that we might come to depend on, and so it can easily turn into an addiction.

On the brighter side of things, coffee is a form of motivation. It gives people that psychological and physiological push to meet academic demands, deadlines,

and expectations. It can lift your spirits and positively alter your mood. Coffee can work against you, but when done right, it will be that moral voice and supportive coach standing behind every word of a toilsome essay and homework assignment. Additionally, it spices up your life with the array of flavors and seasonal specials that are available.

The original cup of Joe (i.e. black coffee) isn't for everyone. Because of that, we have come a long way in revolutionizing coffee, turning it into a universal idea and a vernacular for industrious minds. It is fascinating how the coffee of today has created a whole new ball game for capitalists. Subjectivity and diversity have become the focal point for our modern-day cup. They are what entertain our minds and excite our lives, primary objectives for the everyday millennial. This burst of creativity and imagination promotes pride in one's own individuality and encourages self-expression through endless, potential coffee options.

Fortunately, coffee companies and shops have given people the opportunity to pour their emotions into their drinks and you can learn a lot about a person based on their order. Various aspects of one's personality can come out through their cup. Sometimes, it even works the other way around by influencing behavior and forming certain traits. For example, once a person transforms into a caffeinated creature, it increases their energy levels and awareness, leading to positive changes in performance, efficiency, and productivity. People's senses are heightened and they become more sensitive and aware of their surroundings, resulting in them being more conscientious, responsive, and fun.

Finally, coffee helps people get things done. It has become a symbol of success, effort, and achievement. It encourages people to work hard as they enter adulthood and fulfill the infinite responsibilities that tag along with it. When brewed properly and served right, coffee can become your friend. However, be cautious of taking it to extreme levels, as that can ultimately lead you down troubled roads. Applying the principle of moderation with your coffee intake will decrease dependency and increase satisfaction with your coffee experience. So, next time you plan on buying a cup of coffee, remember to not hold anything back and just express-o yourself.



KLEIN @ 9, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

Zysman. Moreover, that fact that people are talking about this issue right now shows just how important Rubin is to the YU Community. To try to force change would be counterproductive and upsetting to many.

Valiant as the efforts may be, the reformers of any institution will always be fighting against long solidified forces arranged specifically against individuals. It is why the post office clerk could not give me a new form; it is why the politicians and police officers of *The Wire* failed; it is why the initiatives to reform Rubin were rejected. Unless you have a large body of the institution on your side, you are most likely going to lose.

What surprises me is how the author of the article, a member of student council himself, is not aware of this himself. Ask any member of any student council - whether

they are on the Beren or Wilf Campus - and they will tell you how hard it is to bring even the smallest bit of change. We all have stories with the Registrar, Office of Student Life, or Office of Student Finance where a seemingly small issue could not be changed or fixed on our behalf for whatever reason. The DNA of an institution is inherently built to survive, not drastically change. Rubin is no different.

Xenophobic claims against innovation and change is not the message I wish to spread from this article. I am a full supporter of bringing new innovations and reforms to the university that would allow it to grow and prosper. This is the entire reason I support Klein @ 9! However, in order to be the change one wants to see, one must understand the systems they are working under. Institutions cannot simply be upended and change will not come to those that make rash decisions. It must be planned carefully and

skillfully. Forcing change to Rubin to make it fit the Klein @ 9 model would just not work.

Yeshiva University can have its cake and eat it too. Both Rubin and Klein @ 9 can exist together; they must exist together. Not everyone enjoys Rubin and Klein @ 9 serves a certain niche. They both play a valuable role in helping everyone in the YU community feel like they have a place where they belong. Changing one to match the other is not only extremely difficult, but insensitive.

Zealotry towards change should be applauded, but only in certain cases. In this one, the institution is too important and well established to change. So go to Rubin if you enjoy Rubin and attend Klein @ 9 if you like Klein @ 9. But don't ask one to sacrifice its culture and traditions on behalf of the other.

What American and YU Politics Have to do with Chanukah Miracles, The 2017 Version

By Elliot Fuchs

Thousands of years ago, the Maccabean Jews overcame all odds to fight off a Greek army that was much larger and far more powerful than they were. After the war, the second Jewish temple was in ruins, and the Jewish community faced the sad disappointment of being unable to fulfill their candle lighting tradition in the temple. You see, they had oil to light the Menorah, however, the Torah requires that the oil be especially pure for this service, and after the Greeks ransacked the temple, it was unclear if they had any in their possession. It wasn't until a small jug of oil was found, that some hope was redeemed, so they decided to use the oil that they had with the expectation that it would last only one night. But through God's doing, the candles miraculously remained lit for eight nights, and now the Jewish community, thousands of years later, lights candles for eight nights of Chanukah in commemoration of that auspicious time.

A lesser known fact of Jewish tradition, though, is that we believe that the miracles didn't only happen in the past. Rather, Jewish tradition teaches that the seasons when good things happened to the people of our faith will continue to be times that bring good things for us. Similarly, in historically bad times for our people, the "spirits" of that time will continue to be bad for us throughout history.

An example of the latter is that historically, both the first and second Jewish temple were destroyed at the same time – not only in the same month, but on the same day. This is during the Jewish month of *Av*, in which Jews have the tradition to not do things that are unsafe because of our fragile past during that time of year.

This time of year – the broad season of Chanukah – is a miraculous time of year for us. And while Jewish history is full of Chanukah miracles, perhaps we need to look no further than this year, when, as far as I can tell, the Jews had almost as much blessing as the Maccabees thousands of years before us.

The first miracle I will discuss is the one that is, at this point, well-known around the world. About a week before Chanukah, President Trump defied all expectations and fulfilled a promise that many of his predecessors broke. He finally announced that Jerusalem will be officially known as the capital of Israel. Israel, which itself has so much of a resemblance to the Maccabees, as she herself is small yet resilient while surrounded by hostile enemies.

This move was largely praised by the Jewish community. Noted rabbinic and philosophical scholars have gone so far as to say that perhaps God had Donald Trump – one of the seemingly least qualified candidates to hold the office – win the presidency for this reason alone.

While I am not brazen (or learned) enough to decipher why God does what He does, I will point out that Nikki Haley's actions last month, when she voted against a large majority of the world in supporting Israel, were a bold Maccabean move. In a picture that she would go on to tweet out, she proudly raised her hand to do what

was right, instead of doing what the rest of the world was pressuring her to do. If that isn't reminiscent of the Jewish holiday, I am not sure what is.

In line with my argument herein, take a look at the tweet by Jeremy Frankl of *The Daily Wire* and *Resurgent* who noted similar sentiment about Haley's awe-inspiring resilience as she stood up against the rest of the world on Israel's behalf (for those reading in print, he wrote: "The Maccabees would be proud. #Chanukah," followed by a dreidel emoji).

To put the icing on the cake, President Trump then came out and said that any nation that voted against his decision to name Jerusalem as the capital of Israel would lose its funding. This was a bold, strong portrayal of leadership by a man who is proving himself to be a good friend of the Jewish community (but more on that later).

The second "win" that I will discuss here seems to be on a much smaller scale. But, I assure you, if you read this through to the end you will realize the significance of this mini-miracle and how it had a massive affect on America, college students, and our geopolitical relationship with Israel.

"THIS TIME OF YEAR – THE BROAD SEASON OF CHANUKAH – IS A MIRACULOUS TIME OF YEAR FOR US."

Over the past five years, Yeshiva University – a Jewish institution of which I am a student – has offered an elite political science course taught by former Israeli ambassador to America, Danny Ayalon.

In addition to being the ambassador, Ayalon served in the Israeli Knesset and is a contributor for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Jerusalem Post*.

After the longtime political science department chair at YU retired, the new interim-chair decided to discredit Ambassador Ayalon. Further, in a document obtained by *The Commentator* – Yeshiva University's student newspaper – the faculty member was credited as calling the course "too pro-Israel" and "too politically-biased."

The students thought it was funny that this staff member was all of a sudden concerned about political bias in a classroom. As far as most are aware, he didn't make any statements regarding the report published that noted that 99% of Yeshiva University professors who have given political donations have donated only to Democrats. Nor did he fight for unbiased classroom structure of the school when a student on campus claimed that his "most conservative" professor on campus was the former Democratic nominee for Vice President of the United States of America, Senator Joe Lieberman (whose class I also took).

But, classic educational bias aside, there is a much

bigger issue here. Over and over again, the typical college campus continues to be a place where anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment reigns supreme. Columbia University, for example, has an Israel Apartheid Week in which Israel is (ridiculously) accused of being a segregationist state. Just recently, the University of Michigan and University of Maryland's student councils either took votes or discussed a vote on whether or not to join the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement, another form of anti-Israel sentiment being shielded as a political movement. For goodness' sake, the campus culture has gotten so bad that Hamas-supporter Linda Sarsour is being invited to the New School campus to criticize Israel. It is atrocious.

However, despite the unfortunate truths of these other campuses, Yeshiva University always stood proudly on the side of Israel and served as a contrast to those other academic institutions.

So why was the chairman's proposition so dangerous?

In a recent conversation I had with an administrator at Yeshiva, he told me that YU and its opinions are representative of the orthodox Jewish community as a whole. If not overturned, this professor's decision would've given other schools the ability to point to Yeshiva University and say, "if the Jewish and formerly pro-Israel school can turn their back on Israel then we definitely can too." Despite being a horrendous and bigoted argument, it wouldn't be an unfair one. This individual – intentionally or otherwise – tried to set a precedent that would make far worse the already dangerous situation regarding Israel and the Jews on the college campus.

Noting this unfathomably dangerous potential precedent, a small group of Yeshiva political science majors put their heads together and began circling a petition to stop this teacher in his tracks.

With nothing but a few eager voices and a well-worded essay, this small group of students made history, but most people will never know it. Between the petition, and some effective press in the student newspaper, the school reversed the decision that could've altered the way Israel is perceived on college campuses around the world. These students won't be famous for their bravery as the Maccabees are, but their bravery to take on the academic bureaucracy and those who give them grades that eventually dictate their future is nothing short of awe-inspiring.

When asked for comment, David Aaronson, a spokesperson for Ayalon, responded by saying, "The Ambassador is very much relieved that his course will once again count towards a political science degree, just as it always did in the past. He thanks the university's president for the strong support and swift action on this matter."

The third miracle of note, which I will discuss now, was also carried out by President Trump. On the last day of Chanukah – which by Jewish tradition is considered the holiest day – he commuted the sentence of Sholom Rubashkin.

Rubashkin was the owner of a meat packaging factory who – after a run-in with the law – was sentenced to 27 years in prison. I am not arguing about the legality of Rubashkin's actions. But what many people argued for many years was the absurdity of a man who was convicted for fraud to be sentenced for the same amount of time as rapists and murderers. It just made no sense.

As *The Washington Post* reported, Rubashkin's crime was a case where "justice fell far short" as a father of ten was serving 27 years for a crime that "ordinarily merits no more than three years."

Well-known Democratic attorney and Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz also came out in support of the bipartisan move, calling it "the right thing" to do.

If you believe in God and in miracles, then what I have written may impress you. If not, take it as a coincidence. But first, one last note on Jewish tradition: We say that numbers are extremely significant in understanding the way God works. How fitting then that Rubashkin was released on the eighth day of Chanukah after serving exactly eight years in jail? A coincidence? Maybe. Or maybe God leaving us a hint that this is just one more Chanukah miracle, but this time in 2017.





Never. Stop. Commentating.

Got something to say?
Email alexander.strauss@mail.yu.edu

The Biggest Misconception About Cryptocurrency at My College

By Nathan Feifel

Anyone who knows me around my school knows I'm all about cryptocurrency. Apparently, talking about digital money essentially non stop for the past semester will leave that impression on others. Whether it be discussing investment prospects with similarly-interested peers, getting stopped by random students passing by with questions on the subject matter, or even a professor telling me in jest he's surprised I still come to class after "making it big" on Bitcoin, it's no question how much bandwidth I expend on my cryptocurrency ventures within the university setting.

Through it all, however, I've noticed a glaring misconception about cryptocurrency that I believe is worthwhile to address, since I have not seen much written about it elsewhere. The following fallacy has been bouncing around campus ever since Bitcoin's gargantuan ascent:

Cryptocurrency is synonymous with Bitcoin.

A brief, but implicative notion, its simplicity is patently false and deserves further investigation to ultimately be debunked. And while this new age of fintech and subsequently the new markets developing certainly have their intricacies, this just isn't one of them. Let's explore how this sentiment is most frequently expressed in conversation, which will sound quite familiar to anyone who has even remotely discussed the topic in the past few months.

Person 1: "Are you interested in cryptocurrency?"

Person 2: "Nah, Bitcoin is a bubble and will crash."

Heard that before? It's nothing too overbearing, but it's the most typical conversation I hear around campus regarding cryptocurrency, which only reinforces the false perception that Bitcoin is in fact synonymous with cryptocurrency. Let's explore the sentiment's inaccuracies and lack of comprehensiveness with regard to the cryptocurrency industry at large:

Bitcoin is just 1 of nearly 1,500 recognized, regularly traded cryptocurrencies. Stop talking about Bitcoin as if it's the only one.

If you think all cryptocurrencies are the same as Bitcoin, you're mistaken. Many of them actually have no intention of being a currency at all, and admittedly, such a label is somewhat of a misnomer. The cryptocurrency sector is essentially comprised of:

1. True currencies (i.e. Bitcoin, Dash, Monero, Litecoin, etc.)
2. Blockchain platforms/supporting networks (i.e. Ethereum, EOS, NEO, Cardano, etc.)
3. Decentralized applications that utilize cryptographic tokens (i.e. Brave/BAT, ox/ZRX, Golem/GNT, etc.)

I'm assuming that sounds like gibberish to most students reading this, so for those interested in commenting on the topic, there are tons of educational videos and articles online, as well as students on campus who can offer insight. But please, stop equating every cryptocurrency's purpose and status with Bitcoin's. It's silly.

Bitcoin's market cap dominance is plummeting, yet the industry is booming. While there has certainly been significant historical correlation between Bitcoin's price action and the rest of the market's standing, the industry-leader's market cap dominance has dropped from nearly 100% a few years back to just 34% now. 2018 is sure to further this trend as more altcoins gain popularity and recognition, and render Bitcoin a mere chapter of a larger book still being written. But how can this be if Bitcoin = cryptocurrency? Hint: it's not. 2018 will be the year that utility tokens and more blockchain advancements catalyze the industry's path to a \$1 trillion valuation and further legitimization. Next month, for example, millennial-loved, fintech startup Robinhood will even start allowing users to

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FRACTION OF THE INDUSTRY!"**

buy and sell cryptocurrency. This trend will only continue.

Bitcoin was the first blockchain protocol to be used to in the form of digital currency and has a number of shortcomings, potentially even severe enough to prevent it from achieving widescale adoption. But many other cryptocurrencies are learning from its flaws and improving upon them in newer, revised models. Speed of transactions, scalability, transaction fees, and supply issues are central to the future of cryptocurrency implementation, and no one in their right mind is pretending like Bitcoin nailed it any of those accounts. Is Bitcoin overvalued? Maybe. But consider Bitcoin to currency similar to what Myspace was to the inception of social networks. Ultimately Facebook comes along. No one realized we would get so much value from Facebook for quite a while. Who's to say the same isn't true for a decentralized, peer-to-peer digital currency in society?

Bitcoin has a lot of hype around it. Factor that out, and look at the innovation it's spurring. Genetic engineering, self-driving cars, Smartphones, and the importance of social media all didn't exist 10-15 years ago. Few refute the immense value in the decentralized operating systems that blockchain technology is introducing the world to. But those in stark denial of a potential financial transformation within society, claiming that fiat currency is the only way for economies to function, need to take a step back and see just how drastically society is racing ahead. Bitcoin itself,

if at all, will very likely not be the sole component of global finance in the future. But to assert with full conviction that cryptocurrency at large is nothing because "Bitcoin is a bubble and will crash" is asinine and misguided.

Finally, even if Bitcoin is a bubble and does crash, that does not inherently delegitimize the industry. Did the Wall Street Crash of 1929, Black Monday, and most recently the crash of 2008-2009 strip the stock market of its foundational value and importance? Valued at over half a trillion dollars now, the cryptocurrency sector is legitimate even if its valuation takes a large hit. Would MarketWatch, and so many other financial news outlets really list it otherwise?

Is this sentiment unique to just a single college in Manhattan? No. We live in a day and age where buzzwords are the currency of conversation, permeating news coverage and common social interaction alike, irrationally receiving utmost respect and validation along the way. It's powerful to see how restrictive of a language it can be. In the context of cryptocurrency, throwing around words like "Bitcoin," "bubble," and if you're really advanced, "blockchain" have become increasingly popular to stay up with the times and sound tech-savvy. "Bitcoin is a bubble and will crash" is a mere reflection and byproduct of the buzzword-centric era we live in.

While it is technically fine to speak in such terms, it encourages people to develop and propagate polarized opinions as opposed to educated and intellectual ones, which ultimately leads to the proliferation of misconceptions. For the record, people who unabashedly support Bitcoin and refuse to accept any of its shortcomings are equally as guilty of this phenomenon. Where is the agnosticism?

Admittedly, many students don't actually believe or even really understand what they're saying. Such individuals likely just regurgitate what their friends or finance professor said. This only furthers the issue at hand.

The ensuing effect caused by this restrictive cryptocurrency vernacular around campus is an underwhelming one. While many students like to make bold and rash statements about cryptocurrency's apparently imminent demise in factual terms, they simply come off as ignorant on the subject matter, yet more importantly, fail to make campus a destination for legitimate and stimulating discussion about the new technologies and concepts currently trending in the finance and technology sectors. Do cryptocurrencies pose challenges or possess undesirable characteristics which some of us may not like and therefore not want to get involved with? No doubt about it. Can we talk about those actual issues instead of promoting a misconception?

As cryptocurrency is poised for another action-packed, breakthrough, and disruptive 2018, I am curious to see if the students around me start to realize that Bitcoin makes up a mere fraction of the industry. I graduate in May. Let's see how it plays out.



The Demise of Net Neutrality

By Noam Zolty

The U.S. government has recently taken an enormous step in handing control of the internet away from the bureaucratic control of Washington and consolidating that power in the hands of the large internet service providers.

In November, the Federal Communications Commission made an enormous decision when they announced that they would scale back the Obama-era rules that require that internet providers treat all web traffic equally, a move that could fundamentally reshape the internet economy and consumers online experience. These changes, which are expected to be adopted by the F.C.C. in Mid- December, could open the door for a wide range of new opportunities for internet providers, such as allowing companies to form deals with internet service providers that would give their webpages preferential treatment. Examples of this superior treatment would be ensuring that certain websites received better streaming quality and that they would load more quickly. They would also guarantee that by controlling the order of the results of a google search, the websites that made these deals would be more accessible to consumers than those websites that didn't make such deals. This would particularly help websites that are run by large companies with larger revenues that would be able to make these presumably expensive deals and would give them a large competitive advantage in the sphere of internet competition.

These deals, otherwise known as "paid prioritization", were explicitly outlawed under the Obama rules, which required internet service providers, such as Verizon FiOS, Comcast and AT&T, to keep all corners of the internet equally accessible to consumers, and limited the providers' ability to favor content, including their own. These laws were inspired by the principle known as Network Neutrality Principle, which states that the Internet should be treated as a utility, and such it is the government's duty to guarantee that all internet traffic be treated equally. Proponents of this principle believe that public information network will end up being most useful if all content, websites, and platforms (e.g., mobile devices, video game consoles, etc.) are treated equally.

The real root of the issue is a philosophical question about whether the Internet should be treated like a commodity or a utility. Utilities, while still run by private companies, are heavily regulated and their services are doled out evenly to all customers. Commodities are subject to regulatory pressures, but their pricing and availability are governed more by the powers of supply and demand than by federal authorities. A utility, such as water or electricity, is a necessity for all people, and therefore the government needs to regulate the price and availability to guarantee that everyone must have access to the product or service. Many feel that the internet should also be treated as a utility, and that the government must regulate

the industry as a whole. Proponents of the new initiative point out that this position ignores the billion dollars in private investment that made the internet so powerful in the first place. They feel that certain companies build a superior website and service and therefore should be able to differentiate themselves by being put on a higher platform than inferior websites. Just as certain food products are able to purchase better shelf space at

"THESE CHANGES, WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO BE ADOPTED BY THE F.C.C. IN MID- DECEMBER, COULD OPEN THE DOOR FOR A WIDE RANGE OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNET PROVIDERS."

supermarkets by making deals with the large chains, so too should internet providers be able to acquire better "shelf space" on the internet by making their superior products more accessible to the consumers.

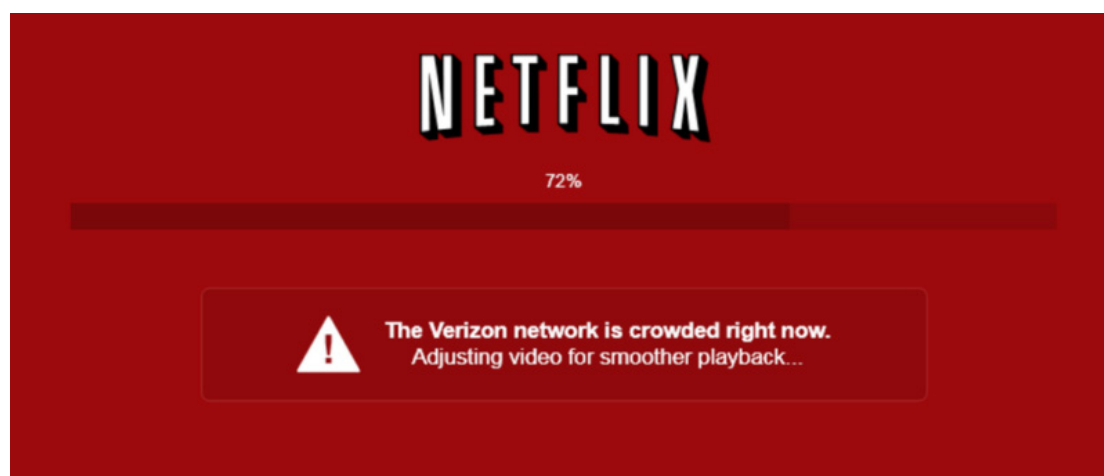
The new rules are expected to undo this "open internet" plan that was adopted by the Obama administration. Supports of the current laws, which include consumer groups and many of the large internet companies, argue that these laws are necessary to restrain the control that the large broadband companies hold over the internet. They feel that these internet service providers are able to unfairly dominate what people can access by controlling the link between consumers and the websites that they are trying to reach.

Advocates of this recent reversal of the laws, which

include the current FCC chairman Ajit Pai, argue that it is not the place of the government to be regulating the internet and that these restraints can stifle investment and innovation in a fast moving and rapidly growing industry. They feared that once the Obama era laws were passed, the government would continue their slow march to an eventual total control over the internet and very heavy handed regulation and oversight. They believe that the internet was created to be a largely unregulated "information service" and that the government has no business in meddling with this crucial aspect of what they internet represents. In a recent interview with the Wall Street Journal, Mr. Pai argued that the Obama laws severely stifled internet service providers from providing the best possible product to consumers. He also stressed that with the pullback of these laws the internet bills of many of these companies will be reduced significantly. He in short believes that "internet access will be improved significantly for all consumers".

Those who are opposed to the new laws believe that the internet will become less free and will be "ruled" by the major internet companies. They believe that a fundamental element of the internet is that it is a totally free platform where all have equal access and share. They strongly supported the laws that President Obama put in place, and are staunchly opposed to the reversal of these laws. They argue that in addition to the loss of freedom, consumers will be charged more by companies such as Netflix and Hulu, who will be forced to charge customers more in order to offset the additional expense of paying the internet providers. In their opinion, this new policy is another example of the government stepping in to help out the big corporate companies and in turn, hurt the "little guy".

Whatever ends up happening, one thing is certain, the debate over net neutrality will continue to rage for a long time.



Tikkun Olam Can Be Good Business, Too

By Dan Bloom

Dan Bloom is the founder of www.StartupStars.io, an Israel-based "meta startup" that helps investors, prospective employees, and tech enthusiasts to discover early-stage tech companies.

Israeli agtech has long been shipped out to developing nations, teaching millions how to farm efficiently and cultivate areas that are often otherwise barren.

According to Dr. Adam Abramson, CEO of Farmster, an Israeli agtech startup, agriculture in emerging markets like Africa and Asia is very different than what most of us are used to. "About sixty percent of the population there work in agriculture, compared to only about one or two percent here. Most people are farming and most of them are farming on small farms."

Many of these farmers are not able to get their crops to buyers in time. The resulting food waste and post-harvest losses of about 40% contributes to a big problem in many regions. On top of that, most don't have smartphones and easy access to the internet. The phones they do have are simple, limited to voice and SMS text messaging.

"USING A SIMPLE MOBILE PHONE, GROWERS CAN POST INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR CROPS TO THE FARMSTER MARKETPLACE."

So, how can these farmers reach buyers more efficiently? To solve this problem, Dr. Abramson and the team at Farmster created a digital marketplace for agriculture in emerging markets.

Using a simple mobile phone, growers can post information about their crops to the Farmster marketplace, which has a chatbot that can process incoming SMS text messages from farmers.



"They can text in what they're going to harvest and then the buyers, most of whom have the internet, can actually download the app and then see what's available," explained Abramson.

Using the Farmster platform, buyers can make arrangements to purchase from farmers before harvest.

Farmster is already up and running in Tanzania and the results are very promising. The actual crop listings can be seen through a link available at www.Farmster.co, where you can track their progress.

The company recently completed the MassChallenge accelerator program in Jerusalem and was recently accepted to the 8200 Social Program, the first acceleration program in Israel for startups that use technology for "tikkun olam," as they work to establish profitable businesses while solving significant social problems.

Tikkun olam, literally, "repair of the world," is a concept in Judaism interpreted by many as the aspiration to behave and act constructively and beneficially. In the modern era, it's the idea that all of us bear responsibility for the welfare of society at large.

By working to empower people and alleviate food waste, Farmster is doing just that.

7 Reasons Why People Didn't Come To Your Event

By Akiva Clair

Nothing upsets a club president or board member more than empty seats, especially if there are a lot of them. They invest an unhealthy amount of time and effort jumping through hoops and begging student council members in order to make their event as successful as possible. Often, however, despite their best efforts, they don't get anywhere near the amount of people they had hoped for. Guest speakers lecture to empty crowds, and pizza boxes remain untouched. Nevertheless, even if you've experienced this disappointing, embarrassing feeling before, there are a number of issues you can address and methods you can implement so that you can fill those empty seats and make all of your hard work well worth it. I present to you seven ideas based on well-known marketing theories and practices, logic, and common sense.

1. They didn't know about it. Unless you happen to spend your nights chilling in places like Furst 501 or Weissberg Commons, you're unlikely to stumble upon an event that you didn't even know was happening. People who run events think that because they sent out a ton of emails and plastered the walls with flyers, students should know about their events. And while that logically makes sense, the unfortunate reality is that it's not true. Due to a combination of laziness and disinterest, many people don't check their y-studs thoroughly. Similarly, much like punters in the NFL draft, flyers get passed by quickly over and over again with little to no acknowledgement of their significance or even existence. Of course, this isn't to

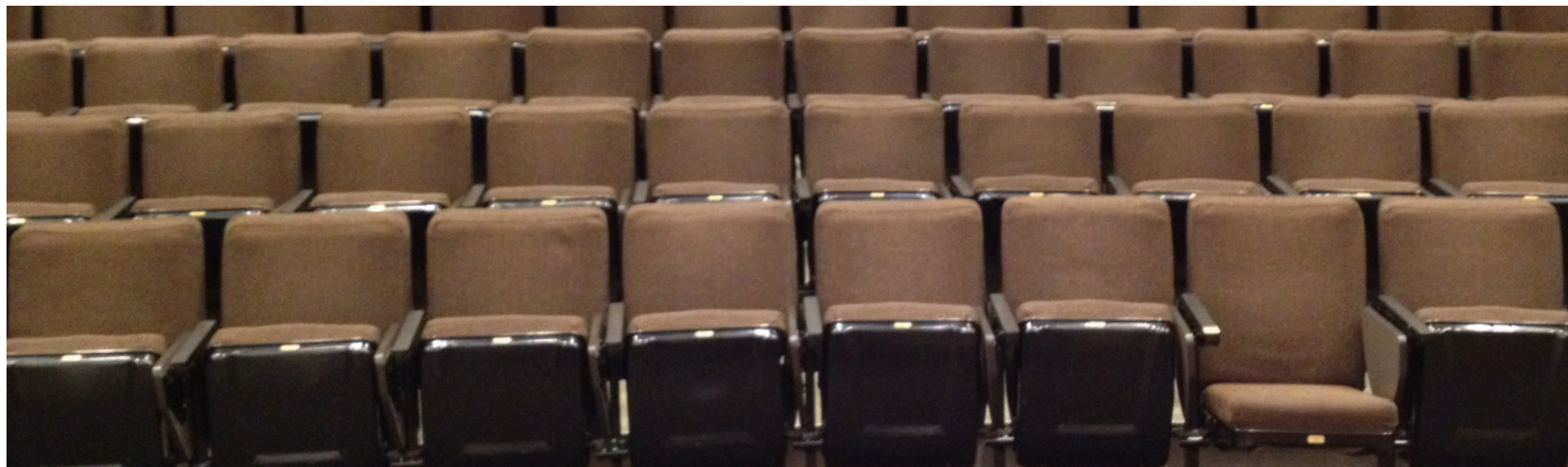
do this correctly, you have to have a pretty good idea of who your target market is, both demographically and psychographically. If a strong majority of your target market is male, then Wilf is the probably the best place to do it, and vice versa when it comes females and Beren. If it's relatively equal, however, Wilf is usually the safer bet because girls are usually more willing to travel uptown because of the library than boys are to go downtown. The wild card here is having events at a neutral location. You have to know whether your target market is the type of people who are willing to travel off-campus to come to your event. Take the annual Israel Club Times Square

“YOU HAVE TO HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF WHO YOUR TARGET MARKET IS, BOTH DEMOGRAPHICALLY AND PSYCHOGRAPHICALLY.”

Kumzits, for example. Some people are more enticed to go because it's cool to sing, dance, and show pride for Israel in the heart of NYC, whereas others don't want to go because of the time and effort it takes to go to the event. It really comes down to just making a logical guess (or doing research) as to which personality type most of your target market is.

because of the social judgements some people make about the event. To be honest, the only way to fix or minimize this problem is to do a substantial rebranding of your club or your event. That's not a quick process by any means, but if you can start using advertising and new events to associate your club with more positive values and beliefs, you can shed some of the negative social value.

6. The advertising for the event (or the event itself) doesn't successfully answer the question of “What's In It For Me?” Arguably the most important question in all of marketing/advertising, WIIFM needs to be thought about constantly and thoroughly. People need to be convinced to come to your event. The default options that YU students do with their free time are studying, learning, hanging out with friends, and, most importantly, Netflix. In order to snatch these people from these activities and get them to come to your event, you need to present them with strong, exciting reasons to stop watching Stranger Things and join your event. Essentially, there are a number of things that can entice them to come. **1. Food.** No one likes free food more than a college student on tight budget. Obviously, some foods are more attractive than others. Carlos and Gabby's is going to get me a little more excited than ice cream and potato chips. **2. Social Value** If an event is perceived as cool, unique, or legendary, people will want to come just so they can tell their friends and family about it. For example, if Tom Brady spoke at YU, people would come not necessarily because they actually want to hear what he has to say, but rather because they want to be able to



say that you shouldn't advertise for your event with these traditional methods. Rather, it's a warning that if you want to reach as many people as possible, you'll have to either make your emails and flyers more creative or eye-catching so that people will see them, or you'll need to effectively use mediums such as social media and word-of-mouth communication.

2. They were inherently excluded due to the nature of the event. Accounting majors don't go to lectures on theoretical physics, and pre-med students don't drool over events on venture capitalism. The more specific you make your event, the more people it is likely to exclude. Let's take a look at a hypothetical example. Imagine that the Marketing Club wants to make an event titled “How To Get People To Come To Your Event.” That's a very general title and idea that could apply to people from all sorts of majors and interests, right? Now, let's say they rename it to “How To Use Data Analytics To Get People To Come To Your Event.” What will happen now? Sure, they might pick up some more BIMA majors or techy people, but it will also turn away a lot of people who don't really care at all about data analytics when it comes to event planning. Finally, let's say they change the event again to “How To Use Social Media Data Analytics To Get People To Come To Your Event.” What about the clubs that don't think that they need to use social media to get the word out about their event? Much more unlikely now that they will come.

3. The general location turned them off. There are three general places where your event can take place: Wilf, Beren, or neither. Deciding among these options is a very crucial step in your event planning. In order to

4. The specific location turned them off. Even when you have your general location established, you have to take some time to think about the specific room or area where you want to have it. In reality, this step is only needed for shorter or smaller-scale events. For major events like ChanukaFest or Stomp Out The Stigma, the specific room or building location won't attract or deter people from coming. In contrast, however, smaller events like a SOY Chulent Mishmar or a Make Your Own Pizza with the RAs can have their attendance increased or reduced because of the specific location. Someone in Morg or Rubin might not want to stop watching The Big Bang Theory, put on some sort of respectable clothing, and go all the way to the Nagel Commons for a bowl of chulent. At the same time, however, that Bio major who has been locked up on the 4th floor of the library for hours upon hours, might be more willing to go to the chulent mishmar because of how close it is to him. So, in reality, each specific location has pros and cons, and it's up to you to decide which ones outweigh the others.

5. The event has negative social value. It's no secret that there are a smorgasbord of different opinions at YU, be they political, religious, or something else. Often, events at YU serve as a platform for voicing such opinions and creating a divisive student body. Unfortunately, your event might lose people who actually want to come yet are scared of the social statement they are making by attending. For example, perhaps someone wanted to hear Ben Shapiro or Dennis Prager speak but didn't show up because they didn't want to be associated with certain values and beliefs. Similarly, even though someone might really want to go to Cake Wars, they might back out

tell everyone they know about how they saw Tom Brady speak in person. **3. Coeducational Representation.** Yeah, like people go to the Sefarim Sale to buy books... **4. Emotional Satisfaction** This incentive can really range from a variety of different events. You can access certain emotions like happiness or amusement from the S/YCDS play, or you can feel things like inspiration and meaning from a Holocaust memorial service. Our emotions play a huge-part in our decision-making process, and successfully appealing to them can attract a lot more people to your event. **5. Knowledge or Information** A lot of events are career-oriented, and if you can convince someone that coming to your event will enhance their career, they'll come. **6. Swag** Again, college students like free stuff.

7. The event was scheduled on a bad date/at a bad time. Anyone who has ever ran an event knows that there's never ever a perfect time and date that will satisfy everyone. It just can't happen. However, that being said, you can still take simple steps to avoid as many scheduling conflicts as possible. An event can be considered to be scheduled at a bad time if it coincides with a different, popular event; is during a religious (e.g. Chanukah) or cultural (e.g. Super Bowl) holiday; is during the weekend (when a lot of people go home); is during a time when a sizeable amount of the target market has class (e.g. a Medical Ethics Society event at the same time as a Bio Lab); is right before or during midterms or finals; is during Night Seder (assuming your target market learns Night Seder); or the event is too long, and people don't want to commit that much time to it.



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