

Political Science Society Holds Debate Between College Democrats and College Republicans



Photo Credit: College Republicans Facebook Page

By Noam Beltran

On February 13, the College Democrats and College Republicans participated in a debate hosted by the J. Dunner Political Science Society on the Wilf Campus. The debate, which was sponsored by The Commentator and The Observer, was moderated by Political Science Professor Maria Zaitseva and was attended by approximately 100 people. A number of students also viewed the debate on a video livestream of the event on The Commentator's Facebook page.

The event was structured with four topics, eight debaters, and five minutes of speaking with opportunities for rebuttal. Avi Strauss and Adina Gernauer began the evening debating the issue of climate change, on behalf of the College Republicans (CR) and College Democrats (CD), respectively. Elliot Fuchs (CR) then contended with Moshe Gelberman (CD) over healthcare, after which Phillip Dolitsky (CR) and Doniel Weinreich (CD) debated the boundaries of religious freedom. Nolan Edmonson (CR) and Molly Meisels (CD) ended the debate by discussing nationalism and patriotism in America.

The presidents of both the College Democrats and College Republicans were both satisfied with the large turnout and apparent interest of the student body in

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Julie Schreier Appointed First Female Chief of Staff to President

By Michelle Naim

Julie Schreier, former Assistant Vice President of Institutional Advancement, has been named President Ari Berman's new Chief of Staff. According to Dean Karen Bacon, the Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Schreier is the first woman to assume this role since the position's creation by former University President Richard Joel who began his tenure in 2003.

This development came days after it was announced that Dr. Stuart Halpern, former Chief of Staff, would be leaving to the provost's office to assume the role of Senior Advisor to the Provost. Dr. Selma Botman, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, confirmed that Schreier's title and job had indeed been changed: "Julie Schreier is the President's chief of staff."

Julie Schreier's former position was as Assistant Vice President of Institutional Advancement. She also previously served as Director of Institutional Advancement in YU's Long Island Region. Schreier received a bachelor's degree in Economics from Yeshiva University and a Master of Business Administration from Baruch College.

Cardozo Enrollment Down Nearly 300 Students Since 2010

By Dov Teitlebaum

Fall 2017 enrollment for the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, YU's law school, decreased by nearly 300 students since the fall of 2010, marking a decline of over 26 percent. Although enrollment for fall 2017 saw an increase from fall 2016 of 26 students, or 3.24 percent, enrollment at Cardozo has been on a decline since 2010.

As reported by The Commentator in December, Cardozo recently decided to accept the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) as an alternative to the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) for those applying for the 2018-2019 academic year. The decision was made on a one year trial basis, explained David Martinidez, the Dean of Admissions at Cardozo.

The move to accept the GRE can be seen as possibly countering the recent downward trend in law school applicants across the country. Cardozo was the 14th law school in the country to allow the GRE in addition to the LSAT, joining schools like Harvard, Columbia, and Georgetown as pioneers in this new approach.

Martinidez emphasized the benefits that the GRE inclusion would have in the development of many emerging fields, specifically those relating to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). Martinidez cited professors at the university with backgrounds in STEM, namely Felix Wu, a doctor in computer science

and the director of the university's Data Law Initiative, and Aaron Wright, the founder of Cardozo's tech startup clinic and the university's resident expert on blockchain technology and the law.

"ALTHOUGH ENROLLMENT FOR FALL 2017 SAW AN INCREASE FROM FALL 2016 OF 26 STUDENTS, ENROLLMENT AT CARDOZO HAS BEEN ON A DECLINE SINCE 2010."

Martinidez stated that as these fields in law become more prominent, the school has become "very interested in increasing the diversity of students who have these sorts of backgrounds in our applicant pool." He stated, "ultimately," this decision was "more about whether or not there is a greater pipeline for GRE test takers for students with STEM backgrounds."

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The EDITORIAL

The Stern College Dramatics Society Demands Recognition—Will YU Respond?

By Shoshy Ciment

If all the world's a stage, then Yeshiva University might want to clean up its act.

The Stern College Dramatics Society (SCDS), the theater group of the university's Beren campus, has been rebuffed once more in its attempts to secure academic credit for its actresses in their fall production.

Their uptown counterparts, the men of the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS), are still being awarded with up to 2 credits for their work on the play.

According to former SCDS members, this disparity was supposed to end this year as a result of meetings with Dean Karen Bacon about the issue last year. Up until last year, YCDS was run under the jurisdiction of the Dean's Office, which accounted for their history of getting credit. At the start of the 2017 school year, YCDS was placed under the auspices of the Office of Student Life (like SCDS had been for years) and it was decided that neither SCDS nor YCDS would be receiving credit for their work on their plays in the future.

But apparently, things have changed.

"Earn two credits without a heavy time commitment," read a recently distributed poster that advertised for YCDS' upcoming play.

"And in case you didn't hear it the last 5 times, you can earn 2 EASY CREDITS for your involvement with the play! What's NOT to like?" read another.

Dean Bacon affirmed that such announcements were "made in error" and that the YC Curriculum Committee would enforce an academic component for students involved in YCDS to receive credit for the play.

But yes, members of YCDS will still be getting credit while members of SCDS will not.

And in truth, whether or not Dean Bacon is using the "academic component" clause to help prevent credit from being given to YCDS ticket sellers (Yes, this has happened) or ushers (That too), there is a bigger issue at play here.

Yeshiva University refuses to recognize SCDS and YCDS as equals.

In 2014, representatives from SCDS proposed a syllabus to Dean Bacon that mimicked the exact same conditions in which YCDS members receive credit for their play - an academic component in the form of a paper.

They were, of course, rebuffed.

This past year, when I reached out to Dean Bacon with a request for credit, she explained it was not a "realistic" option.

Don't be fooled by what appears to be a recent leveling of the playing field. SCDS continues to handle disadvantage after disadvantage; no matter how often they prove themselves to be essential to the university. Yes, gaining the uptown Schottenstein Theater for their performances of *Our Town* this school year was a win many years in the making. But let's not forget what led up to that moment: years of performing like nomads in various venues that were

practically hostile to any serious attempt at a college-level production.

I got involved with SCDS during my first year on campus. When I heard we would be performing in Koch Auditorium, a room usually reserved for biology lectures and Shabbat meals, I did what any decent actress should. I put on a brave face and delivered the lines.

But being a part of a college production should be about more than just delivering the lines in a poorly lit dining hall with terrible acoustics.

Members of SCDS past and present understood this all too well. It is the reason they fought to secure the uptown theater for future generations of Beren's premier theater group when they knew they wouldn't be able to reap the benefits themselves; the reason they never backed down when they were repeatedly told it was never going to happen. It's the reason I fight against not receiving credit today.

"WHETHER INTENTIONALLY OR NOT, YU HAS BEEN BREEDING DISCOMFORT BETWEEN BOTH DRAMATICS SOCIETIES FOR YEARS."

Whether intentionally or not, YU has been breeding discomfort between both dramatics societies for years. In 1990, a rare joint issue of *The Commentator* and *The Observer* reported a long history of competition between SCDS and YCDS. That was almost 30 years ago.

More recently, a 2016 *Commentator* article written anonymously detailed significant disparities between SCDS and YCDS: Budget sizes, theatre spaces, and, you guessed it: the question of credit.

A part of me shudders at the thought of playing into the never-ending cycle of discussing the eternal issue. Someone writes an article, people talk, people forget, repeat.

So allow me to change things up a bit.

This time, we are not requesting recognition. We are demanding it.

To the YU administration: you have seen the fruits of our labor and you have been moved. You have professed to us, the women of SCDS, your admiration and appreciation for all that we do, verbally and via email.

To President Ari Berman: After our final performance of *Our Town*, you approached my family and me and told us that you were amazed.

If these words meant anything to you, as they did to me, do not let them go wasted. Dignify our work, our passion, and our tears. Equate us with the men of YCDS with whom we now share our space.

Both dramatics societies have shared a commitment to artistic excellence for years. It's time we share the credit as well.

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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 Seforim Sale

It's like Ben Yehuda, but with less drinking, and about as much dating pressure as a HASC staff reunion.



2 Falcon Heavy

A powerful rocket, a Star Wars head-nod, and spearheaded by Elon Musk. This could not be nerdier if it tried.



3 Cake Wars

It's like YU's equivalent of a sorority car wash fundraiser: everyone is messy and there is a lot of pink.



5 Model UN

For anyone who has never attended, it's like Sarachek, but for nerds.



6 John Tyler

The 10th President of the United States who was born in 1790 and still has two living grandsons. He must have done something right.



7 Purim

It's like Halachically approved secular college, with all the student diversity and an abundance of drinking.

7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN



1 School on President's Day

Instead of taking off to celebrate the national holiday, we're going to have off on PRDAB's birthday -- but don't bring any peanuts to the party.



2 #Knifegate

Wait, there are shiurim on Sundays?!?!



3 Long Distance Door Holding

We all know it's easier to open the door ourselves than it is to sprint 100 feet to do a favor for the person holding open the door for us.



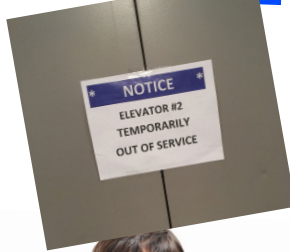
4 Applying for Internships

That moment of excitement when you secure a summer internship before you realize that your summer sitting behind a desk in a stuffy room will absolutely suck.



5 Klein @ 9

It's not just any minyan, it's the minyan that has caused the most spilled ink of any minyan in recorded history.



6 Broken Middle Elevator in Belfer

"We apologize for the temporary inconvenience." -- Facilities

7 The Flu

As much as I enjoy having classes cancelled, this virus is getting out of hand.

Chief of Staff Leaves President's Office

By Michelle Naim

Editor's Note: After this article was published, a new Chief of Staff was appointed. See the front page article titled "Julie Schreier Appointed First Female Chief of Staff to President" for more details.

Dr. Stuart Halpern, former Chief of Staff to Yeshiva University President Ari Berman, moved to the Provost's Office on February 1 to serve in the role of Senior Advisor to the Provost.

University Provost Dr. Selma Botman stated, "I am very excited about his new position which will allow me to launch interdisciplinary and academic initiatives, work more closely with our partner Israel universities, collaborate with deans and others in my office to develop dual degree programs at YU, and [explore] a host of other exciting possibilities."

On Yeshiva University's official website, there is no clear indication about the title of "Senior Advisor to the Provost"; however, in an email by Dr. Botman to The Commentator, she wrote, "Stu's familiarity with the University and his role in the community ideally suit him to working in the Provost's Office."

Provost and Vice President for academic affairs Selma Botman manages academic programs, research, personnel and resources. As provost, Dr. Selma Botman works with administrators and deans to maintain a curriculum, fosters collaboration between all Yeshiva University schools and colleges for research and creative opportunities, and hires new faculty.

Dr. Stuart Halpern has previously held several different roles at Yeshiva University. These titles include Assistant Director of Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, Assistant Director of Community Outreach and Student Activities of the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, and the Deputy Managing Editor of YU Press.



CARDOZO, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

However, some still believe that students who wish to apply to law school should stick with the LSAT. Dina Chelst, a pre-law advisor at for Yeshiva University undergraduate students, said that a student "can take the GRE in place of the LSAT only if he/she is willing to forgo access to the other 185+ law schools." She stated that many students dedicated to going to law school would likely still be taking the LSAT.

For STEM majors deciding between law school and graduate school in a STEM field, the acceptance of the GRE for law school admission comes with the advantage of only needing to focus on one test instead of two. The GRE is generally required for STEM majors who plan on going to graduate school in STEM-related fields.

A student at Cardozo offered his opinion on Cardozo's recent move to accept the GRE in addition to the LSAT. He said, "people who may not even be committed to going [to law school] will apply anyways just to see if they can get in."

Many students at Cardozo believe this change will create an influx of additional students, many of whom meet the criterion for admission. They explained that as more students hear about being able to take the GRE as opposed to the LSAT, more students will apply and the admission rate will decrease.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has yet to issue an official statement regarding law schools accepting the GRE. However according to the ABA's Current Standard 503, which covers the admission policy, the bar requires a "valid and reliable test" in the admission process, a category that, according to many prominent law schools, includes the GRE.

Some Cardozo students disagree with the intended benefits of the GRE. One student stated that "the standardized testing is the problem."

However, Martinidez explained that Cardozo takes a "holistic" approach when it comes to admissions. He stated that students are not admitted based on "one or two sets of criteria," such as a standardized test score, but rather on the entire application as a whole.

Azrieli to Hold Inaugural Conference for Jewish Educators

By Yitzchak Carroll

The Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration is slated to hold an inaugural conference for teachers and administrators preceding its annual Jewish Job Fair. The event will take place on February 26-27 in Englewood, New Jersey.

"ACCORDING TO BARANY, CONVENTION PARTICIPANTS WILL PROBE POTENTIAL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES FOR JEWISH SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT THROUGH 'PROGRESSIVE, CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING APPROACHES.'"

At the conference, dubbed "Azrieli HUB: Reconnect, Connect, Recharge," Orthodox Jewish educators, as well as Azrieli students and alumni, will discuss a variety of challenges in Jewish education, while providing a forum to exchange ideas and suggestions in an innovative and unconventional fashion, according to Azrieli Dean Dr. Rona Novick and Rabbi Eliezer Barany, Azrieli's Communications Coordinator.

"Orthodox Jewish educators and educational leaders shared with us their desire to connect to the array of resources YU has to offer," said Novick and Barany in a joint statement. "They want to both advance their own learning and to enhance their schools, in addition to enriching the learning of their staff members. We wanted to provide a comfortable place for them to connect and recharge, to share thoughts, ideas, challenges and possibilities," they added.

According to Barany, convention participants will probe potential programs and initiatives for Jewish schools to implement through "progressive, constructivist learning approaches." Putting YU's resources as well as participants' first-hand experience to use, discussions will center on a myriad of issues, including problem- and inquiry-based learning, funding challenges, and spirituality in Jewish education.

Azrieli officials are calling this event an "unconvention," as the topics selected for presentation were requested by school officials. Additionally, the presentations will be given "via innovative and constructivist pedagogy," according to Barany, as "those present will be active participants in each of our sessions, sharing methodology we hope will translate to the classroom."

The two-day event will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Englewood, NJ, culminating in the Jewish Job Fair at 6 p.m. on February 27 at the Max Stern Athletic Center on the Wilf campus, during which hundreds of professionals and nearly 100 Jewish day schools and organizations are scheduled to come together to learn

about each other's roles, while affording participants the opportunity to apply for employment.

Novick anticipates the conference will help address pressing issues facing educators in today's generation. "We heard from our constituents, that they see Yeshiva University and Azrieli as continued resources to them, and that they want to learn with and from us," she said in



a statement. "We want to create a safe space for Orthodox Jewish professionals to workshop their unique questions."

"Since a major challenge for the field is how to recruit qualified educators and how to develop them throughout their careers, the theme of professional development in Jewish education will resonate through the HUB and the Job Fair," Barany said. "Azrieli and Yeshiva University have so much to offer, and putting these two events together is just one example of all we can do for Jewish schools."

Doron Stern Named University Vice President of Communications

By Ben Strachman

President Ari Berman has appointed Doron Stern as the new Vice President of Communications, he announced in an email from the President's Office to the YU community on Monday, January 30. As the first to hold the position of VP of Communications since 2011, Stern will head the university's Office of Communications and Public Affairs (CPA). Since 2011, the office has been headed by executive directors.

In his new role, Stern will "oversee all communications and marketing activities, including branding, media relations, print and digital marketing collateral, websites and social media outreach," explained Aliza Berenholz Peled, who has served as the Interim Director of CPA since Dr. Paul Oestreicher stepped down from the position in July 2017. She returned to her role as Senior Director of Events, a position she has held concurrently with her role as Interim Director, after Stern assumed the new role.

Stern most recently worked as the Chief Marketing Officer of GoHealth Urgent Care. Before that, he served as the Vice President of Marketing for the Popcorn, Indiana food company, the IDT Corporation, and Chobani. According to a press release on the YU News Blog, he "helped grow annual revenue from \$30 million to \$900 million in just four years" while at Chobani. A graduate of the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy, the University's high school for boys, and Brandeis University, Stern

gained an MBA in marketing from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business at NYU.

"Doron brings to Yeshiva University a record of transformative success in the corporate world, as well

as a deep insider's knowledge of our core community," President Berman stated in a press release. "As we prepare to launch a new era in the history of YU, we are excited for Doron to bring his leadership and expertise back home."



DEBATE, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

genuine political discussion. SCW Junior Alyssa Wruble, President of the College Republicans, noted that "the debate proved that YU students are willing to spend their free time listening, learning, and debating real-world issues." President of the College Democrats Matthew Haller, a YC Junior, echoed Wruble's sentiment, noting, "I was impressed with the massive turnout, which confirms my suspicions that the student body here wants an outlet for political engagement."

Eli Werner, a Junior in Yeshiva College majoring in Political Science, felt the debaters came well-prepared and expressed compelling arguments. "I wasn't sure what to expect coming in, but I was pleasantly surprised by what I saw." Sy Syms Sophomore Shua Scharf agreed with Eli's

sentiment. "As a republican, it's good to hear the other sides opinion without bashing and ridiculing each other. I came in with an open mind and I had not thought of many things they brought up."

"CHIZHIK BELIEVES THESE EVENTS 'ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO REACH OUT TO ONE ANOTHER AND CONSIDER DIFFERING AND CONTENDING ISSUES.'"

The event was the third of its kind in past five years, and has now occurred for two consecutive years. Stern Senior Neta Chizhik, the President of the J. Dunner Political

Science Society, explained that the debate was similar to last year's, but with a few key changes. This year, debaters were offered an additional opportunity for rebuttal to foster more "back and forth," and a professor moderated instead of student.

Chizhik believes that these events "encourage students to reach out to one another and consider differing and contending issues- even if this involves stepping out of their comfort zones to consider another approach or perspective." She also described the difficulty of getting people to meaningfully engage with issues. "This is part of a larger, national issue, that's being discussed ad nauseam- which makes it all the more frustrating: we are all speaking over each other rather than learning how to listen and process anything beyond our own echo chamber."

Knife-Wielding YU Alumnus Threatens Roshei Yeshiva, Lecture Attendees in Glueck Center

By Benjamin Koslowe

On Sunday, January 28, a male former YU student armed with a knife gained entrance into the Glueck Center on the Wilf campus, eventually threatening the lives of two Roshei Yeshiva, as well as the lives of those attending a lecture.

The man entered the Glueck Center shortly after 10:00 AM. He immediately headed to the third floor of the building, where he encountered YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Michael Rosensweig. After a brief altercation in which the man threatened Rabbi Rosensweig's life, the man entered a classroom where YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Hershel Reichman was delivering a lecture. The man yelled threats to those in attendance. YU security was called, and the man was apprehended by the New York Police Department (NYPD) and taken to the hospital. No one present was physically injured.



As of the time of publication, The Commentator was unable to learn details about the perpetrator's identity or the NYPD's response to the incident.

After the incident, rumors proliferated among the student body about the details of Sunday's incident. Many students described to The Commentator that they felt confused and only partially informed about what exactly happened after they received sparse updates from YU security during and after the episode.

The perpetrator was described by one witness as a bearded man in his twenties or thirties wearing a winter coat and his *tzitzis* out. According to a YU spokesperson from the Office of Communications and Public Affairs, the man is a former student who scheduled an appointment with Rabbi Hershel Reichman. According to the spokesperson, he "checked in with the security desk" by the first floor entrance to the building, and proceeded to the third floor of Glueck, where the incident occurred. Rabbi Reichman told The Commentator that this former student of his called him on Friday to schedule the appointment. YU security declined to elaborate on the matter, deferring to the statement offered by the Office of Communications and Public Affairs.

Upon exiting the elevator, the man encountered Rabbi Michael Rosensweig and approached him. Rabbi Rosensweig told The Commentator that the man, who seemed to not know who he was speaking with, began to swear at the top of his lungs, demanding that Rabbi Rosensweig "read this!" When Rabbi Rosensweig asked the man who he was and why he was screaming, the man pulled out a knife and told Rabbi Rosensweig, "read this or I'll slit your throat."

Rabbi Rosensweig managed to calm the man, who then identified himself as Jewish, apparently in answer to Rabbi Rosensweig's question. He then thrust a card into Rabbi Rosensweig's hand, which Rabbi Rosensweig was not able to make sense of. The man then stormed down the third floor hallway.

At the time, Rabbi Reichman was delivering a lecture to roughly 20 people on the topic of "The Geirus of Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai" as part of the Abraham Arbesfeld Kollel Yom Rishon program for Men, run by YU's Center for the Jewish Future (CJF) and Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS). Kollel Yom Rishon typically features two or three YU speakers on Sunday mornings who deliver lectures in the Glueck 307 classroom,

which seats 30-50 people, after which light food is served. Rabbi Reichman's lecture was scheduled to run from 9:30-10:30, and Rabbi Rosensweig was scheduled to speak afterwards at 10:30. The man entered the room on Sunday morning at around 10:20.

As the man entered the classroom, Rabbi Rosensweig, who was still in the hallway, happened to see the person in charge of Kollel Yom Rishon. Rabbi Rosensweig whispered that someone had just pulled out a knife and threatened to kill him, advising that the person call security. Rabbi Rosensweig then went into his office on the third floor of Glueck and looked up the Security Department's phone number. While speaking with The Commentator, Rabbi Rosensweig emphasized that he did not have the phone number immediately available, something that he hopes YU will improve upon in the future. As he was looking up the number, he heard "screaming" from classroom 307. Shortly after, he heard YU security dealing with the situation.

Several witnesses who were present in classroom 307 described that when the man entered the room, he looked visibly disturbed. Rabbi Dr. Moshe Strauch, one of the attendees, told The Commentator that the scariest moment for him was when the man reached into a bag to pull something out. "At first everyone froze in place," described Strauch. The man revealed a knife and yelled that he could kill everyone. He then placed his knife down on the table, fell on the floor, and began crying and saying that he didn't want to die. Strauch said, "When he fell to the floor, we were able to go out. At that point I ran downstairs to get security. They came up right away and handled the situation smoothly." Several students reported seeing the man being removed in handcuffs from Glueck. Once the situation was handled, Rabbi Reichman's lecture moved to another classroom on the third floor of Glueck and the Kollel Yom Rishon program proceeded normally.

Students on the Wilf and Beren campuses learned about the incident on Sunday morning at 10:48 AM when the YU Security Department sent an email and text message to the student body through its YU Alert System. The email and text, with the subject "Police Activity - Glueck Center - Wilf Campus - Avoid te [sic] Area," had the following message: "The Police Department has responded to the Glueck Campus for an emotionally disturbed person. There is no current threat to the campus community but you should avoid the area until further notice." At 11:17 AM another message was delivered by email and text with the subject "All Clear on the Wilf Campus." This message read: "The Police Department reports that an emotionally disturbed person has been removed to the hospital. Please resume all normal activities on campus."

Another YU Alert email was sent to students early in the morning on Monday, January 29. "Yesterday morning, a former student wielding a knife entered a public lecture on the Wilf Campus," began the email. "Security responded immediately, disarming and apprehending him until the NYPD arrived on the scene. No one was injured during the incident." The email continued, "Our top priority is always the safety and well-being of our students, faculty, staff, and campus community, and we work closely with our local precinct to fulfill this obligation. That ensured a quick response to the situation. Of course, it also ensures our full and complete cooperation in the ongoing investigation into the matter." The email concluded by advising students to carry their YU ID cards at all times, and to contact the security office upon observing any suspicious or threatening behavior.

"Security was notified and promptly arrived at the scene, where they were able to disarm and detain him until the NYPD showed up," wrote the YU spokesperson to The Commentator. "We applaud the swift response of our security personnel in handling this situation without any resulting injuries. While this was an isolated incident, the safety and security of our campus community remains our top priority and we will review our existing safety protocols to ensure that the best procedures and practices are in place."

Rosh Yeshiva from Israel Visits YU as Scholar-in-Residence

By Esti Kuperman

Rabbi Dov Zinger, the Rosh Yeshiva of Makor Chaim and the Jewish Renewal Center in Israel, is visiting Yeshiva University until February 22 as a scholar-in-residence. Zinger, who is currently on sabbatical this year, arrived at YU on February 5 accompanied by the Makor Chaim program director of development, Yossi Baumol.

"Rabbi Zinger will spend two weeks on campus meeting with students, teaching Torah and bringing the ruach of Eretz Yisrael to @YUNews," tweeted President Ari Berman on February 5.

Zinger runs the 10th grade exchange program between students at the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA) and students at Makor Chaim, a program that is now in its 10th year. The program allows students from MTA to have an opportunity to connect with students in Israel for a few weeks by spending an academic quarter learning and living with the students at Makor Chaim.

Makor Chaim is located on Kibbutz Kfar Etzion in the Gush Etzion region of Israel and is a religious Zionist high school for boys. Two of the three boys kidnapped in 2014, Gilad Shaar and Naftali Frenkel, had been attending Makor Chaim at the time of their abduction.

"Rabbi Zinger has fascinating approaches to *ruchniyut* and *chinuch*," said Rabbi Menachem Penner, The Max and Marion Grill Dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and Undergraduate Torah Studies. "He is an inspiring, yet very relatable person."

Penner added that Zinger's visit is not related to the exchange program with MTA, but is solely to learn with and teach students at Yeshiva University.

World Mizrachi, a Torah-based educational organization that is affiliated with the Religious Zionist Organization, worked with RIETS to bring Rabbi Zinger to YU. In an article written in the Jewish Link of New Jersey, Rabbi Doron Perez, the head of World Mizrachi, stated that bringing Rabbi Zinger is an attempt to push connections between Jews in the diaspora and those living in Israel.

Throughout the course of his stay, Zinger will be giving numerous classes on topics such as *Chassidut* and *Chassidut* psychology in the classroom. He will also be discussing his new book "The Prayer Cookbook: Recipes for Devotion." He spent the Shabbat of February 7 on the Wilf campus alongside Rabbi Mordechai Willig, a senior Rosh Yeshiva at YU.

Many people are excited about having Rabbi Zinger

on campus. "Rav Zinger brings the Israeli religious perspective that is lacking at YU," said Yeshiva College junior Ilan Lavian.

According to Rabbi Ozer Glickman, a Rosh Yeshiva of RIETS, Rabbi Zinger "offers a more spiritual approach that may not be sufficiently emphasized in the Yeshiva."

He added that people who know Rabbi Zinger have spoken very highly of him.

Rabbi Zinger's wife, Rabbanit Iris Zinger, is also accompanying him on his trip and has been visiting the Stern campus Beit Midrash regularly. She has been available to meet with students and has been conducting numerous *chaburot* during her stay. She and her husband spent the Shabbat of February 17 on the Beren campus.

Since his investiture, President Ari Berman has been working to increase connections between Israel and Yeshiva University. As he stated in his investiture address, "We will continue to leverage our close ties with Israel to create these kinds of pipelines so that our students will receive the best training in the skill sets necessary to succeed in the marketplace of the future, and the world of tomorrow."

The Unspoken Value of The Seforim Sale

By Ella Herman

For the past 35 years or so, the YU community has benefited both fiscally and intellectually from the renowned annual Seforim Sale event. This event, selling roughly over 100,000 books, provides a more affordable and convenient alternative for the YU community—satiating the avid reader's mind and bank account. Rather than face the trials and tribulations of New York's public transportation system in the middle of winter, those desperately searching for their next Shabbat afternoon read can now walk—or shuttle—no further than Belfer to purchase their respective sefer.

As students, teachers, and book lovers of all kinds calmly peruse through the various aisles of orderly

arranged books, it is easy to forget the immense amount of time many YU students devote to this event's existence. To organize and sustain an event of this magnitude, the staff does much more than assist customers and place books on bookshelves. Students are responsible for every logistical aspect of this event—recording each purchase, dealing with vendors, handling tax return forms.

Seforim Sale profits must be managed responsibly since they are retained to sustain longevity for future sales, while a portion of the profit is donated to YU. In the past, this event has experienced certain financial setbacks, such as the 2013 “net loss of over \$19,600 on revenue of \$851,700”. But from such losses, the YU students organizing this event seem to have taken charge to ensure that all complex financial details are handled properly

considering the increasingly impressive profit intake. Just last year's Sefarim Sale, the third successful sale post the financial atrocity of 2013, brought in around “\$50,000 in total revenue”. Such success has been attributed to Sy Syms School of Business' Professor Fuld and Dean Strauss who responded to the 2013 Seforim Sale by providing a YU oversight committee for guidance. This is not only an admirably positive and productive response to failure, but also an enhancing quality for the sale itself. By implementing such guidance, the potential business skills available to YU students involved in the sale become much more valuable. Aaron Ishida, this year's Seforim Sale CEO, believes that allowing “students to take on and experience what it's like to be part of a real business” is one of the biggest contributions of the Sefarim Sale.

The sale hosts an array of books with a wide variety of topics, from sets of halachic texts to analyses of the Middle Eastern conflict, each and every book is physically labeled by hand and then arranged in Belfer—the Wilf campus being the most spacious option for such a large event. Ishida claims that planning this event is so complex that it takes a full year to prepare. At first this may seem hyperbolic, but when one considers the sale staff's list of responsibilities: contacting and discussing logistics with 70 private vendors and 40 full time vendors, managing the marketing of the event both on and off campus, keeping track of finances and payments, practical set up of the event, designating specific jobs to specific staff, monitoring which books will be sold, and arranging a schedule of speakers that will interest the diverse customer population, the immensity of the project would give anyone a headache.

That being said, it is important to recognize the preparation and intense management involved in this project that countless YU students benefit from as well as many other Jews from various denominational backgrounds. The impressively low prices the Seforim Sale is famous for will make almost any (Judaic) book worm chant “nowhere but here”, regardless of their personal affiliation with YU. In fact, while flipping through the overwhelming stacks of Jewish literature myself, a fellow customer commented (in an admittedly exaggerative way) “this book my friend bought here costs \$70 everywhere else and around \$20 here!”. Although specific profit numbers have yet to be announced, the Seforim Sale has once again provided an excellent event benefiting the Jewish community at large while empowering students to develop valuable business techniques—a quintessential Torah U'Mada event.




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How I Made \$125 Talking About Israel

By Aliza Naiman

“You all have only one thing in common,” she said, as she looked at the seven nervous members of the conference room and tossed the door shut behind her. Loving this dramatic start, I absorbed the room. One wall had a window facing NYC, another a one-way mirror, and cameras were positioned above every seat; the room had a modern-day Twelve Angry Men vibe. Or maybe that’s my overactive imagination. Alternatively, one could imagine that the power-suited woman in the crocodile leather office chair seated at the front of the table was about to reveal something appalling; a real Mr. Poirot scenario. Or maybe that’s my affinity for Agatha Christie. Someone

“TODD SLAMMED HIS HAND ON THE TABLE AND YELLED “I KNEW IT!” AND FATIMA BEGAN TO GIGGLE UNCONTROLLABLY.”

sneezed, and her folded paper name card scooted forward on the mahogany table. Not a “bless you” was offered.

The unknown number had lit up my screen while I was at work, and I had silenced my phone. The caller, a Mr. Garvey, left a voice message, stating that he was calling from Focus Pointe Global to invite me to a focus group the next day. I would be reimbursed \$125 for my time, and he requested that I call him back so that we could proceed with a questionnaire that would confirm if I was indeed a candidate. I had no knowledge of a focus group’s function, Focus Pointe Global, or this Mr. Garvey. The only things I was certain of were his proper pronunciation of my name,

an occurrence unusual without initial correction, and how fine that \$125 sounded. So, naive at worst, up for an adventure at best, I called back.

To assuage my initial skepticism of the legitimacy of the call, Mr. Garvey explained his company’s function. Focus Pointe Global is a marketing company that assists organizations and companies in gaining unbiased, productive data regarding population interest and perceptions of their product or idea before it proceeds to production. A focus group, the assembly of a diverse group of individuals with no prior knowledge of the subject, media, or product being researched, is a mode in which market research companies like FPG provide such feedback to their clients.

Mr. Garvey was ready to continue on to the questionnaire portion of the phone call. The questions were posed in ascending agreement order, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” At first, they seemed like general protocol necessary to ascertain if I would be an asset to such an environment: “Do you consider yourself a people person?” “Are you quick to form opinions?” “Do your friends consider you to be an outgoing individual?” Yes, no, yes. We moved on. “Do you consider yourself Jewish?” “Have you visited Israel within the last five years for over three months?” “How likely would you be to pursue a degree or residency in Israel?” As the questions dropped their initial format, I grew confused. I certainly had never signed up or created a profile on the company’s website, and yet Mr. Garvey had known my name, number and, in some indirect capacity, my religious affiliation.

After the final questions were asked and I was deemed a suitable addition to the following day’s three pm focus group, I interjected Mr. Garvey’s reminder to be punctual and asked exactly how my name had found its way to FBG’s list of appropriate participants.

“On December 21st we got your name and information from our client, whose company name we are not permitted to reveal at this time.” Sketchy, I thought. And with that, the call ended.

Naturally, I informed my friends of my exact coordinates before departing to the focus group the following day. Not wholly convinced this wasn’t an elaborate kidnapping scheme, they were under strict command to enter the scene if I did not return unharmed by 4:30. Snipers were assigned rooftops. With only conjecture available regarding the focus group’s topic, I was concerned that the discussion would pertain to the current political state of Israel, a topic about which I know next to nary. Acutely aware of my religious appearance, I feared that I was not up to the task of playing a token Jew in the room.

Upon my arrival, I sat in a waiting room with six other young men and women and filled out a questionnaire identical to the one Mr. Garvey and I had completed over the phone. I glanced up and made occasional, wary eye contact with the others in the room. Only when we had completed our assignments and were ushered into a conference room was I was able to get a better look at the next hour’s companions.

First, there was Todd, a redhaired, cowlicked white male who didn’t seem particularly jubilant to be involved with FPG. It was later revealed that Todd shared a sole passion for basketball, and intended to seek a career in, well, basketball. Next, there was Shawn, an African American male who was pre-med at a CUNY school. Alexandra, as president of Columbia University’s medical society, shared the same aspiration. Next to her sat Fatima, a Hispanic girl from the Bronx, who wanted to be

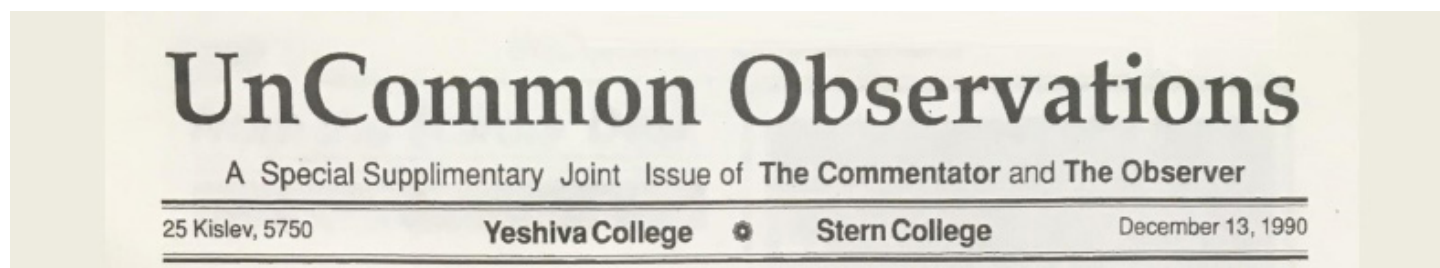
TALKING ABOUT ISRAEL , CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: The Commentator has decided to reprint these two articles from a Special Supplementary Joint Issue, co-published by The Commentator and The Observer. Though written 27 years ago, these pieces about the YU dating scene remain relevant and on-point.

From the Archives (December 13, 1990; Volume 56 Special Joint Issue) — UnCommon Observations



Lethargic Syndrome of Dating

By David Kolb and Carey Schreiber

Bogged down with work? Not meeting the “nice Jewish girl” you thought you would? Saving money for that big date? Welcome to Yeshiva University.

It’s Thursday night, and there is no one around YC to be found. Are they out on dates? No! They have all gone home to rest their weary little eyes after an intensive week of exams, papers, and other schoolwork. Is this any way to enjoy college life?

Thus begins, what we like to term, the “Lethargic Syndrome of Dating (LSD).”

At first glance, Joe Yeshiva notices the convenient location of his sister school (Stern College for Women Only), 150 blocks due south. Our weary student attempts to secure passage to this “sister school.” In doing this, Joe is confronted with a major difficulty: “To van, or not to van.” If Joe decides to take the van route, he must now become a linebacker attempting to secure his position in the line to the van. Failure to do so sends Joe to the safe, secure, and punctual subway.

Upon arrival, Joe is greeted with some warm and welcome stares (a.k.a. Stern Lounge). Carefully he makes his way toward the courtesy phone, to make his second voice contact with his “date.” Waiting in the lounge, our hero begins to perspire at the thought of the impending evening. Should I take her to Mr. Broadway, Kosher Delight, or Cafe Wah? Wait, we might see someone we know, and feel awkward. Think quick Joe; she’s getting off the elevator.

After a lovely and frugal (thrifty) time painting the town, Joe accompanies his companion to “Brookdale Hall.” As he attempts to say goodnight, his voice is drowned by the bellow of the Burns security guard. “LAST VAN LEAVING NOW. ROOM FOR ONE MORE.” During the long ride home, Joe has some quality time to contemplate his evening, while other van riders contemplate aloud. Not a bad evening, considering we saw 12 people we knew, spent \$70.00, (plus tip), and met new and interesting cabbies. At least the company was good!

Joe returns home for the weekend, feeling optimistic. He spends a majority of the weekend studying for his classes. The week passes, Thursday rolls around again, and Joe is faced with his weekly dilemma. He ponders whether to go down to Stern and see his new friend, or save time and money and just rely on Ma Bell. After his conversation, Joe heads down to Morg Lounge to watch the game. After the game, he realizes that it was both fun and inexpensive to view this sporting event with his male companions, without feeling the pressure of dating. Thus ends stage two of LSD.

In our third stage, Joe has come to accept the comfort of “Thursday Night Male Bonding.” In his subconscious, he realizes that he was supposed to call her at halftime...or at least as the post game show ends. Is 2:15 A.M. too late to call? Don’t do it Joe, remember she has 6 other roommates (tight squeeze). I’ll call her next week...Two months later, Joe asks, is it still too late to call?

With the roar of the Madison Square Garden crowd, Joe has now entered our final stage of “Lethargic Syndrome of Dating.” As he rationalizes his motives for his hermit-like existence, Joe justifies his decision by saying, “It wouldn’t have worked anyway.”

We, the members of Student Optimism for Campus Intervisitation and After-Class Life (S.O.C.I.A.L.), plead with you the students of Yeshiva University ... DON’T BE A JOE, GET UP AND GO!

For information, call us. Please!

Dating in the Dark

By Avrum Aaron and Deborah Aharon

Why do they call them blind dates? Because when you see your date you say to yourself, “Gee, the person that set me up must have been blind!” So goes the old joke.

For centuries blind dates, or shiduchim, have been a social reality. In the past, most Jewish young men and women have relied on this method of meeting for the lack of an alternative, or simply because it was tradition. Since most religiously observant men and women did not socially interact as freely as they do in our day, it was necessary to rely on an outside party to make marital matches.

To this day, the ‘blind date method’ is still used by many orthodox people for basically the same reasons. However, there is a new development. Many young people in the orthodox community prefer to meet their match on their own rather than via a friend. Now that society provides many more opportunities than before to meet people in a more ‘natural’ setting, they have begun to frown upon the old-fashioned method. Hence, multitudes of YU students are divided in their approach.

Blind dating still has many adherents, even among modern YU students. “It’s the way to go,” admits one SCW student. “How else will you meet a certain type of guy?”

“Why mess with something that has history on its side?” comments another SCW student. “My parents met that way!”

Despite undeniable success stories, many students express discomfort or even abhorrence towards the blind dating system. “I hate it,” says an SCW student emphatically. “It has gotten to the point where I will refuse dates even if they ‘sound good’ because I can’t stand the pressure. Your every move is under surveillance.”

“I don’t enjoy them,” says another. “I guess if I would, I’d be married.”

Further questioning revealed that positive or negative attitudes towards blind dating are usually the result of upbringing, or past experiences with the system.

Those opposed to the system voice dissatisfaction with the entire process, from the initial arrangement via friends or family to the post-date analysis with the people who set you up.

The blind date is usually arranged by friends, but occasionally relatives try to play their hand at the shiduch game. “Once, this girl I didn’t even know came up to me and asked me if I wanted to go out with her brother,” complains one SCW junior. “I didn’t even know her, why would I want to go out with her brother?”

At the YC campus, one student comments, “I only let my closest friends set me up because they

know me best.”

The details that make the date a blind one are also a cause for apprehension. There are certain questions that cross one’s mind when someone sets you up. Very often, the primary question pertains to appearance.

“I never ask what she looks like because whether she looks like an elephant or is gorgeous, they always say she’s fine,” disagrees one YC student. Young women at SCW also admit they are concerned about looks.

Other aspects that one wants to know about are personality, sense of humor, level of religious observance, education, age, tastes and interests, intelligence, background, and what the parents do. One Smicha student wanted to know such specific details as whether her mother covers her hair and whether her siblings go to Yeshiva. “The problem here,” notes a YC senior, “is that after all the questions and answers, exaggerations, embellishments, half-truths and down-right lies, you still have little knowledge about your date!”

Once these preliminary questions have been asked, someone has to take the initiative and usually it is the man. “The most awkward situation is calling up the girl for the first time,” says one YC junior. “It’s definitely worse for the guy.”

An SCW woman felt differently. “I usually don’t know what to say especially if he’s not forthcoming,” she says. “I also hate the small-talk although I know it’s kind of necessary.”

Since the main purpose of the call is to set up a meeting place, the obvious next source of tension is the meeting itself. While some may feel comfortable meeting right in the lobby of Brookdale Hall, most of those interviewed preferred to meet in a less conspicuous location. “Usually the guy says something to the effect of, ‘I’ll meet you across the street from Brookdale Hall. I’ll be the one wearing the paper bag over my head,’” admits one generally timid young YC man. “I’d rather meet her on the corner,” says another. At SCW, one woman had a different experience. “You can’t win,” she says. “I asked a guy to meet me on the corner and he got insulted.” Others, however, did not mind getting away from the lobby scene to meet their date. As one woman says, “It’s no one’s business who I go out with.”

Whatever actually happens on the date, one can be sure that both will reveal their complete life’s history in the period of a few hours. Equally as certain is the inevitable evaluation and report of this evaluation to the party who initiated the meeting. “That’s the worst part,” says one YC

SEE ARCHIVES,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Edel - White

Courtesy of The Yeshiva University Poetry Club

By Gabriella Englander

Sunlight filters in through dusty blinds,
Dances on a China-blue vase, brimming with edelweiss,
Overshadowing my Bill of Rights homework, abandoned
On the dark-veined table.

My grandmother shuffles in, her gaze
Traces cotton-coated petals. Her eyes,
Envelop me, same gray-blue as mine,
And I fold in -

To a Carpathian valley of sweet gale and rolling pine,
Whistling to the barred warbler's tale, gray-blue eyes
Of a man, plucking clusters of edelweiss
For his wife to fluff in a China-blue vase -

Beside my homework, on the dark-veined table,
My grandmother rests a yahrzeit candle
For those who had no Bill of Rights,
Her lips pressed white, edel-white.

TALKING ABOUT ISRAEL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

a massage therapist. Lastly, to my right was Becky, a nervous girl with a shoulder tick and an undecided major. Sarah, our pinstriped power-suited focus group leader, entered the room. "You all have only one thing in common," she said. "You guys are college students in the New York Metropolitan area."

Looks and a couple of timid smiles were scattered around, and as I arranged my skirt to settle better into my seat, I hoped that my feeling of being an outsider in such a diversely secular group wasn't printed on my cheeks. The next thirty minutes did, indeed, reveal no other commonalities among us. Sarah would pose an innocent question relating to college or our career goals, and responses were stilted and intentionally impersonal. We talked about the importance of resume building and broke down the process into three segments: academic achievement (grades), experience, and extracurricular activities. Then we took turns describing what an ideal internship or other such experience gaining opportunity would look like to each individual. Location, length of internship, and actual job details were discussed. Alexandra felt that a chance to work alongside Doctors Without Borders for a summer would be life-changing, and Todd posited that interning for a Knicks' coach would be "dope."

Religion and Israel were words unmentioned, and I found myself relaxing into the conversation, even as I remained curious about the purpose of such extensive questioning prior to my entering the room. It wasn't until the last twenty-five minutes that Sarah dropped her truth-bomb in the form of a white and blue flag. "There is one other thing uniting the room." She said, and a smile traveled north to her eyes. "Each of you considers his or herself to be Jewish."

What happened next was subtly glorious. Todd slammed his hand on the table and yelled "I knew it!" and Fatima began to giggle uncontrollably. Shawn and I shared looks of surprise and grinned at one another. It suddenly occurred to me that each of us had sat there for the past forty minutes fostering the same simmering discomfort. Like vigilantes, we had all anxiously waited for our religious loyalty to be

called upon.

From there, the conversation took intent. Sarah revealed that the focus group's client was actually Taglit-Birthright. The not-for-profit organization is looking to start a summer internship program that would allow American college students to spend an extended period of time in Israel gaining interactive experience in their area of study while simultaneously enjoying a dynamic, multi-dimensional summer of growth. We had been chosen from the Birthright database as individuals who had an account with Birthright but hadn't participated in a trip yet. Sarah then asked us to describe what such a trip would look like to us, and the conversation continued in high spirits. Fatima explained that, as a Shabbat-keeping Jew, she would like to have Sundays off to do some independent exploring.

The last question Sarah posed was what Birthright and Israel meant to us personally. Alexandra enthusiastically described her family's annual visits to her sister's kibbutz. On a personal note, I described how my community attends women's seminars post high school, and how I had chosen to forgo the opportunity. Hailing from the East Coast but having attended an intensive Bais Yaakov in Denver for two years, an adventure of an experience that I can only describe as character building but exhausting (great skiing, though!), I had opted out of another year of boarding school life and came to Stern as a true-freshman in order to be closer to home. With immensely Aliya-oriented parents and two siblings already living in the land, Israel is a country that I hope to explore fully, even if my college schedule has not allowed for a birthright trip just yet.

As the hour drew to a close, conversation winded down and our coats and phones were returned to us. Each participant was handed an envelope containing a prepaid visa (you thought it was a scam, didn't you?), and we headed out into the hallway, where warm goodbyes were exchanged. Before exiting into the cold, I glanced into the waiting room at the next group of unsuspecting, "unconnected" college students nervously scribbling in their questionnaires. Overall, 'twas not a bad way to make 125 dollars. I sent my snipers home.

ARCHIVES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

senior. "I'm always apprehensive about what will be said."

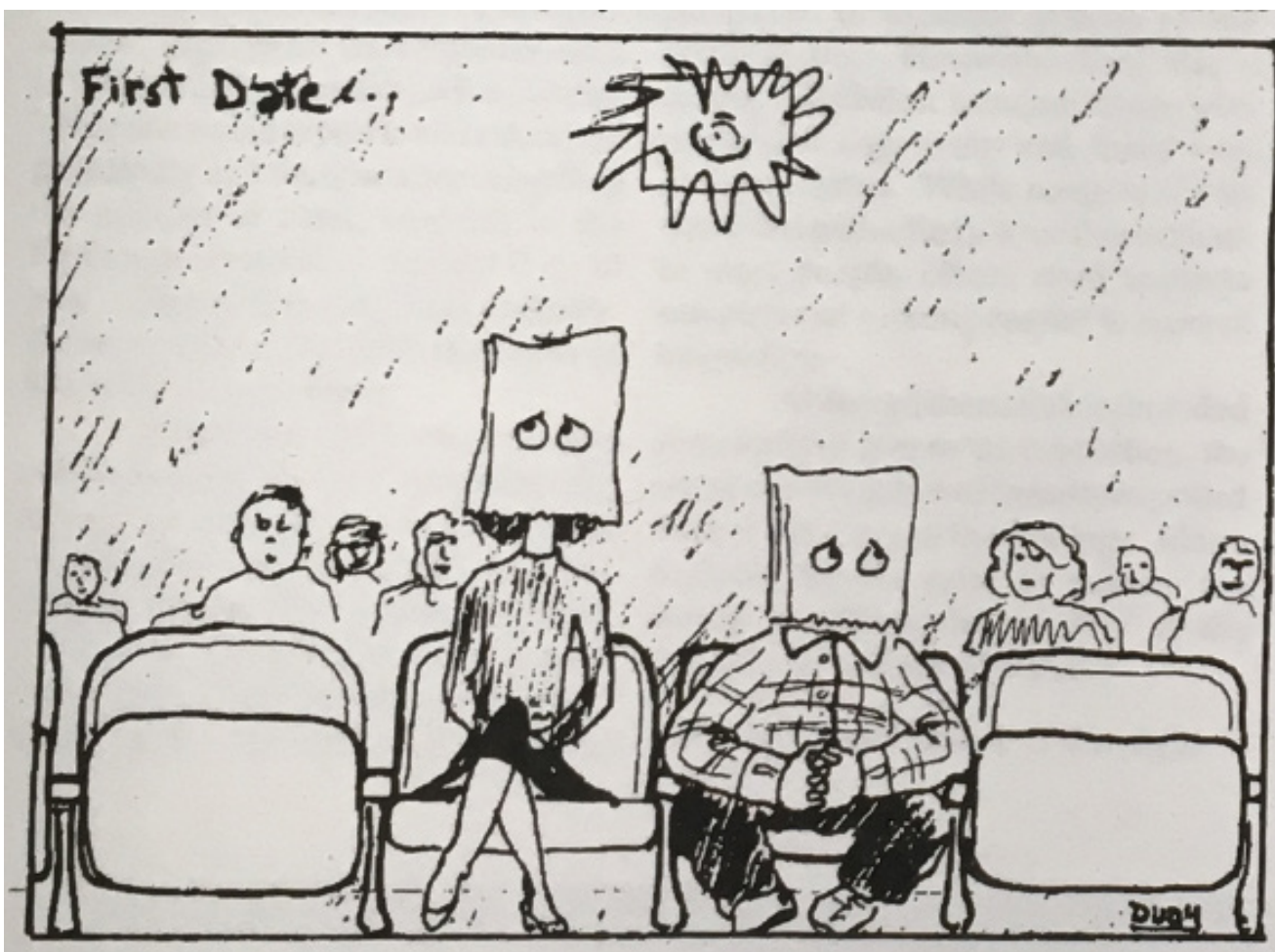
As intricate and detailed as these problems may be, there are still many who resolve themselves to making the best of blind dates. "It's a fact of life," remarks a YC sophomore.

"It's like applying for a graduate school or med school," muses an SCW student. "You may not like studying for entrance exams, but the only way to succeed is by working hard to prepare for them. While studying for them, one may take many practice tests in order to succeed by the real one. Dating is the biggest test of all."

Proof that many YU students do make use of the 'blind-date method', whether due to genuine initiative or peer pressure, is the YCSC sponsored "blind date" that occurs once or twice a year. While participation is low, some students have enjoyed them. "I got to meet some really interesting people who I would never have gone out with on my own," asserts one SCW sophomore.

"It wasn't so bad," agrees one YC senior. "I might even go again."

These people seem to recognize the faults in the system, yet despite all the uncertainty, apprehensiveness, dread, and unpleasant psychological preparation which goes into the blind date, they also recognize the fact that many people have been known to meet their match in this manner. And, even if the night goes poorly, it's a valuable experience about which you can speak...on the next blind date!!



Spider-Man: Homecoming-- Sick of Training Wheels

By Yael Green

Editor's note: This review contains spoilers of the film's plot.

The apropos title, *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, not only alludes to the climactic battle on Homecoming night and conveys the teenage experience central to this film, it also warmly welcomes Spiderman home--into the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU). Usually, competitors do not share their multi-billion dollar icons, but Sony and Disney

"SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING PRESENTS AN INNOVATIVE STORYLINE IN A MODERNIZED SETTING, WHILE REMAINING TRUE TO SPIDERMAN'S TEENAGE PERSONA."

are clearly breaking that norm. Teenager Tom Holland's rendition of Spiderman first won the hearts of viewers in *Captain America: Civil War* (2016). Although Spiderman's introduction to MCU in *Captain America: Civil War* was merely 30 minutes and somewhat inconsequential to the main storyline, many felt Spiderman stole the show. His eager enthusiasm and comical immaturity captured Spiderman's true character-- that of a child.

Spider-Man: Homecoming capitalizes on the youthful energy audiences swooned over in Holland's debut, and opens with the same boisterous, homemade videoclips Peter Parker created on his first Avengers mission in *Captain America: Civil War*. Starting here, Jon Watts completely ignores the classic transformation scenes: being bit by the radioactive spider, and Peter's inaction to prevent Uncle Ben's death. That story stands well-known, engrained, and simply overtold (two times over the past 15 years). Watts cleverly chooses to start afresh. Instead of screening the birth of Peter Parker's powers, *Spider-Man: Homecoming* starts with an upgrade--an 'Iron-Man-esque,' Spidey suit which Peter endearingly calls "Suit Lady."

Avengers' heyday behind, *Spider-Man: Homecoming* begins with Tony Stark (Iron Man) returning Peter home to Auntie May and asserting "We'll call you." Peter becomes glued to his phone, itching for a call to action. Craving to prove his capability, Peter ventures out to protect Queens from petty crime. During his rounds, Peter happens upon an ATM robbery and unexpectedly ends up combating alien weaponry. The main Villain, Birdman (Michael Keaton), who true comic junkies would instantly connect to Vulture, contrasts with Spiderman. Due to the world's harsh financial reality, Birdman became jaded, pessimistic, and ultimately a criminal. Conversely, Spiderman represents an untainted and optimistic beacon of idealism. They are not only fighting over extra-terrestrial weaponry, but also clashing in ideology.

Spider-Man: Homecoming avoids vocalizing Spiderman's iconic catchphrase, "with great power, comes great responsibility," but rather instills that message through it's coming-of-age narrative. Peter struggles to embrace his limiting adolescent reality, exclaiming, "I'm tired of Mr. Stark treating me like a kid, [I] can stop a bus with [my] bare hands!" True, Spiderman impressively saves his classmates from falling to their death in the Washington monument's broken elevator... problem is he caused the commotion in the first place. When Peter's reckless passion causes an entire boat of innocents to nearly become collateral damage, Stark intervenes, and strips Peter of his technology-equipped suit. In the end, losing his Spidey suit oddly empowers Peter, for it teaches him, "if you're nothing without this suit, then you shouldn't have it." Peter ends up entering the climactic battle in his old, simple disguise. We get a taste of the nostalgic Spiderman, before MCU reintroduced him, modernized him, and linked him to Iron Man--mentee, techy suit and all. Although, in the concluding scene, Stark offers Peter his suit back, and invites him to officially join the Avengers, Peter declines. Peter would "rather just stay on the ground for a little longer," and be the "friendly



neighborhood Spiderman," we all know and love... but you can be sure an upgrade is coming soon... to theaters near you.

Upon the film's conclusion, the audience also remains enticed by Peter's romantic prospects. Spiderman's love life takes on a new twist in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*. Rather than sticking to the iconic MJ, in the movie Peter crushes on Liz, the captain of his scholastics team. In the final scenes, Liz leaves school and a new team captain takes over... MJ. The new MJ appears mysterious, atypical, and edgy. The MJ name may be the same, but the girl donning it certainly is not. Will Peter fall for this new MJ in MCU's next work?

The movie leaves the viewer intrigued, mulling with

suspicions, and filled with a desire for more. *Spider-Man: Homecoming* presents an innovative storyline in a modernized setting, while remaining true to Spiderman's teenage persona. Unlike the other two, recent, failed reboots of Spiderman, here Spidey was played by a real teenager. The movie is lighthearted and fun. It certainly kept the theater laughing. One disclaimer: the unsubtle special effects strip the major action scenes of their realism and artistic merit. Nonetheless, *Spider-Man: Homecoming* entertains.

The H3N2 Flu Virus: An Epidemic Of Our Time

By Jonah Stavsky

Statistically speaking, it is likely that you or someone you know has come down with the flu this 2018 winter season. And it is not a coincidence. In fact, the influenza virus has caused an unusually large number of hospitalizations this year: we are officially at an all time high since the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (the CDC) starting recording the data in 2010. If you'll recall, the United States had a similar scare back in 2009 with the swine flu epidemic, and we are now reaching similar numbers in terms of flu-like symptoms for the current season. In the third week of January alone, according to the CDC, over 4,000 people died due to the influenza virus or pneumonia. What's most frightening is the current death toll of our pediatric population: 63 children have already died due to flu-related causes, a number which is sweeping the news, and continues to rise.

But why is this year different from those in the past? While the answer is multifaceted, I will do my best to break it down for you.

The influenza virus comes in four different types -- that is, type A, B, C, & D. Starting at the end of the line, influenza type D does not typically infect the human population, rather it is transmitted mainly through cattle. Influenza type C, although more likely to cause sickness in humans, usually presents as a fairly mild condition and heals quickly. Second to last is type B: while the influenza genus does infect humans more than the other types, it is as yet relatively tame in its disease process, and due to its slow mutation rate, humans are typically inoculated and protected from an early age.

Type A is that which is of primary concern for us humans. Although wild birds were the original host of type A influenza virus, it has, in the not so distant past, begun to infect humans. To find out why type A viruses are so concerning, let's look a bit deeper.

Each of the influenza strains can be further divided into subtypes, called serotypes, which are given names based on two different types of proteins which are present on its surface: hemagglutinin (represented by the capital letter H) and neuraminidase (represented by the capital letter N). There are 18 different hemagglutinin subtypes (and therefore, subtypes H1-H18 exist), and 11 different neuraminidase subtypes (designated by N1-N11). I am sure by now you can see where this is going!

Historically, outbreaks of the type A influenza virus of different subtypes infected various populations. A couple of examples are the H5N1 subtype, which was the culprit behind the bird flu of 2004, while H2N2 caused Asian flu back in 1957.

Here are some you may be more inclined to recall: the H1N1 subtype was behind the Spanish flu in 1918, and, as I am sure you will recall, the Swine flu epidemic in 2009. Finally, a subtype with which we are about to become more familiar is the H3N2 influenza virus which caused the Hong Kong flu in 1968. And it is the H3N2 virus that is now behind the 2018 influenza epidemic.

Why is this strain so lethal when compared to the other types? It comes down to a basic reality of immunological science: the proteins on a virus's surface can mutate very slightly, but just enough to throw the immune system off. It is the mutation rate of a virus subtype, then, that dictates its evasiveness to human vaccination. Influenza virus

B (mentioned earlier) has a slow mutation rate which indicates its relative tameness. Influenza A, however, and especially the H3N2 subtype, mutates at a much higher rate.

So too, as I am sure you are aware, a yearly influenza vaccine is released to the public in an attempt to squelch the worst of that season's most prevalent virus strain. However, the speed at which the H3N2 subtype mutates creates a serious issue for the scientists making the seasonal vaccine: the virus could mutate while a vaccine to the original strain is being distributed. On a practical level, such a mistimed mutation could result in an entire population that is vaccinated with the wrong strain. This can lead to, you guessed it, an inflated influenza season. While the precise reason for the 2018 H3N2 influenza strain becoming an issue is a bit more involved, the vaccine this year was, in essence, far less effective than previous years' vaccines have been.

And it gets even worse. Not only does the mutation rate of the H3N2 virus increase the likelihood of an outbreak, but the strain is intrinsically more deadly to specific populations than its cousins due to a theory called "original antigenic sin" or "imprinting".

The elderly (or those currently over the age of around 50) did not see this particular strain of the virus growing up and are therefore (theoretically) at a greater risk than the general population. The less effective flu vaccine this season does not bode well for the geriatric population (as well as the pediatric population, as previously noted).

To be sure, the flu vaccine should still be taken. While the vaccine is less effective than years in the past, that does not indicate zero efficacy: the shot still decreases the chances of coming down with the flu; remember, there are other strains lurking around as well. Moreover, through a concept called "herd immunity", receiving the flu vaccine helps protect those around you who may not be able to get one, such as young infants, the elderly, and those who are otherwise immunocompromised. Yet, we are often presented with a classic case of the bystander effect: if individuals believe that everyone else will get the flu shot, then those individuals may be less inclined to receive it themselves. Please, if you are medically able, get the vaccine -- it will benefit not only yourself, but those around you as well.

I sit here writing from a NYC subway station, in consideration of our predicament; alarms and announcements from the CDC are echoing throughout the caverns, informing the citizens as to proper hygiene, and the requirement to promptly see a physician should one be experiencing flu-related symptoms. The movie-like scene, however frightening it may be, should only emphasize the seriousness of this year's flu season: get the flu shot if you can (it is not too late!), wash your hands often (and keep your hands off your face), eat healthy, get plenty of exercise, and sleep well; we are still neck deep in the season, but it should be on the mend shortly.



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Clarifying the Role of Women on Shabbat on Wilf

By Nechama Lowy

In recent years, the question of to what degree YU's undergraduate women should be incorporated into the Wilf campus Shabbat experience has come to light, as more single YU women have begun to reside in Washington Heights.

Rabbi Yosef Blau, Senior Mashgiach Ruchani for Yeshiva University and RIETS, lives close to the university and spends most of his Shabbatot with the YU community on Wilf. He has seen Washington Heights become a popular singles community of late and explained, "in the last few years, more and more women have moved to the neighborhood around Yeshiva. Before that, the issue of women being around on Shabbos was not an issue, because they weren't there."

Although women are welcome into the Wilf campus library, cafeteria, and other buildings during the week, on Shabbat, women are not allowed to eat meals with the men in their dining hall. The same policy exists on Beren, where men are not allowed to eat with the women on a normal Shabbat.

Rabbi Blau suggested that within the Wilf campus student body who stays in for Shabbat, "there is a preference for the 'Yeshiva' atmosphere; they're staying in for the Yeshiva experience." The administration feels that a large population of the students have a preference towards spending their Shabbat in single-sex environments. YU has long been opposed to hosting coed Shabbatonim on the Wilf campus in order to preserve this Yeshiva environment. Dovid Simpser, President of SOY, recalled, "two years ago there was a huge push to make coed Shabbatonim uptown." In order to ensure that this large population of YU's men would remain comfortable on Shabbat, the Roshei Yeshiva decided against it.

While full-scale Shabbatonim have been explicitly disallowed, the rules for individual women participating in Shabbat activities are less clear. When asked if women are allowed to attend the Shabbat shiurim and tisch events, Rabbi Blau responded that "it's a good question, because it rarely happens. It is unclear, because I don't think it's come up." However, Simpser asserted that "women are allowed at all minyanim and programming, besides for meals, even

the tisch," stating that it is a huge misunderstanding when women assume they are not allowed at any programming besides for the minyanim.

The lack of clarity surrounding these policies has resulted in confusion among members of the student body. In October of 2017, a group of current Beren students and female graduate students entered the Furman Dining Hall, where Wilf's Shabbat meals are held, and took seats at Seudah Shlishit. Neither Simpser nor Rabbi Blau was able to confirm if anyone complained, but Simpser, who was sitting at Seudah Shlishit at the time, described that "the guys [who they sat close to] were super uncomfortable and got up and moved."

Rabbi Blau approach the women to alert them that "the policy is to not have single women at the Shalosh Seudot," but he did not ask them to leave. Rabbi Blau admitted that one of the women responded that she "was told there's no such policy," indicating that the guidelines are unclear.

The guidelines for the rules of Shabbat and minyanim are not written down anywhere. "None of this is a rule, this is just the way the place runs," explained Rabbi Blau.

"WITH MORE FEMALE STUDENTS RESIDING IN THE HEIGHTS, THERE IS A CALL FOR MORE TRANSPARENCY REGARDING THE CURRENT POLICIES, AS WELL AS REEVALUATING THEM BASED ON THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY."

Another ambiguity surrounds the leadership roles that women are permitted to partake in at minyanim. Simpser reported that when the Klein @ 9 minyan was started (in 2016, by Simpser and several others), it was decided that "women can't speak at the bimah, but they can definitely give the chabura." The reason for this policy is that Klein @ 9 was built to service all students while maintaining the

Yeshiva atmosphere. In this case, the gap of time between davening and the Dvar Torah is small and does not give male students a chance to leave, should they desire to not be present for a speech given by a female. The chaburot, on the other hand, are given after kiddush and attended by students based on personal preference.

This subtle distinction appears to be the minyan's attempt to balance different values. "The Yeshiva has a certain character and it incorporates different things that may not always be consistent but reflects the complexity of the place," explained Rabbi Blau.

According to Rabbi Blau, Klein @ 9 is the first Shabbat day minyan on Wilf at which students speak after davening. "Prior to [the Klein minyan] the only people who ever spoke were rabbis or roshei yeshiva. In the [Glueck] Beit Midrash, I speak Friday night. If I'm not speaking, it's a guest speaker or a Rabbi...Shenk shul has a rabbi and he gives the speech," he recalled.

On Shabbat Chanukah of this year, Stern College Junior Lilly Gelman gave the Dvar Torah from the bimah after the Klein minyan. Several weeks earlier, SOY Vice President Noah Marlowe asked Lilly to speak after davening, but she had not been able. On this particular Friday night, the minyan's gabbai, Sam Gelman realized that no one had signed up to give the Dvar Torah. Lilly volunteered on the short notice to fill in this need.

While Rabbi Blau asserted that "it occurred without consulting others, which does indicate it was done to make a statement," the leaders of the minyan claim it was a miscommunication and not done to cause controversy. "We didn't ask Dovid or Noah because they weren't there that week and it was already Friday night, but I figured that since Noah already asked me, it was okay," recalled Lilly. Explaining his reasoning for asking Lilly, Sam indicated, "I don't think it was ever said that women can't give the Dvar Torah, it was just something that I assumed based on the conversation and what the minyan was going to be like, but it turns out that I was wrong. It was a miscommunication."

CLARIFYING THE ROLE , CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



Current and Former YU Students Join Forces to Fight Mental Health Stigma and Inequality in The Jewish Community

By Akiva Clair and Etan Neiman

In late 2014, Dr. Ariel Mintz (Yeshiva College '11) was approached by Nathan Gilson, a Jewish young adult with a heavy heart. Gilson's friend had just died from suicide. He was shocked, never realizing the extent of the anguish of someone he cared about. This close encounter with a tragic case of mental illness inspired Gilson to ask Dr. Mintz, "Is there any way you could provide an outlet for those in our community to talk about their difficulties?" Taken a little aback, Dr. Mintz stored this encounter away.

A few months later, Dr. Mintz was in the middle of conducting treatments for a middle-aged woman with ongoing clinical depression since early adolescence when out of nowhere she proudly declared, "I have cancer!" For the first time in her life, she felt genuine sympathy from her parents and community. People began making her meals and checking in on her. "Never with my psychiatric admissions had I so much as received a phone call from someone concerned for my well-being."

None of this was right. In fact, it was very very wrong. A young adult stunned to see his friend be taken by suicide. A woman thrilled with her cancer diagnosis so she could finally get some emotional support. These were just two examples of what Dr. Mintz was seeing more and more of: people being failed by society's stigmatic views and left to cope with their mental illnesses alone.

Due to the perception - particularly prevalent in the Jewish community - that there is some type of inferiority or lack of equality in those with mental illness as opposed to a physical sickness, the mentally ill remain silent. They are often too ashamed and scared of how the Jewish community will view them to get treatment, let alone find a much-needed support system. Without medical or emotional help, their illnesses only get worse. The Jewish people, who pride themselves on their strong communities, are failing its members who need them most.

So, armed with Gilson, a small group of supporters and his desire to help the Jewish community face the mental health stigma, Dr. Mintz founded Refuat Hanefesh and officially launched in August of 2016 (while later obtaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit status).

From Refuat Hanefesh's humble beginnings, the

organization has since exploded. Backed by big name advisors - such as Dr. David Pelcovitz (the Straus Chair in Psychology and Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration of Yeshiva University) and Dr. Bella Schanzer (the Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs in the Baylor-Meminger Department of Psychiatry, Medical Director of the Baylor Psychiatry Clinic, as well as the Brown Foundation Chair in Psychiatry) - Refuat Hanefesh's offerings now include a robust blog, active social media pages, a peer-to-peer support room, monthly Live Conversations streamed on YouTube and Facebook, an annual Creative Expression Contest and much more in the works.

Their blog has produced well over 100 original articles authored by both mental health professionals and people with first-hand experience of their own or a loved one's mental illness. The Creative Expression Contest is an opportunity for anybody to submit a creative piece addressing one of three prompts or any mental health topic they feel passionate about. This means submissions can be articles, poems, songs, videos, pictures or any format the submitter can imagine. To date, over 10,000 unique visitors spanning six continents have taken advantage of Refuat Hanefesh's offerings.

Yeshiva University students' imprint, both current and alumni, is littered across Refuat Hanefesh. In the fall of 2016, Dr. Mintz brought Shanee Markovitz (Stern '20) on board to help get Refuat Hanefesh's message and offerings out there. Inspired by the loss of her mother to suicide, Markovitz methodologically worked to expand the organization's team and outreach before settling into an advisory role in order to focus on school. Other YU connections on the Administrative Board include Director of Operations Avi Gordon (Yeshiva College '11), Editor-in-Chief and co-author of this article Etan Neiman (Syms '17), Head of Social Media Talia Korn (Stern '19), Head of Engagement Moshe Winograd (RIETS '11), Head of Marketing Chaim Ancier (Wurzweiler '12), and Head of Creative Contest Netanel Paley (Yeshiva College '18). With four additional YU alumni or educators serving on the Advisory Board (Dr. Stephen Glicksman, Dr. David Pelcovitz, Rabbi Dani Bauer, and Rabbi Dovid Zirkind), it is clear the impact YU students and alumni have had on

making this organization go.

Why have these students and alumni banded together to fight the stigma-driven mental health inequality? According to Dr. Mintz, "We've got to address this perception, which is simply incompatible with reality, that there is a deficiency in those with a mental illness. People fear that if word gets out that they have a mental

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illness, they will be looked down upon, the shidduch suggestions won't come, or their friends will be turned off. This leads them to at best be left alone to cope with their illness and at worst refuse to acknowledge their illness and get treatment." Markovitz concurs that "mental illness in the Jewish community needs to be addressed, and Refuat Hanefesh is not afraid to do so and enable others to join in that effort. It provides a safe space for people to support one another in their experiences." Why does Korn, already saddled with the famously grueling YU schedule, make the time to lead Refuat Hanefesh's social media effort? "Providing resources for those searching for understanding through the turmoil of mental illness has the power to save a life, so no matter how busy my schedule is, I make the time."

Nobody is exempt from speaking up. The way the stigma evaporates is by so many people with a mental illness speaking their truths that society has no choice but to accept them as the equals they are. The way the stigma halts is by those without a mental illness not just being fine with fighting for mental health equality, but feeling that it is their moral obligation to. Fueled by their YU influence, Refuat Hanefesh is making ending the mental health stigma and providing support to those with a mental illness a reality.

CLARIFYING THE ROLE , CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

In regards to Marlowe originally asking Lilly to speak, Marlowe explained that he too misunderstood what the policies were. Marlowe, Simpson, and Sam had been speaking about allowing women to speak at the bimah, "but it was kind of informal, we did not come to a clear policy," explained Marlowe. Simpson further elaborated that "there is no code book and no rule book, everything is a conscious decision. People in charge of Shabbos programming discuss and, case by case, there comes a consensus."

Most students go home for Shabbat Chanukah, so there were only about 30 students present at the minyan. Neither Lilly nor Sam received complaints after the Dvar Torah was given.

Nevertheless, there were clearly some who were uncomfortable with this incident. Rabbi Menachem Penner, Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies and RIETS, was contacted regarding the incident. It is unclear whether it was a student who attended the minyan who relayed his displeasure to Rabbi Penner or just someone who got word of the situation. Subsequently, Rabbi Penner spoke with Simpson and Marlowe and clarified that while women can give chaburot, they cannot give the Dvar Torah from the bimah.

Both Sam and Simpson confirmed that, while women are not in official leadership roles at the minyan, they are included in some aspects of the minyan's operation. For example, a current project that Klein @ 9 is working on is changing the mechitzah. The current mechitzah is a curtain that closes off the back left corner of the room. Sam elaborated that, "whether that's to put [the mechitzah] down the middle or make it less of a curtain," they do

consult with women about decisions pertaining to how comfortable they are in the minyan.

A female student who resides in Washington Heights, but prefers to remain unnamed, reflected upon the overall attitude towards women at the minyan, noting that she refrains from attending minyanim on Wilf on Shabbat due to her discomfort of feeling like she is not welcome. "Women who live in Washington Heights are no peculiarity, but at the YU undergraduate level, we are understandably and fittingly an irregularity", she said. "I feel uncomfortable being in the Wilf gender minority on Shabbat. Not all men who enroll at Yeshiva University expect that female students will partake in their religious communities, so my participation feels like an overstep into understandably partially unwelcoming territory."

The issue of roles on campus is not exclusive to Wilf. This year as well as last, the Torah Activities Committee (TAC) has invited YU men to come to the Beren campus for Shabbat to complete a minyan for women to attend. One might, therefore, have thought to look towards Beren's policies towards these visiting men and expect them to be consistent with those of their counterparts. As it turns out, however, there is actually a pattern of men being more limited on the Beren campus than females are on Wilf. Relaying his experience coming downtown for Shabbat in order to complete a minyan, Simpson expressed that "men feel excluded on Beren. Men are not allowed to go to programming downtown on Shabbat." He elaborated that, apart from minyanim, he was told he cannot listen to speakers or shiurim.

Officially, the men who spend their Shabbat downtown, also known as "Minyan Men", have separate meals and programming, but are welcome into the dorm lounges and any programming that takes place in the Beren beit midrash. Adina Cohen, the Vice President of Shabbat for

TAC, explained that the reasoning for these policies is not so unlike the explanation given for Wilf's policies. "There is a large population of women on campus who prefer not to have coed programming and, in addition to the value of davening tefillah b'tzibur, we also strive to maintain the all-women's feel of Shabbat on Beren campus."

In response to these concerns of making everyone comfortable, there are subtle differences between the way Shabbat is run on Beren and Wilf, nuances that Simpson attributed to the more "imposing presence" of Rebbeim on the uptown campus. One such difference is the policy regarding women kissing the Torah after Torah reading. Yael Green, Student Recruiter of the Shabbat Enhancement Committee, stated, "the current policy is that a man will take the Torah out of the Ark and he will hold it at the front of the women's section and Rabbi Rozensweig, the Shabbat rabbi, will announce 'at this point we invite everyone to come forward and kiss the Torah.'" On Wilf, the leaders of the Klein @ 9 minyan do not offer the opportunity for the women to come up and kiss the Torah. Upon being asked if a similar policy to allow women to kiss the Torah has ever been discussed on Wilf, Simpson replied that he "doesn't know if it would be allowed, but it has also never come up, to my knowledge."

With more female students residing in the Heights, there is a call for more transparency regarding the current policies, as well as reevaluating them based on the needs of the community. While the status quo might ensure the comfort of a large population on Wilf campus, the developing community deserves to know the guidelines, as well as have a voice in the conversation that affects their Shabbat experience. Understanding guidelines for the current programming may enhance Shabbat as well as limit any further miscommunications between the student body and heads of programming.

Mission to Mars: Radiation as the Major Concern for Mars Travel

By Liat Wasserman

In the Pixar science-fiction animation *WALL-E*, the Earth is so polluted and trashed that all humans have fled for refuge in outer space, leaving only two robots to clean up. The film insinuates that being aboard a space capsule far from Earth is safer for the characters than being on our planet. But is this really true? Would we really survive better somewhere else in the universe? Perhaps, but there are also some great risks for future space-dwellers. Journeys to space stations and the moon have shown that space travel can lead to many medical issues, such as cataracts due to light from the sun, and bone loss due to decreased calcium metabolism. Most importantly, as NASA and SpaceX are gearing up to send a manned craft to Mars, the effects of radiation on genes are at the forefront of current studies.

Radiation occurs when an energy source emits waves or particles of energy which can be absorbed by the object in the path of that energy. On a molecular level, though, radiation energy is described as being “deposited” into the receiver’s cells, causing changes in the cell’s functioning and modifications of gene activation or inactivation. These effects can result in damage to the genome and death of the affected cell, causing acute ramifications, with symptoms like nausea and confusion, or delayed consequences, such as cancer. Increased fluence, or energy particles per unit area of the radiated matter, is directly associated with more tumors.

A less simplistic result of radiation is the “bystander effect.” Cells that are subjected to the heavy ions emitted by an energy source can also cause oncogenesis in unaffected nearby cells. Studies have shown that radiation can be transmitted from those irradiated cells to unirradiated ones close by. This effect is so strong that even low doses of low energy radiation can lead to oncogenesis in the unirradiated cells. Therefore, even if astronauts are mostly protected from radiation, any effects that do get through to their bodies and cells can be multiplied.

In 1997, a study following a space station mission showed that seven astronauts were noted to have greater amounts of mutated chromosomes. While these mutations in the lymphocytes can be largely attributed to radiation, a more recent study claims that zero-gravity may have been a factor. Thus, radiation can commence the process of cancerous growth, but other factors are key in promoting the growth. Lengthy exposure to a zero-gravity environment has been known to inhibit the immune system’s defense against cancerous cells. Similarly, psychological stress, from long-term confinement and other factors, has been known to exacerbate chromosomal aberrations.

Compared to the space station and other space missions, the Mars mission is much more dangerous. According to a 2013 study, the astronauts on the International Space Station, for instance, experience less radiation-induced death than those conducting near-Earth asteroid exploration, and both are projected to have less risk than astronauts travelling to Mars. A journey to the Red Planet would require at least 900 days in space, with at least one year in deep space. As the space shuttle moves away from Earth, astronauts must deal with multiple sources of radiation. Along with risk from protons and electrons trapped in the inner and outer Van Allen radiation belt, which are areas with high concentrations of charged particles, solar energy particles pose great risk to humans in space. Solar cosmic rays, or SCRs, are mostly made up of protons, with just a few helium and heavy ions involved. These rays, therefore, are low energy and of little concern until solar particle events, or SPEs, send higher energy into the solar system. This is necessary to consider for Mars travel, as just one strong flare of the high energy can kill an astronaut.

Even more significant than SCRs, though, are galactic cosmic rays, or GCRs. These rays, specifically in the form of X-rays, are emitted due to nuclear and atomic reactions outside of the solar system. This radiation contains heavy ions that can lead to carcinogenesis within just a few months. In particular, the high energy characteristic of the radiation, in addition to the ability for these particles to directly penetrate cells, can cause serious cell damage.

"MOST PEOPLE AVOID DETRIMENTAL ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS JUMPING OFF BRIDGES; SO TOO, ASTRONAUTS SHOULD NOT TRAVEL TO MARS UNTIL THE RADIATION AND OTHER MEDICAL ISSUES ARE NO LONGER CONSIDERED EXCEEDINGLY DETRIMENTAL."

A 1999 study shows that what makes GCRs so much worse than any SCRs or other radiation is that, for Mars explorers especially, GCRs are nearly impossible to avoid. Thicker radiation shielding will not significantly decrease the number of tumors, as radiation will still be able to penetrate the space shuttle.



No matter how much shielding, Mars astronauts will be exposed to greater amounts of radiation, due to longer time in space and specifically in deep space. A 2007 study has shown that more time in space is associated with more radiation. Nevertheless, that more time in space can make an astronaut a little more resistant to the effects of additional radiation.

Some cosmonauts, however, were found to have fewer mutations than expected. An experiment to reproduce these results used mice and concluded that T regulatory cells experienced less radiation-induced expansion if the mice were previously exposed to low-dose radiation. So too, astronauts going to Mars can have accumulation of exposure leading to cancer and other ramifications, but they can also have accumulation of exposure leading to better resistance to the outer space radiation.

Although researchers agree that thicker aluminum shielding is key in avoiding too much radiation, given the lack of completely protective radiation shielding for Mars astronauts, other solutions are necessary. One possibility is deuterium-free water. As deuterium is a stable isotope of hydrogen, with one extra neutron, water with 65% less deuterium, and thus less stability, causes the water to have “anti-cancer” properties. Brain scans showed regression of metastatic cancer after a few months of consumption of deuterium-depleted water. Less stable isotopes kept the tumor from maintaining stability, thereby shrinking the growth. With similar technologies, hopefully astronauts will be able to explore Mars and farther into space without concern for severe genotoxicity.

Radiation, as well as microgravity and stress, is a significant factor to consider for space missions in general and Mars in particular. Most people avoid detrimental activities, such as jumping off bridges; so too, astronauts should not travel to Mars until the radiation and other medical issues are no longer considered exceedingly detrimental. One day, though, perhaps *WALL-E* will no longer be science-fiction but rather be scientific reality.



The Speech that Led to Silence

By Lilly Gelman

For three days during my year studying in *Midrasha* in Israel, while attending a weekend long Tikvah seminar on post-modernism, I completely lost my voice. I don't mean the hoarseness one gets after a long cold or flu, or the scratchiness that we hear after a two-month summer spent cheering along in summer camp. I mean completely lost. Nothing but a mouselike squeak would sound if I tried to speak.

I remember sitting, through hours of discussion sessions, in silence, trapped inside my own head and unable to share my thoughts and contributions. It felt like a paralysis of some sort. I attempted to follow along by listening to the discussion, but without the ability to participate the sessions dragged on and bored me.

On December 16, 2017, I felt a similar voicelessness. That day I had given a Dvar Torah at Klein @ 9, a community oriented student minyan run in the Klein Beit Midrash almost every Shabbat. I was not naive in thinking that allowing a female student to speak from the podium at the end of *tefillah* would go unnoticed, but, I had been

previously asked to give the Dvar Torah at some point, and this weekend seemed as good as any.

The Dvar Torah generally occurs at the end of davening, after the announcements but before we break for kiddush. The speaker stands at the front of the room, and speaks for around five minutes, usually about something related to the parsha. While it may seem small and unimportant, it is a platform for students to have their voices heard, and more importantly, to feel a part of the community.

The brief Dvar Torah, during which I gave over a thought relating Chanukah to Purim, appeared inconsequential. I may have been the first woman to give a Dvar Torah at any YU *minyan* ever; nevertheless, giving one at Klein @ 9, a student minyan which prides itself on its open and tolerant ambiance, seemed natural and normal.

Despite the seemingly supportive environment, word of my presentation spread through campus to a higher YU authority. By the next week, women were officially no longer allowed to give Divrei Torah at Klein @ 9, thus making me not only the first, but probably the last woman to give a Dvar Torah at a YU minyan.

While the minyan still encourages women to attend and lead the occasional *chabura* — a smaller study group after *kiddush* — and the student leaders of the *minyan* were not responsible for the decision to prohibit women from giving the Dvar Torah, nevertheless, the decision was made, and I was silenced.

The men of Klein @ 9 and the Modern Orthodox community at large have their voices heard loud and clear, as they echo and bounce to and from all side of religious involvement. While women sit in the back of the Klein beit midrash behind sky high *mehitzas*, the men *lein*, daven from the *amud*, and announce the page numbers.

Halacha may prohibit women from stepping forward in such participatory roles, however, no Jewish law forbids a woman from giving a Dvar Torah after the davening services have ended. The decision to prevent women from speaking after the minyan stems not from biblical or rabbinic sources, but rather from a patriarchal community

“BY PROHIBITING WOMEN FROM SPEAKING AT THE END OF KLEIN @ 9, THE YU COMMUNITY FURTHER LIMITS A DEMOGRAPHIC ALREADY PUSHED TO THE SIDE.”

mindset encouraged by years of halachically unfounded cultural norms.

The Dvar Torah at Klein @ 9 could have been the platform needed for women to play a more active role in the community. It could have served as an opportunity for my voice and the voices of the women of the community to sound out where they had previously been absent; yet, someone silenced us, knocking me off my platform and telling me to go sit in the corner. By prohibiting women from speaking at the end of Klein @ 9, the YU community further limits a demographic already pushed to the side.

After this moment, I felt as if I had lost my voice. I do not normally sit silently in submission. I am not normally one to accept defeat and raise my white flag in surrender. Yet I didn't attempt to fight this—until now. This event is one of many in a string of events and limitations during which I realized the level of marginalization and belittlement of women at YU and in the greater Modern Orthodox community. I have done my fair share of writing and speaking out about issues regarding women in Modern Orthodoxy, but my voice has become strained. Since I have arrived at YU, I have felt my voice becoming scratchy and hoarse until, finally, it has vanished.



Ode To My Roommate

By Irwin Leventer

The stories told are horrifying. The lessons learned are as follows: you can't room with a potluck drawn x-factor, nor can you room with your closest friend. A random person can be who knows how crazy; your best friend can be worse. Far reaching friendships are torn apart in a matter of weeks. The friend you once respected is too lethargic to take her turn with the garbage. Dinner rotations cease to rotate and you are left with every dirty dish and new recipe. You find that your best friend is a hoarder of sweets and your relationship quickly turns sour.

These are the stories I was told about life with a roommate. Naturally, when I applied for housing at YC, I applied for potluck. I have the goal of being able to relate with most everyone I meet and this was the perfect way to practice. I got what I had hoped for: a roommate with a very different set of personality traits than mine who I was able to learn from and learn to understand.

A year later, and a year into Intro Biology Lab, my lab partner asked me to be his roommate. We had together bursted cancer cells to see the human genome laid out before our eyes, unravelled foot after foot of the intestines of a fetal pig to learn the ways of the body, absorbed the world of biology with our ever curious minds. To say yes to his request would mean to violate the second admonition for choosing a roommate: your lab partner is your best friend, if he could deign to accept such an epithet. Naturally, I said yes. This is of the most beloved yeses to have left my mouth.

People are surprised when I tell them that I believe that life with my roommate

prepares me for marriage. I believe this comes from the fractured construct that contrasts a friendship from a relationship. I see my relationships rather in their fluidity, with their variability measured by the *level* of their intimacy.

This is what being a roommate entails: you are the first to see him wake up, the

“THE NEXT TIME YOU SEE YOUR ROOMMATE, LOOK AT THAT FACE AND REALIZE HOW FORTUNATE YOU ARE THAT YOU CAN BUILD SUCH A CONNECTION WITH ANOTHER PERSON.”

last to see him before he sleeps; you are the one waiting at home, ready to hear of all of the ups and downs in his streams of consciousness; he is the first to hear the poem you just crafted, the first audience to your new song; he gets the most genuine view of you in all of your struggles, and together you grapple to be men of integrity.

All of this makes me elated. I have successfully brought my close friend even more deeply into my life and I let him do the same with me. Though there is one egregious lack in our relationship and it is well worth exploring: we don't fight. When I attempt to explain this, I realize that it is far more simple a task than it may seem. The unspoken premises of our relationship simply don't allow for fighting. We care about each other enough to express that we do, and we communicate our feelings with careful diction. Fighting doesn't happen not because we are so practiced in tempering ourselves, but because we are thoughtful enough to preempt a need for tempering. This leaves superlative grounds for a flourishing relationship.

The next time you see your roommate, look at that face and realize how fortunate you are that you can build such a connection with another person; then continue, with fervor, to build that connection. Write a letter expressing your gratitude for having this person in your life; surprise them with that beloved snack that would be so appreciated after a long day; go out into the city and have an adventure together; renew your sense of thanks in having someone to share your world with. You will not have the opportunity to connect with very many people this intimately. Do not quash this one in all of its potential.

(Special thanks to a friend, who helped me to cement these thoughts.)



The Story of a Sister Survivor

Anonymous

Editor's Note: The following piece poses two challenges to The Commentator's norms. Generally we do not publish anonymous pieces, as they do not provide accountability. For reasons the author outlines, in maintaining anonymity we hope to avoid future harm to the author. As an editorial board we take responsibility for the veracity of the events told in the piece.

Secondly, this piece contains graphic content. After consulting with YU Roshei Yeshiva and professors, both Jewish studies and general studies, at the Beren and Wilf campuses, we have decided that it is appropriate to print.

There are some things in life that one can never imagine. No girl ever fantasizes about being a part of a national epidemic. No woman ever thinks that she too will be overpowered against her will by another person — let alone violated by a man, by one of her friends. It's a naive approach, yet I am one of you and I too was one of those ignorant women who did not think that the unthinkable was possible: I too am a survivor of sexual assault and this is my story.

I remember the snapshot in my mind clear as day. I am standing outside his car on a warm summer's evening. My bra, camisole, and blouse are in a bundle covering my chest. My arms hurt from being held down against my will. I am red in the face, from both anger and humiliation. I demand to be taken home or I say I'll call the cops. Little did I know that the events of that evening would later shape the rest of my life.

It was July 2013. I was sixteen and in high school at the time: young, impressionable, trusting. I had just gotten a promotion at my Hebrew school job and I was eager to celebrate. My friend offered to take me out for ice cream that evening; he and I had initially met at a party and had not been strictly platonic in the past. I was planning on having a casual evening by myself when he suggested we celebrate my new job. He was seventeen, headed to a university in the Midwest at the end of the summer. He was tall, broad, was one of the best on his high school wrestling team and had played football in his high school, wanting to be a walk-on on the university's team. He had gorgeous eyes and a sweet baby face. He was a camp counselor at the local JCC and loved Twitter and playing sports with friends. He was so innocent-looking and I trusted him and his friendship; I didn't ever think he would hurt me, so I gladly said yes to seeing him.

My parents dropped me off at a local ice cream parlor and told me not to be home too late. My friend said they need not worry as he would drop me off. We hung around the ice cream parlor and jumped to a coffee shop about an hour later. The evening looked promising as we made conversation and enjoyed each other's company. About 9:30 PM, he suggested we go on a drive. I was a little leery, but I agreed and hopped in the passenger's seat of his car. We drove around for a little while before pulling into a deserted lot. He parked the car and suggested we move things to the back seat of his car.

"I'm not sure." I recall muttering; I hadn't planned on doing anything too physical.

"Come on," he pushed, "I'm leaving for school next month. Let's have a little fun."

Once I agreed, I told him I needed to be home by 10, so we couldn't take long. To be honest, I was reluctant as we climbed into the backseat of his car. I was not sure if I was comfortable with fooling around in any way in the first place that evening, but we had done so in the past, so I didn't think it would be any different this time around. We began to make out and before I knew it, he was taking off my shirt and bra. We had been passionate in the past, but he had never been so rough and had not rushed like this before. *Woah there*, I thought, *we're moving too fast!* This wasn't my first time fooling around with a guy, but something didn't feel right about this time. While he was kissing my neck, I tried to find my phone, but I was unsuccessful. *Where is it?* I wondered. *I have to go.* I felt around with my hand and found his phone; I clicked the screen and realized it was 10:30, much later than I had planned.

"I need to get going," I said, trying to get his arms off of me, "my parents will worry!"

"Five more minutes," he pleaded.

"No! Get off!" I said to my friend. "I need to go."

"Five more minutes," he said once again, "I'll even set a timer, see?"

He began to fiddle with his phone and before I could even know what was happening, he unzipped his jeans and began shoving his genitalia towards my face. He began rubbing it against my bare breasts and asked me to perform oral sex on him. I heard the alarm go off on his phone in the background as I began to scream as he held my upper arms tight in his grip. He wrapped his large wrestler legs around the back of mine in an effort to restrain me. I was trapped and I did not know how to escape.

By some miracle of God, I contorted my body in a way that I was able to use all of my weight to drop me to the floor of the vehicle. I pulled him down and he released his grip as I hit the floor. I quickly grabbed the handle of the passenger's door and tumbled out of the car. I grabbed my bundle of clothing and began to run away from the car to make sure I was able to escape. He quickly closed his pants and called out after me. I realized my purse and phone were still in the car; I had to go back.

I was initially hesitant to head back towards the vehicle as I was scared that he would attempt to violate me yet again. I quickly threw on my top and approached the car in order not to be indecent. Eventually, though

"I AM NOT A VICTIM — I REFUSE TO BE ONE; I AM A SURVIVOR."

I was scared senseless, I mustered up the courage to go back to his car because I had no other means of getting home unless I walked, but it was over a mile away and I was in shock, not having thought of this option at the time. I don't know where the ability to take charge came from within me, but I found my voice and told him that he had to take me directly home or I would call the police as soon as I found a phone. He agreed so I got into the back, and I sat with my body crammed against the car door where I would be out of his reach.

When he sat in the driver's seat, he handed me back my phone, which had apparently been in his pocket the entire time. *The bastard*, I thought to myself, *he planned to take that. Was he thinking about forcing himself on me the entire time?* I quickly fixed my blouse in the car in order not to alarm my parents and we sat in silence as he drove me home. My insides were churning and I wanted to scream and cry all at once. When he pulled in front of my house, I said not a single word. It was after 11 PM and my father was waiting for me at the door as I rushed past him saying I "needed to use the bathroom." I rushed upstairs and slammed the bathroom door behind me as I began to wash my hands profusely. I scrubbed my hands for what seemed like an eternity to try and remove the gross feeling of grime I had felt, but it did not work. I kept looking at myself in the mirror - my makeup smudged, my hair a mess. My arms were red, as were my legs. I felt weak and I thought I was going to faint. I wanted to cry, but I couldn't. I didn't know what was happening.

I stayed in the bathroom for several hours until I nearly collapsed from sheer exhaustion. I was trying to process what had happened to me. *How could my friend try to hurt me like this?* I tried to process, but no immediate answers came to mind. *Was it planned? Was it because I've fooled around in the past? Was it my fault because I had aroused him? I said "no" this time, doesn't that count?* My head hurt and I began to feel weak. *Was it because of the way I was dressed? Had I provoked him? Was I "asking for it?" Was this my fault?* Questions began to swirl around in my mind as I tried to grip my new reality. *Had I become a statistic? Did my friend just try to assault me?*

My reality began to set in over the next few days and weeks. I became very quiet and refused to make conversation; I barely ate and threw up several times; I couldn't sleep at night and would cry in my bed. I was startled any time someone came from behind and tried

to talk to me; I began to become very paranoid about being alone. I refused to go anywhere alone and became very dependent on spending time with my parents when we were out, all the while isolating myself when I was home. I felt an overwhelming sense of guilt and could not explain how or why. I refused to mention the incident for a long time and became extremely sensitive to every hug and touch from others. I felt an overarching sense of guilt and blamed myself for the assault that had occurred.

Bruises formed on my upper arms from having been held down against my will and on my legs from kicking and using my feet to propel me out of his car. I began wearing baseball tees to hide my black and blue's and wore leggings to cover my legs, claiming I was "cold" to my concerned parents. They thought I was simply sick as I was not eating or sleeping well and was wearing long clothing in the middle of the summer - that or I had begun to "flip out" and become a "frimmer," as my mother calls it. But that could not have been farther from the truth. I was not sick and I was in fact very angry with God. *How could He let this happen?* I refused to face the facts that I, too, had become a statistic - that I, too, had been sexually assaulted, and by someone I knew and called a friend nonetheless. I lived in denial for several months and became an emotional wreck that neither my friends nor my family wanted to spend time with anymore. They did not know what had gotten into me, but simply thought I was going through a phase. But it was not a phase, it was my way of coping.

For me, the realization that I had become another statistic occurred while I one day felt inclined to see what my friend had been up to on Twitter. I had refused all contact prior that he had tried to initiate following that fateful night and had un-friended him on Facebook. Because he was an avid Tweeter, I knew I would be able to see what he had been doing. But nothing could prepare me for the Tweet I would read from that horrible evening:

"Not proud of myself right now," the Tweet read describing our encounter from that evening. He added that he "felt slimy" and "you get what you get."

The Tweet stared back at me, piercing my retinas and forever engraved in my mind. This was the only Tweet from that entire day and he did not post anything on Twitter for several days after. As my eyes remained glued to the screen, I could not believe what I was reading, especially coming from an event so traumatic. My blood boiled. *Not proud?? How could he not see the error of his ways?* I was searing with anger and pain, unable to process the emotions I was experiencing. I wanted to scream, I wanted to do anything but sit there and look at the computer, but I felt numb, helpless, vulnerable, and alone. I felt I had nowhere to turn at the time and for the next few weeks, I continued to further isolate myself.

Eventually, I confided in the first person - a friend from a youth organization I was involved in. He and I both cried and I relayed my painful experience and he assured me everything would be okay. He told me I needed to tell an adult because I could not keep this information inside forever. He convinced me to tell my father, one of the most trusted people in my life. Initially, I refused and said I would do anything but that (which was a lie because I did not want to tell anyone). Ultimately, though, he convinced me I needed to tell my father. After much hesitation, I decided to tell him while we were on a family vacation. He and I both cried when I told him; he was mortified that someone had laid their hands on his little girl and felt helpless for being unable to assist me sooner. I begged my father not tell another soul, especially not my mother. We cried and hugged as there was not much else to be done.

Nearly five years have gone by and a lot has changed since then. I have sought professional help for the trauma I experienced and completely rid my life of my perpetrator — who continued to attempt to contact me and treat me like we were friends after the assault. I don't talk often about this event in my life and my mother and siblings still don't know that it occurred. For those who do know this story, I am completely emotionally detached from the tale in order not to send myself

SEE SISTER SURVIVOR, CONTINUED ON
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Two Households, Both Alike in Dignity

By Esther Stern

The tension between feuding sports teams as they sit on opposing bleachers is the only thing to liken this phenomenon. That which lies deep in the underbelly of Yeshiva University, in the pits of social dynamics, can be found the unspoken war of in-towners versus out-of-towners. It is its own distinct rivalry fueled by the evangelical zeal that comes with knowledge that other people are inherently erring in their views; that by some stroke of destiny you were graced to be born into knowing better than the laymen fanatics rooting for the other team. Or at least, that's what I thought with the sight of the snarky looks on the out-of-towners' faces when the parade of locals flocked to Penn Station and Port Authority early Thursday afternoon. For naturally, the out-of-town away team was snatching any opportunity it had to degrade the home team of their clear home-field advantage.

This animosity can be well understood vis-à-vis a conversation that I had at YU a while back. It was no trick question; it was a very sweet back and forth until she asked me where I was from, to which I answered, "The Five Towns." She responded in nothing short of a soliloquy, explaining how happy she was that she grew up out of town, and that she thanks God every day that she was spared from the talons of living in The Five Towns. Post conversation, I felt slightly taken aback, but not for the reason that would naturally be assumed. I was shocked at how unperturbed I was. It shocked me that I was okay with people bashing the place where I grew up and casting judgement on my childhood. How accustomed I have truly become to this kind of verbal assumption of my character based on preconceived stereotypes, ones that I had been grappling with since I had first gone to sleepaway camp over a decade ago. Why couldn't I bring myself to stand up?

"IT SHOCKED ME THAT I WAS OKAY WITH PEOPLE BASHING THE PLACE WHERE I GREW UP AND CASTING JUDGEMENT ON MY CHILDHOOD."

It may have to do with the fact that the way out-of-towners perceive their in-town counterparts isn't unfounded. For admittedly, there is a certain air of entitlement surrounding in-towners and, compounded by the materialism that many in-towners ascribe to, there is certainly no wonder that out-of-towners have assumed the stereotype onto so many. Because, at the end of the day,

I cannot deny the fact that there was a half year course offered in my high school on Hilkhot Starbucks. And, as much as I'd love to deny the fact that my friends and I were all taken for manicures to celebrate my fifth birthday, I cannot. If I couldn't find grounds for which to defend the

live?" And while laughing through the ignorance of her peers helps cope with the lack of general thoughtfulness, even Daniels noted, "It makes sense that in-towners are stereotyped. There are so many that have yet to branch out, or even acknowledge that a world exists outside of the



stereotype of in-towners and their entitlement, I certainly cannot blame them for saying the things that they do.

Much of the basis of the animosity towards in-towners, as it is understood by Ellie Fant (Syms '20), a proud out-of-towner, is that "in-towners have it really easy and don't necessarily see that it's much harder for the rest of us." Fant explained that the prevalent attitude towards the in-towners at Yeshiva University is twofold. The first is that many in-towners neglect to take care of the cleanliness of their dorm rooms "because they don't realize that the dorm is our only home...Not only do they take it for granted but are a bit rude about it, and they say things like, 'oh, I'll just go home and get everything from my parents.'" The second cause of the rift is that in-towners "already know everyone from other schools because they are in the Yeshiva League and are therefore less inclusive to the out-of-town girls."

Others, like Talya Saban (SCW '20) and Marnina Daniels (SCW '20), have taken their understanding and disappointment of the current geo-politics and turned it into amusement. As Saban recounted whilst trying hard not to burst into laughter, an in-towner asked her, "Do you go on shabbatons every week because you don't have places to go for Shabbat?" In a similar vein, Daniels remembers a student asking her, "Oh, so like, you're not from New York, so, like, do you, like, have kosher food where you

tristate area."

With the multitude of reasons to knock down in-towners, and there are certainly plenty, let us not ignore the obvious fact that so much of the YU community has in-town ties. As it is described by Tamar Schwartz (SCW '20), "while we are disparaged for our plethora of pizza stores, modest clothing stores, variety of shuls and schools, we recognize that these are all precious achievements of our parents' and grandparents' generations of building strong Jewish communities with ample opportunity to live a committed halakhic lifestyle among like-minded people." Schwartz adds that "frankly, the comments and backhanded pejoratives are an insult to my parents whose decision it was to raise me in Teaneck. I find this very disturbing."

As far as who is to blame for this animosity, I'd say the burden is shared between both "teams". Better yet, blame is shouldered in that there are even two "teams" at all. For we are all one body, one incohesive group of quasi like-minded people sharing the same caf regardless of our backgrounds or affiliations. We were all given the Torah on Har Sinai as a unified unit. This is to say I feel fatigued from defending myself for where I hail, and I think it's safe to say I'm not the only one.

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into an anxiety attack. I am still triggered by stories from others where friends were the perpetrators of the heinous crimes and still occasionally have panic attacks. I refuse to allow my family to park in that very lot where the offense occurred and do not drive through it on my own. I never pressed charges and recently learned my assailant was arrested for an unrelated crime.

I have also received a couple of answers to the questions I asked myself nearly five years ago. I have learned the truth that I had known all along but refused to believe: it was not my fault. I had not provoked my attacker and did not deserve that type of treatment. It was not because of the way I was dressed; saying "no" even though he was aroused was not a reason for him to try to violate me the way he did; I was not "asking for it." There are still times when I feel a sheer sense of blame and guilt, but I try to remind myself that I did nothing wrong and had every right to say "no" to his advancement, even if he was turned on. It does not matter if he had planned this or if he had gotten caught up in the heat of the moment: what he did was wrong, not the other way around — "no" means no.

And while I am not ashamed of my story, I choose to remain nameless. I stay anonymous because of the

shame I would face in a world obsessed with perfection in dating - especially shidduchim - and any baggage would ruin my prospects of finding a match. The epidemic of sexual assault is prevalent around the world and it pains me that religiously observant societies in particular would rather turn a blind eye to it. It is true that a woman's value, in a certain sense, is defined in her *ketubah* by her sexual activity. But it is problematic when Orthodox Jewish communities respond by even looking down, implicitly or explicitly, upon victims of assault or rape (God forbid) as having diminished self-worth. There are those looking to draw attention to this problem in Orthodox Judaism like Meir Seewald and Jewish Community Watch, but sexual assault is still a stigmatized, shameful topic that is glossed over by most and is still thought to leave survivors as "tainted goods."

I also choose not to reveal my name because my story is unfortunately far too common and not unique. This isn't only my story, but the story of others around us. It is the story of many other Orthodox Jewish women who have chosen not to speak up out of fear that they would be ostracized. I am your peer, your classmate and - for some of you - your friend. I am your daughter, your sister, your cousin, even your mother. I am one of the millions of girls and women worldwide who has and will continue to experience sexual assault in her lifetime and will live with the scars — physical, emotional, and

mental — to tell the story. I am not a victim — I refuse to be one; I am a survivor.

Recently, in the wake of courageous women telling their stories to the public about accused sexual predators like movie mogul Harvey Weinstein and convicted criminals like USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, sexual assault has taken front stage in discussions in the media and in popular culture. Unfortunately, the media has chosen to focus either too much on the perpetrator or the faults in society that caused this heinous crime to occur. But I suggest a different approach: a spotlight on the survivor and her story — focusing on the strong individual she is to overcome such a trauma and to tell her story on the other side. Sexual assault has long been something brushed under the rug and been something women are taught to be ashamed of; but it's time to acknowledge that this is not something for women to be embarrassed of. The #MeToo movement has done just that and I posted my status on Facebook with pain and pride as I stood in solidarity with my sisters across many backgrounds. No longer can we hide behind these atrocities that occur to half of the population. It is time to acknowledge the epidemic of sexual assault once and for all, so that women can start stepping out of the shadows and nothing like my story and your stories can ever happen again.

When “Chosen” Becomes Racist

By Yehuda Greenfield

“Were you by the *tisch* last night with Rav Schachter and the guest speaker?” I was asked by my friend Shabbat morning Parshat Beshalach.

“No. How was it?”

“The guest speaker gave the most rigorous defense of Torah Umadda I’ve ever heard at YU.”

Intrigued by this description, I decided to go hear the visiting speaker at YU for Shabbat myself. He was scheduled to give a speech in the YU cafeteria for *seudah shlishit* about why you must believe in yourself. It sounded interesting, and I looked forward to hearing what he had to say. What followed, however, was the most disturbing speech I have ever heard at YU, and one that I hope to never hear again.

The speech, meant to be an inspiring one encouraging everyone to fulfill their potential, focused on our potential as Jews. The speaker showed how Jews are worth more to the world than non-Jews, despite our relatively minor numbers. Pointing to the percentage of Jewish Nobel Prize winners, he calculated that Jews are worth 112 other people. He also compared the Jewish nation to the



Muslims and their relatively small percentage of Nobel Prize winners, and concluded that it would take 44 billion Muslims to contribute to society what the small population of only a couple of million Jews have contributed.

"I WANTED TO GET UP AND PROTEST THIS SPEECH, TO SHOUT AT THIS SPEAKER: 'THIS ISN'T A CHAREIDI YESHIVA! THIS IS THE FLAGSHIP INSTITUTION OF MODERN ORTHODOXY AND WE DON'T BELIEVE THAT HERE.'"

These claims troubled me. While it is certainly true that Jews have been awarded many Nobel Prizes, this does not translate into Jews being worth more than others. Since when do we judge people’s value and humanity by the amount of Nobel Prizes they have? Additionally, most of the Jews who won the Nobel Prize weren’t religious, and a lot of their grandchildren aren’t Jewish anymore according to halacha. Does this prove, according to this guest speaker, that non-religious Jews are worth more than religious ones? A nation’s contributions to science, math, and the like does not speak to that nation’s value and humanity. I think it would have been fine, and probably accurate, for the speaker to claim that as Jews we focus on education and therefore have been very successful in certain fields. We are lucky to have this leg up. However, to state that Jews are worth 112 others simply doesn’t follow.

I wanted to get up and protest this speech, to shout at this speaker: “This isn’t a Chareidi yeshiva! This is the flagship institution of Modern Orthodoxy and we don’t believe that here.” I looked around at my fellow students, expecting to see incredulous looks of disbelief that something like this could be said at YU.

Instead, I saw rapt looks of attention. I thought - perhaps we aren’t the flagship Modern Orthodox institution we claim to be. I considered walking out, but, sitting directly in front of the speaker, I decided it would be rude. That’s something I now regret. I attempted to stop listening, to focus on something else, but it didn’t work. My ears unwillingly listened and were continually reviled by his extreme words of Jewish elitism.

The speaker told stories of his encounters with non-Jews. The morals of the stories showed that Jews are harder workers and care more about being productive to society than non-Jews do. He spoke about the sanctity and value of life in halacha, but, instead of mentioning human life, he mentioned only Jewish life. He quoted halacha to show that a Rosh Yeshiva’s life is worth the same as a janitor’s, but he added an assumption that this refers only to a Jewish janitor. Every word of his speech attempted to inspire us, to show us how valuable we are and what kind of contribution we can make in the world, but with every word there was an implicit statement about the non-value of the gentiles. How is this different from what the Nazis preached, that the Aryans were worth more than other races?

Imagine being stopped in the street by a non-Jew and being asked, “What does it mean that the Jews are ‘the Chosen People’?” This speaker would have us respond, “We’re worth 112 of you. We produce more for society than the entire Muslim population put together.” What a *chillul hashem* that would be. This isn’t what “Chosen People” means to me; nor, more significantly, is this what it means in our traditional sources. This kind of speech may be acceptable in the more right-winged yeshivish world that this speaker comes from, but I’d like to think it’s unacceptable here at YU.

YU wonders why their Shabbat meals don’t attract so many people. Maybe this is why. This isn’t the type of speaker that should come to YU, especially on a SOY *in-shabbos* when the cafeteria is fuller than a on a regular weekend. This kind of speech is only going to appeal to a small target audience in YU, I hope, and is definitely not conducive for a warm atmosphere. I call upon SOY and the OSL to more carefully vet prospective Shabbat guests and to not invite speakers who will preach such skewed racist views of what “*am hanivchar*” means. Woe to *Torah u'Madda* if these are its defenders.

Extremism: Thoughts From a Religious Zionist in YU

By Isaac Bernstein

I write this article with a little more than two months until Yom Ha’atzmaut, so there’s still time to daven for the situation to change.

When I first arrived in YU, it was post-Pesach of 2016. The infamous “Yoms” were the atmosphere that I was thrown into. The first “Yom” was Yom HaShoah, a day commemorating our ancestors who were brutally murdered by the Nazis. I thought, of course I am going to the program. A survivor was speaking, and I thought that it would be a moving memorial. As I asked my friends if they were also planning on attending, I was shocked by their response: “You’re going to miss Night Seder?!”

Let me preface this by saying that I am a person who values Talmud Torah very much. I do not mean to boast, but I attend Night Seder. I think Night Seder is the most important ingredient to a successful Yiddishkeit at YU. So, none of this article is coming from someone who does not understand what it means to learn in the mornings and at night.

There is a stigma associated with participating in YU programs. I am not talking about all of the programs, because I too believe that some are environments not conducive for a yeshiva bachur. But I do expect Yom HaShoah to be a day where *at the very least*, those who choose to participate are not put down.

I’m not asking anyone to attend the events. I ask only to respect others’ choices.

Now let’s move on to the days where this issue is most problematic. I am talking about Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut. I sometimes feel like running away from Washington Heights during these days. In no way is that a political statement. It is a personal statement

which stems from my inability to watch *sinas chinam*.

I’m not asking anyone to support the State of Israel. I am not sure where so many students received their anti-Israel education, but I am not writing to persuade anyone.

"WE ARE THE FACE OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM IN AMERICA, AND WE ONLY STAB OURSELVES IN THE FOOT BY PUTTING OURSELVES DOWN."

Believe what you want.

But, if you don’t think that Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut should be celebrated in YU, then:

1. Stop mooching off of the Yom Ha’atzmaut lunch in the gym.

And,

2. Ask yourself why you came to YU.

If you think that in order to be frum, you need to be anti-everything, you are wrong.

There is a very scary trend of extremism in YU.

After my experience with being “put-down” for attending the Yom HaShoah presentation when I first came to YU, I unfortunately fell into a trap.

When Yom Hazikaron came around, a day which I had commemorated my entire life, I did not attend the nighttime event. I fell into the immense peer pressure to be anti the “*tziyoynim*.” The problem was not that I did not attend. The problem was not that I learned Night Seder. The problem was that I started to look down on

those who did attend.

Never before would I have put down Yom Hazikaron. Before this incident, I would jump through hoops to commemorate soldiers and citizens of Israel who have either lost their lives in war or in acts of terror. I went to a very Zionist high school, and was very active in Bnei Akiva. When I went to yeshiva, I realized that certain aspects of Bnei Akiva I disagreed with, but my overall love for Israel was something I knew I still believed in. So now I come to Yeshiva University, the Orthodox Zionist Yeshiva, and I begin to lose my passion for Israel? Why would something like this happen?

I believe that extremism is a very easy coping mechanism. What students need to “cope with” is finding their identity, and deciding who they are. I believe students lack the self-confidence to go against the mass. Students come back from yeshiva and see older students joking about Zionism and YU, so they join in. They don’t question their own beliefs or fight back because it’s easier to join in. I know this is true because it happened to me.

When I’ve complained to friends about incidents that I’ve seen, I have always received the same response: “They’re just joking. Don’t take it too seriously.”

When people hear the words “*Dati Leumi*,” they make faces and laugh. “*Tziyoynim!*” Are they joking? I know they are. But why is that a joke?

When the Yom Ha’atzmaut posters go up around campus, students sometimes laugh or take them down. Are they joking? I know they are. But why is that a joke?

When people sing an awful remix to the beautiful

SEE EXTREMISM, CONTINUED ON
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Never. Stop. Commentating.

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

Commemoration Through Action: What to Learn From Another School Shooting

By Molly Meisels

Like many Americans, I am terrified I'll be the victim of a mass shooting. In movie theaters, I think of the 12 Batman fans who died in Aurora, Colorado. In classrooms, I think of the 20 first-graders who perished in Sandy Hook Elementary School. At concerts, I think of the 58 country music lovers who were killed at a festival in Las Vegas. These anxieties are experienced by countless Americans across the country who feel defenseless in their own cities and communities. America has become a warzone, and our enemy lurks behind every corner.

Gun violence has become so prevalent in America that the school shooting which claimed the lives of 17 teenagers and educators on Valentine's Day in Parkland, Florida shocked no one. We've become so accustomed to the shootings that many of us feel numb to the pain. How many innocents can we mourn and how many children can we bury before we break? We dread the mass shootings, but we've come to expect them. We know it's only a matter of time before another murderer lets loose on innocent civilians, but we can't pinpoint exactly when it will transpire. We live in the land of the free, but how free are we really if we're constantly frightened of being mowed down by an AR-15? Gun violence has become a plague of pandemic proportions, and 89% of Americans (both Republican and Democrat alike) believe in common sense gun laws. So, why is it that nothing is being done to



address this growing problem?

The statistics for gun related deaths in the United States are mind-blowing. America, ranking 30th in math and 19th in science out of the 35 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, can pride itself on being number one in something – gun-related homicides. The United States has more guns per capita than any other developed nation (approximately 300 million guns in total), and, even though we make up less than 5% of the world's population, 31% of mass shooters globally, live here.

Since the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 (which claimed 13 lives), there have been 25 fatal school shootings in the US, with dozens of others attempted since then. It seems like wherever you go in the United

States, it is impossible to hide from gunmen with access to legally obtained assault rifles. Nikolas Cruz, the 19-year-old Parkland, Florida shooter, was fascinated by guns, and when he turned 18, he purchased an AR-15 at a local gun shop. Stephen Paddock, the Las Vegas shooter who viciously slayed 58 concert-goers, purchased 33 guns legally in the year before his shooting, many of which were semi-automatic assault rifles upgraded with bump stocks. Omar Mateen, who murdered 49 clubbers in Orlando, bought his handgun and semi-automatic assault rifle legally from a gun shop, even passing their version of a background check. All these weapons of combat were

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obtained through legal means, even though their sole purpose is to slaughter.

Unlike the bullets of regular handguns, the bullets of AR-15s tear through the human body, leaving the victim battered internally. Assault rifles are designed to inflict as much damage as possible, and are beneficial for warzones. Instead of on a battlefield, they are on our streets, easily accessible to terrorists, white supremacists, and the mentally ill. The US government has an obligation to protect its citizens, granting us the fundamental rights of "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." But, are they granting us those rights when life is taken from hundreds by legal weapons? Is our liberty being upheld if we are restricted by fear and dread? Can we pursue happiness if those we love are being murdered in schools, concert halls, and theaters?

The most common argument utilized by conservatives is that guns don't kill people, people kill people. Obviously, the individual wields the gun and shoots the weapon – so yes, people do kill people. But dangerous people can carry out dangerous actions only if they have access to dangerous weapons. A man with a knife will not have as many victims as a man with a gun, especially when that gun can shoot 24 shots in 9 seconds (98 shots in 7 seconds with a bump stock). In the United States, empirical data gathered by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Harvard's Injury Control Research Center have found that states with easier access to guns have more shootings, while states with stricter gun laws have fewer shootings. Fewer guns in a community will lead to fewer homicides and suicides, as suicides tend to account for most of the gun-related deaths in America. States with more guns tend to have more police officers being shot as well.

The NRA is the reason Republican politicians oppose combatting this problem. The National Rifle Association is

one of the most powerful lobbies on Capitol Hill, spending \$3 million a year to ensure that Republican policymakers do not enact any laws which would restrict the selling of guns (all kinds of guns to all kinds of people). The NRA prides itself on being the protector of the Second Amendment – putting the freedom to own a lethal weapon over the lives of gun violence victims across the country. The NRA opposes blocking the mentally ill or those on the no-fly list from purchasing a weapon, and they advocate strongly for Americans' rights to own semi-automatics. Eighty-nine percent of Americans agree that those with mental health issues should be blocked from purchasing a gun, while 83% believe those on the no-fly list should be barred from buying guns. Ninety percent of Democrats and 77% of Republicans believe there should be background checks for gun purchases, and 80% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans believe that assault style weapons should be banned. However, Republican policymakers are not acting in the interest of their gun-loving constituents. Instead, they're acting in the interest of the NRA, whose only goal is to sell more guns to more people, regardless of the consequences.

Following each school shooting, Democrats rise and rally for gun control, while Republicans send their "thoughts and prayers" to the victims, accusing Democrats of politicizing tragedy. But if this tragedy is not politicized, it will only happen again. Republican lawmakers' "thoughts and prayers" are accompanied by their claims that guns are not the problem – even though all empirical evidence refutes that. Republicans have been opposed to funding CDC research into gun violence, and even instituting common sense gun laws like banning bump stocks and certain at-risk individuals from purchasing weapons.

Marco Rubio has said that before we jump to conclusions about guns and their relation to school shootings, we should check the facts. Well, I have checked them, and the fact is that Rubio has been the beneficiary of \$3,303,355 NRA campaign contributions.

President Trump made an emotional speech regarding mental illness and his efforts to help students suffering from mental illness after the February 14 Parkland shooting, but did not mention guns. Last February, Trump scrapped an Obama-era regulation which would ban those with mental health issues from purchasing guns. Maybe this is because the NRA spent more than \$30 million to support Trump in the 2016 election. Some of the other top NRA beneficiaries are Senator John McCain - \$7,740,521; Senator Richard Burr - \$6,986,620; and Senator Roy Blunt - \$4,551,140. After each mass shooting, these senators will send their condolences, but condolences are not enough. How many condolences can you send before saving lives becomes the priority?

If the NRA continues to control Republican lawmakers, no effective action will be possible. We will continue facing the repercussions of those with access to weapons of warfare. We will continue burying our dead and holding our vigils to commemorate them. But I am sick of crying, I am sick of fear, and most importantly, I am sick of my representatives doing nothing while innocent people die on our streets.

EXTREMISM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

song "baruch hu" by replacing the words "vehivdilanu min ha'toim" with "vehivdilanu min ha'tziyoyanim," are they joking? I really hope they are. But why is that a joke?

I know people in YU who, if they see a video on Yeshiva World News of Neturei Karta fanatics burning Israeli flags in public or of Mea Shearim residents throwing garbage at women, they would respond, "Ah, geshmak!" Are they joking? I know they are. But, once again, why is that a joke?

These are people who I have seen jokingly sit down or fake spit during the *Tefilla Lishlom Hamedinah* and *Mishebeirach Lechayalei Tzahal*.

These are the same people who may have gone to a yeshiva in Israel, and go back to visit at any chance they have. Do they know why they are able to do that? Do they know who is responsible for their safety? Do they know that the same soldiers they jokingly mock are the same

ones who are risking their lives every day so that they can enjoy their vacations without missiles showering down on them?

I really hope that I am right, and that these students' actions are just jokes. I hope it's just "laytzanus."

I really hope that those who romanticize the extremist chareidi lifestyle have asked themselves why they are in YU.

There are many reasons to come to Yeshiva University. If you're here for the academics, you may be the only one. Most people come here to be surrounded by Jews, to learn Torah, and to soak up the wisdom of our Roshei Yeshiva. YU is a very unique place which for decades has been put down by right-wing yeshivas, and has been looked down upon as not among the "serious yeshivas." When someone walks into Glueck, Zysman, or Klein, the same *kol Torah* that's heard in other yeshivas can be heard. We're learning the same *masechtos*, learning the same *Rishonim*, and arguing over the same Rav Chaim. What makes us different is that we are outright

supporters of the State of Israel. This is who we are!

We do not believe in secular Zionism.

We do not believe that the Knesset is the highest power. Hashem is!

We do not believe that if you live in Israel, you can throw away the Torah. That is not who we are.

We believe in Am Yisrael living in Eretz Yisrael according to the laws of Torat Yisrael!

We are the face of Religious Zionism in America, and we only stab ourselves in the foot by putting ourselves down.

We need to end the jokes, and end the self-hatred.

We need to either find a different yeshiva, or start embracing our ideals and beliefs.

At the very least, we need to respect the views of the Yeshiva we are a part of.

I write this article because I am concerned about the extreme culture here in YU. I was a victim of the peer pressure, and I write this article to hopefully start a conversation and make sure no one else is.

David Harbour, Clean Clothes, and How Tide Ran One of the Greatest Super Bowl Ads (Ever)

By Matthew Silkin

“Mr. Greene... Mr. Greene? Do you need any help?”

So begins, neither one of the great American novels of the 19th century nor a classic Best Picture winner, but an advertisement that Coca-Cola ran during Super Bowl XIV in 1980. In the ad, a young boy approaches hobbling Pittsburgh Steelers defensive tackle “Mean” Joe Greene, offering the player words of admiration and a bottle of Coke. Greene begrudgingly accepts both, but after drinking the Coke, happily throws his jersey to the boy with a “Hey kid, catch,” before the ad ends with a jingle of “Have a Coke and a smile.” The ad went on to cement itself in the annals of corporate history as one of the most famous and memorable Super Bowl ads to have ever aired, a statistic that has only become more recognized as companies expend more effort on their own Super Bowl ads. Joining the ranks of the 1980 Coke commercial are Apple’s “You’ll see why 1984 won’t be like 1984” and Wendy’s “Where’s the beef?” advertisements from Super Bowl XVII in 1984, as well as Larry Bird and Michael Jordan battling it out on the court for McDonald’s during Super Bowl XXVII in 1993. Post-2000, there are definitely some commercials that have garnered favorable memories from viewers—Volkswagen’s 2011 young Darth Vader commercial from Super Bowl XLV and GoDaddy’s innumerable advertisements featuring scantily-clad girls come to mind—but it was not until Tide’s advertisement this year that, I feel, another company has added its advertisement to the ranks of the Greatest of All Time.

The ad, shown during Super Bowl LII in early February, featured David Harbour—who plays Officer Jim Hopper, from Netflix’s hit show *Stranger Things*—declaring that, due to the immaculate clothes on all the actors, it could be argued that every advertisement is, in actuality, an advertisement for Tide. This continued on in various other spots during the Super Bowl, where an advertisement for what would ostensibly be another product would begin, only for Harbour to appear and declare that it is a Tide ad. At one point, the commercials ended and the announcers welcomed the viewers back to...well, another Tide ad, with Harbour appearing where NBC would normally feature a graphic of players from the competing teams.

From a humor standpoint, Tide’s advertisements were all on point. The cornerstone of humor is the subversion of expectation, and Tide accomplished that with ease, by having other product icons, such as Isaiah Mustafa—famous for the Old Spice “Smell like a man, man” commercials (which, coincidentally, started around Super Bowl XLIV in 2010)—Mr. Clean, and the Budweiser Clydesdale horse being upstaged or replaced by Harbour. Another ad started out with the washed-out color palette and somber music reminiscent of medicine commercials before having Harbour step in frame. Even the NBC graphics edit followed the relatively simple yet effective formula of the commercials—set up the other product, and then come clean that the viewer is actually watching a Tide ad.

Another effective, yet more difficult, trick to pull off is the fourth wall breaking metanarrative, coming from early modern playwrights and theatrical minds such as Bertolt Brecht and Thornton Wilder. It’s not necessarily a comedic staple—*Our Town* does it, and it’s not really supposed to be a comedic play—but when it’s used well for comedy, it can make the jokes that much more memorable (see Woody Allen’s one act masterpiece *God*), and I would say that Tide nailed it. It’s become more common for advertisers to talk about being advertisements; Michelob Ultra tried that in their own Super Bowl ad this

year, and that one was pretty funny as well. Tide’s, though, was even more meta—not about the advertisement filming experience, but the nature of what exactly the ad is trying to sell the consumer.

In hitting both of those comedic checkboxes, Tide has already set themselves up to be a pretty memorable ad campaign, together with Amazon for getting various celebrities to voice Alexa, Doritos and Mountain Dew for their Peter Dinklage/Morgan Freeman rap-off, or M&Ms for turning the red M&M into Danny Devito. But for why

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those commercials are going to fade away with time while Tide’s 2018 ad campaign should be considered one of the greats, we have to look a little deeper, not just into the advertisements, but into advertising itself.

Contrary to popular belief, the goal of advertising is not necessarily to get you to jump off your couch, run to the nearest store, and clear the entire inventory of whatever product’s commercial you just watched. The people who make Ford commercials aren’t expecting the average viewer to immediately rush to their local dealership and purchase the all-new 2018 Ford Fiesta for just \$10,999 with 0% down and no financing (not an actual endorsement for Ford, I’m just parroting the average car commercial). Advertising is all about brand recognition—you don’t need a car now necessarily, but the next time you need to go to the dealership when your old car breaks down, Ford is

going to hope that of all the advertisements playing in your head as you consider which replacement car to buy, theirs is going to be playing the loudest. It’s true of cars, it’s true of fast food, it’s true of every company that has a jingle or a catchphrase or something memorable to make the consumer think of them first when it comes time to make a shopping trip.

What Tide did that night, by declaring every ad with clean clothes in it a Tide ad—and subsequently building on that by hijacking other products to become Tide ads—was much more than being louder than the competition, it was effectively putting competing products on mute. Tide’s campaign had consumers thinking about Tide, even during commercials for products that wouldn’t even be competing with the company in laundry detergent sales. Every time an ad started, people’s first thoughts wouldn’t be about the product at hand, they would be, “Wait, is this actually going to be a Tide ad?” Tide has taken the simple bait-and-switch humor and turned it into a genius marketing tactic, using it to silence the other competition and leave only Tide in the minds of the consumers.

In this respect, I think Tide actually outshines the great commercials that I mentioned earlier. Yes, drinking a Coke and watching “Mean” Joe Greene give a kid his jersey would put a smile on anyone’s face. Yes, having a Big Mac while seeing two basketball legends compete for McDonald’s is, Yes, Wendy’s was throwing shade at the competition for their beef even before this year’s commercial, although the 1984 one was more subtle and the “Where’s the beef?” tagline more iconic than simply ragging on McDonald’s. But none of them came close to Tide’s brilliance in dominating the advertising sphere by effectively turning themselves into the only advertisers.

In fact, this whole article wasn’t even an article. It’s actually a Tide ad. Well done, Tide.



Tikkun Olam and the IRS

By Shoshi Wyszynski

“*Torah u'Madda*” is probably one of the most common phrases a student will hear in Yeshiva University. Modern Orthodoxy’s famous tagline is used for all sorts of things: an excuse to attend a *Shiur* when time-commitments would have demanded otherwise; a justification for interviewing at Goldman Sachs during a scheduled Seder. “*Torah u'Madda*” is expressed as both a support for making Aliyah as well as a defense for those choosing not to do so. Simply, the meaning of the phrase clearly varies with its speaker’s intentions. However, I think Rabbi Lamm’s definition of *Torah u'Madda* is the most pertinent; “*Torah*, faith, religious learning on one side and *Madda*, science, worldly knowledge on the other, together

the most product. However, the definitions of revenue and product differ from the norm. In regards to a nonprofit organization, the revenue brought in is used solely to cover overhead costs and expenses. It is an incorporated business in which the shareholders or trustees do not benefit financially. As long as the nonprofit’s activities are associated with the nonprofit’s missions statement, any profit made is not taxable.

Nonprofits are tax exempt under Internal revenue Code section 501(c)(3) as public charities because they are formed to provide public benefit. You may have heard a nonprofit interested in gaining your financial support touting their 501(c)(3) status—this essentially legitimizes the organization as it means they have been recognized by the IRS as being tax exempt by the virtue of

and basic necessities that so many people take for granted. There are a plethora of organizations whose missions are to simply make the world a better place: Save the Children is a global organization that sponsors children all over the world who don’t have access to food, water, or shelter. The Simon Wiesenthal Center is devoted to fighting any form of Anti-Semitism, bigotry, and hate and facilitates interfaith dialogue and connection. Other examples include the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Human Rights Watch (HRW), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and more.

In his talk on the assimilation of *Tikkun Olam*, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks delves into the etymology of the Hebrew root word *taken*. As it appears in *Vayikra*, it is used in the sense of straightening, fixing and refashioning.



offers us a more overarching and truer vision than either one alone.”

If one were to ask a Syms student to define the word “business,” he/she would likely respond with an answer similar to “The changing and trading of commerce to make the highest profit.” Indeed, this definition would seem to fit well with that of The Webster’s dictionary: “A usually commercial or mercantile activity engaged in as a means of a livelihood.” The common theme in both of these definitions is the emphasis on monetary profit. In this case, *Torah u'Madda* could be loosely translated as “*Torah* and Business.”

However, in my opinion, the nonprofit sector of the business world is the closest that a person can get to true *Torah Biyedi Madda*.

People are often confused not by what a nonprofit is, but how one operates. When asked what a nonprofit was, my younger sister answered with a couple examples such as the Make-a-Wish Foundation and our local homeless shelter/soup kitchen. However, when asked how a nonprofit operated financially, she admitted to being a little confused. A nonprofit organization’s mission statement is very similar to for-profit institutions in that they both strive to bring in the most revenue or produce

its programming and service.

Under the broad term “nonprofit” exists two categories—private and public. Private foundations are usually established from a single source or specific sources such as family or corporate money, instead of funding from the general public. On the other hand, public foundations have many different missions; in fact, The National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities identifies 645 categories of public nonprofits in their classification codes. Public nonprofits receive their funding from the general public and focus on obtaining their resources from a variety of different donors instead of one trust or fund.

Public charitable organizations are classified in many groupings such as human services, education focused charities, health and mental services, community and civil rights, etc. Although the funding for nonprofits differ categorically, the universal mission statement of providing services for those in need applies to both public and private nonprofits.

Ultimately, the mission of any nonprofit is to help those less fortunate. While the earnings of a for-profit institution will often be used by its board members to purchase various luxuries, the monies of A nonprofit organization go directly to those who need the resources

The Hebrew word “*olam*” means not only world, but a universe, spiritual sphere, society, and eternity. In rabbinic literature and tradition the words *Tikkun Olam* often appear together in order to stress the global responsibility of each individual to repair this world which was fractured by the original sin of Adam and Eve.

In my experience, having interned in various nonprofits, I have found that one way to help repair this world is through helping the needy and less fortunate. Specifically, I believe that a person can maximize his/her impact by working at a nonprofit organization that services a large demographic. Being involved in the business world does not mean chesed, or kindness, should be forgotten. In his book *To Heal a Fractured World*, Rabbi Sacks delves into our mission on this world. He writes, “We are God’s ambassadors on earth.” The way we live affects how others see Him. God needs us. The idea sounds paradoxical but it is true. Wittingly or unwittingly the way we live tells a story. If we live well, we become a blessing to others, we become witnesses to the transformative power of the divine presence.”

Budget Flying's Continues to Change Airline Industry

By Jeremy Herskowitz

Despite all the technological advances in the recent decades one thing has remained unchanged—it still takes six hours to fly from the East Coast to the West Coast, three hours to fly to Miami, and half a day to fly to Israel. While flight times haven't changed, the quality of service consumers' experience is undergoing its biggest shakeup in air travel history. With the rapid rise of low-cost carriers both domestically and internationally, the "Big 3" US

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carriers—United, American and Delta—have been forced to rethink their approach, focusing on both the elite and budget travelers.

Budget airlines like Frontier, Spirit, and Southwest have been transforming domestic travel in the past two decades. In the late 2000's when the "Big 3" began to charge customers to bring a suitcase on domestic flights, the public reaction was extremely negative. Nevertheless, given the growth of budget airlines in the past few years and their incredibly low fares, the "Big 3" have introduced a new fare class called "Basic Economy." Now, not only do customers have to pay a fee if they wish to check a suitcase,

but a fee is also assessed if customers wish to bring a full-size carry-on or choose a seat when booking their tickets. Perhaps the biggest drawback of all is that flyers who book a Basic Economy ticket will not benefit from earning qualifying miles or qualifying dollars that entitle them to reach elite status on that airline for the following year. While Basic Economy isn't the most viable option for a family vacation, the new fare class has made travel for students and those on a tight budget an option that hasn't been available in the past.

Internationally, airlines like Wow Air and Norwegian offer consumers flights to Europe for as low as \$99. Given the ridiculously low fares that these airlines offer, it's incredibly difficult for major carriers like the "Big 3" to compete for the economy passengers who tend to choose the lowest fare available over their airline of choice.

As a result, these major carriers are instead shifting their international focus to elite business passengers. The airlines are redesigning their premium cabins to lure in high paying customers, a lucrative business model for the major airlines. According to Investopedia, business-class travelers account for 12% of passengers, but they are twice as profitable for the airlines. On some flights business-class passengers account for 75% of the airlines' profits. United Airlines is currently undergoing a major rebranding of their business-class cabin as a result of this, shifting away from the previously titled United BusinessFirst—a rather basic premium cabin—to what they are calling Polaris. This rebranding effort includes a major redesign of the cabin to include suite-like seats, as well as luxury in-flight amenities courtesy of United's new partnerships with high end brands like Saks Fifth Avenue and Cowshed. United

is also launching brand new Polaris lounges at United's major hubs—Chicago, Newark, Houston etc.—exclusively for those traveling on their new Polaris product, making travel for those passengers as luxurious as ever. Delta is also improving their product with a new cabin titled Delta One which also includes suite-like seats among other luxurious amenities expected to enter service on their new Airbus A350 and Boeing 777s in the very near future.

All the changes coming to airlines are resulting in a sizeable uptick in destinations being serviced, and customers are responding accordingly, flying more than ever before. A recent report released by IATA (International Air Transport Association) expects planes to be more crowded in 2018 than they have been in the past. Industry-wide net profit is expected to rise to \$38.4B from a previously forecasted \$34.5B while the percentage of seats filled by passengers is expected to reach record levels of approximately 81.4%. While all this bodes well for airlines' profitability, one thing that does not is the recent rise in airline jet fuel prices. United projects that the price they pay per gallon will rise to \$2.11 from \$1.71 just one-year ago. Nevertheless, the future looks optimistic for the airline industry as airlines revamp their products to appeal to the high demand of travelers.

Business is booming for the airline industry as passengers are flying more often, more comfortably and for lower prices than ever before. Even though airlines like Spirit and Frontier have reputations for terrible customer service, their impact on the industry as a whole has resulted in enormous changes that are long overdue from a service that hasn't adapted to consumers' needs since its inception.



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