

The COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University



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Men's Basketball Team Makes Historic Run, Wins Skyline Championship



By Yossi Zimilover

For the first time in Yeshiva University history, the Men's Basketball Team, the Maccabees, won the Skyline Conference Championship and secured an automatic berth into the NCAA Division III men's basketball tournament. On Sunday, February 25, the #4 seed Maccabees defeated the #2 seed Purchase College Panthers by a score of 87-81 at Purchase.

As the game concluded, the thousands of YU fans who traveled to Purchase to support the Macs began singing "mishe nichnas adar marbim b'simcha" to celebrate the historic victory. Syms Sophomore Binyamin Suissa described the atmosphere of the game as "unbelievable," adding, "I really felt like I was at a home game."

The Men's Basketball Team advanced to the Skyline Conference

**SEE BASKETBALL,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

The Shape of Best Picture: What the Academy Awards Got Wrong

By Matthew Silkin

I've seen *The Shape of Water*. It's a pretty good movie, all things considered. Sally Hawkins turns in a particularly memorable performance, especially given that her character was mute - I know from experience it's a lot harder to act when you don't have many lines you can work with, and she had none, so props to her. The shot composition in the movie was also great, as were the practical and special effects. The story, while initially a little hard to swallow - a romance between Hawkins' character and what was ostensibly The Creature from the Black Lagoon - was charming within the universe that Guillermo del Toro created to tell it in. All in all, a perfectly fine movie.

Best Picture, though? In any other year, sure, why not? Not in 2017.

But as of March 4, Best Picture it is. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has decided that, of all the movies nominated for the award, it should go to what I don't even think is Guillermo del Toro's magnum opus. And I feel that's a disservice, not only to the other

**SEE SHAPE OF WATER,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 22**

\$50,000 of Student Activity Fee Funds Spent on Shabbat Minyan Initiative at Beren

By Avi Strauss

Almost a quarter of the \$204,400 composing the raised student activity funds this year, or \$50,000, has been directed towards stabilizing and concretizing the "Minyan Men" at Beren Shabbat initiative, which brings a quorum of ten men downtown each week to ensure the midtown campus has a *minyan*.

For this academic year, the student activity fee, the charge that raises funds for most student-run programming on campus, was raised 67%, to \$250 a year. Between 2,044 undergraduate students on the Beren and Wilf campuses, this increase amounted to over \$200,000 for increased and enhanced programming.

However, for much of the year, it has remained unclear in where and how these additional funds were being spent. Now, after investigation, it appears one quarter of those funds is being used for the weekly *minyan* at Beren.

The main expense for the *minyan* is housing the men in midtown Manhattan. The Office of Student Life arranges for the students to be placed in five hotel rooms at the nearby Court Hotel, the same hotel where students are put up for the larger, monthly, co-ed shabbatonim throughout the year.

"At the end of the day, it's about how much we are willing to support our values. We are strongly committed

to offering everyone on the Beren campus a chance to experience Shabbatot with *tefilla b'tzibur* (prayer with a minyan), with a 'Tzibur' that is their own," said Shira Krinsky, the *Minyan* Coordinator on the Shabbat

**"SHABBAT ATTENDANCE IS UP
OVER 57%, WITH AN AVERAGE
OF 175 STUDENTS ON THE
BEREN CAMPUS EACH WEEK IN
THE FALL SEMESTER."**

Enhancement Committee at Beren.

The *minyan* initiative began last year, the brainchild of Jen van Amerongen, former Torah Activities Council (TAC) Vice President of Shabbat, and Avital Habshush, the former President of the Shabbat Enhancement Committee. Starting in the spring semester, the *minyan* ran semi-regularly, bringing men downtown just about every other week.

"The idea was one I had spoken about with friends throughout my years at Stern. Basically...that communal

**SEE MINYAN, CONTINUED ON
PAGE 6**

The EDITORIAL

To Take Academic Integrity Seriously, Show That You're Serious

By Avi Strauss

Over three years ago, as I was scribbling away Calculus solutions during my first midterm in college, I remember noticing students sharing their papers over the long desks of a Belfer lecture hall. While I heard cheating was a problem in college courses, I certainly didn't expect it would be so brazen. I was shocked, but didn't report it to my professor.

Since then, along with several friends and peers who found similar incidents in their courses abhorrent, efforts have been made in recent years to severely cut off, if not end entirely, the scourge of cheating on campus.

Throughout my college career, I never seriously thought about whether cheating—and brazen cheating, for that matter—is a YU-specific problem. To me, this seems like the wrong question to ask. How other institutions successfully enforce honorable behavior or regrettably allow subpar ethical standards ought not have any bearing on our quest for academic integrity. In addressing our own cheating, which has persisted for decades, we should not mimic

"SIGNS REMINDING STUDENTS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY ARE NICE, BUT DON'T OFFER MUCH IN THE WAY OF PREVENTING THE CHEATING OCCURRING ON CAMPUS."

others' solutions as we institute our own effective standards.

I firmly believe that the majority of YU students do not cheat nor have an inclination to cheat. But pervasive and unpunished cheating stretches curves, rewards misbehavior, betrays the trust between student and college, creates an impression of grade inflation that damages our collective admissions to graduate school, and above all should not be occurring at a Jewish institution.

In the last few years, three meetings have been conducted between students, deans, and academic advisors to discuss the state of academic integrity on campus, and to work together to suggest ways to improve it. I've been a student contributor in all three of these meetings, and feel confident commenting on these matters with the proper background.

And even though I understand that the mills of higher education may grind slowly, it seems clear that not enough is being done and what is being done is being done too incrementally. Signs reminding students of academic integrity are nice, but don't offer much in the way of preventing the cheating occurring on campus.

Much of the sentiment of university faculty has been to bemoan the state of affairs in regards to cheating while highlighting the need for students to do more to help identify cheaters. Putting aside that it is unfair to place this responsibility on students, students *have* gone above and beyond in reporting cheating and suggesting reform.

Yet, after two years of discussions and meetings, only one real reform in the delivery of tests has been implemented—the addition of proctors to some of the larger courses. And even that reform didn't stop cheating from occurring last semester in Calculus I, one of the courses specifically designated for additional proctors.

Moreover, calling out cheating in the middle of a test, identifying one of their peers for serious consequences, can be very uncomfortable for a student. I'm aware of many instances of students reporting cheating after an exam, but there is often little a professor or dean can do after the fact. The best solution is to institute pre-emptive measures that ward off cheating, coupled with a sincere effort by faculty to identify cheaters *during* exams—they shouldn't need students to do it for them.

The issue is that those affected most by cheating, those

students who are making sincere attempts to assist in its elimination from campus, have no means by which to coerce faculty change.

Before I conclude, I'd like to list some of the suggestions made by students in the meetings referred to at the beginning of this editorial. If implemented, I would all but guarantee a positive change towards more academic integrity on campus:

- **School-wide, mandated use of turnitin.com**

for all courses, whether lab, lecture, or seminar. Turnitin screens papers for plagiarism, and the more the program is used, the larger its database of papers—in this case, papers submitted by YU students—becomes. YU already owns the program, so mandated use of the program would be an effective use of resources the faculty already has to combat cheating.

- **Tiered disciplinary action** that could offer alternatives to expulsion for first time offenders. These punishments could include academic probation that limits how many courses a student may take in a semester following cheating or restricted registration that prevents a student from registering for the following semester's courses until everyone else has registered for theirs. Some might consider this "going easy" on cheaters, but these punishments would at least be a fair warning shot that cheating will not go unnoticed or unpunished.

- **Alternate versions of midterm and final exams.** To prevent in-test cheating, professors could prepare two versions of the same test that scramble questions into two distinct orders. Exams can be distributed to students in an alternating fashion. Versions of the test can even be color-coated for professors to easily recognize that neighboring students have different tests and to make it easier to distinguish between the two versions when grading.

- **Taking actual disciplinary action** against cheaters and announcing to the student body when disciplinary action was taken. Based on statements made by the Deans in the aforementioned meetings, there have been only three instances of disciplinary action, all in Sy Syms School of Business, implemented against any undergraduate student in at least the last six years, if not more. This is incongruous with an acknowledged campus-wide problem. While it may be uncomfortable to discipline students with a serious punishment, professors and deans need to agree that even giving the impression of cheating is guarded against, and that students who violate the trust of their professors will be sent straight to the Dean's Office. An email notifying the student body when such action is taken would go a long way towards changing the culture on campus.

Certainly the above is not a complete list of solutions, nor do I think that they would outright solve cheating on campus. I also regret that it would take measures like these to force students to abide by basic codes of conduct. Unfortunately, however, rewritten integrity statements, emails reminding students to not cheat, and other piecemeal measures are just not adequate. The continued widely acknowledged problem with cheating after an effort to quell it proves as much.

If change is to happen, students need to understand that their professors and deans will implement every reasonable measure possible to stem cheating. Perhaps this will lead to an adversarial relationship between some faculty, deans, and students. But it will certainly lead to a positive relationship with the student body in the long run, when there is a mutual understanding that cheating will not be tolerated.

If we're not going to institute more changes at a more rapid pace now, until acknowledged cheating vanishes from campus, when will we?

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

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

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

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



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1 Early Pesach
 God's gift to YU students. When the *chag* falls out perfectly—right after midterms and with plenty of time before finals. There is absolutely nothing to worry about over break except remembering to count *Sefira*.



2 Winter Storm Quinn
 First Bomb Cyclone Grayson, now Winter Storm Quinn, did the storm naming people steal a Southern Catholic School class list?



3 Movie Pass
 Great for going on a ton of dates where you don't even have to talk to the other person. Plus, you can scout out an unlimited amount of *shidduchim* for just \$10 a month.



4 Skyline Championship
 A stunningly successful season by our very own Macs. Bringing pride and joy to the entire university, this historic moment is soon to be forgotten about forever. #BringingItBack



5 Mi Shenichnas Adar at the Basketball Game
 I am certain that when our Sages instituted this month of joy, elation from Division III basketball was exactly what they had in mind.



6 Chicken in a Cone
 This brand new dish at Paprika seems to be the restaurant's clever response to Dunkin' Donuts' recent "donut-in-a-pita" campaign in the ever-raging battle of obscure greasy foods that Stern students will still consume.



7 Huge Snow Piles
 These bad boys appear all over campus and, according to a friend of mine, will probably melt down by Pesach time. Enjoy the last beautiful site of winter while it lasts.

7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN



1 The Ides of March
 We're coming up on the date of Julius Caesar's assassination and a sort of Roman *Yovel* when all debts had to be settled.



2 York College
 By defeating Yeshiva in the first round of the NCAA tournament, they broke a 12 year tournament win drought. You call *that* a losing streak? Pathetic.



3 Winter Olympics
 Let's be honest, without Michael Phelps constantly crushing world records, this was only exciting since the revival of the Tonya Harding scandal after the release of *I, Tonya*.



4 Midterms AGAIN
 There's three things you can be sure of in life: death, taxes, and that midterms extend from the beginning of the semester until finals.



5 The Oscars
 Its rating has gone down four years in a row, and for good reason. Let's try to keep it about the movies.



6 Engineer-in-Charge
 For anyone who has not yet checked out the office right next to Chop Chop, I would recommend it. I have seen everything in there from an evil man petting a dog to a full-wall map of the sewage system in Timbuktu. Honestly, I'm really confused.



7 Forgetting Birkat HaChodesh
 Come on Klein @ 9, we really thought you were going to get a break for this issue, but this was just too good an opportunity to pass up. #KleinCan'tCatchABreak.

Vows

The Commentator Editorial Board extends a Mazal Tov to Senior Features Editor Eitan Lipsky (YC '18) on his engagement to Tehilla Berger (SCW '19)! *Ya'aleh hazivug yafeh veyivnu bayis ne'eman beYisrael.*

Former Cardozo Professor Alex Stein Appointed to Israeli Supreme Court

By Noam Beltran

On February 22, Former Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law Professor Alex Stein was appointed to serve as judge the Supreme Court of Israel.

Stein began his academic career in the United States in 2004 at Yeshiva University's Cardozo School of Law as a professor in Torts, Evidence, Medical Malpractice, and Constitutional Criminal Evidence. Stein then joined Brooklyn Law School in 2016, where he was acclaimed as one of the most highly-cited scholars in the field of evidence and noted for his unique style combining law with economic theories and moral philosophy.

"I am thrilled and humbled...I very much look forward to serving the people of Israel and its legal system," Stein affirmed of the appointment in an interview with Brooklyn Law School.

Stein was born and raised in the former Soviet Union until he immigrated with his parents to Israel, where he served in the military then went on to earn a Bachelor of Law in 1983 and Master of Laws in 1987 from Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Stein continued his education at the University of London, earning a Ph.D with a dissertation titled: *The Law of Evidence and the Problem of Risk-Distribution*.

Stein's nomination, along with Ofer Groskopf's, is considered a win for Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked of the right-wing Jewish Home party, who noted regarding the nomination of the two Justices, "They are part of a process of returning the court to its basic function: interpreting the norms that parliament decides, not replacing it," according to *The Times of Israel*.

Although Israeli Supreme Court Chief Justice Esther Hayut was said to have challenged Shaked's choices, she affirmed the Supreme Court's decision when she told Yedioth Ahronoth that Stein and Groskopf are "two excellent Supreme Court justices with top-notch and impressive reputations. I have no doubt both will make a significant contribution to the Supreme Court and enrich its rulings with their knowledge."



BASKETBALL, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Championship for the first time in school history with an overtime defeat of Farmingdale State College (FSC) on Thursday, February 22. The #4 ranked Maccabees upset the #1 seed Rams by a score of 77-75, at the Nold Hall Athletic Complex in Farmingdale.

In that game, The Macs dominated the first 20 minutes of the game and took a commanding 42-25 lead into the second half of the contest. However, FSC staged a comeback and managed to tie the score 69-69 and force overtime. In a nail-biting 5 minutes of overtime play, a late 3 pointer from Sophomore Tyler Hod gave YU the lead, and the Maccabees secured a win.

Sophomore Gabriel Leifer led the team in scoring, rebounds, and steals, with 20, 15, and 5 respectively. Sophomore Simcha Halpert also had a strong performance with 18 points.

YU had previously lost both of their regular season

matchups to FSC, the defending Skyline Champions, but managed to emerge victorious, and played at #2 Purchase College in the championship game on Sunday, February 25. Yeshiva split with Purchase in regular season play.

In the championship, Purchase jumped out to an early 23-11 lead in the first half, but momentum quickly shifted after a 13-0 run by the Macs, which made the score 24-23 with 8:41 remaining. After a few lead changes, YU headed into halftime leading 43-35.

The Maccabees extended their lead to 15 to open the second half and made the score 52-37. As the half continued, Purchase mounted a comeback and tied the game 54-54. The next 7 minutes of play remained competitive until Yeshiva pulled away when Sophomore Bar Alluf hit a three pointer to put YU ahead 73-68.

Surrounded by two defenders, Sophomore Simcha Halpert sealed the victory with 1:31 remaining by scoring a 3 point shot that made the score 79-70. Purchase's efforts in intentionally fouling the Macs were unsuccessful and

YU emerged with the win.

Halpert led the team with 25 points, going 5-of-8 from

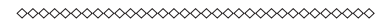


behind the arc, and hitting 8-of-8 free throws.

Junior Justin Hod shot 100% from 3 point range, scoring 6-of-6 in the first half. Sophomore Gabriel Leifer also had an impressive game with 11 rebounds.

Senior Eli Mamann, the Captain of the team, described the long journey towards winning the championship. "We faced a lot of battles this season. We suffered some injuries and setbacks, but we had trust in each other that if we kept trusting the process and playing our style basketball, we would be successful at the end of the season." He added that winning a championship is far from easy, and how it "takes total commitment from every single person to get there."

As the Skyline Conference Champions, the Maccabees automatically qualified for the NCAA Division III tournament, which takes place from March 2-17 in various locations across the country. The Skyline is 1 of 43 Conferences whose champion is guaranteed a spot in the tournament, which features 64 of the best Division III college teams from around the country.



The Yeshiva University men's basketball team lost 81-67 to the #11 nationally ranked York College (PA) Spartans in the first round of the NCAA Division III men's basketball tournament on Friday, March 2. The game was the first NCAA tournament appearance for the team in YU History.

Early in the game, York took a large 31-12 lead, but the YU Maccabees rallied with a 15-2 run to bring the score to 33-27 with 4:53 remaining in the first half. This would be the closest the Macs would come to the Spartans for the duration of the game.

Sophomore Gabriel Leifer led the team in scoring with 18 points. The Maccabees played without Sophomore Bar Alluf, a usual starter for the team, due to allegations that were raised regarding his eligibility. In a statement on Friday, YU Athletics explained that they immediately reviewed eligibility rules. They wrote, "...while this review confirmed our belief that Mr. Alluf's eligibility was properly certified based on the information that had been provided to Yeshiva, we – Yeshiva University and its community of students, faculty and alumni – take pride in holding ourselves to the highest possible standards on and off of the court. As such, we have decided that Mr. Alluf will not play in the tournament in order to avoid any possible impact these new allegations may have on our team's participation."

YU earned a berth into the tournament after winning the Skyline Conference Championship against Purchase College on February 25. The victory was the first in school history for the Macs. Yeshiva also set a program record for wins, with 18 victories in the 2017-2018 season.




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Wilf Campus Resident Advisor Applications Hit Record High in Four Years

By Avi Hirsch

108 students have applied to be Resident Advisors on the Wilf Campus beginning this fall, the highest number since at least 4 years ago. The previous record over this 4-year period was last year, when 87 students applied to be RAs.

The total number of RA applicants has steadily increased over the last three years, from 72 in the 2015-2016 academic year, to 87 last year, and 108 this year. Over that same period, the number of RA applicants in their first year on campus has increased by 97%, from 33 two years ago to 65 this year, while the number of first-year residents has increased around 16%, from 240 to 278. This year, nearly a quarter of first year residents applied to be an RA, the highest percentage in at least three years.

Other trends have similarly indicated a growing interest in the RA application in recent years. Of the RA applicants four years ago, 61 had never been an RA before; this number has steadily increased since then, to 63 three years ago, 78 last year, and 92 this year, for a total increase of 51% over the last four years. This is despite a 9% decrease in the total residence hall population over the same period, from 670 in the 2014-2015 academic year to 609 this year.

Resident Advisors serve several roles on the Wilf campus. Their primary job pertains to the residents living on their floors in the residence hall. RAs address issues on their floor,



frequently mentioned on this year's applications as an example of a "positive experience" the RA applicants this year had.

The financial incentives of the job continue to influence some residents to apply. According to Schwab, RAs are "paid, and they get free housing, which can be a really big deal." One first-year RA applicant who wished to remain anonymous remarked, "I've heard from friends how much money is saved on housing. Other than that...I don't have any outstanding desire to be an RA."

Yehudah Benklifa, a Sophomore in Yeshiva College applying to be an RA, decided to apply to contribute to "a beneficial aspect of YU that I'm very grateful to." He added, "The RAs make a great effort in creating as many ways as possible for people on the floor to meet and befriend each other."

Current RAs, like Yeshiva College Junior Yaakov Samel, were also inspired to apply for the position by their own RAs before them. "When it came to applying and being an RA, I thought about my RAs," he said. "They were helpful, they were open, and I wanted to be able to support my fellow students in that way."

Samel theorized that the increase in applications this year may have been caused by the increase in total RA staff. Indeed, the total number of RAs has been increasing for three years: while three years ago there were 16 RAs, this year there are 19. "The more RAs you have, the more exposure you have and the more enthusiasm you could generate from that," said Samel.

The applications themselves underscore the impact that RAs can have on the RA applications of their residents. "A lot of people who've applied have indicated that they see what their RAs are doing and they're inspired by it," said Schwab. One question on the RA application this year asked students whom they admire most on campus and why. "A lot of people really admire their RAs," said Schwab. "I was genuinely surprised at how many responses fit that category."

Daniel Gofine, a senior in Yeshiva College and one of 3 Head RAs on the Wilf Campus this year, commented that he applied to be an RA because he "wanted to give back to the YU undergrad community in a significant role in shaping the student life on campus." Reflecting on his two years as RA, Gofine believes that he himself has gained much from the position. "I have...gained crucial management skills, learned how to better serve the needs of multiple students and be a part of building the camaraderie that is felt on the floor," he said. "I picked up skills that I know will help me in any professional setting far beyond my time here."

"A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO'VE APPLIED HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY SEE WHAT THEIR RAS ARE DOING AND THEY'RE INSPIRED BY IT," SAID JONATHAN SCHWAB, DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY HOUSING AND RESIDENCE."

from broken appliances in rooms to medical or mental health emergencies, and serve a proactive role in forming a community on their floor. This is accomplished through "floor parties" that RAs run around 4 times a semester, and as of this year, a single "floor shabbaton" each year that the RAs organize.

Other than their role on their own floor, RAs form a cohesive social group themselves, meeting as a team around once a month to discuss the student body as a whole, any issues that have arisen on the Wilf Campus, and their thoughts on new programs to reach the student body. According to Jonathan Schwab, Director of University Housing and Residence Life, there is also a rotation of "RAs on duty every Shabbat to try to create even more opportunities for students to engage and try to enjoy the Shabbat experience here on campus."

According to Schwab, one factor that may have contributed to these trends is the ease of the application. "We made the application a lot more user-friendly," said Schwab. "We started it last year. I think this year we tweaked it a little bit to make it a little more accessible and also advertised pretty heavily for it." He added, "When I first started [in Spring 2015], [the application was] mostly a paper application with very long essays and a requirement to submit a resume and recommendations...now, it's a fully online application."

The advertising campaign this year was changed significantly from previous years. "This year we tried to have a lot of different flyers that hopefully were eye-catching," said Schwab. "We hung up different signs, and tried to make them not information-heavy... in the past, I feel like we've gotten this big flyer with a ton of words on it no one wants to see."

Floor shabbatons, introduced this year for the first time, may have also contributed to the increase in applications this year. According to Schwab, the floor shabbaton was

Wilf Campus Pre-Law Advisor Dina Chelst Leaves University

By Ben Strachman

The Pre-Law advisor for Wilf Campus students Dina Chelst left the University on March 2. She returned to practice law in a Trusts and Estates law firm after working in the university for three and a half years.

"I missed law, and I don't think that I realized that until recently, and so when this

"I MISSED LAW, AND I DON'T THINK THAT I REALIZED THAT UNTIL RECENTLY, AND SO WHEN THIS OPPORTUNITY CAME UP AND IT ENDED UP WORKING OUT, I THOUGHT IT WAS A REALLY GOOD MOVE FOR ME," EXPLAINED CHELST."

opportunity came up and it ended up working out, I thought it was a really good move for me," explained Chelst

Chelst explained in an email announcement to students that she had been working with the administration to ensure a smooth transition after her leave, and wrote that Deans Bacon and Sugarman "will be the point people for pre-law" in her absence.

As the Director of Pre-Law Advising, Chelst advised students on every aspect of the

law school application process, from summer internships to the LSAT. She estimated that roughly 200 Wilf campus students intend on going to law school.

Yeshiva College student and President of the Jacob Hecht Pre-Law Society on the Wilf Campus David Rubinstein commented, "Her guidance and advice was essential to the high rates of admission that YU students enjoy to excellent law schools across the country. She was a personal mentor and friend, and her presence on this campus will be missed."

Reflecting on her time on campus, Chelst noted, "I very much enjoyed my time at YU, I'm actually sincerely leaving with very mixed emotions...the student body here is really unbelievable. It's a wide range of students, and every last one of those students that I've worked with has been great."



7th Annual Sharsheret Cake Wars a Success

By Ilana Kisilinsky

Yeshiva University's 7th annual Sharsheret Cake Wars happened on the night of February 20, 2018. Held on the Wilf campus in Furst Hall, students assembled in their teams of five to eight people ready to decorate cakes while raising money for Sharsheret.

20 teams of students stood by tables with their team,

"IT'S PRETTY INCREDIBLE THE ENVIRONMENT HERE AND THE SPIRIT THAT PEOPLE COME IN WITH. IT'S SO EXCITING TO BE A PART OF,' SAID BELLA ADLER, A SOPHOMORE IN STERN COLLEGE."

a sheet cake, frosting, and various toppings while they listened to the opening remarks given by Ellen Kleinhaus, Sharsheret's Director of Campus and Community Engagement, and Goldie Weiser a senior in Stern College, whose mother, Lauryn, helped start Sharsheret in 2001.

Sharsheret is an organization that provides support

in many ways to women suffering from breast or ovarian cancer. They connect women all over the country to build a chain and community of support as well as providing kits to help through the process and genetic counseling.

After the speeches were made and the thank yous were given, it was off to the races. The teams were given 45 minutes to decorate their cakes in the theme of unity. The music blared as students began to carve, frost, and sprinkle their hearts out. "It's pretty incredible the environment here and the spirit that people come in with. It's so exciting to be a part of," said Bella Adler a sophomore in Stern College.

Phillip Nagler, a transfer student from Cooper Union, remarked on how much bigger the YU Cake Wars was in comparison to the one held at NYU, which he participated in on the Cooper Union team.

For the Sharsheret club, this is the biggest and most anticipated event of the year. "It's great, the teams are great, the energy is great," said Kleinhaus. When asked what Sharsheret's goal is with events like Cake Wars she responded, "We're grateful for all the education and outreach. For us it's important that the students go home and somehow learn about their family cancer history, keep Sharsheret in the back of their mind, because someday they will need us."

But Cake Wars accomplishes more than just education

and outreach. With a budget of about \$2,000, the event raises thousands of dollars each year for Sharsheret. "It's important for people to know that we're here on campus, that we have a presence and that there is a way for them to donate through YU," said Talia Sanieoff, Co-President of the Sharsheret club on campus.

There was, however, a definite drop in attendance in comparison to past Cake Wars, possibly due to the Maccabees playoff game that occurred at the same time. Many students at Cake Wars could be seen running back and forth between the event and the game. The majority of the attendees were female but "it's a very nice ratio," said Yaacov Siev, a junior in Yeshiva College.

The teams used their creativity and all the tools at their disposal to depict the theme of unity and create some colorful, imaginative, and interesting cakes. Many teams formed the pink breast cancer ribbon, others wrote or carved unity into their cake, while some used the Sharsheret merchandise being sold as props for their cake.

At the end of the night the two judges, Daliah Myers from Le Cake Chic and The Kosher Dinner Lady, Rachel Berger, announced the four winning teams: Srambrule, The 7 Layers, Eagles, and the Charitable Chicks. The prize for first and second place was a \$50 gift card to 16 Handles while the prize for third and fourth place was a \$50 gift card to On The Table, a home goods store in Teaneck.



MINYAN,
CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

tefilla, especially on Shabbat, is integral to a Jewish community," said van Amerongen. "We were not able to function as a religious community on Shabbat and instead had to be guests somewhere else. Any other college with a considerable population of Orthodox Jews has a Shabbat minyan. So the plan was to try and recruit men to make a minyan every Shabbat so that there would be communal tefilla for the Beren campus."

Students at Beren had the option of davening at the nearby Adereth El synagogue, but few would actually attend services there. "It is much easier to daven on your own in a dorm lounge, or sadly, skip davening altogether, than to walk ten blocks to a shul that is not really your own community and you don't feel a part of," explained van Amerongen.

Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel described the program's significance and the reason to formalize it as a weekly program this year. "We started bringing the *minyan* to Beren in Spring 2017 as a pilot program and it was very well received. The Beren student Shabbat Enhancement Committee felt that having the weekly *minyan* on campus significantly enhanced the Beren Shabbat experience so beginning in Fall 2017, we have had a *minyan* there practically every week."

Further, Dr. Nissel emphasized the importance of utilizing a large portion of the new funds towards strengthening programming that directly affects about half of the undergraduate student community.

And in part, the *minyan* seems to be contributing to a significant uptick in Beren students staying in for Shabbat this year. Shabbat attendance is up over 57%, with an

average of 175 students on the Beren campus each week in the Fall semester. During the 2016-2017 academic year, just 111 students stayed in for Shabbat, on average.

"The biggest thing that the Beren Community gains from having a *minyan* on campus on Shabbos is a communal center" said Adina Cohen, current TAC Vice President of Shabbat. "The minyan transforms 245 Lexington from a place where women go for their meals and programs into the place they go for their entire Shabbos experience."

Cohen continued by stressing the significant increase in women attending *minyan* Shabbat morning as a result of the initiative, crediting it in large part to the tone having a weekly minyan sets on the Beren campus. "It is in large part due to the sense of ownership that having a minyan on campus creates. Davening *tefillah b'tzibur* within the four walls of our school building fosters a sense of community and has created an important foundation for the community to be able to thrive."

One of the men who regularly goes downtown for the minyan, Yeshiva College Junior Doniel Weinreich, said in support of the program, "It seems obvious that davening is integral to the Shabbos experience, and to any Shabbos program. As someone who partially has the power to alleviate the predicament [of not having a *minyan*], I have a sense of responsibility." He added "it's also generally a quite pleasant experience."

Based on the program's success this year, the Office of Student Life is planning to continue the program next year and is currently in the process of planning the program's future logistics.

Krinsky, reiterating the *minyan's* importance, stressed the signal the budgeting of such a large sum for the program sends. "We show just how much we value [the *minyan* initiative] by spending the necessary money to make it a reality."

Weekday 9:00 AM Rubin Shul Shacharis Minyan Removed from Official YU Zmanim Listing, to Persist as IBC Class

By Benjamin Koslowe

As of Monday, March 12, the 9:00 AM Rubin Shul Shacharis weekday *minyan* will no longer be promoted on the YU Zmanim website. Though the *minyan* will remain open to all who wish to attend, it will persist as a *minyan* specifically intended for Isaac Breuer College (IBC) students registered for the “Explanation of Prayer” course, according to IBC Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Beny Rofeh, who currently runs the *minyan*.

Yeshiva University’s Wilf Campus currently features many Shacharis *minyanim* from sunrise until 9:00 AM, in the Fischel, Glueck, Morg, and Sefardi Batei Midrash, Zysman 101, and the Rubin Shul. These *minyanim*, each with differing paces and locations, offer the many different types of YU students unique niches where they can *daven* in the morning. These prayer times are listed and periodically updated on www.yuzmanim.com, a website sponsored by the Yeshiva University administration. For many students, this website (accessible online and on an app) is their source for *zmanim* information.

The 9:00 AM Rubin Shul Shacharis *minyan*—the latest *minyan* on campus—is designed, on weekdays, specifically for IBC students. IBC, one of the Wilf Campus’s four undergraduate Torah studies programs, offers students the opportunity to study non-Gemara Judaic courses in areas ranging from Bible and Hebrew to Jewish philosophy, *Halacha*, and Jewish History. The *minyan*, officially listed as a course titled “Explanation

“GIVEN THAT THIS IS AN IBC COURSE, WE PRIORITIZE THE EDUCATIONAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF OUR IBC STUDENTS AND RUN THE COURSE ACCORDINGLY.”

-RABBI BENY ROFEH

of Prayer” and taught by Rabbi Rofeh, currently has 63 registered IBC students, but can feature as many as 100 students who show up on any given weekday morning.

“The Explanation of Prayer course is an IBC class whose intent is to strengthen our students’ understanding and experience of prayer,” wrote Rabbi Rofeh to The Commentator. “Removing the course listing from YU Zmanim was intended to dispel the misunderstanding and expectation that it is a regular YU *minyan*. Given that this is an IBC course, we prioritize the educational and spiritual needs of our IBC students and run the course accordingly.” The 9:00 AM IBC Rubin Shul *minyan*, according to several registered students, currently implements certain educational policies, such as skipping

Tachanun and offering short *divrei Torah* on either *Halacha* or *Machshava* on non-leining days. “Having the course listed on YU Zmanim,” explained Rabbi Rofeh, “was only reinforcing the mistaken assumption and expectations of many of our guests” that the *minyan* operates like the other Wilf Campus *minyanim*.



The 9:00 AM Rubin Shul *minyan* has been listed on YU Zmanim since at least Spring 2016, although a source close to the website told The Commentator that this was not always the case. On March 7, a notice on the YU Zmanim website appeared with the title “9:00 Minyan Update,” offering the message: “Starting next week the 9:00 Minyan will take place on Sundays and Fridays only.” Though the IBC *minyan* will still take place at 9:00 AM on Mondays through Thursdays, it will no longer be officially promoted by the YU Zmanim website.

“The IBC *minyan* allows me to *daven* in a calm, yet serious setting,” described Jonah Stavsky, a third-year Yeshiva College student majoring in Biology and currently enrolled in Explanation of Prayer. “It creates a conducive atmosphere for those interested, but at the same time a nonjudgmental atmosphere for those still on their journey.”

Jon Greenfield Appointed Director of Government Relations

By Yitzchak Carroll

Yeshiva University hired Jon Greenfield as Director of Government Relations, effective since February 20. Greenfield replaced Phil Goldfeder, a former state Assemblyman, who left his position as Assistant Vice President for Government Relations at YU to work for Cross River Bank in September.

“I’M EXCITED TO BE ABLE TO BUILD ON WHAT WE’VE ALREADY ACHIEVED IN STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS, AND SECURING FUNDING FOR CRITICAL PROGRAMS,” SAID GREENFIELD.”

Greenfield, a former Goldfeder aide, most recently worked as Managing Director of Communications at Red Horse Strategies, a Brooklyn-based political consulting firm that caters to Democratic candidates. In his new position, Greenfield will work to develop and enhance relationships between the University and federal, state and local elected officials. Greenfield will also monitor legislation and policies that may have an impact on YU and its programs, as well as assist in procuring government grants for University initiatives.

“I’m excited to be able to build on what we’ve already achieved in strengthening partnerships with local elected officials and community groups, and securing funding for critical programs,” said Greenfield. “I will be looking for ways to further highlight the amazing talents of our students to the city’s elected leaders, and continue to maintain YU’s preeminence as an academic institution and strong community partner.”

According to Greenfield, government relations is a function within the University General Counsel’s office, headed by Vice President for Legal Affairs, Secretary and General Counsel Andrew Lauer. The staff of the Office of the General Counsel handled government affairs between Goldfeder’s departure and Greenfield’s appointment.

“We’re proud to welcome Jon to Yeshiva University. Through his work, Jon has built valuable partnerships and worked with current leadership at the various levels of government,” Lauer said. “His expertise will help ensure that YU will have the tools it

needs to continue to serve students, faculty and the surrounding community.”

Regarding projects and initiatives, Greenfield says he “will be working with groups across the YU community, from administration officials, student groups, elected officials and local community leaders, all with the goal of finding new ways that YU can stand out as an institution.”

To that end, he will be meeting with students and faculty members as he starts his new position “to learn how government can help further YU’s mission, as well as how we can contribute to the surrounding community.” Congressman Adriano Espaillat (D-Mannhattan) visited YU and met with President Berman and students on Greenfield’s first day on the job.

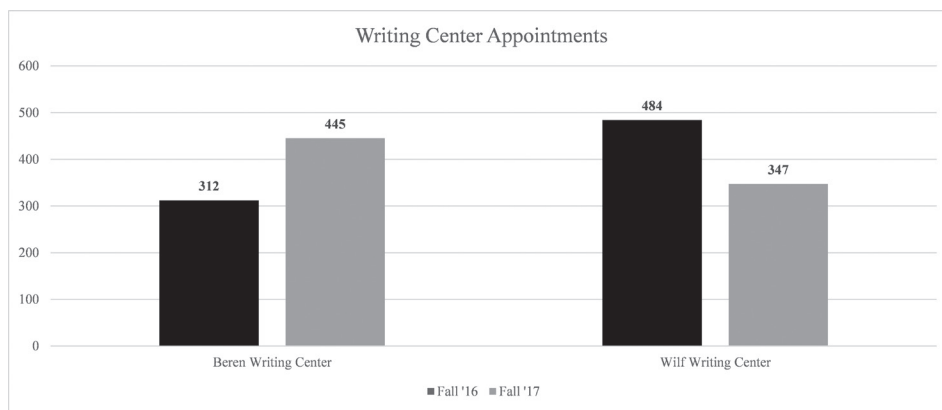
Goldfeder, for whom Greenfield previously served as Constituent Liaison and Communications Director in the State Assembly, was pleased with his successor’s appointment. “I’m proud of what we were able to accomplish during my time at Yeshiva University, strengthening relationships with government, securing millions in new funding opportunities and finding creative ways to engage the student body and faculty,” he said. “Jon is the perfect person to continue and expand on the foundation we have created. He has the passion and knowledge to help ensure YU’s continued success as a center of learning and a strong community partner.”



Beren Writing Center Sees Increase of Over 100 Appointments from Fall 2016; Wilf and Beren Fluctuations and Trends Analyzed

By Shoshy Ciment and Benjamin Koslowe

The Commentator has learned that the Beren Writing Center (BWC) held 445 appointments this past fall 2017 semester, a nearly 45% increase from the fall 2016 semester, which saw 312 appointments. This marks the first time in at least three semesters that the Beren Writing Center has overtaken the Wilf Writing Center (WWC) in the number of appointments. This increase follows the recent increase of on-campus undergraduate students at the Beren campus, which jumped from 909 students in fall 2016 to 981 students in fall 2017. The WWC held 347 appointments this past fall semester.



In contrast with the BWC, the number of appointments in the WWC dropped by 137 from fall 2016 to fall 2017. In fall 2016, the WWC held 201 Syms appointments and 221 Yeshiva College appointments; in fall 2017, the WWC held 137 Syms appointments and 167 Yeshiva College appointments.

“We held fewer appointments last fall due to a number of complicated reasons,” explained Dr. Lauren Fitzgerald, the current director of the WWC and co-chair of Yeshiva College’s English Department. These reasons had “to do with funding, staffing, and the number of hours we were able to offer.”

Despite the increase in Beren appointments, the amount of tutors on Beren (9) was less than half the amount of tutors on Wilf (21) for fall 2017. The BWC has consisted of nine tutors for the past three semesters; the WWC has numbered between 18 and 21 tutors in the same time period.

Both the Beren and Wilf writing centers offer students free, one-on-one tutoring sessions that focus on all stages of writing, from brainstorming to proofreading. Tutors are generally undergraduate students and are specially trained before they begin tutoring. The BWC is located on the 7th floor of 215 Lexington Ave. The WWC operates in room 202 of Furst Hall, located at the far corner of the building’s second floor.

“Many students enter Stern with apprehensions about their writing, and meeting with experienced peer tutors is an excellent way for them to discuss and develop responses to class assignments,” said Professor Gina Grimaldi, the BWC coordinator. “They can vent, too, and just talk through what’s going on with their writing processes alongside somebody who’s been there.”

The current nine Beren tutors are all Stern College for Women students. The vast majority of the current 18 Wilf tutors are Yeshiva College students; three are full-time Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) students, and two are faculty tutors pursuing advanced English degrees outside of Yeshiva University.

While the WWC has an official hiring season in late spring, the BWC accepts applications on a rolling basis. The interview process for prospective tutors is run by experienced tutors at Wilf and by the directors of the writing center at Beren. Once hired, new tutors on both campuses undergo training before they can begin running sessions.

“In order to become an official writing center tutor there is a long process of training that ensures that each tutor feels prepared and confident in their tutoring skills,” explained Stern College junior Alyssa Wruble, a tutor in the BWC.

Each new tutor at the BWC must complete mandatory readings from the Writing Center manual, observe other writing center sessions led by more experienced tutors, conduct a co-tutoring session, and lead a tutoring session while being observed by the head of the writing center.

“In addition to the training process to become a tutor, there are monthly meetings in which we discuss any issues that come up during our appointments, such as tips for tutoring ESL students,” Wruble added.

“We emphasize ongoing training and tutor development so our tutors can share best practices, support one another through tough problems, celebrate each other’s breakthrough sessions, and inspire one another to keep learning to be the best tutors - the best teachers - we can be,” remarked Dr. Joy Ladin, the director of the BWC.

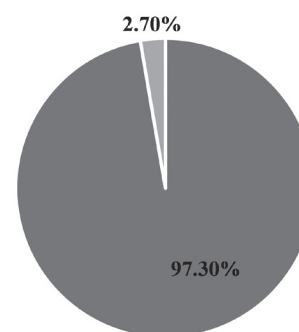
The WWC conducts a similar training process for its tutors. New tutors complete mandatory readings (from *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors*, co-authored by Dr. Fitzgerald, as well as from other academic publications) and observe actual writing center sessions. At the start of each semester, both new and experienced tutors prepare for and participate in an orientation workshop. “At training, we read several academic articles about tips for being an effective writing tutor,” said Yeshiva College junior Matthew Silkin, a WWC tutor. “A few of these tips were self-evident, but most

really taught me a lot about writing and editing, not just within the realm of tutoring but in academic writing as well.”

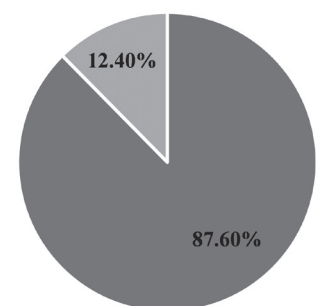
Wilf tutors are also required to participate in ongoing training over the course of each academic semester. “Tutor-led meetings provide an opportunity for collaboration amongst tutors,” explained Yeshiva College senior Moshe Bochner, another WWC tutor. “They are a forum for us to exchange feedback with other tutors as we discuss issues that arise in our tutoring sessions as part of an effort to continue our training so that we improve from one session to the next. My tutoring skills have improved as a result of these meetings and my appreciation of the value of the work we do at the writing center has been enhanced.”

Compared to the Beren campus clientele, the client constituency at Wilf generally includes a higher percentage of students from YU’s graduate programs than at the BWC. In fall 2017, 87.6% of the WWC appointments were with Yeshiva College and Syms undergraduate men; the other 12.4% of appointments were with graduate students from Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, The Katz School, RIETS, Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, and Wurzweiler School of Social Work. “I’m especially proud,” wrote Fitzgerald, “that we continue to serve students from so many programs at YU, because it means we remain a kind of crossroads for the university.” At the BWC, only 2.7% of appointments were made by graduate students in fall 2017.

BWC Client Constituency



WWC Client Constituency

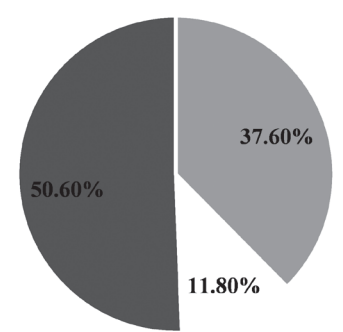
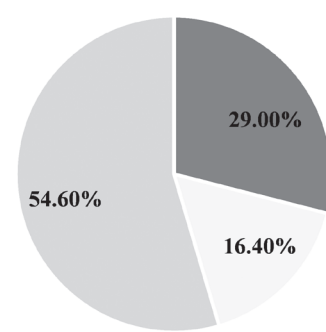


■ Undergraduate Students ■ Graduate Students

First Year Writing and English Composition students constitute the largest percentage of appointments in both writing centers. In fall 2017, 37.6% of the WWC appointments were for First Year Writing assignments. The next most common appointment category was for applications, personal statements, and resumes—these constituted 11.8% of the fall 2017 appointments at the WWC. In the same semester, 29.0% of appointments at the BWC were for English Composition assignments, followed by English 1010 assignments, which made up 16.4% of appointments.

At both writing centers, the remainder of appointments comes from a panoply of departments across disciplines, from those in the Core curriculum to the humanities and sciences.

BWC Appointments by Subject WWC Appointments by Subject



■ English Composition ■ English 1010 ■ Other
■ First Year Writing Applications, Personal Statements, & Resumes ■ Other

The 347 WWC appointments in fall 2017 were scheduled by 136 different students. That semester, 62 students visited the WWC once, 26 visited twice, 13 visited three times, 17 visited four times, and 18 visited five or more times. At the BWC in fall 2017, the 445 appointments were scheduled by 169 different students. 88 students visited

SEE WRITING CENTER,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Beren Independent Housing for Fall 2018 To be Offered at 35th Street Dorm Price

By Sara Marcus

The Beren campus Office of University Housing and Residence Life has confirmed that the Independent Housing Program, which was initially launched as a solution to accommodate the overflow of students in need of housing on the Beren campus during the spring 2018 semester, will continue next semester at an increased rate. The apartments in the program next semester will be offered at the same price as those in the 35th Street Residence Hall, or \$7,500 a semester.

Due to an increase in students in need of housing for the spring 2018 semester, the Beren housing office leased six apartments on 30 Park Avenue to accommodate the overflow, explained Becky Ciment, the Assistant Director of University Housing and Residence Life on the Beren

Campus, in an email on behalf of the Beren housing office. Before the end of the fall 2017 semester, students were

“WE HAVE ACCESS TO THESE NEW APARTMENTS IN 30 PARK AVENUE FOR AS LONG AS WE NEED THEM FOR,” STATED CIMENT.

given the option to switch out of other dorm buildings and move into the new apartments for a semester while still paying the Brookdale standard rate, \$4,075. At the time, it was unclear if the apartments would be offered again after the spring 2018 semester concluded.

“We have access to these new apartments in 30 Park Avenue for as long as we need them for,” stated Ciment. “Since these apartments are comparable to 35th street, the price for the apartments moving forward will be the same as for 35th street apartments.”

In an email to students before the start of the fall 2017 semester, the Beren housing office explained that housing on the Beren campus was filled to capacity. As a result, study rooms and lounges in Brookdale were converted to dorm rooms to accommodate more students. Additionally, some dorm rooms were converted from four-person rooms to six-person rooms by introducing bunk beds.

Evidently, the overflow in the spring semester was handled in a different way. Originally, the apartments at 30 Park

Avenue were chosen because of their “availability,” explained Ciment. “[The apartment building] was in close proximity to the other residence halls on campus and provided the most appropriate space to accommodate students.”

There are currently 28 students, including a Resident Advisor, living in five apartments at 30 Park Avenue. Each of the apartments are on different floors and each have a different layout. There are currently two apartments with three students, an apartment with four students, an apartment with five students, an apartment with six students, and an apartment with seven students. Students living in the apartments must abide by regular university housing rules.

Many students currently living in the Independent Housing Program report a high level of satisfaction.

Miryam Cohen, a Junior at Stern College for Women whose entire Brookdale room applied for the five-person apartment in 30 Park, said, “When else can we afford.. the opportunity to live in an apartment on Park Avenue in Midtown Manhattan with a bunch of friends? I think that everyone who’s living here absolutely loves it. I feel more motivated and even it is enhancing my academic performance to be living in the apartment!”

“I think everyone likes the apartments so far, thank God. I haven’t heard anyone who doesn’t. If you hear, let me know!” remarked Yael Green, the RA in 30 Park.

However, none of those currently living in the apartments know if they will opt to live there again after this semester. Many are concerned about the raise in price next semester.

Ciment added that there has been an increase in students applying to Stern College who will be in need of housing. “As a University,” Ciment concluded, “we will accommodate the growing student body by offering them viable and varied options.”



WRITING CENTER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

the BWC once, 28 visited twice, 10 visited three times, 15 visited four times, and 28 visited five or more times.

and 26.7% on Thursdays, the second most popular day at the BWC.

Both writing centers exhibit sharp spikes in appointments during midterms season, in October in the fall and in March in the spring. Finals season on both campuses is also relatively busy in both writing centers.

Both Yeshiva University writing centers were inaugurated in September 1986. Professor Richard Nochimson, the founding director of the then-titled Yeshiva College Writing Center and Stern College Writing Center, and current professor of English at Yeshiva College, told The Commentator that his “goal, from the first, was to help undergraduate students at Yeshiva University improve their effectiveness as writers. This goal applied to the tutors as well as to the students who were receiving tutoring.”

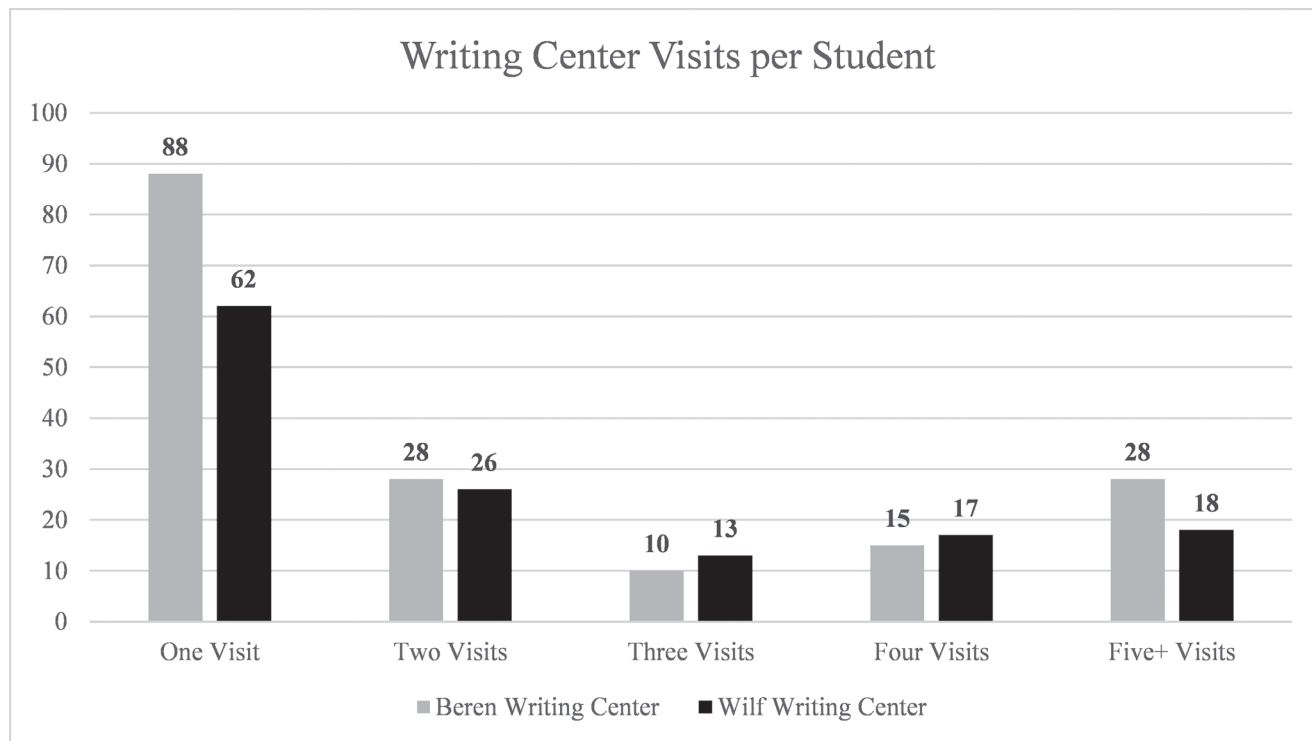
Jonathan Reiss, who later became YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Yona Reiss, was the first writing center tutor hired by Yeshiva University. “The early days of the Writing Center glistened and glowed with an enthusiasm shared by both the tutors and the tutored for both the novelty and the necessity of the enterprise,” Rabbi Reiss told The Commentator. “I remember feeling a sense of pride and responsibility when I would make careful notations in the charts prepared by Dr. Nochimson of each student’s challenges, achievements, and gradual progress. I have remained in touch with some of my original students, and we all share only fond reminiscences of the Center from that formative and formidable period.”

Rabbi Reiss added, “a couple of my Writing Center students eventually became my Daf Yomi shiur students.”

“The original tutors,” described Nochimson, “were all Yeshiva University undergraduate students.” That initial semester, four or five writing tutors worked at each of the two YU undergraduate campuses. By spring 1991, the staff numbered “35 tutors, some of whom were college graduates who came from outside Yeshiva University.”

“The writing center has guided and expanded my mind to think of ideas that were unknown to me before,” remarked Atara Solomon, a sophomore in SCW who frequently uses the Beren Writing Center. “The writing center staff is genuine and patient, wanting to do everything they can to help each student accomplish their goals and succeed.”

Writing Center Visits per Student



The length of each session varies for each writing center. The BWC centers offers hour long sessions, while the WWC offers 45 minute sessions. As of fall 2017, the BWC operates from 9:00 AM until 6:00 PM, Sunday through Thursday, as well as Friday mornings. The WWC operates from 12:00 PM until 8:00 PM, Sunday through Thursday. Both centers open their doors roughly two weeks into the academic semester, and operate through the end of Reading Week.

During the fall 2017 semester, Tuesday was the busiest day for the WWC. 30.6% of all appointments took place on Tuesday, followed by Monday at 22.4%. Dr. Fitzgerald explained that these statistics, in large part, reflect when most Wilf tutors want to work. That same semester, 32.8% of appointments in the BWC were made on Tuesdays

Yeshiva College Faculty to Vote on Allowing Shaped Majors

By Avi Strauss

A faculty vote to determine whether or not to allow students to major in a shaped major in Yeshiva College has been postponed to Tuesday, March 13. The vote, confirmed Dr. Karen Bacon, The Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, was at the top of the agenda for an upcoming faculty meeting on Tuesday, March 6. However, the proposal was rewritten

“STUDENTS WHO WISH TO PURSUE A SHAPED MAJOR WILL BE REQUIRED TO COMPILE A LIST OF COURSES THEY BELIEVE COMPOSES A VIABLE FIELD OF STUDY AND SUBMIT A PROPOSAL TO YC FACULTY.”

at the faculty meeting and the vote was postponed to Tuesday, March 13.

Per faculty voting guidelines, only tenured professors will be permitted to cast ballots, in a vote that will take place electronically.

Shaped majors are already permitted at Stern College for Women, where 41 students are currently majoring in shaped majors. According to Dean Bacon, the bulk of those majors study various disciplines within Art or are on a nursing track in a combined program with NYU.

According to YU’s website, a shaped major is a major “specialized to meet certain academic goals.” Generally it involves a combination of courses from different departments as part of an interdisciplinary pursuit.

In a meeting with The Commentator, Dean Bacon mentioned she believes shaped majors give students more flexibility and opportunity to explore areas of academic interest. She added that when a large enough number

of students seek a specific shaped major, the university might elect to formalize that area of study, as was the case with Biochemistry, which began as a shaped major at Beren and is now available to students on both the Wilf and Beren campuses.

Seeing significant student interest in a discipline without an approved YC major is key for the Dean’s office, because they must file paperwork with state regulators before any new major is formally approved. This paperwork wouldn’t be submitted if the Dean’s office didn’t expect significant interest in a specific new major.

Should the proposal to feature shaped majors in Yeshiva College pass, students who wish to pursue a shaped major will be required to compile a list of courses they believe composes a viable field of study and submit a proposal to YC faculty.

For example, a student interested in majoring in American Public Policy might compile a course list that would include political science offerings like Introduction to American Public Policy and American Constitutional Law, sociology courses like Politics and Poverty and Epidemiology, and Human Behavior and Social Institutions (HBSI) courses like Economics Efficiency and

Justice and Psychology and Public Opinion.

That proposed course load would then have to be approved by an academic advisor in consultation with YC faculty and the registrar’s office.

Several YC faculty did not respond to requests for a comment on the upcoming vote or on the notion of having shaped majors.

“I am very excited at the possibility of shaped majors on campus. I’ve been talking to the deans about it the last two years” said Yeshiva College Junior Michael Kohan, who is interested in majoring in health administration, which is not currently offered in Yeshiva College. “I think it’s definitely something that could benefit students.” For now, Kohan has taken courses within the public health minor track, which includes biology and political science courses.

Yeshiva Student Union Vice President of Clubs Tai Miller shared Kohan’s sentiment. “I think the initiative is an incredible opportunity for students to pursue their varied academic interests...I’m excited that the faculty will vote on it.”



Congressman Adriano Espaillat Meets With President and Students on Wilf Campus

By Yitzchak Carroll

Congressman Adriano Espaillat (D-Manhattan) visited the Wilf Campus on February 20. During his visit, he met with President Ari Berman, Vice President for

“ESPAILLAT, WHO PREVIOUSLY REPRESENTED WASHINGTON HEIGHTS IN THE STATE SENATE, IS NO STRANGER TO THE UNIVERSITY, HAVING HELD HIS CONGRESSIONAL INAUGURATION IN LAMPORT AUDITORIUM LAST YEAR.”



Legal Affairs Andrew Lauer, as well as male and female students.

At their meeting, Espaillat, President Berman, and Lauer discussed opportunities for YU to further engage with the communities surrounding the University. “I look forward to exploring how Yeshiva University can further integrate into the broader community in a way that is mutually enriching,” President Berman said in a statement.

Leaders of several student clubs, including Music Vs. and START Science, met with Espaillat afterwards to meet the Congressman and talk about the work their organizations are doing to better the surrounding communities at-large.

“The Congressman seemed genuinely interested and appreciative towards YU,” said Stern College Senior Goldie Wolfson, President of the Music Vs. club, whose members perform music therapy for elderly residents. “I was impressed he made time to come to YU just to hear from a few students about the clubs we run and ask us about our personal lives and answer our own questions to him,” she added.

Nolan Edmonson, a Junior in Yeshiva College majoring in Political Science, appreciated Espaillat’s insights on federal policy matters, as well as his advocacy work in the Heights. “Congressman Espaillat seems to be extremely interested in continuing the relationship between YU and his constituents in Washington Heights,” Edmonson said. “He’s really hit the ground running in Washington, D.C., serving as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and to me, seems incredibly dedicated to serving the Washington Heights community as a whole.”

Espaillat, who previously represented Washington Heights in the State Senate, is no stranger to the University, having held his Congressional inauguration in Lamport Auditorium last year. He is also the first formerly undocumented immigrant to serve in Congress. The Congressman’s visit was organized by the University, who invited him, according to Espaillat spokeswoman Candace Randle Person.

“Yeshiva University is an epicenter of education in the Jewish community, both in the United States and around the world,” Espaillat said. “I look forward to working with President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman to further Yeshiva University’s mission as an educational institution and a strong partner in our diverse upper Manhattan community.”

Black Panther: *Punches, Politics, and Worldbuilding in the Best MCU Movie*

By Matthew Silkin

There are a lot of reasons why people don't like the *Star Wars* prequel films, from the annoying new characters they introduced to the CGI that was dated by the time they hit their second week in theaters. But the single main reason I personally cannot stand the prequels, and especially *The Phantom Menace*, is the politics. When one goes to see a *Star Wars* movie, one expects grand heroic figures and epic lightsaber fights. *The Phantom Menace*, instead, gave us Jar-Jar Binks and talk of trade embargoes on planets whose internal political systems I could not care for. Which is a shame, because the universe of *Star Wars* is one that I WANT to invest time in, that I WANT to believe exists, but now can't because of the mangled worldbuilding that George Lucas ended up producing.

Luckily for me, I have *Black Panther* to now satiate that hunger.

Black Panther, the eighteenth film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, tells the story of T'Challa, the eponymous hero and king of fictional African nation Wakanda, who must decide whether to open up the historically secretive nation to the rest of the world, or keep hidden behind secret advanced technology as his ancestors had. Director Ryan Coogler brings a much needed sense of humanity to the characters, making Chadwick Boseman's portrayal of T'Challa as an introspective, thinking leader, rather than someone who uses violence and fighting as a be-all-end-all.

That's not to say that *Black Panther* lacks any fighting; heck, some of the most entertaining scenes featured T'Challa throwing down in ritual combat for the throne in some of the most raw fight scenes that I think Marvel has ever committed to film. And Boseman nails both the physical aspects of T'Challa (a double feat, considering that Boseman himself is 40 years old!) and the personality befitting a dignified, African king.

The movie is also bolstered by its massive supporting cast, none of whom were any less great in their roles. Daniel Kaluuya, a rising star from last year's Oscar-nominated underdog *Get Out*, is great as W'kabi, a friend of T'Challa's who isn't too supportive of some of the executive decisions that get made. Winston Duke brings a surprising intensity in his role as M'Baku, the leader of a rival Wakandan tribe. Letitia Wright steals the show humor-wise as T'Challa's tech-minded younger sister Shuri, and Lupita Nyong'o and Danai Gurira are both fantastic as Nakia and Okoye,

respectively, two guards in the all-female Wakandan army. Martin Freeman as Everett K. Ross, the CIA officer assigned to work with Wakanda, doesn't bring much to the table, but then again, he is really supposed to remain kind of a background character, so I wasn't expecting much from him in the first place. Andy Serkis was a treat in one of his rare live-action roles as Ulysses Klaue, a semi-major villain with a sonic cannon in his prosthetic arm.

There is one actor, however, who I have left out of the previous paragraph, and that's because there's a lot that I want to talk about when it comes to his character. Michael B. Jordan, as Killmonger, at first looks like he's going down the "hero-except-evil" road that plagued previous Marvel villains, such as Obadiah Stane (played by Jeff Bridges in *Iron Man*), Yellowjacket (Corey Stoll in *Ant-Man*), and Kaecilius (Mads Mikkelsen in *Doctor Strange*) - one-note characters who shared power sets with the heroes they were up against, and existed simply for the protagonists to defeat them and become heroes.

Over the course of the film, though, it is clear that Jordan's Killmonger is so much more nuanced than that; he is not just a carbon copy of Black Panther to simply be discarded in a bombastic third act. He is a foil to T'Challa; a man with the same motivations as the hero but a different way of getting there, forcing T'Challa to think about why his way of getting what he wants is better than Killmonger's. At one point in the film, the camera rotates 180 degrees, from upside down to right-side up again, mirroring how Killmonger's actions have shaken Wakanda and turned the monarchy upside down (side note that really shouldn't be a side note, the camera work in this movie is outstanding). It is this nuance that elevates Killmonger from a simple throwaway villain to one of the most nuanced, best villains in the MCU, up there with Loki from the *Thor* franchise and *The Avengers*, and even competing with the villains of the Netflix shows, like *Daredevil's* Wilson Fisk and *Jessica Jones's* Kilgrave.

The music in this movie was also a blast. Kendrick Lamar's influence on the movie's soundtrack cannot go unstated; his songs helped the emotions of the scenes they were featured in cut deeper than they would have otherwise. But it is not just the soundtrack but the score as well that must be given praise. While the MCU doesn't necessarily have the best track record when it comes to memorable scores, *Black Panther's* use of African drums and chants in its score helped it get stuck in my head weeks after I left the theater, and made it probably the only MCU score that's



been stuck in my head for that long.

But what must be given the most praise is Coogler's ability to craft enough of Wakanda that the viewer can understand and accept its existence, while leaving out just enough details to keep the viewers' curiosity and not overload them with details. This is where other movies and movie franchises, such as *Star Wars*, went wrong. Of course there are essential details of the politics of the world that the viewer has to know in order to fully understand the motivations of the characters and become emotionally invested in the film. In the case of Wakanda, those details would be in how the Wakandan monarchy functions, the basic alliances between the tribes of the country, and the aesthetic of the landscape and cityscape. *Star Wars* also got this in the Original Trilogy by showing just enough of how the Empire functioned, how the Rebels functioned, and how the Jedi functioned, and bits and pieces of other planets as well.

Where *Star Wars* fails relative to *Black Panther* is in its insistence on drowning the viewer in details. Coogler, however, left enough to the imagination that we wouldn't have really needed to know to get the film, that fans can now speculate about on Twitter and Facebook and Reddit and essentially keep the film alive.

It is in this regard that I consider *Black Panther* the best MCU movie. While other films have had to introduce the viewers to new ideas, characters, and motivations—heck, *Doctor Strange* had to introduce a whole magic system to the MCU—*Black Panther* did it the best, tipping just enough of its hand to show you that it was great, but leaving back enough that we can only guess how great it can continue to be in the future. At least, until they start going into trade embargoes. Then I'm out.

This Is Us: *The Show That Transcends All Generations*

By Chaviva Freedman

It's a cultural phenomenon. We've all heard the constant discussion about boxes of tissues. Crock pots are being thrown out the window. Celebrities tweet about it on a weekly basis. You can't go anywhere without hearing some woman say that all she wants to do is marry Jack Pearson. *This Is Us* is the television show that brings up real issues while still being relatable to all generations and demographics.

Created by famed producer and screenwriter Dan Fogelman (most known for writing the script for the movies *Crazy, Stupid, Love* and the Disney phenomenon *Tangled*), the premise of the show is quite simple: it depicts of the lives of the Pearson family. The show jumps between the 1980s and 1990s with parents Jack (played by *Gilmore Girls* alum Milo Ventimiglia) and Rebecca (Mandy Moore, best known for her role in *A Walk to Remember*) and the present with the "Big Three" kids Randall (Emmy-Award and Golden Globe winner Sterling K. Brown), Kate (Chrissy Metz) and Kevin (Justin Hartley). With Chris Sullivan and Susan Kelechi Watson rounding out the adult cast, the show has been able to touch people's hearts in a way that we haven't seen on television in a long time.

Since *This Is Us* premiered on NBC in September 2016, the show has been able to appeal to all audiences. The show has done so well that not only has it been able to maintain the prime time Tuesday 9PM slot, but it was renewed for seasons two and three before season one had even finished. The show has become so popular with audiences that it received the coveted slot right after the 2018 Super Bowl, the biggest night on television this year. One can find teenagers and young adults sitting around in a cafeteria discussing the show one day, and then find his/her parents recapping the same episode with their friends the next. All the generations have been able to relate to the show in some shape or form. Whether it's how much they want to marry Jack Pearson (let's face it - Milo Ventimiglia is an extremely good-looking man, which never hurts the eyes) or one of the characters does something to make the audience viewer cry, there is an inherent charm about this show that everyone

seems to love about it.

This Is Us has a unique way of dealing with family issues that we don't normally see on television. The show handles death of a parent, foster care, adoption, drug/alcohol addiction, and racism with such care that the audience feels like they are becoming a part of the Pearson family as well. All the actors (specifically Ventimiglia and Brown) are able to take these very sensitive subjects and bring them to life in a way that brings the audience to tears each week. The words might be in the script, but they bring the words to life.

One thing to look out for when taking the time to watch the television show is the character development. Through the intricate writing from the team of show writers, the characters' lives go through twists and turns that affect them as the show goes on. There is an underlying current of pain that all the characters go through, even if it's not explicitly expressed in each episode. There is one life-altering event that the show consistently touches on (even having two episodes dedicated to it) and the writers take great care in showing how this event affects each character in a different manner, especially from the Big Three.

At the end of the day, the moral of the story is simple: no matter what happens in your life, you'll always have your family to support you and have your back. Take the time out of your busy schedule to watch this show - you will not regret it. And who knows? Maybe you'll have a good cry and discover why the world has fallen in love with *This Is Us*.

This Is Us is finished for Season 2. You can catch up on the show on your devices or the NBC mobile app.



From the Torah Activities Council Vice President's Desk: Finding Common Ground

By Adina Cohen

Over the years, people have asked me what it is like to be the daughter of a rabbi. Each time, I respond that I am lucky—I never really felt the pressure that stereotypically comes along with being the child of a communal leader. My parents did their best to make sure that my sisters and I were seen no differently nor judged to higher standards than our peers who surrounded us.

Recently, I have begun to think about my identity as a rabbi's daughter differently. This year, I am involved in the planning of *Shabbat* on the Beren campus. For the first time, I have gotten a glimpse into what my parents do on a weekly basis and have gained insight into how complicated it is to put all the pieces of a community together into a finished puzzle.

When I decided to run for VP of *Shabbat*, I did not realize just how complex the Beren community is. If the campus is a puzzle, then there is one puzzle piece for each student with no reference picture for guidance. Trying to put the image together sometimes feels impossible. Parts of the puzzle have been completed but this is not a puzzle that can be finished in one long *Shabbat* afternoon—this is a puzzle that will take weeks, months and maybe even years to perfect.

As I began to work on the Beren Campus puzzle, I looked back to my community for direction. My shul is a special place. On any given week you will find a mix of *Shomer Shabbat* and *Shomer Kashrut* Jews, Yeshivish Jews, traditional Jews who drive to Shul, and those who will likely be going to the mall after *Shabbat* services. Occasionally, a Chassidish Jew with a *bekeshe* and a *streimel* will join us. Somehow, even with all of our religious differences, the community is extremely strong and quickly growing.

Over the years, I have wondered what it is that makes my community successful. My time in Stern has pushed me to think about this question more seriously, as I have been faced with the challenge of trying to unify a community that, in many senses, is equally as diverse.

There is an understanding in my community that anyone who walks through the doors of the shul is welcome. There are no questions and no judgements. Come as you are, strive to grow, and care about others. Those are the expectations, and the lay leaders of the community practice what they preach.

My *Shabbat* meals have been filled with the most colorful guests; people with fascinating life stories, those who have never experienced a *Shabbat* meal as well as guests who have an Orthodox background. Oftentimes, my family's meals consist of a combination of all of these types of guests, each of us enjoying each other's company and unique perspective. The more I think about it, the more

"I TRULY BELIEVE THAT OUR SUCCESS AS A COMMUNITY AND AS A UNIVERSITY IS DEPENDANT UPON ACHDUT, AND, WITHOUT AN APPRECIATION FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND WHAT SHE BRINGS TO THE TABLE, WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE COMMUNAL GOALS."

I realize that my community is built on finding common ground. While there are programs that cater to different groups, at the end of the day the focus is on what we share with one another and not what makes us different.

In my time at Stern, I have not found this basic understanding to be prevalent within the community. There are sub-communities within the greater campus, but little effort is made to become a cohesive community where we can learn from those with different backgrounds. I have yet to see a movement of reaching out to others in

order to create a sense of unity and respect. In fact, there is a sense of complacency on campus—a feeling that while the status quo is not good enough, the energy required to make a change is not worth the time and effort. Time and time again I am struck with a recognition of the enormity of the problem and a sinking feeling that too few people care enough to fix it. I have become disheartened, as I truly believe that our success as a community and as a university is dependant upon *achdut*, and, without an appreciation for every individual and what she brings to the table, we will never be able to achieve communal goals. *Shabbat*, however, is one of the places where I see the potential for positive change.

When I think of the best way to utilize *Shabbat* as a means for community, I am immediately drawn to the concept of *tefillah b'tzibur*, davening as a community. While there are countless permanent *minyanim* that exist, each *minyan* has a unique spirit that draws in different types of people and approaches the goal of creating an environment that will best allow its attendees to connect to God in a different way. Having a permanent *Shabbat minyan* on campus allows the Beren community to take ownership of the religious experience on *Shabbat*. It allows every woman to feel a part of something greater, even on the weeks where she is eating with friends in one of the dorm lounges and skipping out on the programming. Having a minyan on campus creates a center around which to rally. It creates a forum for people to see other types of people who live on campus and think about their needs. It also attempts to create a davening experience that is comfortable and meaningful for everyone who attends.

When a community is established through the *tefillah b'tzibur* experience, there is a hope that the shared experience will remind each community member of the imperative to reach out to her peers at all other communal *Shabbat* events such as kiddush and meals. It is through the *minyan* initiative that the roots of a caring community can take hold on the Beren Campus, and hopefully the community will grow beyond the bounds of *Shabbat* and into the week as well.



"The Sky Says Snow"

By Elazar Krausz

The sky says snow,
White turning to gray as what remains of the sun tucks itself away,
Stripped by the clouds of its grand adieu.
The naked trees shiver with hesitation,
Unsure if they're ready for the burden.
And then the flakes come,
Weaving themselves into an oscillating tapestry outside my window.
My radiator rattles angrily,
Anticipating its job will be harder tomorrow.
The radiator is tired. The trees are tired. The sun is tired.
But the sky says snow.

Courtesy of The Yeshiva University Poetry Club

A Beautifully Tragic Dance of Two Lovers

By Yael Blau

A few weeks ago, the Stern Honors program went to the New York City Ballet's performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. While the entire ballet was beautiful, the one aspect that truly stood out was the agility of the dancers. With each and every turn, spin, and dip, I was more and more amazed by the way the ballet dancers moved. They seemed to glide across the stage, and gravity did not constrain them. The men flipped the women upside down and around, as the women did splits in the air. Throughout every scene, it was clear that each dancer was incredibly talented.

The audience is first introduced to Romeo, played in this performance by Peter Walker, at the very beginning of the play along with his two friends who add a comical aspect to the ballet. Romeo is clothed in blue and is joined by other members of the Montagues, all wearing green. The red clad Capulets come on stage and subsequently have a dance battle against the Montagues.

"WITH EACH AND EVERY TURN, SPIN, AND DIP, I WAS MORE AND MORE AMAZED BY THE WAY THE BALLET DANCERS MOVED."

The audience then meets Juliet, played by Erica Pereira. Juliet not only looks small and childlike, but she keeps running away from her maid and playing around, allowing us to truly understand just how young the character is. Her parents introduce her to Paris, played by Russell Janzen, the man they want her to marry. As she does not speak, she expresses herself by trying to refuse Paris's offer to dance with him. Romeo and Juliet meet at the ball hosted in the Capulet home. Romeo is in disguise and is obsessed with Juliet the second he sees her, first watching her from afar and then moving onto the dance floor to dance with her. The two fall in love as they dance together. Tybalt, played by Sebastian Villarini-Velez, is Juliet's cousin and realizes the masked figure is Romeo. He tries to make him leave, but Lord Capulet, played by Ask la Cour, lets him stay.

Due to the feud between Romeo's and Juliet's families, the lovestruck couple cannot be together in public. Their



love flourishes as Romeo visits Juliet at night. Instead of Romeo calling to her and Juliet answering from on top of her balcony as is done in the play, she comes down and the two dance together as though they are one person. Juliet elegantly falls into Romeo's arms and Romeo lifts Juliet effortlessly off the ground and high into the air. She leans back over his shoulder and they continue to smile at one another throughout the dance. They are both dressed in pastel colors, signifying the delicate and intimate moment. The music is sweet and almost dream-like, as the two express their love through dance.

After that one night together, Juliet is so invested in her relationship with Romeo that she sends him a letter asking him to marry her in secret. Romeo is hopelessly in love with Juliet and the two meet at a chapel, where they ultimately wed.

After they marry, Romeo and his friends encounter Tybalt. Tybalt tries to start a duel and Romeo tries to stop it. After Romeo's friend is killed by Tybalt, Romeo kills Tybalt out of rage. As a result, Romeo is sentenced to leave. Throughout Romeo and Juliet's next dance, Juliet beautifully portrays the conflicted emotions she feels, pulling Romeo close as she loves him, then pushing him away due to her sadness that he killed her cousin. She runs to the edge of the stage, but Romeo comes and takes her hands, and pulls her in again. As conflicted as she feels, she does not want to lose him.

When Paris is presented to Juliet to be her husband,

she refuses to dance with him, running between both of her parents and begging them not to make her marry him. Juliet hatches a plan to pretend to be dead, so that she will not have to marry Paris and can be with Romeo, instead. When Romeo sees her lifeless body, he drinks poison and kills himself. Juliet awakens to see Romeo dead, and cannot stand the thought of living without her lover, so she stabs herself. The music choice for this scene was brilliant, not melancholy, but almost sweet, as the two lovers were able to be united through death. Though Juliet dies a violent death, the music gives the audience a feeling of peace and closure.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this ballet was the way Romeo and Juliet were able to fall in love and express their feeling to the audience without any words. Their entire relationship is shown through the way they dance with one another. At the beginning of the play, she is intrigued by him and takes his hand, but their dance is very formal. When she dances with him that night, Romeo cannot stop putting his arms around her. After Romeo kills Tybalt, Juliet shows her confused emotions when she pushes Romeo away as they dance, only to pull him back in again. Throughout the ballet, the audience is able to grasp just how in love the two are just by the way they dance with one another.

The story line is beautifully tragic, the dancing is elegant, and the music is so appropriate for each scene. For those hopeless romantics, this ballet is a must-see.

Judaism's Only Sect

By Ellie Parker

Politics are heated these days. Political views extend well beyond the reaches of the White House, expressing themselves in dress, hobbies, and other physical manifestations. Especially in religion, exteriors tend to point to things like labels and sects, creating a visual distraction from the truth that we are all one and the same.

Last weekend, I experienced what life would be like without these politically charged shells. I spent three days at Cteen's 10th international *Shabbaton* with over 2,500 high schoolers from all over the world. Cteen, short for Chabad Teen Network, is an organization that brings together high school students from varying backgrounds with a focus on Judaic education, humanitarian work, and social events. The pinnacle of this year-long program is the international *Shabbaton* held every February in Crown Heights. Although the event was run by Chabad and held in Crown Heights, the majority of the teenagers who are part of this youth organization attend public school. Bringing teenagers who have little to no religious background into Crown Heights, a famously Chassidic neighborhood, for the weekend is no small undertaking.

When I was asked to chaperone a small group of girls from Atlanta, I was nervous. A few weeks prior, although I was not in attendance, BBYO held its own international *Shabbaton* at Universal Studios, with guest hip-hop star, Fetty Wap. I feared that my group, made up of teenagers with similar backgrounds to those in BBYO, would be expecting similar perks from their weekend in New York. I conjured up ways to make Jewish ideals such as being *Shomer Shabbos* and *Shomer Negiah* sound as exciting

as Steve Aoki and Josh Peck. However, once I met the kids with whom I would be spending *Shabbos*, I realized that they did not care about celebrities and Snapchat stories; they came for a weekend of growth and substance. Instead of having to drag them to the various workshops and speakers offered by Cteen, my group went out of their own volition, even choosing to swap free time for more round-table discussions.

I wish I had been more like this group of youths in high school. While I spent my high school days trying to find a sect that I could cling to, these kids had no idea such labels even existed. We spent hours talking about religion and life and they reminded me of the importance of a person's interior.

For members of a religion that emphasizes the importance of internalities, we too often find ourselves fixated on where we belong. Though exteriors allow for a physical manifestation of one's beliefs and they help to solidify and encourage group unity, appearances tend to result in exclusion and scrutiny. In one of the many conversations I had with my newfound friends from

Atlanta, I asked them if they knew what Chabad was. "They're a group of Jews, right?" one of them replied. "Exactly," I answered.

That response, though seemingly futile to the rest of the table, stopped me in my tracks. Those simple words "a group of Jews" sounded like the most revolutionary concept to me. This fifteen year old from public school could see more clearly through the religiously fueled political haze than some of the greatest minds of our generation. Reform, Conservative, Modern Orthodox, Belz, Satmar, or Chabad—we are all just "a group of Jews". I cannot thank my group of teens enough for showing me how little categories matter.

"I'm a Jew and I'm Proud," was the song of the weekend, instead of "I'm Chabad and I'm Proud" or "I'm Unaffiliated and I'm Proud". Teenagers from France, Chile, Canada, and Atlanta sang these words at the tops of their lungs. At the end of the weekend, after we had all said our goodbyes, we went our separate ways – leaving us as united as ever, having joined Judaism's only sect: "Jews."



Tales of a Scoreboard Keeper

By Dalia Sieger

If you were one of the more than 1,000 people at the Macs playoff game on Tuesday night, February 20th, you probably experienced one of the most exciting games to happen at YU. The comeback, the 3 pointers, the coach-ref showdown! You may have also noticed, unless your hearing is immune to blaring horns, a scoreboard faulty enough it could cause an earthquake. Hi, I'm the person who was controlling that scoreboard for the night, nice to meet you. This was my 12th game working the scoreboard and I consider myself a seasoned vet at this point. My friend Betsy (the name I call the scoreboard) and

"AT HALF TIME, MY FRIEND TOLD ME 'YEAH, SOME PEOPLE WERE YELLING ABOUT THE SCOREBOARD, BUT DON'T WORRY I YELLED BACK AT THEM, 'IT'S NOT HER FAULT!'" BLESS PEOPLE LIKE THIS FRIEND!"

I have had a bittersweet relationship together for the past four months. Some days, we have a blissful romantic adventure through an exciting game. Other days, she throws temper tantrums and decides to blow her horn for 3, sometimes 6 seconds too long. To calm her down, I've tried many methods. I've tried smacking her (keep in mind, "her" is still an object, I am normally a very tame, non-aggressive human being). Sometimes that works. Sometimes I press the horn button again and that does the trick. As the season went on, while I complained to the staff that we needed a new scoreboard, we stuck it out and ultimately, Betsy and I were staying tight.

Come the playoff game; a new, stranger scoreboard is brought out. Let's call him Norman. I could tell he wasn't Betsy. And let me tell you, as the tip-off began, I began to miss Betsy. A lot. The time on both clocks kept stalling and delaying. As I pressed "+1",

or "+3" (yeah, the Macs are pretty great at those), the displayed scoreboard decided to let the public know a solid 30 seconds after the shot was made. I heard distinct cries "the score is 37, not 35!", "fix the score!". I attempted to move around the little antenna on the board so the displayed boards would update. That seldom worked.

Now Norman was special. He didn't throw short insignificant temper tantrums. No, he wanted to be heard loud and proud after being in storage for so many months. He decided to blast his horn for a whopping 8 seconds. EVERY time. The last straw I had with Norman, was his grand finale, the tekiah gedola. He blasted for maybe 20 seconds. At this point, I tried all my usual tactics I used with Betsy. I smacked him ("him" is an object, remember), I pressed the horn again, But alas, Norman could not be tamed. I looked up slowly, hoping to find everyone merrily minding their own business, to a crowd full of faces staring at me. I felt my face turn bright red. I wanted to do something to appease the crowd, laugh it off, but sheer horror overcame me. No, it's not my fault, but Norman sure knew how to make people think it was.

At halftime, my friend told me "Yeah, some people were yelling about the scoreboard, but don't worry I yelled back at them, 'It's not her fault!'" Bless people like this friend. Thank G-d, I had a wonderful support system next to me at the table in my fellow shot clock guy, scorebook keeper, and stats master, who kept reminding me, "it's not your fault". Bless them as well.

Second half came and we decided to switch the consoles, BARUCH Hashem. I reunited with Betsy and the rest of the game went smoothly. Perhaps she learned her lesson from a short time out; that temper tantrums don't get you anywhere except the

storage box. The Macs came from a 17-point lag at the beginning, to a 13-point lead at the end and clinched their spot in the next round of the playoffs. The redness of my face from embarrassment turned into a happy, excited red, hearing the crowd sing "Mi Shenichnas Adar BeSimcha" when the game was in our pocket.

While our last home game of the season sure had its downs in the first half, we came back, as Maccabees do. Although, I must admit I remember a time when a player named Titus (yes, that was his name on the roster) on the opposing volleyball team made several kills against the YU Maccabees volleyball team. Sadly, the Maccabees did not recover from Titus's defeat that day. But besides for that instance, the Maccabees persevere and with the help of the "sixth man", aka all the fans in the crowd, the basketball team continued their journey to ultimately gain the title of Skyline Conference champions.

Two lessons we can learn from this playoff game. One, "Dan Lechaf Zchut", it really wasn't me, it was the scoreboard, I'm actually pretty decent at the gig, ask Stan, my scoreboard keeping coach



extraordinaire and longtime Max Stern Athletic Center manager. Second, with the help of G-d, and our unity as a Jewish people, as Yeshiva University, as the Maccabees, we can accomplish anything. It's been a pleasure keeping score for you, Macs. Betsy, we'll talk later.

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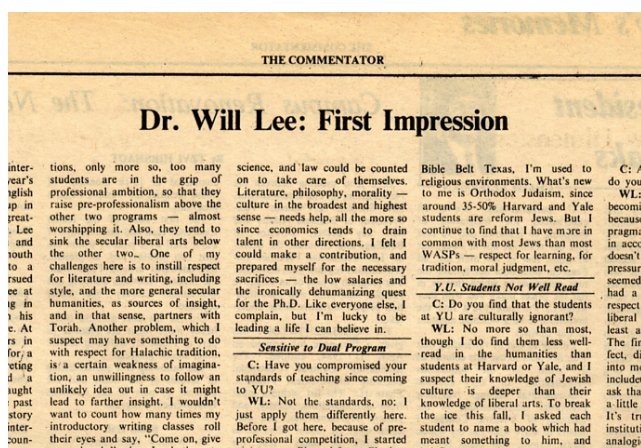
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COMMENTATOR

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: The Commentator has decided to reprint this interview which was printed over 30 years ago. Dr. Will Lee came to Yeshiva College as an Assistant Professor of English in 1983 and has been an Associate Professor of English since 1998. Throughout his long tenure, Professor Lee has not only enlightened and inspired hundreds of students, but he has also contributed to and helped with The Commentator on many occasions. This semester is Professor Lee's last full-time semester at YU. Though he will remain at YU part-time next year and hopes to continue teaching one course each term for years to come, The Commentator, with Professor Lee's permission, has decided that this is an appropriate time to reprint his first interview with the newspaper.

From the Archives (May 24, 1984; Volume 49 Issue 7) — Dr. Will Lee: First Impression

The Commentator recently interviewed Dr. Will Lee, this year's popular addition to the English department. Having grown up in Amarillo, Texas, which his great-grandparents helped settle, Dr. Lee graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Dappa from Dartmouth College in 1969. Thanks to a Marshall Scholarship, Lee pursued a second undergraduate degree at Oxford University, graduating in 1971, to bridge the gaps in his knowledge of English literature. At Yale, he garnered a Masters in 1973 and a Ph.D. in 1980 for a dissertation called "Interpreting Insane Characters: Toward a Theory." Along the way he taught at Yale, Colby, Tufts, and the past five years at Harvard in History and Literature, the oldest interdisciplinary program in the country.



Harvard is an Academic Recycling Plant

The Commentator: Why did you leave Harvard?

Dr. Will Lee: For junior people, Harvard is an academic recycling plant. With few exceptions, it doesn't grant young faculty reputation in five or six years.

C: Why did you select YU.

WL: Actually, YU selected me. I was glad to come, though, because of its strong faculty, its motivated students, and its location in Manhattan. Also, frankly, the thought of ending my string of rather stuffy Wasp institutions appealed to me.

C: How have your relationships with other faculty members worked out?

WL: I'm on excellent terms, I think, with my colleagues in the English department, who warmly welcomed me, and with colleagues in other departments as well. At Yeshiva, sharing of insights and information, especially across disciplines, happens more easily than at many larger institutions, and I've met enough intellectually inquiring people, including some students, to satisfy me. I still haven't returned one colleague's book on scientific method and thinking, and earlier this year, another helped me explore the differences between fourfold Jewish interpretation and Dante's and Aquinas' four levels of allegory. In case you're interested, they're not close analogies.

Y.U. Students Talented as Harvard Students

C: How do Yeshiva students compare with the students you previously taught?

WL: I was expecting this one. I'd say the best here are as talented as the best at Harvard, though fewer, and the worse are worse and more numerous. Also, students here are not as well prepared in literature and writing as at Harvard. But in my field, the average Yeshiva student has two advantages over the average Harvard student: he respects texts — substance if not style — and he learns more quickly because he's more motivated. As a teacher, I'm more fulfilled here and feel my time is better spent than at Harvard because I'm more needed here and because I see students progress more over the course of a term.

"Weakness of Imagination"

C: What dissatisfies you about students here?

WL: From what I can tell, most pursue a triple program: pre-professionalism, Torah, and Madah. That means that in effect they are taking on six programs, since they need to synthesize each pair of pursuits in order to lead coherent lives. As at other institutions, only more so, too many students are in the grip of professional ambition, so that they raise pre-professionalism above the other two programs — almost worshipping it. Also, they tend to sink the secular liberal arts below the other two. One of my challenges here is to instill respect for literature and writing, including style, and the more general secular humanities, as sources of insight, and in that sense, partners with Torah. Another problem, which I suspect may have something to do with respect for Halachic tradition, is a certain weakness of imagination, an unwillingness to follow an unlikely idea out in case it might lead to further insight. I wouldn't want to count how many times my introductory writing classes roll their eyes and say, "Come on, give me a break," when I ask them to consider possible connections and significances, or to read an article from *New York Review of Books* designed for an already college-educated audience.

C: Why do you suspect that may have to do with Halachic tradition?

WL: Again, my experience is so limited that I hesitate to answer. But I suspect that respect for Jewish law and the teachings of rabbis, as admirable as they are, may lead to acceptive rather than exploratory habits of mind. On the other hand, the interpretive debates in the commentaries must foster intellectual rigor and subtlety.

C: Why did you devote your life to the study and teaching of English?

WL: Presumably you want the abridged version of that long story. Briefly, Sputnik propelled me out of high school toward a career in science and math. In fact, my plan was to contain the world's first practical fusion reaction in a magnetic bottle. By my senior year, I woke up to the limits of my commitment to science and to the computers which I had programmed to put myself through college. My facility with science had blinded me to my lack of real commitment and love. What I did love, and spent more and more time on, was language and literature, and more generally the humanities. At that point I had two main choices. My talent for argument suggested I should be a lawyer. My love of teaching and literature suggested I should become a teacher — a college teacher, since I didn't feel I had the patience required to teach high school, and since I welcomed intellectual challenges. Basically, I decided that in America, math, science, and law could be counted on to take care of themselves. Literature, philosophy, morality — culture in the broadest and highest sense — needs help, all the more so since economics tends to drain talent in other directions. I felt I could make a contribution, and prepared myself for the necessary sacrifices — the low salaries and the ironically dehumanizing quest for the Ph.D. Like everyone else, I complain, but I'm lucky to be leading a life I can believe in.

Sensitive to Dual Program

C: Have you compromised your standards of teaching since coming to YU?

WL: Not the standards, no; I just apply them differently here. Before I got here, because of pre-professional competition, I started giving more B's and fewer C's than I would in the fairest of all possible worlds. Since getting here, I've been adjusting to the "dual program" — trying to be sensitive to the burdens on students' time while designing assignments to ensure that students actively learn something — that they not only gain knowledge,



apply new skills, new modes of insight — in my courses.

C: How do you feel about students avoiding your courses?

WL: This first term, several students gave me a friendly warning after class that if I didn't shape up and start giving more A's, I'd lose my talented students, but that seems not to have happened. I think I did lose a few pre-law and pre-med students who felt they couldn't risk a B, but most of my students, including most of the best, have stayed with me. As I told the "grade lobby" in the fall, I intend to teach courses in which grades, especially A's, still signify achievement. I think I'm attracting students who think I have something to teach, and that it's worth risking a B for that "something." I also feel that many take my A barrier as a challenge. This term, the noise is positively deafening.



Every WASP Should Experience Minority Status

C: How do you feel about being the only non-Jew in the English Department?

WL: I think every WASP should have the chance to experience minority status. In fact, I feel my WASPishness more with students than with colleagues, perhaps because I share with colleagues a common liberal arts culture to a greater degree. Since I grew up in Bible Belt Texas, I'm used to religious environments. What's new to me is

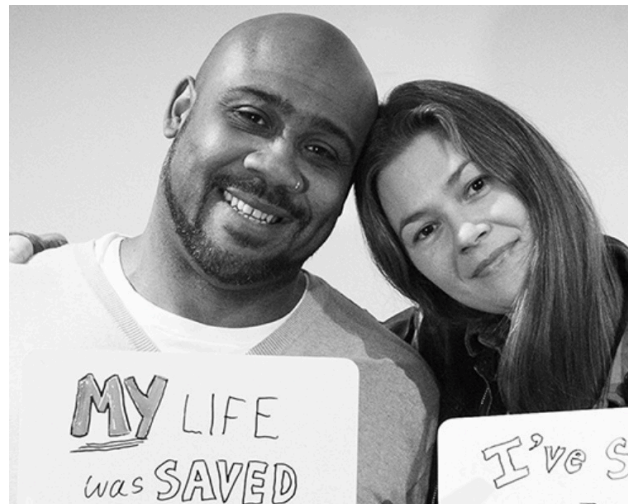
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Opioid Overdose Prevention as a Unifying Aim

By Elana Luban

The opioid crisis does not pick and choose victims based on political views, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status—one of the deadliest issues of our generation is also one of the most non-discriminating.

More Americans died of drug overdoses in 2016 than during the entirety of the Vietnam War, and in that same



year, more people died from overdoses than were killed by guns, or in car accidents. Even more shockingly, while the overwhelming majority of people entering treatment for heroin addiction in the 1960s started with heroin itself, of those who began abusing opioids in the 2000s, 75 percent reported that their first opioid was a prescription drug.

On January 29, the United Against Inequities in Disease (UAID) and YU Red Cross held an event on the Wilf campus dedicated to informing students about all the above information as well as training students to administer Naloxone, a medication used to block the effects of opioids. Naloxone is often sold under the brand name “Narcan” and, in the case of this training session, sprayed into the nose of someone experiencing an overdose. Over 40 students, from both the Wilf and Beren campuses, learned about the enormity of the opioid epidemic, as the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration refers to it, and their part in

preventing deaths from overdose.

The event began with a presentation given by Christine Fitzsimmons, an inspiring, lively, and humorous representative from the Washington Heights Corner Project. The social services organization works to reduce risk associated with sex work and drug use. Fitzsimmons captivantly described symptoms of overdose, which include a slow or erratic pulse, loss of consciousness, unresponsiveness, slow and shallow breathing, and the inability to talk. She then continued to demonstrate exactly how to administer Naloxone by using a nose spray.

The presentation and training were in themselves incredibly meaningful to experience, but to me the event meant something much bigger. I have watched one of my closest friends, who I met in an Orthodox Jewish summer camp seven years ago, become addicted and suffer throughout her entire adolescence, go through rehab, and come out on the other end of opioid dependency. While we did not live in the same city, we consistently stayed in touch over the phone, and she told me years later that those phone calls had meant more to her than I could ever have realized at the time, in terms of emotional support.

She felt helpless to stop throughout that time of her life; helpless to even consider that she wasn't alone during the cycle that could be ended. It is precisely this feeling of helplessness and powerlessness that raising awareness of the opioid crisis among the general population can prevent.

When asked to recount her experiences and explain what it felt like to be completely dependant on opioids, my friend explains, “It’s a rush of euphoria followed by an extreme calm. I’d sink into a haze, and everything would slowly buzz into silence. When I’d come to [after starting during the day], it’d be dark outside – hours since I had passed out. It should have been terrifying. But instead, I was ready to do it again... What should have upset and scared me made no impact except for the fact that I wanted to do it again, and soon. Later that night in fact. It’s the nature of my disease. Once I ‘stuck a toe in the water,’ it didn’t matter if I almost died, didn’t matter what I woke up to, what or whom I’ve lost, what I’ve become. The exhilaration and sense of tranquillity is paramount to everything else. I felt whole again... until it would stop working for me. Then I’d keep chasing that first high. Until I’ve had enough – and only then was recovery possible.”

C: Do you want to get more involved in student activities?

WL: Absolutely, but selectively. So far I’ve been approached by the tennis team, the *Commentator* and the English Honor Society. I see my involvement as an extension of my teaching and a result of my feeling that academic disciplines shouldn’t be compartmentalized, closed off from the rest of life. Basically, I’d like to contribute more actively to intellectual and cultural life at Yeshiva.

C: Academically, what direction do you see the University taking?

WL: I’ve heard that YU is becoming a vocational school because of such factors as students’ pragmatism, state-mandated credits in accounting, etc., but the faculty doesn’t seem to be caving in to those pressures. The curriculum debate seemed interminable, but everyone had a chance to speak out, and respect for education, and the liberal arts in particular, was at least as apparent as pragmatism. The final proposal, though imperfect, divided knowledge and skills into more coherent categories, and included restricted electives, which ask that a student know more than a little about more than his major. It’s true that YU is the only institution of its kind, and yet analogies with other institutions are helpful. On the one hand, we could have moved the curriculum in the direction of Queens College, thereby appealing to a greater number of students. We also had the opportunity to make curricular reform a means of rendering education more coherent, higher in quality, and therefore moving in the direction of the best liberal arts institutions. I think the final curriculum reflects a compromise. I just hope that in practice, the quality of required courses will rise, and students will take more advanced courses in their areas of interest, as restricted electives encourage them to do.

Internal Debate

Seeing the determination of the Corner Project speaker to make a difference, paired with the determination of dozens of YU students to learn about overdose prevention, made me feel that we were truly united against this issue as a student body. Looking around the room, I saw every

“LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM, I SAW EVERY STUDENT AS SOMEONE WHO WAS WILLING, AND NOW TRAINED, TO SAVE THE LIFE OF THOSE IN NEED, LIKE MY EX-ADDICTED FRIEND.”

student as someone who was willing, and now trained, to save the life of those in need, like my ex-addicted friend – she had known countless people who had overdosed, and could easily have herself, and my peers wanted to prevent this! Seeing close friends of mine at the event just drove the point home further. I had not discussed the event with any of them beforehand, and was surprised to see friends from very different groups show up. The crowd reflected the entire gamut of political and religious variation within YU. Additionally, there were about as many female students as male students at the event, despite the event being held uptown, and that kind of representation was empowering to see.

I was genuinely surprised by the turnout, and by the amount of interest shown in the topic – students interacted and asked questions more than at any health-related event I had witnessed before. Perhaps the event filled a gap that YU students long needed filled; perhaps we need to create more dialogue on issues like these, so that questions about addiction, and the problems that those going through addiction face are no longer taboo and stigmatized. In either case, the Naloxone training session was a good start. Being a part of this group of young people felt truly like being part of a small, determined segment of our generation ready to self-educate and battle one of today’s deadliest epidemics.

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Orthodox Judaism, since around 35-50% of Harvard and Yale students are reform Jews. But I continue to find that I have more in common with most Jews than most WASPs – respect for learning, for tradition, moral judgment, etc.

Y.U. Students Not Well Read

C: Do you find that the students at YU are culturally ignorant?

WL: Not more so than most, though I do find them less well-read in the humanities than students at Harvard or Yale, and I suspect their knowledge of Jewish culture is deeper than their knowledge of liberal arts. To break the ice this fall, I asked each student to name a book which had meant something to him, and briefly say why; two students claimed not to have read any. Another student this year made a point of surveying his Yeshiva acquaintances to prove to me that expecting people to know or learn the word “moot” was unreasonable. Out of around forty people he found only a few English majors and a faculty member who knew the word.

C: Are YU students in your class prepared for college writing?

WL: I would say most of them can learn to write at the college level by the end of the year. If they were fully prepared for college writing, why require the course? At the start, most of the writing I see is dull, incorrect, uneven, episodic, weakly argued, or all of the above.

C: So what can you do? What role do you play?

WL: First of all, I can ask them to write for a real audience, which most of them have never imagined doing, and bring in published writing as models. I can show them how to move beyond mere competence – though competence is nothing to sneeze at – toward interesting, persuasive essays. In comments, I try not to show them what’s wrong without suggesting how to correct it.

C: What courses would you like to offer to Yeshiva College students?

WL: In my electives, I want to emphasize method and theory – frames of reference for interpreting literature. That’s why I’m introducing a course next spring on literary criticism from Pater and Wilde to the present. And that’s why I’m exploring the cultural context of Victorian prose and poetry next fall in a course that combines my appreciation for theory with my love of nineteenth century English literature. As for the direction of my writing and thinking, I will be struggling through an internal debate for at least another month. Several years ago, I was co-authoring a book on college teaching with Kiyoo Morimoto, the Director of Harvard’s Bureau of Study Counsel. Eventually we’ll probably finish it, but I’ve decided it will have to wait. So will a book on the language and literature of insanity which my dissertation was trying to be. Right now I’m fascinated with John Dewey, who I find represents the directions criticism should be taking, but by and large isn’t. After courses are over, I’ll begin work on an exploratory article on Dewey which may develop into a larger project. Soon after that, I’ll begin revising the article on Austen, epistles, and interpretation which I talked about with a few members of the English Honor Society this fall, and which was intended to be part of a book on style as a key to the author’s way of thinking in nineteenth-century works. Right now my guy says “Dewey,” but it’s hard for me to imagine staying away from the nineteenth century for long.

Lee Glad to Stay

C: What direction do you plan to take at YU?

WL: Assuming I continue to like YU and to be well-treated, and to feel fulfilled as a teacher and scholar, I’d be glad to stay. I intend to deserve tenure, and hope it’s granted. There is always room for improvement in bringing new and innovative events to an ever-changing student body.

State of the World: Global Warming

By Dov Teitlebaum

Global warming, over the past several decades, has been conveniently configured to suit various agendas. Perhaps this is implicit in its nature as its acknowledgment would lead to tremendous economical and political consequence. This has led to the dispensation of misleading, obscured, and entirely inaccurate information. My intention is to display the facts of global warming, not as an oil company or a politician, nor as a representative of any other group, but as an observer.

Any individual who has cared to learn the facts pertaining to global warming recognizes its existence; its trajectory, however, is multi-faceted. The facts create a concise range of possibilities, which have been misconstrued in most outlets with the usual exception of scientific journals.

According to the latest release from the Mauna Loa Observatory, a highly regarded atmospheric research facilities, the level of CO₂, as of February 4, 2018, is at about 408 ppm (parts per million). That is incredible. Put in context, this is more than a 45 percent increase in carbon dioxide levels since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Scientists differ on exactly when levels were last this high, but the estimates range between 800,000 and 15 million years ago, the majority opinion leaning towards the latter.

Although the anti-global warming movement is entirely nonsensical, entertain me as I disprove the one piece of evidence that could have conceivably held some ground: The notion of the global warming hiatus. This is a term for the stagnation of the global surface temperature for over a decade, from roughly 1998 to 2013. The scientific explanation at the time was that events such as La Niña caused a temporary respite from global warming effects, as natural disasters, such as hurricanes and volcanic eruptions, tend to do. This entire attempt to negate global warming was largely falsified when, in 2015, surface temperatures increased more drastically than in several decades. When missing data from the rising temperatures in the Arctic was, retroactively, inserted, they found the hiatus never existed.

Usually groups will emphatically state the incredible rise of global surface temperatures over a relatively short period of time. They will quote theories such as the Keelings Curve, a proven method that Charles Keeling, the previous scientist and director at Mauna Loa Observatory, invented to quantify the acceleration of atmospheric CO₂ levels. This is of course all irrelevant if it avoids the basic question of how this affects people. At what levels are our physical abilities impaired? At which levels can humans survive? Incidentally, this question largely remains outside the vast swath of media attention and so has required some digging.

An occurrence at Lake Nyos, Cameroon in 1986, when CO₂ levels skyrocketed leaving 1,700 people dead and 5,000 in various degrees of injury, sheds light on

the matter. Within proximity of three kilometers to the lake people experienced fatigue and dizziness before unconsciousness which persisted for as long as 36 hours. At distances three to ten kilometers, individuals experienced confusion prior to unconsciousness. It is evidenced that the results varied greatly by individual for

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– ABRAHAM LINCOLN**

survivors who were near the deceased. The study then proceeds to list various recorded patient symptoms at the local hospitals and the respective survival rates. The CO₂ levels were estimated in excess of 8 percent, which is 80,000 ppm, establishing what levels we can state with near certainty as inducing fatalities.

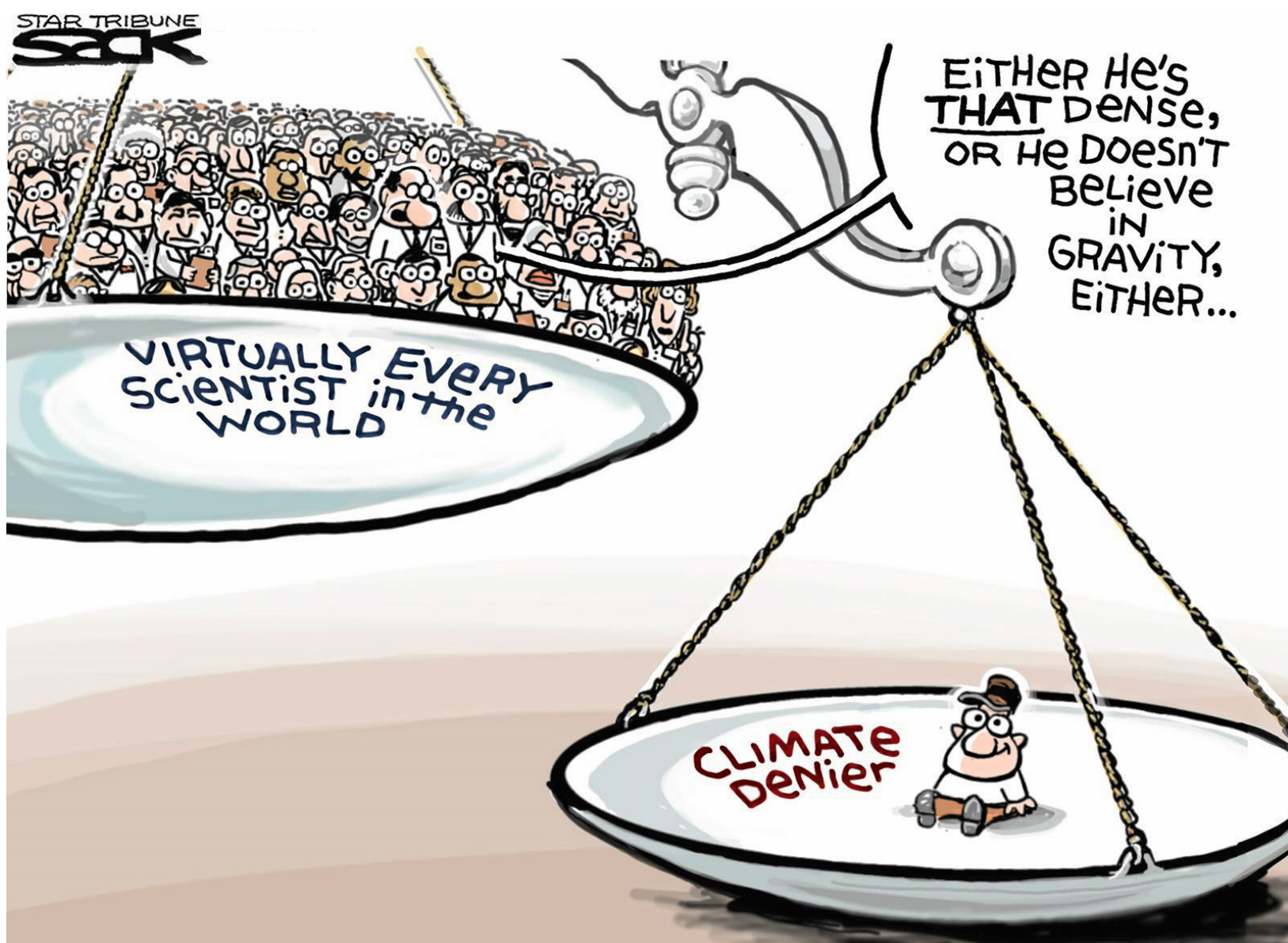
A more recent little-publicized study in 2012 may be more relevant. A Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) study tested the effects of variable CO₂ levels on the human decision-making process. They found that “statistically significant and meaningful reductions in decision-making performance” as the CO₂ level rose from a baseline of 600 ppm to 1,000 and then 2,500 ppm. A more significant study conducted by Dr. Joe Allen, Director of Harvard’s Healthy Buildings program,

at an accelerating rate, however, there are studies that show a significant increase in localized snowfall as well. According to an article in Scientific America, “Brooke Medley, a NASA research scientist, and her colleagues” extracted a 500 foot deep ice core from Queen Maud Land, a location south of Africa’s southern tip. What they discovered was a 25% increase in snow precipitation from the pre-industrial era. “It’s not all doom and gloom,” Medley said.

Many scientists, however, differ. Phil Plait, otherwise known as “The Bad Astronomer,” disagrees with this notion, writing, “no matter how you slice it Antarctica is losing ice, and losing it fast.” He references data amounted by NASA’s Grace satellites that shows a present loss of 134 billion metric tons of ice per year in Antarctica. He calls another study referencing snow precipitation as “problematic,” as the “process” of snow converting into ice “isn’t completely understood.” Greenland, an area many overlook, he says, actually “outpaces” Antarctica in melting ice.

The facts are apparent. Ocean levels are rising and global temperatures are increasing. Industries are pumping out over 40 billion tons of CO₂ pollutant every year. Although asphyxiation is a long way off, the effects of global warming, even on a year by year basis are, as evidenced, quantifiable.

In a decade old interview with F. Sherwood Rowland, who shared a Nobel Prize for discovering the effect CFCs incur on the ozone layer, he was asked what he predicts peak CO₂ concentration levels to be. Many noted scientist have suggested numbers such as 500 ppm, one even declaring a reversal to 350. Rowland said, “1000.” When asked exactly what that would look like, he somberly retorted, “I don’t know.”



and Dr. John Spengler, Professor of Environmental Health and Human Habitation at Harvard, found that on average an increase in CO₂ levels by 400 ppm resulted in a 21 percent drop on cognitive testing scores.

There are other ominous effects of global warming, such as the melting ice sheets in Antarctica. This has been a controversial topic. The ice sheets are losing mass

Lincoln’s words from time immemorial remain applicable today. “We know how to save the world. We, even we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility. The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last, best hope of earth.”

I Am Not a Colonialist: Why I Wholeheartedly Support Postering the Nagel Mural Wall

By Ilan Hirschfield

Søren Kierkegaard, a nineteenth-century Danish philosopher mused that “people demand the freedom of speech as a compensation for the freedom of thought which they seldom use.” Put differently, members of society have the freedom to consider what to say and what not to say, yet so often they fail to exercise it. They instead demand the freedom of speech, espousing platforms that happen to pop into their heads, failing to consider the aptness of such speech and how the public may respond in kind.

Around one year ago, the Wilf campus turned into a case study in this faux pas/free speech conversation. Two student groups, one anonymous and the other the YU Feminist Club, covered the mural on the Nagel Commons dividing wall with their own creative displays. The former display highlighted similarities between the United States government’s current immigration policy and its rejection

“YES, WE HAVE BULLETIN BOARDS AROUND CAMPUS. BUT STUDENTS MAINLY USE THOSE TO ADVERTISE CLUB EVENTS THEY PLANNED. IN OTHER WORDS, PUBLICIZING IDEAS BEYOND ONE’S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS ON CAMPUS THROUGH THE CREATION OF A CLUB REQUIRES THE APPLICATION OF SIGNIFICANT TIME, MONEY, AND EFFORT TO GET IT OFF THE GROUND.”

of European Jewish immigrants during World War II while the latter display consisted of name-dissociated printouts of sexist comments sourced from students on the Wilf campus and YU-related online forums, raising awareness of sexism on campus.

Various members of the YU student community came out as proponents for using the mural wall for such activity. For example, an anonymous student group on the Beren campus put up a similar immigrant display in the entrance hall of 245 Lexington Avenue. Yosef Sklar wrote a relatively short yet well thought-out piece laying out theoretical ground rules in support of such ideological usage of the mural wall.

Doron Levine, on the other hand, penned an editorial following the incidents chastising such student use of the mural. He posited that covering the mural to publicize any ideas or causes, regardless of their merits, egregiously violates basic etiquette of keeping art in the public arena exposed to the public. Such pursuits can too easily be interpreted as political appropriation, a colonialism of sorts. Not forgetting the physical reality on the ground, Levine also mentioned that this “vandalism” also jeopardized the mural’s physical safety.

While I understand Levine’s concern for the status quo and the mural’s physical condition, I unequivocally support such postering of the mural on both ideological and logistical grounds. However, in order for such an initiative to succeed on campus, it requires the involvement of student government and the Office of Student Life (OSL).

As I stated above, Levine said the architects made a nearly unforgivable faux pas when they decided to cover the mural; they did the “unintuitive thing” and were “renegade[s]” and “transgressive” when they decided to raise their voices and stir the political pot. Put bluntly, that isn’t ok—at least according to Levine. Did these craftsmen really do the unintuitive thing? Yes, yes they did. However, such activity highlights the fact that transgression works as a method of increasing public awareness of issues and advancing social change, one of Dr. Martin Luther King’s cornerstones in his sociological theory of nonviolent protest (to delve further into this topic, I recommend reading Dr. King’s *A Letter from a Birmingham Jail*). Take, for instance, the occurrence of “Freedom

Riding” in 1961 when white and African-American civil rights activists would ride busses through the American South to protest segregated bus terminals. This activity garnered violent reactions from whites who passionately opposed integration on the ground in the South, despite the U.S. Supreme Court’s previously-issued rulings denouncing the *Plessy v. Ferguson* doctrine of “separate but equal.” Despite the deeply intertwined nature of the civil rights movement’s method of exposing racial injustice and the racial injustice itself, the technique still has great efficacy today in alerting the public to injustices that plague our world, whatever the status quo may say.

This worshipping of the status quo dovetails cleanly into Levine’s next point about how members of high society must respect art in order to participate. The designers, he said, had no such respect. They committed an act of “erasing art,” turned such activity into a “bona fide addiction, at least a developing habit,” and modified the plaster into a “wailing wall.” I repeat myself here, but with a twist: Levine accounts accurately what social code they violated, but this time he refused to recognize their intent in a different way; namely, the physical reality of their work. From only reading his description of the events, one gets the impression that the student activists brought gallons of wall paint to Nagel Commons at the stroke of midnight and hurled them onto the wall, muting the expressive mural for eternity; in its place, they painted their respective displays. In reality, the student designers stuck posters and pieces of paper to the mural wall with painter’s tape, preemptively avoiding damaging the wall with the display.

How else can we see the taking of preemptive measures in this case? In the materials’ positioning on the mural wall. The students took care to cover as much of the blank space on the mural as they could with their content before gingerly encroaching onto the actual artwork. This attack on the student activists’ credibility that fails to take into account intent or context represents but a tile in the mosaic of the troubling trend at universities of students draining the rainbow (read: complexity) from discussions about thorny issues like immigration and sexism (I direct the reader to an insightful essay in *The American Scholar* titled “Low Definition in Higher Education” written by Lyell Asher about this oversimplification of the human experience in universities).

Despite his blistering critique, Levine offered the brazen student activists a brief respite, conceding that “it would be pitiful to thoughtlessly fall in line with established norms. Sufficiently dire circumstances can call for desperate measures, and it’s hard to imagine a social norm the breaking of which would not be warranted in some far-out scenario.” In other words, stand for something, otherwise you’ll fall for anything. This concession would come off as wise, however it exists in a vacuum. Meaning, Levine didn’t propose an alternate and more appropriate outlet for the publication of ideas that would garner student interest and attention. I lament this fact. Why? Not because I disagree with Levine on such public use of the mural wall and want to see him freewheel in lambasting the student activists, giving me all the more reason to disagree with him.

Rather, I lament that though these incidents opened our eyes to the logistical fact that no physical space on campus exists solely for the publication of ideas, Levine did not explore this fact. Yes, we have bulletin boards around campus. But students mainly use those to advertise club events they planned. In other words, publicizing ideas beyond one’s circle of friends on campus through the creation of a club requires the application of significant time, money, and effort to get it off the ground. No reasonable middle-ground option for publication of ideas exists between the two. Given the fact that students on our campus consistently run to and from morning programs, classes, and meetings throughout the day, creating a format that includes the mural wall can successfully utilize smaller blocks of time to effectively engage with ideas. Ideas publicized wouldn’t even have to necessarily take on a governmental political tone.

Turning this proposal into policy would not require student government or OSL to exert a great deal of effort. The two groups could use Yosef Sklar’s theoretical rulebook as a guide for ensuring that everyone who has an interest in using the wall gets an opportunity to put up their own content. I am not a colonist—for if I were, I would allow only some students to use the mural in this way and forbid others from doing the same. Such rules for mural usage could include a twenty-four hour time limit on a display’s placement on the wall, the prohibition of tearing down other people’s displays within twenty-four hours of it being put up, and the prohibition of making personal attacks via a display on the wall. A person may put up a display on the wall only once a month. Student government could provide a Google Form which students would fill out to indicate the content they’d like to share on the wall, in addition to the date and time frame requested, giving them a quick and easy avenue for seeking approval. Class representatives could lead the approval process and rotate to meet monthly with OSL or the president or vice-president of YSU to decide on the “final mural schedule” for a given calendar month. The class representatives could then have the obligation of communicating via email with the student (or students) whose request was approved, confirming the date and time frame for the display and reiterating the mural code of conduct as mentioned above.

In expressing my wholehearted support for such creative use of the mural, I do not mean to create division or “sow seeds of discord,” as Levine so sharply accused the mural planners of doing. I support such use in an effort to generate unity on our campus. However, when I say unity I do not mean unity of opinion in terms of ideology. I mean unity of supporting a space on campus for fostering productive, stimulating, and thoughtful conversation about the ideas that give our world three dimensions and lend themselves to consideration of our humanity.

I am not a colonialist, but I support postering the Nagel Commons mural wall. And so, I encourage the student body to seize this opportunity and tell the student government and OSL what ideas drive you. Help the campus community build a space that will endure long after your tenure at this university. Put ‘em up, Wilf. The posters, that is.



On Prayer

By Irwin Leventer

We choose to treat different portions of our days either as moments of mindlessness or as tools of navigation toward elevated spaces. The respite from our mindless moments can be cathartic; finally, I can ignore the

"CONNECTING TO A SINGLE LINE OF RESONATING MANTRA IS FAR MORE WORTHWHILE THAN RECITING HUNDREDS OF UNINTELLIGIBLE PHRASES."

unending pursuit of truth for a few ticks of time as I stand to brush my teeth. These kinds of moments are valuable, vital. Although, on the quest to balancing the listless lulls with our most powerful of moments, we often allow for far too much lethargy. This is especially and most painfully the case when it comes to prayer.

We are often to-the-letter diligent with prayer. We proudly and rightly laud ourselves for our carefully crafted,

steadfast routine of supplication. We consistently, tridaily, read through hundreds of words of pristine expression, formulated by those with truly intimate knowledge of the ways of the world. Such a routine takes sagacious maturity to desire and immense self-wielding to uphold.

The question then turns to the worth of such toil. The first step is establishing the routine; the second is keeping sight of its value. When I, who in no way meets the word-count requirement for daily prayer, want to discuss with a friend something powerful in prayer, something that shook me right awake and brought me closer to Existence, I am too often deprived. I find that many people that I care about are at a loss to translate even a single line of prayer.

This saddens me deeply. What is meant to be an exalting bout with self and All Else becomes a lull of inaudible listlessness. Where we are to be exuding and expounding our very *selves*, we mumble in haste to fill a quota. This is *not* prayer. We'd be just as well off reading the words of Woodstock the bird. Connecting to a *single* line of resonating mantra is far more worthwhile than reciting hundreds of unintelligible phrases. Unlike the words of Woodstock, which (arguably) are lines and only so, the words of prayer beckon for the due diligence of learning to access the thoughts they impart. The phonemes of prayer are epically useless without their morphemes.

So we grapple with the language that isn't our own, rein

in translation and reign over word. This, most excitingly, is only the beginning. We shall take *The Amidah* as an example. Once the words are ours in their translations, it is in our power to make them ours in what they express. The compartmentalization of values and desires in each blessing creates a blossoming niche for focused formation and formulation of our innermost selves. With this newfound access to the words we use, our creativeness is unleashed to inform the themes of each niche. These themes then follow us and layer our idle thoughts with what we decided, while praying, is worth thinking of each day. Then our days return with us into each prayer-niche and lead to powerful, novel assessments. Not circular; ever spiraling.

Post learning what, no, *that* I am actually *speaking* in prayer, and after beginning to understand how I relate to prayer, the two facts most formative of my prayer have been: that prayer is a meditation, and that prayer is *yours*. Prayer is a meditation in that it is the time you set aside for confronting your inwardness. Prayer is yours in that you get to layer each word with your very own meaning; for example, *Et Tzemach David* has worlds of significance when your beloved father's name is David, as is mine. Prayer is yours in that you have every right to pause in one of those heartfelt niches and use your very own words, preformulated or not, in whatever tongue you should choose, to express your very essence, and soar.



Skating by with a Double Standard

By Lilly Gelman

Back in the 90's, Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan furiously competed in national and international figure skating competitions in a never-ending, one-upping battle on the ice. Growing up poor in Portland, Oregon with both an abusive mother and husband, Harding lacked the resources necessary to portray the elegance and poise expected of female figure skaters. The United States Figure Skating Association (USFSA), as well as

“WHAT THE MEDIA MAY HAVE PORTRAYED AS JUSTICE APPEARS NOW TO BE EVIDENCE OF A DOUBLE STANDARD BETWEEN THE SOCIETY’S TOLERANCE FOR MALE VERSUS FEMALE ATHLETES’ CRIMES.”

the media and figure skating fans, criticized Harding for her unconventional style, such as her homemade costumes and blue nail polish.

On January 6, 1994, Harding's husband, Jeff Gillooly, hired Shane Stant to hit Kerrigan in the knee with a telescope baton, bruising her leg and forcing her to withdraw from a national competition. After an FBI investigation, the judge sentenced Gillooly to two years in prison. Harding, pleading guilty only to delaying the prosecution, denied any knowledge of the attack. She avoided a prison stay, but received three years probation, 500 hours of community service, and—what for Tonya may have equaled a prison sentence—a forced resignation from the USFSA as well as a removal of her title as U.S. Champion, prohibiting her from competing professionally in the future.

Harding's story falls in line with other sports related scandals. Tom Brady's Deflategate and former professional boxer Mike Tyson's rape conviction serve

as two examples of athletes caught up in scandal. Additionally, retired Baltimore Ravens' Linebacker Ray Lewis, charged with murder and aggravated-assault after the 2000 Super Bowl, became the center of a murder trial. While Brady, Tyson, and Lewis retained popularity and went on to continue their sports careers, Harding failed to convince anyone of her innocence, losing her livelihood as well as the one passion in her life. What the media may have portrayed as justice appears now to be evidence of a double standard between society's tolerance of male versus female athletes' crimes.

The intention of the attack on Kerrigan to help Harding get ahead in the skating competition resembles the New England Patriots' and Brady's desire to defeat the Indianapolis Colts by deflating some of the footballs in their 2015 game. The Patriots, however, barely suffered from this scandal and went on to win the 2015 Super Bowl. Additionally, while the female Harding lost her life's work and career due to her minor involvement in the aftermath of Kerrigan's attack, the male Brady escaped with a simple four game suspension.

One could argue that the Kerrigan scandal involved a violent assault, possibly warranting a harsher punishment on Harding than Brady. Mike Tyson, however, while charged and convicted of raping an 18-year-old in 1992 and serving fewer than three years of his six year sentence, made a major comeback during his first fight after his release. The fight against Peter McNeely grossed \$96 million dollars, and, in 2015, 50% of respondents in a Boxing News poll voted Tyson the Greatest Heavyweight since Muhammad Ali. Harding became the punchline of jokes and her name became the verb for sabotaging an opponent, while Tyson gained fame and fortune as he watched his conviction fade into the fog of history.

Tyson's involvement in violent crime is not an outlier example. After Ray Lewis's murder charge, he took a plea deal by testifying against two friends, saying that they had bought knives believed to have been used in the murders. Lewis pleaded guilty to obstruction of justice, a detail shockingly similar to Harding's admission

of delaying the prosecution, and ended up with one year's probation and a \$250,000 fine by the NFL. Despite the extreme nature of the crime and seemingly incriminating evidence against him—police found the victim's blood in his limousine—the NFL named Lewis Super Bowl MVP in 2001 and he continued to play professionally until 2012. The FBI, on the other hand, had no concrete evidence against Harding, basing their accusation of her direct involvement on a scrap of paper with the name of Kerrigan's practice rink scribbled in Harding's handwriting. Nevertheless, Harding was banned from her sport and shunned by the media and majority of figure skating fans as well.

The incongruity between Brady, Tyson, and Lewis's smooth comeback and Harding's spiraling downfall reflects a major double standard in gender-specific sports scandal forgiveness. The NFL gave Brady and the Patriots a second chance, and society forgave Tyson and Lewis, excusing their crimes as mistakes and appreciating their athletic talents independent of their criminal flaws. Harding, however, was relentlessly chastised and mocked. In 2007, President Obama told a crowd in Vinton, Iowa that "folks said there's no way Obama has a chance unless he goes and kneecaps the person ahead of us, does a Tonya Harding." These jokes and criticisms reflect the unfair severity of Harding's consequences, one not seen in the cases involving male athlete scandals.

On *The Daily*, a podcast by the *New York Times*, Taffy Brodesser-Akner, while discussing the present life of Tonya Harding, expressed the guilt on the part of the media in harshly punishing Harding while letting male athletes get by with much worse. "Her mother abused her, her husband abused her, and then we abused her." It may be too late for the media or the USFSA to make amends with Harding, but the recent revival of her story since the release of *I, Tonya* (2017) offers an opportunity for society to reevaluate the second chances we give and do not give to the male and female athletes involved in scandal. It's time to stop letting things slide for the sake of the game and start holding athletes accountable for their wrongdoings.



A Modest Proposal to Ban Women from Wilf Campus

By Rivka Reiter

Much like the author of a recent article for The Observer, I identify as a feminist. And, like her, I firmly believe that Yeshiva University is, first and foremost, a yeshiva that believes in *Torah UMadda*, the synthesis of Torah principles and valuable secular knowledge. In her article, the author states that a good first step towards minimizing distractions and preserving the yeshiva atmosphere is maintaining the status quo of not allowing women to use the Wilf campus pool, explaining that it increases the chances for our boys to see immodesty. However, I must respectfully disagree.

Instead, we should ban women and girls from *all* the Wilf facilities.

“AN ENTIRE THIRD OF OUR UNDERGRADUATE CLUBS ARE CO-ED, AND WE HAVE TO NIP THIS IN THE BUD BEFORE MORE OF OUR CLUBS ARE TAINTED.”

Like I said, I’m a feminist. And the author’s story of a time she saw a girl in a tank top and leggings in the men’s cafeteria is absolutely horrifying, and clearly just the tip of the iceberg. Her anecdotal evidence shows us the risk that we are putting our men in every day we intentionally allow girls into their lounges, their libraries, and their classrooms. I shudder to think what would happen if we

allowed the girls to attend the sacred Thursday night parties or, even worse, permitted them to move uptown.

This is a slippery slope and while we unfortunately can’t stop community members from crossing the Yeshiva University 185th Street plaza, we have to try. I know that the undergraduate girls pay more in tuition and housing than the undergraduate men, but they maintain access to the most crucial of on-campus facilities: an ice machine, fresh sushi, and proximity to one of the world’s largest department stores. Ask any Stern girl—Dunkin’ Donuts in the caf is far more important than a pool, a multi-story library, or a theater.

We have graduate schools on the Wilf campus that are full of girls, and that can’t be helped—to mine and others’ dismay—but we are halakhically mandated to take further steps towards gender separation for the sake of our men. An entire third of our undergraduate clubs are co-ed, and we have to nip this in the bud before more of our clubs are tainted.

And before you start to challenge the idea that modesty *isn’t* inherent to Yeshiva University, that in 1970, YU left the title of “yeshiva” behind to officially become a secular university for purposes of state and federal funding, I oblige you to remember that our faculty are hired with this exact goal in mind. For a hundred years Yeshiva University has hired those with the same moral code as them, not once bringing in teachers or administrators of low caliber or staff who portray YU as anything but the flagship institution of the Modern Orthodox world.

Wait a minute, you, the reader, are saying. *Of course we believe in co-ed events! That’s why we regularly bring men down to the girls’ school for Shabbat!* Remember that the controlled environment of a co-ed shabbaton is a unique situation, unlike the unsupervised library,

cafeteria, and classroom. The girls on the shabbatons are under strict orders not to bring the men to impropriety, and, because we know that all undergraduate females have the capacity to be temptresses, all the Stern girls are required to sign contracts that they will not enter the hotel rooms, as this is the only way to stop them. Written contracts are binding, obviously, which is why our students have such strong academic integrity.

You, dear reader, might be getting upset right now. That’s why I’d like to think that we can eventually consider proposing the reopening of certain facilities on the Washington Heights campus to women. Once the girls have stopped wearing jeans in their dorm buildings and are learning to comply with halakha, amenities such as restrooms and parts of the fourth floor of the library can be opened to them on a trial basis. Maybe we’ll even fix the shuttle app for them so they can use it, though that would be a stretch.

I’m a feminist. So you can trust me when I tell you that separate but equal is the only way to go, and is always successful. The Jewish value of modesty is, as the author stated, crucial. In her words, “we are responsible for preserving a Yeshiva atmosphere, and we cannot allow this Yeshiva membrane to be permeated by setting up inappropriate situations that could otherwise be avoided.” And I would go so far as to say that this value, this responsibility, is far more critical than any other Torah commandment, such as *gemilut chasadim* (the giving of loving-kindness), *kivush hayetzer* (mastering one’s impulses), or *kavod habriyot* (honoring God’s creations). We must keep girls away from the men’s campus for the preservation of their Torah-true experience, no matter the cost.



The Molds That Bind Us

By Chezky Frieden

Albert Einstein. The Rambam. Golda Meir. These three people all had one thing in common: they were all incredibly successful Jews who changed the course of the world forever. But what is so fascinating about these three, and many other “successful” Jews, is that, while they have all had such a positive influence on the future of the Jewish people and the world as a whole, they were all so...different.

This is why when I was reading the February 19 issue of *The Commentator*, the article titled “Extremism: Thoughts From a Religious Zionist in YU” stood out to me. In his article, the author identified a problem pervasive throughout Yeshiva University. He mentioned a specific



instance, meant to represent many more, where a friend of his cynically looked down on him for choosing to attend a Yom HaShoah event instead of Night Seder. He talks about how it distressed him, as he felt that Yom HaShoah is a very important day. However, over time, he began giving into the peer pressure of his friends and stopped attending events that he felt he should. The author suggested that this rampant behavior of putting others down for “not being frum enough” is due to people lacking self-identity and using extremism as a “coping mechanism.” While I agree with his belief that many students act poorly as a result of their lack of self-identity, I saw a much larger

problem underlying his story.

Both in and out of YU, communities create a specific mold which defines success, and anyone who doesn't fit into that mold has, to a degree, failed. This is fairly easy to see when looking at the sects of Judaism to the right and left of “Modern-Orthodoxy.” In the Yeshivish community, success is seen as sitting and learning all day. In the Conservative and Reform movements, it's about interacting with the world in a moral way and supporting Israel. However, when looking at the “Modern-Orthodox” community, the community that is present here at YU, it is much more complicated. I believe that this helps create the rift and negative feelings between friends addressed by the author.

I put “Modern-Orthodoxy” in quotes because, within “Modern-Orthodoxy,” there are so many different, smaller communities that each have their own molds of success, but yet still identify as “Modern-Orthodox.” All these different types of people end up going to YU and expect everyone else to have the same ideals as they do. But they don't. There are the communities which, like the author mentioned, believe that you should joke about the *tziyonim* and spend all your time learning. There are the communities which are more “modern,” which generally believe in more interaction with the world and are more pro-Israel. And there are communities that fall in between.

I went to a high school that was like that. It fell in-between, but it still had a clear mold of success. There was a specific kind of person that they wanted graduating from the school. They should, of course, be a *mensch*, be incredibly politically active, be involved with multiple extra-curriculars, go to a *Hesder Yeshiva*, specifically Gush, and then go to either the army, YU Honors, or both. Now, I believe that it's crucial for me to state that I loved my high school. I got along with the administration, made lifelong friends, and grew tremendously. In fact, I even filled out their mold, almost to a tee. I got good grades, went to all the political rallies, was captain of multiple teams, and, you guessed it, even went to a *Hesder Yeshiva* (not Gush, which I was spoken to about by the administration) and then YU Honors. So, you may be asking yourself, “why are you writing this article? You succeeded in your mold, so why do you care?” I care because I realize that even though I happen to satisfy what my community wanted of me, I recognize that so many others don't. I have friends

who have felt like failures for so long, despite the fact that they are some of the kindest and most brilliant business minds I know, because they don't want to sit and learn all day. I also have many friends who went to Yeshiva in Israel and loved sitting and learning. They wanted to come back a second year but weren't allowed to by their parents because they didn't want their kids “flipping out.” Those parents didn't want their kids pursuing something which they loved and connected to because it stepped outside of what they and their community thinks it means to be successful.

**“I CARE BECAUSE I REALIZE THAT
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Here at Yeshiva University, we are the future of “Modern-Orthodoxy.” We are the future teachers and parents, the educators and examples. It's about time we recognize that the specific templates our communities try to fit us in are significantly hindering our growth. Albert Einstein, the Rambam, and Golda Meir were all clear successes but yet they were all so different. They didn't all fit the same mold. So why can't we see that? Why can't we teach our future children and students that, while it's of course necessary to follow Halacha and maintain certain fundamental principles, it's okay to be different? That if you are great at caring for others, but aren't great at focusing, maybe you should work at HASC in the summer instead of Morasha Kollel. If you love learning and don't want to be a doctor, lawyer, or businessman, it's more than okay to learn in kollel. Why don't we teach them to use their skill-sets and focus on what they enjoy and are good at so that they can be the best that they can be, free from judgment? Perhaps if we open our minds to how we should raise the next generation we may even come to respect ourselves more, and not feel so upset that we skipped Night Seder to listen to a speech about Yom Hashoah. Instead, we should feel proud that we went to hear that speech and also feel proud of our friend who decided not to.

SHAPE OF WATER, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

nominees, but to del Toro himself. See, del Toro deserves an Oscar - he's a terrific filmmaker, no doubt - but this one is a few years too late; he really should have gotten it for *Pan's Labyrinth* back in 2006 (which was nominated when it came out for Best Foreign Language Film, but lost to Germany's *The Lives of Others*). The Academy has a tendency to do that, I've noticed, when people feel that a director is owed, in a sense, an award. It's what happened when Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* won Best Picture, also in 2006 - a good movie, sure, but not the best out of all the nominees from that year. I think *Babel* and *Little Miss Sunshine* are both better than it, and it was not Scorsese's best film. 1980's *Raging Bull*, which lost Best Picture to *Ordinary People*, and 1990's *Goodfellas*, which lost to *Dances with Wolves*, are both better, more memorable movies than *The Departed*, and because they lost their respective Best Picture races, it's been speculated that the Academy awarded Scorsese in 2006 to make up for it. And all this was from back when there were only five nominees for the award. We're up to ten now, and the Academy still hasn't corrected themselves!

See, the Academy has a tendency to be particularly myopic when it comes to the winners of Best Picture. What do I mean? Well, let's go back to *Ordinary People* and *Raging Bull*. Between a fairly serviceable movie about a dysfunctional family going through a divorce and a movie that redefined the sports genre from the triumphant underdog stories of *Rocky* to gritty, down-to-Earth, tales of human failure, the Academy went with the former. And now, *Raging Bull* sits at #24 of the American Film Institute's 100 Years... 100 Movies list (and at #4 of the Redux list 10 years later). *Ordinary People*, meanwhile, is on neither of those lists, and if you asked people on the street if they remember the movie, you would probably get blank stares. Orson Welles literally changed the game of filmmaking when he created *Citizen Kane* back in 1940, yet it lost at the Academy Awards to *How Green Was My Valley*. Guess which one is considered one of the best films of all time, and which one I had to Google to see who won Best Picture that year? Some of Alfred Hitchcock's best films, such as *Rear Window* (1954, when *On the Waterfront* won), *Vertigo* (1958, when *Gigi* won), and *Psycho* (1960, when *The Apartment* won) weren't even nominated for the award!

Looking at what was nominated this year, I don't think the fish-human romance novelty of *The Shape of Water* is going to be memorable past the next few years in ways that the much more raw feelings of grief of *Three Billboards over Ebbing, Missouri*, the tense relationships of *Lady Bird*, or the taut war imagery of *Darkest Hour* or *Dunkirk* will. Heck, even *Call Me By Your Name*, barring the one scene with the peach that I think scared the Academy voters away, will more likely be remembered as a champion of LGBT filmmaking and storytelling than *The Shape of Water* would.

One could argue that it's impossible to NOT be myopic; how was the Academy supposed to know how much influence a certain movie would have ten, twenty, even sixty years into the future? And yeah, there is a case to be made that the Academy Awards are basically a gamble. But most gamblers stop after they've gone for a few hours without a lot of wins. When you've been playing for 90 years and haven't picked out that many true winners, you might have a gambling problem. And the Academy might want to pick up some glasses on their way out of the casino.



“Zchus For Sale!”: YU Torah and The Indulgences of Torah Philanthropy

By Aryeh Schonbrun

From time to time I avail myself of the privilege of modern societies—the internet. I read the news (i.e. YU Commentator), chat with friends, and sometimes even check my Facebook newsfeed. Sometimes I browse the vast stores of knowledge of Wikipedia, sometimes I listen to enlightening podcasts from the BBC, and sometimes I even search for answers to halakhic questions. And sometimes I do what might seem commonplace for any diligent YU *bochur*—I log onto www.yutorah.org. Modern technology, with all its vices and annoyances has at least the *zchus* of having made recordings, videos, and shiurim of Torah available from a wide variety of sources, Rebbeim, and on a vast array of topics. With relative ease, I can select a topic that interests me, pick a shiur, and download or stream it instantly on my personal computer and smartphone. YU Torah, in fact, not only allows me to remain connected to the Torah, it also allows me to return to my days in YU and brings to me the personalities I left behind.

A friendly voice counts for much in the turbulence of my post-Aliya lifestyle, and the ability to tune in on demand and hear a shiur directly from my Rebbeim in the U.S., in English, brings great convenience and comfort. My soul demands a shiur once in a while in my native tongue, and the ability to return, albeit digitally, to a place from which I parted a year ago gives me some personal coherence in the hectic transitions I've come to expect here in Israel. I speak proudly of my Rebbeim back in the U.S., I feel obligated to instill in my fellow Israelis a respect for the Rabbis that they may not have heard about. With all of the politics of today's Torah world, the knowledge that the Israel-specific problems (as related to the Rabbinate, army, etc.) don't affect all Rebbeim equally gives me a better perspective as I relate to my surroundings. While I appreciate my Israeli Rabbis' enthusiasm for the Zionist enterprise, and while I feel very connected to the goings on the military and societal levels (as I have many friends actively serving in the army), I frequently hearken back to the good-old-days of YU, where the issue at hand was just Torah, minus the distractions of today's modern Israel.

However, my nostalgic revelry doesn't last too long. Though we face many problems here in Israel, I should not ignore the issues facing the American Jewish community. Even while remaining shielded from Israel-specific issues, American Jewry suffers from other, systemic problems. Assimilation, Orthopraxy (and disaffection), and Antisemitism are just a few of the issues that you must deal with, and I sincerely wish you much luck. These problems have trailed the Jewish people from time immemorial, and have collectively wrought significant damage upon our national psyche. We have problems here too, but the ones listed usually get drowned out in the chaos of wars, scandals, and shady politics, not to mention the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. It seems just natural (!) that the loss of what some assess as 20% of religious youth gets much less focus than the fate of fifteen families who built their houses on [what's claimed to be] private land. Some of the more enduring and significant issues, and accordingly, the issues most avoided and silenced such as the allocation of national resources, the housing bubble, the rising cost of living, and the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth get little to no media coverage. It serves no elite to speak about the *real* issues.

And while I cannot argue that the *Jewish* community as a whole finds itself complicit in the current state of affairs and I do not agree that the Jewish lobby should take responsibility for the U.S. and other countries' financial arrangements, I do find it quite aggravating to see my fellow brethren following the dictates of neo-liberalist idolatry and as such supporting the cruel measures of population control that conjure up images of an Orwellian dystopia. The recently passed U.S. tax break for the rich, and corresponding funding cuts for the poor (as proposed), just prove to me the inarticulate cruelty of those responsible for enacting such draconian reform on the unsuspecting, hoodwinked masses that they claim to represent. The Jews didn't pass the reform, and many of our brethren in politics protested valiantly against the robbery, however, I am not naïve. I know that some of us well-to-do welcomed the tax-breaks, and that most of us could not find the strength to call out the implicit perniciousness of the decree. Money was stolen from the American people and no one bothered to fight. To be fair, this was not our fight. We should not feel at liberty to interfere with impunity in foreign (i.e. non-Israeli) decisions, and our continued involvement in government does not always promote our well-being (à la Kushner). Nevertheless, I chose to write this not as a polemic against our indifference to others' plight, but as a critique on our own failings. The evil that begot the recent tax bill does not stop at the national level, it even affects our religious communities.

Which brings me back to my homesick revelry: I download my shiur, put it on playback and, to my unsurprised chagrin I awake to the hurried voice of the impersonal announcer: "Today's Learning is Sponsored by '...' Leiliuy nishmas '...' Honestly, I couldn't care less who sponsored 'today's learning.' I most likely have never met either the *niftar* or the donor. I must listen, as I do not want to miss my shiur, and thus I feel myself a captive audience. When the shiur begins I ask myself simply, did I gain anything from knowing that someone has sponsored my shiur? Do I really care? More deeply, I feel angst and become defensive. I begin to wonder: If they sponsored the shiur *leiliuy nishmas* whomever, well, I'm going to appropriate that to my heart's desire. I know enough people who have passed on, people whom I care about, whose souls I wish to elevate, and I don't really care what the donor paid. Isn't it my right to decide where the *zchus* goes?

I do not wish to seem too irreverent or facetious, but it must have occurred to someone that the advertisement-style informative nonsense we must listen to has no

purpose or meaning. I do not wish to insult those who have opened their pockets to the furtherance of the teaching of Torah. They're all-right. They mean well and deserve respect for making a sacrifice of their morally-earned (I hope) wealth. I just fail to see the

“YU TORAH HAS FORMED A MONOPOLY ON ONE OF THE SOURCES OF DIVINE INSPIRATION AND THUS CAN EXPROPRIATE MY RIGHTLY-EARNED ZCHUS IN FAVOR OF SOME BENEFACITOR WHOM I DO NOT KNOW AND DO NOT INHERENTLY TRUST!”

reasoning behind their actions. If they want to gain *zchus* for their dear-departed, they should speak of them kindly, tell stories of the good-deeds that came to the world by their hands. It fills me with a certain sadness to hear of the departure of a soul from among us, to be prodded to learn and be *maale* their souls from purgatory, when I know nothing about them. How can I possibly pray for them if I don't know anything about them! When we insert the *choilim* into davening, we usually either know them, or know someone who knows them. If we don't, we insert them anyway, out of goodwill. We do not feel obligated, we do it out of love of our compatriots. When someone goes out of his way to *pay* for the soul of his dear-departed, I must comply, since, well, doesn't he deserve it? If I am free to appropriate the *zchus* to whomever I wish, or to the general *clal*, what's the point of it all? But then, if I must invest of my own consciousness, of my attention and consideration in order to help the soul of a comrade, then what have I gained from a ten-second statement of gratitude? Can I expect to feel any connection whatsoever? I cannot, and I must then conclude that the whole enterprise smells of a forced transaction.

If I cannot feel myself invested in the beneficiary of the *zchus* (the donor and the soul) generated by my listening and absorbing the words of wisdom of my Rebbe, and I cannot feel myself directly aided by their contribution, then I have simply entered into a spiritual transaction without my consent. I don't feel anything special towards the donor who has possibly indirectly made the shiur available to me, nor can I even express my gratitude in a significant manner. The powers that be have decided to appropriate the *zchus* that I've generated in my earnest desire to connect to the Almighty to whomever offered them the biggest check. I don't have the ability to see where the *zchus* is going, and I cannot object, since where else am I to hear the shiurim of my Rebbeim? YU Torah has formed a monopoly on one of the sources of divine inspiration and thus can expropriate my rightly-earned *zchus* in favor of some benefactor whom I do not know and do not inherently trust. I didn't agree to the arrangement and I won't agree to *mafqir* my *zchus* to just *anyone* (sue me!).

But seriously, don't take this the wrong way. YU Torah is great, it's just that this kind of relationship infects the very fabric of religious communal life and that you can feel the destructive nature of the commodification of spirituality in almost every corner of our religious world. Donations, investments, and *tzedakah* have all come to represent a certain spiritual transaction. One might donate in order to gain merit, *kavod*, or just to feel good. One might invest in a project in order to feel part of something uplifting and one might give *tzedakah* in order to immune himself from future poverty or as an attempt to unburden himself from the load of a wealth amassed from questionable finances.

I do not mean to accuse every do-gooder of wrongdoing or of complicity in the nullification of the holiness of such good deeds. Most of us genuinely feel a sacrifice when we give of what we've earned. (The Atlantic (3/2013) reported that the poor, in fact, give *more* to charity (relatively) than their rich peers!) However, those who have made their wealth immorally can also abuse the system. A rich capitalist might find it satisfying and profitable to rid himself of his guilt by donating to an institution, Yeshiva (where students' products of long hours of study get siphoned off), or charity fund. He feels himself clean of his spiritual filth when he gets his tax-deduction and merits good-standing among his peers. His wealth has been translated into a *meilitz yosher* and *sheim tov*, and instead of receiving a reprobation from his sacerdotal Rabbi on his questionable business practices, he receives an approbation and absolution (only rarely does one find a Rav fluent enough in financial matters to spot a crook). One can only wonder how

deeply this illicit ceremony has infected our religious system and has thus quieted our consciences. A quick look at our priorities as a community might serve as a warning. Through the ongoing crisis of wealth inequality and people suffering in the streets, American Jews argued over expanding a seldom-used prayer section at the Kotel, among other nonsense. Hashem yerakhem.

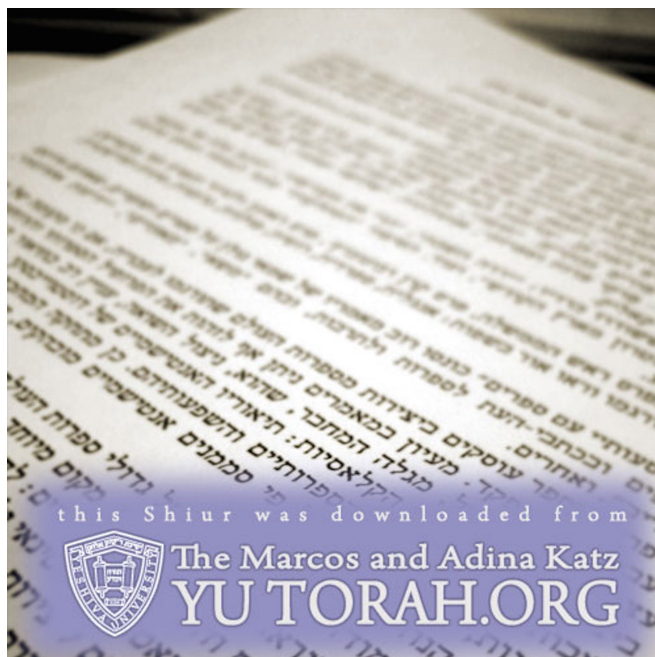
Excerpts from the Luther's 95 Theses:

32 Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.

43 Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences

45 Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath.

75-76 To consider papal indulgences so great that they could absolve a man even if he had done the impossible and had violated ... God is madness. We say on the contrary that papal indulgences cannot remove the very least of venial sins as far as guilt is concerned.



Photoshoppers Have Feelings Too

By Tamar Ciment

People often ask me to make flyers for their school clubs or events, and I always agree to it because it's never a trouble for me. All I'm doing is messing around on Photoshop for a couple of hours.

Most people who see the crowded bulletin boards in passing barely notice one posting out of 20 that are up there, and that's why I like to work extra hard on my flyers. I want them to stand out- I want people to see them.

Recently, I made a flyer for the College Republicans and College Democrats debate. You may have seen it around. I thought it was pretty cool-looking and I always love seeing my flyers hung up around campus, so when I saw those red and blue posters around school I was feeling happy about it. But then I saw one hanging up that was completely torn on only one side of the poster, clearly a representation of someone's opposing views.

This article is really not about politics, so I'm not going to specify which side of the flyer was ripped up.

If you know me, you know I'm a generally easy-going person who doesn't get annoyed very easily, so I just kind of shrugged it off and went on with my day. However, I noticed that many more of my flyers were ripped or even thrown out. And I couldn't help but feel bothered by it. Not only because I had worked hard on making the flyers, but also because the College Republicans and the College Democrats are two of the most mature and professional clubs on campus, so it was just sad to see someone reacting so immaturely.

This seems to be a popular problem nowadays, where people are so focused on one idea that they don't realize there are other things going on. If you care a lot about politics, good for you. Go be a political science major and change the world. However, if your views are so strong

**"I'M JUST THE POSTER-MAKER
AND I'M NOT TRYING TO CRAMP
YOUR STYLE!"**

that it's hard for you to take a step back and realize that I'm just the poster-maker and I'm not trying to cramp your style, then maybe you should reconsider your values.

I thought about giving the benefit of the doubt, you know, because someone obviously could have just accidentally punched the wall with a fist full of knives. Maybe someone just had a lot of feelings bottled up and needed to take it out somehow, and the closest thing to them was a political debate flyer. Who knows? (I do)

The point of this article is to try and open people's eyes to the greater picture, which is that everything you lay your eyes on, especially on the bulletin boards, is a product of someone else's time and effort. A wise man once said, "your ego is trying to kill you," and it remains true to this day. So please don't let your ego get the better of you. Just walk around and take things in before spitting things out.



The Woman of Valor

By Michelle Naim

It was a dark night in the Brookdale dormitory, floor eight, room F. Three young women sat huddled over their textbooks in preparation for the next day of courses. All of a sudden, one of them stood up yelling the words: "We must start a revolution!" The other two girls got out of their chairs and, with their chins held high, looked each other straight in the eyes and began speaking of the women at Stern College. Although the women in room 8F had a spectacular picture of their counterparts as Women of Valor, many of their peers did not share the same vision.



The other day, I heard someone on the shuttle say that they didn't even know why they were getting an education: "We all know that I'm going to become a stay at home mom anyways. There's no reason for me to try to do well in this class." This is a problem, said the girls in room 8F! The ability to have a career and advance ourselves should be our top priority, in addition to raising our children. Being a mother is a full-time job on its own accord, but there is no reason for us to stagnate our intellectual growth by not getting the complete experience of a college degree.

**"THE ABILITY TO HAVE A CAREER AND ADVANCE
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ADDITION TO RAISING OUR CHILDREN."**

Before every registration date, most people are not asking themselves questions like what classes can I take that will challenge me intellectually and give me the opportunity to learn something new? Instead, everyone wants to take the easiest classes that will guarantee them an A. This is especially true with regard to Judaic studies classes.

Jewish families are spending thousands of dollars for their daughters to get an education. Women are now educators, professionals, and business women. We cannot use our precious time at Stern College to only go out on dates! Although an exciting part of the college experience, and Yeshiva University at large, this is not the prime reason we attend this institution. It behooves us, as future mothers, to prepare our minds and intellects for the obstacles we will face in the future. We should be just as capable to help our sons and daughters with their algebra homework as we are to help them understand the concept of a *mitzvah aseh shehazman grama*.

A current Senior at Stern College, who has chosen to remain anonymous, remarked: "It's not that I have a problem with being a stay at home mom. I feel uncomfortable with the idea that people are spending thousands of dollars on a degree they might not ever use and essentially are using the university as a dating pool. It's demeaning to education at large and lowers the quality of classroom discussion when people don't care about their education to the same extent as other people in the classroom." We are the women of the future. Let's start acting like it.

Dress for Success

By Aaron Karesh

On Tuesday January 30, the YU Career Center hosted an event for all students considering pursuing a job in the financial services industry titled “What is Wall Street.” The event, featuring a keynote speech by Goldman Sachs Managing Director and YU alum Bennet J. Schachter (SSSB ’97), was meant to give aspiring financial services professionals insight into what working on the Street is like. While Schachter, along with the panelists — most of whom were YU alumni — outlined the pros and cons to both the pursuit of a career on Wall Street and the various careers themselves, they failed to address an often overlooked aspect of life on the Street: dress code.

Ever since the dot-com bubble at the turn of the 20th century, workplace dress codes on Main Street have become increasingly more casual; on Wall Street, not so much. While male employees at startups are often seen wearing anything from a button down shirt and chinos to jeans and a t-shirt, bankers and other financial services professionals are seldom seen in anything less formal than a dress shirt and slacks, and are most often found in a suit and tie.

But what is acceptable Wall Street style? Are pinstripe suits, contrasting collar shirts, maroon power ties, gaudy cufflinks, and suspenders (for reference, see Gordon Gekko in the 1987 film *Wall Street*) still acceptable? Is there a style hierarchy at banks that, while not in writing, is not to be broken? What about those fun, colorful socks? Is that patterned sport coat you wore to your sister’s Bat Mitzvah party acceptable to wear into the office? I am here to answer these questions, and give some advice, free of charge. Now I’ll admit, anyone who knows me knows that I prefer wearing joggers — or jeans if I feel the need to dress up — a t-shirt, and a solid crew neck sweatshirt to most anything else in my wardrobe; at the same time, however, I do enjoy putting on a suit and tie and having the opportunity to not look like the college kid in every movie who rolled straight out of bed and into class. After hours of extensive research — I’ve been reading GQ and watching Tom Ford interviews recently — I am here to present you with the definitive guide to the male dress code on Wall Street.

The suit: While the stereotypical banker suit has bold pinstripes and wide lapels, and is worn with a power tie that screams “I’m better than you,” that is no longer the case, especially for interns and analysts just starting out at the firm. Suits — yes, you should have more than one — should be in one of two colors: gray or navy. While they do not all need to be solid, make sure that one of each color is. The suits you purchase after those two basic one’s can be patterned, but nothing too “in-your-face.” For example, instead of a bold Gordon Gekko-esque pinstripe suit, opt for something a little more subtle — something that shows you put effort into your outfit, but that won’t make you look like you’re trying to get into GQ’s “People of Pitti Uomo” album. Instead of wearing a suit with Tom Ford’s signature wide, peak lapels, choose something with a slimmer profile that will show the client you came to play ball, but keep you from looking like a guy who has too much money and doesn’t know what else to do with it other than purchase a \$5,000-plus suit.

The shirt: While finding the right type of suit may be difficult, finding the right type of shirt is not. It comes down to three words and two colors: white and blue. These are your basics. They’ll match with your navy suits and your gray suits, and almost every tie you own. Now, like your suits, a little bit of pattern is okay, so long as it is subtle. Bengal stripe? Check. Pinstripe? Check. Solid white or blue? Obviously. Check and micro-check? You bet. Seeing as your shirt will be covered up by your suit jacket majority of the time, you have some additional creative liberty should you choose to exercise it; just be careful.

The tie: This one is admittedly tricky. Unlike with a suit or shirt, not all patterned ties are considered “peacock-ish” and unacceptable; at the same time, it is important to know not only what tie matches with your respective

suit and shirt, but also what patterns are acceptable for you to wear. A solid tie in a neutral color will never cause you any problems; where it gets more complicated is when you decide you’re getting bored of your solid ties and

“BUT WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE WALL STREET STYLE? ...I AM HERE TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, AND GIVE SOME ADVICE, FREE OF CHARGE.”

want to incorporate some patterns into your otherwise conservative wardrobe. The key here is to not do too much. It shouldn’t have to be said that those “fun ties” with team logos or cartoon characters on them are a no-go. Ties with diagonal stripes, polka dots, small shapes, basically anything in a neutral color that isn’t going to stand out too much, is fair game. With ties, even more so than with shirts, there is an incredible amount of creative liberty you can take, but with that immense creative liberty comes a

be made of leather, and should not have any big, flashy buckles. You got a Ferragamo or Gucci belt as a present? Good for you. Leave it at home and wear something that doesn’t tell the rest of the world you’re privileged.

The watch: “Significantly higher levels of conscientiousness were observed in participants who wore a watch.” This is a line taken from the abstract of a study conducted by David A. Ellis and Rob Jenkins. It is proven that wearing a watch gives off the impression that you have your stuff — I use this word in lieu of a better, explicit one — together. So the question is not whether or not you should be wearing a watch, but what type of watch is acceptable. As a junior banker, this answer is simple. Like a Ferragamo or Gucci belt, anything expensive that screams “I’m privileged” should be left at home. Stick with watches that are less than a few hundred dollars and you’ll be fine.

Accessories: Yes, men wear accessories too, even if we do not define them as such. Cufflinks? Accessory. Tie clip? Accessory. Pocket square? You guessed it, accessory. Let’s run down the list real quick. For starters, wearing a button cuff shirt is a much safer bet than wearing a French cuff shirt, for which you need cufflinks. Should you choose



tiny margin of error. One paisley tie and you may never be taken seriously as a banker ever again.

Socks: This one is hard for me because, like everyone else at YU, I have been wearing socks with different colors, patterns, and shapes for years now (I can even remember when I got my first pair — it was my freshman year of high school in 2011). The easy solution to the question of whether or not you can wear patterned socks is to say no. If you’re wearing a gray suit, wear gray socks, a navy suit, navy socks. But to our generation of fun sock wearers, this solution does not suffice our desire to ball out of control in the six dollar sock section at Target. So what should you do? Treat your socks like your shirts. Solids are always acceptable, and patterned socks work as long as the base color is the same as that of your suit and the pattern is subtle. So wear your Happy Socks, your Unsimply Stitched Socks, or whatever other brand you choose, just don’t let your inner peacock get in the way of your outer banker.

Shoes and belts: Shoes and belts are the easiest articles of clothing to wear into the office because you really only need two of each. In terms of shoes, you should have a black pair and a brown pair to go with your black belt and your same-shade-of-brown-as-your-shoes belt. Your shoes should be made of leather and with welted soles, so you won’t find yourself having to buy a new pair after six months of daily wear and tear. Your belts should also

to wear a French cuff shirt, however, make sure your cufflinks are not too “in-your-face.” Unlike a woman’s engagement ring, your cufflinks are not meant to be shown off. Despite being billed as a fashion accessory, the tie clip serves an extremely functional purpose in keeping your tie connected to your shirt so it doesn’t blow in the wind or accidentally dip into your coffee. Unfortunately, tie clips are not seen that way, and at least as a junior employee at a bank, should be avoided. While a pocket square is a great way to show the world you know how to match patterns and fold nice crisp lines, they are not worth the hassle, are difficult to coordinate with an outfit, and are just unnecessary. The bottom line for accessories is as follows: You can if you want, but there’s really no point.

The key to dressing well on Wall Street is to wear well-fitting, relatively conservative clothing that shows your clients and your higher ups that while you put you put effort into your appearance and your image, you know that at the end of the day your job is more important. I’ll leave you with some very simple advice for dressing for your career on Wall Street — advice you didn’t get from any of the financial services professionals who came to the “What is Wall Street” event: KISS — keep it simple, stupid.

Cybersecurity: Battling Crime in Cyberspace

By Sarah Torgueman

The threats posed by technology have grown. Identity theft, intrusive viruses, and malicious software are just a few of the danger's lurking behind a person's computer screen. But what's most frightening is the fact that many users are unaware such dangers even exist.

Cybercrime has increased tremendously, affecting not only individuals but business entities and their virtual transactions, as well. The internet has undoubtedly advanced global business, increased productivity and stimulated much growth. However, with such strides comes great risk. With society's continuous advancement into the age of smart machines, internet crime has surged, triggering tremendous spending on cybersecurity.

According to Barbri Cyber Solutions, 64% of companies experienced web-based attacks and 59% experienced malicious code in 2017. To combat these attacks, projections for federal spending are estimated to reach about \$1 billion on cybersecurity alone over the course of 2018. Moreover, Cybersecurity Ventures estimates that global spending on cybersecurity will exceed \$1 trillion from 2017 to 2021. According to a Symantec Internet Security Threat Report, there will be about 50 to 200 billion connected devices in the United States by 2020. Without the necessary and proper security carried out by the cybersecurity industry, cybercrime damage costs are expected to reach \$6 trillion annually by 2021, about \$3 trillion more than in 2015.

According to CNN Money, nearly 1 million viruses and malicious software were created each day in 2015, totalling more than 317 million new threats. These figures have only grown over the last few years. Viruses and other malware are characteristic of the most widespread internet dangers. They consist of malicious digital activity and theft by targeting downloads, dropping files, integrating spyware, and setting passwords.

Additionally, cyber attackers have been sneaking malware into website codes. This infects entire computer browsers simply by visiting a website with malicious code, which is often hidden. Taiwan and Iran have been reported to have the highest concentration of these download pages, known as drive-by download websites. Luckily, web browsers monitor malware and may redirect web pages when suspicious content is detected.

According to the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA), popular cyber crimes affecting businesses include identity theft, tax-refund fraud, and theft of intellectual property. In addition, corporate account takeover continues to affect company finances tremendously. Cybercriminals have stolen companies' financial banking credentials and have stolen funds from their bank accounts. According to FDIC Cyber Fraud specialist, small and average sized businesses suffer a combined loss in the millions due to electronic fund transfer fraud.

Microsoft's Security Intelligence Report of 2017 highlighted cloud computing as the newest trend for cyber attackers targeting businesses. Cloud computing is a company's use of a technology network of remote servers to store information and allow centralized access of data. More and more information is being saved and stored in the "cloud" through platforms such as iCloud by Apple and Google Drive by Google. This centralized data storage has prompted cyber attackers to break into a cloud account and access large amounts of company data and customer information. According to the report, cloud-based user account attacks have increased by 300% since 2016. One reason why such attacks are so common is because companies often create weak, guessable account passwords, which has made it possible for attackers to break into them.

Ransomware has been on the rise as well, disproportionately targeting businesses on the eastern hemisphere. It is characterized by malicious software that accesses digital files and disables them until money is paid to the attackers. Ransomware is a major threat to endpoint devices, which are any device remotely connected to a network. This enables attackers to gain direct access to company files. Hackers are now breaking into consumer products demanding ransoms totaling billions of dollars.

"WITH SOCIETY'S CONTINUOUS ADVANCEMENT INTO THE AGE OF SMART MACHINES, INTERNET CRIME HAS SURGED, TRIGGERING TREMENDOUS SPENDING ON CYBERSECURITY."

It seems like cyber attacks have disproportionately affected the healthcare industry. In fact, 94% of health organizations have been affected by cyber attacks, being locked out of company systems and having private information exposed. 88% of ransomware victims were

and mitigate the dangers posed by malicious software. Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance, for example, has released two insurance policies to cover cyber liability, which includes costs companies may incur from responding to cyber threat. Firms are trying to use artificial intelligence and machine learning systems to better detect malicious and intrusive activities online. Nearly a third of cybersecurity startups founded in 2017 began focusing their security efforts toward medical devices and automotive systems.

By the end of 2017, there were over 400 active cybersecurity companies in Israel. 30 international corporations have cybersecurity related R&D centers located there as well. In January, Israel hosted a Cybertech conference in Tel Aviv, showcasing cyber technology outside of the U.S. Israel's cybersecurity industry is expanding as investors pour their money into Israeli cybersecurity firms and startups. About 15% of global investment in the cybersecurity industry went towards Israeli firms, amounting to approximately \$815 million.

Though constant efforts are carried out to minimize cyber dangers and more money is being devoted to preventing attacks, hackers continue to gain strength. As more and more people do business online, it remains ever-so crucial to protect yourself and your company from these growing risks.

How You Should Respond to Cyber Danger:

- Avoid weak, guessable passwords



notably in the healthcare industry and have recently cost the U.S. \$2.6 billion.

Hackers are tech savvy and have been getting away with their attacks. Avivah Litan of the technology firm Gartner Group mentioned that less than 1 in 700 identity theft cyber crimes have led to arrest and emphasized that attackers stay ahead because once law enforcement agencies discover a virus, many more have already been developed and put to use.

Hackers have expanded their range of attacks and have developed new outlets for acquiring information. The increased number of businesses' sponsored posts and advertisements on social media has left more room for security threats. Twitter and LinkedIn have both been victim to security breaches in the past, suggesting that information posted via social media outlets is not secure. Cybercriminals are reported to have also attacked smaller law firms or third-party entities who often represent larger corporations with many customers, accessing their information as a result.

The cybersecurity industry is working hard to address

- Don't compromise your identity; create strong and secure passwords and routinely change them
- Do not use public Wi-Fi hotspots
 - You're opening the door for hackers to access your info and potentially lock you out of your accounts.
- Watch what you post
 - Despite being on "private," your posts are exposed.
- Update your software
 - Platforms are constantly being improved to fix issues and provide the latest security developments.
- Sign up for real-time alerts
 - Receiving real-time credit card and bank transaction info will allow you to detect unusual activity right away
- Close accounts that have been tampered with

Meet The Press (Sources)

By Akiva Frishman

Home to thousands of startups, Israel is internationally recognized as one of the most fertile environments for entrepreneurs, attracting thousands to cities like Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Beer Sheva. Among these aspiring businesspeople is a recent graduate of Yeshiva University. David Gedallovich, a native of Columbia and *Oleh Chadash*, has just launched Presssources, a company promising to

PRESSOURCES

radically improve the journalism industry and streamline a reporter's writing process.

Via Whatsapp call, I had the opportunity of speaking with David and learned more about the history and goals of Presssources, its recent achievements, and its strategy for profitability. An individual with a remarkable background and persistent determination, David is not only building a successful startup but is instilling much pride within the YU community as well.

Recounting the impetus for Presssources, David tells me about his business partner, Rosella Tercatin, and how her frustrations with the journalism industry motivated her to create a more efficient way for writers and reporters to conduct their research and find sources.

Tercatin, an Italian citizen and acclaimed journalist, was asked to write an article comparing Italy to its neighboring European countries. "She'd travel to France, Germany, Belgium etc. to speak with local residents and learn more about their respective cultures" David says. "But Rosella quickly learned that finding interview-ready individuals from varying backgrounds, occupations, and political viewpoints would not be easy; it was challenging for her to connect with credible sources and the language barrier presented an even greater obstacle" he adds.

Enter Presssources.

In an *Upan* classroom, Tercatin—now CEO of Presssources—relayed her experiences to David and told him of her plans to start a company that would help expedite the process by which journalists find credible sources. "We'll build a database comprised of people from all sorts of backgrounds. If a reporter needs a quote from a teacher in Milan, a baker in Paris or a Merkel-voter in Germany, we'll have one ready for them. To contact the sources, reporters will simply need to access our site and search for relevant identifiers, saving them countless hours" Tercatin tells him. David, moved by his friend's professionalism, ambitious spirit, and talented skill set, was inspired by the idea and sensed its economic opportunity—he signed on as the company's CFO.

Presssources has grown since that impromptu meeting in Tel Aviv. In September of 2017, Gedallovich and Tercatin were accepted into *Gvahim's* "Hive", an Israeli accelerator that assists international entrepreneurs by providing access to an expansive professional network, mentorship, free office space, and website design. This exclusive program enabled the Presssource team to collaborate and refine their business model with highly successful individuals in Google and other top companies.

Following a series of productive brainstorming sessions, Presssources formalized how they intend to recruit sources and build their database. "For the past few months, we've been working with journalism schools across Italy; Many students are eager to be listed as sources and it also allows us to build connections with future reporters. Eventually, we plan to employ an international ad agency to help us reach people across the globe and encourage them to register as sources" he says. Gedallovich will travel to Spain, South America, and the U.S. in the coming weeks and has set up meetings with journalism schools in those areas.

David—and the Presssource team—is confident that people will recognize the economic opportunity of being listed in its database. He explains "Imagine you're a business owner in Manhattan and a Times article mentions you and your company, who wouldn't want that sort of publicity?" To ensure that sources are who they purport to be—For example, a resident of a specific area or a member of a racial or socioeconomic group—Presssources will either contact an applicant directly or review their profiles on social media platforms. Juan David Alvarez, the company's CTO, hopes to design a software to automatically verify a source's identity.

The Israeli startup intends to provide journalists with services beyond its source database. The company has already retained a number writers and researchers who are available to help journalists with time-consuming projects like polls and data collection.

While the company has yet to charge its clients, its business model is conducive for significant revenue growth. Offering a low-fee monthly subscription plan, Presssources hopes to lure both ambitious journalists who might be eager to take advantage of an expedited reporting process as well as larger media corporations that could

benefit from Presssources' future network. In addition, the company will allow reporters to purchase relevant photographs and videos obtained by its affiliated sources.

Gedallovich has reason to be optimistic about the future of his company. While they've yet to officially launch their database, Presssources has already been quite successful in assisting journalists. Leveraging their connections in Italy, the startup introduced "Presto", a service intended to help reporters cover the recent Italian election. "We've gotten

"DAVID GEDALLOVICH HAS JUST LAUNCHED PRESSOURCES, A COMPANY PROMISING TO RADICALLY IMPROVE THE JOURNALISM INDUSTRY AND STREAMLINE A REPORTER'S WRITING PROCESS."

calls from many newspapers and media outlets seeking translators, advice, and research services" David explains. The company intends to capitalize on their recent success by debuting their awaited database in the coming weeks.

Though he's aware of the economic potential of the company, David believes that Presssources can also have an important and meaningful effect on society. For example, he attributes much of the media's negative portrayal of Israel to a journalist's inability to contact reliable sources. He argues "It takes a while to find and interview people who actually live in Ramallah or Jerusalem. If the writer is under a strict schedule, he'll just recycle old and inaccurate information, prolonging a false narrative."

Additionally, David hopes that NGOs and social justice agencies will choose to use the service as well. "Many countries don't allow journalists to enter, but if we're able to build a network of sources in these areas, it's very possible that they'll be able to provide information for writers hoping to expose a country's wrongdoings" he argues.

Gedallovich believes that investors and clients are less interested in a company's idea as they are in the people running it. "If they see that you're passionate, motivated, and hardworking, they'll invest with you" he claims.

In David's case, these traits will certainly contribute to Presssources' success. Backpacking through Israel, David discovered a *Yeshiva* and was quickly captivated by Judaism's depth and meaning. After spending a number of months engrossed in *Torah* learning, David decided to continue his religious studies at Yeshiva University. Starting in the James Striar School, YU's elementary-level Judaic program, David worked diligently and eventually enrolled in the Mazer Yeshiva Program, the most intensive and demanding Talmudic studies curriculum.

Despite his double major in Finance and Marketing, David made time for a number of important extracurricular activities. As president of the International Student's Committee, he ensured that foreign students like himself had a voice on campus. Additionally, seeking to establish bonds between the Jewish and Spanish communities of Washington heights, David became involved in Tech for Life, a club designed to teach local students about computers and the benefits of technology.

While he enjoyed his time in New York, his dream was to live in Israel. Following his graduation in 2014, David traveled to China for a business venture and later moved to *Givat Shmuel*, officially making *Aliyah* in 2017. Indescribably happy living in Israel, David considers it to be "one of the best decisions of his entire life." He's thankful for all of the assistance that YU provided him in regards to his *Aliyah*—and college in general—and urges all of its students to take advantage of the resources that the university provides.



Never. Stop. Commentating.

Got something to say?
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