

## Ben Katz Gives Visibility to Religious LGBTQ Community

By SHAYNA HERSZAGE

Yeshiva University and the College Democrats welcomed Ben Katz, a YU alumnus (YC '11) and LGBTQ activist, to the Beren Campus on Nov. 13 to speak about the dialogue in Israel regarding LGBTQ rights and inclusion within the religious community.

Every desk in Room 208 of 215 Lexington was filled, with students sitting on desktops and on the floor, as well as standing in the back. Over 65 attendees showed up to hear Katz speak. Katz explained much of what Shoval, the organization he works for, does throughout Israel.

Shoval, as Katz explained, is an organization that aims to educate religious communities about LGBTQ people. This primarily comes through three forms: hosting meetings and events to offer queer religious Jews a sense of community, traveling throughout the country to start a dialogue in the religious communities and educating school teachers and administrators about how to give support to LGBTQ students.

Katz, who studied psychology at Yeshiva University before moving to Israel, emphasized the effect of a

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Ben Katz, left, speaking to over 65 attendees on the Beren Campus

THE COMMENTATOR

## Cheating Incidents Plague YU Midterms Season Once More

By YARDENA KATZ and  
BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

Several students allegedly cheated on a General Chemistry midterm on Oct. 31. Two weeks later, on Nov. 14, cheating was reported once again following a Money and Banking midterm. Both were Yeshiva College (YC) courses, with the latter course also cross-listed as a Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) course. In addition, Stern College (SCW) Deans this semester identified incidents of suspected plagiarism in an advanced English course and a Computer Systems course. These incidents follow on the heels of efforts in recent semesters to curb a culture of lax academic integrity that has plagued YU's undergraduate colleges for decades.

The General Chemistry midterm was administered to the course's 38 students in Belfer 807 without any proctors besides for Prof. Jianfeng Jiang, who teaches the course. According to Jiang, he "noticed suspicious activities in the back of the room close to the window sides, such as low-voice murmuring," and one student reported to him that "a few students dropped and picked up papers on the floor to exchange info" during the exam.

There were also no additional proctors accompanying Prof. Srikar Gopal Vinjamuri in the Money and Banking midterm, held in Glueck 308. The setup of the room allowed some of the 30 students to sit very close to each other and potentially place notes on their laps out of the professor's sight. The cheating, which allegedly included note-passing and whispering during the exam, was reported to the professor, Dean Fred Sugarman of YC and Dean Michael Strauss of SSSB shortly after the exam.

Several days after the General Chemistry midterm, Executive Director of Pre-Professional Advisement Lolita

Wood-Hill sent an email with the subject "cheating is rampant once again" to YU's pre-health listserv. In the email, Wood-Hill expressed her disappointment in the "rampant" cheating, stating, "Ethics—truth, honesty, hard-work—are not just lofty ideals. Cheating compromises these values and one risks becoming morally bankrupt when the stakes become even higher as a clinician."

*These incidents follow on the heels of efforts in recent semesters to curb a culture of lax academic integrity that has plagued YU's undergraduate colleges for decades.*

Wood-Hill also emphasized in her email that "those who are not brave enough to turn in the cheaters are almost as bad." She cited philosopher Edmund Burke's aphorism "Evil prevails when good men do nothing," and warned students that if they "are not willing to expose the cheaters then please don't come to us with a complaint. We cannot fix an issue that you are unwilling to help us resolve." Wood-Hill's email concluded with an offer for "honest students" to anonymously report cheaters who "cut into the curve and affect YOU!"

As of the publication of this article, no students in either General Chemistry or Money and Banking have been prosecuted for breaches of academic integrity.

"When I graded the exams," explained Jiang, "correct

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## Fall 2018 Financial Update: Presidential House and Moody's Rating

By YARDENA KATZ

Nine days before President Ari Berman assumed office in July 2017, Yeshiva University purchased a two-story house in Teaneck, New Jersey for \$1.8 million to function as the President's home. New Jersey property records indicate that YU paid for the property upfront, without mortgaging the 9,226 square foot lot and its 4,784 square foot house.

Since purchasing the 2006-built property, the University has been billed for approximately \$53,400 in property taxes and could continue to pay upwards of \$42,000 in property taxes annually. Because of its 501(c)(3) status as a tax-exempt not-for-profit organization, however, the University is eligible to apply for a full property tax exemption that, if granted, would apply to future quarters.

The University similarly purchased a house for then-President Richard Joel just before he assumed the presidency in 2003. New York property records show that YU bought the Riverdale house for over \$2.2 million and either paid or was exempted from paying property taxes that have since totaled at least \$1.5 million. Unlike YU's unmortgaged ownership of President Berman's house, subsequent records show that the University mortgaged Joel's house for \$2.5 million in 2004 and refinanced the mortgage in 2009 and 2014.

A monetary incentive for universities to purchase rather than rent these houses for their presidents is the selective applicability of the not-for-profit property tax exemption to property owners, but not to tenants.

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# THE COMMENTATOR

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# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## YU's Academic Integrity: A Ship in Rough Waters

By **BENJAMIN KOSLOWE**

"If we can't come away with some ethical behavior from man to man, all has been wasted. And if we can't transfer that knowledge to business, then I'd be terribly disappointed."

These were the words of Dr. Michael Schiff, the founding dean of Yeshiva University's Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). One cannot help but reflect upon these words in light of recent cheating incidents, some of which have been exposed, and others which any YU student knows about either firsthand or anecdotally. Hard data on cheating is hard to come by, but it is clear that significant numbers of YU students cheat on exams. Though cheating occurs at all universities, it is especially tragic at a religious institution like this one. By his own reasoning, Dr. Schiff would likely be logically compelled to conclude today that all, in fact, has been wasted.

Recent newspaper coverage indicates that the cheating incidents of late are but the most recent flare-up of a decades-old problem. Apparently, recently heightened efforts to crack down on cheating have been but flimsy plugs in the porous ship that carries YU's academic integrity through the raging waters of a 4.0-minded atmosphere in America — the flood of cheating might be temporarily halted from time to time, but it will inevitably infiltrate the institution again by some other avenue.

There are two means by which YU administrators and professors in positions of power might eradicate the cheating problem for good. To row onwards with the ship metaphor: They either can get serious about patching up the ship, or they can invest in a new vessel.

The first means, in practice, would entail implementing the same tried efforts to curb cheating, but enforcing the rules smartly, strongly and comprehensively. For example, rather than simply recommending proctors for

midterms, the University can require that all large classes administer exams in spacious classrooms and with proctors. Student leaders and teachers have also suggested installing video cameras in every single testing room as a potential disincentive.

Of course, cheating disincentives work only when they are supported by an administration with a reputation for responding seriously to cheating incidents. In a cost-benefit analysis of an ethically lax student in YU's current climate, even if cheating were to be made difficult, the chances of there being an actual punishment are so slim that the most rational action may still be to peek at a neighbor's answers or to whisper when the professor turns his back.

This cost-benefit analysis would change if the University took actions that would change its reputation vis-à-vis cheating. Picture the following theoretical email sent to the entire student body: "Last week, a student in General Chemistry was caught stealing answers during an exam. Following a prompt investigation, the Deans have found this student guilty. He has been placed on academic probation and assigned an 'F' in the course. Academic integrity is of the utmost importance to Yeshiva University, and breaches of this integrity will not be taken lightly." Certainly, such a notice would seriously disincentivize cheating.

But perhaps patching up the ship is unrealistic. Maybe finances don't permit ideal testing conditions, or maybe the logistics of YU's bureaucracy of Deans, professors, academic standards committees, classrooms and proctors are such that serious preventative measures are too difficult to enforce.

What, then, of the second means? Is there an alternative

vessel that can adequately replace the flailing ship?

One solution, which has been suggested several times over the years, would be an honor code. Indeed, this would take away responsibility from the Deans, who often insist that the cheating problem stems from culturally permitted behaviors such as general reluctance of students to report their peers by name.

Honor codes are systems by which universities formalize stances of trusting students to behave with honor. Though honor codes are rarities among American liberal arts universities, several prestigious universities use them, including Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland, Williams College and Princeton University.

At Princeton, "all in-class examinations, including finals, midterms, and quizzes, are administered under the Honor Code. Students pledge their honor that they have not attempted to give or receive an unfair advantage during examinations. In exchange, faculty proctors are not present in examination rooms. Additionally, students pledge a responsibility to report all suspected violations of the Code to the Committee." According to the University, "The duality of obligations emphasizes the importance of student to student accountability, a foundational value of the Honor system."

This system is not just naïve wishful thinking. Princeton has operated with its honor code since 1893. Though hardly a scientific sample, several current Princeton students reported to this editor that their exam conditions are perfectly upstanding. Articles as well indicate that cheating incidents during classroom exams at Princeton are few and far between.

Might an honor code be the *deus ex machina* that Yeshiva University needs?

At first glance, the answer would seem to be yes. The argument proceeds roughly as follows. Yeshiva students are at least as ethically upstanding as their secular college counterparts. And for any system of ethical enforcement, if the

system works with a certain population, then the same system would work with another population that is at least as ethical on the aggregate. So, since honor codes effectively maintain academic integrity at several other colleges, an honor code would effectively maintain academic integrity at Yeshiva University.

Upon closer inspection, though, the argument fails. Specifically, the universal conditional does not hold up, and for one simple reason — Yeshiva University's brotherhood. YU's students are almost all Orthodox. Almost all YU students are graduates of Orthodox Jewish high schools, proud alumni of Israeli *yeshivot* and seminaries. Whereas the student bodies of typical American universities are melting pots of strangers from across social strata and around the globe, Yeshiva University undergrads by comparison all know each other.

In a community where social circles stretch wide and where friendships run deep, it is a tall order to expect peers to report on their fellows. Inversely, in such an environment, a sudden paradigm shift of removing all proctors would likely result in a rather messy fallout, not unlike that of an abandoned candy shop after being ravaged by unaccompanied minors.

And so, here ends another Commentator editorial about cheating, bemoaning into the void of time about the seemingly unsolvable state of affairs. One wonders what some future editor will think when he dusts off folded yellowing pages and reads Commentator coverage from Fall 2018. Will that editor marvel at how far YU has progressed? Or will he relate to the familiar porous ship, still beating on, holding academic integrity afloat perilously as it always has and always will?

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*Though cheating occurs at all universities, it is especially tragic at a religious institution like this one.*

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### 1 Game of Thrones Date Announcement

So "GOT" announces their premiere month and then, two days later, the *Ribono Shel Olam* announces that WINTER IS HERE with an out-of-nowhere storm. Call me crazy, but I think She's a fan.



### 2 Using 7 Up/7 Down To Vent Our Own Personal Problems

Super inappropriate and clearly unhealthy. And why is this even in 7 Up? Isn't this a bad thing? Who cares? We're in charge and there is nothing you can do about it! Bow before your new gods.



### 3 Return of Sushi Salad Uptown

What... what is this feeling we are having right now? It's like... it's like we approve of this decision and are... *happy* about it. No, it can't be. IT CAN'T BE! Quick, go to the next 7 Up before we start complimenting RIETS for allowing an uptown co-ed Shabbaton.



### 4 The Greatest Showman

I know we are a year late, but the music in this movie is UNBELIEVABLE!!! Hot take, though, the real protagonist of the film is the bartender from "The Other Side." Did you see that choreography? And the way he juggled those shot glasses and Key Food grapes?



### 5 Rihanna Requesting That Trump Not Play Her Music At His Rallies

Is this the inverse of Ben Shapiro playing Eitan Katz on "The Daily Wire?" Whereby our homeboy B-Shap blasted sick club beat *Lema'anacha*, only to then admit that he is not only bros with Sir Eitan Katz, but also played the first lines of gentle violin on His Lord and Majesty Eitan Katz's track?? Am I just dreaming??? Are the meme groups truly reunited after all???? SWOON!! Pinch me from across the aisle!!!!



### 6 SCWSC Thanksgiving Day Parade

If you saw the wacko footage of this event, you already know it was absolutely ICONIC. The PRDAB and Dean Bacon headshots that made it feel as if they marched with us; the life-size zebra cutout that blended in seamlessly; the turkey float, bearing our SCWSC President in pilgrim garb, pulled by our TAC President from 215 to 245 Lex. The self-awareness alone was like cider for the soul. Vive la France, vive la révolution, vive la Beren doing whatever the heck we want.



### 7 Halakhah

The ultimate facade; the more you know, the less *frum* you appear!

## 7 UP 7 DOWN

## Letter to the Editor: Yonatan Abrams

To the Editor:

I want to publicize an aspect of the Resident Advisors' responsibilities to the student body, because I think that, in general, students are not aware of the duties of Wilf Campus RAs.

I fractured my back at the beginning of the spring semester in 2018, and I was generously escorted to the hospital by Jacob Ovadia on that fateful *motzei Shabbos*. But that is not the extent of what the RAs did for me.

My parents live 275 miles away in Silver Spring, MD, and they could not be with me until arranging for the care

*The RAs were charged with spending time with me while I lay in bed, physically defenseless, loopy from painkillers and lonely.*

of my younger brother and driving up four and half hours to NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. The RAs were charged with spending time with me while I lay in bed, physically defenseless, loopy from painkillers and lonely.

The RAs each did two-hour shifts with me, and I got to spend time with a total of 14 RAs before my parents could arrive. Some even spent more than two hours with me because they were so concerned. I remember that Yisroel Schatz did not want to leave me while I waited for a critical MRI which had been delayed half an hour from 12:30 a.m. to 1 a.m.

I was blown away by the dedication of the RAs and their leader, Jonathan Schwab, Director of University Housing and Residence Life.

Yonatan Abrams, Yeshiva College '20

## Letter to the Editor: Pre-Professional Advising

To the Editor:

In this past issue, The Commentator's editor-in-chief published an editorial entitled "A Pre-Law Advisor Isn't a Luxury. It's a Necessity.," which argued and advocated for the urgent need for a new pre-law advisor. The author ends his article with the following statement:

"The abysmal state of pre-law advising at YU must be addressed. The students *deserve* a qualified individual with legal experience who can advise accurately and professionally" (emphasis added).

In this statement, the author assumes that pre-professional advising — specifically pre-law — is an undergraduate student entitlement or right. Based on the *descriptive* reality — that YU maintains both a Career Center and pre-health and pre-law advising — the institution agrees with the author's assumption. However, *prescriptive* questions must be asked as well: Should universities provide their students with pre-professional advising and guidance? If yes, how *ought* YU distribute its resources for pre-professional advising?

While the first question interests me and intuitively strikes me as antithetical to the "true" goals of a liberal arts education, I will leave it aside for the sake of the second question.

In general, the Career Center focuses on business-related professional paths and, to a certain extent, neglects other professional aspirations. The strong focus on business careers logically springs from the fact that more than half of the male students at YU are enrolled in the Sy Syms School of Business. The question, then, shifts to pre-law and pre-health advising: Should YU

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### 1 Akiva Clair

You either die a 7 up, or live long enough to see yourself become a 7 down.



### 2 The Free Pizza Group Controversy

Please don't vent personal grievances and political opinions in an outlet that is clearly not meant for that. It's inappropriate and unhealthy.



### 3 Calling Benedict Cumberbatch "Ben" in a ystud/sstud

Unacceptable and despicable. There is no way SCDS and Benny are on a first name basis.



### 4 Return of Island Photography

Ladies, put your makeup bags away. Island's filters have got you and your face covered.

I'M WITH STUPID



### 5 No Anti-Vaxxers at the Free Flu Shot Event

Minions don't get vaccinations! NEITHER SHOULD YOU!!!!!!



### 6 Como Pizza at Kedushat Yisrael Chaburah

Weakkkk! I expect better from this battle, nay, war effort.



### 7 Silence

My disturbia at the Thanksgiving table when we allowed women to whisper what they're thankful for really reminded me of that one time a woman spoke at Klein@9 353 days ago. Boy, am I thankful YU handled that with emotional maturity. Happy sweet 16 everyone!

# Wurzweiler Postpones Event With Transgender Activist Hannah Fons

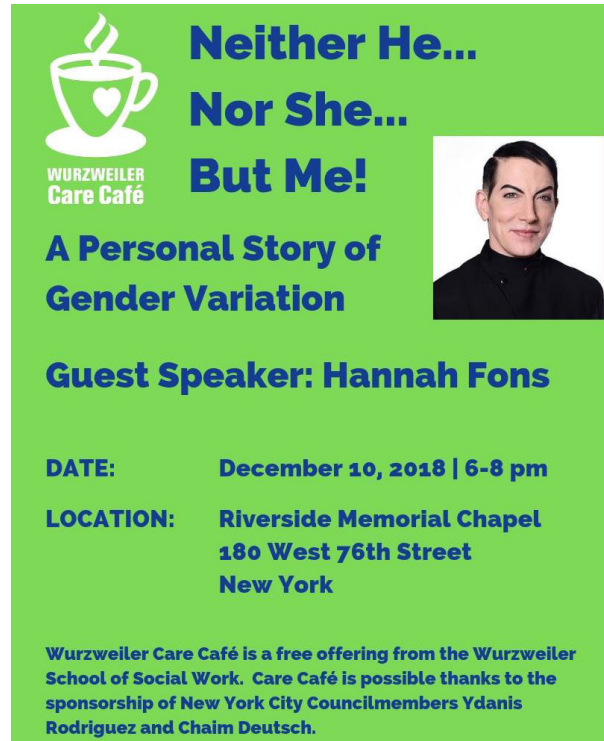
By **BENJAMIN KOSLOWE**

YU's Wurzweiler School of Social Work is set to host an event titled "Neither He, Nor She, But Me: A Personal Story of Gender Variation." Though the Wurzweiler event was originally set for Dec. 10 at the Riverside Memorial Chapel on the Upper West Side, it has since been postponed.

The event, which will be hosted by Wurzweiler's Care Café, will feature speaker Hannah Fons, a transgender individual who works as a Strength & Conditioning Coach at Five Points Academy, a Senior Editor at Yale Robbins Publications and an educator about issues related to the LGBTQ+ community. According to the promotions for the event, the speech will be "a personal story of gender variation."

Wurzweiler's Care Café, which was launched in Jan. 2018, is a grant-funded program that hosts events about topics such as addiction, mental illness, suicide prevention and relationship issues. According to Wurzweiler, "audience size for most Care Cafés will not exceed 50." Three weeks ago, over 65 students packed into a crowded classroom at the Beren Campus for a YU-sponsored speech, hosted by the College Democrats, by LGBTQ activist Ben Katz.

According to YU's Office of Communications and Public Affairs, "the December 10 Care Café with Hannah Fons



**Neither He...  
Nor She...  
But Me!**

**A Personal Story of Gender Variation**

**Guest Speaker: Hannah Fons**

**DATE:** December 10, 2018 | 6-8 pm

**LOCATION:** Riverside Memorial Chapel  
180 West 76th Street  
New York

Wurzweiler Care Café is a free offering from the Wurzweiler School of Social Work. Care Café is possible thanks to the sponsorship of New York City Councilmembers Ydanis Rodriguez and Chaim Deutsch.



WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

## The original flier for the Care Café event

you about future events." Though YU did not share further details about rescheduling, Fons posted on her Facebook page this past Thursday that it will take place in either January or early February.

"I had a conference call with the Care Café organizers [on Thursday]," Fons explained

Riverside Chapel 'wasn't the right venue' for the event, and the second being that they wanted to promote the event more widely to students, and felt that postponing would ultimately get more people to attend."

Some students were confused this past Thursday when the official Facebook posting

for the Dec. 10 event was abruptly taken down without explanation. Only a few hours later, The Observer, one of YU's independent student newspapers, published an article titled "Wurzweiler Event on Gender Issues Disappears From the Internet." According to the article, Wurzweiler's stated motivation of canceling

the original event due to venue issues has been "debunked" for several reasons. These reasons included the testimony of certain

staff workers from Riverside Memorial Chapel, as well as the "surprising" notion that "the event would be cancelled at the last minute by the venue."

As of the publication of this article, The Commentator was unable to confirm any of The Observer's speculations or its alleged debunking of the University's stated motivation for postponing the event.

"I don't have a strong opinion one way or another about where I speak," said Fons, "or when — I'm ready to rock whenever the organizers are — but I am a bit salty that my mom bought a plane ticket to be here in NYC to see me speak on the 10th, and now has to somehow wrangle that back from the airline, or just eat the cost."

*"They felt that Riverside Chapel 'wasn't the right venue' for the event, and ... they wanted to promote the event more widely to students, and felt that postponing would ultimately get more people to attend."*

Hannah Fons

at Riverside Memorial Chapel has been canceled as we are looking for a different venue for this educational event. We will update

to The Commentator, "and they expressed two issues: the first being that after actually viewing my TEDx Talk, they felt that

**BEN KATZ,**  
continued from Front Page

supportive, visible community for LGBTQ people on the state of their mental health. If the LGBTQ community is not represented or mentioned in religious contexts, he explained, religious LGBTQ people feel alone in their experiences, and their mental health and wellbeing may be at risk. As Katz said during the event, "If you can not imagine a future for yourself, you get desperate, and do desperate things. And what people need to hear is, 'There is a future for you, it is okay.'" Through organizations like Shoval, Katz shared, a positive dialogue surrounding LGBTQ members of the religious community is being created. Katz was proud to say that Shoval is helping queer Jews imagine their futures.

The event had a strong effect on the students in attendance. Rivka Reiter (SCW '19) said, "It's the culmination of years and years of work by queer and allied students. I couldn't help but get emotional, seeing the large turnout of students from all backgrounds and walks of life. It was groundbreaking, and hopefully just the first step toward helping our university and the faculty, administration and student body recognize and address the needs of the minority students contained within it."

The issue of LGBTQ acceptance, inclusion and visibility in Yeshiva University has been a polarizing topic in recent years. While some



Students attend Ben Katz's lecture on the Beren Campus.

THE COMMENTATOR

have expressed a feeling of relief at the lack of homophobia upon coming out, such as Moshe Brimm in his article "Where Are the Pitchforks? Being an Openly Gay Student at Yeshiva University," others, such as Josh Tranen in his article "Why I left YU, and Why I'm Writing About It Now," have expressed feeling targeted or ostracized by the community. Particularly in the wake of YU Admissions' rejection of a YU Model United Nations topic paper about "State-Sponsored Legal Discrimination and Violence Against Sexual Minorities," many students felt that the visibility and representation on campus from the Ben Katz event offered a much-needed voice to a community that often may feel underrepresented. Matthew Haller (YC '19), the event coordinator and co-president of the College Democrats, stated,

"We need to start actively representing the LGBTQ+ community on campus, rather than just ignoring it."

The last time that an event like the Ben Katz speech took place at YU was in 2010, when Katz himself was a student at Yeshiva University. A panel entitled "Being Gay In The Modern Orthodox World" was run through the Tolerance Club and the Wurzweiler School of Social Work. At the time, the event was groundbreaking on campus and in the broader YU community. "I was at YU during a time when the community simply was not aware that you could be Modern Orthodox and gay," Katz said. "We didn't talk about LGBTQ people on campus because the public assumption was that they did not exist."

With the occurrence in 2010 of the first

undergraduate Yeshiva University event centered around the LGBTQ community, the marginalized community was acknowledged, according to Katz, but far from accepted. While many supported the event, others were scandalized or insulted by an event centered around LGBTQ people; particularly, there were some *roshei yeshiva* who called for a boycott in advance of the event. However,

*"I couldn't help but get emotional, seeing the large turnout of students from all backgrounds and walks of life."*

Rivka Reiter (SCW '19)

according to Katz, society is much more open-minded today than in 2010, and he has hope for the future society that is to come.

"In the history of the world," said Katz, "there has never been a better day to be young, religious and LGBT. And, if you want to know about the future, you have to believe tomorrow will be a better day."

*Grappling with your gender or sexuality? Looking to connect with like-minded YU students? Reach out to [lgbtqyu@gmail.com](mailto:lgbtqyu@gmail.com) to learn more about a student-run support network. Anonymous messages welcome.*

*CHEATING,*  
*continued from Front Page*

answers without work leading to these answers were not deemed ‘correct.’” In the Money and Banking course, Vinjamuri announced a retest, with the original exam counting for one-third of the midterm grade and the retest counting for two-thirds of the midterm grade. The retest was originally scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 21, but was moved to the next Monday after several students expressed that having an exam on the eve of Thanksgiving would interfere with their travel plans. Both Jiang and Vinjamuri stated that future exams would be more seriously proctored and administered.

Breaches of academic integrity are not a new phenomenon at Yeshiva University. Archives from *The Commentator* indicate that the University has struggled with plagiarism, answer-sharing and general cheating for decades. A news article in 1987, responding to two cheating incidents, offered a broad survey of cheating in YC at the time and an attempt at explaining why cheating was taking place.

In Fall 2002, Rabbi Jeremy Wieder, a YU *rosh yeshiva*, delivered a widely-discussed *sichat mussar* in which he addressed rampant cheating. Among several critiques, Wieder urged that when students are “called in [to the Academic Standards Committee] for cheating, please walk in there without your *yarmulkah*, so no one should think that it’s the *yarmulkah*, *chas veshalom* the *yarmulkah*, that gave you the *reshus* [permission] to cheat.”

Later that same semester, a *Commentator* investigation, much like the 1987 investigation, looked into those factors that were enabling cheating. The article proposed several possible solutions, including an Honor Code which would “obligate students to report violations of academic integrity thereby placing responsibility with the students, sometimes through un-proctored examinations.” The article also suggested that all professors should be required to make their old exams publicly available to all students.

These *Commentator* archives are but select instances of reports about cheating in Yeshiva University’s antiquity. *Commentator* articles from dozens of different semesters point to a persistent cycle of cheating, reports of cheating and attempts by administrators, faculty and students to curb the cheating.

More recently, Deans of YC and SSSB, in response to reports of cheating in Fall 2016, called for meetings where Deans and students could brainstorm together about academic integrity, and for the creation of a student-run academic integrity committee. In Fall 2017, Yeshiva College Deans announced that midterms would take place with proctors and in large rooms where students could be spaced far apart from each other and that signs with the Hebrew verse “*da lifnei mi atah omeid*” [“know before whom you stand”] and the English phrase “Demand this of yourself, expect it of others” would be placed on the walls of classrooms.

SSSB that Fall 2017 semester, in response to cheating incidents, followed suit, instructing faculty to not reuse old finals, to not assign take-home exams, and to not use “test-banks, which are documents provided to professors from textbook authors that contain thousands of potential questions that can be used to create tests.”

The aforementioned academic integrity reforms did not eradicate cheating in YU. In Fall 2017, a Judaic Studies course in SCW cancelled its midterm following revelations that a student stole a copy of the exam from the professor’s office, and a Mathematics course in YC administered a retest after reports of suspicious behavior during a midterm exam. On a different plane, several posts from the past few semesters on Stern College: In the Know, a private Facebook group with over 2,700 members, indicate SCW and SSSB students offering money to their peers in exchange for full paper-writing services.

“My intention was not to place this burden on the shoulders of students only,” explained Wood-Hill to *The Commentator* when asked about her recent listserv email, “but to remind my future doctors that shining a light on wrongdoing is ESSENTIAL to their future work as physicians and leaders in their communities.” Professor Jiang, on the other hand, expressed regret at his “omission not to seek additional proctors for a classroom too spacious to handle.”

Jiang added, “I was in fact very disappointed that I trusted my students and hoped that they would do their best job in a clean test ... Cheating is the worst thing that happens on campus. It diminishes the value of learning and makes the efforts of hard-working students meaningless. We will

work very hard to crack it down.”

Professor Vinjamuri, in an email to his students, similarly expressed that “academic integrity is the cornerstone of Yeshiva University ... any behavior that goes against the spirit of academic honesty will not be tolerated.” He also explained his belief that “it is in the best interest of all of us to take this remedial course of action [of taking a retest] to ensure that the highest standards of academic integrity are maintained.”

A student in the affected General Chemistry class from this fall semester remarked that he found it “very upsetting as a Yeshiva University student that people cheated and the Deans did nothing about it.” A pre-med student on the pre-health listserv similarly expressed frustration that Wood-Hill’s email “suggested that students are responsible to police cheating in their classes.” He felt that “the administration, not the students, has the responsibility to provide their students with a fair and comprehensive education” and that the administration has “taken too few concrete steps to limit cheating and to punish cheating students. Change needs to start with them.”

Other cheating incidents have taken place this semester as well. One student reported to *The Commentator* that a classmate of his, who was discovered to have plagiarized an assignment and admitted to his professor what he did, received no disciplinary repercussions from the University besides for a mark of zero on that individual assignment.

“The culture of leniency in dealing with student cheat-

*“Cheating is the worst thing that happens on campus. It diminishes the value of learning and makes the efforts of hard-working students meaningless. We will work very hard to crack it down.”*

Prof. Jianfeng Jiang

ing encourages the student body to continue cheating,” complained the student who learned about his classmate’s punishment. “In many instances, students feel no moral impediment to cheating, a clear result of the chronic atmosphere of cheating at YU. Moreover, the leniency of punishment calls into question the priorities of the institution; by failing to adequately punish cheaters, the administration signals that it cares more about maintaining high GPAs and successful employment rates than the integrity and ethics that their graduates represent.”

According to SCW Associate Dean Ethel Orlian, in addition to the reported instances of plagiarism regarding an advanced English paper and Computer Systems assignment, at least two additional academic integrity breaches at SCW have been reported to her this semester. Dean Orlian cited the incorporation of “discussions of cheating into recent Orientation programs in the hope of creating awareness early on,” and discussions of plagiarism in first-year English Composition classes as developed efforts to prevent such instances.

As for formal policies regarding academic integrity, YU’s colleges currently have several means by which to handle cheating incidents. Academic Policies for Wilf and Beren indicate that proctoring procedures for YC, SCW and SSSB are roughly the same.

According to Dean Strauss, the Dean’s Office of SSSB regularly informs all faculty and adjuncts to follow certain testing procedures. These procedures include such recommendations as not reusing old exams, not using test-banks, not offering take-home exams, requiring students to leave their cell phones on the front desk during testing and for professors of larger classes to request proctors to help ensure



Furst Hall

THE COMMENTATOR

that students do not cheat or communicate with each other during exams. Strauss also recommends that teachers who assign papers should utilize Turnitin, a plagiarism detection website.

Several YC professors and Dean Orlian of SCW confirmed that though proctors are recommended for midterms, they are not mandatory. Finals at YC are optionally proctored, while finals at SCW are organized by a Director of Examinations who ensures that a minimum of two proctors supervise each final exam and that smaller classes are assigned to take finals together in one larger room. However, multiple SCW students have confirmed being administered their finals in smaller classrooms with one proctor as recently as Spring 2018.

Finals for all undergraduate colleges are administered under strict conditions, usually with proctors. For over ten years, through the end of the Fall 2017 semester, Elizabeth OuYang served as Final Exam Director for Yeshiva College, a role which entailed interviewing and assigning proctors, handling examination deferrals, time conflicts and special accommodations. In 2015, OuYang was appointed to the same position for SSSB on the Wilf Campus. Last year, OuYang explained to *The Commentator* that, as a Yeshiva University outsider, her role “brings more objectivity and credibility to the process.”

As of the Spring 2018 semester, Dean Fred Sugarman serves as the Final Exam Director for YC while OuYang continues to hold the position at SSSB alone. The *Commentator*

was unable to confirm the University’s motivation for OuYang’s reassignment.

According to Dean Shalom Holtz, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Yeshiva College, “all faculty receive several e-mail messages prior to midterm and final exam periods alerting them to the possibility of employing proctors to support exam integrity.” Dean Karen Bacon, the Dean of Undergraduate

Faculty of Arts and Sciences, as well as other YC professors confirmed that despite the availability of proctors, many professors do not take up the offer.

In addition to formal preventative measures, YC currently has an Academic Standards Committee that meets periodically to discuss the state of academic integrity at the University. According to Prof. William Stenhouse, the Chair of YC’s History department and the head of the Academic Standards Committee, the committee of two undergraduate students and five professors meets with the Deans two or three times each semester to discuss old strategies and to brainstorm new strategies for preventing and dealing with cheating.

When a cheating incident does take place, students and faculty from all undergraduate colleges are instructed to report details to the Dean’s Office. According to the Academic Policies, accused students who initially admit to the allegations will receive an “F” in the course in question.

When an accused student denies any wrongdoing, an ad hoc Academic Integrity Committee of three faculty members is gathered to conduct a hearing, evaluate the case and recommend to the relevant Dean what punishments, if any, should be administered and whether or not the student should be dismissed from the University. Finally, the Dean decides to either accept, reject or modify the Committee’s recommendation. Written copies of the final decision are sent to the Deans of the undergraduate schools and to the Office of the Registrar.

Prof. William Lee, who has taught English at YC since 1983, remarked that “the atmosphere of an institution or a community can encourage or discourage cheating. In YU, we seek truth; we give credit to each individual for his or her work.” Lee cited “the *halakhic* position of R. Moshe Feinstein” which “couldn’t be clearer: cheating and plagiarism are theft of mind and therefore prohibited. So cheating should always be rare at YU. But it’s not; we have cycles where it’s rarer and cycles where it’s all too common.”

Though Prof. Lee expressed that cheating is inevitable, Prof. Marnin Young, Chair of Art History at SCW, said that he “doesn’t really understand why cheating continues at YU. It’s simply shameful that it does.” Young advised for greater faculty attentiveness to potential cheaters, stricter administrative enforcement of punishments and the adoption of a student-enforced Honor Code as potential remedies to cheating. “In the end,” he said, “cheating only hurts the students.”

“Any university should remain attentive and vigilant, never assuming that cheating has gone away,” said Prof. Lee. “It will never go away.”

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## To Deal With Expectations: Men's Basketball Season Preview

By CHANA WEINBERG

**Editor's Note:** The following article was originally published online on Tues., Nov. 20.

Following a championship season, the YU men's basketball team has set out to prove that last year's success was more than an aberration. Tonight, the men's basketball team will host their home opener against Skyline Conference rival, the Sarah Lawrence Gryphons. The pregame ceremony will include a tribute to the victims of the massacre in Pittsburgh and the raising of the championship banners from Yeshiva's three Skyline Conference Championships from last season: men's tennis, women's tennis and men's basketball.

"I'm looking forward to being a part of the

banner raising with my team," said men's basketball Head Coach Elliot Steinmetz. "They work so hard — I'm not sure people truly appreciate what goes into being a student-athlete at YU. They deserve a night to be appreciated so I'm happy to be there and support them in what they've accomplished."

After being the first Yeshiva basketball team to win the Conference Championship, the returning players will certainly relish in the celebration on Tuesday evening while the newcomers look at what they can potentially be apart of in the future. But after the metaphorical confetti clears, the 2018-19 Maccabees will turn back to the hardwood for a season of basketball where the road to repeated success remains far from guaranteed.

The 2018-19 season has yet to see a men's basketball victory, with the team losing its first two games by a combined margin of five points. One of these losses was a buzzer

beater against Final Four contender Ramapo Roadrunners, but the game was close nonetheless. With its first game against Sarah Lawrence, Steinmetz is preaching patience.

"We've been starting a couple of freshmen and playing more of them off the bench," Steinmetz said in response to his team's close

something we need to improve on from last season is ball control," said Steinmetz. "Limiting turnovers. We need to take better care of [the ball]. We shoot such a high percentage it's a shame to ever give up possessions without a shot at the basket."

Last season, the team shot a combined 47

*After the metaphorical confetti clears, the 2018-19 Maccabees will turn back to the hardwood for a season of basketball where the road to repeated success remains far from guaranteed.*

call loses. "These guys are playing their first ever college games. I think as the season goes on we will continue to mature and improve."

A notable freshman is 6'7" forward Ryan Turell from Valley Torah High School in Los Angeles. In his first two collegiate games, Turell has shot a combined 16-28 from the field, or 57 percent, showing few visible signs of the growing pains to which Steinmetz refers.

Another potential cause of this 0-2 slide is the absence of Skyline Conference Championship Most Outstanding Player junior Simcha Halpert. Halpert, who was recently named co-captain along with seniors Daniel Katz and Tal Gweta, is sidelined due to injury. Steinmetz is looking forward to Halpert's return to action, when he will be able to help the team with his two years of experience and his award-winning shooting abilities. Assuming all goes well, Halpert will join Turell, teammate Gabe Leifer and the rest of the sharpshooting Macs who are known for their ability to rally around clutch three-pointers.

That being said, Steinmetz can still point to aspects of the game that need improvement. "I think

percent from the field while also inducing 445 turnovers, which, on average, is one more per game than their opponents combined. But turnovers aside, YU men's basketball team enters the season with "a target on their backs," said Steinmetz.

This target can also be called expectations. For the first time in program history, the Maccabees received a top 25 vote from D3hoops.com's Division III ranking. The D3hoops.com poll is voted on by a panel of 25 coaches, sports information directors and media members from across the country, and is published weekly — Yeshiva men's basketball now has national recognition from DIII basketball experts. In addition to the D3hoops recognition, the Macs also received six first place votes on the way to a first place projection from the Skyline Conference pre-season projections. All eleven Skyline head coaches vote on these rankings.

The Macs are no longer sneaking up on teams like they did during last season's 8-0 run to the Skyline Conference playoffs, but expectations are not something the team is worried about.

"Our guys know how hard they had to work to win each and every game last year," said Steinmetz. "We know how good our league and opponents are and we know we have to work harder than ever."



Maccabees' logo

*FINANCIAL UPDATE,  
continued from Front Page*

Purchasing homes for university presidents is common practice for American public and private universities. According to The Chronicle of Higher Education, “Many presidents of large universities are given houses in which to live and to play host to fund raisers and other events.” The Chronicle’s annual national survey of presidential pay and residences at 118 public universities found that amongst houses provided to their presidents, over 36 are valued at \$500,00 or more and 20 are valued at over \$1 million.

For most university presidents, according to the Wall Street Journal, the value of “free accommodations is not taxed as income.” As a private university, YU reports the “estimated annual value of this benefit” to the Internal Revenue Service annually in its Form 990 to ensure its compliance with federal limits on not-for-profit employee compensation, according to The Chronicle.

The June 2017 purchase of President Berman’s house followed YU’s April 2017 refinancing of five campus properties in Manhattan using a \$140 million mortgage from two debt fund management companies. The sale and leaseback transaction placed Washington Heights’ Wilf Campus buildings of Belfer Hall and Pollack and Gottesman Library, and Murray Hill’s Beren Campus buildings of 215, 245 and 253 Lexington Ave, into a wholly University owned limited liability company called Y Properties Holdings LLC through which YU continues to lease back the five properties. The \$140 million mortgage was used to redeem \$175 in taxable bonds held by UMB Bank issued in 2014, whose remaining principal balance owing on the bonds was approximately \$125 million.

“The University continues to evaluate ways to improve its operations,” Vice President for Legal Affairs, Secretary and General Counsel Avi Lauer told The Observer in May 2017. “In this case, we were able to refinance our long term

debt at a more favorable interest rate, which will help the University reduce its annual debt costs.”

Though listings indicate that the Teaneck property is the most expensive one on its block by approximately \$800,000, a source with knowledge of the transaction details confirmed that YU paid market value for the property. According to differing estimates by online real estate websites Zillow and Realtor, the average listing price for homes on the house’s block ranges between \$667,200 and \$708,900. These estimates place the house at between 254% and 270% of the average listing price for its block.

The realtor involved in the transaction for President Berman’s home, Nina Eizikovitz of Links Residential, explained that the discrepancy between the house’s sale price and average block listing prices is indeed “normal” for an area in which “there are many houses which property owners custom built for themselves.” Because the heightened values of custom built homes are not reflected in the property records from which average property listing values are calculated, these averages do not offer a comprehensive picture of nearby property values, nor a reliable assessment of the presidential house’s market value. Eizikovitz also said that there are many homes in the area valued on par with the President’s house.

In light of the University’s ongoing operating deficits, the source of the liquidity with which the University paid upfront remains speculative. The Commentator could not determine whether the President’s contract provides that he reimburse the University for the property taxes filed by YU’s Tax Compliance Department in the University’s name. It is also not clear what role the Board of Trustees, which presided over the President’s contract, played in securing upfront funding for the property.

YU’s fiscal 2017 statements of Joel’s final and fourteenth year as president acknowledge that YU has sustained significant and recurring operating losses in recent years, meaning that each year it is spending more on operational costs

than its cash and cash equivalents can cover. The financial statements acknowledge that these incurred deficits could be relieved by YU’s increased use of liquid assets to “provide additional operating support.” The University grew its unrestricted liquidity in fiscal 2017 through several transactions, including the completed transfer of assets belonging to Albert Einstein College of Medicine to a not-for-profit corporation run by Montefiore Medicine for \$148,000.

Since President Berman assumed office on July 1, 2017 — incidentally the first day of YU’s fiscal 2018 — the University’s finances have received some positive external attention. In an April 2018 credit rating of YU’s outstanding revenue bonds, Moody’s Investors Service revised its rating outlook of YU from stable to positive for the first time since the bonds’ 2009 and 2011 issuances, and affirmed the B3 status which the bonds have maintained since 2014. According to Moody’s, a B3 rating indicates that the long-term bonds are non-investment grade and “speculative and subject to high credit risk.”

The Moody’s report cited “improved operating performance,” projected “continued moderation of operating losses” and “strengthened financial management and a new president focused on enhancing the university’s external profile and reputation” as factors that could amp up prospects of “renewed donor confidence and gifts” and improved financial stability. The report cited YU’s 2017 monetization of numerous assets and the resultant growth of its unrestricted liquidity as “a stabilizing factor during a highly transitional period.” Though the rating action impacts \$159 million of outstanding rated debt, the positive rating outlook predicts that YU’s new senior leadership will succeed in executing “important structural changes that will create a stable operating profile over the long term.”

The Office of Communications and Public Affairs told The Commentator that “Yeshiva University offers housing

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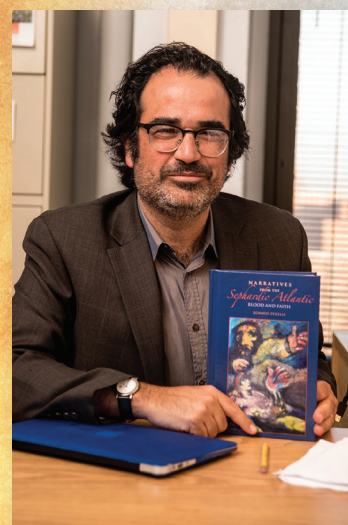
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## Career Center Implements Changes to Better Serve Students

By ZACHARY GREENBERG

The Career Center has added a variety of new additions to benefit the students on both the Wilf and Beren Campuses. Previously, the two campuses each had their own respective staffs, but now the two departments are much more fluid by having the staff rotate between the two campuses.

Additionally, this semester, the Career Center introduced numerous new programs for students. One initiative is called “Work Stream Project,” which is an assemblage of alumni within ten different fields who serve as men-

to provide information on how to best prepare for the competitive recruiting process within this sector of the industry.

Large-scale events, such as TechUcation, are intended to help prepare students who are new on campus to better compete for job positioning within a variety of industries. “The event gave students an insider’s look into how the computer science interview process works,” Elisha Rosensweig (YC ‘21) said. “They told us ways to distinguish ourselves by focusing on leadership qualities and that things like GPA are not necessarily the most important feature that a company is looking for.” The in-

Other updates within the Career Center itself include a new partnership with the Office of Alumni Affairs with the aim of building relationships and creating programs for students that involve alumni. “The formalized partnership with Alumni Affairs brings the added value of gaining career advice from those working in industry and committed to giving back and supporting the professional development of future generations of YU students,” Susan Bauer, Executive Director of the Career Center, explained. “This creates a pipeline of continual giving back as each student graduates and enters into the alumni community.”

The Wilf Career Center has also switched offices from the fourth to the fifth floor of Furst Hall. The new office is much more spacious than the previous one. “An opportunity presented itself for the Career Center to move from an older space to something new and renovated, aligning with our new philosophies and initiatives, and I seized it,” Bauer said. “Our new space is welcoming and visibly appealing to both students and the alumni and employers we engage with.”

Several new staff members were also hired this academic year, including Assistant Directors Matthew Garcia and Daniel Coleman, as well as new Associate Director of Employer Relations and Alumni Programs Marina Mazina and Employer Relations

Specialist Hannah Zucker. Director of Employer and Alumni Relations Todd Lotpeich was also hired. The Career Center is also seeking a Director of Career Coaching and Technology to move the group into a new and innovative direction. “I hired smart people from a diverse range of backgrounds who I knew would serve both our students and our mission,” Bauer remarked. “Collectively, the Center

now has the ability to serve all students effectively and not just undergraduate students. The new staff members are instrumental in making all the new and exciting changes possible.”

“YU’s Career Center and alumni network have been invaluable. They helped me secure my Goldman Sachs internship which led to a full time offer,” said Isaac Shulman (YC ‘17).

*“Collectively, the Center now has the ability to serve all students effectively and not just undergraduate students.”*

Career Center Executive Director Susan Bauer

tors for students by helping review the student’s resume or having an informational phone call. Another program called “TechUcation” is geared for students interested in careers within computer science and technology. The program kicked off with an event with a prominent keynote speaker, followed by two educational panels intended

inspiration for the event came from student feedback after last year’s seminar “What is Wall Street... Other Than Investment Banking,” which asked for more large-scale events for other industries as well. There are now post-event surveys for all students and professionals attending to discuss their opinions about the event in order to help advance and create future programs.



Susan Bauer, Executive Director of the YU Career Center

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## Shared Dining Funds Program “YU Cares” Collects From Over 100 Students

By JACOB ROSENFELD

Towards the end of the Spring 2018 semester, YU launched a new charity program called YU Cares. The fundamentals of the program were simple — students were able to donate up to \$50 of leftover funds from their meal plans to an account which would allocate the funds to students in need of money for meals.

According to Dean of Students Chaim Nissel, who oversees the program, funds were collected from over 100 students and were distributed to 26 students “who were in need.” Dean Nissel added, “Based on the feedback from the program, YU Cares will continue this semester as well.”

Under YU policy, meal plans are non-transferable, non-refundable and there is a daily limit of \$100 per student account and a maximum purchase of six of the same item. The Dining Services website states, “Recent interpretations of NY State Tax law do not permit

the use of tax exempt meal plan funds for [large] purchases.” The Dining Services website further enumerates that refunding leftover funds would void the sales tax exemption. Dean Nissel did not offer comment regarding the legality of

the program with respect to New York law.

Other universities which provide meals on a swipe-based system participate in a program called “Share Meals,” which allows students to meet up to share extra swipes.

The combination of these policies often leaves students with excess money on their Caf Card which will expire at the end of the year. To help use up these funds, the YU Cares program was introduced, which allowed the funds to

be donated to needy students.

“It sounded like a good initiative and I hope they continue it for the end of this semester,” remarked Phillip Nagler (YC ‘20).



The Furman Dining Hall on the Wilf Campus

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for our president, as many universities do. We do not comment on specific employment matters.”

The presidential home has long served as both a private and communal space for

presidential use. In a January 2008 interview with the Riverdale Press, Joel identified his “Arlington Avenue backyard” as “his source of tranquility.” He conveyed that “the relentlessness of the public eye can be overbearing,” and that at times he and his wife need the seclusion “to be able to be non-people.” More publicly, Joel’s house

was used as a set for the 2015 Maccabeats music video for “Latke Recipe” which garnered two million YouTube views, and as the venue for a YC Honors Program dinner in the program’s early days at which students presented their Honors theses.

Joel also hosted several annual Student Leader Chanukah parties and Student

Leader *Shabbatons*, the former a tradition which President Berman upheld during his first Chanukah in office in December 2017. President Berman will again host a Chanukah party for student leaders in his Teaneck home this December.



# Just Give Up! Why American Democracy Is an Illusion

By **ARYEH SCHONBRUN**

Like many of my idealistic friends, I too voted in this year's election. I didn't plan on it — it didn't strike me as something too important — but, finding myself near my polling station I walked in, took an envelope and voted. I voted in Israel, having made this country my home for the last few years. I did *not* vote in the U.S. elections and never did it cross my mind to obtain an absentee ballot. I just don't think that my vote counts, and not because I'm only one individual. My problem with system lies deeper: I know that it's all a lie.

I did not pay so much attention to the results either. I hate the GOP, but I don't especially like the Democrats. I feel appalled by President Trump and his minions' crude behavior and vicious policies, but I don't harbor fond sentiments for the ultra-liberal insanity that many of the Democratic lawmakers promote. To me, both parties form an unholy coalition, a single party of corrupt opportunists with wallets and ears open to the suggestions of corporate power and ruthless strongmen. This one-party-state that you live in appears to some as a thriving democracy, but don't be fooled: democracy in America is dead on arrival.



Rabbi Eli Sedan receiving the Israel Prize for his work on reviving middle-class participation in the IDF (Mechinot)/IDF Soldiers

Nearly any attempt at sane politics in the U.S. faces the unrelenting obstacles and restrictions of an invasive, global bureaucratic order intent on stifling revolution and squelching protest of any of its broad policies that threaten humanity. Together with the corporate world, the corporate media and manipulative social-network platforms, the ruling class has made it nigh impossible to even investigate and report to the public on anything. The calls of “*Lugepresse*” (“Fake news”), which hearken back to the dark days of modern man's oppression, reinforce in the general public's consciousness the subjectivity of truth and honesty and further strengthen our ruler's (owners of the “official outlets”) ability to rewrite our histories and values, and control our lives.

Some outliers do manage to break through the hermetically-sealed fountains of information that we semi-willingly imbibe on a daily basis, and sometimes idealistic figures surprise us at their relative successes. Ms. Ocasio-Cortez, a socialist congresswoman from NY, woke me up to the idealistic undercurrents of a sophisticated and frustrated left that I had not known existed, though I do not believe for a moment that her recent election will spell the end of Western neo-imperialism, nor do I think that her election presents a danger to the ruling establishment. Serious political discourse, even if people have begun to speak up, will not develop independently in America — it's too late.

In order for a healthy democracy to operate, a state needs a public sphere conducive to the promotion of democratic ideas, freedom of the press, freedom of discourse and of religion, and the ability to defend the decisions of its people in the event of violent uprising by segments of its population. For that purpose, a state needs not only a law making system of legislature, but also a standing army, a comprehensive educational system and a general willingness to sacrifice one's well being for the common good. America today lacks

nearly all of those qualities: it lacks a free, sophisticated and unbridled public sphere, it lacks a system of legislature that feels responsible to its constituents and it lacks the ability to physically defend itself against the power of private interests.

In addition to the comprehensive privatization of many branches of the military-industrial complex (e.g. Haliburton, private contractors etc.) and the mass accumulation of wealth and influence (through the media, education, the market etc.) by our ruling elites that took place over the past thirty years, we have also witnessed a general trend of disaffection regarding our international conflicts and the military in general. While young men eagerly joined the ranks of the largest military on the face of the Earth 40 years ago, today most of us have never had any serious interaction with soldiers, let alone a draft official. As American citizens, we all must register for the draft at the age of eighteen, but has anyone seriously considered the army as a serious option? Most well-to-do bourgeois Americans, favoring the individual luxuries of a suburban, industrial lifestyle, cannot even imagine that one might feel a yearning to defend his way of life and country against the forces of evil and oppression.

We have yielded much of this responsibility to the few idealistic youths who harbor a deep love of their country but lack the basic understanding of an upstanding citizen.

other means.

We have seen such a fate befall many states that fought the onslaught of corrupt American interests. Chile, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Cuba, Iran, China, South Korea and Argentina, among many more, witnessed the triumph of American interests over those of their democratically elected governments or have suffered the effects of tacit American approval and material support of vicious dictatorships. Such betrayals of liberal democratic values occurred many times before in history, and I do not dare believe that such a coup, if politically necessary in order to maintain control over a rebellious proletariat, will shrink away from striking at the paradigmatically democratic U.S. By opting out of their civic duties, middle-class Americans have given away their country to the highest bidder. They privatized away their responsibilities and with them their liberties.

In Israel, on the other hand, the IDF still plays a large part in general society. Every Israeli, with exceptions, of 18 years must draft for close to three years of active service, followed by reserve duties for the remainder of his working career. Such an expectation, unheard-of in most Western democracies (with the exception, of course, of Switzerland) looms large over the heads of most Israeli high school students, guiding their burgeoning lives through to their retirement. While American high schoolers must decide where to go to university and where to party, Israeli teenagers must deal with the intensely bureaucratic military, be tested, cataloged and sent for service, all within a year or two of their AP (“Bagrut”) exams. The extreme privation of bourgeois luxuries, the overwhelming nature of total and complete subservience to an external system of laws, values and directives, necessarily tests the abilities of many of the countries youths, and some fail to qualify for such physically and mentally demanding circumstances. The involvement of such a large portion of society in such an institution generates vast repercussions for society at large, even more so for the middle class.

Recently, many of the more bourgeois, middle-class families have begun to prefer sending their children to non-combat duties, the intelligence corps, cyber-warfare etc. These jobs, in addition to keeping the young draftees out of harm's way, also provide excellent opportunities for social and economic advancement. The social connections developed in select units such as 8200 (Intelligence) bring with them excellent odds for future employment through a deep system of nepotism (“protectsia”), and the technological/logistical acumen the soldiers develop through exclusive government-funded courses and intense experience with sensitive, usually classified, material, look great on just about any job application. Intent on promoting their children's self-interest and in anticipation of a harsh job-market, the middle class have begun the same process that their American counterparts completed years earlier.

Much of Israeli bourgeois society has moved on from the army experience as a unifying factor. They serve, but they are less noticeable. The large army bases are being relocated to the periphery of Israel, ostensibly for real-estate interests, but also serving the same objective as in America. By removing the middle-class from the army, by incentivizing non-combat roles and by physically relocating soldiers to peripheral microcosms (one sees fewer armed soldiers nowadays) away from the influence of greater society, we too risk castrating Israeli society and alienating our middle-class from taking an active role in its own protection.

In response, many Religious-Zionists (among other secular Jews) have felt the need to reintroduce the middle-class element into the IDF. Many idealistic kids from stable, middle-class households have returned to the ranks of combat troops, not without objection and not without controversy. They bring with them the classical values of a traditional middle-class upbringing: a stable, strong family life, modest religiosity and sophisticated patriotism. They think on their feet, they question orders, they must deal with conflicts of values and interests and they are truly selfless. They are strong in their desire to provide for their families, communities and country, and, owing to their bourgeois, urbane mentalities, they know how the system *really* works. These youths threaten the resurgent neo-liberal assault on society, and thus are labeled as fanatics, ideologues or unenlightened. They may be just so. But only they can guarantee Israeli democracy. They are our *only* hope.

God Save America.

While the army still receives a steady stream of strapping young lads and gals willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of their brethren, the white-collar working class has disengaged completely from national service and pays for it dearly. Middle-class America suffers from the utter gutting of its capital, the annihilation of its freedoms, and even the general unwillingness of the public to demand justice. The False Consciousness of fake democracy terrorizes the American people. One does not only suffer, but he also can't even register his own demise.

Even in the unlikely event that a democratic revolution occurs from within our current political system, such a brazen act, a collective democratic uprising against our ruling elites, will not be tolerated. We lack the power and resources to actually effect such a change as we aspiring socialists desire. Even if we could convince masses of the American electorate that voting for either the Democrats or the Republicans runs counter to their interests, even if we could introduce into such a corrupt system a new brand of politics, authentically motivated and sufficiently sophisticated to re-educate America and make her great again, I am convinced that the forces that be will not allow such a democracy to persist.

By neglecting its civic duty to serve in the army, the American middle class has lost its influence and power in the military. The monopoly of force now firmly rests in the hands of private interests and the uneducated lower classes who will not necessarily support the democratic will of the middle-class. Instead of freeing itself from the banality of military service, the middle class has concretized their vulnerability and permanently divorced itself from an active role in America's internal power struggle. The ruling class, if unable to maintain its control over society and our natural resources through the psychic ploy of a dysfunctional democratic system, will not hesitate to enforce its rule through

## Here's To My Other YU

By COLE ARONSON

Towards the end of my sophomore year at Yale, I decided that Judaism should mean everything to me. Our Hillel's JLIC rabbi — a *talmid* of this *yeshiva*, and to this day my close teacher and friend — encouraged me to go to Morasha Kollel that summer to get acquainted with the *Gemara* and those who take it seriously. Those six weeks were like an intense dream, and I resolved that they shouldn't stop just because the academic calendar said so. That fall and spring, and into my senior year, I took the Metro North every week I could from New Haven to New York, then the subway through Harlem to Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus. I came to love YU as much as I feel a right to love any school that is not my own, and I'd like to tell you why. In part because I think giving thanks is the proper response to feeling thankful. Also, I have a vainglorious hope that YU may take encouragement from the gratitude of someone who had no claim on the school's resources, but who gained and still gains from their gracious provision.

*Yeshiva University takes a refreshingly unified view of study and culture, which is that both are conducted under the Yoke of Heaven.*

To my way of thinking, an institution's central virtue is the character of its leaders, so I'll begin with the *Roshei Yeshiva*. I never thought there could be so many people whose sagacity equals their integrity, whose scholarship and teaching are matched by a generous concern for those who are not their students and colleagues. The *roshei yeshiva*, a friend once said to me, try every day to be

better people, and to improve others through example. No student at a secular college can say that about all of his or her teachers. Nor is there any university faculty, I would wager, with one fifth as many loving and fearful servants of the Lord as preside over the Glueck *beit midrash*. Ten thousand men of Harvard could not confer such distinction.

Faithfully emulating their *rebbeim*, YU's students are joyful, diligent, broad-minded and firm-footed travelers along the narrow path of the *halakhah*. For no reason other than our common faith, the YU studentry invited me into its intellectual and ritual life. Dozens of *talmidim* helped me through my first *sugyas*, answering questions they had asked as young *bnei mitzvah*, with patience, charity and intelligence. Study at a secular university can feel a bit monastic. Most of it is done in the sterile silence of a library, often in cubicles excluding all signs of the world outside a computer screen. I think the *yoshvei beis medrish* have taken vows of loquacity, always explaining and arguing and asking their friends to do the same (this learned buzz even infects the uptown library, in which I felt together rather than alone with

other people). The approach is dialectical and cooperative, a united quest for a holy truth during which controversy is sharp and productive and disinterested, and the best partners are the worthiest opponents.

Keeping Shabbos at Yale is counter-cultural, but how much more wonderful for a whole school to keep it together! Redoubtable members of the Kollel Elyon welcomed me



Glueck Beit Midrash

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

into their homes and showed me proper, *frum* parenting and loving marriages — how to build faithful, peaceful houses in Israel. The *rebbeim* who live in the Heights did the same, answering questions I asked and ones I lacked the courage to voice. These *bnei Torah*, young and old, became my guides and comrades in a nascent life of Orthodoxy.

My experience of YU is exclusive. I have never visited the Beren campus, and I've only met about twenty students of Stern College. Still, I found them to be as serious, perspicacious and kind as their brothers in the Heights. Yeshiva University takes a refreshingly unified view of study and culture, which is that both are conducted under the Yoke of Heaven. Therefore, YU expects men and women to behave towards one another with modesty. American culture lusts for a cheap equation between the sexes.

*Vive la différence*, YU insists without apology. Maximum dignity, maximum sanctity. Integration when appropriate, separation when necessary. A treatise on the wisdom of these principles would go longer than "Atlas Shrugged."

There is a final thing to say about YU, which is just that it has the best mission any institution can have — to preserve, to transmit and to discover further riches of our tradition, and to cultivate its students to do the same in turn. The Proverb tells us "to know the Lord in all our ways." Sensible of this instruction's breadth, YU teaches its students the liberal arts and sciences, sites of auxiliary efforts to know God's world. Each day, uptown and downtown, the students and faculty of this school do a great thing. Thank you, beloved teachers and friends, for including me in it.

## Hearing Lost and Found

By ELLIE PARKER

"You don't know what you've got until it's gone." We've heard the cliché hundreds of times, but, in reality, it couldn't be more accurate.

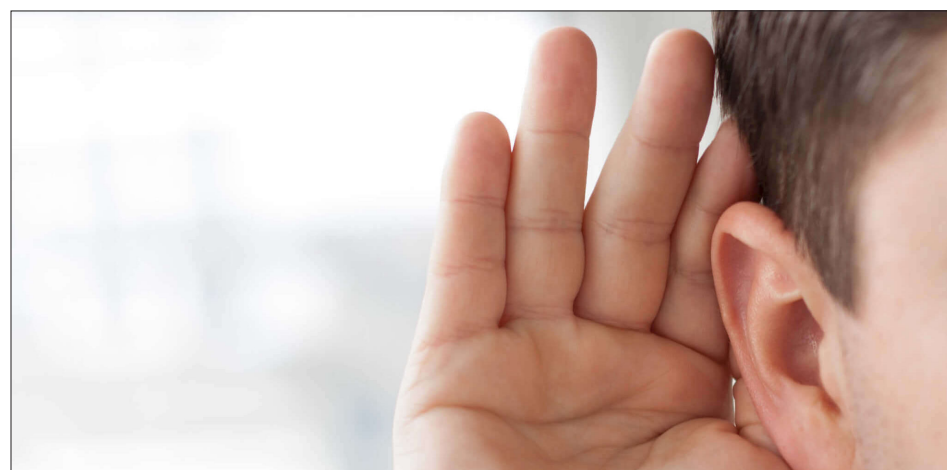
I am a bona fide adrenaline junkie. I have yet to discover a feeling more freeing than upping the ante and living on the edge. However, I'll be the first to admit that I have a tendency of pushing my limits a little too far at times. The pursuit of the thrilling has resulted in priceless memories, but it has also ended with a few trips to the ER. I had never questioned my need to live on the edge until this past summer, when my thrill-seeking almost cost me my hearing.

*I had never questioned my need to live on the edge until this past summer, when my thrill-seeking almost cost me my hearing.*

A friend of mine had been raving about this new wakeboard park that had just opened on the outskirts of Georgia. I had always wanted to learn how to wakeboard and decided that now was just as good a time as any. I enlisted some friends to join me on my adventure, and we headed out to Emerson.

When we got to the wake park, I was a little disappointed. The lakes were teeming with young kids, a usual indication of family-friendly activities (not exactly what I was going for). Nevertheless, having already covered the tens of miles from Atlanta to Emerson, we decided to try it out. The park was set up like this: there was a circular lake with a rotating line overhead. Attached to the line were five ropes with which the rider would grab on. The line would then pull the rider around the lake. As we watched from the shore, we reasoned that the feat looked easy enough. When it was my turn, I sat on the edge of the water with my board up and waited for the pull of the rope. Within seconds I was flat on my face. What we hadn't accounted for was the speed of the line and the core strength necessary to leverage the weight of the rope with the weight of your body. But I wasn't fazed by my wipe out; I had come for adventure.

A few hours later, soaking wet and very bruised, I got the hang of it. Our time was running out, but I implored my friends to wait around for a little while I struggled to curb the last bend of the lake. I had tried almost a dozen times, but I couldn't seem to keep my balance at the last turn. I was determined to master this lake before the day's end, and I went out for one last ride. As I approached that stubborn curve, I leaned forward to get a better choke on my rope. I quickly realized that I had thrown myself off balance, but before I had the chance to rectify my stance, I was flying forward. The rope had tugged, and I had fallen — hard.



Hearing is a gift that so many of us take for granted.

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The second I hit the water I knew that something was wrong. In an effort to protect my face from the impact, I had subconsciously tilted my head to the right. As I waded to the surface, I felt a shooting pain across the side of my head. And then, all at once, I realized that I couldn't hear out of my right ear. I strained to hear the voices calling to me from the shore, but I heard nothing. For those seconds in the water, I understood that I would give absolutely anything to get my hearing back. It was something I never thought about, but suddenly it was the only thing that mattered.

As I made my way to the edge of the lake, I thought about the steep price I would have to pay for my recklessness. I called my mom and, having gotten similar phone calls in the

past, she readied herself for yet another ER visit. I couldn't quiet my mind on the ride to the hospital. My brain jumped from bad to worse scenarios as I considered living my life half-deaf. Though I had since regained some hearing in my ear, sounds were muffled and intermixed with an incessant ringing. When I arrived at the hospital, the PA regretted to inform me that ENT (Ear Nose and Throat) injuries were not her specialty. She recommended we make an appointment with an ENT specialist as soon as possible. That night was restless. I was riddled with regret. I played the scene over again and again in my mind wondering what had compelled

Continued on Page 11

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

**Editor's Note:** Over three decades ago, Yeshiva University was plagued by rampant cheating and futile efforts to curb the problem. It is quite astonishing to read the following article, which was one of many articles about cheating printed in an issue of *The Commentator* from February 1987, and to see how little has changed. The specifics aside, this article could almost pass as a news piece today.

## From the Archives (February 18, 1987; Volume 52 Issue 5) — Poll Shows Widespread Cheating: Senate Acts to Rectify Situation

By **FREDDY SCHWARTZ**

The cheating at Yeshiva College has reached such a proportion that it is now perhaps the most serious problem this institution must confront. While the majority of the student body has never cheated, the overall atmosphere is frighteningly conducive to student chicanery.

Although exact statistics are unavailable, results from the recent *Commentator* survey reveal a major problem. Of the 104 students who responded to the poll, 36% admitted that they have cheated at least once in college. In addition, an overwhelming 88% of students claimed to have witnessed others cheating, with more than half of the respondents reporting to have seen such a spectacle on at least four separate occasions. While less shocking, perhaps the most significant statistic to emerge from the survey was that 81% of those polled would refrain from reporting visible cheating to the instructor. Apparently, although most students do not cheat themselves, they do tolerate cheating from others.

This general atmosphere of tolerance not only fosters cheating, but also allows cheaters to boast openly and freely about their immoral conduct instead of feeling shameful and culpable. Many cheating instances become quite well-known. One example is the case of the accounting student who last year was requested to take his final exam earlier than scheduled. The teacher acquiesced on condition that the student take the test in the teacher's office. The student complied, but when not being observed, proceeded to make several photocopies of the exam for his friends. He distributed them later on, and neither he nor his friends were ever penalized.

Another instance of group cheating occurred last semester when a makeup exam was being administered to fifteen economics students. Their instructor seated them in a room, handed out the test, said "I've got to teach a class now but I trust you guys not to cheat" and left the room. According to one source present, nearly every student in the room cheated. Unfortunately, there are enough anecdotes like these to fill an entire newspaper. Surely, most students who have been here for a while are aware of some fellow student who has cheated.

How is it possible that at Yeshiva, of all places, this type of intolerable conduct is so widespread? There are several answers to this question. Firstly, the proctoring at exams is virtually non-existent. It is not an uncommon sight to observe a proctor talking to his students or to his fellow proctors, or reading papers during a test. According to one professor, "there are certain faculty members who are notoriously irresponsible when proctoring." Also, room 501 in Furst Hall is frequently overcrowded and unorganized,

creating an atmosphere of chaos.

A second explanation for the cheating is that, ironically, many of the students here are graduates of yeshiva high schools which breed cheaters. Even some of the noncheaters at YU who hail from the yeshiva high school system spoke of their former violations.

A third reason for cheating at YU is that students are subject to more pressure to succeed here than almost anywhere else. Whether the origins are parental, internal or from peers, this pressure becomes inflated to the point that many students will begin to rationalize doing what they know to be wrong.

The final explanation for the cheating is that, in the words of one senior, "it's just so freaking easy here." The entire student body is so close-knit that students will invariably help each other out. The unique student camaraderie which is one of Yeshiva's outstanding characteristics is unfortunately also serving to lower the ethical standards of the student body.

In response to all this, the Student Senate has placed the issue of cheating at the head of their agenda. They recently passed certain laws which they felt will render cheating more difficult. According to Daniel Feit, Chairman of the Senate, the goal is "to establish an atmosphere of decorum during examinations." Mr. Feit feels that, to effectively combat the problem, we must not merely strengthen and enforce the rules, but also "raise the consciousness of the student body." He hopes to include informative essays against cheating in the packets distributed at freshman orientation, as well as encourage articles in future *Commentator* and *Hamevaser* issues on the topic.

One possible solution the Senate has not considered yet is a stiffening of the punishments for proven cheaters. Dean Rosenfeld concurs but feels that the current system is just. He explained that the penalty for someone caught cheating on a final is failure on that exam, unless it is "flagrant" in which case the student automatically fails the course. The Dean defined "flagrant" as premeditated, as opposed to the spur-of-the-moment offender who is less blameworthy.

In theory, the most effective deterrence to the cheating would be unequivocal student intolerance towards cheaters. In a situation where 4/5 of the student body is prepared to "let it go," no Senate law can be too effective.

What has created the current atmosphere where students will refuse to cheat and yet stand idly by as their classmates do? One very simple answer is that many students are afraid. In a small college such as ours there is a realistic fear that the cheater will eventually discover the identity of his accuser. Also, some people, although personally against cheating, do not necessarily want to take a stand on the issue. Just as a student who sees a sign in the school displaying what he considers to be anti-Torah slogans often lacks the necessary sense of vigilance to rip it

but luckily my eardrum wasn't badly injured. I had perforated my eardrum and had damaged my Eustachian Tube, but with time, everything would return to normal.

For the first time in over 12 hours, my muscles relaxed. I felt the tension leave my body as I breathed a sigh of relief. True, I had dodged a bullet, but the prognosis easily could have gone the other way. In those

# The Commentator

Official Undergraduate Newspaper of Yeshiva College

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### Costello Resigns, Replaced by Shevlin

By Jonathan Bandler  
On January 12th, Dr. John Costello shocked the administration by revealing that due to an illness in his family he would be unable to continue in his role as Y.U. Athletic Director. Dr. Costello had been chosen this past summer from a long list of candidates to fill the position vacated by Dr. Arthur Tauber, who retired after thirty-six years at Yeshiva. His sudden resignation forced a seven member search committee to once again screen those candidates for a possible replacement. However, by the end of intercession, the committee was informed that Dr. Julius Shevlin, a top administrator and professor at CCNY, was available for the position. Within one week, Dr. Shevlin met with the search com-



A multipurpose light designed by Peter Eisenman, a world-renowned architect is part of the Nerot Mitzvah exhibit now on display in the YU Museum. The piece, constructed of wood and plexiglass, is entitled *The Absence of Presence*.

### Dean Named for Syms School of Business

By Joshua Annenberg  
Dr. Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University, has formally announced the appointment of Dr. Michael Schiff as the founding dean of Yeshiva University's Syms School of Business. Dr. Schiff earned B.B.A. and M.B.A. degrees from the City College of New York and has a PhD from New York University's Graduate School of Business Administration. In addition to being a Certified Public Accountant in the State of New York and a consultant for a host of corporations, he also served for a number of years with New York University's Graduate School of Business Administration, was a chaired professor in NYU's accounting department, and founded and directed the Ross Institute of Accounting at New York University.



Dr. Julius Shevlin

### Poll Shows Widespread Cheating Senate Acts to Rectify Situation

By Freddy Schwartz  
The cheating at Yeshiva College has reached such a proportion that it is now perhaps the most serious problem this institution must confront. While the majority of the student body has never cheated, the overall atmosphere is frighteningly conducive to student chicanery. Although exact statistics are unavailable, results from the recent *Commentator* survey reveal a major problem. Of the 104 students who responded to the poll, 36% admitted that they have cheated at least once in college. In addition, an overwhelming 88% of students claimed to have witnessed others cheating, with more than half of the respondents reporting to have seen such a spectacle on at least four separate occasions. While less shocking, perhaps the most significant statistic to emerge from the survey was that 81% of those polled would refrain from reporting visible cheating to the instructor. Apparently, although most students do not cheat themselves, they do tolerate cheating from others. This general atmosphere of tolerance not only fosters cheating, but also allows cheaters to boast openly and freely about their immoral conduct instead of feeling shameful and culpable. Many cheating instances become quite well-known. One example is the case of the accounting student who last year was requested to take his final exam earlier than scheduled. The teacher acquiesced on condition that the student take the test in the teacher's office. The student complied, but when not being observed, proceeded to make several photocopies of the exam for his friends. He distributed them later on, and neither he nor his friends were ever penalized. Another instance of group cheating occurred last semester when a makeup exam was being administered to fifteen economics students. Their instructor seated them in a room, handed out the test, said "I've got to teach a class now but I trust you guys not to cheat" and left the room. According to one source present, nearly every student in the room cheated. Unfortunately, there are enough anecdotes like these to fill an entire newspaper. Surely, most students who have been here for a while are aware of some fellow student who has cheated. How is it possible that at Yeshiva, of all places, this type of intolerable conduct is so widespread?



Dr. Michael Schiff

### The Commentator Archives

down, very few people are inclined to actively attempt to stop the cheating in the school. Another reason for the general tolerance is that many people interpret cheating as a moral decision strictly between the cheater and God. Who am I, a student will reason, to butt into another's personal, ethical decisions? Finally, in the close-knit environment of Yeshiva, many students are likely to feel "I don't want to tell on him- I know him!"

What many students do not realize is that by letting cheating continue undisturbed, the noncheaters are affected in a very real way. The most obvious examples are tests which are graded on a curve - as the cheater's grade improves, the noncheater's grade decreases. A more serious effect could occur in the future if graduate schools find out the extent of the cheating. They may begin looking down on a Yeshiva graduate, saying "well, sure he has a 3.8 index, but he went to Yeshiva, so we don't know how legitimate that is." We would be wise not to reverse the excellent

reputation that YU currently enjoys in the eyes of schools nationwide.

There are certain students who are quite upset over all the publicity and attention this topic is receiving. Obviously, anyone who wishes to continue cheating will now be frustrated by an overall heightened awareness of the problem. This realization is probably what prompted some people to steal the survey boxes, and others to complain bitterly to the paper's editors to refrain from exposing the issue.

There are others who are equally saddened, but for an entirely different reason. These people are concerned over the most serious consequence of all—*chillul Hashem*. When word spreads that there is cheating at a religious institution such as ours, this represents a tremendous desecration of God. If for no reason other than this, something must be done.

hours of anxiety and regret, I realized that I needed to make a change. Though I had made it through this fiasco relatively unscathed, the next time I may not be as lucky.

I may never curb my desire for adventure, and I don't necessarily think I should. But, with only one life to live, it is important to find a way to maximize every experience in the safest way possible. My brush with

catastrophe was a wakeup call for me. My need for speed has elicited some exciting adventures, but as inertia would have it, I could have just as easily crashed. In those hours of hearing loss, I found a new appreciation for the day to day trivialities that are so easily taken for granted.

HEARING,  
continued from Page 10

me to make that last trip around the lake. The next morning, I met with the ENT specialist who told me I had done serious damage to the side of my face (which had completely blown up since the day before),

## Bioethics in Practice

# The Baby Wears Prada: Bioethics of Designer Babies

By RACHEL RETTER

Imagine a world where a baby's genetic composition is no longer a product of chance; where parents can select or even alter embryos to fit their preferred specifications. With the advent of technology like in-vitro fertilization (IVF), preimplantation genetic screening (PGS) and powerful and precise gene editing tools like CRISPR, this world, once found only in science fiction novels, looms exciting and unnerving just over the medical horizon.

*Should parents be allowed to bestow on their children whatever qualities they consider meritorious, if there is no objective way to evaluate these qualities?*

Colloquially referred to as "designer babies," this concept admittedly evokes the unsettling image of vapid parents sitting in a cushy doctor's office with indulgent requests like "make sure she has blue eyes like her mother." However, despite its shallow connotations, the medical technology behind designer babies has the potential to revolutionize healthcare. Scientists believe that it may allow doctors to prevent and even eradicate certain incurable diseases, instead of just treating their symptoms.

This possibility is not as removed from our reality as we may think. PGS, which involves screening embryos for genetic diseases before implanting them via IVF, is already legal and has been used successfully in the United States and many European countries. And though germline genetic modification, which involves direct gene editing in developing embryos, is completely illegal in the United States and over 40 other countries, clinical trials involving the practice have been conducted in China since 2015, sparking international outrage and debate. In November 2018, MIT Technology Review reported findings of Chinese documents describing a clinical trial intending to genetically

modify embryos and implant them via IVF. According to the Review, "[These scientists] planned to eliminate a gene called CCR5 in hopes of rendering the offspring resistant to HIV, smallpox and cholera."

As with all advances in biotechnology, it is important to weigh the pros and cons, and explore the ethical implications of both sides. To evaluate this complex issue, this article will examine the parties involved:

The embryo: At the crux of this issue lies, of course, the embryo, and the person that that embryo could become. One obvious benefit for the embryo would be health-related,

in which case one must weigh the health benefits and risks associated with the various methods used to create designer babies.

PGS is one method which is minimally invasive and low-risk. It involves screening embryos to make sure that they are genetically healthy before implanting them via IVF. This is especially important for children born to parents who are at a high risk for passing down genetic disorders, like many individuals within the Jewish population.

Germline genetic modification, which involves altering the embryo's genetic code, also has tremendous potential to prevent disease. However, the procedure would be much more invasive and complex, and poses an important question: can we reach a high enough level of confidence in the safety of these procedures that we can feel comfortable trying them on actual humans? Gene mapping provides some insight into the traits associated with certain genes, but is still a developing field. Genes are highly complex, interacting in ways that are difficult to predict; at least for now, we cannot account for every consequence that would result from editing an area of genetic code. Even a single unforeseen consequence could

be debilitating to the child, and, if heritable, to the child's descendants.

Another factor to consider on the embryo's behalf is the possibility of selecting or altering embryos in favor of certain desirable qualities unrelated to health. As gene mapping becomes more nuanced, scientists have attempted to pinpoint genes that influence intelligence, athletic ability and physical characteristics like height and weight.

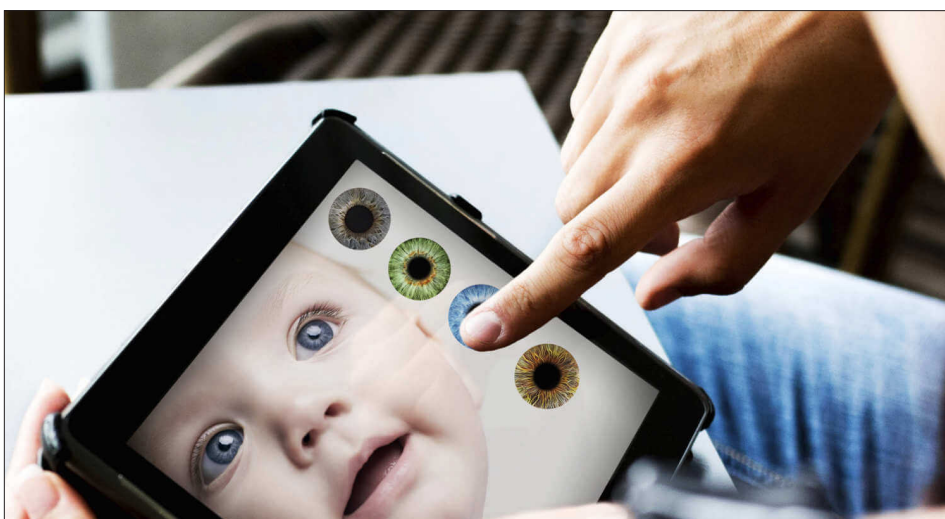
A number of issues could arise from parents choosing to improve their child in this way. One potential issue lies in the subjectivity of the word "improve." What determines whether a quality is considered positive and constitutes an improvement? In a recent case, a deaf lesbian couple elected to use a deaf sperm donor to have a child, intentionally maximizing the chances that their child would be deaf. The couple said that they were part of a deaf community and culture, and did not want their child to feel isolated and cut off from that. Their baby was not technically a designer baby, but what if it was? Should parents be allowed to bestow on their children whatever qualities they consider meritorious, if there is no objective way to

evaluate these qualities? This brings us to...

**The parents:** Every parent wants to do what they deem best for their child. In the U.S., medically speaking, this is largely within a parent's right. American law does not consider a child competent to make medical decisions and considers the parent responsible for the child's health and wellbeing. For this reason, a parent is allowed to vaccinate his or her child against dangerous diseases, have their broken leg set in a cast and have their inflamed appendix removed, even if the child protests. One might apply this logic to the issue of designer babies, and say that it does not matter that an embryo obviously cannot consent to genetic modification; a parent has the right to make a decision that will save their child from a dangerous disease.

However, this logic does not apply for elective medical procedures. A parent cannot force a child to get a cosmetic surgery, even if they think it is in the child's best interest. Therefore, one could argue that

*Continued on Page 16*



Are we entering an era of designer babies?

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# Thank you!

To the hundreds of Yeshiva University students who form the core of our amazing staff this, and every summer. Yasher Koach on your dedication, commitment and leadership!

Thank you to the prominent leaders of the YU Community who visited us and addressed our staff & campers this summer - Your presence added so much to our program.

*We are proud to be your partner and are honored to work together with Yeshiva University in serving our community.*



Rav Moshe Weinberger



Rav Menachem Penner



Rav Yaakov Glasser



Rav Aharon Kahn



Rav Mordechai Willig



Rav Baruch Simon



Rav Yehuda Willig  
Camp Rabbi



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## From the SCWSC President's Desk: Lexington, Wilf and the Pursuit of Happiness

By SHOSHANA MARDER

The Tuesday before Thanksgiving, the Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) created probably the most powerful program for the Beren student body to date: our very own Thanksgiving Day Parade. What began as a complete joke turned into a challenge — could we pull off this large-scale *shtick* in the middle of Manhattan? We gathered our loyal SCWSC followers, transformed a pushcart into a float, printed out pictures

*These moments of laughter and even silliness are not demeaning or degrading, but give us the freedom to express and embrace an often-overlooked part of ourselves.*

of Dean Bacon, President Berman and Snoopy to serve as our balloons, dressed in our best pilgrim costumes (I may have been the only one to do that part) and marched down the sidewalk of Lexington Avenue, waving at babies and singing the two Thanksgiving songs we knew. Magical? Yes. Inspiring? Absolutely. Uplifting? If the messiah comes this year we will personally take credit. Bizarre? 100%. But as Torah Activities Council (TAC) President Adina Cohen pulled me

on a pushcart across Lexington Avenue, I felt the exhilarating freedom of the storied American pilgrims, like I too was traveling the Mayflower to a future of hope and happiness.

We often take ourselves very seriously during our college years, and it makes sense. There is an intensity that permeates so much of everyday life on campus. College consists of a frantic search for who we are and what we want, and then an overwhelming planning stage for how to go about getting it. We are tasked with making real deci-

sions and being independent all while grappling with a newfound sense of adulthood. We question what were once unquestionable assumptions as we struggle to understand the world and people around us. Academic success, internships and extracurriculars are not just for our ego, but can have practical implications for the next stages of our lives. Our actions have empowering but ominous magnitude — like shooting an arrow, it seems that any slight turn will cause our

efforts to hit an entirely different target, leading us down a drastically different path.

We're mistaken, though, when we allow the inherent intensity and seriousness of college to be all-encompassing. We miss out on the holistic experience of college — where discovery of our interests, passions and character is not just frantic and painful but also exciting, and even fun. We have a serious duty and responsibility to take ourselves less seriously at times. These moments of laughter and even silliness are not demeaning or degrading, but give us the freedom to express and embrace an often-overlooked part of ourselves. This awareness is the key to coming to know our genuine selves and the ticket to making sure our next steps are reflective of who we really are.

We on SCWSC take our job very seriously. We understand and embrace the serious and intense aspects of the college experience. Through clubs and programming, we aim to create opportunities for students to succeed in college and beyond and do intense exploration of their presents and planning of their futures. But we also take seriously not being serious at times. Whether it's bizarre parades, odd emails, club events or just a friendly smile, we want to help foster an environment in Stern and the University as a whole

## The Artist and the Average Commuter

By MIKKI TREITEL

On long subway rides,  
I used to draw the commuter across from me  
The man with his hands burrowed  
deep in his denim pockets  
I'd ask myself — what can I take from him?  
Hair: already in quick pencil strokes, like stealing candy from a baby  
Eyes: tired, but metallic like the coins I'd imagine in his  
Hands: tucked away.  
They must be warm in there, I thought.

These days I see hands in pockets,  
Hands where I can't see them.  
Hands holding metal.  
I ask myself — what can he take from me?  
And what would I give  
To keep the blood rushing through my body,  
and not from it?

COURTESY OF THE YU POETRY CLUB

that is also fun, happy and positive. So yes; be on the lookout for ball pits, selfie competitions with the Le Bistro Café mannequin and multiple surprise birthday parties for Dean Bacon. Because not being so serious all the time may just be your parade float to success for your college years and beyond.

For the 30 people who marched and the many more who watched and took part in our post-parade hot apple cider, an environment was (hopefully) created where school was allowed to be experi-

enced as fun and enjoyable, even if a bit weird. *Shtick* — appropriate *shtick* (my father made me add that) — can be a crucial element to creating a unifying environment where people feel free to be who they are and explore new things about themselves. So, of course, take your grades and intellectual pursuits seriously. But also make being happy a priority this year.



SCWSC and Beren campus students in lobby of 215 Lexington Avenue before Thanksgiving Day Parade.

## Law Review

## Are Patents Public or Private Property?

By AARON GOUKHMAN

Legend has it that Charles Holland Duell, the former Commissioner of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, once said that “Everything that can be invented has been invented.” His proclamation proved to be absurdly short-sighted as far as modern inventions and discoveries are concerned. After all, antibiotics and planes had yet to be conceived of in his time, let alone high-speed internet or virtual reality technology. Humanity’s innovative capacity is still in its infancy, though in contemporary times we now invent at a rate never seen before. However, the laws protecting the patents and copyrights of these inventions have not advanced nearly as rapidly as the rate of the inventions themselves. In cases of disputes, we look to rudimentary yet precedential eighteenth-century laws for guidance. This came to play recently in the Supreme Court case of *Oil States v. Greene’s Energy*, where the crux of the case lay on the fine line separating patent private rights from public rights.

In order to understand the importance of this case, it is necessary to understand the difference between a public and private patent. If a patent lies in the public domain, it can be revoked at any time, while a privately held patent cannot. This difference between what is considered public or private property stems from the origin of patent law itself. Laws stemming from statutes and regulations are public, such as revocable business licenses. In contrast, laws stemming from common law, the same laws that give individuals personal freedom, are immutable private rights. The difference between the two was decided by the King’s bench and circle of advisors when issuing and nullifying patents.

The case of *Oil States v. Greene’s Energy* is of interest because both sides went to court holding very different views on the domain of the fracking patent — that is, whether it fell in the public or private domain. In this case, Oil States held a patent on new fracking technology, which it claimed that Greene’s Energy had infringed upon. When Oil States sent Greene’s Energy a Cease and Desist letter, Greene’s

Energy retaliated by filing a petition with the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB) in an ultimately successful effort to invalidate the patent. Oil States then sued Greene’s Energy in a case that made it all the way to the Supreme Court. See *Supreme Court. OIL STATES ENERGY SERVICES, LLC v. GREENE’S ENERGY GROUP, LLC, ET AL. No. 16-712., Oct. 2017.*

*The Oil States v. Greene’s Energy ruling has the potential to affect many industries in both positive and negative ways, including but not limited to pharmaceutical, medical and software industries.*

Oil States sued Greene’s Energy with the claim that its patent was a private right, or personal property, while Greene’s Energy petitioned based on the assumption that the patent was a publicly held right that could be revoked by the PTAB. IP Watchdog, an organization that evaluates patent policies, suggests that a ruling in Greene’s Energy’s favor, could become a contentious precedent that creates opportunities for abuse of power by the executive branch of government. The PTAB has the power to revoke publicly held patents, a power which is solely under the jurisdiction of the executive branch of the government’s Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce is led by a political appointee of the president of the United States, giving the president a direct line to revoking patents at will, claiming that rather than being a creation, and therefore personal property, they are more similar to state-granted licenses. Granted, this is an extreme hypothetical case.

However, with the case of *Oil States v. Greene’s Energy*, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Greene’s Energy, stating that patents are indeed public rights. The court did so

based on the precedent set by an old English law, in which the king’s advisors had the power to revoke patents at will. This law implied that patents are more of a government-issued license than a personal right. In the words of Justice Thomas, “It was well understood at the founding that a patent system could include a practice of granting patents subject to potential cancellation,” thus giving the PTAB the ability to revoke patents. See *Id. at 1374 (quoting Cuozzo Speed Techs., LLC v. Lee, 136 S. Ct 2131, 2137 (2016)). Oil States’ patent was granted some ten years before Congress established IPR, but, as the majority emphasized, “Oil States [did] not challenge the retroactive application of inter partes review.” Id. at 1379.*

The *Oil States v. Greene’s Energy* ruling has the potential to affect many industries in both positive and negative ways, including but not limited to pharmaceutical, medical, and software industries. For example, this ruling has the power to deter the practice of patent trolling, in which individuals file patents for various vague ideas in the hopes that they can sue the inevitable inventor of the idea and settle for a large sum. Patent trolls have long been disrupting the entire patent system, as evidenced by the fact that according to The New York Times, out of 4007 patents filed in 2012, 3000 were filed by patent trolls. By giving the PTAB the ability to revoke patents, the Supreme Court effectively deprives patent trolls of their leverage.

On the opposite side of the outcome spectrum, some worry that the newfound power afforded to the PTAB will devastate the innovative spirit of many industries as we know it. By removing the power of any one individual or entity to monetize an idea, we run the risk of removing one of the most powerful incentives to keep inventors inventing. As put in the Article Three of the American Constitution, the purpose of a patent is “to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.” By removing this security from a creator, we run the risk of killing the innovative spirit that has guided our progress as a society thus far.



# A Comprehensive Analysis of Trends in MYP *Shiurim* Sizes

By **BENJAMIN KOSLOWE**

*Note: This article appears on The Commentator's website with more visual-friendly charts.*

This article, continuing in the footsteps of Commentator data-driven analytic articles from this semester, tracks changes in Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) *shiurim* sizes over the past several years. The scope covers the *shiurim* of MYP *roshei yeshiva* and *ramim*. The data begins with the Fall 2013 semester.

All male Yeshiva University undergraduates are registered in one of four Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) programs, one of which is MYP. Students enrolled in MYP typically learn Gemara together as *chavrutot* in one of YU's *batei midrash* — Glueck, Fishel and Klein — in the mornings, and then attend a *shiur* delivered by their *rosh yeshiva* or *ram* in the early afternoon.

The data indicates there have been 28 different MYP *shiurim* since Fall 2013. Most of the *shiurim* are taught by YU *roshei yeshiva*, although some are taught by *ramim*. According to Rabbi Menachem Penner, the Dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and Undergraduate Torah Studies, the title of "*rosh yeshiva*" is "a title of *kavod*." He added, "In theory, the *roshei yeshiva* should have even more weight [than *ramim*] with regard to existential questions facing the *yeshiva*. In practice, few of those issues arise."

As far as education is concerned, MYP *roshei yeshiva* and *ramim* have essentially identical formal roles. "The differences between *roshei yeshiva* [and *ramim*] are minimal," explained Rabbi Penner, "as all of the *rabbeim* have a say in the future of the *yeshiva*."

Of the 28 rabbis who have taught MYP *shiurim* since Fall 2013, the only *ramim* are Rabbis Mordechai Benhaim, Avraham Sarfaty, Netanel Wiederblank, Yehuda Willig and Ari Zahtz. As for the 23 *roshei yeshiva* who teach MYP *shiurim*, whose last names all appear in the charts below, 21 still currently teach in MYP. Rabbi David Horwitz has not taught an MYP *shiur* since Spring 2017, and Rabbi Gershon Yankelewitz passed away in August 2014.

Besides for Rabbi Yankelewitz, the other *roshei yeshiva* who have passed away since Fall 2013 are Rabbi Ozer Glickman, who died in March 2018, Rabbi Yosef Weiss, who died in December 2015, and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, who died in April 2015.

Besides for the *roshei yeshiva* who appear in the charts below, there are also currently nine others who serve YU in capacities that do not include MYP *shiurim*. These are Rabbis Assaf Bednarsh, Yosef Blau, J. David Bleich, Zevulun Charlop, Menachem Genack, Norman Lamm, Dovid Miller, Yona Reiss and Ezra Schwartz.

The only *rosh yeshiva* to be hired since

Fall 2013 has been Rabbi Michael Taubes, who was named *rosh yeshiva* in Fall 2016 after having served as *rosh yeshiva* of Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy/Yeshiva University High School for Boys (MTA). According to Rabbi Penner, "We do not yet have a set plan for the future of *rosh yeshiva* appointments."

All of the data comes from MYYU listings. Since all MYP *shiurim* are cross-listed with RIETS, the numbers below include not only Yeshiva College (YC) and Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) undergraduates, but also graduate *semikhah* students.

Empty boxes indicate that the corresponding *rosh yeshiva* or *ram* did not deliver an MYP *shiur* during the indicated semester. A bolded number indicates that a *shiur* studied a *halakhic masekhet* rather than the standard MYP *masekhet*, and an italicized number indicates that a *shiur* studied a non-*halakhic masekhet* rather than the standard MYP *masekhet*. The standard MYP *masekhet* which were studied by the vast majority of MYP *shiurim* in recent years have been: Shabbat ('13-'14), Ketubot ('14-'15), Sanhedrin ('15-'16), Kiddushin ('16-'17), Sukkah ('17-'18) and Baba Kamma ('18-'19).

	Adler	E. Ben-Haim	M. Benhaim	Cohen	Feldman	Goldwicht	Hirsch
Fall 2013	28	28		1	21	26	34
Spring 2014	27	34		0	22	31	24
Fall 2014	34	39		7	22	16	21
Spring 2015	32	28		6	32	26	26
Fall 2015	34	22		2	22	21	20
Spring 2016	29	20		3	31	22	16
Fall 2016	32	17		4	21	15	19
Spring 2017	33	13		6	19	13	11
Fall 2017	33	13		2	25	11	21
Spring 2018	33	11		2	24	16	19
Fall 2018	36	10	13	2	13	9	25
Average	31.9	21.4	13.0	3.2	22.9	18.7	21.5

	Horwitz	Kahn	Koenigsberg	Neuburger	Reichman	Rosensweig	Sarfaty
Fall 2013	4	21	58	29	6	55	18
Spring 2014	1	30	58	28	8	45	25
Fall 2014	3	21	56	35	9	50	33
Spring 2015	2	14	50	36	11	47	26
Fall 2015	3	15	42	26	9	50	22
Spring 2016	3	12	47	28	8	53	37
Fall 2016	3	11	43	31	8	55	40
Spring 2017	3	10	44	30	6	48	33
Fall 2017		7	42	17	4	46	40
Spring 2018		8	39	12	6	43	38
Fall 2018		11	50	16	4	55	37
Average	2.8	14.5	48.1	26.2	7.2	49.7	31.7

	Schachter	Shulman	Simon	Sobolofsky	Stein	Taubes	Tandler
Fall 2013	29	35	44	101	20		5
Spring 2014	26	40	39	82	20		2
Fall 2014	24	48	29	48	15		6
Spring 2015	24	42	35	48	14		2
Fall 2015	26	46	27	54	19		4
Spring 2016	24	44	21	50	27		4
Fall 2016	23	33	19	50	34		9
Spring 2017	18	35	20	45	33		7
Fall 2017	26	38	24	39	18	5	2
Spring 2018	28	35	27	48	9	4	3
Fall 2018	28	36	37	50	10	4	5
Average	25.1	39.3	28.7	55.9	19.9	4.3	4.5

	Twersky	Wieder	Wiederblank	M. Willig	Y. Willig	Yankelewitz	Zahtz
Fall 2013	26	29		18		1	
Spring 2014	12	27		18		0	
Fall 2014	16	34		12			
Spring 2015	19	28		12			
Fall 2015	29	36	12	9	16		
Spring 2016	34	35	12	5	17		
Fall 2016	40	33	17	21	13		
Spring 2017	33	33	14	19	11		
Fall 2017	49	25	12	10	20		
Spring 2018	44	22	13	8	20		
Fall 2018	34	17	11	13	10		8
Average	30.5	29.0	13.0	13.2	15.3	0.5	8.0

Though the charts largely speak for themselves, some trends are worth pointing out.

Most *shiurim* have not varied much from their average sizes from year to year. Exceptions include Rabbis Ben-Haim, Goldwicht and Kahn, whose *shiurim* have seen mostly steady declines in size in recent

*The data indicates there have been 28 different MYP shiurim since Fall 2013. Most of the shiurim are taught by YU roshei yeshiva, although some are taught by ramim.*

years, and Rabbi Sarfaty, whose *shiur* has seen mostly steady growth in size in recent years.

Some *shiurim*'s sizes differ markedly from their averages during years in which they do not study the standard MYP *masekhet*. For example, whereas Rabbi Mordechai Willig's *shiur* averages just over 13 students, during

the 2016-2017 academic year, when he taught a unique *masekhet* (Niddah), his *shiur* averaged 20 students. Conversely, whereas Rabbi Yaakov Neuberger's *shiur* averages just over 26 students, during the 2017-2018 academic year, when he taught a unique *masekhet* (Hullin), his *shiur* averaged 14.5 students.

Besides for Rabbi Sobolofsky's *shiur* averaging the largest at almost 56 students per semester, his *shiur* has also boasted the largest *shiur* size for individual semesters, numbering 101 students in Fall 2013 and 82 students in Spring 2014. The only *shiurim* to ever number under 5 students for a semester are those of Rabbis Yitzchak Cohen, David Horwitz, Hershel Reichman, Michael Taubes, Moshe Tendler and Gershon Yankelewitz.

Though most *shiurim* stay roughly the same size during the two semesters of each academic year, several do not. For example, Rabbi Goldwicht's *shiur* is almost always larger in the spring compared to the fall, whereas Rabbi Rosensweig's *shiur* is almost always larger in the fall compared to the spring.

The chart below indicates the total number of students registered in MYP *shiurim* for each semester since Fall 2013 (again, this data includes YC and SSSB undergraduates as well as RIETS *semikhah* students):

	Fall '13	Spring '14	Fall '14	Spring '15	Fall '15
Total Registration for MYP <i>Shiurim</i>	637	599	578	560	566

	Spring '16	Fall '16	Spring '17	Fall '17	Spring '18	Fall '18
	582	591	537	529	512	538

During every academic year besides for 2015-2016, the aggregate number of students in MYP *shiurim* has shrunk after the fall semester. This trend is most likely due to a combination of the fact that many YU students graduate in January after completing three and a half years of college, as well as the fact that students often switch morning programs from semester to semester. From Fall 2013 to Fall 2018, the total number of students in MYP *shiurim* has dropped by 99 students, from 637 to 538.

As with other data-driven Commentator pieces, explanations for *shiurim* sizes are beyond the scope of this article.

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Some notes on methodology:

-MYP data from [yu.edu/myyu](http://yu.edu/myyu) (MYYU) was copied into Excel and organized by *shiurim*.

-The numbers of registered students might differ slightly from the numbers of individuals who are present in any given *shiur*, since some *shiurim* include alumni or other non-registered students, and some *shiurim* include many registered students who sometimes are not present for *shiur*.

-Since the median sizes for *shiurim* were typically very close to the average sizes for *shiurim*, the medians were not included in this article.

-The total number of MYP and RIETS students produced by MYYU data differs slightly from the total number provided by Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIR). This is most likely due to the fact that every semester, several MYP students choose to do independent studies and therefore do not register for any MYP *shiur*.

DESIGNER BABIES,  
continued from Page 12

a parent should not be allowed to alter a child's natural genetic makeup for superficial or cosmetic reasons without their consent.

**Society at large:** One last factor to consider is the impact that designer babies could have on the global population. Overall, the proliferation of designer babies would likely result in a greater percentage of the population being more intelligent, physically

fit and free of disease. This seems like a benefit; however, there is a darker side to consider. Firstly, this could lead to a more genetically homogenous population, with parents favoring genes in line with desirable or "in vogue" traits. Genetic diversity is very important since it renders different people resistant to different types of diseases and threats, which prevents a single cause from being able to wipe out entire populations.

Additionally, treatment to select or alter embryos would likely be expensive. This could increase the disparity between

wealthier and poorer classes, creating an upper class that is smarter, stronger and otherwise could be considered "genetically superior." This would make it much more difficult for members of poorer classes to achieve upwards social mobility. Even more alarmingly, it could pave the road for a culture of eugenics, a social philosophy which favors promoting populations with genetic superiority and reducing those with genetic inferiority.

So in summation, should designer babies be legalized? Obviously, there is no simple

answer. When thinking of worst case scenarios — violations of medical autonomy, debilitating heritable mutations and a whole host of societal inequities — it may be tempting to keep this Pandora's box safely shut. But when one considers the possibility of extraordinary good — the eradication of diseases, advancement of humanity and other benefits that we, in our narrow scope of vision, can't even begin to imagine — the prospect of leaving this area of medicine unexplored can feel, at the very least, anticlimactic.



## Babies at YU: An Appreciation

By MICHAEL WEINER

If you spend enough time on the Wilf Campus, you will see lots of babies. Granted, none of them have a *makom kavua* in the *beit midrash* (yet), but their presence is unmistakable. Every day without fail, walking through campus between classes, I inevitably cross paths with some babies in strollers, being pushed by students about my age who are “on duty” as fathers and mothers.

*My case for the benefits of having babies around, in brief: they give you perspective.*

By contrast, I’ve spent a couple of *Shabbatot* visiting friends at secular college campuses this year, and I can say with confidence that there are far, far fewer babies in those student communities than there are here. It’s not even close. But why should anyone care? After all, it should come as no surprise that strollers are more ubiquitous here than at other colleges, given the relatively young age at which most Orthodox Jews marry and the high value we place on having children.

That said, I think the presence of babies on campus adds something profound to our college experience that is all-too-often overlooked.

My case for the benefits of having babies around, in brief: they give you perspective.

College campuses are worlds unto themselves; isolated cocoons of students who are

all mostly doing the same thing, set apart from the hustle and bustle of life “out there.” In an average day on a campus, it would be easy and natural for every single person you encounter (barring faculty and other school employees) to be about the same age as you and in the same stage of life. Schools can tout their diversity along lines of race or gender, but few have much diversity in terms of age.

There’s a discomfiting artificiality to this setting. It is so unlike the real world, filled with a dazzling array of people of all ages.

That kind of environment can have some seriously negative effects. After living on a typical college campus for a few months, you might (justifiably!) start to get the feeling that everyone in the world is 20 years old. And by the same token, that everyone in the world has the same thoughts, feelings, experiences, hopes and dreams that you and your 20-year-old friends do.

In its worst incarnation, a college campus can become a sort of Never Never Land, where, because we only spend time with peers just like us, we stop growing up. And just like in the story, although Never Never Land might sound like paradise, it ends up becoming a nightmare. Classes, shiur, homework, clubs. These are all enriching, meaningful activities, but they’re also all about you. Most of life, as a spouse and a parent and a coworker, will be lived with

and for other people.

Stuck inside this cocoon, thinking about ourselves, our work and the present moment, we can be in danger of forgetting that college is just one leg of the journey of life, and that we have a number of critical life milestones coming up that we desperately need to prepare for. Unfortunately, acing all your classes or even getting an internship is not the right kind of preparation.

Enter babies. Their presence, even for just a few moments, keeps us grounded in reality, gently and adorably reminding us to think of others and of the future. “Finding yourself” is absolutely about exploring personal passions and career options, but for Orthodox Jews, it’s just as much about growing into the kind

of person who can one day be a wonderful parent and spouse.

Walking down Amsterdam Avenue, lost in thought about essay deadlines and my next class, babies help snap me out of my reverie. Looking down at their adorable faces buried in the recesses of their strollers, I hear the message: you will soon grow up. You will face greater challenges than a midterm. You will one day be a parent to a baby just like this one. And your choices now do matter, shaping you into becoming the most caring and empathic human being you can be.

Thanks for those daily reminders of humility and empowerment that you unconsciously send me, anonymous babies. They’re coming at the perfect time.



Two smiling babies.

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## YU Needs More Armed Security Personnel

By PHILLIP NAGLER

**Editor’s Note:** Certain details in this piece have been deliberately obscured out of concern for the safety of Yeshiva University campuses.

The scope of this article is regarding the security standards on the Wilf Campus. The security on the Beren campus is not addressed in this article.

More than 300 mass shootings have occurred in America this year. A few weeks ago, the Jewish community mourned the

loss of 11 of our brothers and sisters who were murdered in Squirrel Hill. In Thousand Oaks, 12 lives were taken by a deranged gunman, where many of the victims were college-aged students. As a Jewish institution and major university, YU is a conceivable target of gun violence. While accepting this fact is difficult and frightful, we have to be preparing ourselves in case of an emergency.

Last semester, I wrote an Opinions piece to promote student awareness of active shooter protocols. I was pleased to see that the school held two active shooter drills this semester that were open to the entire student body; I decided to attend one of them. The drill was led by Mr. Paul Murtha, Director

of Security at YU. He discussed the general protocol and how to best approach different active shooter situations.

At the end of the drill, I had not felt a sense of safety on campus. It seemed that in many situations there is not much that one can do to ensure their safety in the event of an active shooter. A feeling of helplessness lingered inside of me. This feeling compelled me to ask a question: “How many armed guards are there on campus?” I approached a source familiar with security at Wilf who told me that there are a few armed guards, but they are not stationed in every building on campus.

Administering these drills was a step in

the right direction. After much thought, however, I am not satisfied with the amount of security we have on campus. How can I truly feel safe in those buildings that do not have an armed guard? These shootings can happen in the blink of an eye. By the time an armed guard hears of a shooting in another building — one without an armed guard — lives could have already been taken. This is not a scenario that other students and I should have to wonder about.

One can argue that there is a lack of

*How can I truly feel safe in those buildings that do not have an armed guard?*

evidence that armed guards prevent mass shootings in the first place. Additionally, it can be argued that armed guards, police officers and the strong presence of guns can cause discomfort amongst students. My response to both of these arguments would be that the benefits of having more campus security would highly outweigh the points brought across from these arguments. While some students may be uncomfortable in the presence of guns, I think most can recognize the extra measure of safety that they bring to campus.

By no means is this article trying to tackle the debate on gun control versus Second Amendment rights. I am simply addressing concerns I have about the unsound climate of the country we are living in. We need to accept that at this point in time, a mentally ill person can easily get their hands on an assault rifle. The only way to ensure our safety is to fight fire with fire, and right now, we barely have a flame.



Ruben and Belfer Halls

THE COMMENTATOR

# Something for the Spirit: A Response to Fear in Talmud Torah

By Lavi Teitelbaum

Since the time of our father *Ya'akov*, who united the *hesed* of *Avraham* and the *gevura* of *Yitzhak*, our people's scholars and teachers have treaded the treacherous path between *mesorah* and *hiddush* — tradition and discovery. In every generation, our *yeshivot* must raise both Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenos, the plastered cistern that does not lose a drop, and Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh, the ever-strengthening fountain. Like Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai in his cave, our institution of Torah learning is sustained by a slow-growing carob tree, gathering water, and a rushing spring, shooting water out. For that reason, the emerging discussion in this publication of the place for academic Talmud study is an essential one to be had both inside and outside the walls of the *beit midrash*.

Unlike the giants of Torah in our institution and in countless others, I am not a scholar. I am neither a plastered cistern nor a strengthening fountain. Many *gedolim* of our generation and of those past have written on the subject of academic methodology, but this is neither the place for a thorough treatment of *derekh halimmud* nor of the exact parameters of academic Talmud. In his recent Commentator headline, Michael Weiner posed what is certainly the most important question in any *beit midrash*: What of *Yirat Shamayim*?

That is a question I can answer.

In this pursuit, I would like to analyze three sub-questions raised in the article: The fleeting identity of “classical Talmud Torah,” concern for the undermining of *kavod* for our sages and the claim that certain methodologies “offered nothing to the spirit.”

## Nothing New Under the Sun

In discussing academic methodology in Talmud, it should be noted that virtually all of the methods in question are not themselves products of some twentieth-century enterprise of secular academia, but have been held dear by our own great sages in every generation. As the author duly noted, the comparison of manuscripts to produce a reliable text is all but unquestionable. My teacher Rabbi Jeremy Wieder is quick to point out that most significant textual variants were already noted and considered by the *rishonim*. Archeological and linguistic findings, though sometimes less available to previous generations, have been utilized everywhere from the Rambam's treatment of *avodah zarah* to Rabbi Steinsaltz's masterful glosses.

Beyond these universally utilized methods, many *talmidim* trained in the conceptual analysis common in many modern *yeshivot* fear approaches that recognize layers in the text of the *Gemara*. But such recognition is

far from foreign. As Rabbi Wieder explains in his article on academic Talmud in the *beit midrash*, the *ba'alei hatosafot* distinguish in numerous cases between a statement of an *amora* and its interpretation by the *Gemara*. Just a few weeks ago in *shiur*, I learned such a case (*Bava Kamma* 19a s.v. *Rav Ashi*) where *Tosfot* explains an inconsistency between a cited question and a later question of Rav Ashi by claiming that the *Gemara*'s citation included a later interpretation which was not shared by Rav Ashi. Clearly, there can be no threat to “traditional” study of Talmud from suggestions of historical development *per se*. They have already sat firmly in the *beit midrash* for a thousand years.

## Dignity of the Law

In his article, the author cites Professor Lawrence Kaplan to voice concern that a “diachronic” historical approach to Talmud study — one that analyses historical development within a *sugya* by deconstructing its layering and redaction — is “undermining respect for *chazal* in suggesting they are poor, careless or uninformed interpreters.” This accusation is understandable. After all, some secular scholars do espouse such disrespect, and, in doing so, do cite changing interpretations between redactional layers. Nonetheless, many *gedolei haTorah* are unphased. Rabbi Yehiel Yakov Weinberg in the *Sridei Esh* (vol. 3 p. 22) stresses:

One should not be surprised when into an answer of *Rava* a later interpretation is inserted, for we find this sort of thing in many places in the Talmud, that the *stamma d'Gemara* or *rabanan savorai* added explanatory words of their own to the language of a *braita* or of an *amora*, and even a few commentaries of the *geonim* entered into the body of the *Gemara* after the sealing of the Talmud, something that the *rishonim* have already testified to and explained. We even find in later additions that entered a statement of the *amora* things that seem to contradict the *amora* himself.

Are we to say that the *Sridei Esh* lacked respect for *talmidei hakhamim*? In his fourth volume (p. 246), the *Sridei Esh* quotes the Vilna Gaon as asserting that the phrase *hisurei mehasura vehechi ketani* indicates that the authors of the *Gemara* disagree with the *Mishnah*. Surely the Gra did not lack respect for Torah scholarship.

If this is so, how can we understand historical layering differently? The question of why certain *sugyot* are layered is one that requires deep *iyun* and careful individual treatment that is far beyond my place to provide here. One answer is certain, though: We search for truth with *ahavat haTorah* and *yirat shamayim*.

## Something for the Spirit

In every generation, as our sages held together both *mesorah* and *hiddush* — Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkenos and Rabbi Elazar ben Arakh — an element of fear has driven their search for truth. Through our travails in exile, our study of Torah has been driven by fear of Karaites, Christian censors, heretical reformers and false messiahs. Each generation's search for truth is tainted, *rahmana letzlan*, by the pressing need to refute enemies of that truth. It is therefore nothing new that we fear secular academia. Nevertheless, we cannot let this fear compromise our *yirat shamayim* by denying our own traditions and rejecting truths latent in the pages we hold dear. What of Torah *lishmah*?

In his article, the author suggests, following an online statement in which Rabbi David Brofsky explains Rav Lichtenstein's approach to academic Talmud, that “philological-historical study ... offered nothing

in every generation. Granted, this revelation is seldom relevant to *psak halakha*, but, in the words of *Rambam*, the Creator “commanded us to love him, may he be elevated, that is to say, we should contemplate and consider his commandments and his works until we comprehend and find in his providence the essence of ecstasy. This is the love that is binding” (*Sefer HaMitzvot*, Positive Commandment 3). Our contemplation of all aspects of Torah, irrespective of their current practical applicability, is the foundation of *ahavat Hashem*.

In his article, the author compares academic Talmud study to academic study of *Tanakh*, which has been largely accepted in this institution and in the broader Modern Orthodox world. He points to a process of “*borer*, separating out the religiously desirable from the undesirable” as justification for this acceptance, and the absence of a similar movement in academic Talmud as evidence of its problematic nature.

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*The layers of the text of the Gemara opened my eyes to the dynamic genius of our sages in revealing retzon Hashem in every generation.*

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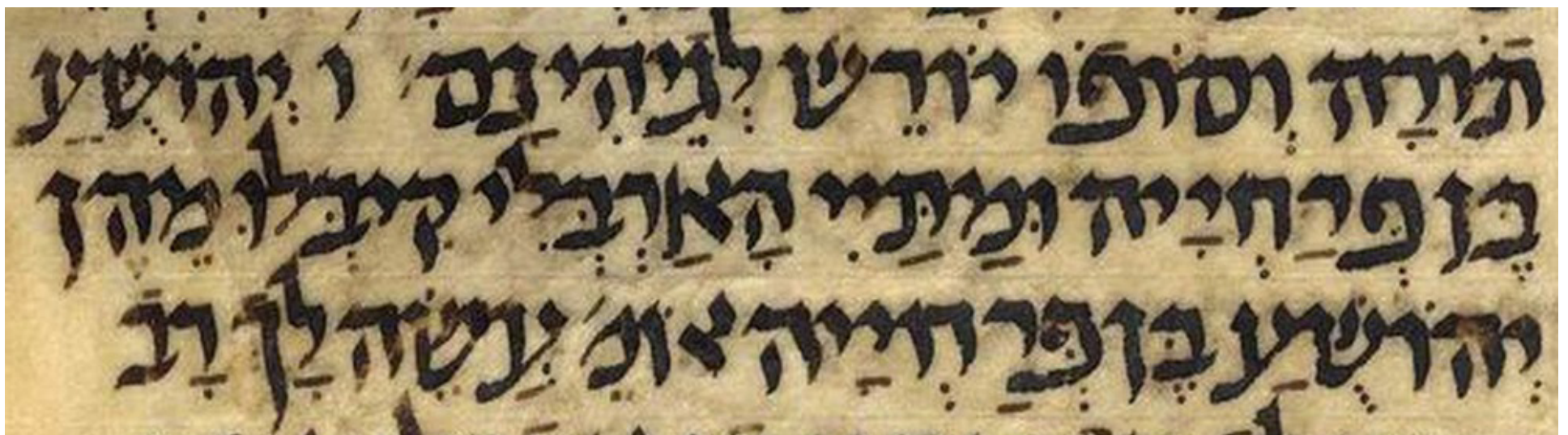
to the spirit.” Even if the academy indeed looked coldly upon our sacred traditions and out of them sought only to know what kind of house *Abaye* lived in or what he ate for breakfast, it is our great *avodah* as inheritors of the *mesorah* not just to record, but to listen deeply to its wisdom. What does *Abaye* teach us? What does *Abaye* reveal of *dvar Hashem*?

Practitioners of conceptual *darkhei halimmud* like *Brisk* mine the wisdom of the *mesorah* by constructing harmony in its legal mechanisms. As such, suggestions that previous generations did not understand these mechanisms in the same way can be frightening. In my experience, though, such suggestions are far from lacking in spirit. When I struggled through my first pages of *Gemara* in *yeshiva*, I was disturbed by the messiness of the text. Aside from explaining seemingly simple things in overly complex ways, it could not even seem to choose a consistent language in which to write. As I matured and learned to read more carefully — to recognize the stylistic differences between early *tannaim*, late *amoraim* and the so-called *stamma* or anonymous narrating voice — I began to see true beauty in the structure of the Talmudic *sugya*.

The suggestion of layers did not hinder my spiritual experience. On the contrary, my formerly planar attempts at *lamdanut* gained a third dimension; the layers of the text of the *Gemara* opened my eyes to the dynamic genius of our sages in revealing *retzon Hashem*

Based on my own experience in *Eretz Yisrael*, I cannot accept this argument. I merited to sit for many months in the *Beit Vaad l'Torah Har Hevron* in *Otniel*, a sizeable and well-respected *yeshivat hesder* whose *beit midrash* resounds constantly with historical analysis of our layered tradition. Similar methodologies are used extensively in the *yeshivot* of *Mahanayim*, *Petah Tikva*, *Maale Gilboa* and *Tekoa*, not to mention *hareidi* institutions such as *Yeshivat Kisse Rahamim*, which perpetuates the Tunisian tradition of Talmudic analysis. It cannot be said that there is no movement of *yirei shamayim* for layer-sensitive reading.

In my Introduction to Bible course, we have examined uncomfortable issues of authorship, redaction and textual transmission from the perspective of *rishonim* and *aharonim*. These issues may be practically irrelevant for *psak halakha*, but they are essential for understanding the nature of *mesorah*. Uncomfortable questions are of course amplified when they come to Talmud, the core of our *avodah* in the *beit midrash*, but we cannot let discomfort or fear get in the way of truth. Fundamental questions of textual layering and historical development of *halakha* have been addressed by the *geonim*, discussed by the *rishonim* and deliberated by the *aharonim*. To shun these discussions is to shun our own tradition.



The Kaufmann Manuscript of Pirkei Avot

## Spread the Student Council Wealth

By **SAMUEL GELMAN (HOUSTON, TX)**

The announcement of a coed Shabbaton uptown left me very excited. It is about time something like this happened, and I am looking forward to seeing how the parties involved approach it. However, this announcement also brought back memories of my time on the Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) last year, when I served as the Isaac Breuer College (IBC) Representative. This Shabbaton is an amazing accomplishment for the current student council, as well as for past leaders who helped lay the foundation, and it made me ask myself what I accomplished during my time serving on SOY.

The short and long answers are nothing. Aside from answering logistical questions about IBC for various students, I really did not do much with my position. The conversion of the Rubin Shul to an IBC Beit Midrash never came to fruition, I did not bring any guest speakers and, well, we all know what happened with Klein@9.

Part of this was my fault. I did not realize how frustrated I would become with my position. The OSL and RIETS have a meticulous vetting process for speakers and programming, and I did not have the patience or the energy to deal with the bureaucracy.

But part of the blame lies in how student council is structured. The president of each council has full control over their respective budget. That means that, at the end of the day, if a non-presidential member of student council wants to bring speakers or develop programming, they will have to ask the president, who then evaluates whether the program is worth funding. In making this decision, the president will weigh several factors, including their relationship with the council member, whether the program fits into their “agenda” and if the program fits into their budget, items that many presidents usually plan in the summer or at the very beginning of the academic year.

This process ends up being very discouraging for non-presidential members of student council. They cannot actually do anything on their own, and must always be in consultation with the president, which can be tedious, slow and discouraging. Ask any student leader; the events approval process is drawn out and frustrating when it is just the presidents planning. Adding another player to the mix, who must then seek approval from the president who must then seek approval from the OSL, is not ideal for anyone.

The problem only intensifies when councils do not meet often. From my own personal experience as well as from discussions I have had with other council members — both current and past — student councils do not often meet as a full group to discuss issues. Sometimes, a council can go a full year with only one meeting where everyone is present. Without a proper environment where everyone can consistently discuss council-related issues together, lower-level council members have no place to propose ideas in an environment where they can be seriously considered and debated. Sure they can schedule a meeting with the OSL, but that just adds another layer of bureaucracy, and OSL employees are not members of the student body. Ideas about students should be discussed by students that we elect, and only then presented to the OSL for guidance and logistical support.

What ends up happening, then, is that non-presidential student council members

end up staying on the side while the president takes care of pretty much everything, only calling on the rest of their council when they want to “honor” them with the job of planning the YOMs or helping to set up Chanukahfest. This removes all sense of responsibility and prestige from the position, turning the rest of the student council roles into ceremonial positions at best and unpaid labor at worst. This, in turn, convinces most students not to pursue student leadership positions, allowing students to run unopposed for a position that they and

planning. No longer tied to the president, their budget and their “agenda,” these members could pursue their own “agenda,” filling them with a sense of accomplishment and empowerment that they can take with them once they graduate. The middleman would be removed, making the process faster and more efficient. The president should not be the only one deciding on student programming, and this restructuring would add more diverse voices to the student life initiatives.

Additionally, this plan could also lead to a diversification in programming. Once again,

the agenda and, because they control the budget, end up getting the final say. They can withhold funding from any program or event they choose and face little to no consequence for it. This is especially true in our system, where council budgets and spending reports are not released, and the Google Sheet that the OSL uses to plan and approve events is not public. Furthermore, presidents can go an entire term without meeting with their entire council, taking full control of the agenda and only communicating decisions through email and texting.

However, taking away some of the budget from them and giving it to their fellow council members would force presidents to acknowledge their full council and negotiate spending with them.

*By designating a certain amount of the budget to each individual council member, as opposed to leaving it all in the hands of the president, these positions would gain a level of responsibility and prestige not seen before.*

the student body do not actually care about.

Money makes the world go round, and it is no different here. What I propose, therefore, is for the OSL to designate a certain amount of money to non-presidential members of student council to oversee on their own.

Take SOY as a test subject. Each morning program has a representative on the council, yet they do not garner much attention or interest. In the Spring 2018 elections, the winners of the Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) and James Striar School (JSS) elections ran unopposed, and no one ran for the IBC or Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP) representative positions, forcing another election to take place in the fall.

By designating a certain amount of the budget to each individual council member, as opposed to leaving it all in the hands of the president, these positions would gain a level of responsibility and prestige not seen before. It could bring in an entirely new contingent of students who would be interested in running to the table, and increase student interest in the elections. After all, where there is money concerned, people will start caring. It would also weed out students who are not qualified or interested, as they would now know that this position comes with actual responsibility and expectations.

Furthermore, it would give those members new freedom in terms of program

we will look at SOY as an example. This year, SOY sponsored and spearheaded several programs, including poppers to go along with cholent on Thursday nights, opening Nagels 15 minutes earlier to accommodate night seder, freshly brewed coffee for Friday L.A.B. (a Friday morning learning program) and a new publication, *Yitzchak Yiranan*. While I have no doubt that these programs were done with the best intentions and have pleased many students, they do not appeal to the entire YU student body. It is hard to know what students in other morning programs want, and the fact that every SOY president so far has been from MYP makes IBC and JSS students feel unheard and ignored when it comes to programming. However, if the IBC or JSS representatives had a budget of their own, they could sponsor programming specifically designed for IBC or JSS. This could be anything from IBC breakfast after the 9 AM *davening* to an interesting Shabbat guest to a full JSS Shabbaton. This would also make the SOY president’s job much easier, as he would no longer have to worry about specific programs, allowing him to focus on larger and more important issues and events that require his attention.

Finally, adjusting the budget would put a check on the power of each president. Despite the many other members of each council, at the end of the day, the president determines

This idea does not have to be limited to SOY. Think of the possibilities if each class representative had a designated budget to run programming specifically for their class. The freshman representatives could sponsor an early year gathering for new students to get to know each other; the sophomore class could plan their own “halfway there” dinner; the junior reps could sponsor a day trip upstate. Some of these programs happen already, but empowering the representatives with a budget would streamline the process and allow for more creativity.

I am not suggesting that each member get their own \$45,000 budget. Just a small amount in order to empower them to run something significant. The amount can be determined by the percentage of students in each class or morning program, or can be fixed. The money can come from the greater council’s budget itself, or a new fund entirely. With the increase in the student activities fee, there should be plenty of money to get these programs off the ground. Yes, this would take some power out of the hands of the president, but if they truly want their university to succeed and feel like a community where everyone feels welcome, they should trust their fellow council members to share some of the power and, therefore, the wealth. Our council members have ideas. Let’s help make them a reality.



Money.

## The Vaccination Debacle

By YOSEF LEMEL

There is no question that vaccinations are a positive result of the medical advances in the modern era. As a result of vaccinations, diseases such as smallpox and measles have respectively been eradicated and receded significantly in the U.S. However, in certain Jewish communities, measles is resurfacing due to a lack of children being vaccinated. I believe that this proliferation is the result of certain prominent religious leaders being opposed to vaccination.

The modern anti-vaccine movement began with a study published by Andrew Wakefield in *The Lancet*, (a prestigious peer-reviewed medical journal) which suggested that the combined vaccine of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) directly corre-

advocacy of pop-culture icons such as Jim Carrey and Jenny McCarthy, both of whom virulently speak out against the use of the MMR vaccine.

Then, somehow, this became a religious issue. Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky, the *rosh yeshiva* of the Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia, and his wife, Temi, were persuaded that vaccines are extremely harmful to humans. Mrs. Kamenetsky publicly lectures against the use of vaccines. In a 2014 exploration into anti-vaxxers, the Baltimore Jewish Times quotes Rabbi Kamenetsky, saying that “vaccinations [are] the problem. It’s a hoax... It is just big business.”

In 2015, Rabbi Kamenetsky turned his flawed beliefs into policy when he signed a letter prohibiting *yeshivas* from refusing admission to unvaccinated children. He signed the letter along with Rabbi Malkiel

measles. It spread to the U.S. through travelers from Israel and was then transmitted to children who were not immunized.

This is absolutely reprehensible. The loss of even one life is devastating. The Talmud states (*Sanhedrin 37a*), “Anyone who kills one Jew, the Torah considers it as if he destroyed the world. Anyone who

Lakewood and Brooklyn who blindly listen to what the “*gedolim*” preach, even when it directly contradicts facts and logic.

I believe that it is upon us, as rational human beings, to assess the extent to which we listen to these religious figures. How much influence must they be given outside the sphere of Torah?

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*It is completely irrational to suggest that Rabbi Kamenetsky knows better than the CDC, FDA, AAP and WHO when it comes to the risks of vaccine use.*

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saves a Jewish soul, the Torah considers it as if he saved the world.” This is how much a soul is worth in our religion. The disregard these parents showed when they failed to

In response to the most recent measles outbreak, the Beth Medrash Govoha recommended that its students to get vaccinated. In addition, the Orthodox Union and the



Lack of vaccines among children have led to a measles outbreak in Rockland County.

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lates to the development of autism in young children. He therefore urged parents and physicians not to administer the vaccine to children.

In 2010, Wakefield was stripped of his medical license by the General Medical Council of the UK because of his irresponsible research methods. As a result, *The Lancet* retracted the study published by Wakefield. In addition, a vast majority of the co-authors of the study withdrew their support of the findings. Credible organizations, such as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and World Health Organization (WHO), have confirmed the relative safety of vaccine use. Unfortunately, Wakefield’s inaccurate findings were still able to sway masses of scientifically illiterate individuals through social media, documentaries and the

Kotler and Rabbi Matisyahu Salomon, two of the leading rabbis in Beth Medrash Govoha (BMG), the largest yeshiva in the US. The letter claimed that vaccine use is “unavoidably unsafe.” Although the letter never explicitly stated that getting immunized is forbidden according to Torah law, these statements have normalized this belief in parts of the ultra-Orthodox community in the U.S.

Unfortunately, this attitude led to the largest outbreak of measles in New York in the past few decades and my hometown, Monsey, has been at the center. According to the Ramapo Daily Voice, there have been at least 77 reported cases of measles in Rockland County (where Monsey is located) since September. There are a few dozen more cases confirmed within the Jewish communities of Lakewood and Brooklyn. This outbreak originated in Israel, where over 1,500 cases of measles have been reported and where a child died as a result of contracting

immunize their child is antithetical to this precept. The blame for the child’s death lies squarely on the parents for not immunizing their child.

In the case of vaccinations, Rabbi Kamenetsky is talking about a field of knowledge of which he has little comprehension, yet, some ultra-Orthodox individuals listen to his views on vaccinations without consulting with their physician. This is a gross misinterpretation of *daas Torah*. Those who believe in this erroneous doctrine of *daas Torah* contend that the *gedolei hador* have a special insight into worldly matters because they use their Torah perspective to assess situations.

This view of *daas Torah* is an assault on human reason. It is completely irrational to suggest that Rabbi Kamenetsky knows better than the CDC, FDA, AAP and WHO when it comes to the risks of vaccine use. Yet, there are groups of people in Monsey,

Rabbinical Council of America published a joint statement strongly urging “all parents to vaccinate their healthy children on the timetable recommended by their pediatrician.” Be that as it may, Rabbi Kamenetsky and all other rabbis who persist in their dangerous anti-vaccination beliefs must immediately retract their previous statements and rulings on vaccine use. The Agudath Israel, a major organization which represents the *yeshivish* ideology in America, has not officially taken a position on the vaccination debate. They must denounce the unscientific and dangerous beliefs of anti-vaxxers. Finally, rather than solely listening to a rabbi, parents should rely on professional medical advice when making health decisions for their children. If such action is not taken, lives will be put at risk.

## Don't Embolden Anti-Semites By Giving Airbnb A Pass

By ETAN NEIMAN

Airbnb recently jumped into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, announcing a decision to forbid homeowners in the “Israeli occupied” West Bank from listing their properties on the popular rental platform and remove all current listings. Members fortunate enough to live in an area which Airbnb deems to be sufficiently unoccupied use the platform to arrange or offer lodging. In a press release titled “Listings in Disputed Regions,” the company reported that the decision to remove the listings came after “considerable time” was spent consulting experts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict about how they should “treat listings in occupied territories.” Airbnb (which operates in 191 countries) said that as an industry leader, we “must consider the impact we have and act responsibly.”

Let's talk anti-Semitism. For assessing this decision, we will overlook that one can still enjoy Airbnb's platform in the West Bank Palestinian city of Qalqilya — a city just a few hundred meters away from some of the delisted “occupied territories,” and a territory in which a Palestinian Authority court recently sentenced two Palestinians to 15 years of hard labor “for the crime of leaking (read: selling) land to the enemy (read: Israeli Jews).” This should be considered a lenient ruling as the punishment under Palestinian law for trying to sell or selling land to Israeli Jews can include execution. We will also overlook the fact that one can continue to surf Airbnb's listings for a rental

on the Gaza Strip. A territory governed by Hamas, who has a charter demanding the destruction of every Jew on earth. A territory which indiscriminately fires missiles as fast as they can accumulate them at Jewish civilians to cheers of the populace.

We will overlook both of these because the decision-makers at Airbnb never claimed an industry leader must act responsibly in a territory governed by oppressive laws or a group identified as terrorists by numerous countries and international organizations. It is disputed territories which an industry leader has an innate responsibility to police.

In assessing if Airbnb's decision is anti-Semitic, it is important to note that among the listings available as of this writing on Airbnb are a “modern apartment studio” in the city-center of Sevastopol, Ukraine (annexed by Russia) and a “Cozy Studio” in Tibet, China (formerly known simply as Tibet). Additional disputed territories with listings on Airbnb include Western Sahara (brutally occupied by Morocco) and Northern Cyprus (which Turkey invaded before expelling nearly all the ethnic Greeks and seizing their homes). Indeed, the West Bank is virtually the only disputed territory Airbnb has taken action in.

This double-standard is key because the widely respected International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (boasting 31 member countries including superpowers such as the United States and the United Kingdom) weighs in on exactly this tactic in defining anti-Semitism. Their definition includes singling out Israel for special attack, or in other

words applying a double-standard.

Certainly, there is adequate room to argue that Airbnb's action is not, in fact, anti-Semitic. There are those who fear — including some within the United Kingdom's Labour Party — that the “double-standard” aspect of the definition limits free speech and makes it too difficult to criticize Israel. Moreover, two days after the West Bank decision was made public, amidst backlash, Airbnb reportedly told some media outlets that it will look into whether it should drop listings within Western Sahara.

Perhaps strongest in defending Airbnb's decision is that they were likely bullied into

with many of the strategies employed in BDS campaigns — are anti-Semitic. Many individuals involved in the starting and running of BDS campaigns are driven by opposition to Israel's very existence as a Jewish state. And, all too often, BDS advocates employ anti-Semitic rhetoric and narratives to isolate and demonize Israel.”

Seemingly emboldened and empowered, in its report “Bed and Breakfast on Stolen Land: Tourist Rental Listings in West Bank Settlements,” HRW called on similar platform Booking.com to follow Airbnb's “positive step.” Booking.com responded in essence that they will not be bullied, at least

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*Whether anti-Semitic, anti-Israel or a product of caving into pressure, Airbnb's decision was a boon to anti-Semites.*

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it by the influential Human Rights Watch (HRW), an organization no stranger to accusations of anti-Israel bias. Airbnb felt that it was the best business decision to appease HRW and similar advocacy groups, though at the same time risk a loss in business from Israel and Jewish defenders. A day after the announcement, HRW published a preplanned scathing report detailing the company's operations in Israeli settlements.

Whether anti-Semitic, anti-Israel or a product of caving into pressure, Airbnb's decision was a boon to anti-Semites. Does anybody doubt, for example, that notorious anti-Semite Louis Farrakhan considered the announcement anything but a major victory? For those unfamiliar, Farrakhan (who scarily has a strong following and has met with and been mainstreamed by some prominent political figures) is known for hit lines such as “Hitler was a very great man” and “the satanic Jews control everything and mostly everybody” and “the powerful Jews are my enemy.” Of course, he uncovered that “there were many Israelis and Zionist Jews in key rooms in the 9/11 attacks.” He did recently vigorously defend his image, clarifying that they “call me an antisemite. Stop it. I'm anti-termites.”

Similarly worried about Airbnb empowering anti-Semites, Anti-Defamation League CEO, Jonathan Greenblatt, told the company in a letter, “With this decision, the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement and its supporters will be further emboldened and view it as a victory for their hateful campaign against Israel ... Many of the founding goals of the BDS movement, including denying the Jewish people the universal right of self-determination — along

not at this time. Meanwhile, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat wasted no time seizing upon this victory to lay the roadmap for Airbnb's “next step.” He said in a statement that Airbnb made an “initial positive step” in removing settlement listings from its website, but it should have also declared that the settlements are “illegal and constitute war crimes.”

As Jews, we cannot count on anybody but ourselves to fiercely push back at anybody or any organization which mainstreams or abets anti-Semitism. If we see a politician smiling alongside Farrakhan, we should denounce them as the filth they are and ensure they never come near our vote. If while walking down the street we hear hate being spoken at us, it emboldens that anti-Semite and any anti-Semite listening if we do not loudly and proudly call out the racist as a racist.

Whether one concludes Airbnb was anti-Semitic, discriminatory towards Israel or making a tough business decision, we cannot — we must not — give them a pass. Let's hit Airbnb where they care: their income statement. Do not book through Airbnb and implore anybody who will listen not to. The world is watching. They must be sent a clear and unambiguous message — the Jewish people will not allow anti-Semites to be emboldened.

*Etan Neiman (Syms '17) is a former Commentator Business Editor and is currently working as a Senior Accounting Associate at Brand Sonnenschine as well as the Director of Operations at Refuat Hanefesh.*



PINESACHILLE

Airbnb operates in 191 countries.

*PRE-PROFESSIONAL ADVISING,  
continued from page 3*

School of Business. The question, then, shifts to pre-law and pre-health advising: Should YU provide pre-professional guidance based on demographics? Do these advisors cater to the largest demographic of undergraduate students in Yeshiva and Stern Colleges? If they do, then, I ask the administration to be transparent about the rationale behind providing pre-health and pre-law advising.

[To me, it appears that there is a certain prestige associated with the two; especially within the Orthodox community, lawyers and doctors maintain a certain prominence and primacy.]

In addition, the author adds that pre-law students encounter an exceedingly difficult application process and therefore require a specialized pre-professional advisor. This

rationale, however, subtly deviates from the demographics argument. Most likely, this would require individuals with a *specific* background in a professional field, and not merely a *general* career advisor. Though slightly beyond the scope of this piece, I think we must question the existence and efficacy of the Career Center, in its current form, to properly assist students pursuing specialized fields. Perhaps the Career Center should be composed of one or two general advisors and five or six, for example, specialty advisors for pre-law, pre-health, pre-psych, computer science, etc. Personally, I find both rationales — the demographic and preparation-based — legitimate; nevertheless, students, faculties and Deans should explain which, if any, rationale they advocate.

Lastly, I want to advocate for what I believe to be another neglected need at YU: Pre-psych advising. According to both of the aforementioned rationales, pre-psych

students deserve pre-professional advising. According to research conducted by The Commentator last (academic) year, there are currently 182 declared Psychology majors in YC and SC. This number is a little smaller than former-pre-law advisor Dina Chelst's estimated 200 undergraduate students that are pre-law at YU. From a demographics perspective, pre-psych nearly parallels pre-law, and thus, pre-psych deserves or requires a pre-professional advisor.

Although one might object that not all Psych majors apply to graduate programs, if resources are distributed according to declared majors, there is no reason why pre-psych students should be barred from having their own advisor. Secondly, graduate Psychology programs also demand much preparation: the GREs, determining a proper graduate program, deciding your professional trajectory and finding research opportunities. And, recently at YU, the latter has grown

much more difficult. As YU administrators recently shifted the Psychology department's focus from research to teaching, students have less access to research and research experience, and since most graduate programs require research experience, YC and SC students have a strong disadvantage.

In closing, I implore the YU community (students, faculty and Deans) to re-think our assumptions about pre-professional advising. How should resources be distributed? Should resource distribution follow declared majors, the number of students with declared professional intent, or according to the number of past students, etc.? Pre-professional advising may be a necessity, but the question is, why?

Noah Marlowe, Yeshiva College '19

## “The Office:” The Virtues Learned in the Halls of Dunder Mifflin

By AARON KARESH

There’s no shortage of television shows that are based in offices. From “Billions” in Stamford, to “Suits” in New York City to “House of Lies” in Los Angeles, we have come to expect certain things out of certain industries based on what these shows portray. But life is not as it is on the screen; TV shows do not accurately portray life in corporate America. But there is one exception: “The Office.”

We’ve all seen “The Office;” if you haven’t, borrow a Netflix login and watch it now. “The Office” is based in Scranton, Pennsylvania and focuses on a fictional, regional paper company called Dunder Mifflin. Unlike the aforementioned shows, “The Office” comes pretty close to portraying office life in a realistic manner.

Ask any hedge fund employee or “hedgy” and they’ll tell you that while intriguing, “Billions” is not what their day-to-day looks like; ask any attorney or consultant and

they’ll say the same about “Suits” and “House of Lies,” respectively. Those shows play up the glitz, glamour and cut-throat nature of corporate America, while, in reality, it is nothing like that. “The Office” on the other hand, shows what an office environment really looks like. Blatant HR violations and other cringe-worthy moments aside, Michael, Jim and the rest of the Scranton branch introduced us to true friendship,

Flonkerton competition at the “Office Olympics,” the paper-sellers are enjoying themselves every step of the way, building true camaraderie — no small feat considering their dreadful job selling paper in the Scranton Metropolitan Area. Another major feature of “The Office” is how much time is wasted. Now, in the real world you will be hard-pressed to find another Jim-Dwight relationship where all they seem to do is waste

real people make real sacrifices for their loved ones. Michael left Scranton to move to Colorado with Holly. Jim gave up on his successful side-gig because it took him away from Pam and his kids. All of these portrayals are real, and they happen in every single office in every single city across the country. Yes, “The Office” is souped up in its own way, but at its core, it has a certain realism that isn’t found in most shows.

*Blatant HR violations and other cringeworthy moments aside, Michael, Jim and the rest of the Scranton branch introduced us to true friendship, the inevitable time-wasting that goes on at work and the personal sacrifices people make for their loved ones.*

the inevitable time-wasting that goes on at work and the personal sacrifices people make for their loved ones. Allow me to elaborate.

Throughout the show, the members of the Dunder Mifflin Scranton branch have fun both in and out of the office. Be it the infamous “Chili’s Dundee Awards” or the

time, but even in so-called “legitimate,” “fast-paced” or whatever adjective is used to describe an investment bank, law firm, consulting firm or hedge fund, people waste time. Jokes are made, pranks are pulled and conversations are had, and you know what? That’s not a bad thing at all. Lastly, we see

In “Billions,” “Suits” and “House of Lies,” we are taught that in order to be successful, you need to be the biggest, baddest shark in the water. You need to eat what you kill and be utterly ruthless. “The Office” teaches us that chasing money and corporate domination just might not be worth it.



Michael, Jim, and the rest of the Dunder Mifflin Scranton branch

MASHABLE

## Does a Company Name Really Matter?

By AKIVA CLAIR

Does a company’s name really matter?

No. It doesn’t. At least not nearly as much as you’d think.

Let’s try the following experiment. We need five letters.

--The first consonant in your name

--The first vowel in the city you grew up in

--The first consonant in the name of your favorite “High School Musical” character

--The first vowel of your favorite sports team

--The first consonant in your favorite TV show

Unless your Xavier from Utica who likes Chad, the Bulls and Canada’s Got Talent, you should have a somewhat reasonably sounding name. For me, I got “Kitel” (Akiva, Chicago, Troy (duh), Steelers, LOST) which we’ll pronounce kih-TELL.

Now, we have to be perfectly intellectually honest for a second. Let’s say we take that name and replace the name “Facebook” with it. You still have the liking and the sharing, the photos and the videos, but instead of it all being on a website called Facebook, it’s on Kitel. Would it be less popular? What if we gave it a name like Pepsi or Target? Could we

honestly say that we think this revolutionary product wouldn’t be nearly, if not exactly, the same?

The point is pretty straightforward: most names of companies really don’t matter. Granted, there are some names that are great and help the product, while there are others that are stupid and harmful. Yet, for the most part, if the rest of the company’s marketing mix (product, place, price and promotion) is good, then its name doesn’t really matter.

Before we analyze some examples, we have to make a key distinction: When we mention a company’s name, we mean literally only the name and not also the brand image. For example, if we were to talk about “Nike,” we’re just talking about those four letters and what they look like, sound like and the meaning behind them (i.e. the Greek goddess of victory). What we’re **not** talking about is what Nike’s brand stands for (i.e. “Just do it” and pushing past personal obstacles) or Nike’s social or political image (i.e. Nike’s Kaepernick ad).

As mentioned above, there are three classes of company names: Ones that help, ones that hurt and ones that really make no difference at all. Let’s start with the good ones. Dreamworks vs. Pixar. Which name do you like better? Look at Pixar first. I guess it sounds cool; it has an “x” in it, after all. And

the “pix” part of it is somewhat relevant to pictures and animation. But compare Pixar to Dreamworks. The latter has all these positive associations with things like creativity, imagination and building these magical worlds that our lovely reminiscent of our childhood. Of course, this all comes back to show that names are not so important, as Pixar as a company is a legend in the animation business.

In a similar example, compare Burger King to McDonald’s. The former, while perhaps a bit pretentious, is obviously a better name for a fast-food store. Yet, McDonald’s is still historically more popular and successful.

Another good name is BuzzFeed. “Buzz” if exciting and synonymous with virality and super-interesting content and news that everyone wants to get, and “feed” is like your source of information. So, essentially, every time you see the name you’re reminded that this is a place where you can get all of your interesting news and content. Other good names are Under Armour (associating itself with things like strength and power) and Intel (with the obvious theme of intelligence and sophistication).

On the other end of the spectrum are there the bad names. Now, these names are either



Companies feature a broad range of creative names. But do they make much of a difference?

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## The Subscription Model: What's All the Hype?

By SARAH TORQUEMAN

When a dairy in rural Vermont made the first milk delivery back in 1785, it soon became mainstream to have your milk delivered from the local dairy directly to your front door on a subscription basis. The American milkman certainly played a role in what has escalated to the subscription model of business.

Years later, the magazine and newspaper industry honed in on it and enabled their readership to receive yearly, monthly or daily print deliveries for a monthly or annual fee. Now, this very model in which companies focus on selling a product or service in exchange for a monthly or yearly subscription fee is exploding. One after another, today's entrepreneurs are increasingly utilizing this strategy, creating opportunities in stagnant markets and eventually disrupting entire industries.

The classic case is Netflix. After competing with Blockbuster, it booted the company from the game and took the movie entertainment industry by storm with an IPO in 2002, eventually earning a 75% share of today's U.S. market, according to Forbes. Netflix's defeat of Blockbuster may have been a direct result of the former's specific business model. Blockbuster charged customers per movie rental and employed inconvenient late fees when films were returned after the return deadline, while Netflix replaced rental and late fees with a simple monthly

subscription fee for unlimited television and movie streaming.

For those who aren't familiar, Netflix requires a relatively low monthly fee in exchange for access to thousands of shows and movies streamed to your television and just about any other smart device on the market today. Recognizing its own popularity, and therefore, potential to increase profits, Netflix began producing and streaming a slew of original series and movies, becoming a player in the entertainment production side of the industry as well.

subscription pricing. Spotify pursued a direct listing on the New York Stock Exchange and is now a public company as of April.

It's no coincidence that both of these entertainment giants experienced such growth. According to Investopedia, the rise of technology and Software as a Service (SaaS) products greatly contributed to the popularity of the subscription model of business as it permits consistent access to the delivery of a good or service, offering tremendous convenience to consumers. This way, consumers end up paying a smaller amount

a recurring revenue one and push to earn said VC backing.

Dollar Shave Club was founded in 2012 and is just one of these companies. The founders set out to replace the generally high-priced disposable razors retailers keep locked up in their toiletry aisles. This company provides new razor blades shipped directly to consumers for a monthly subscription fee. Additionally, Chewy figured out how to include pets in the mix. It sells pet food and supplies and offers reorders for a monthly subscription fee. PetSmart acquired Chewy for \$3.35 billion last April according to Inc.com.

A New York City-based cosmetics company known as Birchbox offers a box shipped to consumers that is filled with about five selected samples of beauty products each month for a subscription fee. Rent the Runway enables women to literally rent the runway by ordering designer clothing to their homes and returning it typically after use. The company introduced a subscription model, allowing consumers to keep four items of clothing at a time with unlimited exchanges each month. Another New York City-based startup, MM.Lafleur, launched a weekly box they call the "Bento Box" that delivers polished, professional outfits direct to consumers for every day of the work week. Its target consumers are working women. Companies continue joining the trend and dive right into industries from all directions.

Movie Pass has employed the subscription business model to bring once consistent moviegoers back to movie theaters in an ever so stagnant industry. It has partnered with movie theaters to provide flexible access to watch their movies for a monthly fee instead of purchasing tickets on a per movie basis. AMC recently decided to join the subscription shift and compete against Movie Pass with its own subscription movie pass. While Movie Pass had to readjust its model and raise its subscription fee to keep up with rising movie ticket prices, AMC's pass has started at a hefty price of \$19.95 a month in hopes of maintaining convenience while staying afloat with rising prices.

An extensive report by Inc.com noted that meal delivery kits, which operate primarily on a subscription basis, are not as sustainable as one may believe. For example, more than half of subscribers to HelloFresh and Blue Apron canceled their subscriptions within one month of signing up and just 20 percent remained after six months.

When it comes to the subscription model of business, customer retention is key in order to maintain the glorious recurring revenue stream. It becomes a massive hurdle and a tremendous cost for these companies' sales and marketing teams when too much effort is devoted to customer acquisition rather than to product development and expansion.

Convenience coupled with recurring revenue generation has encouraged mutually beneficial relationships between busy consumers and profit-seeking entrepreneurs and VCs. This has welcomed more variations of the subscription model than ever before. What's next?

*One after another, today's entrepreneurs are increasingly utilizing this strategy, creating opportunities in stagnant markets and eventually disrupting entire industries.*

Back in 2006, entrepreneurs Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon founded Spotify, which transformed the music industry. Spotify was actually created as a response to the global piracy problem that greatly affected the music industry at the time through illegal platforms like LimeWire. Apple's iTunes platform required consumers to purchase each song or album individually, which tended to add up quickly, Spotify provided an app that enabled access to music streaming from as many artists as you want whenever and wherever you want for a low monthly fee. This subscription model has expanded to special student and family plan

for their goods and services as the cost of subscriptions is generally less than that of the accumulation of individual purchases.

Vendors tend to prefer the subscription model as well. It essentially generates continuous revenue streams as consumers are automatically charged each month or year until customer cancellation. This consistent source of funds is what has made these companies extremely attractive to venture capitalists and investors. Moreover, while VCs have been rushing to translate subscriptions to just about every other product and service category, entrepreneurs are eager to join the shift from a single sale business model to



As companies shift to the subscription model of business, boxes like this are delivered to more and more doors each month.

A COMPANY NAME,  
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stupid or provide negative or contrary associations. One of the most stupid names is WhatsApp. Think about it: It's a combination of the common message "what's up" and the fact that it's an app. It's really just an awful

pun. Moving onto the sports world, let's look at the New Orleans Pelicans. Does that name inspire themes of dominance, power and confidence? Of course, not all sports teams have great names, but I'd much rather play for a team called the Bulls or the Warriors than the Pelicans.

Lastly, we have the neutral names. The

ones that aren't bad but aren't good either. For these names, you can interchange almost all of them without the success of the company changing significantly. Disney, Uber, Verizon, General and Ford Motors, Dell, 7 UP, Sprite, Procter and Gamble, Tylenol and so many others.

Of course, when you're making a company,

you should definitely take time to think of a good name. As mentioned above, creating a clever or relevant name could garner more success and popularity whereas a stupid name could do just the opposite. However, in order to create the next big thing, you won't need some legendary name. Even a simple "Kitel" or "Xucuc" should be fine.

## Yeshiva University UNDERGRADUATES can take courses at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

Classes are open to students either within the BA/MA Program or as upper-class undergraduates taking graduate courses with permission.

### CLASS SCHEDULE FOR SPRING 2019

#### MONDAY

##### 2:50 PM

**Tsadik:** JHI 5336 Jews in the Lands of Islam II

**Barak Cohen:** TAS 6857 The World of Amoraim: The Evolution of Talmudic Law

##### 4:50 PM

**Carlebach:** JHI 6385 Kehillat Yisrael: The Jewish Community in Early Modern Europe

**Rynhold:** JPH 5012 Survey of Modern & Contemporary Jewish Philosophy

##### 6:50 PM

**Eichler:** BIB 6212 Genesis: Patriarchal Narratives

**Rynhold:** JPH 6874 Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas

#### TUESDAY

##### 2:50 PM

**Koller:** BIB 8801 Northwest Semitic Inscriptions & the Bible

**Dauber:** JPH 6735 Kabbalistic Views of Maimonides

**Hurvitz:** TAS 5871 Introduction to the Midrashic Literature of the Tannaim

##### 4:50 PM

**Mordechai Cohen:** BIB 8310 Song of Songs: Readings in Biblical Poetry

**Gurock:** JHI 5572 American Jewish History: 1881 – 1967

##### 6:50 PM

**Olson:** JHI 6416 German Jewish Intellectual History

**Hurvitz:** TAS 7523 Literature of the Geonim

#### WEDNESDAY

##### 2:50 PM

**Tsadik:** JHI 6377 Muslim—Jewish Polemics

**Gurock:** JHI 6889 Writing the History of New York Jews in the 20th Century

##### 4:50 PM

**Leiman:** BIB 5031 Introduction to Biblical Studies I

**Zimmerman:** JHI 5441 The Jews of Eastern Europe 1914 – 1967

##### 6:50 PM

**Fine:** JHI 6255 Jewish Art & Visual Culture

**Karlip:** JHI 6466 Eastern European Jewish History through the Prism of Drashot

#### THURSDAY

##### 2:50 PM

**Angel:** JHI 5215 Jews under Roman Rule

**Berger:** JHI 6807 Maimonidean Controversy

**Dauber:** JPH 5360 Introduction to Hasidic Thought

##### 4:50 PM

**Kanarfogel:** JHI 6812 Devotional and Ascetic Practices and Ideals in Medieval Ashkenaz

**Hidary:** TAS 5804 Introduction to Amoraic Literature

##### 6:50 PM

**Angel:** JHI 6241 Second Temple Period Aramaic

**Rynhold:** JPH 6662 Philosophy of Gersonides

#### Language

Tsadik SEM 5112 Arabic II Monday and Wednesday 4:40 – 5:55 p.m. Does not count toward the ten required MA courses, but scholarship grants apply to this course.



## Revel

Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies

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