



"STUDY WELL FOR FINALS, EVERYONE!"

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

"BUT ALSO, LIKE, CHILL OUT. YOU'LL BE FINE!!"

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## Future of Paprika Restaurant Uncertain

By SARAH RUSSMAN

This past week, Paprika restaurant put up a "for sale" sign on their front window. Paprika is an Israeli-style restaurant located next door to Brookdale Residence Hall on the Beren Campus and is one of the many restaurants on the student meal plan.

David Zaken, Paprika's owner, expressed his uncertainty over the future of the restaurant in an email to The Commentator. "We might sell and move or we might find an investor and stay. It's been the first year for this restaurant and it's not easy to run," he wrote. YU Dining Services Director Sam Chasan, explained that Paprika has not informed the University of any changes, and Dining Services is awaiting future updates.

This past spring, YU had some questionable problems with Paprika in regards to overcharging students. Four Beren Students reported being overcharged between the months of January and March. This resulted in Paprika being taken off of the student meal plan for about a week. When Paprika was approached, they promised to be more careful with payments in the future, and the restaurant was restored to the OMNI program. In addition, Chasan advised students

to keep track of payments through the YU One Card website.

News of Paprika's potential closure unsettled students. "I could not believe that they were about to close the only restaurant that reminds me of my mom's food," said Anaelle Ezekie (SCW '21). "I was in total shock."

*"I spend most of my restaurant money at Paprika because their food is so fresh and good. It's a huge sign that is somewhat in your face, kind of screaming 'help us.'"*

Talia Kupferman (SCW '20)

Talia Kupferman (SCW '20) added that she was very confused and disappointed by the sign. "I spend most of my restaurant money at Paprika because their food is so fresh and good," she said. "It's a huge sign that is somewhat in your face, kind of screaming 'help us.'"



A 'For Sale' Sign Displayed in the Window of Paprika

SHOSHI GINSBURG - STERN COLLEGE: IN THE KNOW

## President Berman Comments on Klein@9, Discusses Women's Role on Wilf Campus

By SHOSHY CIMENT

In a recent interview with The Commentator (see page 5), President Ari Berman offered his opinion with respect to the role of women on the Wilf Campus and in Yeshiva University as a whole. Regarding last year's controversy where a Stern College student was silenced after giving a *dvar Torah*

Torah and to teach it." He also explained that "Yeshiva University is certainly for women giving *divrei Torah*."

To Berman, a solution for the unresolved issue should come from the students themselves. While women are still banned from giving *divrei Torah* at the community *minyán* on Shabbat, Berman believes that channels for similar opportunities for women on the Wilf Campus already exist.

*"If there is an interest from students in trying to find an appropriate vehicle that would help bring together our community in which women can also give *divrei Torah*, I am pretty sure that they can figure something out."*

President Ari Berman

in a Wilf Campus community *minyán*, Berman remarked that the situation was perplexing.

"There's no question that we want our students, both men and women, to not just learn Torah but spread Torah as much as possible," said Berman. "We encourage everyone to take their

"If there is an interest from students in trying to find an appropriate vehicle that would help bring together our community in which women can also give *divrei Torah*, I am pretty sure that they

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## A Comprehensive Analysis of YU Undergraduate Student Leaders

By SAMUEL GELMAN (HOUSTON, TX) and YARDENA KATZ

When one thinks of the leaders of Yeshiva University, many names may come to mind: President Ari Berman; Rabbi Menachem Penner; Dean Karen Bacon; the list goes on and on. Yet, there is another group of leaders at YU with which many of us interact with on a much more intimate and practical basis than any dean or rabbi: our fellow students.

Between Oct. and Dec. 2018, The Commentator conducted a survey of undergraduate student leaders to examine trends and patterns among this small group of students. While the definition of "student leader" may mean something different to everyone, for the purpose of this survey, The Commentator defined "student leaders" as those that directly contribute to non-academic campus culture. In this article, the term "student leader" thus refers exclusively to student council members, Student Life Committee members, Wilf Campus resident advisors (RAs) and head resident advisors (HRAs), Beren Campus RAs, Commentator editors, Observer editors and club presidents.

Unlike their Wilf Campus HRA counterparts, Beren Campus Graduate Advisor (GA) equivalents were not surveyed as they are not undergraduate students. *Shiur* and teacher's assistants, Writing Center and peer tutors and

Honors Council members were not considered, as they predominantly contribute to strictly academic campus culture. Other campus publications were not considered independent categories due to their size, specificity and nuance. However, they were included as clubs, and editors-in-chief of each publication were asked to fill out the survey.

The survey asked for basic demographic information: age, campus, hometown, college, major, minor, year on campus, leadership position(s) and for Wilf students, morning program. The survey also asked if student leaders took a gap year(s). For those that did, students were asked how many gap years they took and which institution(s) they attended. The category of academic minor was disregarded as too many students either did not have one or were undeclared. A total of 178 students responded to the survey, making up 8.5 percent of the undergraduate student body currently on campus, according to the Fall 2018 YU Fact Book (provided by YU's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment).

Of the 178 students who completed the survey, 51 percent (91 respondents) attend classes on Wilf Campus, while 49 percent (87 respondents) attend classes on Beren Campus. All data pertains to the Fall 2018 semester.

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# THE COMMENTATOR

2018-2019

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*For 84 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.*

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

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# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## A Defense of Critical Journalism

By **BENJAMIN KOSLOWE**

With this current newspaper issue hitting shelves, The Commentator has officially covered eighty-four fall semesters of Yeshiva University news. Commonplace for editorials in such issues is to analyze the quantity and quality of the articles that were published, as well as to reflect upon notable themes that surfaced among Commentator readership. This editorial, which will attempt to respond to one particular critique, shall prove to be no exception.

This Fall 2018 semester saw the success, for the first time in over a decade, of seven print issues. The issues included over 180 articles written by over 80 unique student writers. There have been close to a dozen data-driven pieces, many important news updates and interesting investigations that have garnered thousands of readers on campus and online, and serious student opinions that have provoked thoughts, discussions and written responses.

A small but significant subset of this semester's Commentator coverage has been articles that showcase, either directly or indirectly, unflattering aspects of Yeshiva University. These articles include pieces about shakeups in Institutional Advancement, the Office of Admissions' rejection of a Model UN topic paper dealing with sexual minorities and a leaked survey that indicated a dissatisfied YU faculty, as well as a comprehensive investigation into cheating incidents in the colleges and an editorial criticizing the inadequate state of YU's pre-law advising.

The aforementioned (and perhaps one or two other) critical articles have engendered a not insignificant amount of criticism in varying capacities and from varied segments of Commentator readership. The critiques typically present themselves in the form of questions, such as: What is to be gained by airing YU's "dirty laundry?"; Why does The Commentator deliberately seek to make YU look bad?; What is the virtue of printing "negative" stories rather than "positive" stories?; and so on. The common denominator of the questions is that they always assume a certain malicious intent on the part of The Commentator's editorial board.

Such critiques come from sincere, often valid places of concern. However, they reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of journalism.

Before addressing the relevant

critiques head-on, though, it seems prudent to briefly state The Commentator's editorial ethos. This ethos has been expressed as recently as last semester, as well as countless times over the decades of this newspaper's history, but it is important enough that it bears repeating.

The Commentator aims to serve three main functions. As a student newspaper, editors and writers seek out and investigate interesting and important news stories that relate, in some broad sense, to Yeshiva University. Student writers report on these stories with articles that are dispassionate, truthful and as objective as possible. The Commentator also offers a platform to the undergraduate student body to voice their opinions. Finally, the newspaper serves, when necessary, as a check on the university.

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*The importance of a serious student newspaper that delivers a check on power cannot be overemphasized.*

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A list of functions is inevitably rather abstract, but concrete instances follow almost immediately from these particular propositions. This semester's data-driven pieces, this semester's serious student opinions and so on, as well as the specific five critical articles that were mentioned at the beginning of this editorial, all fall under at least one of The Commentator's stated functions.

Of course, the value of a newspaper's fitting to a certain set of rules is directly commensurate with the goodness of those very rules. And this brings this editorial back to the argument at hand, which is to address the following question: Why does The Commentator engage in critical journalism?

Critical articles are a proven means that can be an effective check on those in power. This is true for all serious journalism, from international newspapers down to local weeklies. Student journalism is no exception.

Famously, The Commentator in 1992 publicized the fact that YU board members were considering closing the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. The publication led to student riots, and the graduate school stands to this day.

Though most cases do not play out as linearly as did the Revel case, the goal with all critical articles is the same. These articles expose a certain unglamorous state of affairs, which leads to a reaction from the public, which leads to those in power feeling pressure to change certain

things, which leads to real change. Such articles inevitably cause bad publicity for the university in the short run, but, when a real change eventually occurs, the articles ultimately wind up as net positives.

The importance of a serious student newspaper that delivers a check on power cannot be overemphasized. Even in the age of the internet and Facebook, there is hardly any other venue aside from an independent student newspaper that can effectively ensure that the broader world may learn about the goings-on in the institution. The fact that student writers are unpaid, motivated purely by ideology, only strengthens the case.

A tour through Commentator archives indicates that there have been countless instances of YU — whether by offices or by individual administrators, and whether

with intent or without intent — disserving its community unnecessarily. These instances include minor misdoings, like inflating cafeteria prices and raising activity fees without stated reasons, but also more serious malfeasance, such as imposing curfews on dorming students and removing student publications from shelves. It is scary to imagine what YU would look like had there never been independent student journalism to call out these cases of negligence and misconduct.

Critical coverage from this semester has been no different. The Commentator publicized cheating scandals that have taken place for the purpose of sparking a public reaction that might push those with the power to improve YU's academic integrity to actually do so. The Commentator publicized the inadequate state of YU's pre-law advising so that an adequate advisor might be hired. And so on for all critical articles that have been published.

Being criticized does not always feel good. The Commentator does not expect subjects of criticism to thank its editors for writing critical articles. Moreover, criticism is very much welcome regarding the manner in which critical articles were handled.

Criticizing the act of criticism itself, though, is categorically unwarranted.





**1 YU is the Stanford Prison Experiment**  
Why would you say something so controversial yet so brave?



**2 YU and Stern Confessions**  
Yeah, no way this ends well.



**3 Course Evaluations**  
As Executive Director of Pre-Professional Advisement Lolita Wood-Hill once famously said, "those who are not brave enough to turn in the cheaters evaluate their professors are almost as bad. 'Evil prevails when good men do nothing' [Edmund Burke]."



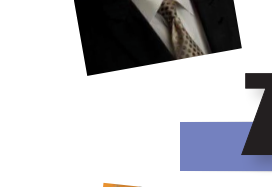
**4 Syms Facebook Page**  
"Like our page today and be entered in a raffle to win a free test bank."



**5 President Berman's Student Leaders Chanukah Party in His Home**  
If anyone snagged pics of his house, please let us know and we will include them in our next tedious financial update. More importantly, though, were Key Food grapes served?



**6 Ariana Grande, Hozier and The Chainsmokers Releasing Excellent New Music This Month**  
You are all amazing, your music is amazing and some of your opinions on *Hakadosh Boruch Hu's* gender are amazing.



**7 Rabbi Berman Interview**  
Shoutout to those people who read the whole 5,200 word interview with PRDAB. And might I suggest you question your life choices?

# 7 UP ↗ ↘ 7 DOWN



**1 Commentator Roasting on the Meme Page**  
Don't tempt us. If you think we won't run a pretentious podcast analyzing the cultural undertones of Commentator memes and their impact on the broader YU community, then you clearly don't understand us.



**2 Uptown Coed Wilf "Heights" Shabbaton**  
Let this be a warning. We will come for you.



**3 IBC Finals on Christmas**  
Classic YU not respecting other religions' beliefs and practices on campus.



**4 No More Chevra Friday L.A.B.**  
NOOOOOOO!!!!!! Not the chevra! We love the chevra!! We need the chevra!!! The chevra is what we live for!!!! What, you think that "freshly brewed" coffee was the reason there are now a full 15 people who attend? Bring them back or I promise it will go back down to the usual 14.



**5 Cheddar Cheese Sticks in Stern's 215 Caf Disappearing**  
WHERE. HAVE. THESE. CHUNKS. OF. CHEESE. GONE. These were seriously unreal. These sticks of cheddar alone should have been enough to convince YU's administrators to keep more office hours downtown. Actually, you know what? These cheese sticks were too darn good for the Beren Campus. When we find out their location we will personally set them on fire and invite Wilf's troops to stop the raging blaze of fondue. Shoutout to our boys on the front lines who spent their Christmas fighting the battle of our generation for us.



**6 Let Me Be Frank**  
Make it stop. Please, please make it stop.



**7 Silence**  
"Building Tomorrow, Today," but only if "tomorrow" means 60 years ago and "building" means upholding a system of Handmaid's Tale-esque social norms with no *halakhic* basis. #betternevermeansbetterforeveryone

## Letter to the Editor: What YU Gains With Its Open Door Torah Policy

By STEVE GOTLIB

In the Dec. 16 issue of *The Commentator*, there was an editorial that asked how YU can continue to be a "crucial and necessary citadel of wisdom" within the Modern Orthodox community when so many students are able to take advantage of all the Torah being produced by YU without needing to officially enroll here.

In his piece, the author specifically mentioned two types of students who do this. One type of student sits in the Chabad or Hillel of their secular campus and listens to *shiurim* on YUTorah. Within this group, some will listen to just a few *shiurim* a week, and others will keep up with an MYP *shiur* every day, preparing morning seder along with the *talmidim* physically sitting in that very *shiur*.

The second type of student goes further than this and regularly commutes from their campus to YU so they can sit in on their chosen *shiur* in person. Either way, neither of these types of students is officially part of the YU community, as even the ones who travel in for *shiur* will immediately return to their secular campus and continue their regularly scheduled education.

*Without YUTorah, I would not be sitting in YU's beit midrash today.*

However, these two types of "freeloading" secular college students are not the only ones who benefit from YU's Torah outside the walls of Glueck. Without even mentioning the many older individuals, community lay leaders, YU graduates and women of all ages who benefit from YU's Torah from the outside, there is a third type of secular college student that does the same. The author overlooked those non-YU students who benefit so much from YU's Torah that they choose to become a part of the YU community themselves. They are the members of the YU family who are gained only as a result of YU's Torah being disseminated as widely as it is. I am a prime example of this third category.

In May of 2018, I graduated from Rutgers University, a place that I had chosen to attend due to its strong Orthodox community (including a kosher meal plan, Jewish housing, multiple daily minyanim and JLIC) as well as the superior education that it offered in the fields that I wanted to specialize in. Throughout college, and especially during my last two years, I spent much of my free time sitting in the *beit midrash* of Hillel (and sometimes Chabad) preparing for and listening to *shiurim* on YUTorah and in *chevrusa* with our JLIC rabbi, a YU graduate. I then spent much of my senior year commuting from New Brunswick, New Jersey to Washington Heights so that I could sit in on *shiurim* in-person before beginning my time at RIETS. The Torah that I was able to learn as an undergraduate made me realize that I had a true love for learning within me, and taught me how to nurture that love while staying in a place that I could never have brought myself to leave. Without YUTorah, I would not be sitting in YU's *beit midrash* today.

Looking around at my peers in RIETS, I know that I am far from the only person who had this experience. We may not be a particularly vocal group, but there are many men and women that would never have chosen to attend YU or any of its affiliate institutions (RIETS, GPATS, YC or Stern) if not for the access to YU's Torah that we received during our undergraduate careers elsewhere. Some of us chose to transfer to YU while in college, while others, like myself, joined after graduating. All of us, however, share one very important thing in common: a love for YU and a desire to give back to this community that was generated by the positive experiences we had from its Torah which touched our *neshamos* from so many miles away. Without the "Open Door Torah Policy" of YU, we would not be at YU right now. Without an "Open Door Torah Policy," YU would have lost us.

Steven Gotlib (Rutgers '18; RIETS '22)



KLEIN@9,  
continued from Front Page

can figure something out," said Berman, who added that working with the proper administration could help bring this to fruition.

"It would be really surprising to me if that couldn't happen," he added.

Berman also discussed the disparity between the men's and women's learning programs on the Beren and Wilf campuses. Specifically, he mentioned his goals for more advanced learning programs on the Beren Campus.

Though there is not currently a concentrated effort to create a *shiur*-style morning



Klein Beit Midrash

THE COMMENTATOR

## Six Amendments to Wilf Campus Student Constitution Ratified

By YOSHI ZIMLOVER

Six amendments to the Wilf Campus Student Constitution were ratified on Monday, Dec. 24. This marks the first time since Spring 2017 that the Constitution has been amended.

The approved amendments vary in topic including giving those in the Makor College Experience Program and undergraduate Katz School students the right to vote in certain student government elections, empowering the presidents of student government to fill vacant positions and eliminating prerequisites for the YCSA Secretary/Treasurer position.

Approximately 215 students submitted their ballots for eight proposed amendments that were approved by the General Assembly. (The General Assembly is composed of the Presidents of YSU, SOY, YCSA, SSSBSC and the Senior Co-Chair of the Student Life Committee). Six cleared the necessary three-fifths affirmative threshold required by the Constitution.

The Constitution mandates that there "shall be a General Student Body Amendment Votes held each semester" and that the "fall semester vote must take place within the two weeks prior to Reading Week."

Below is an analysis and contextualization of each of the amendments:

*Note: The amendment numbers correspond to the numbers that appeared on the ballot and on the document that was sent to students by the Canvassing Committee on Dec. 20. The titles are unofficial and were written by the author to highlight the major point(s) of each amendment.*

### Ratified Amendments

#### Amendment 1 - Prerequisites for YCSA Secretary/Treasurer Eliminated

The first approved amendment eliminated the requirement for the YCSA Secretary/Treasurer to be "at least a junior" and to be "a full-time student of the Yeshiva College for at least one semester prior to taking office." A minimum number of semesters and class standing will no longer be prerequisites necessary to be elected to the position. This amendment comes after the Fall 2018 Wilf Student Government Elections and subsequent student court case in which a student who won the election for YCSA Secretary/Treasurer was deemed ineligible for the position to due to his sophomore status.

#### Amendment 2 - Student Government Presidents Given Power to Fill Vacant Positions

This amendment gave the president of the respective student councils the ability to appoint students to unfilled student government positions within their councils. The appointments must then be confirmed by the

"majority opinion of the General Assembly." Previously, if a position was unfilled after a spring election, the Constitution mandated that an election for that position be held in the following fall, and if a fall election position was unfilled, the position would remain vacant for the remainder of the year. For the current academic year, YCSA Secretary/Treasurer is the only unoccupied position on the student government.

#### Amendment 4 - Repealing Section Regarding Editing the Constitution

The third approved amendment repealed Article XIII, Section II of the Wilf Constitution. The section read, "the origi-

Firstly, the amendment eliminated the position of YSU Vice President of Class Affairs from the list of YSU positions in the Constitution. The position was previously included in Article II, Section II, Subsection 2, which listed all the positions that comprised YSU. Due to the fact that the sixth proposed amendment (see unratified amendments below) did not pass, it is unclear if this amendment is effective in removing the position from YSU. Additionally, if the amendment is deemed valid, it is unclear if it is effective immediately and removes the current YSU Vice President of Class Affairs from office, or will only affect the future student

*The approved amendments vary in topic including giving those in the Makor College Experience Program and undergraduate Katz School students the right to vote in certain student government elections.*

nal body of this Constitution shall remain unedited and unchanged in any manner. All changes to the Constitution shall be addenda to the Constitution. As a notice of the amendment, an asterisk may be placed in the point of amendment. On any point of contradiction, the amended text shall supersede the original text." According to the explanation written by the General Assembly, the "intention of the amendment was to allow future General Assemblies and Student Bodies to amend this constitution (within reason) while still remaining true to its central tenets..." The explanation appeared on a document that was attached to a ystud email to the male student body on Dec. 20.

#### Amendment 5 - (A) Removal of the YSU Vice President of Class Affairs Position From YSU List in Constitution (B) Granting Undergraduate Katz School Students the Right to Run and Vote for YSU Freshman and Sophomore Representative Positions

Amendment 5 had two distinct results.

government composition. As of the time of publication, there has been no student court case to decide on the matter.

The second element of this amendment now grants eligibility to those in undergraduate programs in the Katz School to run and vote for YSU Freshman and Sophomore Representatives, respective of their class standing.

#### Amendment 7 - YSU Chain of Command Shifts from YSU VP of Class Affairs to YSU VP of Clubs

This amendment shifted the responsibility of the YSU VP of Class Affairs to the YSU VP of Clubs, in regards to the inability of the YSU President to perform his duties. Previously, the YSU VP of Class Affairs would temporarily or permanently act as YSU President based on the circumstances outlined in Article II, Section II, Subsection 5. Now, the role belongs to the YSU VP of Clubs.

#### Amendment 8 - Makor College Experience Program Students Granted Right to Vote for YSU and

program on the Beren Campus, Berman mentioned that increasing opportunities for women's learning is important to him.

"There's no other time in which Jewish women have the opportunities and the access that they have today," said Berman. "And we want to strengthen, encourage, support and grow that as much as possible."

Specifically, Berman mentioned expanding the Graduate Program In Advanced Talmudic Studies For Women (GPATS) and bringing in more high-level professors for undergraduate Torah studies.

"We are very interested and excited about the prospects of growing learning at the Beren Campus," Berman said.

### SOY Positions

The final ratified amendment granted students enrolled in the Makor College Experience Program the right to vote in the elections for YSU President and VP of Clubs, and SOY President, Vice President and Public Relations Secretary. The Makor College Experience is a program for young men with intellectual disabilities on the Wilf Campus run by Makor Disability Services. According to their webpage, the program gives individuals an "opportunity to be part of the YU community while gaining skills and exploring opportunities as they transition to a life of independence."

Traditionally, only those enrolled in the undergraduate programs at Yeshiva College or Sy Syms School of Business had the ability to vote in student government elections. "More than anything else, the guys in our program just want to be included. It's amazing how so many people in various roles at YU have embraced us," remarked Dr. Stephen Glicksman, Director of Clinical Innovation at Makor. He added that "the fact that this amendment was entirely initiated by an individual Yeshiva College student who saw an opportunity to help the Makor guys be more involved in campus life makes this particular act of inclusion all the more gratifying."

### Unratified Amendments:

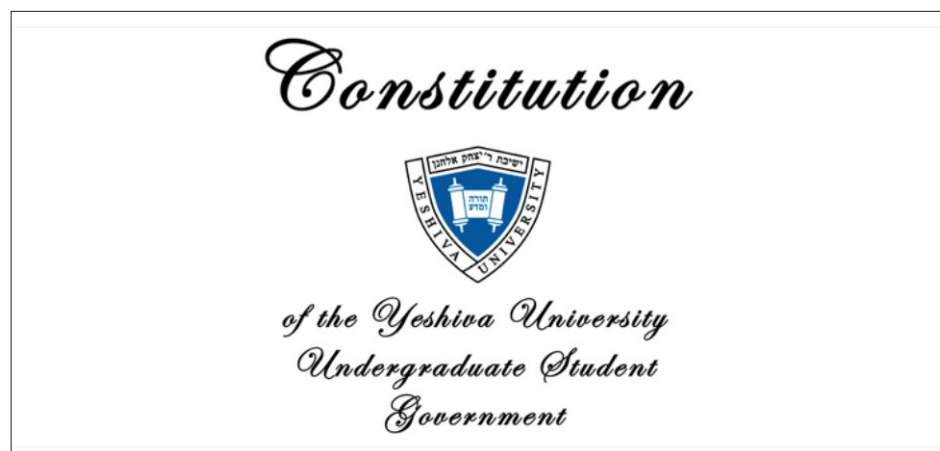
#### Amendment 3 - Wilf Student Life Committee Senior Co-Chair Nominated by YSU President and Confirmed by General Assembly

This amendment would have given the YSU President the ability to nominate and the General Assembly the power to confirm the Senior Co-Chair of the Wilf Student Life Committee. Currently, there is no established procedure for how the Senior Co-Chair is given his position. Traditionally, the position has been nominated by the previous year's Senior Co-Chair. The Senior-Co Chair is an unelected position and has a vote on the General Assembly.

#### Amendment 6 - Role and Responsibility of YSU Vice President of Class Affairs

Amendment 6 would have repealed Article II Section IV of the Constitution. This section discusses in length the role and responsibility of the YSU Vice President of Class Affairs. Due to the ratification of Amendment 5, it remains unclear what the significance of this section of the Constitution is and whether it does not allow for the removal of the YSU VP of Class Affairs.

*To see a detailed breakdown of the voting percentages, please see the document that was shared by the Canvassing Committee.*



Wilf Campus Student Constitution

THE COMMENTATOR



## Floor Shabbatons Bring Wilf Campus Residents Together

By ZACHARY GREENBERG

Floor Shabbatons on the Wilf Campus provide an opportunity for students and resident advisers (RAs) across different backgrounds to connect and build a community. To that end, each floor in all dormitory buildings hosts at least one floor Shabbaton each year at no additional cost to residents.

The idea for floor Shabbatons came about in Spring 2017. RAs created an “experiment Shabbaton” to see whether the idea would be viable or not, and to observe which aspects worked well. The first official floor Shabbaton was hosted by the fifth floor of Rubin Hall in Oct. 2017.

The schedule of the Shabbaton is determined by each floor’s respective RAs. Generally, the floor has a meal together Friday night in either the basement of Morgenstern Hall or in the lounge of the floor itself. There are numerous icebreakers, speeches and activities that take place

throughout the night. Floors sometimes have a Friday night *tisch* with candy, soda and *zemirot*. On Shabbat day, the floors will have another meal together with more activities. Often, either before or after Shabbat, there will also be another floor event. Usually between 10 and 25 residents attend each shabbaton.

Floor Shabbatons take place in all three dorms on Wilf Campus. Each floor’s residential advisors reserves a date for their

Shabbaton to ensure it does not conflict with another event. There is a minimum of one Shabbaton per year for each floor, and some try to have a Shabbaton once per semester. The Office of University Housing and Residence Life offers to provide restaurant food for Shabbatons, including Chop Chop and Golan. From pizza parties, to rock-paper-scissor tournaments, to meals in the hallways, each Shabbaton has its own distinct twist.

“The unique dynamic of a floor Shabbaton allows residents to connect in a way that’s not possible in other contexts,” said Noah Hazan, the Head RA of Muss. “After my floor Shabbaton, I noticed newfound friendships, floor-wide inside jokes and more examples of YU residence life feeling more like a community.”

Many residents on campus live in their dorms for seven days a week and are often too preoccupied with school to meet each person on their floor. The goal of floor Shabbatons is for residents to connect with one another and truly feel as though they are one big family. “Floor Shabbatons provide the absolute best mechanism for residents to really get to know each other,” said Jonathan Schwab, Director of Undergraduate Housing and Residence Life. “A few minutes grabbed between classes cannot compare to the 25-hour opportunity that Shabbat provides. And it is a great way to further enhance the general Shabbat program on campus.”

*“A few minutes grabbed between classes cannot compare to the 25-hour opportunity that Shabbat provides. And it is a great way to further enhance the general Shabbat program on campus.”*

Jonathan Schwab,  
Director of Undergraduate Housing and Residence Life



Morgenstern Hall

THE COMMENTATOR

## Faculty Unease, Women on Wilf and LGBTQ Events: An Interview with President Ari Berman

By SHOSHY CIMENT and  
BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

The following is an abridged transcription of a 45-minute interview with President Ari Berman. All editing of the original 6,500-word transcription was done in a way to preserve the essence of the conversation. After much insistence on the part of the YU Office of Public Affairs and Communications, we included some editing of syntax and grammar; condensed sections are indicated by ellipses.

The questions asked in the interview reflect the interests and curiosities of those who responded to the survey that was distributed among the student body.

**Benjamin Koslowe: President Berman, on an average day, what do you do in the capacity of your role?**

President Berman: I’m very glad to talk about this, because I have the feeling that many people don’t have an accurate sense of the President of Yeshiva University’s role. For example, recently I was *davening* in Teaneck and a fellow came over to me, and started talking to me about Yeshiva University’s ads in The Jewish Link. I thought to myself, I’m not the Vice President of Communications. Our actual Vice President of Communications is great, and you should speak to him.

My role as President consists of three

primary elements. First, I formulate, articulate and represent the vision of the future for Yeshiva University. In that capacity, I address a number of different constituencies. We have our undergraduate student bodies, our graduate student bodies, faculties from across all of our schools, our professional staff, our administrators, our friends, our alumni, our donor base in different geographic regions here and around the world, thought leaders, faith-based leaders, rabbinic leaders, academic leaders and more. Representing YU’s values and vision to these various groups is a primary element of my position. That’s number one.

Second, I form and develop partnerships with major current and potential partners, also on a number of different levels. For example, lay leaders, potential donors, organizations, universities, academic alliances. That’s the second aspect.

The third is being CEO of this enterprise. I have great vice presidents who are directly on the ground, operating across the layers of the university, from communications, to legal, to finance, institutional advancement, et cetera. Serving over these great vice presidents is the third aspect.

In each of these aspects, we’ve moved the ball forward considerably. The first part, forming and articulating the vision, is maybe the most crucial. The vision for the future of Yeshiva University, emerging from the first year and a quarter of listening and

meeting with all the different constituencies and groups, is now clear. We can talk about that if you’d like. We’ve also had great success in the second part, developing new partnerships, as reflected in the new gift commitments that we received before the Hanukkah Dinner. And in the third part, we’ve done a lot of work, especially in strengthening our business model by adding new annual revenue streams.

...

*There’s no other time in which Jewish women have the opportunities and the access that they have today.*

So my days encompass all of these things, at every level of the university: the ten graduate schools, four undergraduate schools, high schools, museum and library. In order to move the ball forward on all fronts, I am meeting with donors, academics and lay-leaders and walking around campus and speaking to faculty.

All these pieces make up my day, which is like a marathon. At the end of the day, when I come home, my daughter and I talk about our day. We try to pick out five good things that happened to us each day. And I often find that when she asks me, “so what did you do today?” I have a hard time even remembering what happened at the beginning of the day. It takes a real effort.

**Shoshy Ciment: Yeah, I should do that.**

PB: It’s really helped.

**SC: What would you say the most stressful part of your job is?**

PB: I don’t know if I think of it in terms of stress. I think in terms of opportunities. In the beginning, I had an advantage because I come from this institution. I’m not just an alumnus, but somebody who really grew up in this community. So I sort of had a little

step ahead. I also thought that having a wider range of experiences — moving to Israel and seeing the Jewish world from a whole other Jewish perspective — was important coming back to YU, and thinking about YU into the future, I thought that was very important.

But coming back to your question, I had to learn a lot of things. So my listening tour, meeting with all of the constituents across the YU community and beyond, was eye-opening on many levels. And we needed to do that to form the vision for the future, which is crucial.

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**SC: Cool. So the next question is something that has come up a lot, and you've probably heard about it, and I think it flows nicely from what you just said about there being a lot of differences. I think at the same time a lot of things haven't really changed in many respects. So, many students have expressed concern about the disparities between men and women's learning programs in the morning. Basically, that women don't really have a learning program to the caliber of the men's undergraduate [program] at Yeshiva University. So why has there never been a significant effort to institute similar programs on the women's campus?**

PB: Well, I can't really speak to the possible efforts of the past, but I can speak towards the issue of women's learning, which on many levels is very dear and important to me and to the future of YU. Let me put this question into a broader context. Yeshiva

I asked them that question, and they told me the same thing. They also thought that part of this is that we come from a Talmudic tradition of asking questions. But studies have suggested that single-gender educational settings can have advantages for women.

But whatever the case may be, we feel that it's very important for us to grow in these areas. Computer science for women, for example, is absolutely crucial. The new Digital Lab coming to Stern College is an example of how we want to elevate all of the education at YU, and to make sure that our students have a great pathway for success.

There's no question that the basis of our values and education is Jewish learning — learning our Jewish texts and learning our tradition. And we want our students to have as much access as possible. Whatever we can do to grow their opportunities, we would love to do so, and we're working on that now. We are asking questions like, what is the right format? What works best with the students' calendar and the structure of the day? How do we get more high-level teachers to the Beren Campus so that women who are interested can tap into it?

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*There's no question that we want our students, both men and women, to not just learn Torah but spread Torah as much as possible.*

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University educates the leaders of the future. We deliver quality education, great jobs and great values. That's what we're about, those three things. We accomplish this in two primary ways: through a focus on values and leadership on the one hand, and educating for the market skills of the future on the other.

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The first thing we do is values and leadership. We're number one in values and leadership. There's no other university setting that teaches the ideas, values and texts of our 3,000-year-old tradition of wisdom, complemented with the best of the Western tradition like we do. And our goal is to inspire our students to leave here ready to go out and be people of impact and purpose.

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The second thing is educating for the market skills of the future. Our students need to be fully capable in all the skill sets and behavioral competencies that will be necessary for them to succeed in the marketplace of tomorrow, so that they experience enormous personal and professional success. This is crucial to us.

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So with all of this as a larger context let me talk specifically about Stern College and the Beren Campus. When it comes to women, *barukh Hashem*, we are living in the greatest time in Jewish history, perhaps ever. There's no other time in which Jewish women had the opportunities and the access that they have today. And we want to strengthen, encourage, support and grow that as much as possible. And I mean that in all fields, starting with issues like women in tech, women in entrepreneurship, women in business. We already have great strengths in science and technology, and we want to strengthen ourselves more in finance. In these areas, we feel like we have a leverage point. The single-gender education system might even give us a leg up on some of these pieces.

I was just walking around the Beren Campus, and one professor said to me that our students ask the best questions. He's been teaching in university settings for 30 years, and the students at Stern College ask the best questions. So I asked, "what do you attribute that to?" And he said, the fact that it's single-gender and that there aren't men in the classroom. I turned to the students and

I love what [TAC President] Adina Cohen did. When Adina did the *bekiyus* program I was delighted to speak at the opening in support of the program. That she was able to work with the right administrators and figure out a way of growing that program is great. And certainly, whether it's student-driven initiatives or coming from the faculty or the administration, we are very interested and excited about the prospects of growing learning at the Beren Campus.

**BK: When thinking about growth in specific, do you and the current administration view as an ideal a future where the Beren Campus would have some equivalent to the Yeshiva Program, or is the belief more that the ideal might be to continue a certain growth, but that there still might be differences even at an ideal point?**

PB: Whatever is best for the students, I'd want to do. We're thinking about GPATS too, it's not just during the undergraduate experience, but growing GPATS and its classes, so that women can stay longer and study more intensively. We're open to as intensive a growth experience of *talmud Torah* as possible. I think it's amazing.

**SC: So while we're talking about women, there's been a lot of talk recently about the role of women on the Wilf Campus, specifically in the aftermath of Lilly Gelman's article about speaking at Klein@9, and then being silenced and then the aftermath of that. So the question is, do you think that women should be allowed to get *divrei Torah* on Shabbat on the Wilf Campus, and what do you think the role of women on Wilf Campus is?**

PB: So let me back up and continue the last answer. There's no question that we want our students, both men and women, to not just learn Torah but spread Torah as much as possible. We encourage everyone to take their Torah and to teach it. We want our women students to be *marbitzot Torah*, and that runs across this institution and exists in many forums and places. I think on the Wilf Campus, it seems to me there are vehicles that it could exist in already.

A lot of this has to come from the students,

meaning the students need to speak to each other, work with the right administrators and identify the right forums. But it seems to me that there are vehicles that exist, and if they don't already exist, could exist. Certainly in concert with what we think that we want for our women as leaders for the future.

**BK: I wonder if you could speak more practically. Let's say, rather than looking towards the future, meaning what was your immediate reaction to the discussion that became a pretty communal discussion about Klein@9 specifically? What was your assessment of that situation?**

PB: I'd say my immediate reaction when I heard the general issue was that Yeshiva University of course stands for our women not just learning Torah but teaching Torah. It's been true throughout Yeshiva University communities throughout the world. It's been true for Yeshiva University specifically. I've been at Beren for Shabbos, I have seen women giving *divrei Torah* all the time. I was the rabbi of The Jewish Center where women give *divrei Torah* all the time. So I was perplexed that this became, I would say, misunderstood. Yeshiva University is certainly for women giving *divrei Torah*.

The particular issue of where is the best place and the right forum on a campus that is also a single-gender male *yeshiva* is a good question, and I think students should talk to each other about that. The students should speak to each other with the right administrators and come up with the right vehicles. There are sensitivities in all directions, and I have confidence in our student body that if they work together, they can find the right directions and vehicles for these kinds of issues. It's important for them to do so.

**BK: Do you think that it was a healthy discussion that wound up happening?**

PB: I don't know if I followed all of the articles, to comment on the exact discussion. But this is an example of how we're part of a community. Students should be talking to each other.

**SC: Productive conversation would be nice. At this point, I don't think it's totally resolved. I go to Klein@9 and women still aren't speaking, so, I don't know. Maybe with this article people will talk more. I don't know.**

**So, this is kind of a departure from what we're talking about, but in light of recent events on campus that are giving voice to Jewish LGBTQ activists like Ben Katz and Hannah Fons, who's postponed until later, students on both sides of the aisle have voiced concerns regarding events like this. So what is your opinion on events like this? Do you think that YU should continue to hold these types of events in the future?**

PB: Yeshiva University stands for a number of core values. I articulated them last year, but it was just a re-articulation of the values of Rav Soloveitchik, our *roshei yeshiva*, rabbis and — the truth is — our tradition from *Har Sinai*.

We believe in *Torat Emet*, that our Torah is true. We believe in *Torat Chesed*, that our true Torah is one of compassion and kindness. We believe in *Torat Adam*, that each individual carries his or her specific unique potential and it's holy work for each individual to develop themselves in the way that best allows them to reach their own destiny. We believe in *Torah Chayyim*, that our Torah is not limited to learning in the four walls of the *beit midrash* or *davening* in shul, but that we must bring our Torah out into the world. ... And we believe in *Torat*

*Tziyyon*, that our broader ambition is to work towards redemption.

...  
So what we do is, we bring our values, our 3,000-year-old tradition, in conversation with the best of the Western tradition. And we educate our students to be informed by and infused with those values, which will enable productive conversations about all kinds of issues. Whatever the contemporary issue is now, my thinking is, what's going to happen in ten, twenty, thirty years? Meaning, I want our students to have the values and the learning experiences to be able to speak how our values and wisdom, our texts and ideas, will apply to whatever new issues are going to come up as well. That's all very important to the education Yeshiva University is trying to provide.

At a base level, the most important thing for Yeshiva University is of course the mental and physical health of each one of our students. That is a threshold issue, crucial across the board. Now, very specifically, what kinds of events should be run, certainly in the extracurricular sphere — this is another example of where students should be speaking to each other. We have one community, so the students who make up that community should work through these kinds of things together. They should speak with each other, speak to the right administrators and figure out the best way for the community to think about current issues. I think it's great.

**BK: Where do you see the role of *roshei yeshiva* playing into this? Particularly when it comes to issues like LGBTQ speakers, on the one hand you mentioned that students traditionally do schedule events and deal with student council and that avenue of bringing speakers in, but especially for speakers like these, *roshei yeshiva* and maybe other administrators often have certain concerns that could run in conflict with speakers that students might want to bring. So I wonder what your thoughts are.**

PB: I think our undergraduate students represent a spectrum, and they themselves reflect opinions of their teachers and *roshei yeshiva*. That's how the conversation takes place. Of course, it's also working with administrators. I don't know if our *roshei yeshiva* have specific positions on any of the details, but of course they're a part of the mix. But I think the students are pretty representative of their teachers. I'm sure students will go to their *roshei yeshiva* and ask them questions. This is part of the process.

When you're a growing adult and you have questions, you learn from your *roshei yeshiva*, your rabbi, your teachers. You

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*Our faculty is crucial to the future of Yeshiva University.*

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learn from those experiences. I have *rebbeim* myself, and I speak to them all the time about issues that are important to me. Throughout my whole life, *rebbe u-mori* Rav Lichtenstein, *rebbe u-mori* Rav Rosensweig, *rebbe u-mori* Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter and all the *roshei yeshiva* that I studied with here, have affected a lot of my decisions and my thinking. So I think it would be very natural for students to speak to their teachers, and I'm pretty confident in our students' ability to think things through together with each other.

**SC: Yeah, I think it's definitely true that there are students on both sides of every single issue that goes on in YU, and there is a lot of discourse.**

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We especially see it in the pages of *The Commentator* and letters to the editor and so many different opinions. But, I think at the end of the day, students talking is important and that happens a lot, but it always ends up being thrown to a higher power. Like, for example, the Klein@9 thing, there was so much on both sides for both students, and people who said all the way on one side and all the way on the other side and they were talking, and it was really nice actually to watch. But at the end of the day, it gets thrown up to an administrator, someone higher up who can make a decision.

PB: I don't want to speak for the administrators who are responsible for overseeing these areas, because it's really not my role, and I don't want to overstep. But I'm pretty sure that if there is an interest from students in trying to find an appropriate vehicle that would help bring together our community in which women can also give *divrei Torah*, I am pretty sure that they can figure something out and the administrators would work with them to figure out the right way to do that. It would be really surprising to me if that couldn't happen, by the way. But let's leave that (laughter). I don't know what the exact vehicles are, but if everyone is talking to each other, it seems to me that these kinds of issues can be worked out.

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*I think that those polls represent the difficult past that Yeshiva University is only now emerging from.*

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**SC: I think there was talk about another minyan at some point, right?**

**BK: Yeah, that was part of the conversation, and it didn't pan out in the end. Anyway, shall we move to the next question? This actually ties in well to another question, in that it has to do with students. So the question is: Without town hall meetings, do you feel that you have an accurate depiction of the pulse on campus?**

PB: We have a number of campuses and a number of constituents on each campus. We have undergraduate students, and then it's broken up by schools and Jewish studies programs, et cetera. We have our graduate students across ten different graduate schools. We have different kinds of faculty, and the different layers of the administration. So it's important for our senior team to have our finger on the pulse of all of those constituencies.

We try to do this both qualitatively and quantitatively. We plan touchpoints with all of the different constituents that I mentioned. But, beyond that, we also do a great deal of data gathering, so that our thinking is more scientific. We try to make data-driven decisions, and our senior team is certainly thinking a lot about the current context and how to lead us to a future of growth and expansion.

**BK: Would you be able to elaborate on what the data research into student sentiment looks like?**

PB: We do several different collections of data. These are internal things. We do studies on the current student body and potential student body. We certainly do a lot of those things.

**BK: And is your sense that student sentiment is positive?**

PB: I don't know if "positive" versus "negative" is the right framework. We're interested in areas of satisfaction and which areas we need to grow in.

**SC: We would be remiss if we didn't mention this, just because it's been a big story that we recently had and a lot of people are interested in this. So there was a recent survey that spread through YU faculty that polled the [faculty], and there were a lot of interesting facts from the survey. So I just wanted to specifically ask you about a few of them. So it said that 40 percent have confidence in President Ari Berman in his role as President, so I wanted to hear your reaction to that and why you think that is or how you think that you should approach that?**

PB: Our faculty is crucial to the future of Yeshiva University. Meaning, we pride ourselves in quality education, great jobs, great values — all of this comes from the faculty. Their sense of their position in Yeshiva University and the future is very important to us. And their morale and their compensation are certainly at the forefront of my mind. *Certainly* at the forefront of my mind. Everything I'm doing to grow this institution — and that we're all doing; not just me, but everybody in the administration — is obviously for the benefit of our students. But we can only do that through ensuring the future of our faculty.

And I think that those polls represent the difficult past that Yeshiva University is only now emerging from. We spent a lot of time to try to create a financial framework for greater growth in the years ahead. We are creating a

stronger business model. The people that will see their compensation increase because of this is of course the faculty. But it's a marathon; it's not a sprint. This is a process. And I'm deeply grateful for our faculty's loyalty and devotion. They've come through some very difficult years at Yeshiva University. I'm very appreciative of their excellence. If we're providing quality education, it's only because of our excellent faculty. And I have their concerns deeply in my heart and my mind as we grow this institution.

**SC: To what extent are you going to focus on the suggestions that they offered in the survey? For example, they wanted to increase the pension plan 45.5 percent. A lot of people said they wanted to create a plan for raises and compensation. So to what extent are you considering moves like that?**

PB: As we see new growth, which we've already started to see, these are the kinds of things we can be doing. And we've already begun to do it. I don't want to overstate what we've done so far. I don't think we deserve any pat on our back for the fact that we've been able to increase pensions, but it's a start. And that's certainly at the core of what we're doing, there's no question about that.

**BK: Those were our main questions. I know that 100 questions came up, and we obviously couldn't address all of them. One question that is kind of a synthesis of several questions, but a theme that seems to be of interest to students is that, obviously Israel is such an important motif and object of interest for your presidency — you being the President who came from Israel, and who very quickly created pathway programs with Israel, who talks about Israel very often. So there**

**are many types of questions that came up. One that seemed the most interesting to us that we thought might tell a lot is the following, and that is, do you want every YU student to eventually make *aliyah*, to move to Israel?**

PB: Well, I definitely encourage *aliyah*. I think *aliyah* is wonderful. I think Israel is the great *berakhah* that *Hashem* has given us after close to 2,000 years of waiting. But I love this question, because it cuts to what Yeshiva University is really about when I talk about *Torat Tziyyon*.

Let me put it this way. We live in the greatest era of opportunity for Jews in close to 2,000 years. And I think that we are on a great historic trajectory moving forward. There are two areas, two centers, where you see this taking place. One is Israel, where we're growing a Jewish society and we're building the Jewish state. It's an exciting, riveting, new turn for the Jewish people, and we've always encouraged people to make their future in that state — to think about raising their children there and how they're going to be a part of that enormous incredible endeavor. I think that's wonderful and great.

But there's also a great project that's taking place in the Diaspora.

Now, the first one — the project in Israel — I think people know about. It's the second one they actually don't focus on enough. And this is what I've been speaking about when I talk about *Torat Tziyyon*. But because the word "Israel" is there so often, I'm not sure if people fully grasp my meaning.

When I talk about Zionism or *Torat Tziyyon*, what I'm talking about is the process of redemption as a whole. And I think that specifically in the Diaspora, Yeshiva University students have a role to play in that process that is enormous. This includes all the things that Paul Singer spoke about in his speech at the Hanukkah Dinner. He summarized it so well; how Yeshiva University can be a bridge between Israel and the Diaspora because we are pro-Israel and also living here. We can build bridges to Jews who are less identified with their roots and our tradition. We can build bridges to the non-Jewish world, bringing our values out into the world, showing what Torah and Judaism are about, and what *Hashem* is about. We can be *mekadeish sheim shamayim barabim* in this generation in ways that were never possible before.

So when I tell our students that we want them to graduate here and be people of impact, I'm not just saying that you're only a person of impact if you make *aliyah*. I think that's one way of being a person of impact.

But being here in the Diaspora also provides enormous opportunities for impact that we uniquely can leverage. Where somebody decides to live, there's such a range of individually-specific factors, I wouldn't venture to say what a particular person

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*I'm not just saying that you're only a person of impact if you make *aliyah*.*

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should or should not do. These are all questions that are very case-dependent. I know I wouldn't suggest my personal journey to anyone! But whatever you decide, the fact that we're part of a bigger picture in Jewish history, and the fact that we're living in an extraordinary era of opportunity, is the key point. Our students should feel that. They should be empowered by that, and then move forward with that consciousness. Whatever place or whatever profession they're in, they should have that consciousness of redemption. That's our goal.

**SC: So this is another question that we got. Do you think that YU tuition is too high, and, if so, how is the university working to make YU a more accessible place for people who want to come here?**

PB: There are two pieces to that. First of all, in all of [Vice President of Communications and Marketing] Doron [Stern]'s ads, Doron points out that 80 percent of our student body receives some form of tuition assistance. So that's very important, meaning that it is of great concern for

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*We need to show that YU education is not a cost, it's an investment.*

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us that our community — and I'd say our broader community because there are new markets that we're looking to reach, that we've already reached and that we're growing and continuing to reach — sees Yeshiva University as affordable and accessible for everyone, and that's part of why I'm working so hard on raising money for scholarships, to make sure that our students from across regions are able to attend Yeshiva University.

But we also need to raise our value proposition. We need to show that YU education is not a cost, it's an investment. So that people see that coming to Yeshiva University gives the kind of education and sense of purpose and meaning that will infuse one's life with great personal and professional success. ... And this also includes our great students, the student life and the great Jewish community here.

You can't find this anywhere on any other university campus. It's unbelievable, all the great things that happen at Yeshiva University. And so to raise that value proposition, of course with greater awareness promoted by our communications and marketing, is very important, so that people both see that it's affordable and that it's worthwhile, because it's an enormous, important investment that will reap incredible rewards for people in their future.

**BK: Thank you very much, President Berman, for taking the time. One thing that I think we would be remiss without is that, in the process of preparing for our conversation today, we looked into [the] history of old newspaper interviews with presidents, and one common theme was always ending with a certain creative philosophical dilemma to pick the President's brains.**

PB: Now we're talking!

**BK: The student body today is no exception, as several of these very creative questions came up. So the one that we thought was the most interesting was: Who does President Berman think would win in a fight — 1,000 chickens or one grizzly bear?**

PB: Wow, that's a tough one. What could 1,000 chickens do, really? Can they do anything? I like the idea where the smaller animal wins but, I'm just thinking, chickens specifically, what can they do to a grizzly bear? He would step all over them! Is there another side to this? I would go, I think, with the grizzly bear.

**SC: That's our headline.**

(laughter)

PB: I think the headline should be how much I enjoyed the play.

**SC: We can write a separate article.**

PB: Well thank you both for your incredible work. I know that you put in a lot of time for this, and *The Commentator* is so important. I really appreciate the enormous amount of time you guys are spending on growing Yeshiva University. Thank you.



## YU Raises Faculty Pension Matching Contributions, Upholds Salary Freeze

By YARDENA KATZ

In the midst of an ongoing ten-year faculty salary freeze, YU has raised its maximum faculty pension matching contribution from three to four percent. Effective Jan. 1, 2019, the change marks the university's second one-percent increase since the end of the recession in 2009, when President Richard Joel slashed the contribution level from seven to two percent.

Joel had pledged to return the maximum pension matching contribution level back to seven percent by 2011, but the level remained at two percent until Sept. 2017, when President Ari Berman announced the university's first one-percent increase to three percent. Faculty have "heard informally" that the university will continue restoring one percent annually going forward, according to one faculty member. This would result in a restoration of the seven-percent level by 2022, 13 years following its initial reduction below industry standards.

Pension matching contributions are a standard element of universities' faculty compensation packages, by which a university matches the annual pension savings of an employee up to a maximum designated percentage of the given employee's salary. According to a 2013 Faculty Council survey, for comparable universities located in Manhattan, pension matching contribution levels hover at around ten percent. Even contextualized within its 80th place ranking in the 2019 US News & World Report National University Rankings, YU falls behind industry standards in Manhattan. Pace University, which is ranked 177th, offered a nine percent contribution in 2013; St. John's University, ranked 152nd, offered 10 percent; Fordham University, ranked 70th, offered five percent to faculty serving for under five years and 11 percent to those serving for five years and above; and New York University, ranked 30th, offered 10 percent.

The increase was announced to faculty by Provost Selma Botman in late Spring 2018, and trailed the May 2018 presentation of a Faculty Council survey report to the Office of the Provost and Board of Trustees. In the report, which was anonymously leaked to The Commentator in Dec. 2018, the Council surveyed 117 faculty members on their perceptions of the university, confidence in YU leadership and recommendations for actions to be taken. The most commonly selected response to what actions the university "should take in the immediate future" was "to increase pension plan contributions" (46 percent), while the second was "to create a plan for faculty raises and compensation" (38 percent).

Though pension matching contributions have now risen by two percent since their 2009 hit and

the 2013 survey, faculty salaries have remained frozen since 2009, when Joel implemented numerous university-wide budget cuts in an effort to reduce YU's annual budget by \$30 million. In the absence of standard annual one- to two-percent raises that most universities automatically apply to account for inflation, YU faculty salaries have in effect decreased since 2009. Many universities froze faculty salaries in 2010 following the recession, but unfroze them two years later by 2012. Accounting for inflation, one professor estimated that faculty members are now making 82 percent of their 2008 income prior to the salary freeze.

Representing Cardozo, Ferkauf, Revel, SCW, Syms and YC, 17 professors of the Faculty Council signed onto a letter in May 2013 in response to Joel's financial update on the university's deficit. "The University administration must understand and recognize that a strong and well-supported faculty is vital to the long-term stability and success of the institution," the letter stated. "The University's policy of investing in the faculty in recent years has made it possible for us to offer our students a better education. We are also producing more scholarly and creative work, earning more grants, and enhancing the reputation of the University."

The letter also expressed, "If, in response to short-term pressures, further cuts were to be made to salaries or to our benefit packages, our University would, we are convinced, be undermined in the medium and long term." The Board of Trustees, which is responsible for overseeing aspects of the University's budget allocation including faculty compensation issues, did not reply to the letter.

Discussing the pension matching contribution increase in a Dec. 2018 Faculty Council meeting, the Provost reiterated the university's commitment to the one-percent increase. When one faculty member remarked that the Board of Trustees had "also [said] that they would be adding one percent per year," the Provost responded that "that's the plan but not an official statement." In frustration, another faculty member remarked to the Provost that "the plan was to return to seven percent after two years, but that never happened. Plans don't mean anything."

In the same meeting, a faculty member asked the Provost what the university was doing about the ongoing salary freeze. "They're working on it," said the Provost. "I've asked [Vice President and Chief Financial Officer] Jake Harman, and he said they are working on it. So hopefully in the new year we'll hear more about that." The Provost also relayed that according to Chief Human Resources Officer Julie Auster, YU's insurance policies "are below industry standards, as are our retirement benefits and our salaries."

Only 11 percent of faculty agree

that they currently "have confidence in the university's expertise in financial management," according to the 2018 Faculty Council survey. A minority of 15 percent of faculty reported to have confidence in the Provost, while 20 percent reported to have confidence in the Board of Trustees and 40 percent reported to have confidence in President Berman.

The 2013 Faculty Council survey found that of its 127 faculty respondents, 89 percent expect that they will financially need to keep working until at least age 70, and 70 percent expect to keep working beyond that age. Asked what conditions they would require to retire at their preferred

nationwide, as determined by a recent survey by leading financial services organization Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America-College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF). According to a May 2018 Gallup poll, the average retirement age that Americans predict for themselves is 66.

Asked about faculty demoralization resulting from years of compensation cuts in a Commentator interview at the outset of her provostship in 2014, Provost Botman remarked that in American higher education, "costs are escalating in terms of information technology, financial aid, alumni affairs ... We've created a business plan that

professor told the Commentator in May 2018, when the contribution level was at three percent. "It was one of the reasons I took the job. It hurts the retiring faculty because of course there will be less money for them, but it also hurts in attracting young faculty."

The four percent level "is obviously making very difficult for people to retire because people cannot afford to, and it is leading to an aging of the faculty," a tenured professor told The Commentator in Dec. 2018. "It is affecting more the elder faculty, who are nearing retirement and won't have time to recover from the losses."

"All my colleagues and I welcome the increase in pension

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*Though pension matching contributions have now risen by two percent since their 2009 hit and the 2013 survey, faculty salaries have remained frozen since 2009, when Joel implemented numerous university-wide budget cuts in an effort to reduce YU's annual budget by \$30 million.*

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retirement age if it fell below their required retirement age, 88 percent selected "a resumption of the 7% matching contribution" and 82 percent selected "a higher salary." The report stated that "the survey results revealed that the situation of a significant portion of Yeshiva University faculty members facing retirement might best be described as dire, with too many headed for underfunded retirements at very advanced ages."

The report also noted that the percentage of YU faculty that expects to have to continue working until at least age 70 is three times that of university faculty

no longer works." She said that the costs of pensions and healthcare plans — "many things that are not academic" — have also increased.

"I don't think we deserve any pat on our back for the fact that we've been able to increase pensions, but it's a start," remarked President Berman in his Dec. 2018 interview with The Commentator. "This is a process. And I'm deeply grateful for our faculty's loyalty and devotion. They've come through some very difficult years at Yeshiva University ... I don't want to overstate what we've done so far."

"We felt [the seven percent] was a sort of contract," one tenured

contributions," another tenured professor said. "If the university can only allocate a limited amount of money to increase faculty compensation, it is more tax efficient to increase the retirement contribution. So this is good news. However, we are still not where we had been or at industry standard and I hope we will get there soon in order to retain and recruit the best faculty." The professor added that beyond unfreezing salaries, "it would be great to provide merit increases that can support the best faculty who contribute above and beyond the call of duty."



Furst Hall



## FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

**Editor's Note:** Just over fifteen years ago, Yeshiva University welcomed Richard Joel as the institution's fourth president. This article, which was Joel's first interview with *The Commentator*, is being reprinted now alongside President Ari Berman's recent interview with the student newspaper.

## From the Archives (August 27, 2003; Volume 69 Issue 1) — Interview With President Joel



The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

By COMMENTATOR STAFF 2003-04

Q: So how's life as president these past two months?

A: It's wonderfully exciting, it's overwhelming, it's somewhat terrifying. It's kind of amazing because you really get a perspective about how much is at stake, how wonderful this place is, and how much we have to do together, and I look at it and say, "Me?" ...

It's gotten much better since my wife and my children were able to move up to New York which happened in the middle of the third week of July. We're still in the midst of packing hundreds of cartons. That's what we're calling the President's house. Seriously because it's and I hope you'll have the opportunity to be there. It's one of the facilities of Yeshiva that we get to live in that has to be used as a place where people can come together and ideas can be exchanged...

Look, I've been building an office of the President, and I think I've only had a full contingent of my support system for two and a half to three weeks. It's a new presidency, it's a different presidency than that of Dr. Lamm, he should live and be well, and there are different emphases, and I have to build on what he provided me. So everything, from having a new office to having new staff and having a different kind of operating style and learning about the institution.

I'm a child of Yeshiva, so I know a lot, and I worked here for ten years, and I have three children who've graduated from here, and I went to MTA and graduated and I ran Torah Leadership Seminar and all kinds of high school seminars from here. In so many ways, Yeshiva defined my life. My wife got her Ph.D. from here. All my significant friends come from here. I've been a part of the YU world, and you know, I've done as much hocking at Yeshiva as anybody else has.

I can say that I have the same kind of love/hate relationship. But you know, usually when people are passionate enough to say "I hate it," we're in good shape. Elie Wiesel said the opposite of love is not hate; it's indifference. So we have an enormous amount of goodwill that sometimes masquerades itself as anger. And I think that we can tap into that, and I think that part of the issue is to realize the enormity of the challenge of the whole university...

Q: You'd mentioned before regarding enunciating a vision for the university. Could you comment on, in general or specific terms, what overall your vision for the university is?

A: Please G-d, you'll be in the audience on Sept. 21... I've spent seven months listening to a lot to students. I lived at Morgenstern for three and a half months... I've listened to faculty, to different faculties. I've been out and around the country and in Israel listening to some of the 40,000 alumni. I've been

listening - as you might guess, every person I bump into has an opinion about Yeshiva University...

This is a unique kind of institution and I don't believe, by the way, in consensus. I don't believe I should come up with something safe that should offend no one. Consensus is a root to death. Consensus is the lowest common denominator. It might be good for doing long division, but it doesn't work for moving towards the Jewish purpose of being *mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh* (a kingship of priests and a holy nation). But I also don't believe in a lonely vision; I believe in a collective vision, which means I can, I'm pretty good at enunciating visions. I think I spent my life, together with my family, dreaming dreams of what we're supposed to do as Jews...

I think universities in general and Yeshiva University in particular claim its place as an academy for the inspiration of values... I think we have to look broadly at our responsibility as the great educational institution of the Orthodox world, and Modern Orthodoxy, and we say "what are our responsibilities, to ensure that there's a lifetime of learning, and to ensure that this educational institution transcends its walls, and has a living, continual relationship with the Jewish community, from womb to tomb?"

And, that we take seriously our role, beyond the undergraduate and yeshiva elements, to see how do we make sure that the graduate schools, professional schools that we have will look at the wonders of arts and science and letters and professional training and look at it through the prism of Torah and Torah values that have really been the foundation stone of western civilization.

Q: More on a practical level, how would we go about achieving such a goal, in terms of increasing the awareness of Torah U'Madda and that sort of inspiration?

A: Kavod HaBriyot has to be the cornerstone because it's also the outcome. What we want to do is help build a world, a Jewish community and a world, based on Torah values. What do we basically do? We engage in the act of imitatio dei...

You translate that more into how we continue to build the undergraduate experience so that it's both personal and excellent. The appointment of Hillel Davis, I joke, I say he's vice president of kavod HaBeriyyos, looking at all the areas that impact on quality of life here, so I'm giving that particular portfolio to a professional, a ben Torah, a talmid chacham and a great professional, who cares deeply about YU, and who's a product of YU. I think that is making the statement that we want to be serious about this, and we want to be professional about this. Unleashing Dr. Lowengrub as Vice President of Academic Affairs so that he's not dealing with any focus except working with the dean of all organs

of this *guf* (body), to really look for what the agenda of academic excellence should be at Yeshiva University, so that we can make careful and important decisions...

You know, I think that of course there are issues of what our population is going to be, how we look from an enrollment management and strategic point of view as to what we think our population will be and how we house it. What we do with the Independent Housing Program, what we do thinking about the future of dormitories here. What we do thinking about the *eruv* that now goes across Amsterdam Avenue. With the gentrification of this area, and the safety of the area. Some people want to make this more of a community. How we make this a community so that on Shabbas it's alive? How we make this an attractive place where secular faculty might want to live as well, so it becomes a neighborhood, the yeshiva neighborhood. Those are all things that I would love to dream about in week six of my presidency.

Q: Getting back to some administrative things. Speaking practically of Andrew Leibowitz leaving, I can tell you from my experience in talking to many students that there's a lot of optimism coming into this year, and many students are excited about the possibilities. But as the same time, Andrew Leibowitz was, it's a little of an exaggeration to say he was the only, but he was one of the few administrators that students really liked and it's a very big disappointment to many students that he's gone.

A: It's a big disappointment to me.

Q: Most of the people I've spoken to here said that they really are going to miss him and they'd like him to stay, but he said he didn't feel like he was really appreciated or wanted.

A: Sorry he felt that way. But I can't really comment on how he felt...I have regard for Andrew Leibowitz, and I'm going to attend the wedding of his brother this evening. He's a terrific young man and I think he's done very fine service to Yeshiva University. And certainly work was invested in his remaining here. I can tell you that Dean Nulman was a very strong advocate for his remaining here. He was not pushed out, he left of his own volition...

So why I'm sorry he left, I think this provides us with an opportunity to review student services, and we're going to do to make sure that we do it well. I don't see the Student Services area as one that tries to fix what the rest of the place breaks.

I think that we have to look at the whole culprit of academic advisement and counseling, student life counseling, the whole aspect of *hashkafa* in the yeshiva and how we make people feel personally valuable and not faceless. That's complicated, because this is a complicated place... we have to work to do. Some of that's going to take money that we don't have. But I'm not sweating the money

until we have the right vision and the right plans... How to do it is going to take a little bit of ingenuity and involvement of students.

Q: What perhaps might be your immediate goals, let's say, for the next several months?

A: Survival (laughter). I want to build a culture of "ivdu Hashem *besimcha*" (serve the Lord happily). And not by putting drugs in the Kool-Aid. I think it is about everybody realizing that they are together stakeholders in Yeshiva University and in Yeshiva University as a prototype of the rest of their lives and the community that we have to build. This is a time when young people --more than in the last generation, frankly --are looking to say, "How do I build my life in a way such that it works, and that I matter?" I think Yeshiva University will be foremost among universities in saying that values matter, that we will both value students and provoke students to confront the issue of values.

And we're going to look to make this... a sterling place, where Torah is shining and joyous and rigorous and where *Madda* is excellent. This should be a place of excellence where we should challenge students --not to see how we can get by. I want people to walk away saying, "Do I really have to leave now? There's so much more that I want to learn, that I want to give, that I want to contribute, that I want to do, that I want to serve."

A lot of this is a challenge that I'm going to put out to the student body and to the faculty, to say "Let's dream serious dreams, and then make them happen." Part of this also depends upon the leadership that hired me, being open to a challenge, to say "we're going to go to the next step." What we have here, when we put all our cynicism aside, is pretty darn good. I inherit a healthy university. This is the defining force in Modern Orthodoxy...

We have a responsibility to be able to pinpoint achievements. Right now I'm saying that we took the word "only" off the entrance and exit doors is an achievement, we can make jokes about it, but it's an achievement; that the president has an office that people can be proud of, and hopefully will be in, is an achievement, but that it's not only the president's office, but the whole floor is inviting to the whole YU community; that the conference room I'm going to have here is a conference room that will be used by all; it's not the President's conference room, it's a conference room for the university. That the café here is made more attractive, and that we're looking to do that not only in that way, that we're starting to make the Wilf Campus a more open and welcoming place, that we're maximizing the space we have by doing good things, I think, will be shown over time to be part of a new culture of building on what I have been entrusted with.



## Highlights from Student Questions for President Berman

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

In preparation for *The Commentator's* interview of President Berman this week, we invited undergraduate students to anonymously submit questions via Google Forms for our Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor to selectively ask the President. Of the 93 substantive and entertaining responses that *The Commentator* received earlier this month, the following are a sampling of our favorite responses.

1. What are you doing to confront the Juul epidemic and widespread student use in YU facilities, including class and the library?
2. Do you see a path to remedy the schizophrenia in the institution?
3. In the long run, would the Modern Orthodox community be better or worse if YU closed at the end of this year?
4. Would you be happier if students chose to go to Touro instead of YU or if they chose to go to Penn instead of YU?
5. You mentioned learning deep deep into the night when you spoke in the Glueck *beit midrash* at the beginning of last year. With the increase of seriousness of the University aspect of YU, which in many ways has been positive, how do you reconcile the need or

wish of many to learn Torah deep into the night when the college workload makes it so hard for many?

6. How do you reconcile offering classes to students that many, if not most, of the *roshei yeshiva* would find unacceptable?
7. What do you do on a daily or weekly basis - the life of the President?
8. Zysman Hall is one of the architectural gems of Upper Manhattan, yet its façade has been consistently obstructed by ugly scaffolding for many years. Will this situation change soon?
9. Do you think YC [Wilf] and the Beren campus should be the same hashkafically?
10. How do you think the LGBT+ events or lack thereof on campus impact the University's image? How do you think it impact the *yeshiva's*?
11. What have you done to bring closer the *Mashiach*?
12. What steps should one take to end up in your position one day?
13. Earlier this year, *The Commentator* poked fun at President Berman for his heavy involvement in philosophy while at Yeshiva College. How does Rabbi Berman plan to improve the current state of the YC Philosophy department, which is at a historic

weak point?

14. What is one mistake you've made so far in your tenure as president?
15. How's YU's financial situation doing, in your opinion? What do you plan to do to improve it?
16. Have you ever been to bathrooms in Glueck? They reek! What is Yeshiva doing to have *Kavod Habriyus* when we "enter into the world of eternity," the *beit midrash*?
17. Does YU have an answer for the *shidduch* crisis, and how can it use both schools to help contribute to a maximum of Jewish marriages?
18. Are you taking a reasonable salary compared to our last president? What are we doing to make YU financially sound and strong? Can we focus on making more parking spots for students?
19. What is the most challenging part about dealing with the YU Commentator?
20. It seems clear that the administration has no plans to act on the Klein@9 saga. How would you advise students who wish to see a *minyán* where women can speak

and be more included to act to bring about this change?

21. Would you rather fight 1 horse sized duck, or 100 duck sized horses?
22. Did it really matter to that starfish?
23. Are you more of an enabler or enobler?
24. A university is supposed to serve as a beacon of thought, change and new ideas. As a university, YU should be no different. One would expect that, as a self declared beacon of Modern Orthodoxy, the university would be looking at ways to offer insight and solutions to many of the challenges the MO community faces. Yet, there seems to be no public effort from the universities to solve major challenges that the Modern Orthodox world currently faces, including Jewish day school tuition, LGBTQ inclusion, women's roles, assimilation, relationships with Conservative and Reform Jews and a growing dissatisfaction with Israel among American Jews. (1) Is the university doing anything to solve these problems? If yes, what? If no, why not? (2) Is it our place to solve these problems? If no, what do we mean when we say we are a beacon and center of American Modern Orthodoxy?

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### What is the most challenging part about dealing with the YU Commentator?

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## YC Honors Program Fall 2018 Update

By BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

Yeshiva University's Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program currently has 174 enrolled Yeshiva College (YC) undergraduate students. These students, all on academic scholarships, benefit from Honors courses and optional Honors cultural events, as well as the opportunity to pursue a senior thesis. One semester into his new role as YC Honors Program director, Professor Daniel Rynhold sat down with *The Commentator* to discuss the state of the program and its future prospects.

As per current rules, YC Honors students are required to take six Honors courses by the time they graduate. This Fall 2018 there were 14 Honors courses offered, and in the Spring 2019 semester there will be 16 (four of which are First Year Writing). A *Commentator* analysis earlier this semester showed that Yeshiva College offered in the

CORE courses or Jewish history courses. Rynhold described the motivation for consolidating Honors courses to the CORE courses as aiming to help students fulfill both Honors and CORE requirements at the same time, as well as to a shrinking faculty and student body that makes it difficult to offer as many Honors courses as was once possible.

The process of choosing which courses will be labeled as Honors courses is done "in consultation with me and the Deans," said Rynhold. "We generally look at the semester's offerings, and then we flag the potential Honors courses, which of those we feel would be particularly appealing to Honors students."

In addition to Honors courses, the YC Honors Program offers students a host of cultural events. Unlike the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program at Stern College for Women cultural events, the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program cultural events are all optional.

to give that to our students."

This past fall semester also continued in the tradition of hosting Honors luncheons, of which there were nine, similar to Spring 2018's ten luncheons and Fall 2017's ten luncheons. This semester's Honors luncheons hosted various academics to speak to students, as well as actor Stephen Tobolowsky who spoke at one luncheon this past October about his experiences in Hollywood and his new book.

Fall 2018 was the first time that Honors luncheons took place in the new Honors Lounge, located now in the basement of Belfer (room C-10) rather than in the basement of Furst Hall. Though the room right now is relatively undecorated, there are plans to bring upgrades soon. According to Rynhold, these upgrades will firstly include installing a coffee machine and enabling a means by which Honors students uniquely can access the room whenever they like, rather than only during Honors luncheons. Honors students can expect these first upgrades at some point this academic year.

In addition to access and a coffee machine, Rynhold and the administration are open to discussing with students how to make the room into a workspace, leisure space or something in between.

Finally, the YC Honors Program offers students the opportunity to research and write a senior thesis. The official requirements are currently that students find a mentor by their third year and draft a proposal, to be approved by the mentor and the Honors Director. Senior theses are typically on topics related to students' majors, but students historically have also done theses with non-YU professors who they know from other capacities.

Rynhold emphasized the importance of the senior thesis. On the one hand, explained Rynhold, students might "produce something that could easily be even a master's thesis ... which is worthy in itself." He added, "On the other hand, for those going onto graduate school, the senior thesis is a real feather in their hat, and very helpful in

applying to graduate work. Having that kind of serious research under your belt is a real strength to your application."

Students are expected to enroll in the 1-credit "Honors Thesis: Proposal" (HON 4977H) course in the semester in which they draft the proposal. Once the proposal is approved, students are expected to enroll in two courses — "Honors Thesis: Preparation" (HON 4980H) and "Honors Thesis: Writing" (HON 4981H) — over two consecutive semesters. These latter two courses add up to a total of four credits, which students can choose to distribute as they wish over two semesters (i.e. either two semesters with two credits each semester, or one semester with one credit and one semester with three credits).

The thesis requirement came under criticism last year when an editorial highlighted a disconnect between students and the administration that leads to the majority of YC Honors students failing to complete senior theses, despite the supposed requirement to do so. According to Honors Program records, 31 students completed senior theses in 2016, 20 students completed senior theses in 2017 and 25 students completed senior theses in 2018.

According to Professor Rynhold, "all U6 students, now with a year to go, should be signing up for thesis proposal" (U6 students are those students who have completed at least 78 credits, which typically takes place by the end of students' second year). He added, "We're going to work to make sure everybody is assigned a mentor, basically immediately at the beginning" of their final year on campus. Progress will be monitored such that "if nothing is done the following semester, we will reserve the right to" re-evaluate scholarship terms.

Yeshiva University tuition is currently \$41,000 per year, not counting undergraduate fees — including the activity fee, university fee and registration fee — that add up

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*"I hope to both come up with ideas moving forward, but also to listen closely to what you guys suggest."*

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Professor Daniel Rynhold

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range of 30-35 Honors courses through Fall 2015, but that the typical amount diminished to roughly 10-15 per semester by Fall 2017. That same analysis indicated that YC Honors courses average around 10 students per class, compared to non-Honors YC courses that average around 15 students per class. When "serious-minded students are all together," reflected Rynhold, "courses can push them a little further."

The diminished number of Honors course offerings "has to do with the diminishing faculty numbers at YC," explained Rynhold. Whereas Honors courses used to be offered across departments, they are now typically offered only for required courses, such as

This past fall semester featured five such outings, including off-broadway shows, a New York Philharmonic Orchestra performance and a museum trip. Last spring there were six such events, Fall 2017 saw eight such events, and Spring 2017 saw seven such events. The Honors Program this past semester, as it has for the previous few semesters, also provided students with free tickets to the SCDS play.

"The cultural events give exposure to interesting personalities and academics," said Professor Rynhold. "It seems to be part of what an educated citizen taking a liberal arts degree ought to have access to. And the Honors Program is dedicated to trying

*Continued on Page 12*



# A Year of Commentator News

By CHANA WEINBERG

As the calendar year comes to a close and finals season arrives, *The Commentator* invites you on a trip through its top news stories of 2018. The following list is in chronological order, beginning with Jan. 2018 through to the most recent issue.

## Doron Stern Named Vice President of Communications

President Ari Berman appointed Doron Stern as the new Vice President of Communications, announcing it in an email from the President's Office to the YU community on Monday, Jan. 30. As the first to hold the position of VP of Communications since 2011, Stern now heads the university's Office of Communications and Public Affairs (CPA). In this past year, Stern spearheaded an ad campaign in *The Wall Street Journal*.

## Men's Basketball Wins Skyline Championship, Earns Berth into NCAA Division III Tournament for First Time in YU History

With a win against Purchase on Sunday, Feb. 25, the Yeshiva Maccabees Men's basketball team won the Skyline Championship and secured its first-ever NCAA Division III tournament berth. Thousands of Macs fans were in attendance singing "*mishe nichnas Adar marbim b'simcha*" as the team closed out the victory. The team was eliminated in the first round of the tournament.

## Rabbi Ozer Glickman, YU Rosh Yeshiva, Dies Suddenly at 67

Rabbi Ozer Glickman, a YU *rosh yeshiva* and professor in Sy Syms School of Business and Isaac Breuer College, died suddenly on Monday, March 19. Glickman, a resident of Teaneck, New Jersey, leaves behind his wife, Ilana, as well as six children and several grandchildren. He was 67 years old, and was remembered for his dedication to *Torah Umadda* and humility.

## Dean of Students Chaim Nissel Announces New Wilf Minyan Where

## Women Can Give Divrei Torah

Dr. Chaim Nissel, Dean of Students released a statement to the student newspapers on Friday, March 23 outlining the framework for a new "community" minyan on the Wilf campus for the 2018/2019 academic year, where women will be able to give *divrei Torah*. Dean Nissel explained that this decision was made after "student feedback" regarding Shabbat services at YU. The statement came one month after several articles in the student newspapers discussed, questioned and further criticized the administration for not addressing Wilf campus policies concerning women's roles in uptown Shabbat

but had its authorization rescinded by the Dean's Office after the Fall 2017 semester. As per an update in the Oct. 14 edition, Ben-Zvi has regained permission to tutor on the Beren Campus this semester.

## Syms Male Population Surpasses YC, Total Undergraduate Enrollment Down

For the Fall 2018 semester, the full-time male student population in the Sy Syms School of Business surpassed that of Yeshiva College. As of Oct. 9, there were 524 full-time students enrolled in Syms and 476 in YC. The data followed an eight-year trend of the

(SCWSC), and was held on the 185th Street Plaza on the Wilf Campus. The attendees formed a circle, and while the majority of the crowd was made up of students, many members of the Washington Heights community also attended.

## Median GPA at YU Over 3.6, Most Undergraduates on Dean's List

The majority of Yeshiva University undergraduates merited Dean's List last year, and the median grade point average (GPA) was greater than a 3.6, according to data provided by the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIR) and confirmed by the Office of the Registrar.

## Cheating Incidents Plague YU Midterms Season Once More

Several students allegedly cheated on a General Chemistry midterm on Wednesday, Oct. 31. Two weeks later, on Wednesday, 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 followed efforts to curb a culture of lax academic integrity that has plagued YU's undergraduate colleges for decades.

## Leaked Survey Results Reveal a Concerned and Dissatisfied Faculty

Results from a survey conducted by the Yeshiva University Faculty Council reveal a faculty that feels largely underappreciated and distressed about the future of the university. The survey, which polled 211 faculty members across all of YU's graduate and undergraduate schools, consisted of 16 questions screened by the Faculty Council with response possibilities on a scale of 1-7 (1=strongly agree, 7=strongly disagree). The results were sent to *The Commentator* via an anonymous email address on Thursday, Dec. 13.

As the calendar year comes to a close and finals season arrives, *The Commentator* invites you on a trip through its top news stories of 2018.

activities. As per an update in the Oct. 14 edition, this *minyan* will not be established.

## Second Annual Giving Day Raises \$4.5 Million in 24-Hour Campaign

The second annual YU Giving Day campaign on Apr. 25 and 26 raised \$4,538,697 from 3,004 donors, surpassing the original stated goal of \$3 million from 3,000 donors, according to the Giving Day website. While the original \$3 million goal was reached with hours to spare, the total donors' goal was aided by a push of over 1,000 donors in the last two hours.

## Private Tutor Nomi Ben-Zvi Tutoring Illicitly on Beren Campus Despite Deauthorization by Dean's Office

A private tutoring service has been illicitly conducting sessions for undergraduate students on the Beren Campus, without permission from the Office of Events, Security, or the Dean's Office, an investigation by *The Commentator* revealed. The Chromium Prep tutoring service, conducted by Nomi Ben-Zvi, a science tutor who has been known to Beren students for several years, operated on the Beren Campus with permission in the past

Yeshiva College student body decreasing in size. During this time, the large gap between the Syms and YC populations dramatically closed, and for the first time at the beginning of an academic year, Syms maintained a majority.

## 21 Cardozo Professors Sign NY Times Letter Opposing Kavanaugh Nomination

Twenty-one professors from the Yeshiva University Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law joined more than 2,400 other law professors in signing an open letter in *The New York Times*' Opinion Section. The professors were attempting to urge the U.S. Senate not to confirm Supreme Court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh. The letter appears in the opinion section of *The Times* and was presented to the Senate on Thursday, Oct. 4.

## YU Community Hosts Vigil for Pittsburgh Massacre

On Monday, Oct. 29, the YU community held a vigil to honor those lost in the attack in the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre. The vigil was organized by the student councils, led by Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) and Stern College for Women Student Council



Photos from top Commentator stories



## Bioethics in Practice

# Death in the Hands of the Healer

By MICHELLE HOCH

At a time of extreme duress, it is only natural to seek reprieve. What happens when the only respite is death via the hands of the supposed healer? Physician-assisted suicide is not merely a political controversy, but one that strikes a sensitive emotional chord. This practice is an option presented to individuals with a terminal illness, in addition to a prognosis of six months or less to live. Because of its controversial nature, physician-assisted suicide is currently legal in seven states, not including New York. Though beauty is in the eye of the beholder, I do not believe that death should be held in the hands of the healer.

As a New York State Certified Nurse Aide (CNA), I often encounter patients in pain. During my time in CNA school, I learned how to measure vital signs, including pulse and respirations. While these measurements are quantifiable, pain, defined as physical suffering or discomfort caused by illness or injury, is purely subjective. Asking patients to rate their level of pain is something that I have done firsthand, especially working with the elderly. Pain is observable, but cannot be felt by another or measured. Because of this, when asking patients about their pain, I am trained to rely on the standard zero-to-ten scale. In this scenario, I trust the words of my patient. But when my patient tells me that the pain is so great that he wants to terminate his life, do I apply the same feeling of trust? “The Psychology of Pain,” authored by

two physicians, explains that focusing one’s attention on pain exacerbates it. Patients who have a somatic preoccupation with pain become hypervigilant to the sensations that they are experiencing. It has been found that attending to these sensations amplifies them to the point of becoming painful. To counter this psychological phenomenon, distraction is a highly endorsed strategy for managing discomfort. The process of distraction appears to involve competition for attention between a highly salient sensation,

*If boredom contributes to feelings of pain, how accurate is the patient’s proclamation that his pain is a 10?*

like pain, and consciously directed focus on some other information processing activity. Hansen and Streltzer report that burn patients undergoing treatments or physical therapy experience excruciating pain even after they have been given opioids. It has been shown that these patients report only a fraction of this pain if they are distracted with a virtual-reality type of video game during the procedure.

As a healthcare professional, I can attest that not every patient in pain spends his day assuaged with distractions. Compared to the complexities of medicine, it seems easy to fill a patient’s day with entertainment, but the reality of modern healthcare prevents this from being so. As a result, full-time patients spend more time on their own. If boredom contributes to feelings of pain, how accurate

is the patient’s proclamation that his pain is a 10? Wesley Smith, an attorney and Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute’s Center on Human Exceptionalism states, “If we legalize assisted suicide, some patients will die instead of ultimately regaining their joy in living ... But know this: if we are seduced into legalizing assisted suicide, we will cheat at least some people out of the universe’s most precious and irreplaceable commodity: time. Assisted suicide isn’t ‘choice;’ it is the end of all choices.”

While many doctors and politicians advocate that physician-assisted suicide should be banned without question, others see the opportunity from a different vantage point. As a healthcare provider, I seek to provide my patients with all of their needs. Fulfilling a need can be as simple as fetching an extra pillow, but this small act can be as graciously received as one triple its magnitude. There is inherent joy in giving a patient something that they need, and all the more so in fulfilling one of their simple wants. During my CNA training, I was instructed to give my patient a choice of which clothing to wear each day. Providing the patient with the opportunity to choose is a form of empowerment, and all patients are entitled to dictate the minor choices that arise throughout the day.

The Death With Dignity National Center agrees with this conjecture, proclaiming, “The greatest human freedom is to live, and die, according to one’s own desires and beliefs. The most common desire among those with a terminal illness is to die with some measure of dignity. From advance directives

to physician-assisted dying, death with dignity is a movement to provide options for the dying to control their own end-of-life care.” If I am motivated by the joy of fulfilling a simple desire, then it should seem that I am even further inclined to provide my patient with their greatest wish.

The Annals of Internal Medicine, an academic medical journal published by the American College of Physicians, summarizes the ethics and the legalization of physician-assisted suicide in a few poignant sentences. “Society’s goal should be to make dying less, not more, medical. Physician-assisted suicide is neither a therapy nor a solution to difficult questions raised at the end of life ... the principles at stake in this debate also underlie medicine’s responsibilities on other issues and the physician’s duty to provide care based on clinical judgment, evidence, and ethics ... However, through high-quality care, effective communication, compassionate support, and the right resources, physicians can help patients control many aspects of how they live out life’s last chapter.”

In conjunction with this statement, the psychological roots of pain and pain management bring another dimension to this controversy. Not only does physician-assisted suicide alter the doctor-patient relationship, but the relationship between each healthcare provider and patient. A patient’s word must always be taken seriously, but there are times when a trained professional can see past the subjective pain a patient is experiencing. Because death is an irreversible and immutable decision, this controversial decision must be made with the knowledge that numerous lives hang in the balance. If physician-assisted suicide is to be nationally legalized, the words “I want to die” will no longer be just words, but a prescribable reality.



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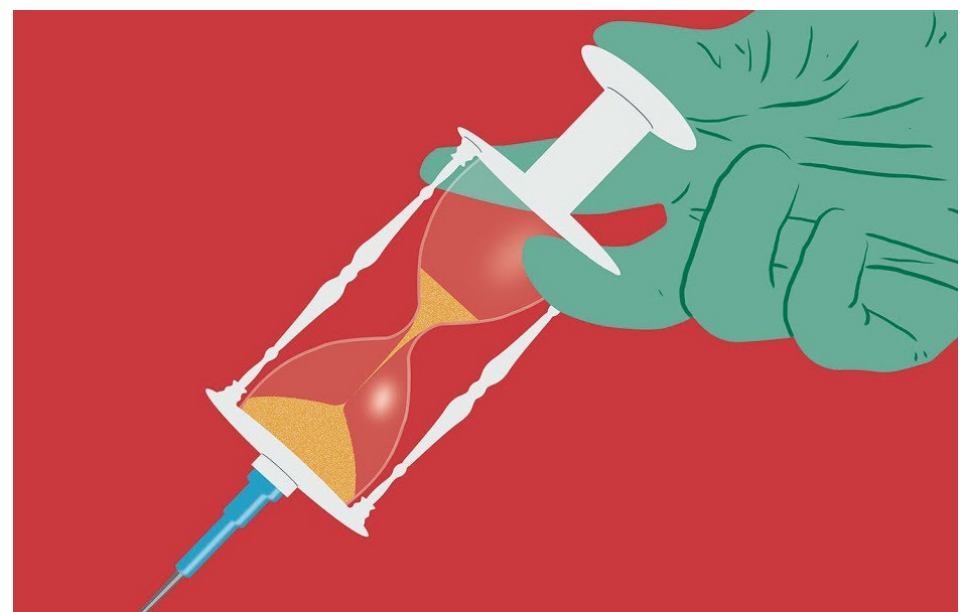
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End-of-life care is a complicated and heart-wrenching issue.

YC HONORS PROGRAM,  
continued from Page 10

to \$2,500 per year, and also not counting the meal and housing plans, whose costs vary but typically wind up in the vicinity of \$12,000 per year for on-campus residents.

Honors students currently earn scholarships as high as \$25,000 if they apply early decision, and as high as \$20,000 if they apply regular decision. Yeshiva University used to offer scholarships as high as full tuition, but full tuition merit scholarships have not been offered since the 2012-13 application cycle.

“It’s been interesting to gauge the morale in the program amongst the students,” reflected Rynhold. “I’m three months in, and I certainly know more now than when I took on the role, which has allowed me to form some ideas about what it is I’d like to do.” He concluded, “I hope to both come up with ideas moving forward, but also to listen closely to what you guys suggest to see how we can work together to build the program and to add facets or improve on existing facets, whatever it might be.”





Paid family leave is vital for many families across the country.

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## Law Review

# The Paid Family Leave

By **RACHEL ROSENBERG**

Thousands of dollars in debt, scraping by to make ends meet or steadily working but just getting by, Americans on many levels of the financial spectrum do not have the capacity to take time from their paying jobs, yet familial responsibilities sometimes necessitate taking a break. With tremendous advancements in technology, society and human productivity, life has become somewhat of a race. In the process of advancing our nation's productivity and increasing the national GDP, the law sometimes fails to ensure that the best interests of constituents are always considered. When there is a new mother or father looking to care for their infant, or a hard worker whose elderly parent needs care, the law takes few precautions to ensure that these people can care for their loved ones without being left behind in the race to success in the workplace.

Aside from the purely financial loss workers suffer, there are also stigmas attached to missing work and penalization in the form of decreased responsibilities given to the caregiver once they return to work. The current legislation makes only feeble attempts to support those who must take a recess from work. The failure to address the fundamental value and necessity of parental leave only further alienate those who must take leave, increasing the stigma associated with taking time off work.

The current federal legislation, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), as codified in 29 U.S.C. § 28, instituted regulations that

should allow families the necessary time to care for those in need, yet the law lacks proper protections to ensure families can provide care without substantial financial loss. Major flaws in the legislation include compensation for necessary time off, leave is only available if one's business has fifty or more employees, and only twelve weeks of leave in a 12 month period. These caveats to the FMLA make the leave unavailable to some, and realistically unattainable for others. Yet, one question persists in the minds of many Americans: Why does this policy get minimal attention from legislators and constituents alike when it impacts almost all Americans?

While some would chalk up the inability to attain paid family leave to partisan politics, Rachel Gillett, in "Why America Doesn't Have Paid Family Leave," claims that both sides of the political spectrum agree that there should be some form of paid time off for new parents. The policy proposed by the Democratic Party, the Family Act, would allow twelve weeks of paid family leave. Family members on leave, according to "Policy Recommendation: Paid Family Leave" authored by Lindsay Oncken, will receive two-thirds of their average monthly income for 12 weeks administered by Social Security, and it would be funded by a 0.2 percent payroll contribution by employees and employers. This policy would resolve the problem many workers face when taking unpaid family leave and find themselves unable to financially support the very children they took a leave of absence to care for.

With practical solutions as to who would

allocate these funds and where the finances would come from, it seems that this legislation has thought through many of the factors that impede the current FMLA from helping many citizens. However, opposition to the Family Act states that the minimal payroll contribution is far less than what it must be to fund such a program.

paid family leave to its working citizens. As stated on New York's paid family leave website, "the number of weeks employees can take will continue to rise through 2021, at which time employees will be able to take up to 12 weeks of job-protected, paid time off to be there for family when they are most needed." With a less than 0.2 percent payroll

*The failure to address the fundamental value and necessity of parental leave only further alienate those who must take leave, increasing the stigma associated with taking time off work.*

Ben Gitis explains that the Family Act's predicted cost has the potential to demand an immense amount of funding that the government does not seem to have readily available. Gitis' article "The Earned Income Leave Benefit: Rethinking Paid Family Leave for Low-Income Workers" enumerates a more cost-effective solution to providing paid family leave. Considered the mainstream Republican policy, the Earned Income Leave Benefit would provide subsidies to families below a certain threshold of earned income. This form of legislation would protect the most financially vulnerable citizens, yet it fails to consider that those who make a healthier income do not necessarily have the savings and stability to receive a 100 percent cut to their income for multiple months of necessary leave.

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2019, New York state will join California, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Washington, D.C. in providing

contribution and a maximum annual contribution of \$107.97, the burden on employees is minimal while the protection has the potential to be monumental. As we look to the four-year phase-in program to institute the New York State Paid Family Leave Benefits Law, federal legislators can look at this as an example, deduce the benefits and failures of the program and decide whether this form of legislation will benefit our nation as a whole. It is incredibly important to be aware of this inner self and know that you can always tap into it because it is the source of your efforts and motivation to pursue your dreams. Doing the things you like emits this positive energy which envelops you afterwards, and your smile will emerge simply because you are more in tune with yourself. That is what we all must be working towards: not just the quantity of the zeros on our paychecks but the quality of the one life we have to live. Let's live it right.



# YU's Acapella Sensation: The Maccabeats

By MICHELLE NAIM

YU has had its fair share of success stories; the Skyline Conference Championships; a student on Jeopardy. They were even featured in a YouTube rewind video. (It's true! Look it up.) Despite all this success, there is one gem that outshines them all on the world stage, and it's all thanks to Taio Cruz. "Candlelight," The Maccabeats' parody of the pop star's hit song "Dynamite" led them to stardom, bringing in 14 million views and earning them appearances on "Good Morning America" and "The Today Show." Since then, the group has found much success, but it did not come easily.

Founded in 2007, the Maccabeats started out just like every standard YU club, going through the same student council approval process that many of us are familiar with. According to Linda Stone, the Director of Student Events, the Maccabeats were YU's first acapella group. They were just ordinary students, singing in the hallways and rehearsing together after school.

The group started out small. "It was six guys, among them Michael Greenberg, Julian Horowitz, who's now the director of the group, and Imu Shalev, who's now my business partner, and has since left the group," said Noey Jacobson, one of the core members of the group. "These guys looked around and [realized] ... every university had an acapella group. And not only that, every university had a Jewish acapella group. But Yeshiva University didn't have a group, and that was off. That shouldn't be." And thus, the Maccabeats were born.

Except they weren't. Well, not in the name at least. It took the Maccabeats a year to change their name to what it is today. "When the Maccabeats started, it actually wasn't called the Maccabeats," said Jacobson. "It was called YU acapella, or something like that."

There's a long of tradition of acapella groups including musical puns in their names," added Horowitz. "In our case, we were all students at Yeshiva, so we were able to incorporate some school spirit as well."

By 2009, the Maccabeats began working on their first album. The Office of the President, then headed by Richard Joel, granted the group approximately \$5,000 for their first CD, "Voices from the Heights." The group also published a cover of the Matisyahu hit song "One Day" on YouTube, receiving over 100,000 views on the site, launching their performing career.

"That totally helped us in terms of gigs in the New York area because 100,000 views mean that everyone in the Modern Orthodox community in New York has seen that video and they're interested," Jacobson remarked.

Following the success of "One Day," the

Maccabeats attempted another shot at a cover. This time, though, with a twist. Jacobson noted that a couple members of the group thought of doing the parody-style video called "Candlelight," based on a popular Taio Cruz song "Dynamite." Although the group was sure that they could never replicate the 100,000 views as they had with their cover of "One Day," the song became a massive hit and, before they knew it, the Maccabeats were internet sensations.



"Candlelight"

"I remember going to the Apple store in the Galleria [mall] in Houston and we were putting the video on all the screens to get the view count up and we were all excited," Jacobson said. The video gathered over a million views in just five days and earned them guest spots on "The Early Show" and "Katie."

While the group mainly focuses on their own music, Jacobson mentioned that he would love to see more collaborations between the Maccabeats and other acapella groups from diverse backgrounds. He noted that the collaboration between the Maccabeats and Naturally 7, an African American acapella group, was his proudest project with the group, even though he was not directly involved in it.

*Although the group was sure that they could never replicate the 100,000 views as they had with their cover of "One Day," the song became a massive hit and, before they knew it, the Maccabeats were internet sensations.*

Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel even remarked that "[The Maccabeats] are great examples of how our YU students have an impact on our community around the globe," highlighting the Maccabeats' important role in the wider world of acapella.

Now, 11 years after getting their start at Yeshiva University, the group has parted

ways from the university. However, there was no explicit breakaway from YU, as there was no formal relationship between the two organizations in the first place.

"There was no point, or any conversation, where there was an official separation," remarked Jacobson. "It was just that naturally as the group evolved, it became 'Oh we're just a club that uses space in YU and we rehearse at YU' to this LLC that has grossed millions of dollars in revenue and has a whole apparatus

around it. This is a thing that goes beyond. This is no longer a student club. But there was no clean break."

Still, even after graduation, the group maintains a positive relationship with YU. "Only in that our brands overlap," stressed Jacobson. "Whatever YU represents — in terms of super rigorous academics, fused with traditional learning, [we also represent] ... That's what we are in this space. That's the brand — dorky Orthodox Jewish boys meet modern culture. What happens? And it's precisely that jarring juxtaposition that is interesting to people. Like when people opened the original video [they thought]: 'why is what looks like the cast of 'Book of Mormon' singing Taio Cruz?'"

"The relationship didn't change when we graduated," remarked Horowitz. "We still proudly announce at the beginning of each show that the group started while we were students at Yeshiva, and we incorporate the shared ideological vision into our presentation. But we are not formally affiliated with YU."

Aside from the \$5,000 grant they received from the President's Office, the group has not received any other funding from Yeshiva University, excluding standard payments for events.

"If Student Council hired one of the groups to perform at a student event, they would have paid the cost," said Linda Stone, Director of Student Events.

However, at the beginning of their career, the group did offer YU discounted rates. "I do believe there was a period [of time] where we were doing stuff for YU at a discounted rate," said Jacobson. "At the beginning, we did stuff for YU for free because we just wanted to get out there. We weren't charging much anyways even for outside gigs. But as for the opportunity to perform at Yom Hashoah and Yom Hazikaron in front of the whole school, we certainly didn't charge for that."

With their rising success and fame, things today are more formalized. "Each booking is negotiated on a case-by-case basis by our manager," said Horowitz. "But I believe various Yeshiva departments have been offered discounts through the years, including several complimentary appearances at Yeshiva events and dinners."

Both Jacobson and Horowitz made it clear that the Maccabeats see themselves as "informal ambassadors" of the institution, with Jacobson even noting that he "can't think of a better piece of branding and marketing for YU than what the Maccabeats did."

"[YU] didn't plan it, they had nothing to do with it, but it really showcases what YU is about. I honestly believe that," he said. At the same time, Jacobson stressed how grateful they are towards YU for everything the institution did for them. "We have tremendous *hakarot hatov* to YU. I know I have that personally...I had the time of my life."

Jacobson himself had a very personal connection with YU having worked as a personal speechwriter to President Richard Joel two years after graduating. Jacobson spoke highly of his experience at YU noting, that although he understands its limits, "If [YU is] right for you, then it is the only place for you."

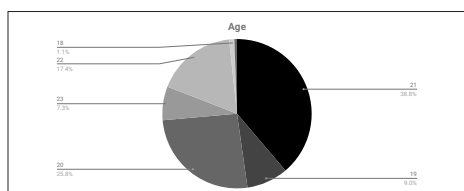
The Maccabeats success came, and continues to come, from the original formula of a parody cover to a popular song. They continue to recreate the genre that they created in the first place.

"It's all about staying ahead of the curve, honestly," Jacobson noted. "It's about finding the thing that hasn't been done and being the first to it." He says that "My advice to people looking to get into the space is to get ahead of the curve and not just do another holiday parody video, or another acapella cover of a popular song, but [to ask themselves] 'What's [my] Candlelight? What's that thing that's ahead of the curve?'"

## STUDENT LEADERS, continued from Front Page

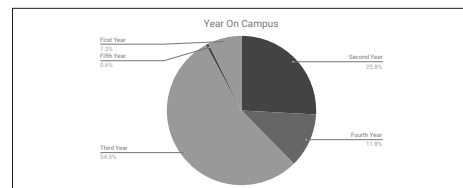
### Age

According to the survey, the average age of a YU student leader is 20.8. The most common age of student leaders is 21 (39 percent), followed by a second most common age of 20 (26 percent) and a total of just 10 percent who are under 20 years old. The oldest student leader is 23, while the youngest is 17.



### Year on Campus

Most student leaders (55 percent) are in their third year on campus. They are followed by second year students (26 percent), fourth year students (12 percent), first year students (7.3 percent) and fifth year students (0.6 percent).



### College

A plurality of student leaders surveyed attend Stern College for Women (SCW), comprising 42 percent of student leaders. This is

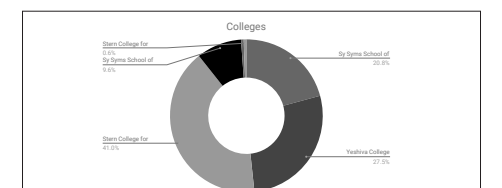
slightly higher than their general enrollment, where SCW students make up 38 percent of the undergraduate student body on campus. They are followed by Yeshiva College (YC) students, who represent 28 percent of student leaders. This is also slightly higher than their general enrollment, where YC students make up 25 percent of the undergraduate student body on campus.

Syms Wilf contains 21 percent of student leaders, despite making up 26 percent of the undergraduate student body on campus. Syms Beren contains 10 percent of student leaders, slightly higher than the 7.8 percent of the student undergraduate population on campus which they comprise.

No students from the Katz School on Beren or Wilf serve in any student leadership positions. Katz Beren makes up less than 1

percent of the undergraduate student body on campus, while Katz Wilf makes up 1.6 percent of the undergraduate student body on campus.

(The percentage data exceeds 100 percent to account for student leaders that attend two colleges. Students who attend YC/Stern and Syms are counted in both groups. The chart below includes those that attend both Syms and Stern/YC as a separate category.)



Continued on Page 15

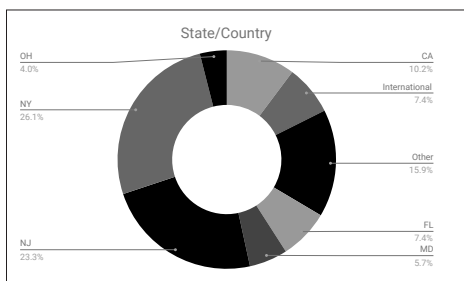
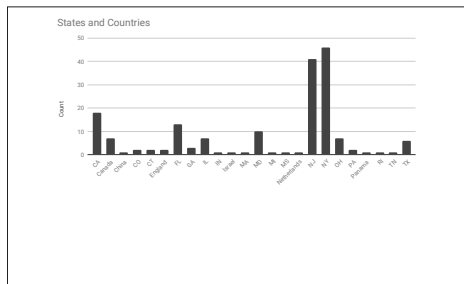


*STUDENT LEADERS,  
continued from Page 14*

**Home State/Country**

Most student leaders come from either New York (NY) or New Jersey (NJ), making up 26 percent and 23 percent of the student leader population, respectively. These states are followed by California (CA) with 10 percent, Florida (FL) with 7.4 percent and Maryland (MD) with 5.7 percent.

International students make up 7.4 percent (13 respondents) of student leaders. 54 percent (7 respondents) of the international student leaders are from Canada. The other countries of origin for student leaders are China, England, Israel, the Netherlands and Panama.

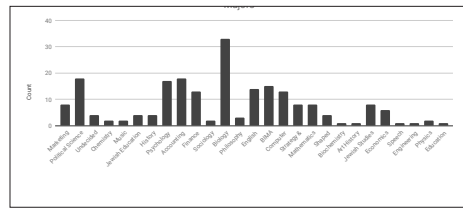
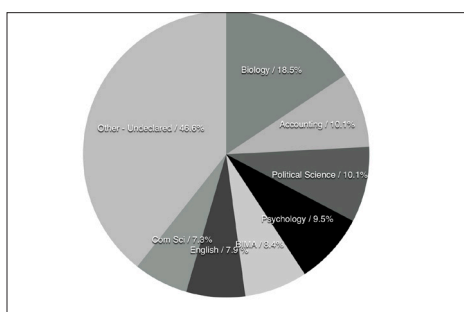


**Major**

The most popular major among student leaders is biology, with 18.5 percent (33 respondents) of the student leader population majoring in the subject. This is higher than the 12.9 percent of the YU undergraduate student body that is majoring in biology. The next most popular major is a two-way tie between political science (10.1 percent, 18 respondents) and accounting (10.1 percent, 18 respondents). Political science majors make up a much larger percentage of student leaders than of the general student body, as only 2.8 percent of undergraduate students are majoring in political science. Following those two majors are psychology (9.5 percent, 17 respondents) and business intelligence and marketing analytics (BIMA) (8.4 percent, 13 respondents). (The Commentator could not collect reliable data on overall major demographics for Syms students.)

Other notable over-representations include English and computer science majors, which make up 7.9 percent (14 respondents) and 7.3 percent (13 respondents) of student leaders' majors, respectively. When it comes to the overall undergraduate population, only 3.3 percent of the student body majors in each of these individual subjects.

(The percentage data exceeds 100 percent to account for double and triple majors. An individual student is counted in as many categories as they have majored in. The data accordingly represents the number of students who have majored in that subject.)



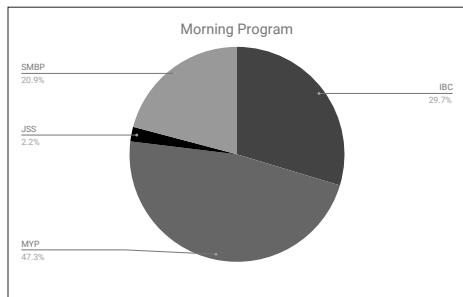
**Morning Program**

The most populated morning program amongst Wilf student leaders is the Mazer School of Talmudic Studies (MYP), with 47 percent (43 respondents) of student leaders enrolled. This is slightly higher than the 43 percent of students enrolled in MYP from among all students enrolled

*A plurality of student leaders surveyed attend Stern College for Women (SCW), comprising 42 percent of student leaders.*

in an Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) program. The program with next highest representation is the Isaac Breuer College (IBC), which makes up 30 percent (27 respondents) of student leaders, higher than its overall UTS enrollment of 20 percent.

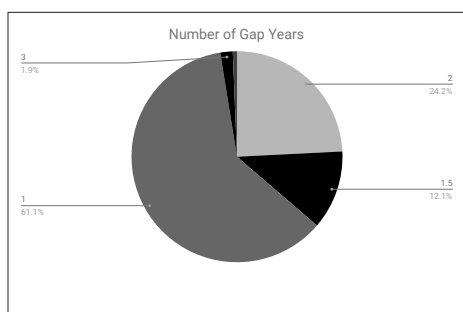
Following IBC is the Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP), which makes up 21 percent (19 respondents) of Wilf student leaders compared to its overall UTS enrollment of 24 percent. The James Striar School (JSS) has significantly fewer student leaders, making up just 2.2 percent (2 respondents) of the student leader population. This is significantly lower than its overall UTS enrollment of 13 percent.



**Gap Year**

88.2 percent (157 respondents) took a gap year, while 11.8 percent (21 respondents) did not take a gap year.

Of the student leaders that took gap years, 61 percent (96 respondents) took a single gap year. This is followed by the 24 percent (38 respondents) who took two gap years and 12 percent (19 respondents) who take one and a half gap years. 1.9 percent (3 respondents) took three gap years.

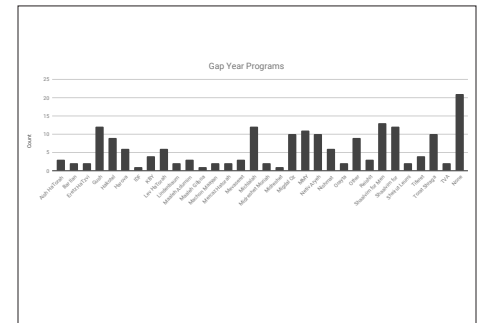
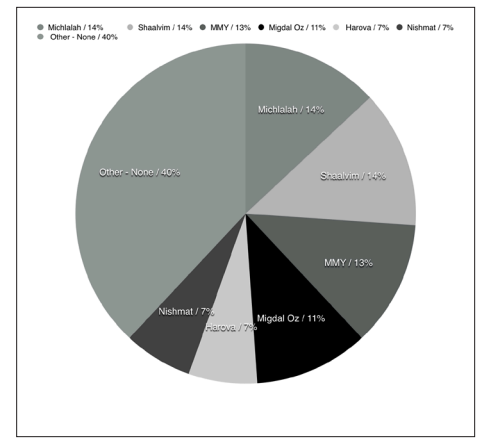


**Gap Year Program**

Amongst Wilf student leaders, the most represented yeshiva is Shaalvim for Men, which accounts for 14 percent (13 respondents) of all Wilf student leaders. This is on par with the 15 percent of Shaalvim for Men students that compose the student body, as reported in The Commentator's latest article on gap year program trends. The second most represented yeshiva is Gush, which accounts for 13 percent (12 respondents). Overrepresented by 4 percent, Gush only

makes up 9.3 percent of the Wilf student body. The third most represented yeshiva is Torat Shraga, which accounts for 11 percent (10 respondents). This is also the third most represented yeshiva amongst YU undergraduates, making up 12 percent of the Wilf student body, and is thus underrepresented by 1 percent.

These were followed in popularity by Netiv Aryeh, which accounts for 11 percent (10 respondents), and Hakotel, which accounts for 10 percent (9 respondents). Netiv Aryeh makes up 16.5 percent of the Wilf student body and is thus underrepresented by 5.5 percent, while Hakotel makes up 11 percent of the Wilf student body and is thus



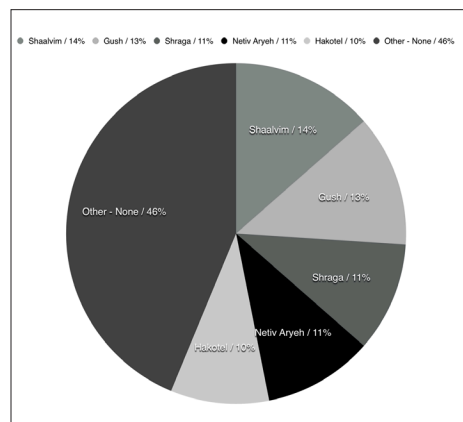
underrepresented by 1 percent.

Amongst Beren student leaders, the most represented *midrashot* are Michlalah and Shaalvim for Women, which each respectively account for 14 percent (12 respondents) of all Beren student leaders. Michlalah makes up 9.6 percent of the Beren student body, and is thus overrepresented by 4.4 percent. Shaalvim for Women makes up 18 percent of the Beren student body, and is thus underrepresented by 4 percent.

The third most represented midrasha is Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY), which accounts for 13 percent (11 respondents). MMY makes up 17 percent of the overall Beren study body, and is thus underrepresented by 4 percent. These were followed in popularity by Migdal Oz, which accounts for 11 percent (10 respondents). Migdal Oz makes up 4 percent of the Beren student body, and is thus overrepresented by 7 percent. Harova and Nishmat each account for 7 percent (6 respondents) respectively. Harova is thus underrepresented by 3 percent, accounting for 10 percent of the Beren student body, while Nishmat is overrepresented by 5 percent, accounting for 2 percent of the Beren student body.

Notable statistical discrepancies include Mevaseret, which makes up 10.9 of the Wilf student body but 3.3 percent of Wilf student leaders; Tiferet, which makes up 12.3 percent of the Beren student body but 4 percent of Beren student leaders; and Midreshet Moriah, which makes up 14 percent of the Beren student body but 2.3 percent of Beren student leaders. Only 1 student leader in the survey served in the IDF, while 2 served through Sheirut Leumi.

(The percentage data exceeds 100 percent to account for shana aleph, shana bet and shana gimmel students, as well as students that switched programs in the middle of a year. An individual student is counted in as many categories as the number of separate programs which they attended. The data accordingly represents the number of students who have attended that program.)



**Positions Held**

The average number of student leader positions held per student leader is 1.3. 77 percent (137 respondents) of student leaders hold 1 position, 15 percent (27 respondents) hold 2 positions and 6.2 percent (11 respondents) hold 3 positions. The largest number of positions held is 4, which is attributable to only 2 of the 178 student leaders surveyed.

*Chana Weinberg contributed to this article.*

**Notes on Methodology**

1. Within each category of student leaders, a minimum of 70 percent responded to the survey, with the exception of the 69 percent of student council members who responded. Within the category of club presidents, the percentage of represented club presidents within the survey could not be calculated due to an indeterminable number of total club presidents. Because of the unavailability of this statistic, the total number of student leaders on campus and percentage of student leaders surveyed could accordingly not be calculated.

2. The following are the percentage of student leaders who fall into each category of student leaders surveyed, followed by the response rate within this category: student council members (15 percent, 69 percent); Student Life Committee members (12.9 percent, 88 percent); Wilf Campus resident advisors (RAs) (7.9 percent, 70 percent); Wilf Campus head resident advisors (HRAs) (2.2 percent, 100 percent); Beren Campus RAs (9 percent, 84 percent); Commentator editors (5.1 percent, 75 percent); Observer editors (3.9 percent, 100 percent). Of the total number of student leaders surveyed, 75 percent were club presidents.

3. Data regarding undergraduate college populations, majors and morning program came from the Yeshiva University Fall 2018 Fact Book, produced by the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment.

4. Statistics in the "Gap Year Program" section on yeshiva and midrasha representation within the general student body are stated as reported in The Commentator article "A Comprehensive Analysis of Which Yeshivot and Seminaries YU Students Attend," written by Jacob Rosenfeld.

5. The survey was conducted by Google Forms. Emails containing the survey link were sent to student leaders individually.



# Yeshivas and Universities Manufacture False Consciousness: The Dualistic Debacle of *Torah Umadda*

By ARYEH SCHONBRUN

Over the past few years I have explored Israel's rich and varied society, searching for inspiration and intent on learning about my new home. This search has naturally brought me to many a place of higher learning and to many new relationships. From acquaintances at university to my good friends at a number of *yeshivot*, each individual has added to my appreciation and understanding of contemporary Judaism and Israeli political life. Apart from the deep, engaging conversations, amid the enlightening novelties and intimate reciprocity that I've shared with my new friends, I have noticed a troubling trend that worries me greatly.

For years now I have been looking for people who share my vision for society, life and politics. Throughout my high school, college and yeshiva experience I have conversed, argued and criticized my mentors, family and friends for their inability to rise above the nonsensical and irrelevant politics of ideas and concretize their views in a coherent understanding of reality. I found many of my friends interested in serious discourse, only to then feel disappointed upon realizing that their worldly limitations effectively restricted their ability to talk about anything important. Sure, I could always find friends and teachers who could talk about sports, current events and my superficial individual experiences or, in contrast, about God, religion and speculative ideology, but I could never find people with whom I could converse about reality and material philosophy.

When my father frequently complained of the immense burden of day school tuition, my rabbis, friends and mentors all looked upon us in suspicion. "Two thousand years of exile and you complain of some financial distress!" "You must make sacrifices for the eternal well-being of your soul and the continuity of the Jewish tradition!" When I began to search for answers regarding my disaffection from the barbarous nature of politics and post-modern civilization, I again met with frustration or suspicion from my peers and mentors: "You're not applying yourself, you don't care enough about your future." I would sometimes protest but to no avail. Reality, in its rawest sense of deterministic futility, would await me at every turn, unable to inspire me to fulfill my potential, undeserving of my idealistic spirit.

Instead, I lost myself in the verbosity and complexity of medieval philosophies, classical Talmudic theology and the esoteric

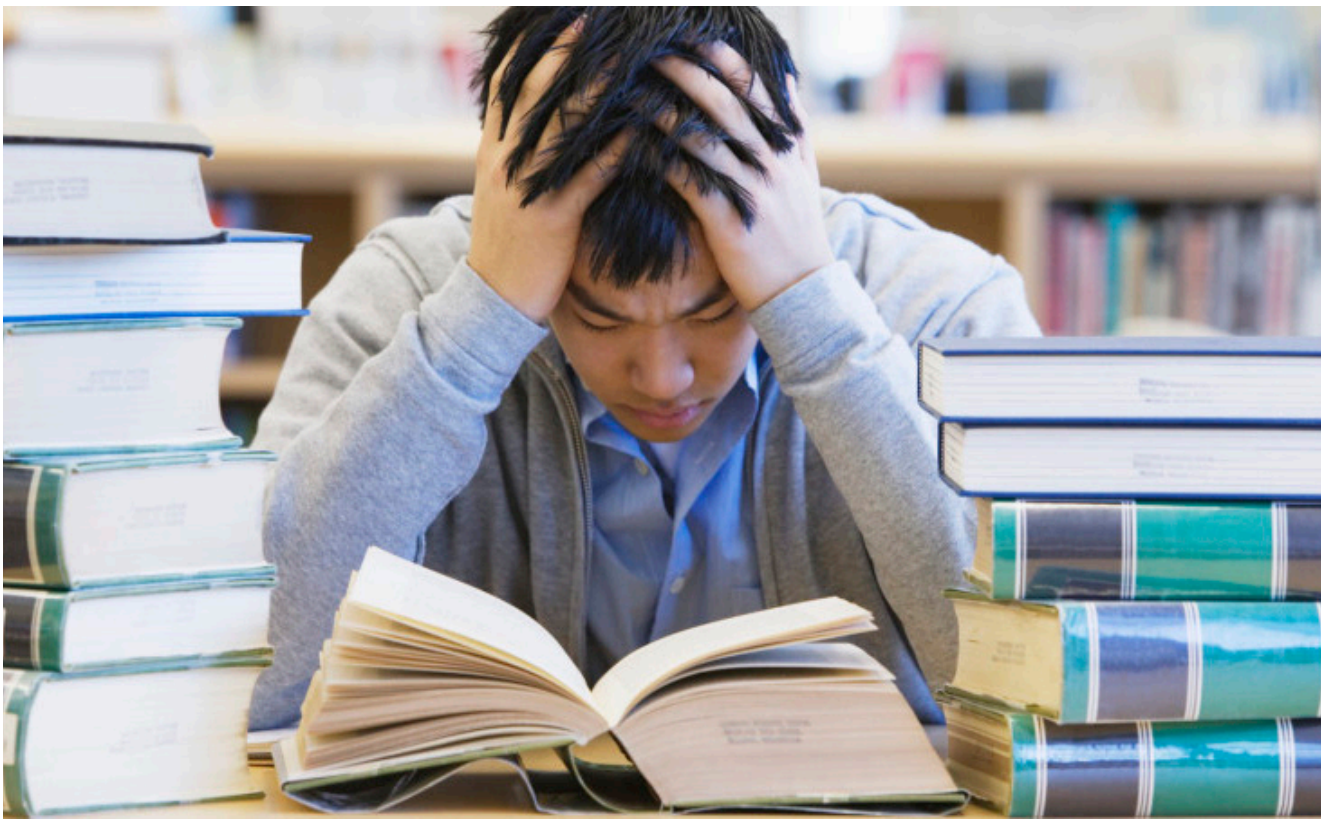
worlds of literature and mathematics. I found my spirit wanting of material wealth, strength, fulfillment and engagement, but I could not escape the abstract constructs of educational abuse. Some of my friends chose to throw themselves into the material realm, investing many hours in girls, sports and money while others settled on Talmud, scholastic curricula and philosophy. I personally tried to bridge such worlds by studying languages and politics, but I remained a geeky, Western ideologue, unable to come to terms with my reality.

As much as I tried to explore my worldly feelings, sexual desires, strengths and confines, the dual system of *Torah Umadda*, enforced by a rigorous educational regimen and reinforced by communal and religious expectations, slowly erased my individuality, leading to many years of introspection and confusion. I could not fully identify with my intellectualized, castrated self, as my rabbinic and philosophic figures had encouraged, nor could I reconcile myself with the coarse, unrefined barbarity that I encountered in the "real" world. I had been conditioned to seek out holiness in reality (*Torah Umadda*), and my expectation for such a lofty material life actually led me to disaffect from the worldly

qualities of my spirituality. I rarely enjoyed davening or performing the *mitzvot* — I could not see God's influence on my everyday life, and I rejected the esoteric nature of intellectualized spirituality, *Talmud Torah*. On account of my dismissal of society's crude material interests and my own lofty goals for personal spiritual growth, I could internalize neither the lowly material reality, nor the fetishized spirit. Overawed by the innocent spirituality of my righteous peers, I felt impure, though still not impure enough to fully identify with the materialistic desires of my worldly counterparts. I was lost in myself.

These factors came to the fore in my first year of *yeshiva*. I justifiably sought out redemption from my internal dissonance through spiritual means, and only later did I realize that such a desire lacked logical coherence. Why continue to raise my expectations for my spiritual self, why intensify the disconnect that I felt between my reality and spiritual presence? I was looking for a way out from such a conundrum. I felt that losing myself in my soul, completely sublimating my worldly desires, would allow me to function in society. I did not think of the physical ramifications of such a deprivation of my physical prowess, and I suffered for mistaking religion as a *deus ex machina*.

*Barukh Hashem*, my physical confines and revived consciousness of my inner bestial spirit did not allow me to lose myself as planned in the complexities of rabbinic wisdom. As much as I tried to force myself to close myself off from worldly thoughts, I could not bring myself to such a sophisticated "suicide." I did not give in to the religious system of sexual and material suppression, and I began to question the merit of it all. If religion could not allow me to grow as a person, if it continuously plotted against my



Oppression.

human spirit, I could not honestly accept the dictates of its practitioners and missionaries. Something was affecting my rabbis and their Torah.

The modern *yeshiva* system bears a striking similarity to the monastic system of medieval Europe. Monks and nuns historically separated themselves from society, seeking out isolation and meditation instead of engaging with society and struggling with her collective sins. Owing to their precept, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house," (Matthew 13:57) traditional Catholics have always demurred from actively pursuing religious fulfillment through a synthetic experience with reality. Philosophical dualism, accompanied by a mythos pervaded by praise of martyrdom and a pious indifference to worldly affairs, contributed to Catholicism's inability to evolve with society, papal corruption and eventually the Reformation.

In response to modernity, though, the religious establishment did not entirely suffer. While many of the younger, more progressive generations actively rejected the teachings and way of life of traditional religiosity, many spiritually inclined youths made their way into the priesthood, sometimes in protest of irreverent liberalism (e.g. during the German

*Kulturkampf*). Others went the way of the intelligentsia, studying in universities and contributing to secular society.

For the Jews, much the same occurred. European Jewry, once uniformly traditional, opened its doors to the secular culture of the Enlightenment, and many Jews went off the *derekh*. In response, Eastern European society adapted and became ultra-observant, wary of any outside influences and closed-off to the progress of the day. Such closed-mindedness culminated in the devoted sects of *Hassidim*, who, owing to the non-rational, reactionary premises of their new communities, dealt with their *goyishe* surroundings as completely alien to their internal identities. We gained much from the reinforced *ghetto* mentality of the *Ostjuden*, but we also lost touch with reality. We managed to keep the majority of Jewry religious until the early 20th century, but we left ourselves helpless and self-absorbed. This material disconnect, our inability to adapt to modernity and adopt Zionism as a political and religious necessity, contributed to our ultimate decimation.

Today, Israel's society is torn asunder by an increasingly threatening divide. On the one hand, secular society languishes in a xenomaniac neo-liberal absurdity, while on the other hand the ultra-Orthodox suffer from primitive tribalism and systemic corruption. The *dati* community also suffers from such a dissonance, and we need to finally address the time-old question of dualism. I see the immense financial, emotional, intellectual and political resources that pour into *yeshivot* and universities. It pains me to see my young, strong, smart and curious friends fall into either the banal intellectual struggle of intellectualized Talmudic literature or the mundane oppression of hyper-intense academic studies. Were it not for the innately speculative

nature of *yeshivot*, were it not for the aggressive materialism that plagues universities, I would not constantly lose my friends to such soul-sucking morbidity.

In order to bring religion into our lives and rid ourselves of the unholy spirit of neo-liberalism, we must know whom to fight. When society bifurcated away from the golden mean to the far-flung reaches of mystified religion and the lowly levels of deterministic savagery, we lost our presence in authentic, material reality. Our inability to process our physical being and spirit thereby made us vulnerable. When we unsuccessfully attempted to synthesize reality, outside forces monopolized on our weakness and robbed us of our resources, freedoms and our souls. By investing in universities and

*yeshivot*, the corrupt establishment reinforces the dualistic trap that ensnares our youth. College students lose touch with their souls while *bochurim* forget about their lives and worldly talents. School becomes a dehumanizing psychic nightmare and *yeshiva* a cold ghetto. We must recognize the corrupt nature of such systems of population control and begin the fight. We will purge the manipulations, reject our impure reality and rid ourselves of false gods.

If we [...] do nothing but engage in the canonical prayer, petition God, and invoke His name, the imperialists and the oppressive governments allied with them will leave us alone. If we were to say 'Let us concentrate on calling the *azān* [call to prayer] and saying our prayers. Let them come and rob us of everything we own — God will take care of them! There is no power or recourse except in Him, and God willing, we will be rewarded in the hereafter!' — if this were our logic, they would not disturb us. —Ayatollah Khomeini

Let my people go!



## “Mary Poppins Returns:” An Original Tribute to the 1964 Classic

By LILLY GELMAN

On Sunday, Dec. 16, I, along with 3,200 other Washington Heights community members braved the icy rain and headed to the United Palace theater for a pre-release screening of “Mary Poppins Returns” starring Heights native Lin-Manuel Miranda as lamplighter Jack and Emily Blunt as the ever-loved Mary Poppins.

The event opened with members from the Amber Charter Schools honoring the retiring Louis Miranda, Lin-Manuel’s father and the school’s co-founder, who has been working with Amber Charter Schools since 2000. Miranda helped open Amber, the first Latino-led charter school in New York State, along with the Community Association of Progressive Dominicans (ACDP). Amber currently educates around 850 students in its two locations — Kingsbridge and East Harlem — and has announced the opening of a Washington Heights location by 2020.

Several hundred Amber Charter School students attended the event, creating an early and lasting atmosphere of childhood joy well-suited for the film’s early showing. During the lovable Pixar shorts, played while audience members found their seats, audible laughter and giggles rose from the children in the audience, spreading an infectious mood of happiness and excitement.

After his father’s introductions, Lin-Manuel ran energetically onto the stage to briefly welcome his community to the long-awaited Washington Heights premiere. Expressing deep love for those living uptown, Lin Manuel said, “From the moment I was cast in this movie, I have waited for this day. We can watch this uptown with our people. It makes my heart so full to see so many kids here, so many families. *Mi gente*. I love you.”

Lin-Manuel’s words, however short, added a layer of personal pride to the already enthusiastic atmosphere, making the excitement not merely about the film, but about Lin-Manuel’s representation of the Heights community

through his acting and musical career.

Lin-Manuel sets the tone for “Mary Poppins Returns” with the opening number “The Lovely London Sky.” While the songs and story differ from the first “Mary Poppins” (1964), Marc Platt, the film’s producer, said they were “respectful of [“Mary Poppins”] and [paid] homage to the original tropes of the film, and yet we confidently take those tropes and tell the story our way, with our personality.”

Many of the new songs’ messages match up to the earlier soundtrack. In “Can You Imagine That?” Poppins shows the new Banks children, John, Anabel and Georgie, the joys of taking a bath, similar to Poppins’ use of “A Spoonful of Sugar” to get the original Banks children, Michale and Jane, to clean their room.

The combination of live action and animation that delighted audiences in 1964 returns, this time with Poppins, Jack and the children jumping into the paintings on a China bowl instead of a chalk drawing, to attend a show at the Royal Doulton Music Hall. Elevating the magical ambiance from the older version with advanced 2018 technology, these

[they] need her touch / And loving gaze / Gone but not forgotten / Is the perfect phrase.”

Mrs. Bank’s absence weighs heavily on the plot of “Mary Poppins Returns,” as Michael Banks, now all grown up, struggles to keep up with his bills and save the family home from foreclosure by the bank. Throughout the film, Michael, with the help of his sister Jane, Jack, Mary Poppins and the children, tries to pay back a loan by the end of the week before the bank repossess the house. This serious note, however, does not take away from Poppins’ convincing lesson that returning to and allowing some childlike fun and innocence into one’s days adds joy into lives that too quickly turn mundane and monotonous.

As an adult, however, one realizes that Poppins’ message comes with an incredibly well-balanced attitude towards fun and parenting. Both Andrews’ and Blunt’s Poppins exude silly, carefree energy while maintaining necessary amounts of responsibility and practicality. They may make cleaning and bathing into outrageous adventures, but, at the end of the day, the job gets done and a lesson is learned.

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scenes pay tribute to the original movie’s use of 2D animation which lies at the foundation of these reimaged scenes.

Poppins’ somber bedtime song also makes an appearance in “Mary Poppins Returns.” Setting a similar tone to that of Julie Andrews’ “Feed the Birds,” Blunt’s “The Place Where the Lost Things Go” brought some tears to the audience’s eyes as Mary Poppins sought to comfort John, Anabel and Georgie on the loss of their mother, telling them that “when

While the film contains many allusions and references to the original “Mary Poppins” and has the most to offer to an audience familiar with the first, hoping to catch a nostalgic glimpse of the 1964 film that settled into everyone’s hearts, “Mary Poppins Returns” does wonderfully as a standalone movie as well. Anyone of any age should consider sparing a few hours to become a child again. Could you imagine that?



Lin-Manuel Miranda speaking before the early screening of “Mary Poppins Returns” on Dec. 16, 2018



## More Than “Just a Joke:” How Comedy Can Keep You Sane

By **SAMUEL KAUFMAN**

People often say that the funniest and most creative people are also the saddest. There are many famous examples of this. Lots of well-known comedians have dealt with clinical depression, including Rodney Dangerfield, Larry David, Sarah Silverman and Robin Williams, just to name a few. Williams, who took his own life in the summer of 2014, made this point very clear when he said, “I think the saddest people always try their hardest to make people happy because they know what it’s like to feel absolutely worthless and they don’t want anyone else to feel like that.”

Research shows that creativity and mental health struggles often go hand in hand. Comedy can be used as a tool to fight depression and anxiety. One of my favorite comedians is Bo Burnham, who talks about mental health in a very funny and interesting way in one of his Netflix comedy specials called “Make Happy.”

In his final song for the show “Can’t Handle This,” he talks about the seemingly tedious problem of ordering a burrito, only to have all of the ingredients spill out. He uses this superficial example as a metaphor for the real problems in life that we all try (and often fail) to hide from. He repeatedly asks himself whether he can “handle this right now.” He sings, “Come watch the skinny kid with a steadily

declining mental health, and laugh as he attempts to give you what he cannot give himself.” An article reviewing the special stated: “this line ties the whole song, show, and message together. Burnham’s job, when simply stated, is to make people happy, even if for only an hour. The resting irony of the piece is that Burnham can’t give himself the happiness that he wants to give his audience.”

As someone who has dealt with depression and anxiety, I can certainly attest to the cold, hard truth of Burnham’s song and Williams’ quote. It is absolutely the case that people with mental health issues often try to make people happy even when they cannot make themselves feel that way.

During my years in middle school and high school, I always had a desire to make people laugh, and I think I actually had a knack for it. I performed lots of comedic “bits” that took away from class time and annoyed the teachers but usually made the kids in my class laugh. My bits usually involved me interrupting the class in some way, pretending that I was not actually doing anything wrong, and then eventually getting kicked out. Now that I am older, I realize that this was not the smartest or nicest thing to do, but just making kids laugh and smile was worth it to me because no matter how bad I felt, I always knew that my bits might just make somebody else’s day.

My real struggles only began after high school. My first year at

YU was relatively normal and easy. I had a few ups and downs, but I was making friends, having fun and getting good grades too. During my second year, I started struggling with depression more than I ever had before. I went to class but lay in bed as much as I could, and it was hard for me to pay attention and enjoy what I was learning.

During this time, I found that a great tool to combat depression was comedy. In difficult moments, telling and listening to jokes was

often enough to turn around an entire day, just like in middle school. I regularly told jokes about my depression, and these jokes were often depressing themselves! Being able to laugh about my struggles alongside my friends who were comfortable with my dark humor was cathartic for me. It helped me see the real and funny side of life that had eluded me for so long, and gave me the strength to keep going.

I am now in my fourth year and things have gotten better, but

I still struggle with depression and anxiety sometimes. When that happens, I rely on comedy and close friends to pick me up.

Even if today is difficult, we can always look forward to tomorrow. With a positive attitude and a little humor, it might just be the best day yet.

*If you have any questions for Samuel, you can email him at [sakaufma@mail.yu.edu](mailto:sakaufma@mail.yu.edu).*



Bo Burnham from the Netflix comedy show “Make Happy”

## Yeshiva College Offers Too Few Honors Courses

By **JACOB STONE**

Prof. William Lee, Yeshiva College Associate Professor of English, told The Commentator in 1984 that “the best [students at Yeshiva College] are as talented as the best at Harvard, though fewer, and the worse are worse but more numerous.” Quantity of students aside, Prof. Lee’s comments comforted me when I first read them; I, among other students, fear that our university lacks the academic rigor of other secular institutions, and while I can’t claim that our classes are as vigorous as those in Harvard, I found solace in Prof. Lee’s assessment of our student body’s academic ability.

The Honors Program at YU exists to develop the abilities of the elite students who choose to attend this non-elite institution. YU’s standards for admission don’t compare to those of most other private research universities, and as a result, our student body boasts an unusually large range of intellectual ability. Therefore, we must make sure that our brightest students can create a space of serious academic immersion, surrounded by like-minded individuals who challenge them to become the best students that they can be.

But the YC administration’s decision to cut the number of Honors classes offered each semester hinders Honors students from creating that space. From Fall 2015 to Fall 2018, the number of Honors courses offered in Yeshiva College dropped from 34 to just

14. In the Spring 2019 semester, there are no Honors classes being offered in the Computer Science, Economics, English, Mathematics, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology departments, which represent over half of the subjects that Yeshiva College students can major in. The Honors Program website claims that “students who take honors courses commit themselves to hard work, a challenging search for understanding, and intellectual excellence,” but English majors like me haven’t been offered Honors English courses not cross-listed as a CORE class since Spring 2017. Must a YC Honors student only commit to “a challenging search for understanding” if it is within the CORE?

*We must make sure that our brightest students can create a space of serious academic immersion, surrounded by like-minded individuals who challenge them to become the best students that they can be.*

Faced with dwindling enrollment, the Yeshiva College administration recently reduced the minimum number of required Honors courses from eight to six and concentrated the Honors courses offered each semester into the CORE. In doing so, the administration stripped the Honors Program of its legitimacy, prompting students to take Honors courses to fulfill requirements for graduation and not for the pursuit of their

interests. It’s not hard to understand why an informal 2017 Commentator poll found that only half of YC Honors students intend to graduate with Honors; Honors students rightly feel no obligation to fulfill the requirements of an outmoded and unsatisfactory program.

When asked about the current paucity of YC Honors classes, Prof. Daniel Rynhold, director of the program, responded, “I am painfully aware of the lack of Honors options in the undergraduate schedule. Unfortunately, this is a result of the decrease in faculty numbers over the past few years, which means that we are simply unable to staff the same number of courses as we could in the past. But the problem that

the Honors Program faces here is, therefore, really a symptom of a more general issue for YC. While I, together with the YC deans, am looking at what we can do to address these issues, we are all at the mercy of whether or not YU decides to invest in replacing undergraduate faculty when, for whatever reason, posts are vacated.”

If there aren’t any easy solutions to this problem, then perhaps the Honors Program

should rethink all of its requirements and how students fulfill them. Honors students benefit little from taking Honors classes exclusively in the CORE, and another reduction of the number of required classes would only delegitimize the program further. Just eight years ago, 754 students were enrolled in YC for the fall semester, 43 percent more than the 527 enrolled in Fall 2018. We must acknowledge that as the landscape of our college changes the requirements should change as well.

“A university training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end,” argued John Henry Newman in 1858. “It aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. It is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them.”

It is incumbent upon the YC administration to restore the Honors Program to the standards that Newman imagined over a century ago. Without spaces to develop their opinions with other students, Honors students cannot hope to raise the intellectual tone of our university and community at large. We owe it to ourselves to see what our best students can do.



# Brexit: What Is It? Why Is It Important? Where Does It Stand?

By **BENNI TUCHMAN**

On Thursday, June 23, 2016, a referendum was held to decide whether the United Kingdom (UK) should leave or remain in the European Union (EU). The term “Brexit” was coined, combining “Britain” and “Exit.” The “Leave” supporters won the vote by a hair’s breadth, with 51.9 percent voting in favor of the UK exiting the EU and 48.1 percent voting for the it to stay. While the vote took place over two years ago, many details such as the amount of money the UK will owe the EU upon leaving, what happens to UK citizens living in another part of the EU and vice versa and trade between the UK and EU have not yet been resolved. Hammering out all of these details is what is causing the deal negotiations to linger.

What caused Britain to want to exit the EU? The supporters of Brexit were primarily in favor of leaving the EU because of immigration. The EU offers citizenship and free trade and free movement across its participating nations. Because of this, there has been a major influx of immigrants, particularly from the EU, to Britain. Brexit supporters think that it is too easy for people to immigrate from the EU to the UK and that the immigrants are saturating the job market.

While immigration was a major concern for many Brexit supporters, it wasn’t the only one. Many people from the UK were frustrated by the lack of British independence and preferred not to have to answer to a larger European entity. Furthermore, the UK was spending large amounts of money in

dues to the EU, frustrating Brexit supporters who felt it was a waste of funds.

The UK secession from the EU could have major impacts on its own economy and the world economy at large.

Since the vote in 2016, the UK economy has taken a major hit. The pound drastically plummeted immediately after the vote and again after article 50 was implemented,

in the EU and the customs union, allowing free trade and movement of goods across all borders within the EU. On the flip side, the UK would still have to pay some money to the EU for participating and would probably have to concede to allowing EU citizens to move freely in and out of the UK which, as mentioned earlier, is what Brexit supporters primarily oppose.

*A total secession would cause major tariffs on the many goods and services that are transferred between the UK and the EU each day, increasing prices dramatically.*

amounting to a 30 year low of \$1.11 before rising again. Since then it has been steadily weakening. Before the deal the pound was selling at \$1.50; now it’s selling at \$1.26. The decrease in the exchange rate between the dollar and the pound allowed United States citizens to spend more money on UK goods, and has allowed Americans to take more vacations in Britain than before. Despite this extra spending in the UK, economist calculated that Brexit has caused the UK GDP to decrease 1-2 percent per year until its two year deadline in March — an average of about 30 billion pounds per year.

The further implications of Brexit will depend on whether there is a “hard” Brexit, a “soft” Brexit or no deal at all. A “soft” Brexit would be a scenario in which a deal is made that allows the UK to maintain some light ties to the EU. This could mean that the UK would still be part of the single market

A “hard” Brexit would entail the UK leaving the single market and customs union. They would still have few ties to the EU, but ultimately the UK wouldn’t have to pay anymore to be part of the single market and would also restrict free movement across the borders. Additionally, it would restrict UK citizens from working anywhere in the EU for free.

Lastly, if no deal is reached by the March 29 deadline, then the UK will automatically exit the EU without any ties in place whatsoever. It would be treated just like any other country in the world relative to the EU. Yes, this would give the UK the most independence possible, but on a global scale this could be the worst of the three options. A total secession would cause major tariffs on the many goods and services that are transferred between the UK and the EU each day, increasing prices dramatically. Furthermore, the lack of a deal would also cause difficulties in air traffic as planes would have to figure out how to navigate across Europe using different flight paths which would largely increase the use of fuel and therefore flight prices.

After Prime Minister Theresa May postponed the vote, I have lost much confidence in the ability of the UK to come to an agreement before the deadline. Unless there is a second referendum, I suspect that Brexit will not reach a deal and that the UK will automatically exit the EU upon the March 29, 2019 deadline and become the independent nation that its people hoped it would be.



As the March 29 deadline for ending Brexit negotiations approaches at a rapid pace, the UK and the EU are still nowhere near a deal.

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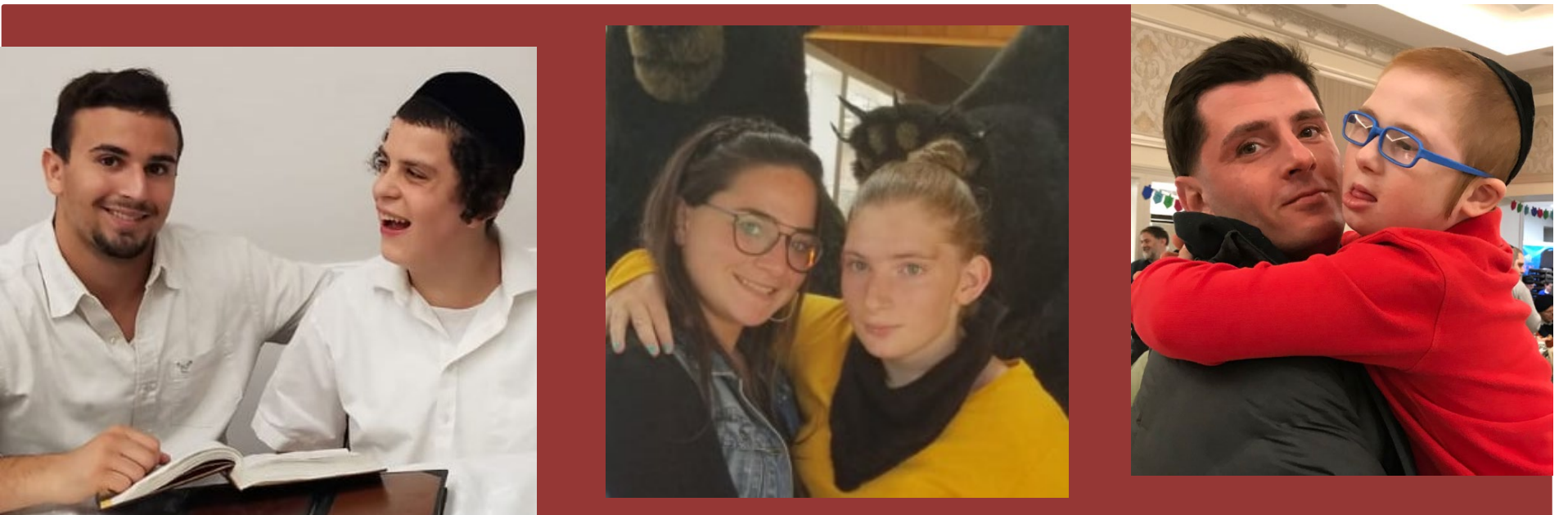


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