

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

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ISSUE NO. 6

## Man Breaks into Schottenstein Hall, Sets Fires



The front door was repaired on Friday.

DANI LANE

By YITZCHAK CARROLL  
and ELISHEVA KOHN

The Schottenstein Residence Hall on the Beren Campus was broken into in the early morning hours of Friday, Dec. 20, and three small fires were set. Peter Weyand, 33, was arrested at the scene by Fire Department of New York (FDNY) Fire Marshals on charges of burglary, arson, reckless endangerment and criminal trespass, though officials are not charging the defendant with a hate crime at this time.

After kicking through the glass door of the dormitory, Weyand walked down the hallway of the lobby and used matches left out in the open to start three small fires, according to an FDNY press release. According to officials, the matches were intended to light Chanukah menorahs. Firefighters arrived on the scene shortly thereafter and extinguished the flames without injuries.

In an email to Beren students at approximately 11:30 a.m. on Friday morning, YU Security informed students of “an incident” that set

off the fire alarm, adding that “an arrest was made and Security is working with the NYPD on next steps.” The email also emphasized that “there is no current threat to our residence hall or the campus.”

YU Security sent another email to YU students and faculty members, as well as parents of undergraduate students, on Saturday evening at 7:41 p.m., clarifying the incident following the coverage by media outlets that occurred over Saturday.

According to the email, an intruder approached the Security team at Schottenstein Residence Hall asking for help, at which point the Security team “immediately called 911 and did not let him into the building.” After kicking through the glass door, entering the building and running to the back lounge, the intruder “set a small fire with toilet paper.”

“The fire was extinguished immediately by the sprinkler system and the NYPD and FDNY were on site within minutes of the initial call,” YU Security wrote in the email. “A fire alarm went off and residents were instructed to stay in their rooms; after the intruder was arrested and the FDNY cleared

the room, an all-clear announcement was issued.” According to the email, the investigation is “ongoing,” but the NYPD “concluded this was not a hate crime.” It reiterated that “there is no current threat to our campuses.”

On Saturday evening, the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force tweeted, “While the arson at Yeshiva University is currently not believed to be a hate crime, the NYPD and HCTF are staying touch with FDNY until a final determination is made.”

Footage released by the FDNY shows a person kick the bottom pane of the glass door outside of the dormitory building and then walk away, only to return and kick the door several more times. The individual then pushed through the pane and crawled into the dorm lobby, picked up a telephone at the security desk and put it back.

According to multiple Stern College students residing in Schottenstein, fire alarms went off in the dormitory early in the morning and commotion ensued as students began to run down to

*Continued on Page 3*

## History Revisited: Controversy Over LGBT Clubs at YU Graduate Schools

By DONIEL WEINREICH

Much controversy and fanfare has been raised this year over demands for an LGBT club at Yeshiva University’s undergraduate colleges. Students attempted to officially form such a club last year, but they were rejected by the

generate awareness and sensitivity.”

The developments of the past few years, however, are not the first time controversy has been ignited over LGBT groups at YU. Several of YU’s graduate schools have had LGBT clubs since the ‘80s, and in the mid-‘90s controversy erupted over those as well, in one case garnering national media attention.

*LGBT groups had existed at Cardozo and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine since at least 1987, but Kay’s graduation speech ignited a mass movement to ban them, with particular focus on Cardozo.*

administration. This year a march and rally was organized in support of LGBT students at YU and in protest of the administration’s complacency. The rally and its aftermath led to media coverage outside of YU and a renewed discussion in the Modern Orthodox community about LGBT issues. Earlier this year, President Ari Berman announced a new team led by Senior Vice President Josh Joseph to “work on formulating a series of educational platforms and initiatives that will

One of the first such controversies occurred in 1993 over a meeting of an LGBT group in the Wurzweiler School of Social Work (WSSW). Wurzweiler was founded in 1957 and in its early years was located in midtown Manhattan. However, in 1982, Wurzweiler left midtown and relocated to Belfer Hall on YU’s Washington Heights

*Continued on Page 7*

## Over \$5.6 Million Raised at Hanukkah Dinner; \$18 Million Donation by Azrieli Foundation Announced

By AVI HIRSCH

Over \$5.6 million was raised from the 95th Annual Yeshiva University Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, which marks a 12% increase from last year’s dinner and the largest sum raised from the dinner in at least seven years. The Azrieli Foundation, honored at the dinner with the inaugural Legacy Award, announced a gift of \$18 million to the university to support the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration and to contribute to undergraduate scholarships.

This year’s dinner was held at the New York Hilton Midtown Hotel and hosted around 600 attendees. According to Adam Gerdts, VP of Institutional Advancement at YU, the \$5.6 million raised at the dinner “will be used across the university including scholarships.”

Howard Jonas, founder and chairman of IDT Corporation, Genie Energy and IDW Media, was awarded an honorary doctorate at the dinner. He serves as chairman of the board of Rafael Pharmaceuticals, and he and his wife have contributed to a wide array of causes in the Jewish community.

This year’s dinner also marked the inauguration of the Legacy Award, presented to the Azrieli Foundation in celebration of “36 years of transformative partnership with Yeshiva University,” and in honor of the foundation’s 30 years of philanthropy, according to YU News. Dr. Naomi Azrieli, chair and CEO of the foundation, accepted the award.

The Yeshiva University Women’s Organization (YUWO) was recognized at the dinner as well. YUWO provides scholarships to YU students, sponsors educational *Shabbatonim* (shabbat programs) for YU undergraduate students, funds *chesed* (charity) programs and offers stipends for undergraduate students in need.

“We’ve crafted an educational vision that ... capitalizes on the opportunities of our era by growing science, tech, innovation and entrepreneurship,” said President Ari Berman in his opening remarks. He continued by elaborating on the financial success that YU has seen in recent years. “But this does not speak directly to our fundamental purpose,”

*Continued on Page 4*

NEWS | 8

FEATURES | 15

OPINIONS | 19

BUSINESS | 23

Jewish Week Journalist Barred from Speaking at YU Shabbaton

Commentator Library Survey: A Comprehensive Analysis

And as the Credits Roll: My Top Ten Movies of the Year

2019 IPO's



# THE COMMENTATOR

2019-2020

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*For 85 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 Letter to the Josh Joseph Committee

By JACOB STONE

An extensive historical analysis of the discussions that surrounded the creation of gay student clubs in the YU graduate schools has been published in this issue. It chronicles the controversy involving the gay clubs that were formed at Cardozo Law School, Albert Einstein College of Medicine and other YU graduate schools in the 1990s. The discussions had during that controversy maintain relevance to the current deliberations of the committee led by Vice President Josh Joseph examining the state of LGBTQ inclusion on campus. After a student protest demanding the creation of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) and equal funding for LGBTQ-themed events, the YU community and the committee led by Senior Vice President Josh Joseph should take a moment to consider the lessons that history has taught us.

In the '90s, then-President Norman Lamm elected to allow gay clubs in the graduate schools to continue, claiming that YU's non-denominational status required him to forgo his personal religious convictions. He was referring to the secularization of YU that occurred in 1970, in which YU separated from RIETS and became a non-sectarian institution in order to qualify for government funding. While YU continues to be rooted in Jewish values, its graduate and undergraduate divisions remain legally secular. President Lamm and the YU administration, therefore, could not discriminate against gay students who sought equal access to university facilities and student activity funds.

In the modern day, Yeshiva College, Stern College for Women, and the Sy Syms School of Business are all, as YU's undergraduate institutions, part of the same non-sectarian charter that governs the graduate schools. Thus, the question must be asked of the committee led by Joseph: what has changed since President Lamm allowed the formation of gay clubs in the graduate schools in the '90s? If the legal protections preventing discrimination against gay students have not changed since, then why does the administration allow LGBTQ clubs at the graduate level but forbid them to undergraduates?

I am not the first to make the connection between YU's non-sectarian undergraduate and graduate schools. At the time of the graduate school controversy, Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller wrote to President Lamm in *The Jewish Observer*, "To borrow a phrase from your book, *Torah Umadda*, the problem 'will not sneak away like a thief in the night.' Are your undergraduate colleges, Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women, not under the same nondenominational charter? Sooner or later you will have to face the problem of gay students in these

schools. How will you avoid the problem there? Whatever means you are presently using will soon become obsolete, if you are true to your duty as the head of a non-denominational institution to 'conform to the secular law.'"

I must agree with Rabbi Keller. If President Berman is to be true to his duty as the head of this non-sectarian university, he cannot continue to discriminate against undergraduate students based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Many opinion pieces have been written in the YU newspapers that discuss the interplay of *halakha* and LGBTQ issues, and their conclusions have been constructive and thought-provoking. But those discussions should be theoretical, not practical, in nature. As a non-denominational institution, our duty lies in accepting the multiplicity of narratives that exist in our colleges, one of those being that of the LGBTQ community and its allies.

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*Thus, I request that the committee led by Josh Joseph reflect on the history of LGBTQ inclusion in this university and consider the hypocrisy that is inherent in this university's current attitude towards undergraduate LGBTQ clubs and events.*

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YU's secular nature does not undermine the Jewish roots of our school, and the school may require religious classes or offer Jewish holidays off, given that such provisions are offered equally to all. The Jewish roots of our school do not, however, permit discrimination towards specific groups of students.

More legal defenses of LGBTQ students have evolved since the '90s controversy surrounding the graduate schools. Title IX, a prohibition against discrimination based on sex at institutes that receive federal funding, "protects students, employees, applicants for admission or employment, and other persons from all forms of sex discrimination, including discrimination based on gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypical notions of masculinity or femininity." YU is subject to Title IX as a recipient of federal funding, yet the administration consistently hampers student activists' attempts to arrange events and clubs surrounding gender identity, among other categories of LGBTQ.

Some universities have applied for and

received religious exemptions from Title IX, but it remains unclear if YU would be able to secure such an exemption as a non-sectarian institution. When asked for comment on YU's Title IX status, Senior Vice President Josh Joseph noted, "YU has not to date applied for a Title IX exemption. We work diligently to ensure compliance with all laws and regulations while maintaining the environment and culture that are core to our mission. Our policies prohibit any form of harassment or discrimination against students on the basis of protected classifications."

But both New York state and city law have provisions banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. New York State's human rights law explicitly prohibits colleges from "deny[ing] the use of its facilities to any person otherwise qualified, or to permit the harassment of any student or applicant, by reason of ... sexual orientation." If YU is working to "ensure compliance with all laws and regulations," as Joseph claims, then why have LGBTQ-themed clubs and events been suppressed by the administration?

In the '90s, YU made clear in a press release fact-sheet that student leaders, not the administration, are in charge of club approval and allocation of funds for student activities. This could be argued to be a defense of the university's practices; if it is the students who reject funding for LGBTQ clubs and events, then the administration is not acting in a discriminatory fashion.

Efforts by student leaders, however, have shown otherwise. The student council presidents of the Yeshiva Student Union (YSU), the Yeshiva College Student's Association (YCSA) and Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) worked throughout the past academic year with President Berman and other administrators to secure a GSA on campus but it was not approved. They recounted that a club application for a GSA was submitted in the Spring 2019 semester, but members of the Office of Student Life contacted them to inform them such a club could not be allowed on the undergraduate campus. Clearly, it is the administration, not student leaders, who are discriminating against LGBTQ students.

Erin Harrist, Senior Staff Attorney at the New York Civil Liberties Union, commented on the current state of affairs at YU, "The university — including the undergraduate schools — is not incorporated as a religious entity, so it should need to comply with the New York City Human Rights Law, in which case, it would be discrimination for the university to not permit a gay club ... I would say with fair confidence that they need to let the club exist."

*Continued on Page 8*



# 1 Uptown Observer/Commentator *Shabbaton*

Turns out, the people I work with are actually kind of cool.



# 2 YU ranked one of the top five "most underrated colleges in the country," according to patch.com

Agreed. YU would be 26th if it weren't for swag day.



# 3 The "I am just a minyan man looking for a minyan woman" mug on Redbubble

Great Chanukah gift idea!



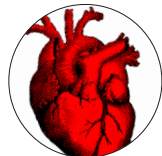
# 4 General Seating

They should've just called it *Sy Syms* Seating. #soldout



# 5 Billy Joel

From "Uptown Girl" to "We Didn't Start The Fire" – this guy shall henceforth be referred to as the YU Prophet.



# 6 Roomies of Commies

Sorry all the major stories happen on Friday morning when you are trying to sleep in. Love you.



# 7 Our very own YCSA President's View From YU

Oh em gee! He davens and wrks out and studies scIeNCe and knows Zarrowe and uses hashtags!!!!!!! Good luck with gel electrophoresis <3

# 7 UP by Elisheva Kohn NMODL

## YU admissions brochures: intellectuals vs. women

Come on, you can do better! I want to grow as a Mommy, a Morah and an Eshes Chayil! #gobigorgohome



# 1

## @realbriskarav on Twitter

You like your own Tweets. Tragic.



# 2

## Should you put ketchup in your chulent?

DID THEY HAVE KETCHUP IN THE SHTETL??? YOU TELL ME.



# 3

## People who bring their shabbos bags to class on Thursdays

The ultimate way to signal to everyone how in-town-y you are. #escapeYU



# 4

## The Rolex

A lousy timepiece, especially in comparison to the ORA Watch Watch Watch.



# 5

## The lamb at the Chanukah Dinner

"Tbh, not even that great," according to a person familiar with the matter.



# 6

## Man attempts to set Schottenstein Hall on fire

Eh... Have you seen all those brOkEn eLEvAtOrs though??? Count += 1



# 7

SCHOTTENSTEIN HALL,  
continued from Front Page

the lobby. Students noticed the broken glass and overheard rumors from fellow residents that a burglar attempted to break into the building but were told by security guards to head back up to their rooms.

Fire alarms continued going off as students locked themselves in their rooms. Nearly a half-hour later, FDNY firefighters accessed the dorm's public address system and notified students that the matter was under control. When students came down in the morning, they noticed the front door glass was shattered. The door was repaired later Friday morning.

Automatic sprinklers were also activated in the newly-opened Schottenstein communal kitchen. The kitchen is currently functional, according to an email Beren Campus Director of University Housing and Residence Life Rachel Kraut sent to Schottenstein residents shortly after the incident was made public.

Communication deficiencies exacerbated the situation. "The lack of information we received for the first 15 minutes was more alarming than what was actually happening," said one Schottenstein resident, who wished to remain anonymous. Resident advisers were not formally notified of the attempted break-in.

Shortly before Shabbat, Kraut sent an email to Schottenstein residents to assuage concerns. Kraut contended that the university does not believe the matter was a targeted hate crime, and that YU Security "worked to make sure this was resolved quickly," adding that guards "called [911] immediately." No students were in the lounge at the time of the incident, according to Kraut.

Schottenstein resident Dani Lane (SCW '21) remarked, "the situation was really confusing and a little scary due to the lack of information but I really appreciate the quick response of YU's security, the NYPD and FDNY."

According to the suspect's LinkedIn page, Weyand was working as a freelance software developer prior to the incident. On Thursday, Dec. 19, the day before the incident, Weyand posted on LinkedIn, "They're trying to make a martyr of me, but I'm no martyr. I'm a helper and a doer. I want to help people but I dont know how."

Several hours prior to that post, Weyand wrote, "Killing is the old way. If you want to move forward in the world you must find a way to love and respect other people that doesnt involve violence. We need everyone to get together and realize that we are just a bunch of monkeys sitting under trees. And... just because you have more toys, that doesn't make you better than the little guy."

"Attacking any religious institution is a serious crime and we have zero tolerance for acts of arson in this city," said FDNY Commissioner Daniel Nigro in a statement. "Thanks to the thorough investigative work of our Fire Marshals, a dangerous individual has been quickly apprehended."

As of the time of publication, the FDNY's Office of Public Information and the NYPD's Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Public Information did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries.

Jacob Rosenfeld and Avi Hirsch contributed to this story.

## Students Discuss LGBTQ Issues at YCSA Meet & Greet

By SRULI FRUCHTER

A Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA) “Meet & Greet” was held on the Wilf Campus on the evening of Dec. 9. Although the official title of the event was “YCSA Meet & Greet,” YCSA President Leib Wiener explained that the purpose of the event was to “show support to the LGBTQ community at YU.”

*“Creating dialogue about the grassroots LGBTQ community and its allies on campus was something that I thought was incredibly important.”*

Leib Wiener, President of YCSA

10 students came to the event, which was only promoted through WhatsApp messaging. At the event, which took place in YU’s Furst Hall, LGBTQ students and allies from the YU Pride Alliance led a conversation with other undergraduate students about LGBTQ matters at YU. The attending students spoke about campus attitudes towards the LGBTQ community, ways to humanize the LGBTQ community at YU and how to foster an LGBTQ-friendly environment.

“I wanted to give students the ability to voice their own opinions, struggles, and triumphs about being Jewish and LGBTQ in a safe and welcoming environment,” Wiener explained.

“Having a small, yet diverse, group of students meet to discuss how to better the lives of an underprivileged population gives me hope,” Molly Meisels, president of the YU Pride Alliance shared. “I, along with other members of the LGBTQ+ student body,

allies, and student leaders, will continue to work on promoting dialogue on the issue of LGBTQ+ rights in our institution. This is just the beginning of our advocacy.”

Formed in September, the YU Pride Alliance is an unofficial student group that does not receive funding from YU’s Office of Student Life (OSL). According to its Facebook page, its mission is “to foster an environment of acceptance on [YU’s] campus for the LGBTQ+ community and

its allies — community is at the root of what we stand for.”

“As President Berman and other administrators have noted, the students at Yeshiva University must create dialogue for the issues that we think are important at our institution,” Wiener explained. “To that end, creating dialogue about the grassroots LGBTQ community and its allies on campus was something that I thought was incredibly important.”

Students at the event also expressed frustration about the state of LGBTQ issues on campus. Among the topics raised were the inability to host LGBTQ events at YU, disappointing meetings with YU officials about LGBTQ concerns and YU’s refusal to sanction an LGBTQ club.

Past and future efforts to work with YU administration on addressing LGBTQ issues were reflected upon during the YCSA event. At one point this year, a student shared, eight

students went to Senior Vice President Josh Joseph’s office to try collaborating with him on possible solutions to LGBTQ concerns.

“The president has asked me to facilitate a number of meetings for the team with students — groups, individuals — as well as many others,” Joseph commented on that meeting. “Those are well underway, and we have had many learning opportunities through these conversations.”

This was not the first time YU students advocated for LGBTQ inclusion on campus. Last year, the YU College Democrats brought Ben Katz (YC ‘11), an LGBTQ activist, to YU to speak about LGBTQ inclusion in religious Israeli communities. Before that program, the last event at YU dealing with LGBTQ issues took place in 2010, when a panel organized by the Tolerance Club and the Wurzweiler School of Social Work was held on the topic of “Being Gay In The Modern Orthodox World.”

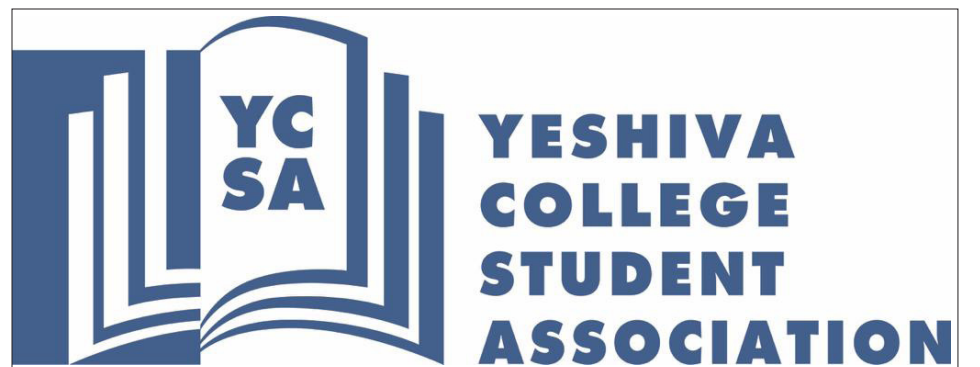
Over the course of the 2018-2019 academic year, The Commentator reported, then-current presidents of YU’s student councils met with President Berman and other university officials on numerous occasions to discuss LGBTQ-related issues,

including the possibility of forming an official YU Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club. Although the GSA club’s initial application was approved by Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC), Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) and YCSA in the spring of 2019, YU’s Office of Student Life denied the club’s application.

Conversations about LGBTQ inclusion on campus have resurfaced this year. Following the march for LGBTQ equality on campus on Sept. 15, the YU Pride Alliance was formed. Former YU employees and alumni later organized a “#PledgeNotToPledge” campaign leading up to YU’s annual Giving Day.

“[YCSA is] trying to help an underrepresented community start dialogue on campus,” Wiener noted. Other students at the event shared a similar sentiment. “LGBTQ awareness is an important discussion to have on campus,” remarked SCWSC VP of Clubs Elka Wiesenberg after the event, “and I’m proud to be a part in making it visible by participating in this event.”

As of the time of publication, Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel and Senior Director of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg did not return a request for comment.



Yeshiva College Student Association’s Logo

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

HANUKKAH DINNER,  
continued from Front Page

he added. “Why are we here?”

“Our goal and purpose is to transmit our positive Jewish values to our children, to fill their lives with meaning,” he explained. “Very simply put, this is the purpose of a Jewish university today ... Our purpose is to educate our students to internalize our values and be successful role models and leaders in an ever-evolving world.”

According to YU News, the Azrieli Foundation’s donation is “one of the largest gifts focused on Jewish education that Yeshiva University has received.” It follows their \$10 million donation in 2012, which was at the time the largest single donation ever made by the foundation.

“This historic gift to Jewish education and Jewish educators is transformative for the

future of our communities,” said President Berman. “The Azrieli family is the gold seal in philanthropy, and this gift reflects their true partnership and commitment to the essential work of Yeshiva University.”

This year’s dinner was the first in five years to not feature a keynote address; the last such dinner was the 90th annual dinner in 2014. When reached for comment, Gerdts emphasized Dr. Azrieli’s address in response to the Azrieli Foundation’s acceptance of the Legacy Award. “[W]e were delighted for her to share the announcement of this transformative gift,” he said. “Featuring her in this way was aligned with the design of the dinner.”

Last year’s dinner took place on the heels of shakeups in the Office of Institutional Advancement that resulted in Julie Schreier’s appointment as Interim Vice President of Institutional Advancement. This year’s dinner is the first since Gerdts was appointed

to fill the position in March. Since Seth Moskowitz resigned from the position the morning after the 92nd Annual Hanukkah Dinner in 2016, no individual has held the title of VP of Institutional Advancement for two years in a row.

“This was my first Hanukkah Dinner at YU,” said Gerdts. “I am excited to keep the momentum going and working together with my colleagues to continue to support the university’s efforts.”

According to Gerdts, “The Office of Institutional Advancement, the Marketing and Communications Office, the University Events Office, University Leadership, and lay leadership all had a role in organizing the dinner.”

Other than the annual Hanukkah dinner, the Office of Institutional Advancement is responsible for large-scale fundraising efforts such as the annual 24-hour Giving Day fundraising campaign. This year’s Giving Day,

which raised over \$5.7 million for student scholarships, brought in far fewer donors compared to previous years, and over \$4 million of the \$5.7 million raised was donated by 11 individuals.

Past honorees of the dinner include American politicians such as Adlai Stevenson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Jack Kemp, Colin Powell, Joseph Lieberman, George W. Bush, Hillary Clinton, John McCain, Mike Bloomberg, Al Gore, Kirsten Gillibrand, Cory Booker, Jack Lew and Andrew Cuomo; Israeli politicians such as Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog, Chaim Herzog and Nir Barkat; philanthropists such as Ghity Lindenbaum Stern (the widow of Max Stern), Sy Syms, Philip Belz, Ira Mitzner, Stanley Raskas and Laurie Tisch; as well as columnists such as David Brooks and Bret Stephens.



(L-R) Dr. Rona Novick, Dean of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration; YU President Ari Berman; Dr. Sharon Azrieli; Dr. Naomi Azrieli, Chair of the Azrieli Foundation; Dr. Herbert Dobrinsky, Vice President for University Affairs

YU NEWS

## Student Councils to Bring Back Chanukah Concert, New Programming Planned

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

The Yeshiva University student councils will be bringing back the annual Chanukah concert this year after a five-year hiatus. The “GMF Capital and Yeshiva University Chanukah Concert,” slated for Dec. 23, will begin at 6:45 p.m. in the Lamport Auditorium on the Wilf Campus.

President Ari Berman will begin the event with opening remarks, which will be followed by a *siyum* (completion ceremony) on *Shas* by Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) Dean Noam Wasserman. Singers Benny Friedman and Mordechai Shapiro will then perform with the Freilach Band.

After four years of “Chanukahfests,” the YU student councils are reintroducing the annual Chanukah concert in an effort to reach “people from a wide spectrum of YU,” according to Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) President Ariel Sacknovitz (SSSB ‘20).

According to Sacknovitz, the event will be “geared towards everyone in YU, no matter which group you choose to identify with.” To this end, Sacknovitz said he convened small focus groups to identify possible performers. He then polled over 100 students from the four men’s Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) morning programs and from varying religious backgrounds on the Beren Campus to select performers that would appeal to a wide array of students.

The results from the poll led him to select Shapiro and Friedman for the concert.

“We are building the event in a way that appeals to everyone on campus,” Sacknovitz said. “There is separate men’s and women’s seating as well as general seating. The performers appeal to a wide range of people. The post-concert programming has a range of options that can be good for all of YU. All in all, we are excited.”

In an effort to make the con-

Students Chaim Nissel did not respond to The Commentator’s inquiries regarding the event and its budget. Sacknovitz declined to comment on budgetary matters relating to donations from GMF Capital and other sponsors.

Sacknovitz noted that he is fundraising to help defray costs and that with ticket sales, he hopes to break even to what past Chanukahfests have cost. He further emphasized that making tickets free for students “will allow a

Aryeh Lebowitz, SBMP *Mashgiach Ruchani* Rabbi Aharon Ciment and MYP Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Elchanan Adler will be giving *shiurim*. The coed option will be led by JSS Assistant Director Rabbi Jon Green and his wife, Debra. Latkes, donuts and drinks will be available for students in the Furman Dining Hall.

Previously, Chanukah concerts were a staple of the holiday’s programming in YU. However, in 2015, the decision was made to cease running concerts, due to their cost

event that can cater towards the entire university, much like the Yoms and Purim festivities do,” he said. “This concert is a chance for all of our students to unite as a whole, and enjoy not only the entertainment, but also enjoy our peers who attend this complex institution that we are a part of.”

Students are looking forward to this year’s event. “I’ve never been to a Benny Friedman or a Mordechai Shapiro concert before, so seeing them both in concert at the same time is going to be an amazing experience,” said Ben Freund (SSSB ‘20). “There’s so much going on and I’m so excited to go.”

Syms Student Council President Chaim Mahgerefteh (SSSB ‘20) credited Sacknovitz’s effort for planning and executing the event. “Ariel is a true leader for taking the initiative of bringing back the Chanukah Concert,” he said. “People should recognize how much time and effort he devoted to making the concert a success and making it a special evening for all students.”

“I am so grateful for every person who worked so diligently on this project,” added Torah Activities Council (TAC) President Bella Adler (SCW ‘20). “Jewish engagement comes in many shapes and sizes in our diverse community and I’m thrilled to support and help organize the concert. Music can be a uniting factor for many people and I hope we allow it to be just that.”

After four years of “Chanukahfests,” the YU Student Councils are reintroducing the annual Chanukah concert in an effort to reach “people from a wide spectrum of YU,” according to YSU President Ariel Sacknovitz (SSSB ‘20).

cert more appealing to students, Sacknovitz decided not to charge current YU undergraduate students for admission. According to the concert website, tickets for YU faculty and administrators cost \$15, tickets for alumni cost \$20 and general tickets cost \$36.

Multiple student council sources, who commented on the condition of anonymity, said the tab for this year’s concert, food and post-event programming is expected to amount to roughly \$60,000. According to former YSU President Nolan Edmonson (YC ‘19), last year’s Chanukahfest cost less than \$20,000 — a third of the reported cost of this year’s event.

YU’s Office of Student Life (OSL) and University Dean of

greater number of students to be involved and enjoy Chanukah on campus.”

Nevertheless, the concert’s cost sparked concerns among some students. “I have no idea what the goal of the concert is, or why the institution is investing so much into it,” said one Yeshiva College (YC) sophomore, who commented on the condition of anonymity.

Following the Chanukah concert, there will be several activities for students. *Leil iyun* learning-based events will be held in men-only, women-only and coed formats. For the men- and women-only events, Young Israel of Woodmere Rosh Beis Medrash Rabbi Shay Schachter, RIETS Director of *Semikha* Rabbi

and the need to pass the tab onto students. Additionally, attendance was low at past Chanukah concerts, with many attendees coming from outside the student body. Student leaders decided to replace the concerts with “Chanukahfest” events, modeling the Welcome Back Bash and Yom Ha’Atzmaut celebration. These events have been comprised of various arcade and carnival-like games designed to foster socialization among students, as well as refreshments.

SOY President Yoni Broth (SSSB ‘20) touted the unifying nature of the Chanukah programming slated for this year. “By having a concert, and a *leil iyun*, and a social reception, and Mordechai Shapiro and Benny Friedman, it is truly an

**BENNY FRIEDMAN**

**MORDECHAI SHAPIRO**

GMF CAPITAL AND YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

**CHANUKAH CONCERT**

The flyer for YU’s Chanukah concert

## Jewish Week Journalist Barred from Speaking at YU Shabbaton

By AVI HIRSCH

Yeshiva University's Office of Student Life (OSL) rejected a request to bring Jewish Week journalist Shira Hanau to speak at a joint YU Observer/Commentator club Shabbaton on Dec. 14. Senior Director of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg explained the decision by referring to the fact that Hanau had reported on recent YU events.

"For this Shabbat experience that we are being super sensitive about," wrote Weisberg in an email to the Student Council leaders organizing the Shabbaton, "I don't think it makes sense to invite a speaker that has recently been reporting on YU current events." Hanau was one of several options put forward by the student newspapers to be a guest speaker on the Shabbaton and was the only one denied. After Hanau was rejected, Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) Opinion Editor Laura Adkins was invited and spoke at the Shabbaton.

Hanau, a staff writer at The New York Jewish Week, reports on politics, religion and the American Jewish community for the paper. She covered the "We, Too, Are YU" march for LGBTQ representation at YU in September, as well as the subsequent dissolution and reinstatement of the YU College Democrats club.

"Journalists provide a necessary voice in any community," said Hanau. "I would welcome the opportunity to speak with Yeshiva University's student journalists about reporting on and being a part of a community." Hanau was previously invited to give an

interviewing workshop at Yeshiva University High School for Girls (Central) on Oct. 31, which was covered by YU News at the time.

Molly Meisels (SCW '21), editor-in-chief of the YU Observer, was frustrated by the OSL's decision. "It is evident that Yeshiva University would rather avoid controversy amongst their rabbinic leadership and administrative body than provide students with diverse opportunities," she said.

In December 2017, a request by the YU Poetry Club to screen the film "Dead Poets Society" was rejected by the OSL. Their reason for rejecting this request was that the film contains "inappropriate material that is not in line with Yeshiva Universities halachik and moral standards," according to an email from Weisberg to the president of the Poetry Club at the time. According to Common Sense Media, the film is recommended

After Rabbi Dr. Reifman was approved as a speaker following weeks of delays, a request form for the event was submitted a week before the event was scheduled to take place. According to Doniel Weinreich (YC '20), at the time an Event Coordinator for Kol Hamevaser, Weisberg finally informed the club two days before the event that "the proposed topic is not a good fit." The event took place only after it was sponsored by

*"Shira Hanau, an emerging leader in the world of Jewish journalism, has been on the forefront of issues impacting the Jewish community. For YU to reject her attendance at a student journalism Shabbat for reporting objectively on the YU Pride March back in September is shameful.."*

YU Observer Editor-in-Chief Molly Meisels (SCW '21)

"Shira Hanau, an emerging leader in the world of Jewish journalism, has been on the forefront of issues impacting the Jewish community," Meisels added. "For YU to reject her attendance at a student journalism Shabbat for reporting objectively on the YU Pride March back in September is shameful."

At the time of publication, Weisberg did not respond to The Commentator's request for comment.

The OSL is responsible for approving speakers and events at YU. Its decisions to approve or reject speakers and events are not spelled out in written policies, according to sources familiar with the matter. Students have occasionally expressed frustrations with the OSL's vague speaker and event approval process.

by parents for kids ages 14 and up, and it has a PG rating from the Motion Picture Association of America. A censored version of the film was allowed to be shown only the following semester, with one scene depicting the centerfold of a Playboy magazine — the "inappropriate material" Weisberg had referred to — removed.

This was not the only incident in which the OSL rejected a club event without any specific written policy or guideline as a basis. In February this year, Kol Hamevaser invited Rabbi Dr. Daniel Reifman, Rosh Kollel at Drisha Summer Kollel and faculty member at Drisha Institute in New York, to speak at YU on "Tza'ar Ba'alei Hayyim and Factory Farming: Understanding the Roles of Legal & Moral Considerations in Psak Halakhah."

YU's Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies, which is not required to run events by the OSL.

"It was ridiculously frustrating that after following all the proper procedures and attempting to work with them for months, we were hindered by OSL's incompetence and proclivity for censorship," said Weinreich about the incident. "Unfortunately, this was not an exception, but was characteristic of nearly all my experiences with them."

A YU spokesperson declined to comment on the OSL's speaker and event approval policies.

## Uptown Coed 'Shabbat Experiences' to Launch with Joint Commentator, Observer Shabbaton

By ELISHEVA KOHN

A new initiative to bring a coed Shabbat experience to the Wilf Campus is launching this weekend with a joint Observer/Commentator Shabbaton. As part of the effort to expand the "Community Shabbat" model to the uptown campus, student leaders and the Office of Student Life (OSL) have created a framework to invite clubs to run Shabbatonim where students can participate

in coed meals and programming in a smaller setting. This is in contrast to the major coed, club Shabbatonim that have taken place on the Beren Campus in the past.

The Observer/Commentator Shabbaton will take place as a parallel event to the main Shabbat meals and activities on the Wilf Campus that are open to men only. Meals will be held in the Yeshiva Community Shul at Shenk, and JTA's Opinion Editor Laura Adkins and RIETS Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Jeremy Wieder are scheduled to speak to

the students participating in the Shabbaton. Adkins, who previously served as Deputy Opinion Editor at The Forward, will be teaching an advanced writing seminar titled "Columns and Editorials" at Stern College for Women in the spring. Approximately 20 editorial board and staff members from The Commentator and The Observer are expected to attend. Accommodations will be provided for any students who need in Washington Heights.

The first of its kind, the Shabbaton is the product of cooperation between student leaders and the OSL. OSL Senior Director Rabbi Josh Weisberg, TAC President Bella Adler (SCW '20), SOY President Yoni Broth (SSSB '20), TAC VP of Shabbat Ariella Etshalom (SCW '20) and Wiener aimed to find a way to make the Shabbat experience on campus more appealing to a wider range of students. Taking student feedback into account, they concluded that to accomplish this, it would be necessary to offer a "normal social coed environment for people who want to be in that environment," according to Etshalom. Unlike previous major coed Shabbatonim on the Midtown campus, this new model will focus on individual clubs and allow them to expand their regular coed programming to the weekend while avoiding an overwhelming social experience for the rest of the students on campus who prefer to remain in a non-coed environment. These new Shabbatonim will effectively bring the new Beren "Community Shabbat" model to the Wilf Campus. According to Etshalom, keeping the meals and activities "normalized" will "make sure that everyone feels comfortable on campus."

"Yeshiva University has a diverse student community," said YCSA President Leib Wiener (YC '20), "and providing different shabbat options to keep students on campus

and foster our community is important and essential for the continuity of our Yeshiva University ecosystem."

Last year, the announcement of the first uptown coed Shabbaton in decades led to controversy after Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman encouraged male students to leave campus for that weekend. This year, "the OSL met with different Roshei Yeshiva to discuss future shabbaton programming on Wilf campus," explained Wiener. According to Wiener, the Roshei Yeshiva are constantly being "updated" on new Shabbat programming ideas.

Upon hearing about the initiative to bring smaller coed groups uptown for Shabbat, Eliana Lindenberg (SCW '21) commented, "I am happy to hear they are expanding the community uptown for the women as well. It is our university, our campus, too. We should feel welcome here."

The upcoming Observer/Commentator Shabbaton was also very well received by the newspapers' staff. "After the controversies surrounding women on the Wilf Campus for Shabbat arose last year, I am proud that student leaders are taking the initiative this year to provide the YU undergraduate student body with diverse Shabbat experiences," commented Molly Meisels, editor-in-chief of The Observer. "YU is not one thing. Its students do not belong to one religious subset. Allowing students to choose their version of a meaningful Shabbat is an integral aspect of their experiences on campus."

When reached for comment about the new Shabbat programming, Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel said, "The Office of Student Life works closely with student leaders and YU administrators to create programming that meets the diverse needs of our student body."



The Wilf Campus

THE COMMENTATOR

LGBT CLUBS,  
continued from Front Page

campus. Its new location on the same campus as the *yeshiva* would exacerbate future tensions. On Nov. 21, 1993, a group of Wurzweiler students began advertising an event to discuss LGBT issues, placing signs on the floors of Belfer frequented by Wurzweiler students. At the time, The Commentator reported that the flyers were torn down, and many Yeshiva College (YC) students voiced concern about such an event taking place on the same campus as the *yeshiva*. One student remarked that while such a meeting doesn't belong in any Orthodox institution, "their audacity to have it on this campus where the *Beit Midrash* is located is even more troubling." In response, YU released an official statement saying, "We understand that a small group of WSSW students plan to meet Sunday to discuss what they have called gay and lesbian issues. Our legal counsel advises us that we are required to permit the meeting to proceed. We will do what the law requires and nothing more." The meeting proceeded on Dec. 5, 1993.

The controversy over the Wurzweiler meeting happened within a general context of a recent focus on LGBT issues and increased debate about the place of the *yeshiva* and the university at YU. That same month, controversy ensued over the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS) production of "Lips Together, Teeth Apart," which some students and rabbis felt was too approving of "the homosexual lifestyle." The Commentator reported that their flyers were also torn and were defaced with epithets such as "fag play." In response to the controversy, the YU administration formed a new committee the following semester to approve scripts for YCDS productions and recommend revisions.

The previous year, there had been controversy over the participation of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (CBST) — an LGBT synagogue — in the Salute to Israel Parade. In response to their prospective inclusion, many *yeshiva* high schools withdrew from the parade. As late as two weeks before the parade, it was still unclear whether YU would participate. A compromise was thought to be reached wherein CBST would march in the parade under the same banner as the Association of Reform Zionists of America but would not be explicitly identified as an LGBT group. This, however, was still unacceptable to many Orthodox parties. Some YU rabbis expressed the opinion that marching in the parade violated precepts against condoning sinners, and one said it was even *yehareg v'al ya'avor* (one should be killed rather than transgress). Participation of Orthodox groups was only secured three days before the parade, when CBST was expelled by the parade organizers, who claimed that a feature on CBST in the New York Times violated their agreement.

Also during the same semester as the Wurzweiler event, there was a major controversy over the censorship of YU's undergraduate literary journal for what some felt was vulgar language and sexually explicit content. This led to vigorous discussion of the relationship between the *yeshiva* and the university. In response to the debacle, Dr. Will Lee — then an English professor and faculty advisor to the literary journal — penned a lengthy op-ed in The Commentator, outlining his vision of Yeshiva University and objecting to the censorship, which he deemed antithetical to the values of a university. Rabbi Aharon Kahn — a Rosh Yeshiva at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) — then wrote an equally lengthy op-ed in which he defended the censorship

and criticized Dr. Lee's conception of Yeshiva University. In his essay, Rabbi Kahn laid out a vision of YU in the spirit of Volozhin and contended that YU cannot abide by standards contrary to Torah or halacha, even if it would cost the institution its accreditation or government funding. "*Ossur is ossur*," he wrote, even if it has financial costs. Kahn then explicitly addressed the contemporaneous controversy over the gay groups in the graduate schools, remarking, "If gay groups are abhorrent to us as Torah Jews, we have to be willing to sacrifice everything to reject them and refuse them a forum in our midst."

This tension between "the *yeshiva*" and "the university" would set the stage for many more controversies in the coming years.

Later that year, President Norman Lamm addressed the issue of homosexuality in a forum with students. Rabbi Lamm distinguished between "being gay and doing gay" and between people "born that way" and those "who seek to legitimize their choice [of lifestyle] in public." Lamm also emphasized that what people do in private is not one's business and condemned "gay bashing." Lamm confessed that he did not know what he would do if confronted with a gay professor.

At this same time, there was a focus at Cardozo School of Law on diversity of the student body and faculty. On March 3, 1994, the president of the Student Bar Association — Cardozo's student government — published a column in the Cardozo Law Forum decrying the lack of diversity at Cardozo. In the column he mentioned that "certain homophobic individuals whisper about running the Gay and Lesbian Student Alliance off campus."

Another student, Moshe Schwartz, penned a response to this column. Schwartz objected to classifying those who object to the presence of a gay organization on campus as "homophobic." "Labeling someone homophobic is a personal smear aimed at squelching opposition to the homosexual lifestyle," he declared. Schwartz claimed his opposition to the organization stemmed from the Bible and his understanding of YU as an Orthodox institution based in "Torah values." Schwartz asked several YU rabbis their opinion, and they agreed that the presence of a gay group on campus was antithetical to what YU stood for. Schwartz was clear that he didn't object to the presence of gay students at Cardozo, but rather only to "administrative policies that foster their activities."

The controversy over the LGBT group at Cardozo reached a peak the following year, catalyzed by a comment at the 1994 Cardozo commencement. At the ceremony, one of the student speakers, Michael John Kay, exclaimed "Michael Joseph, I love you," in reference to his same-sex partner with whom he had exchanged rings and vows during the previous summer.

LGBT groups had existed at Cardozo and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine since at least 1987, but Kay's graduation speech ignited a mass movement to ban them, with particular focus on Cardozo. The Forward reported that in the aftermath of the speech, President Lamm's office was "blitzed with phone calls and faxes." Many were upset at Rabbi Lamm's initial silence regarding the incident. Moshe Schwartz told The Forward that he had a petition to form a "family-values club" which would invite speakers and distribute literature "criticizing the gay lifestyle." (The petition was never submitted, and Schwartz later claimed that it was never meant to be.)

To many, the heart of the controversy was the religious status of YU itself. In order to continue to qualify for government funding, YU revised its charter in 1970, legally becoming a non-sectarian institution and

separating its *yeshiva* — RIETS — into an independently incorporated sectarian institution. According to the New York City Human Rights Commission, YU would lose its tax-exempt status if it were to ban the gay group. The American Bar Association also said that it ordinarily would revoke the accreditation of a non-religious institution that refuses to sanction gay groups.

Rabbi Lamm told The Forward, "To deny gay clubs the right to function would be to deny Yeshiva University its right to exist. We have no intention of closing our doors over this ... It is more important [to keep the clubs so] our school stays open." The Dean of Students pointed to a recent case involving Georgetown University — a Catholic institution — where the District of Columbia Court of Appeals ruled that the university must provide its gay student organization with the same services as any other student group.

Some rabbis were undeterred by the possible consequences, saying YU should "take the high road" anyway. Several board members agreed that a gay club was incompatible with YU's mission.

A small group of students kept the issue alive and attempted to prompt the university into taking action. Jeff Stier, a vocal student and editor-in-chief of the Cardozo Law Forum, took a stand against the club, claiming that Lamm was allowing "the politically unpopular position of banning gay social groups and letting Torah principles central to the University's essence fall by the wayside." Stier agreed with the *rebbeim* who argued that government money was not a good reason to compromise on Torah values. Moshe Schwartz wrote another column in which he disputed the illegality of banning the gay club, warned that accepting a gay club would run afoul of *Torah Umadda* and condemned those "smear"ing him with accusations of bigotry and homophobia. Schwartz pointed to the presence of *mezuzahs*, exclusively kosher food, and the library closing on Shabbat as clear evidence that Cardozo was an Orthodox institution.

Many objectors to the presence of gay clubs pointed to an article by Rabbi Lamm in the 1974 Encyclopaedia Judaica Yearbook. In the 12-page article, Rabbi Lamm attempted to engage in a full legal and philosophical analysis of homosexuality, laying out several possible Jewish approaches to the issue. His conclusions noted that "certainly, there must be no acceptance of separate Jewish homosexual societies," and "under no circumstances can Judaism suffer homosexuality to become respectable."

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"Have Lamm and his rabbis  
no shame or scruples?"

—  
Rabbi Mordechai Gifter

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Other students rejected these arguments, claiming that unlike YU's undergraduate colleges, Cardozo was merely a law school and was not specifically dedicated to "Torah values." After all, most students at Cardozo were not religious; they went to Cardozo only because it was considered a good law school. Some students claimed the non-sectarian status of Cardozo was specifically emphasized and reassured in recruitment. Had Cardozo been unequivocally committed to Orthodoxy and "Torah values," these students claimed they would not have enrolled. Students involved in the gay club were perplexed as to why there was a controversy at all.

Schwartz's columns provoked many negative responses. One letter in the Cardozo Law Forum alleged that the selective focus on homosexuality as opposed to anything

else counter to Torah is "based on bigotry and should be rejected as mere homophobic rationalization." Another objected to Schwartz's comparisons equating homosexuality with bestiality and satanic worship.

Some students worried that banning the gay club would have a deleterious effect on Cardozo's reputation and standing in the legal community. One gay Cardozo professor wrote that even if the detractors were legally correct, if YU was to ban the gay group, "Cardozo School of Law would then publicly stand for discrimination." Several YU faculty members and rabbis likewise voiced concern that banning the club would jeopardize YU's ability to attract professors, students and donors.

Karen Marcus, the president of the Cardozo Lesbian and Gay Student Alliance, also weighed in on the controversy. In a letter to the Cardozo Law Forum, Marcus emphasized the unique function of the alliance as a medium for support in a hostile environment. Marcus described the events at Cardozo as a "microcosmic example of the pain and oppression lesbian and gay people must face every day in the larger world." She further discussed how the club had had its bulletin boards vandalized, as well as some of the double standards it had been subject to when advertising their events. The previous year, the alliance hosted a student-alumni networking event, which they advertised as a "mixer." The administration, however, requested that they instead brand the event as a "reception" so as not to offend any students. According to Marcus, it was clear that this request would not have been made of a heterosexual group.

"[The controversy] was very upsetting to the gay students at the time, but they got support from many professors at Cardozo," Marcus recalls now. "It was viewed as an affront to basic equality and civil rights. People were outraged by it." According to Marcus, there was never a chance that the dissenters would be successful in getting Cardozo to cut the funding to the club.

The controversy reverberated in the undergraduate colleges. The Commentator covered the controversy extensively, and several undergraduate students wrote letters against the club — all invoking the biblical word *to'evah* (abomination).

The YU administration did not budge in their refusal to take action against the club. The Cardozo Law Forum wrote on Nov. 7 that both the Dean of Cardozo and the YU Dean of Students affirmed that "there is no controversy." Multiple YU administrators said that taking action against the club would be illegal discrimination and would compromise YU's government funding. Based on Georgetown's experience, The Dean of Students voiced concern that waging a legal battle would lead to "gay-rights groups staging rallies on the Yeshiva College campus, and an enraged faculty at the graduate schools."

The issue began to garner significant outside media attention. In addition to The Forward's coverage, an article appeared in The Chronicle of Higher Education in November, and in January, articles appeared in Ma'ariv and The Jerusalem Post. In response to the Ma'ariv article, the *roshei yeshiva* of RIETS published a quarter-page advertisement in a subsequent issue, denouncing the gay clubs and disavowing any affiliation between them and the *yeshiva*. They lamented the decline of morality in America, that the law forced them to recognize these groups and that they even had to write a letter regarding what they thought should be obvious. "We express our deep

Continued on Page 8

LGBT CLUBS,  
continued from Page 7

distress and protest with all our might over this painful and disgraceful situation which is to the disapproval of our Torah tradition," they wrote.

In The Jerusalem Post, Rabbi Lamm publicly commented for the first time since the September article in The Forward, stating, "As a rabbi I cannot and do not condone homosexual behavior, which is expressly prohibited by Jewish Law. But as president of a nondenominational institution that must accommodate people who reflect a wide range of backgrounds and beliefs, it is my duty to [ensure] that the policies and procedures of Yeshiva University conform to the applicable provisions of secular law, even in the rare instances in which these may offend my own religious beliefs and personal convictions."

The Haredi world got wind of the controversy, and the ultra-Orthodox began using the presence of a gay club in their critiques of YU and their efforts to delegitimize its philosophy of *Torah Umadda*. Rabbi Elazar Shach — one of the most prominent ultra-Orthodox rabbis in Israel — issued a *cherem* (formal ban) against YU over the presence of gay clubs. Another leading ultra-Orthodox rabbi, Mordechai Gifter (Talmudical Academy '33), remarked, "Have Lamm and his rabbis no shame or scruples?"

This "public relations nightmare" and the onslaught from the right was felt by undergraduates at YU. The media attention was covered in The Commentator, which printed an editorial lamenting the publicity. The editorial denounced those using the small club at a graduate school in their efforts to delegitimize YU's entire institutional philosophy, and it accused the outsider critics of not understanding the details and nuances of the situation. The Commentator commended Rabbi Lamm's "tactful" handling of the issue, even though they would also prefer it legally and financially possible to take action against the club.

One undergraduate wrote a lengthy article in Hamevaser — a publication by the Jewish studies division of YU — attempting to take a nuanced stance. While not in favor of the gay club, describing it as "an organization where the members involved endorse and support a lifestyle which completely opposes halakhic norms," the author distinguished between homosexual activity and gay people and noted that "to find a specific *halakhic* infraction incurred by Yeshiva University's handling of the situation would be difficult." According to the article, the dominant issue was not one of a formal proscription, but rather of *chillul hashem*. In order to minimize *chillul hashem*, the author said someone "sensitive to Torah standards" should refrain from reacting in lieu of publicly condemning the club. He warned that "challenging gay organizations would provoke protest on campus," which would result in an even bigger *chillul hashem*.

On Feb. 24, 1995, YU organized a meeting between student journalists and YU's lawyers from the firm Weil, Gotshal & Manges

LLP. The two attorneys present — including current YU Board of Trustees member Philip Rosen — explained that New York law requires educational institutions to provide protected groups with equal access to facilities. A religious exemption is only possible if the institution defines itself as religious. YU had legally separated from RIETS and became a non-sectarian institution 25 years earlier. During that period, YU had filed for government aid numerous times, specifically declaring itself a non-religious institution. According to the attorneys, arguing for a religious exemption would be "an impossible task," and might compromise tens of millions of dollars that YU receives from the government.

*"The university — including the undergraduate schools — is not incorporated as a religious entity, so it should need to comply with the New York City Human Rights Law, in which case, it would be discrimination for the university to not permit a gay club ... I would say with fair confidence that they need to let the club exist."*

Erin Harrist, Senior Staff Attorney at the  
New York Civil Liberties Union

The meeting, however, did little to quell the dissidents. Stier, who was at the meeting, wrote a letter to The Commentator disputing the attorneys' opinions and claiming that the religious exemption was much broader. Similar opinions were advanced by RIETS Rosh Yeshiva and Cardozo professor J. David Bleich, as well as former Assistant to the Solicitor General Nathan Lewin (YC '57).

The controversy might have died down, but for a new wave of media coverage — this time by national newspapers. The Washington Times ran an article in April, followed by The New York Times in May and the New York Post in July. Stier remained adamant that "the second you allow gay clubs at Yeshiva University you are degrading the Torah U'Madda symbol." He made several statements to the media criticizing YU for choosing "political correctness" over "Torah values." YU also began to come under attack from an organization called the Family Defense Council.

Today, Stier emphasizes that his primary grievance was with Yeshiva University's unwillingness to engage with the issue and define what it stood for. The club that existed at Cardozo at the time was totally secular in nature and gave no consideration to *halakha*. Stier wanted YU to pick a side and reconcile its institutional schizophrenia. "I think the university missed an opportunity to include various stakeholders in an open and respectful dialogue, and doing so would have led to a better outcome for Yeshiva. I hope they don't make the same mistake today," he reflects. "It's important today — more so than at the law school — that the university have an open and welcoming environment for all students, and to struggle with the challenge of doing it in a way that remains

true to Torah U'Madda."

The Haredi world continued to criticize YU over this issue. During the summer of 1995, Rabbi Chaim Dov Keller — *Rosh Yeshiva* of Telshe in Chicago and a prominent critic of Modern Orthodoxy — published a letter to Rabbi Lamm in The Jewish Observer criticizing him for his previous statements on the topic and for not trying to fight the legality. "When the very life principle of a reputable educational institution is threatened, it does not hire counsel to justify its compliance with the threatening legislation, but to fight for its principles," he wrote. Keller accused Lamm of dispensing with the Torah part of his *Torah Umadda* philosophy.

Rabbi Keller also warned, "Are your undergraduate schools, Yeshiva College and Stern College, not under the same nondenominational charter? Sooner or later you will have to face the problem of gay clubs in these schools. How will you avoid the problem there?"

On June 30, nearly all of the RIETS *roshei yeshiva* signed an open letter to Rabbi Lamm, published in The Jewish Press and the Algemeiner Journal. The 24 rabbis wrote that the controversy has "besmirched the name of our yeshiva" and that they "regard [gay organizations'] very existence as distinct groups an offense against all that we and the institution stand for." The *roshei yeshiva* endorsed the content of Rabbi Lamm's 1974 article, and while acknowledging the legal hurdles, urged him to "explore every possible avenue to obviate this blemish." "What Judaism tells us is an abomination should find no welcome in our institution," they declared.

According to The Forward, Stier interpreted the letter as a reason to withhold donations from YU and publicly called on "Yeshiva University supporters to send their money to 'real Yeshivas'" instead.

Rumors spread that the letter was actually written at the behest of Rabbi Lamm and in conjunction with him, in an effort to help preserve the *yeshiva's* reputation. Such was reported as fact by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) and the Algemeiner Journal, based on "a high-level YU administration official" and "highly reliable sources."

One of the signatories of the letter, Rabbi Yosef Blau, today emphasizes that a lot has changed in 25 years. "At that point everybody assumed that being gay was a choice. No one thought of it in terms of nature," he recalls.

According to Rabbi Blau, gay pride was seen as a celebration of that choice, which is what was perceived as a problem by the *roshei yeshiva*. Rabbi Blau confirmed that today he would not stand by the content or rhetoric of the letter.

Exacerbating the controversy that summer was a syndicated article by JTA, which reported that Yeshiva College undergraduates were now also trying to start a gay club. According to an anonymous student, this was actually an attempt to force the administration to "take a stand against the club." The Commentator, however, reported that no such petition was submitted, and the student council president claimed students only entertained the possibility as a joke.

At the start of the school year in 1995, YU's Director of the Department of Public Relations circulated a 4-page fact sheet to answer some common questions and deflect some of the criticism they had been receiving. In the sheet, he reiterated that the undergraduate colleges were unaffected by the clubs in the graduate schools, and that YU does not endorse homosexual activity. He explained that the human rights ordinance of the City of New York prevented YU from taking any action against the clubs and that their lawyers concluded that YU would not be eligible for a religious exemption given its non-sectarian status. They further concluded that even if YU was a religious institution, they would still likely be unable to ban the clubs given the conclusion in the Georgetown case that allowing clubs to exist and receive money from student activity fees does not legally constitute an endorsement or support by the university.

As the school year began, the controversy and publicity seemed to die down. Some of the chief agitators at Cardozo had graduated, and the ire of the traditionalist undergraduates turned to the newly established Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity chapter at Yeshiva College.

When asked about the relevance of the Cardozo controversy to the current situation in YU's undergraduate colleges and the legality of disallowing undergraduate LGBT clubs, Senior Vice President Josh Joseph replied, "Our team is currently meeting with students, groups and a range of people involved, focusing on ways to make our campus culture more inclusive. We are looking into the areas implied by your questions but at this point we are still in the middle of our discussions."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was more definitive. After reviewing the case, Erin Harrist, Senior Staff Attorney at the New York Civil Liberties Union, concluded, "The university — including the undergraduate schools — is not incorporated as a religious entity, so it should need to comply with the New York City Human Rights Law, in which case, it would be discrimination for the university to not permit a gay club ... I would say with fair confidence that they need to let the club exist."

JOSH JOSEPH COMMITTEE,  
continued from Page 2

Thus, I request that the committee led by Josh Joseph reflect on the history of LGBTQ inclusion in this university and consider the hypocrisy that is inherent in this university's current attitude towards undergraduate LGBTQ clubs and events.

In the '90s press release, YU drew a distinction between itself and Notre Dame, a school that had banned LGBTQ clubs at the time, claiming that Notre Dame was able to discriminate based on sexual orientation due to its location in a different state. I ask that the Joseph committee look at the Notre Dame website in 2019, which proudly states that upon prompting by their President, the Division of Student Affairs reviewed the services provided to LGBTQ students

at the university. They then released a pastoral plan which "allows for the creation of a recognized Student Organization designed to provide peer-to-peer support, direct service opportunities, and friendship for GLBTQ students and their heterosexual allies."

I hope that we do the same.



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: After the ban of "Kol," the literary journal of Yeshiva College, in 1993, Dr. Will Lee wrote a response arguing for freedom of expression within a university environment which was republished in the Issue 85.5 of The Commentator. Rabbi Aharon Kahn, a rosh yeshiva in RIETS, penned a response in which he argued that the yeshiva aspect of Yeshiva University should be emphasized over the university aspect.

## From the Archives (December 22, 1993; Volume 59 Issue 7) — Perspective: Yeshiva, Yes...

By RABBI AHARON KAHN

Ad Mosii Atem Poschim al ShTei haSe'ipim. "How long will you straddle two opinions?" How long will you halt between two value systems? — I Kings (18,21)

(Dr. Lee began his thoughtful, well-written and caring essay with a quote from the Catholic writer, G.K. Chesterton that there cannot be a Catholic university. If it is Catholic it is not a university, if it is a university it is not Catholic. The assumption is that Chesterton would have made the same observation about a Yeshiva University. I agree with the Chestertonian observation. Still, I suppose it is more appropriate, considering my position, to cite Eliyohu HaNovi.)

Dr. Lee's essay is a carefully wrought analysis which, with a yeoman's craft, attempts a "Yeshiva, yes; University, yes" argument. Of course, he is completely wrong.

Dr. Lee argues that it is possible to have a YU, a Yeshiva University. He argues that this indeed is the whole vision of Torah U'madda.

I would not like to get fastened on the sticky slogan of Torah U'madda. What, you might counter, would a university be without a slogan? And why not then also a mascot? If we have managed without a mascot all these years, we probably can manage without a slogan, too. Besides, all the good ones, like *Urim VeThumim*, have already been copyrighted by the Yales of this world. Columbia's emblem even has the *Shem haMeforash* on it. (A curious aside: Columbia's emblem, with its *Shem haMeforash*, is finely engraved on the floor of Low Library. There the *Shem haMeforash* is stepped on quite regularly by all the devotees of higher learning, all the apostles of modern and arcane wisdom, who cross Low Library's threshold. Perhaps a real university has to do just that.)

As slogans go, my tastes incline me more towards those ancient, well-worn expressions which marshal instantly our attention and our allegiance. We would do nicely with slogans such as *Na'aseh Venishma*, *Zochor VeShomor*, *Emes VeEmunah*, or *Ahavah VeYir'ah*. To me, these slogans seem to be most appropriate to the purposes of our institution, most suitable to reflect its message. "Nishma" would refer to the Torah learning at YU, and "Na'aseh" to the application of that Torah learning to life (or, as our talmidim call it, to life out there). Why not "Ahavah and Yir'ah?" "Yir'ah" — our rebounding in ultimate self-reduction (see Rambam *Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah* ch.2) from that unbounded "Ahavah" for *HaShem*, a love which has been nourished by a discovery of *HaShem*, in Torah (Rambam, *Sefer Hamitzvos*) and in the world (Rambam, *Yad, Yesodei HaTorah*). All these ancient phrases would seem to serve us very well here at YU.

Still, *chacun a son gout*. And some like the taste of Torah U'madda. But, all that aside, I do not feel that slogans will help us here, for we are seeking to discover and to describe the essence, the *nes homo*, of Yeshiva University. And slogans will not do that for us. So I do not intend to refer to Torah U'madda again in this essay.

I wish to address one question and only one question. What is Yeshiva University? More precisely, how does the university of Yeshiva University relate, conceptually, to the yeshiva of Yeshiva University?

What is Yeshiva University is not the

page 16

The Commentator

December 22, 1993

**"Let us declare what the yeshiva is not. It is not the street, the world, it is not America, it is not a place for women or for free-thinkers. It never was. It can never be."**

Yeshiva, Yes... continued from page 11

Bach or Mahler or Berenson or Shelley. And not even Albert Einstein or Shimon Peres can lend us their world-view. Subjects they provide, world-views they cannot.

I am reminded of the intense disappointment of two writers who had undertaken a study of the Rav's

**We want the Torah to address the modern world, but we want Yeshiva University's address to be the Torah.**

philosophical essays in search of a revolutionary thought. They concluded, instead, that the Rav was merely old wine in new bottles. The Rav was a decanting of the very same Torah-wine which he inherited from his Brisk forefathers. What a frustration for those who were looking for something really new, really insurgent. They had wasted their time.

Had they come to me first, I could have saved them both time and

The Commentator archives

much less "revolutionary" than his grandfather, Reb Chayim Brisker. How many times did I hear, in the almost twenty years in which I heard the Rav's shiurim, that Reb Chayim was the trailblazer who had "paved a path through the jungle."

The Rav clarified and demonstrated, elucidated and expounded, dissected and reconstituted, asked and answered, queried and protected the very same Torah which he received from his father and grandfathers.

He may have used in his shiurim phrases that no other Rosh Yeshiva used: willy nilly (the anglican cousin of the Latin *volens nolens*), *mutatis mutandis*, *reductio ad absurdum*, *imitatio Dei*. But in the end it was all *gavra* and *cheftza*, *ahava* and *yir'ah*, Rambam and Ra'aved.

No wonder those two writers in search of a brave new Torah were so disappointed in what they found in the Rav's pouch, no wonder they were so disillusioned with the Rav.

It is critical to distinguish here between the university complex and yeshiva college. The university complex is under Jewish auspices. There may be advantages to the Jewish community in having such a university complex, there may be opportunities for the students of

and is part of the university, but it is not integrated with Yeshiva college nor integral for it.

Yeshiva College is a yeshiva and bears the standard of all yeshivos since Wolozhin. As a Yeshiva it carries the torch of Torah and of *Yiras Shomayim*, as a yeshiva it is the bastion of Jewish identity and of *ahavas yisroel*, as a yeshiva it stands for intensity of commitment and for the fine-tuning of ethical commitment and moral behavior; it is a haven in which Torah values and Torah ideals are given reign and flourish. This is historically the Jewish Torah academy — the yeshiva.

Let us declare what the yeshiva is not. It is not the street, the world, it is not America, it is not a place for women or for free-thinkers. It never was. It can

**YU may have many populations, but it has only one Torah. It may have many sub-communities, but it has only one halacha.**

education. Awake or asleep, summer or winter, today or tomorrow, it can never not be a yeshiva.

We look to the guidance and the leadership of our Rosh Yeshiva to guarantee always, as he has once again done recently with the Kol affair, that the kol of YU remains the Kol Yaakov and does not become, *choliloh*, the Kol Eisav.

I was bracing myself against a very harsh wind, a heady harbinger of winter weather, the kind of wind that seems to notice you and that will not let you go. It is a Washington Heights kind of wind, pushing at me with its mocking howl just as I pass Belfer Hall. I look up at the banners with YU's logo, dancing a wild dance to a windswept tune. And I notice that the banners are full of tears, full of rips which allow the wind to pass through. It makes me wonder.

There are two ways you can secure a canvas in the face of a powerful gale wind. You can tie down that canvas so securely, so well, that no wind can move it. Or you can rip holes in the canvas so that the wind can pass through. But if you do that the canvas is torn. Since a torn canvas is not a pleasing thing, the tears are carefully prepared in such a manner

THE COMMENTATOR

same question as: Why do we need a Yeshiva University, nor is it the same question as: Is Yeshiva University a legitimate enterprise. (Perhaps I should have written: Why is Yeshiva University a legitimate enterprise.) Here I address only the first question. What is YU?

Let us once and for all put to rest this mantra-like recitation of the words of the Gaon of Vilna: "There is a tenfold lack of Torah comprehension for every measure of ignorance in the secular wisdoms." Some have denied that the Gaon ever said it. Others resent such an allegation, call it revisionism, and insist that the Gaon did say it. But, even if he said it, what did he intend to convey?

It is clear to all who have studied seriously even some of the many writings of the Gaon of Vilna that he could never have condoned a great deal of what college professors regard as *chochma*. Moreover, no one who remains true to the tradition of the Gaon and to his legacy, can deny the Gaon's insistence on the total immersion in Torah learning as the ideal way of life. Nor could anyone imagine that a budding *talmid chochom* should spend very major portions of his day preparing himself for the study of Torah, thus leaving himself little time to study Torah itself. *Yatziva Be'Ar'a veGiyora BiShmay Shemaya!* And if the sciences were included (as the text was a translation into Hebrew of Euclid's Geometry, which the Gaon had encouraged), literature was certainly not included. Indeed it is inconceivable that the Gaon would have condoned the study of anything that even intimated heretical opinions.

The fact remains that Rav Chaim of

Wolozhin, inspired by the Gaon's words and stimulated by his *brocho* did not start a Yeshiva University. He started a Yeshiva. The Yeshiva of Wolozhin was the brainchild and the legacy of the Vilna Gaon's greatest disciple, and he did not dream the dream of a Yeshiva University of Wolozhin.

One of the great Roshei Yeshiva of Wolozhin, the Netziv (Rav Naftoli Tzvi Yehuda Berlin), wrote a responsum (*Sho'el uMeshiv*, I, 44) in which he describes the caveats of a secular studies program which might be required by the government to be established at a yeshiva.

I paraphrase as I translate: "If the government requires a secular studies program, make sure that it is supervised by Torah scholars and rabbinic authorities and that the teacher of such secular studies be a G-d fearing Jew."

(Parenthetically, in the same responsum, the Netziv argues that no one can become a great Torah scholar unless he immerses himself totally, with absolute dedication and unflagging concentration, in his Torah studies. The Netziv continues, "And all the Torah greats who also were scholars of secular subjects, either studied these secular subjects before they immersed themselves completely in Torah or after they were already accomplished Torah scholars. (Torah and secular subjects studied simultaneously cannot produce the ultimate in Torah knowledge.)"

The Yeshiva of Wolozhin closed its doors on the second of Shevat, 5652 (1892), rather than institute the Russian government's plan for the yeshiva. This plan had four major points. 1) that the Rosh Hayeshiva and all the

teachers of all subjects should have accreditation (that is, should hold diplomas); 2) that the secular subjects be studied from 9AM to 3PM; 3) that there should be altogether no more than ten hours of instruction each day; and 4) that the yeshiva should be closed at night. I have no doubt that if our YU would be faced with such a regime, Rav Dr. Lamm would also close our doors.

Let us examine a document from that period. It is signed by all the Torah giants of that era. This document was signed in Adar of 5647, that is nearly five years before the yeshiva was forced to close. The yeshiva in Wolozhin was then in its most brilliant period. Over four hundred outstanding scholars studied Torah day and night. But the winds of secularism and *haskalah* were blowing fiercely and, in Poliakoff's attic in St. Petersburg, all these Torah giants gathered to discuss the plan, proffered by the Russian government and supported by Jewish *maskilim*, to introduce secular studies into the yeshiva.

Concerning the *yeshivos* they concluded: 1) Although most students coming to the yeshiva already know how to read and write Russian, still the Rosh Yeshiva is obliged to maintain a teacher in a separate facility if the Yeshiva appropriate for such lessons. The teacher is to have an appropriate diploma and license from the Russian authorities; 2) The teacher of Russian at the yeshiva is forbidden to keep with him any free-thinker's writings nor can he have with him any "Romanen" (Novels), for these are alien to the Torah,

Continued on Page 10

YESHIVA, YES,  
continued from Page 9

and they are not to be brought upon the holy altar of the yeshiva. Nor is the teacher to engage the students of the yeshiva in any discussions which would introduce them to free-thinking thoughts or to stories of "Romanen."

Prominent among this document's signatories are the Netziv, the Bais HaLevi and the namesake of our yeshiva, Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Spector.

*The Commentator* ought to publish the entire text of this document. It is a sad document and leaves one with a heavy heart. It fights mightily for what should have been patently obvious. And it reflects the views of the *gedolei Yisroel* whose opinions we revere because they are so steeped in Torah and righteousness, in *ahavas Yisroel* and *ahavas HaShem*.

It is important for us moderns to remember also that in their day the argument of the *maskilim* included the need to respond to "modernity." And such were the arguments of the Hellenistic Jews a very long time ago.

Our Yeshiva was called, at its birth more than a hundred years ago, Yeshiva Etz Chayyim. In honor of Rav Yitzchok Elchonon who was truly loved by all, the yeshiva was named Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon. Whatever its name, our yeshiva was to be a continuation of the legacy of the Wolozhin Yeshiva Etz Chayyim. Our strength lies in our ability to preserve that legacy. We Jews were never given the charge of keeping the torch of the university ideal. We were charged with the keeping of the Torah.

As far as the accreditation argument goes, I for one do not understand it at all. It is simply eminently illogical. If the standards of the evaluators are contrary to Torah standards, we cannot and dare not abide by them. If these experts get their values elsewhere and their vision of the good and the great is not rooted in *Hashkafas HaTorah*, then they cannot be, dare not be the arbiters of our values and our vision. If their sense of right and wrong, or of true and false, is not predicated on the *halachah* and contradicts *halachah*, how can we do right by them and still remain true to our Torah?

As to the question of state funds, *ossur* is *ossur*. Does anyone claim that for the sake of monies from anywhere *ossur* become *muttar*?

To the Protestant Henry of Navarre is attributed that cynical remark that Paris is worth saying mass for. Are we then to say: *Paris vaut bien une messe*? We do not justify the dereliction of religious principles for the sake of material gain or of social and cultural acceptance.

I believe that we had no right to box ourselves into the government funds corner, that we should never have created structures which so depend on government funds that we have to compromise our attitudes and postures. If gay groups are abhorrent to us as Torah Jews, we have to be willing to sacrifice everything to reject them and refuse them a forum in our midst. At the very least, the question requires serious *halachic* analysis by the greatest *poskim* of our time. Certainly we cannot say the contract we have with the government demands that we allow it even minimally, that we tolerate it even minimally.

The argument has been proffered that the *halacha* acknowledges the special needs of the after-the-fact *bedieved* situation and that *halacha* allows greater leniency after the fact than it might allow before the fact. And isn't a classic example of this principle the instance of great loss of monies, what is called "*hefsed merubah*?" Of course it is, and of course there are differences in the *halacha* between *lechatchila* and *bedieved*. But not every *bedieved* changes the *halacha*.

Nearly every Jew who emigrated here at the turn of the century and was compelled to support his family by taking a job which required Shabbos work, felt the terrible pressure of the *bedieved*. And succumbed. He did not ask *poskim*, he did not feel compelled to live on bread and water. He did not deal with the unacceptable, and historically and juridically untenable, *bedieved* which he had created. Sometimes *mesiras nefesh* of the highest order is needed to reject an untenable *bedieved*. Most were not *zocheh* to achieve that level. And it is hard to judge them. Truly hard. But they were wrong.

Because human nature abhors guilt, soon the Jewish immigrant's *bedieved* was transformed, by a series of justifications and exculpations, into a plausible *lechatchila*. America was different. The old rigor was suddenly no longer relevant, no longer real. Why suffer?

Not every *bedieved* is acceptable. Furthermore, the problem with accepting a gay society as part of YU, on the YU campus, goes a lot deeper. The fundamental question is: can a yeshiva ever be a *bedieved* circumstance?

This question pops out of a Pandora's box of bilious perplexities.

The fundamental issue is this: Should our YU teach a student about life after YU, about

of *kedusha*. Torah demands the academy of *yiras Shomayim*, of the fear of heaven. *Raishis Chochmah yiras Hashem*. For Torah there is no other way. And *yiras Shomayim* is not fostered by "Romanen."

Perhaps Dr. Lee would argue that an introduction to "Romanen" might benefit the student of YU by reducing his *Yetzer Hora*. He writes: "This desensitization (to foul language and sexual literary content) has some positive consequences. Language which might have triggered the 'evil inclination' in a student of the forties, and which that same student might have found viscerally offensive, might carry no sexual charge for most students today."

There's the rub. It is precisely that sensitivity which is the hallmark of the *ben-Torah*, of every pious Jew. *Lashon Kodesh* has no explicit references in its vocabulary. That makes it *kodesh*. Desensitizing our students is the beginning of the end, not just the end of the beginning.

Something as delicate as sensitivity would seem to be a *hashkafic* matter, not a *halachic* one. It is not so. But were it to be so, it would be a terrible mistake to think that the enterprise of a yeshiva can restrict itself to the *halachic* realm. Yeshivas foster *hashkofo*, they offer their *talmidim* a vision of life.

It would also be a serious error to imagine

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the "world out there," by gently introducing him into that world? Is the environment provided him to be a half-way house or is it to be a tower of ivory and iron? Should the student/talmid be exposed to the world with its weaknesses and its enticements, its compromises and its *bedieveds*, its here-and-now reality? Or should the environment be pure and holy, where the sacred is protected, the profane rejected? (Not the secular, the profane.)

What is the model, the simile? "*Sugah bashoshanim*" - hedged in by roses. Is it the horticulturist's English garden or the rougher survival-of-the-fittest (or the fastest, or the feistiest) wildflower field?

Dr. Lee writes: "A Jew should learn the ideals of the Western World uncensored in order to be able to say that he rejects those values but he understands them." This then is the dialectic: learn, understand, reject. The product is expected to come out stronger, more fit to function in the Modern World, to resist its temptations, which he already knows first-hand. He has tasted of the poisoned fruit and he has come out whole. True the angel of Eisav may have smitten him here and there, but the sun shines and lo, he, Yaakov, is whole and well. So this *bedieved* turns out to be actually a *lechatchila*. After the fashion of all vaccines, a little introduction to the disease, in a controlled way, and the antibodies build up, immunities are formed and the disease no longer reigns.

One might wish to carry this argument even further. Perhaps, the argument would reason, the millions we, *klal Yisroel*, have lost to this western world, might not have been lost if we had developed these vaccines much earlier. *Halvay*, the argument would continue, there would have been a YU available to all those kids who got lost. *Halvay*, the vaccination process had been available to all those who had nothing in *Yiddishkeit* to nourish them save for the hard, extreme, and unyielding *lechatchilas* of the right-wing intransigent model of *Yiddishkeit*.

I do not believe in the theory of Yeshiva as vaccination. Because the Yeshiva historically has been a place of intense Torah learning it has also been a place of profound holiness,

that *hashkofo* is more arbitrary than *halacha*, more relative. Often the Rav would say in the name of his grandfather that *aggadah* was also *halacha*, the *halacha* of how a Jew should think.

How a Jew should think! How reactionary can you get, how unlike a true university?! This then is the crux of the matter.

Dr. Lee introduces a significant argument. The university tradition. He writes: "Although not nearly as ancient as the Jewish tradition, the university draws on its own ancient roots and adheres to ideals which it has evolved over centuries. Foremost among those ideals in the modern American university are the development of individuals who think for themselves, contribute in some way to society, and participate in the unfettered pursuit of knowledge and truth, including truths about humanity." An impressive paragraph, and, as the strains of Brahms' Academic Festival Overture waft over my sensibilities, I can almost declare: *Gaudeamus igitur*, let us therefore rejoice.

Some of our recent college graduation exercises leave me thinking that a good part of the university tradition can be summed up in three words: *In vino veritas*. Perhaps I am too harsh. But there is too much of the herd instinct in what goes for individualism. Iconoclasts are exercises done all too often by many "individuals" acting always together and in exactly the same way.

I am not so sure about universities breeding students who are fiercely individual and who learn how to think for themselves. Frankly, I think an argument could be made that the yeshiva historically did a better job in producing such individualists. And clearly, every yeshiva prides itself on the development of the clearest, most incisive thinking in the pursuit of the truth.

Dr. Lee writes that it is in the university tradition to produce students who will contribute, in some way, to society. True, I have been asked in my formative, prefatory years by well-meaning family members and avuncular patrons, as to the precise nature of what I do. I would invariably answer that I studied Torah and would invariably be asked again, "Yes, but what do you do?" Nonetheless, I

stubbornly persisted in my presumption that I was in fact doing something, for myself, for society, for my people and for the world. I also felt I was part of that great ecological effort in which yeshivas have always been engaged, an effort to preserve an endangered species: the Jews.

But the point, essential and telling, which Dr. Lee makes, lies at the end of the paragraph. He speaks, of course, of academic freedom, of "the unfettered pursuit of knowledge and truth, including truths about humanity." The "unfettered" pursuit of truth. "From a secular faculty member's point of view, freedom of thought, inquiry, study, speech and writing weigh in heavily; they help take the measure of a true university."

But YU is not a siamese twin with two heads and one heart. YU was a yeshiva first and, after the advent of the college, continues to be a yeshiva foremost. Rav Dr. Lamm insists that the yeshiva is the heart of YU. Then he is the keeper of our heartbeat. YU is a yeshiva at which there is a college.

YU has many branches, like a tree. And, like a tree, it has a history, it has roots. In the Chapters of the Fathers (3,22) it is written: "He (Rabbi El'azar ben Azariah) used to say: He whose wisdom exceeds his deeds is like a tree whose branches are many but whose roots are few. The wind comes and uproots it and overturns it upon its top. Of such a man it is said: 'He shall be like a lonely man in the wasteland and shall not see when good comes...' But he whose deeds exceed his wisdom is like a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are many. Even if all the winds of the world come and blow upon it, they cannot move it from its place..."

We at YU want to remain connected to the stream of running waters, we want our tree to bear the very best fruit. We want a tree whose branches are few and whose roots are many and deep. We want to guarantee that no matter how hard the winds blow, the tree will remain true, steadfast in its purpose and confident in its vision.

YU may have many populations, but it has only one Torah. It may have many sub-communities, but it only has one *halacha*. YU may seek to make the *halacha* relevant to all, but not at the expense of redefining and thereby narrowing the parameters of *halachic* relevance. And Torah provides YU with its *weltanschauung*, not Proust or Kant or Bach or Mahler or Berenson or Shelley. And not even Albert Einstein or Shimon Peres can lend us their world-view. Subjects they provide, world-views they cannot.

I am reminded of the intense disappointment of two writers who had undertaken a study of the Rav's philosophical essays in search of a revolutionary thought. They concluded, instead, that the Rav was merely old wine in new bottles. The Rav was a decanting of the very same Torah-wine which he inherited from his Brisk forefathers. What a frustration for those who were looking for something really new, really insurgent. They had wasted their time.

Had they come to me first, I could have saved them both time and frustration by telling them that it could not have been otherwise. The Rav's Torah was authentic, so it had to be the same Torah. In all the languages which the Rav had mastered, it was the same Torah. In the prisms of all the philosophies which the Rav had studied, the Torah still refracted Abaye and Rava, Rav Saadya and the Rambam, the Ketzos haChoshen and the Nesivos, the Gaon of Vilna and Reb Chayim of Brisk. The Rav had a masorah of Torah erudition, of *lomdus*. It was the same masorah which he had inherited from his father and his grandfather. Actually, the Rav was much less "revolutionary" than his

Continued on Page 11

*YESHIVA, YES,*  
continued from Page 10

grandfather, Reb Chayim Brisker. How many times did I hear, in the almost twenty years in which I heard the Rav's shiurim, that Reb Chayim was the trailblazer who had "paved a path through the jungle."

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No wonder those two writers in search of a brave new Torah were so disappointed in what they found in the Rav's pouch, no wonder they were so disillusioned with the Rav.

It is critical to distinguish here between the university complex and Yeshiva College. The university complex is under Jewish auspices. There may be advantages to the Jewish community in having such a university complex, there may be opportunities for the students of Yeshiva College. And, of

course, there is the flip side, the problems and the headaches and the heartaches, often of unendurable proportions. But there is no connection whatsoever between the yeshiva and its students and the medical school at Einstein in the Bronx. The Cardozo law school downtown is under YU auspices and is part of the university, but it is remote and unconnected. The Wurzwiler School of Social Work is on the very same campus as the Yeshiva College, to our great distress, but it too is not part of the Yeshiva College identity. It is under YU auspices and is part of the university, but it is not integrated with Yeshiva College nor integral for it.

Yeshiva College is a yeshiva and bears the standard of all yeshivos since Wolozhin. As a yeshiva it carries the torch of Torah and of *Yiras Shomayim*, as a yeshiva it is the bastion of Jewish identity and of *ahavas yisroel*, as a yeshiva it stands for intensity of commitment and for the fine-tuning of ethical commitment and moral behavior; it is a haven in which Torah values and Torah ideals are given reign and flourish. This is historically the Jewish Torah academy — the yeshiva.

Let us declare what the yeshiva is not. It is not the street, the world, it is not America, it is not a place for women or for free-thinkers.

It never was. It can never be. Nor can Yeshiva College be a "supermarket" of possibilities or a shopping mall super-store of ideas and alternatives. Not if YU still wishes to lay claim to the yeshiva tradition.

Insofar as the beauty of *Yefes* (Greece) in the tents of *Shem* (Yisroel), it is clear that there was never any thought given to the erection of a tent of *Yefes* in the midst of the encampment of the tents of *Shem*. It is the Torah that may be translated into Greek, so long as it remains the Torah. It is the beauty of *Yefes* that is accepted, not her subject matter.

YU provides a college education. But it is a yeshiva which provides a college education. Awake or asleep, summer or winter, today or tomorrow, it can never **not** be a yeshiva.

We look to the guidance and the leadership of our Rosh Yeshiva to guarantee always, as he has once again done recently with the Kol affair, that the kol of YU remains Kol Yaakov and does not become, *choliloh*, the Kol Eisav.

I was bracing myself against a very harsh wind, a heady harbinger of winter weather, the kind of wind that seems to notice you and that will not let you go. It is a Washington Heights kind of wind, pushing at me with its mocking howl just as I pass Belfer Hall. I

look up at the banners with YU's logo, dancing a wild dance to a windswept tune. And I notice that the banners are full of tears, full of rips which allow the wind to pass through. It makes me wonder.

There are two ways you can secure a canvas in the face of a powerful gale wind. You can tie down that canvas so securely, so well, that no wind can move it. Or you can rip holes in the canvas so that the wind can pass through. But if you do that the canvas is torn. Since a torn canvas is not a pleasing thing, the tears are carefully prepared in such a manner as to be aesthetically appropriate, even pleasing. The holes seem to fit, to belong.

But there will always be that innocent, who will look up at the banners unfurled and cry out: Look, mother, the banners are full of holes!

We want our banners whole, not full of holes. We want our Yeshiva to be a yeshiva, to be Torah's home and not its motel. We want the Torah to address the modern world, but we want Yeshiva University's address to be the Torah. And we pray that the wonderful and caring Dr. Lee understands.

*Rav Aharon Kahn is a Rosh Yeshiva in RIETS and the Rosh Kollel of the Gruss Kollel Elyon.*

## Chinese-Jewish Program Encourages Cross-Cultural Conversation

By TEMMI LATTIN

Launched in February 2019, the Chinese-Jewish Conversation (CJC) is a landmark program at Yeshiva University. Opening strong this semester with two lectures by Rabbi Dr. Yakov Nagen, the CJC partnered with Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and The Katz School of Science and Health to present "Introduction to Jewish Thought from Beijing and Shanghai" and "To Do and To Be: Judaism's Integration of East and West," which took place on Oct. 24 and 28, respectively. Both seminars embodied the goal of this new project, which is to "increase mutual awareness between Chinese and Jewish communities and cultures" and to "provide a welcome space for Chinese students at YU."

After attending the event on the 28th, Adina Bruce (SCW '21) said, "It was fascinating to see the axis of overlap between Jewish texts

and Chinese philosophy and really interesting to be able to share a space with a demographic within the YU community who we might not necessarily have contact with on a day to day basis to hear about Judaism from their perspective."

Dr. Mordechai Cohen, a professor at Stern College and Associate Dean at Revel, spearheaded this program after teaching in Shandong University for the last

from thousands of years ago as well as the struggle to balance those traditions with modernity.

The Chinese students involved in the program are graduate students studying at the Katz School of Science and Health who are studying subjects such as math and economics and are participating in this program in an extracurricular forum. But, as Dr. Cohen explained about this emerging project: "A

Jews who settled in Shanghai during WWII, and perhaps an introduction to Jewish music — which was requested by our Chinese students. If people have other suggestions, I'm open to them! You never know where the next good idea for an interesting CJC program will come from." Dr. Cohen explained that there will be future opportunities for undergraduates to participate in this emerging

this initiative, currently in its early stage, is "like other YU programs, such as the Rabbi Arthur Schneider Program for International Affairs. It isn't tied to any specific YU school. It's independent, with its own website, activities and budget." Whether furthering education about Holocaust survivors' experiences escaping to Shanghai, comparing ancient Chinese and Biblical archeology or exploring similarities with *Sefer Ezra* and Confucius, The Chinese Jewish Conversation is poised to have a significant impact on global conversations while furthering YU's mission of *Torah U'Madda*.

During the inaugural event in February 2019, Shang Guan Shun, a student studying Quantitative Economics at the Katz school, spoke about a teacher from China who "always taught that philosophy helps us live a better life and when it comes to Chinese philosophy like Confucianism ... we should develop what's useful and healthy and discard that which is not and we should not ignore Western philosophy. His words remind me of our university's motto: Torah and secular knowledge, combining academic education with the study of the Torah." She described leaving her home in China to come to America and craving "the traditional spirit that is part of [her] blood" but also getting involved in a different world and becoming more tolerant, open-minded, and respectful of the differences between different people and cultures in a global society. Shang Guan Shun ended off with a wish for intersection without conflict and discrimination but with love and respect. "No man is an island entire of itself, that's why we have this Chinese Jewish Conversation."

*Dr. Mordechai Cohen, a professor at Stern College and Associate Dean at Revel, spearheaded this program after teaching in Shandong University for the last four years and seeing the shared values, traditions and challenges of Chinese and Jewish communities and cultures.*

four years and seeing the shared values, traditions and challenges of Chinese and Jewish communities and cultures. These include valuing family, education, community and a historical tradition that stems from textual sources

lot of different things can be done within the CJC framework. In the spring we're planning a lecture on environmental protection — in modern-day China and as mandated by Torah law. We're also looking into hosting an event about the

program, including more informal get-togethers with both groups of students as well as the potential for new courses if students show interest, including a language course in Mandarin Chinese.

Dr. Cohen pointed out that



Dr. Mordechai Cohen, Ms. Shun Shang Guan and Dr. Roger Ames with students from the Katz School of Science and Health and Stern College for Women at a CJC event.

CJC

For more information and to get involved, students can reach Dr. Cohen at [cohenm@yu.edu](mailto:cohenm@yu.edu).



# JOY

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JOY

SUPPORTING & EMPOWERING  
JEWISH LGBTQ YOUTH  
FROM ORTHODOX HOMES

## Bob Dylan: A League of His Own

By YOSEF ROSENFELD

I needed a reminder. We all do. Because it's easy to get lost in 21st-century pop music and forget that Bob Dylan is the most influential solo artist of all time. On Dec. 5, I attended a Dylan concert at the Beacon Theatre in New York City. True to his ever-changing performance style, in a 19-song set that predominantly drew from albums "Time Out of Mind," "Tempest" and "Highway 61 Revisited," Dylan repeated only three songs from when I last saw him in 2016.

It was during this concert that Dylan reminded me of my perhaps-unpopular opinion that he is among the greatest singers in the history of recorded music. During songs such as "It Ain't Me Babe" and "Not Dark Yet," he showcased his signature spacing of words and syllables, articulation and intonation, adding meaningful nuance and detail to his vocal performances that I would argue few — if any — other singers have ever

communicated or even attempted. Is Dylan one of the *best* singers of all time? No, not even close. Being a *skilled* singer is distinctly different from being an iconic one, and even I — a singer-songwriter who idolizes Dylan's work — would never look to his vocal style for useful singing techniques. But that shouldn't detract from Dylan's legendary songs and how his uniquely Dylanesque vocal approach has canonized those songs in the annals of timeless music.

The other aspect of Dylan's performance that impressed me to the point of surprise was his poetry. During a few of his songs, namely "Things Have Changed" and "Make You Feel My Love," it seemed like one lyric after another just blew me away — including lyrics I anticipated and was almost singing along with him. I would hear an exquisitely arranged string of words come out of his mouth and think: *man, I wish I wrote something that clever...* This, of course, is an irrational fantasy; the truth is Bob Dylan is in a league of his own.

After all, this is a man who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016 — as a *songwriter*. Still, watching Dylan in person, I welcomed the reminder of how poetic his lyricism has always been and just how much I owe to his influences on my own songwriting.

For me, the greatest moment of the entire show was witnessing Dylan come back on stage to play two encores, "Ballad of a Thin Man" and "It Takes A Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry," both from "Highway 61 Revisited." Putting nostalgia itself aside, knowing that I grew up on these songs just the same as the couples in their 50s, 60s and 70s who surrounded me — and now, together with these people from a completely different era of music and history, seeing Bob Dylan play those very songs — fueled a moment of incredible awe and admiration that will likely last longer than any of my other memories of Bob Dylan, both from the past and those I anticipate experiencing in the future.

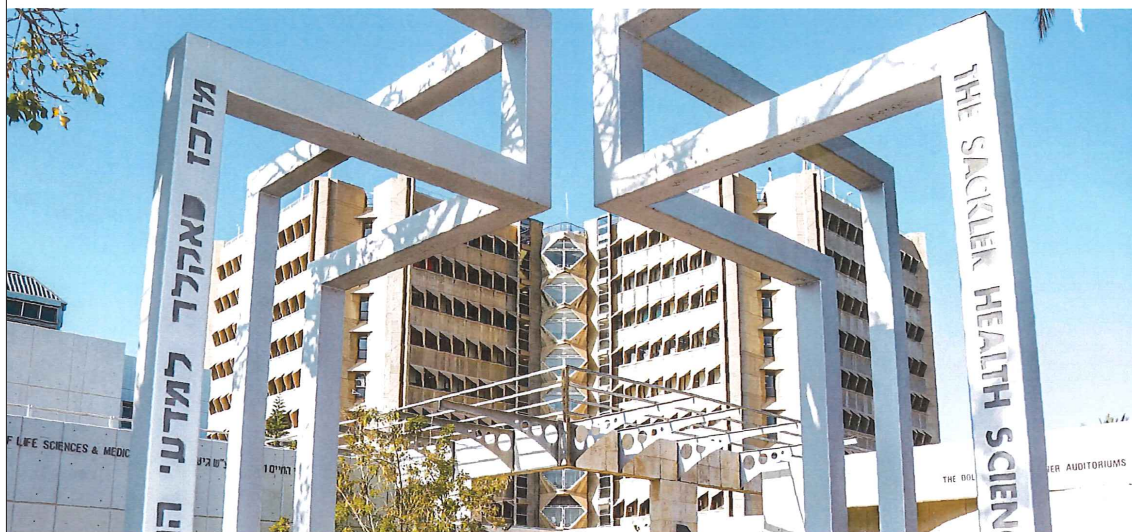


Promotional poster for the concert

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## Bioethics in Practice

# Can Producers Leave Out Details to Gain Consumers — The Effects of Juul's Marketing

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

We've all heard of the Juul, whether we've seen the flash drive-like product on the streets, the murky vapor produced by someone in our dorm, or we own one ourselves. While Juuling was created to wean adult smokers off of cigarettes, there are those that claim that it, in fact, wasn't marketed that way; rather, it targeted teens and young adults who weren't already smokers. Additionally, they claim that the true health cost of Juuling wasn't sufficiently publicized, causing many people to get sick and even die due to vaping related diseases. Is Juul directly responsible for these deaths, and for causing a generation of teenagers to become addicted to nicotine?

Juul is a vaping product created by Adam Bowen and James Monsees as an alternative to smoking. Both were smokers themselves, and decided there had to be a safe and easy way to stop smoking. Their website states that their mission is to "[improve] the lives of the world's one billion smokers by eliminating cigarettes." They realized that the Juul had to contain a higher percentage of nicotine than other products claiming to help people abstain from smoking to wean people off cigarettes. Some benefits of the Juul include the fact that it's odorless, in contrast to the stench associated with smoking, as well as a 99% reduction of formaldehyde and carbon monoxide particles in second-hand vapor, compared to that of combustible cigarettes.

A study printed in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that e-cigarettes are nearly twice as likely to enable a person to quit smoking than nicotine replacement

therapy. Another study published in the *Harm Reduction Journal* found that three months after adult smokers purchased a Juul vaporizer, 28.3% reported having not smoked a cigarette for at least 30 days. They also found that the rate of quitting was notably much higher for people who used the Juul vaporizer daily, as well as those who typically used a Juul vaporizer containing mint and mango flavored pods. The Juul website includes many stories of people who

which means that smokers who were only going through a couple of cigarettes a day are consuming more nicotine on a Juul device. On top of that, the National Center for Health Research reveals that the nicotine that Juuls use are "nicotine salts," as opposed to the chemically modified form called "freebase nicotine" that other brands utilize. Nicotine salts "more closely resemble the natural structure of nicotine found in tobacco leaves. This makes the nicotine more readily

Administration show that one in four high schoolers and one in 10 middle schoolers vape. Some claims include that Juul violated consumer protection laws by failing to disclose material facts about the health and safety risks Juul consumers are exposed to, and failing to disclose how much nicotine its products contain. Many consumers feel they were led to believe that Juul products could be used without any negative health consequences. The flavors, some of which have been banned in certain states, are appealing to young adults and teens. An article published in the *New York Times* claimed that "Juul's remarkable rise to resurrect and dominate the e-cigarette business came after it began targeting consumers in their 20s and early 30s, a generation with historically low smoking rates, in a furious effort to reward investors and capture market share before the government tightened regulations on vaping." James Monsees, the co-founder of the company, insisted they "never wanted any non-nicotine users and certainly nobody underage to ever use Juul products." But the facts point out that in the blink of an eye, Juuls have become ever-prevalent among teens and have hooked a new generation of people on nicotine.

The Juul Company is trying to save face amid all the allegations placed against it, claiming that Juul is doing more good than harm. The prohibition of *geneivat da'at* includes deception, cheating and creating a false impression. While they might be safer than cigarettes, Juuls are certainly not harmless. And the "coolness" factor of Juuls looks an awful lot like a stumbling block placed in front of blind, naive teenagers.

*While Juuling was created to wean adult smokers off of cigarettes, there are those that claim that it, in fact, wasn't marketed that way.*

have successfully used the Juul to stop smoking. Former smokers talk about how much the Juul has improved their lives, whether it be that they don't have to be self-conscious about smelling like smoke anymore or that they don't have to interrupt their workflow to step outside for a cigarette. Users are excited about how easy the Juul product is to use and are grateful for the impact it has had on their journey to abstain from smoking.

While the use of Juul has been proven beneficial to some cigarette smokers, the product itself is not entirely danger-free. Michael Blaha, M.D., M.P.H., the director of clinical research at the Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Heart Disease, shares that "vaping is less harmful than smoking, but it's still not safe." Juuls have 5% nicotine in their e-liquid, which is more than double the amount of other vaping products. Each Juul pod contains the amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes,

absorbed into the bloodstream and makes the vapor less harsh so that it is easier to inhale more nicotine for longer periods of time." The higher dose of nicotine increases the risk of addiction, not to mention that it increases blood pressure and heart rate. In rare cases, this can lead to heart failure, but a person who vapes long term may be looking at serious medical problems, such as lung disease and chronic bronchitis. With this product being such a new phenomenon, it's hard to say exactly what the long-lasting effects are; however, new research is showing that there is more danger than the Juul Company is letting on.

The Juul Company is currently facing numerous lawsuits in several states based on allegations of deceptive marketing. The plaintiffs allege that the Juul Company utilizes flashy marketing techniques targeted at teens. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug



A man using a Juul device

# Commentator Library Survey: A Comprehensive Analysis

By YOSEF LEMEL

*Editor's Note: For the purposes of this article, "satisfied" refers to students who indicated that they are either "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied," and "dissatisfied" refers to students who indicated that they are either "dissatisfied" or "extremely dissatisfied." Likewise, "comfortable" refers to students who indicated that they are either "comfortable" or "extremely comfortable," and "uncomfortable" refers to students who indicated that they are either "uncomfortable" or "extremely uncomfortable."*

The Commentator recently conducted a survey on a variety of issues relating to experiences of students in YU's two libraries on the undergraduate campuses, the Mendel Gottesman Library on the Wilf Campus and the Hedi Steinberg Library on the Beren Campus. This article presents a detailed breakdown of the results.

## INTRODUCTION

Overall, the survey of the YU libraries polled 309 undergraduate YU students, or 16% of the total undergraduate student body on the Wilf and Beren campuses.

137 respondents (44%) are Yeshiva College (YC) students, 95 (31%) are Stern College for Women (SCW) students, 57 (18%) are male Sy Syms School of Business (Syms-Men) students, 18 (6%) are female Sy Syms School of Business (Syms-Women) students and 2 (1%) are Katz School students.

102 respondents (33%) are in their first year on campus, 92 (30%) in their second year, 84 (27%) in their third year and 31 (10%) in their fourth year or beyond.

Of the male respondents, 126 (65%) attend the Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP), 32 (17%) attend the Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP), 29 (15%) attend the Isaac Breuer School (IBC) and 6 (3%) attend the James Striar School (JSS).

Specific conclusions were not drawn from the results of some groups in YU with a low sample size, such as respondents from Syms-Women, Katz School, SBMP, IBC and JSS.

## SURVEY RESULTS

Both men and women are generally comfortable with students of the opposite gender studying in the library on their respective campus. 65% of men feel comfortable and 17% feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable with women studying in the uptown library. Last year's Commentator Spring Survey also found that 65% of men feel comfortable with women studying in the uptown library. This year, 56% of MYP students expressed comfortability with women in the uptown library and 23% feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable. 69% of YC students feel comfortable and 15% feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable with women studying in the uptown

library; 56% Syms-Men feel comfortable and 33% feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.

Women generally feel comfortable with men studying in the Hedi Steinberg Library. 54% of women feel comfortable with men studying in the downtown library and 31% feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable. Last year, 81% of women indicated that they were comfortable with men studying in the library on the Beren Campus.

21% of men see women in the li-

83% of YC students, 70% of Syms-Men students believe that women generally visit the uptown library to study.

63% of students frequently use the Wilf library to study alone, 51% to use library printers, 25% to study in groups, 21% to socialize, 11% to use library computers and 6% to take out a book. 79% of men say they frequently visit the Wilf library to study alone compared to 29% of women who say similarly. Compared to 22% of men, 19% of

expressed overall satisfaction. 73% are satisfied with the conduciveness for study in the Wilf library. Only 6% and 5% of students expressed dissatisfaction with the Wilf library computers and printers, respectively. 92% of men expressed overall satisfaction with the Wilf library compared with 70% of women. 78% of men are satisfied with the conduciveness for study in the Wilf library compared with 64% of women who thought similarly.

Overall, 16% of undergradu-

Around half, 51%, of students have taken a book out of a YU library. 68% of YC students, 42% of SCW students and 30% of Syms-Men say they have taken a book out. Only 13% of students have used YU's Interlibrary Loan Service. 15% of SCW students, 13% of YC students and 7% of Syms-Men have used the Interlibrary Loan Service.

## METHODOLOGY

We mostly followed the methodology of the surveys conducted last year by The Commentator.

As before, we reached out to students via ystud/ssstud emails and posted flyers in both the Wilf and Beren libraries encouraging students to sign up for the survey, gathering a total of 357 interested undergraduate students. We conducted a raffle with a \$75 Amazon gift card as the first place prize to motivate respondents. We also confirmed that respondents were current undergraduate students with YU's Office of Student Life. Unlike last year, we did not send out emails to professors asking them to encourage students to sign up. The survey was conducted through SurveyMonkey. All responses were completely anonymous.

There were several confounding factors that could have skewed the results of the survey one way or the other. For example, while students in Syms-Men comprise 27% of the undergraduate student body, 18% of our respondents were from Syms-Men. Similarly, while students in SCW comprise 39% of the undergraduates, 31% of our survey was comprised of SCW students. YC students were over-represented in our survey with 44% of respondents being students in YC, while only comprising 24% of the undergraduate student body.

*The Commentator recently conducted a survey on a variety of issues relating to experiences of students in YU's two libraries on the undergraduate campuses, the Mendel Gottesman Library on the Wilf Campus and the Hedi Steinberg Library on the Beren Campus.*

brary as distractions to their studying. 18% of YC students see women as distractions, compared with 28% of respondents from Syms-Men. 27% of MYP students saw women as distractions. Only 5% of women saw men in the library as distractions to their studying.

46% of women expressed that they have avoided studying in the uptown library due to the fear of being objectified. 39% of female first-year students have avoided studying in the uptown library due to fear of objectification compared to 49% of second, third and fourth-year students.

Overall, 92% of students believe that men generally use the uptown library to study, compared to 82% who believe the same about women. When broken down by gender, 93% of men and 91% of women believe that men generally use the uptown library to study. 79% of men and 89% of women believe that women generally use the uptown library to study. Compared to

women frequently visit the Wilf library to socialize.

47% of all undergraduates visit the Wilf library at least a few times per week, while 30% visit once a month or less. While 72% of men visit the Wilf library at least a few times per week, only 5% of women do so. 70% of women visit the Wilf library once a month or less, with 28% saying that they never visited the Wilf library.

The most frequently visited floor in the Wilf library is the 4th floor, with 28% of respondents frequently visiting it. The least frequently visited floor is 5a, with only 11% frequently studying there. 33% of men frequently study on floor 4. Floor 2a is the most frequently visited floor by women, with 16% of women saying they frequently study there and 16% saying they visit floor 2a neither frequently nor infrequently.

Students were generally satisfied with library services provided in the Wilf library. 85% of students

ates visit the Beren library at least a few times per week, while 74% visit once a month or less. 60% of students never visit the Beren library. While 53% of women visit the Beren library at least once a week, only 2% of men do so. 90% of men have never visited the Beren library.

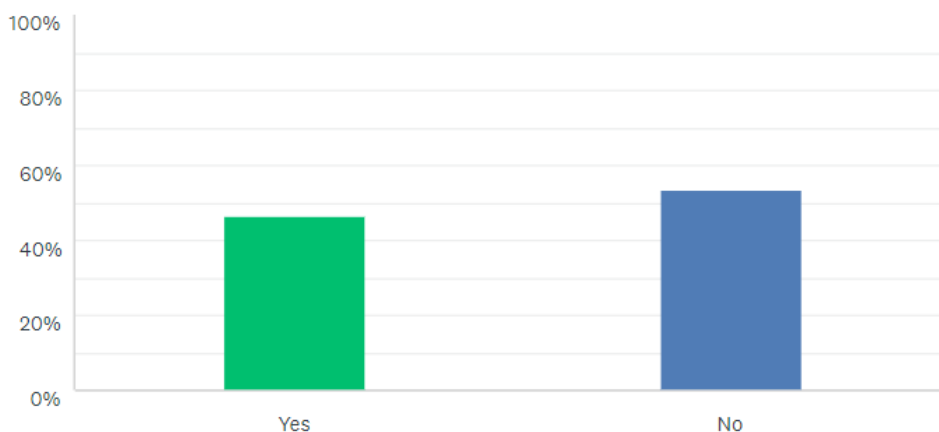
The most frequently visited floor in the Beren library is floor 2, with 33% of respondents frequently visiting it. 32% and 29% frequently visit the reserve library and the 1st floor, respectively.

51% of students expressed overall satisfaction with the Beren library. 59% were satisfied with the conduciveness for study. 20% and 25% of students were dissatisfied with the library computers and printers, respectively.

54% of students frequently use the Beren library to study alone, 43% to use library printers, 16% to study in groups, 4% to socialize, 10% to use library computers and 8% to take out a book.

## Have you ever avoided studying in the Mendel Gottesman/Pollack Library on the Wilf Campus due to fear of objectification?

Answered: 112 Skipped: 197



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	46.43% (52)
No	53.57% (60)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112</b>

46% of women expressed that they have avoided studying in the uptown library due to the fear of being objectified.

# Year in Review of Commentator News: 2019

By YOSHI ZIMLOVER

As 2019 winds down, *The Commentator* has compiled a list of some of the most important and popular stories we reported on this year.

## February 14 - Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz Hired as RIETS Director of Semikha Program

It was announced that Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz would become the Director of *Semikha* at RIETS beginning this fall. Rabbi Lebowitz is the rabbi of Beis HaKnesses of North Woodmere and a popular educator. He has over 8,000 *shiurim* uploaded on YUTorah, the most of anyone on the site. Before returning to YU, Rabbi Lebowitz most recently held the role of Senior *Magid Shiur* at Lander College for Men.

## February 16-17 - Uptown Coed Shabbaton Takes Place on Wilf Campus

For the first time in nearly 40 years, a coed Shabbaton took place on the Wilf Campus, despite a statement from Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman that encouraged male students to leave the campus in protest of the event. In a thorough feature, *The Commentator* helped clarify the details of what took place and what went on behind the scenes in the planning of the *Shabbaton*.

## March 4 - Dr. Noam Wasserman Appointed Dean of Sy Syms School of Business, Effective May 2019

Another substantial administrative addition was announced in early 2019. In an email to the student body, President Ari Berman stated that Dr. Noam Wasserman would become the Dean of the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) starting in May. Dr. Wasserman has an impressive background in academia that includes serving

as a professor at Harvard Business School and publishing two best-selling books. Dean Wasserman is also slated to make a *siyum* on Shas at this year's Chanukah concert.

## April 14 - "Volozhin Yeshiva" Survey Email Ruffles Feathers

Hundreds of male students received emails from a group of anonymous students called the "Volozhin Yeshiva" asking them to fill out an anonymous form regarding potentially "objective halachic or *hashkafik* issues found within courses." The course evaluation form was sent out without any knowledge from the RIETS administration and was met with particular disapproval from the YC Deans.

## August 25 - University Sued by Nearly 40 Former Students Alleging Abuse

After New York State passed the Child Victims Act, 38 former students sued YU for allegedly turning a blind eye to sexual abuse that took place at Yeshiva University High School for Boys, between 1955 and 1986.

## September 9 - YU Drops to 24-year Low in U.S. News and World Report Rankings

YU dropped to 97th place in the U.S. News and World Report Annual Rankings of national universities. Last year, YU was ranked 80th. The rating marked a 24 year low for Yeshiva.

## September 15 - Students, Allies and Activists March for LGBTQ Equality

A group of over 100 YU students, alumni, LGBTQ allies and activists marched in Washington Heights and in front of the Gottesman Library in support of LGBTQ equality and representation on campus. The march was organized by the YU College Democrats club without official YU approval, together with Eshel and JQY.

## September 22 - Third Giving Day Raises \$5.7 Million Despite Steep Drop in Number of Donors

YU's third annual Giving Day raised over \$5.7 million from 1156 donors, exceeding its \$5 million goal. However, the total number of donors fell 61% from last year's campaign.

## September 26 - Student Council Presidents Reinstate YU College Democrats

The YU College Democrats were originally rejected as an official club for the 2019-2020 academic year by the Yeshiva Student Union (YCU) and Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) student governments, but after a joint statement was issued by all the YU student council presidents, the decision was reversed.

## November 29 - Meal Plan Changes Reverted Following Student Backlash

The restructuring of this year's dining plan was undone after students expressed their displeasure with the changes and the administration admitted their failure at informational meetings on the Beren and Wilf campuses.

## December 5 - University Cited for Dozens of Building, Elevator Violations Over Past 3 Years

The *Commentator* learned that dozens of building code violations have been issued to YU in the past three years, largely stemming from elevator issues on both the Beren and Wilf Campuses.

Several of the violations are classified by the New York City Dept. of Buildings as "Code 1 — Immediately Hazardous" matters, and a number of the citations are still pending resolution.

## December 12 - Over \$5.6 Million Raised at Hanukkah Dinner;

## \$18 Million Donation by Azrieli Foundation Announced

Over \$5.6 million was raised from the 95th Annual Yeshiva University Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, which marks a 12% increase from last year's dinner and the largest sum raised from the dinner in at least seven years. The Azrieli Foundation, honored at the dinner with the inaugural Legacy Award, announced a gift of \$18 million to the university to support the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration and to contribute to undergraduate scholarships.

### In Memoriam:

## April 4 - Sherwood Goffin, Renowned Cantor and Educator, Dies at 77

Cantor Sherwood Goffin, a teacher of Jewish Liturgy and Folk Music since 1987 at Yeshiva University's Belz School of Jewish Music, died on Wednesday, April 3. He was also the cantor of Lincoln Square Synagogue on Manhattan's West Side from its founding in 1965 until 2016.

## May 19 - Leah Adler, Beloved and Respected Head Librarian, Dies at 72

Leah Adler, the Head Librarian of Hebraica and Judaica at Yeshiva University's Mendel Gottesman Library for over 33 years, died on Saturday, May 4.

## October 4 - Bob Tufts, Syms Professor, Passes Away at 63 after Long Cancer Battle

Former Sy Syms School of Business Professor Robert "Bob" Tufts died on October 4. A former major league baseball pitcher, Tufts served as a clinical assistant professor in the Strategy and Entrepreneurship Department and was named the Lillian and William Silber Professor of the Year in the 2017-2018 academic year.





## The Art of Being Invisible

By **MAYER FINK**

On December 3rd, in the midst of the football season, the Carolina Panthers fired head coach Ron Rivera. Ron Rivera is the second coach to be fired before the end of the season (Jay Gruden lost his job following an 0-5 start to Washington's season) and is expected to be one of many coaches that will be fired by the end of the season.

We hear a lot about coaches on the hotseat. After every Sunday, we hear on sports commentaries which coaches are expected to be fired and which coaches should be in fear of losing their jobs. One thing we don't hear often is which coaches are on the "cold seat," which coaches have the saf-

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*One thing we don't hear often is which coaches are on the "cold seat," which coaches have the safest job security and don't have to worry about getting fired.*

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est job security and don't have to worry about getting fired.

There's an art to being on the "cold seat". An art to being invisible. The average tenure of an NFL head coach is only three seasons. There are a handful of coaches that have been in the league for a long time and while their names may surface every few years as a coach on the hotseat, they are consistently able to avoid the pressure of coaching for a job. The five coaches that have mastered the "cold seat" are Bill Belichick, Mike Tomlin, John Harbaugh, Sean Payton and Pete Carroll. Many would point to the Super Bowl victories as the thing that these five coaches have in common, claiming that is why these coaches are on the "cold seat". A Super Bowl victory does bolster job security among head coaches, but a Super Bowl victory can only last so long. Mike McCarthy was fired last season despite winning a championship in the 2010 season.

Why are some coaches able to remain invisible? How are they able to avoid the pressure from the media and fans and keep their jobs for as long as they have? There are three common tendencies within the five coaches mentioned above. There is no exact science to success in the NFL, but there are some common trends which can go unnoticed by the common fan.

### **Never tank; always be competitive.**

It's a cliché in the NFL to always be competitive. Every coach will say that they are trying to win every game. Few coaches can remain competitive regardless of the circumstances. It has been common in the NFL for teams to "tank" or purposely lose for draft position. The best head coaches will never relay that message to their team, even one with a depleted roster. In an era of "selling out", the teams that are "buying in" are winning.

Last off-season the Seahawks lost some key players from their Super Bowl team in the 2013 season. Most fans expected the Seahawks to bottom out and finish last in the division in hopes of being a better team in the future years. Not Pete Carroll. Carroll made sure the Seahawks were competitive that season. Despite a roster stripped of its championship talent, the Seahawks managed to make the playoffs last season. Pete Carroll has kept the Super Bowl mentality in Seattle and the Seahawks are back to being contenders as they boast one of the best records in the NFL this season.

Similarly, this off-season can be classified as the worst in the Mike Tomlin era in Pittsburgh. The team lost All-Pro running back Le'veon Bell, All-Pro wide receiver Antonio Brown, and other key pieces of what has been part of the Steelers success in recent years. To make matters worse, future Hall-of-Fame quarterback Ben Roethlisberger suffered an elbow injury in the second game of the season to sideline him for the year (the team fell to 0-3 the following week). Many thought the Steelers would finish last in the division. Mike Tomlin dismissed any thought of that following the week two loss as the team traded their first round draft pick in exchange for defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick. Mike Tomlin has proven in his tenure in Pittsburgh that it's not in his mentality to lose, leading the Steelers to a .500 record or above every season. Mike Tomlin has not only guided the team to an 8-5 record (as of Tuesday night 12/10/2019), he has done so with a third string quarterback, Delvin Hodges, and a third string running back.

### **Always Adapt.**

The NFL is a league of trends. Whether it's the no-huddle offense or the 46 defense, the league is full of innovators and copycats. The coaches that last in the NFL are the ones who not only outlast the trends but are able to adapt with them.

What makes Bill Belichick's 19 year tenure with the Patriots so impressive is that throughout his time in New England many trends have come and gone, yet he remains. Belichick has not only withstood some of the trends that other coaches have tried to implement, he has also started some of his own. Belichick will probably go down as one of the greatest preparation coaches the league has seen, and the idea that you win a game in practice has been embodied in New England.

Last year, John Harbaugh had to make a gutsy decision that resulted in him securing his job for the foreseeable future. He was faced with the dilemma of keeping traditional pocket-passing quarterback Joe Flacco as the starter or going with the young, raw dual-threat quarterback in rookie Lamar Jackson. The decision to switch to Lamar Jackson changed the Ravens offense and since the change at quarterback the Ravens have been one of the best teams in the NFL.

The great coaches not only know what trends to follow, but also are the innovators of the league. The coaches that are two, three steps ahead of everyone else are the ones that keep their jobs. Great coaches also know when to make a risky decision and when not to. Many coaches are considered risky when they go for it on fourth down or surprise the other team with an onside kick in the middle of the game, but many risky decisions are also made off the field with the staff and personnel.

### **Have good relationships not only with the ownership/management but also the players**

Don't let the sideline look of Bill Belichick wearing a hoodie and sweatpants fool you. He is a football genius but he also runs the team like a CEO runs a company. Everyone who goes to New England knows that they are playing for Bill Belichick and his system, not for themselves.

When Charlie Casserly was the general manager in Washington, he would only draft players that he knew Joe Gibbs wanted to coach, the result was three Super Bowl championships in nine seasons with a group of players that were capable of playing not only with coach Gibbs but with each other as well.

Now, most coaches don't have complete control of who they bring in. Part of the difficulty in being a head coach is having a strong chemistry with the player hierarchy on the team. A common phrase heard in the sports world is that a coach "lost the locker room," meaning they lost the respect and control of their team. New coaches have the extra difficulty of winning over the players who not only have been playing football their whole life but have likely been in the organization for longer than the coach who just got hired. This has resulted in searches for coaches who can understand and relate to the players on the roster. Pete Carroll is most notable for being a successful "players coach" in recent years. While he has let his players be more vocal and independent, he has had the final say in team actions and team activities.

Coaches have the extra difficulty of dealing with the owners and management of the team who are above them in power. A good relationship with an owner can be the strongest component for a coach being able to keep his job. Marvin Lewis coached the Bengals for 16 seasons and never won a playoff game, while Jim Harbaugh went to three NFC Championships in his first three seasons with the 49ers only to be fired after his fourth season with the team. Both coaches had to deal with different owners; one was patient and had a good relationship with his coach and the other got into a power struggle with the general manager and the owner. Just like every locker room is different, every owner and general manager is different. The coaches that last are able to figure out how to win over both.

It's hard to know the exact science behind the ideal coach. One thing is common, though — winning makes everything better. The teams that will begin their coaching searches this offseason will hope to find the next great coach. They should look into the coaches that have been great in recent years to find commonalities that make coaches great.



Texans player kneeling

## Faculty Spotlight

## An Interview with Dr. Dara Horn

By MICHELLE NAIM

The Dara Horns of this world don't come around too often. As the Straus Center's Distinguished Visiting Scholar for the 2019-2020 academic year, she teaches a course called "When Bad Things Happen to Good People: Divine Justice and Human Creativity," which meets for four hours every week and spans two full blocks on the schedule. She has eight people in the class.

Horn doesn't plan her books; "I'm writing them the way you're reading them," she said. She may write up to 1500 words a day only to throw out the whole lot afterward (it's a skill she said she's honed over the last 20 years).

The five-time novelist was sharp and honest when she said, "writing is not a career choice, it's a chronic illness." It doesn't matter to her if the work is good or not, but only that she is generating words. "That happens," she said. "That's part of the creative process. Not everything works out the way you'd hope it would."

"You were hoping for a little quote where you could say 'she went to Ramaz,'" she told me when I interviewed her. I actually wasn't. Hearing that Dara Horn had gone through the public-school system and then took time to educate herself in *ulpan* classes at a local JCC (she was the only one *not* retired, and her nickname in the class was *tinoket*), was a breath of fresh air.

She is the "weird exception to the Pew survey." Horn currently lives in Short Hills, New Jersey, where she also grew up. She has reached dozens of readers from various backgrounds and her informal Jewish education gave her the tools to package Jewish ideas for anyone. Unlike other children who attended synagogue Hebrew schools, Horn actually learned something from the one she attended, she said.

Horn graduated with a PhD in comparative literature from Harvard University in 2006. She studied Hebrew and Yiddish literature, and although her class at Stern College for Women is listed under the English department, most of the works she teaches are in Yiddish or Hebrew (one was originally written in German).

Horn has previously taught classes at Sarah Lawrence College and City University of New York in Jewish literature and Israeli History. She was also a visiting Professor at Harvard University where she taught Hebrew and Yiddish literature.

"I've taught in many different contexts — adult education, high school, graduate studies — this is the best class I've ever taught!" she said about the class she teaches at Stern. But these intellectually rigorous institutions have got nothing on YU. "I've felt that at other places I've taught, the seminar discussion is about people trying to impress me. No one is trying to impress me here, or if they are, they're just succeeding and I'm a chump," she quipped.

She also added that the mere fact that she is teaching at a Jewish college means that many students understand the biblical/prophetic references in the literature they discuss. "YU students are the readers who these texts are meant for," she continued.

Horn comes from a long line of Jewish educators. Her mother got a doctorate in Jewish education and her family grew up bringing the holidays alive — acting out the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* by redoing their house on Passover into a "Plague House of Horrors," which takes participants through the Horn's papered basement. Her son pops out and slaughters the first born, then participants go through and "there's 500 yards of blue yarn hanging from the ceiling and one of my other sons is there and he's dressed as Moshe and he's leading you through the red sea as you part this yarn," she explained with excitement.

Horn always thought about Judaism through the prism of creativity — whether that be the plays she and her family enact or their "Plague House of Horrors."

When she read books with references to *Tanach* and *Gemara*, she was amazed at their depth.

"Now I think it's different," she said. "But there was this thinness to the American Jewish literature that I grew up with which was all about Judaism as a social identity, it was not anything about the content of this tradition and I was like 'wouldn't it be cool to have this in English.'" So that's what she wrote her novels about.

Judaism, to Horn, is the opposite of the American dream. Judaism is not about the individual, no matter how many lines of "If I am not for myself, who will be for me" lines exist in Jewish literature.

"Actually, the most important thing in your life happened thousands of years ago, there's nothing you can do about it ... Everything about Jewish life is about reliving the past and that the past isn't even the past. Everything is this endless spiral."



Dara Horn lecturing at an event on the meaning of Jerusalem.

YU NEWS

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## Assessing the UK Election and its Significance for Jews Everywhere

By DANIEL MELOOL

On Dec. 12, the United Kingdom held a general election for the third time in just five years. The election resulted in the Conservative Party, led by incumbent Prime Minister Boris Johnson, maintaining its status as the largest party in parliament and increasing its seat count with a net gain of 66 seats to secure 365 out of the 650 seats in the House of Commons — nearly 40 more than the necessary 326 required to form a government. The opposition Labour Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn, suffered a net loss of 42 seats, decreasing its share of seats from 262 to 203 in the party's worst performance since 1935. For the Conservatives, this election was the party's biggest victory since the re-election of Margaret Thatcher in 1987.

The election was a victory for supporters of Brexit. The Conservative Party, under the leadership and direction of Boris Johnson, had made leaving the European Union a big part of their campaign — to the point of making their official mantra “Get Brexit done.” Although a majority of the British public voted to leave the European Union in June of 2016, the parties have failed to reach an agreement on what the leave should look like. At a victory speech to supporters, Johnson said, “I will put an end to all that nonsense, and we will get Brexit done on time by

the January 31 — no ifs, no buts, no maybes. Leaving the European Union as one United Kingdom, taking back control of our laws, borders, money, our trade, immigration system, delivering on the democratic mandate of the people.”

The election result also proved to be a victory for investors. As soon as an exit poll showing the Conservative Party would win a significant majority was published, the British pound jumped two percent against the euro, and 2.3% against the U.S. dollar. Throughout the election, markets improved whenever Conservative Party poll numbers increased and dropped

whenever there was a chance that Corbyn's Labour Party would form a government. Neil Wilson, an analyst at Markets.com, remarked about the election, “The exit poll shows a whopping victory for the Conservatives and the perfect result for the market and for business. Markets hate uncertainty, but they would have hated a Corbyn government a lot more.”

However, without any doubt, the biggest winner of this election is the Jewish community, not just in England, but worldwide.

Outgoing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has been plagued by numerous anti-Semitic scandals. Corbyn referred to Hamas and Hezbollah as “friends,” despite both groups being designated terrorist groups by both the European Union and the United States. In 2012, Corbyn appeared on Iran's

Press TV, and speculated that the “hand of Israel” was involved in a terrorist attack in Egypt in which sixteen policemen and border guards were killed and seven were injured. Corbyn said about the attack, “I'm very concerned about it [the massacre] and you have to look at the big picture: in whose interests is it to destabilise the new government in Egypt? In whose interest is it to kill Egyptians, other than Israel, concerned at the growing closeness of relationship between Palestine and the new Egyptian government?” When asked by presenter Lauren Booth if “a Muslim would go against his Egyptian brother and open fire?”, Corbyn responded, “It seems a bit unlikely that would happen during Ramadan, to put it mildly, and I suspect the hand of Israel in this whole process of destabilisation.” In 2014, Corbyn traveled to Tunisia and participated in a wreath-laying ceremony for the terrorists who murdered eleven Israelis at the 1972 Munich Olympics. At the time, then-Labour MP Luciana Berger called on Corbyn to apologize: “Being ‘present’ is the same as being involved. When I attend a memorial, my presence alone, whether I lay a wreath or not, demonstrates my association and support. There can also never be a ‘fitting memorial’ for terrorists. Where is the apology?” Last year, Corbyn was forced to apologize for attending an event in 2010 titled “Never Again for Anyone:

Auschwitz to Gaza,” that compared Israel to Nazi Germany. In 2017, it was discovered that Corbyn was a stalwart supporter of an anti-Israel campaign group, Deir Yassin Remembered, which is chaired by notorious Holocaust denier Paul Eisen. Eisen wrote an essay in 2005 detailing his support for a jailed German Holocaust denier, and insisted being a Holocaust denier was an “entirely honourable thing.”

*Without any doubt, the biggest winner of this election is the Jewish community, not just in England, but worldwide.*

The controversy surrounding Corbyn drew comments from people who usually refrain from speaking about politics publicly. Former Chief Rabbi of England Jonathan Sacks said in an interview with the New Statesman in 2018 that Corbyn is “an anti-Semite” who has lent support to “racists, terrorists and dealers of hate.” The comment was the first time Rabbi Sacks has issued a political statement in his 30 years in public life. Rabbi Sacks was also asked on the BBC if he knew any Jews who were seriously considering leaving Britain if Corbyn would

become the next prime minister, and responded with, “of course.” Indeed, a poll commissioned by the Jewish Leadership Council and shared with The Times of Israel found that 47% of Jews in the U.K. would “seriously consider” emigrating if Corbyn won, and 87% considered Corbyn anti-Semitic. The current Chief Rabbi of England, Ephraim Mirvis, in an unprecedented move, warned that the “very soul of our nation is at stake.” Assessing the way Labour has handled allegations of anti-Semitism, Rabbi Mirvis said, “The way in which the leadership of the Labour Party has dealt with anti-Jewish racism is incompatible with the British values of which we are so proud - of dignity and respect for all people. It has left many decent Labour members and parliamentarians, both Jewish and non-Jewish, ashamed of what has transpired.”

With the results of the latest election, the Jewish community can breathe a sigh of relief. Not only will Jeremy Corbyn not be the next Prime Minister of England, he will no longer lead the Labour Party. Following his electoral defeat on Friday, Corbyn announced he would step down as leader. The election results in Britain are good news for Jewish communities around the world, and indeed for all people who oppose bigotry.

## And as the Credits Roll: My Top Ten Movies of the Year

By JOSH LEICHTER

It's that time of year again. As the seasons begin to change and turn more subdued, the films released seem to mimic this pattern. Following those thrilling days of the summer that brought us enjoyable popcorn flicks like “Spider-Man: Far from Home”, “Toy Story 4” and of course “Avengers: Endgame”, there is a noticeable lull. Moving into the winter months, the movies that come out are calmer, quieter, more intimate films that pull on our heartstrings and keep us warm as the snow falls outside. And another year fades to black, we find ourselves sitting around with friends, discussing what our favorite movies were this past year, which brings me to the point of this piece. Here are what I felt were the ten best films released over the course of 2019:

“The Irishman” (Netflix): A story that spans five decades, this film takes us through the life of Frank Sheeran, a mobster from Philadelphia, and dives into his relationship with the mafia and influential union boss, Jimmy Hoffa. Beautifully shot by the legendary Martin Scorsese and populated with screen legends Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci and Al Pacino acting together for the first time since they all got their starts almost 50 years ago was a sight to behold. While the film runs long at 3 hours and 30 minutes, not a moment feels unearned as Scorsese chooses to show us a different side of the mafia life, showing us a man who must live with the sins of his younger days. It is currently streaming on Netflix.

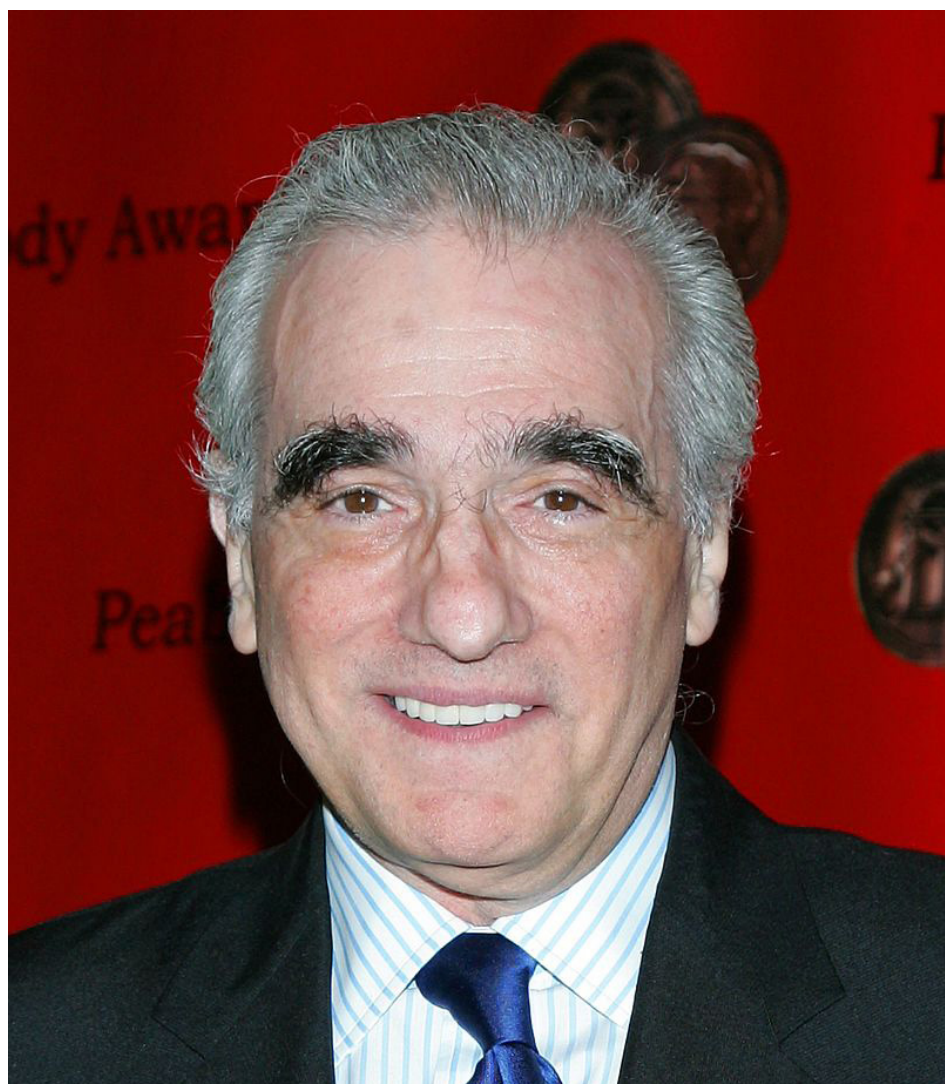
“Marriage Story” (Netflix): This

semi-autobiographical film directed by Noam Baumbach shows us a couple played by Scarlett Johansen and Adam Driver going through a brutal divorce. What they sought to keep civil soon devolves into a bitter and hostile affair that draws out the worst in both of them. The film's strength is in the dialogue, performances and the way that it helps us relate to both characters, intentionally making it unclear as to who we are supposed to be supporting. Playing supporting roles are Ray Liotta (“Goodfellas”) and Laura Dern (“Big Little Lies”), whose turns as two high-energy attorneys provide both perspective and humor on just how intense the divorce process can be. It is currently streaming on Netflix.

“Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood” (Sony): Another big-name director making his return to the big screen this year, Quentin Tarantino cast A-list stars Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio in his latest love song to the golden days of Hollywood, with DiCaprio portraying an actor struggling to find work and Pitt as his loyal stuntman and best friend. The film takes us through those “good old days” of Hollywood and features cameos from many real-life celebrities of the time, from Bruce Lee to an incredible supporting turn by Margot Robbie as Sharon Tate. It's the kind of movie only someone with such a love could make and Tarantino shows he's the one who could pull it off.

“1917” (Universal): Not since 1998's “Saving Private Ryan” has there been a war movie so captivating, visceral and gripping

*Continued on Page 20*



Martin Scorsese's latest film, "The Irishman", has an all-star cast and is generating Oscar buzz already.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

*TOP TEN MOVIES,  
continued from Page 19*

in showing the horrors of the battlefield. Taking place over the course of a single day and focusing on two soldiers who must give orders to stop an attack that will lead to devastation for the British troops, director Sam Mendes and cinematographer Roger Deakins shot the film to appear as one long take, allowing for the film to have a hypnotic hold over the audience. It never breaks for even a moment, making you feel like you are standing on the battlefield, uncertain of where danger might strike next. It's an impressive feat that I think will change the way we see films like these, just like how "Private Ryan's" famous D-Day scene changed the genre over 20 years ago.

"Ad Astra" (Fox/Disney): With a plot that can be described as Apocalypse Now in space, we find ourselves observing a more quiet and contemplative side to Brad Pitt's acting in a radical departure from his role in Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... In Hollywood". The film takes us through space focusing on the bleakness of being so far from humanity and simply allows us to join Pitt on his mission to discover whether his father is still alive. The film showcases

brilliant shots of the space odyssey, but never loses sight of the message at its center: the timeless story of a son that wants nothing more than to reconnect with his father.

"Joker" (Warner Brothers): If there was ever an actor that can transform into a role and truly make it his own, it would be Joaquin Phoenix. In his turn as Joker, he allows himself to contort his body into a masterclass of method acting that I dare say upstages Heath Ledger's Oscar-winning role in "The Dark Knight". We, as the audience, see how one man who actively seeks out treatment for his neurological conditions can be completely kicked around in society to the point of breaking. While some were critical of the violence in the film, it opens up the door to having an actual conversation about mental illness and what we can do to help. At the same time, the film breaks the conventions of what a "comic book movie" can be, by elevating its source material and translating it into the real world, one devoid of caped crusaders and flashy armor, where the only heroes are the ones that we allow ourselves to be.

"Ford V. Ferrari" (Fox/Disney): Leaning in to the conversation on celebrity acting pairings, James Mangold perfectly nailed it in this film, casting Matt Damon as Carroll

Shelby, a car designer and engineer to play alongside Christian Bale, who portrays racing driver Ken Miles. The two play off of each other in a way that makes it a delight to watch, while also having the reader feel like they are there during the famous 1966 Le Mans race, where Ford sought to design a car that could beat the legendary Enzo Ferrari. The movie takes us back to those days when the engineers did not have the modern technology we have nowadays and had to rely on their wit and inventiveness to get the job done.

*And as another year fades  
to black, we find ourselves  
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"Avengers Endgame" (Disney): 22 movies, 11 years and the highest gross ever has shown that Marvel Studios really did accomplish the impossible. No one would have believed that they would be able to start off in 2008 with "Iron Man" and take the

characters to new heights and development, actually providing a satisfying conclusion to what are now some of the most iconic superheroes in history. To say goodbye to these modern myths can only be said in the same words we heard in the film. We love you, 3000.

"Knives Out" (Lionsgate): An ensemble murder mystery, "Knives Out" never takes itself too seriously, allowing itself to have fun and riff on the old Agatha Christie novels in what I found to be one of the most surprisingly enjoyable films of the year. As soon as the movie ended, I was eager to watch it all over again to catch everything I missed on the first viewing.

"A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" (Tristar): In a role that seems as tailor-made as his recognizable sweaters, Tom Hanks transforms into Mr. Fred Rogers and draws out the kindness and gentle warmth that he brought into the world in real life. Unfortunately, the rest of the film struggles to find its footing when Hanks is not on the screen. I still recommend it because of the excellent job Tom Hanks does, but much preferred last year's documentary, "Won't You Be My Neighbor", which is about Mr. Rogers and how he became such an icon.

## Who Should Fight Global Warming?

By NOAM GERSHOV

The Democratic Party's fifth presidential debate was held on November 20 in Atlanta, Georgia. Not surprisingly, every candidate on stage agreed that President Donald Trump must be ousted from office in 2020. Another issue

that every candidate agreed must be addressed is that of climate change. Mayor Pete Buttigieg, for instance, described this crisis as a "national emergency," and Senator Bernie Sanders coined it "an existential threat to our country and the entire planet." The proposed solution by most candidates includes a combination of increased taxes on greenhouse gas emissions

and an implementation of the ambitious Green New Deal, a plan introduced by Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey that aims to bring carbon emissions to zero and invest in projects that protect the environment. These proposals align with the Democratic ideology of a big, involved government that regulates businesses and spends a

lot of money on public problems.

Across the aisle, Republicans also believe, at least in part, that the climate is changing. A Monmouth University poll suggests that 64% of Republicans believe in global warming, but only 25% think it is a very serious problem. Whether climate change is a pressing issue that needs immediate attention or can be put on the back-burner, conservatives generally oppose a powerful government that intervenes to solve our country's issues. Instead, Republicans encourage individuals and private industries to pursue efforts at stabilizing the environment.

A prime example of a private company and specific individual successfully tackling the problem of climate change is Tesla and its founder, Elon Musk. Established in 2003, the mission of Tesla has stayed consistent throughout: "to prove that electric vehicles can be better, quicker, and more fun to drive than gasoline cars," and simultaneously, that "the faster the world stops relying on fossil fuels and moves towards a zero-emission future, the better." Over the years, Tesla has put its money where its mouth is, and as of the end of the second quarter of 2019, 720,000 electric vehicles have been sold globally. This number is quite staggering and is projected to rise exponentially with the recent announcement of the Tesla Cybertruck, which received 146,000 preorders just two days after its reveal.

To meet the energy demands of its electric vehicles while on the road, Tesla created a vast supercharger network that spans roads, highways, rest stops and malls, so the driver never has to worry about running out of battery. Although Tesla is a for-profit business that wants as many people to buy its vehicles as possible, the company has generously offered to allow other electric car manufacturers to

create compatible charging outlets and use the Tesla superchargers. This self-sacrifice demonstrates the company's genuine drive towards achieving a zero-emission future.

In his spare time, Elon Musk participates in other ventures that also reduce global warming. SolarCity, which Tesla purchased in 2016 for \$2.6 billion dollars, manufactures a variety of solar panels that convert sunlight into clean energy. One version of these panels is standard and can be installed directly on top of an existing roof. However, acknowledging that these panels are an eyesore, Tesla recently unveiled its Solarglass Roof, which brilliantly replaces traditional roof shingles with beautiful, seamless solar tiles. The clean energy produced by these panels must be stored, so Tesla provides a Powerwall that mounts to the side of one's house and keeps the generated power for later use.

Elon Musk's incredible inventions have already contributed so much to the environment, and they will surely continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change for years to come. His electric vehicles, supercharger network and solar panels have become the gold standard in sustainable energy technology and innovation.

Many other private businesses are also innovating in these fields. And not only are these companies not taxing U.S. citizens or placing restrictions on fossil fuel emissions, but they are concurrently creating great products with the positive side effect of fighting global warming. Perhaps the Democratic candidates should observe the success of Tesla and other similar companies and realize that under a free market economic system with the proper incentives in place, individuals and private businesses will do the job of solving climate change better and faster than government ever can.



Elon Musk's electric vehicles, supercharger network and solar panels have become the gold standard in sustainable energy technology and innovation

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## Seeking Transcendence, Finding Ourselves: A Review of SCDS's 'Defying Gravity'



Many of the characters initially seem to fit specific tropes, but upon closer inspection, reveal deeper complexities.

STERN COLLEGE DRAMA SOCIETY

By AHARON NISSEL

I could start this review by saying that the Stern College Drama Society's (SCDS) production of "Defying Gravity" really takes off, or that it was out of this world, or I could make a bad "Wicked" joke (despite the title, this play had nothing to do with the Broadway smash hit). Instead, I'd like to move past all that and get to what's really going on here. The SCDS production of Jane Anderson's "Defying Gravity" is simply a delicately durable performance about the vastness of the universe, the tininess of humankind and the beauty we create despite that bifurcation.

The play runs in a free-structured style, oscillating between the 1986 Challenger mission and the present. Non-linear plays are often hard to follow, but that wasn't an issue here (and anyway, time is relative in space).

Many of the characters initially seem to fit specific tropes, but upon closer inspection, reveal deeper complexities. For example, when we first meet the old traveling couple Betty (a tender Shayna Hain) and Ed (Mikki Trietel — with incredible eyebrows), who actively seek out adventures, they seem to be just a quarreling couple going camping. But Betty's naive innocence is more than a silly personality trait. It inspires us to contemplate the beauty that exists in the world — both natural and manmade. This is wonderfully complemented by Ed's laid back, somewhat skeptical demeanor. Despite the fact that they provide levity to an otherwise heavy script, they still speak to a very human desire to connect to something greater.

We have the soft-spoken and eloquent Teacher (Chana Weiss, who just so happens to be teaching about churches and reliquaries), who has been chosen to be the civilian representative sent up on the Challenger space shuttle. Despite being a teacher, she herself has what to learn, especially about parenting. Her young daughter Elizabeth (the powerful Sarit Perl) attests to this with visceral, emotional expressions that are powerful in the way that only a child unadulterated by apathetic adult life or a Monet painting can be. While she may

And of course there's the man who opens the play, the French Impressionist painter, Monet (a delightful Leah Schewitz), who anachronistically — but delightfully — joins us throughout the play, interacting with characters who lived decades after his death. The play seeks to draw a parallel between Monet's artistic pursuits and NASA's scientific pursuits. In this play, Monet's sublimity goes beyond his paintings of cathedrals and lilies. He is everywhere he needs to be, simply trying to create beauty and see the world "from God's view."

script weaves together a complex tapestry of themes and motifs: God, science, art, the cosmos and most importantly the interplay between them all. It is no coincidence that the Teacher's projection of the stained glass rose window from Chartres Cathedral hovers above one scene like a planet or that she talks about how the invention of flying buttresses allowed Cathedrals to be built higher than ever before (look out for the many clever references and call-backs within the play). The play as a whole is very much an exercise in taking metaphors and really hashing them out to find the truths that lie within them.

The play challenges us to relate to these bigger themes, and ultimately to each other. The play is about reaching God and clinging to God's world. Whether you're a science person or an art person, it's well worth your time to head over to Schottenstein Theater to see this stellar (sorry, I had to) performance about "space, time and human emotion."

realize how influential these people were in many of the things we take for granted today, such as the communities we live in, the schools we go to and the shuls we pray at. There needs to be some type of written work or class that can preserve their history to ensure that their legacies will be remembered by future generations. Also, their *sefarim* should be made more easily available so that we can learn the Torah of the people who have indirectly influenced where we are today. Yeshiva University has wonderful traditions from these incredible rabbis and there needs to be a greater effort to spread the Torah, stories and character of these great people so we can keep their tradition and the tradition of YU alive.

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*Whether you're a science person or an art person, it's well worth your time to head over to Schottenstein Theater to see this stellar (sorry, I had to) performance about "space, time, and human emotion."*

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just seem like an ill-tempered child at first, Elizabeth really struggles to understand the pressure her mother is under just as much as Teacher fails to understand the pressure Elizabeth is under.

We have the gruff but deeply human NASA engineer C.B. (Eli Azizollahoff), who drinks a little more than he should, and his girlfriend, the motherly nurturer Donna (Tamar Guterson), who operates a bar near the NASA facilities. Throughout the play, she comforts the characters that need comforting (it's no coincidence that her name is a play on Madonna), and eventually she herself must face her own challenges with heights, which, while smaller in scale, are no less important.

Rocky Pincus and Sara Pool's set is soothingly delicate. The walls and floor of the stage are painted in the harmonious, tranquil blacks and purples of outer space blended in Monet's signature style, with fairy lights that shine like stars between scenes. The furniture hovers on the back wall as if floating in antigravity. The efficacious props and costumes are thoughtfully curated by Head of Props, Yael Nissel, and Head of Costumes, Gabriella Koege, and their teams.

Director Reuven Russell artfully navigates the complexities of the play as he blurs the lines between past and present to emphasize the eternal truths that pervade the work. Jane Anderson's meditative

## The Flu Vaccine: Fighting Complacency with Convenience

By AVIGAIL GOLDBERGER and  
RACHEL RETTER

The availability heuristic is a mental shortcut which allows us to dwell on fears that are statistically less likely to hurt us than ones we ignore. For example, a person may feel more anxious on a plane than in a car, even though more people die every year in car crashes than in planes. In a similar vein, while much recent media attention has been devoted to documenting anti-vaccination groups with regard to the measles virus, flu vaccination rates have not been as frequently discussed. Of course, the potential dangers of a measles outbreak are not to be minimized. But the fact remains: tens of thousands of Americans die each year of the flu according to the CDC while thankfully, no measles deaths have been recorded in the US since 2015. In fact, according to a survey conducted by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID), 60 percent of Americans “[agree] that flu vaccination is the best preventative measure against flu related deaths and hospitalization.” Despite this, the CDC reports that less than half of Americans get the flu vaccine in any given year; it is even possible, based on data from recent years, that this number could be on the decline.

Because college students represent the up-and-coming members of society, public health workers often turn to college campuses to investigate and initiate change regarding critical health attitudes. In a 2017 survey conducted by the NFID, 70 percent of college students in the US reported that they believe it is important to get an annual flu vaccine, while only 46 percent stated that they typically get vaccinated.

Among reasons cited for not getting vaccinated were doubts surrounding its efficacy, confidence in one’s own health, needle aversion, financial hesitations, and fear of side effects. While several of these reasons account for the percentage of the population who do not believe it is important to get vaccinated, others provide insight into why people may believe it is important yet still fail to vaccinate. In other words, there are two necessary avenues of attack to increase flu vaccine participation — educating those

*In a 2017 survey conducted by the NFID, 70 percent of college students in the US reported that they believe it is important to get an annual flu vaccine, while only 46 percent stated that they typically get vaccinated.*

who see no reason to get vaccinated and facilitating a more comfortable and convenient vaccination process for those who are merely reluctant. Along these lines, the NFID concluded that some likely ways to increase participation might include decreasing the financial burden and offering small tangible benefits, such as food or monetary incentive.

In September 2019, Yeshiva University’s chapter of UAID (United Against Inequities

in Disease) provided free flu shots right on the Beren and Wilf campuses to students who presented health insurance information. One student commented that the nurses from Rite Aid were “so incredibly nice, assuring me that it would barely hurt — and it was true!” The student added that they even gave out small chocolates at the event. Surveys distributed to the students who partook in the event provided insight into



UAID works to make getting a flu shot easier.

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flu vaccination trends of some of the Yeshiva University student population.

Out of the 111 participating students (approximately half female and half male), 95 percent believed that it is important to get a flu vaccine, and 41 percent had been sick with the flu before. However, 26 percent said that they did not receive a flu vaccine last year, and 21 percent said that if free flu shots were not offered on campus, they would not have gotten vaccinated.

Students’ responses varied in regards to why they may have gone a year without getting a flu vaccination. Among those who reported missing a year of vaccination in the past, the largest percentage (31.5%) said that it was because “there was no convenient way to get a flu shot.” Others (11%) responded that they “didn’t feel the need.” Less than one percent avoided it, respectively, because of fear of side effects, discomfort surrounding needles, or belief that it does not work.

It seems that, at least in the population surveyed, the main obstacle towards students getting vaccinated is not wariness or fear. Rather, it is a lack of sufficient motivation, comfort, or convenience that drives lackluster flu vaccine participation. Of course, this survey population was limited to those who attended the 2019 flu shot clinic and therefore will not be representative of global student attitudes, whether at Yeshiva University alone or in the broader US college student population. Specifically, it would likely not represent the attitudes of students with pre-existing strong opposition to flu vaccinations.

Flu shot clinics such as the ones organized on the Yeshiva University campuses this fall represent a significant stride toward addressing the element of convenience, both in terms of monetary relief and logistical ease. In order to find out if objections to the vaccine itself exist within the overall YU population and to investigate the nature of these hesitations, a more widespread canvassing could be conducted. This would provide insight into whether the student body could benefit from an educational initiative to combat misconceptions about the flu vaccination. It is critical to seek an understanding of our health behaviors and attitudes, so we can implement appropriate changes that will move us forward in a positive direction.

## Orthodox Jews and the Political Process

By RABBI YOSEF BLAU

Orthodox rabbis play a prominent role in Israeli politics and often openly support candidates in American elections. Since I question the connection between *halakhic* expertise and political acumen, I have refrained from expressing my political views to the students in Yeshiva. However, there is value in analyzing the basis used by many Orthodox Jews, including rabbis, in taking public political positions.

In parallel but differing nuances, the heads of government in America and Israel are facing serious charges of corruption and/or abuse of power. The Orthodox community perceives both leaders as having policies that are favorable to its interests. While differing in detail the leaders’ defense has been to claim that their enemies, political and in the media, have orchestrated a coup against them.

The substance of the allegations is seen as irrelevant. The leaders have demanded loyalty from their followers.

In Israel, a prominent Rosh Yeshiva attended a rally where the attorney general and police commissioner, both Orthodox Jews appointed by the Prime Minister, were denounced. All the religious parties support legislation that would immunize the Prime Minister from any prosecution. If one reads Orthodox media in America, one gets the impression that Orthodox Jewry is totally supportive of the President. His demeaning, name-calling of opponents doesn’t even require being defended.

Support for both leaders can be justified in terms of protecting the community’s self-interest, though that would not necessarily lead to such extreme demonstrations of loyalty and attacks on opponents. What appears to be lacking is any concern about illegal, unethical

and immoral behavior. Whether reflecting a cynical attitude about politicians in general or accepting that these leaders demand total loyalty and cannot handle any criticism, the impression exists that Orthodoxy doesn’t care about ethics or legality.

*Judaism doesn’t tolerate corruption. No political gains are worth losing ethical sensitivity.*

What has differentiated Orthodoxy from other Jewish streams is a full commitment to *halakhic* observance, which is most clearly reflected in ritual observances. Any differences in standards of interpersonal behavior are relatively minor. The Reform movement, having abandoned observance of Shabbat and Kashrut, focuses on quoting the statements of prophets criticizing the mistreatment of the poor

and the vulnerable. No Orthodox rabbi would disagree, but functionally this focus defines only part of Orthodox Judaism. In Israel, where Jews have sovereignty over non-Jews for the first time in two thousand years, ethical standards for treating non-Jews, who are of-

ten hostile, are more complicated.

These and other factors have led to ethical concerns becoming of marginal significance in Orthodoxy. In the complex world of politics, these considerations are rarely mentioned. This is a major mistake pragmatically in promoting Orthodoxy to the broader Jewish and non-Jewish communities, and more importantly as not being true to our basic values. Traditionally one of the highest

Jewish compliments was that one is a “*yoshor*,” a person who is straight and has unquestioned integrity. It is paradoxical that anti-Semites characterized Jews as cheaters and manipulators.

Maimonides, in concluding his Guide to the Perplexed, quotes and amplifies Jeremiah 9:23 “Let him who glories glory in this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord Who exercise faithful love, justice and righteousness in this earth: for in these things that I delight says Hashem.” For Maimonides, the goal of knowledge of Hashem translates into our emulating Him by pursuing faithful love, justice and righteousness.

Judaism doesn’t tolerate corruption. No political gains are worth losing ethical sensitivity. Without integrity our religious identity is hollow. Silence may seem to be a clever strategy but demonstrating ethical concerns is being authentically Jewish.

## Crash Landing

By NATHAN HAKAKIAN

On Monday, Dec. 16, Boeing announced that they would suspend the production of the 737 MAX Jet beginning in January. Many questions regarding the safety of the plane have arisen since two devastating crashes took the lives of 346 passengers. Although the 737 MAX was once viewed as the gold standard in commercial aviation, these two events prompted experts to question the overall safety of the plane—ultimately ordering their immediate grounding. Boeing has been the industry leader in the transportation industry for decades, but its failure to produce an updated 737 MAX could compromise both their reputation as well as their profitability.

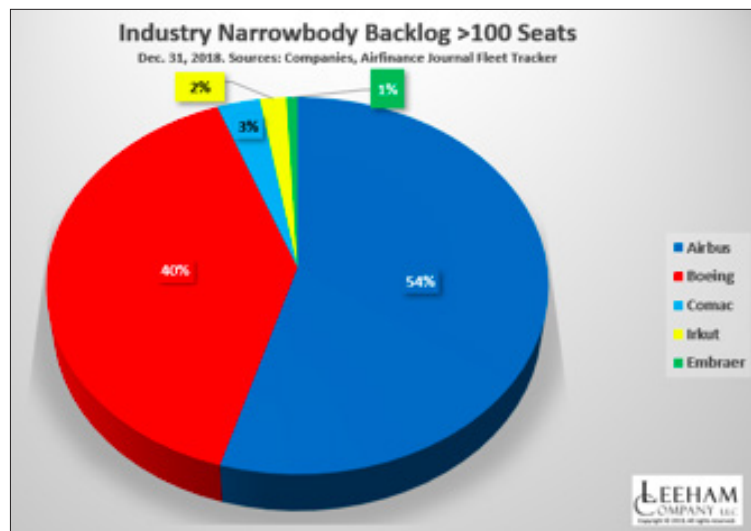
Founded in 1916 in Seattle, Boeing began as strictly an aircraft manufacturer. But they soon began to expand their reach into a number of industries through acquisitions. In 1960 they bought Vertol Corporation, which was the largest helicopter producer at the time. Boeing saw this purchase as their ticket to diversify their interests, entering industries such as marine craft, energy production and transit systems. In 1995 Boeing led a conglomerate of European companies to form Sea Launch, an avenue to enter the satellite and space travel fields. The continued interest in satellites provided the framework for Boeing's 2000 acquisition of Hughes Electronics satellite division, which is known today as DirectTV. In 2017, Boeing was the fifth-largest defense contractor. Boeing soon established itself as a main player in a variety of industries.

Despite having a presence in numerous industries, Boeing's main focus will continue to be in commercial aviation. They have worked tirelessly to win over accounts from airlines worldwide, and have worked equally as hard to retain those relationships. But in 2011, American Airlines presented Boeing with an ultimatum: improve the 737 MAX or lose their account. Opting for a short-cited approach, Boeing scrapped plans for a new passenger plane that would have been ready by 2017. Boeing figured that in order to stay at the top, complying with the customer's request was essential.

The main cause of this pressure was the resurgence of European rival Airbus. In the last few years Airbus has seen an increase in

orders and deliveries of its A320 plane. The grounding and production halt of the 737 MAX have allowed Airbus's A320 to overtake the 737 MAX as the world's most popular plane — receiving 120 orders for A320 variants following the grounding. Boeing is no longer the market leader, as both

an average of 40 planes a month in their Seattle facility with the hope of receiving the green light from regulators. But, in early December, FAA administrator Stephen Dickson rejected the possibility of renewing the 737 MAX operating status before the end of the year. This announcement



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the popularity of the A320 and the uncertainty regarding the safety of the 737 MAX have allowed Airbus to narrow that lead.

The constant pressure to win airline accounts created much internal chaos. In order to be efficient, Boeing believed that they had to cut costs and time. They tried their hardest to retain the design of the older planes, and according to a New York Times Article, engineers were pushed to submit sketches of the plane at double the normal pace. Although Boeing executives were confident that the redesigned 737 MAX planes had passed the required internal safety regulations, "The company was trying to avoid costs and trying to contain the level of change. They wanted the minimum change to simplify the training differences, minimum change to reduce costs, and to get it done quickly," according to veteran Boeing engineer Rick Ludtke. One of the results of neglecting to ensure proper safety protocols was the failure of their MCAS software. The MCAS system was created to counterbalance the plane's tendency to move its nose up. But instead of creating balance, the MCAS system malfunctioned and the pilots were unable to override the system, causing the plane to crash in both incidents.

While the two crashes caused the grounding of the 737 MAX in March, Boeing had yet to halt production. They were still producing

caused Boeing's stock price to fall 4% within hours.

The financial impact on Boeing has been significant and will continue to worsen. The 200 already produced planes must all be individually inspected by the FAA — further delaying their delivery and causing Boeing's cash shortage to worsen. Additionally, the company has been further leveraged as they prepare to pay high production and compensation fees, allotting \$3.6 and billion \$6.1 billion respectively in anticipation — amounts that may need to be more than doubled in the coming months. As a result of the 737 MAX setback, Luke Tilley, the Chief Economist of Wilmington Trust predicts that the lack of production of the 737 MAX would reduce the quarterly annualized GDP growth rate by 0.3%.

When looking at Boeing's future, there is still reason for optimism. Despite the large looming losses, Boeing announced that it did not plan to lay off any of its 150,000+ employees. Because of Boeing's importance to the American economy, the government will likely assist them to return to stability, whether it be in the form of loans or extended deadlines. Boeing must look to capitalize on their other markets, which will allow them to stabilize their revenue stream in the interim. Regardless of their storied history, Boeing will have to compete with Airbus in order to preserve its status as the Aerospace industry leader. The success of Boeing is strongly predicated on its ability to revamp the 737 MAX plane and remind customers worldwide that they are still the gold standard in commercial aviation.

## 2019 IPO's

By MAX ASH

2019 was a tumultuous year in all regards and the stock market was not excluded. A host of unicorns went public and endured quite a bumpy ride. Here's a look at some of 2019's most high-profile IPOs.

In the gig-economy sector, we had Uber (UBER) and Fiverr (FVRR) making their debut on the public stage. Valued at \$82 billion, Uber was one of the biggest tech IPOs ever. That didn't last long, though. Investors still had a bad taste in their mouths from the underperformance of Lyft (LYFT), Uber's competitor, and Uber went public at a lower-than-expected price of \$45. Since then, it has hovered around the \$30 range, well below its initial price. Fiverr is a rarity in that it was one of only a handful of companies to undergo a Series D funding round. It's rival, Upwork (UPWK) debuted at \$15 and has steadily decreased since.

Moving on to Food & Beverage (because who doesn't like food), humans weren't the only ones being represented on this year's list. Chewy (CHWY), an e-tailer in the growing pet products industry, went public on the NYSE at an initial price of \$21 and barked all the way to \$34.99 by closing. Since then, it has traded exclusively above its offering price. Because of its dual-class share structure, though, Chewy is unable to be included in any ETFs or mutual funds that track them.

Back to human food, Beyond Meat (BYND) has pioneered the rise of plant-based meat substitutes in the broader economy, selling their "ground beef", "chicken", "pork sausage" and other products in supermarkets and restaurants such as TGI Friday's across America. Offered at \$25, BYND soared to \$234.90 a few months later before returning to Earth and has traded above its offering price since. Its rival, Impossible Foods has been on the fences for an IPO but does not have any concrete plans to go public anytime soon, opting instead to raise more capital in means other than an IPO.

*Surprisingly, Pinterest is the fastest growing website by overall member growth, surpassing Facebook and competing with Tumblr along the way.*

With all that veggie burger eaten, our health-conscious consumer is obviously going to want to burn off those calories. In comes Peloton (PTON). With their technologically enhanced stationary bikes and treadmills, they were lifted to an initial valuation of over \$8 Billion. Peloton is following the ever-growing trend of subscription-based services and provides fitness classes through those endeavors.

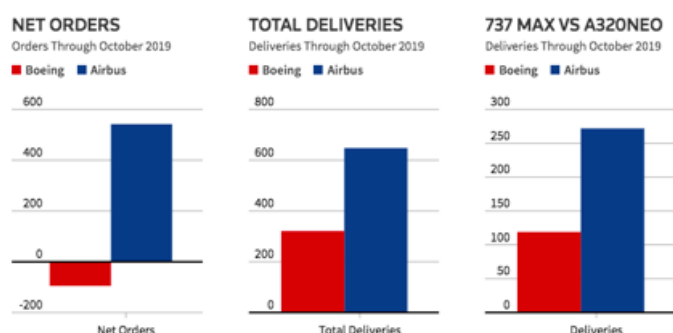
In a completely different sector, social media was represented by the offering of Pinterest (PINS). Surprisingly, Pinterest is the fastest growing website by overall member growth, surpassing Facebook and competing with Tumblr along the way. Its stock has remained slightly volatile — record highs and lows in the process, and is currently trading just below its initial price of \$19. Underneath the same tech umbrella was a lesser-known, but an equally as important company called Zoom (ZM). One of the few profitable companies that IPO'd in 2019, the cloud-based videoconferencing company still did not garner the tremendous attention from the media and investors that other, more "famous" companies did. To add insult to the ignorant investors, Zoom has been trading exponentially higher than its offering price and looks to continue its growth with the rise of its product usage across all industries.

Closing it out is Smile Direct Club, with its direct-to-consumer business model which utilized licensed orthodontists to act as "brokers" in its battle with Invisalign in the clear aligner wars. While there are extremely promising growth expectations for this ever-expanding industry, new regulatory concerns have increased investor anxiety about rising expenses. This has caused its stock price to fall over 50% from its initial price of \$23.

All in all, 2019 was a year in which a plethora of overvalued, loss-generating companies went public. Over time, thankfully, investors have corrected their mistakes and have calculated correct valuations.

### Airbus leads, Boeing MAX impact weighs

Boeing expects its grounded 737 MAX jet to return to service in January, and said it was possible that MAX deliveries to airline customers could resume in December



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