

THE COMMENTATOR

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Shoshana Schechter Appointed Associate Dean for Torah Studies at Stern College

By ELISHEVA KOHN

Mrs. Shoshana Schechter has been named the Associate Dean for Torah Studies at Stern College for Women (SCW), a newly inaugurated position on the Beren Campus. Beren students were informed of Schechter's promotion via email from Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon on April 7.

According to Schechter, the Beren Associate Dean for Torah Studies position was envisioned by President Ari Berman and modeled after Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky's former role as Associate Dean for Men's Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS). As Associate Dean for UTS, Kalinsky oversaw the four undergraduate Torah morning programs on the Wilf Campus; Schechter's job will be to "maximize the collaboration" between Beren's Jewish Studies courses and campus environment and ensure that "academic programs and the extracurricular activities on

campus complement and support each other," according to Bacon.

While the search for an Associate Dean of Torah Studies at SCW began in the summer of 2019, Schechter told The Commentator that she applied for the role recently and will assume her new position on July 1. She will work under Provost Dr. Selma Botman and Bacon.

"The beit midrash needs to be a central focal point."

Mrs. Shoshana Schechter

"We are so pleased that Shoshana Schechter will join the leadership team at Stern College," remarked Botman. "She will apply her remarkable skills as an effective academic and popular mentor to the entire student body of the Beren campus. The true beneficiaries of this appointment are the students."

"Mrs. Schechter's track as both a Jewish Studies faculty member and as someone dedicated to students' spiritual growth outside the classroom make her ideal for this position," Bacon told The Commentator.

Schechter is a graduate of SCW and holds master's degrees from Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and Columbia University School of Journalism. Beginning her career at Yeshiva University as an adjunct professor in 1998, Schechter currently teaches four bible classes at SCW and leads the Mechina Pathways Basic Jewish Studies Program, which she founded 16 years ago to accommodate students who did not receive a formal Jewish education prior to their enrollment at SCW. Approximately 30 students join the Mechina Program every year.

"We call ourselves Yeshiva University, but really, the uptown



Shoshana Schechter has been teaching at Stern College for Women for over 20 years

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Continued on Page 3

Syms Announces New Jewish Values Curriculum for Men, Beginning in Fall 2020

By SRULI FRUCHTER

The Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) will be replacing Wilf students' current Syms Academic Jewish Studies (JVCW) series with a revamped Syms Jewish Values Curriculum (SJVC). This change was announced to Wilf Syms students via email on April 6 and is set to begin in the fall.

The active curriculum requires Syms students to complete four courses: Jewish Engagements, Jewish Values in the Contemporary World, Jewish Public Policy, and Business and Jewish Law; these courses are completed during a student's first, second and third year, respectively, while the fourth may be taken at any time at the student's preference. Under the redesigned SJVC, however, students may complete their courses in whichever order they prefer.

"In the summer of 2019, we created a steering committee [for these changes] that included three faculty from outside Sy Syms...and three people from inside the school," SSSB Dean Noam Wasserman told The Commentator. "In addition to this faculty group, we also received input from a variety of students who were taking or had taken courses in the program, and I interviewed YU alumni to understand what further help YU could have provided to them as they transitioned from college into the workforce."

The three recurring problems students and alumni mentioned, Wasserman shared, was their difficulty to see the practical implications of their classes, their desire to see "explicit connections" between

Continued on Page 4

Wilf Student Candidates Struggle to Reach Required Signature Count

By SARAH BEN-NUN

Candidates running for Wilf student government positions for the 2020-2021 academic year are facing the unprecedented challenge of virtually collecting student signatures to ensure their names appear on the voting ballots for the upcoming elections on May 7. This difficulty was introduced as all university functions shifted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was further exacerbated after the Wilf Student Court ruled that the Wilf General Assembly's (GA) proposed amendment to lower candidates' required signature count was "null and void," citing constitutional violations.

Ordinarily, the GA — whose voting members are the presidents of the Yeshiva Student Union (YSU), the Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA), the Syms Student Council (SYMSSC), the Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY)

and the Senior co-chair of the Student Life Committee — forms an Amendments Committee each semester that holds a Constitutional Amendments Convention to hear amendment proposals. The GA then votes

required number of signatures from 500 or 33 percent of the students they represent to 50 or 5 percent of the students they represent; it was then handed to the Wilf student body for a final vote. On April 5, the Wilf

"I had hoped that just as our university and the world have been adjusting to this online period, so would the Student Court and Canvassing Committee."

YSU President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB '21)

on the proposed amendments, and if the proposals receive a majority vote, they are sent to the student body. Finally, once a semester, a General Student Body Amendment Vote is held, and amendments will pass if they receive three-fifths of the student body votes.

On April 2, the GA, in a 3-1 vote, proposed and passed an amendment to lower candidates'

Student Court, prompted by the Canvassing Committee's petition to evaluate the amendment, rejected the GA's proposal completely.

According to the student court's ruling, the amendment violates two clauses in the Constitution. Article XIII,

Continued on Page 4



THE COMMENTATOR

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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

Credit Where Credit Is Due: Should Students Be Satisfied With YU's Refund Policy?

By AVI HIRSCH

In a call with the university's students last week, President Berman announced that despite the "serious financial consequences" that the university has endured from the current situation, YU will be refunding 30% of its students' housing costs for the semester and 100% of their remaining dining plan card balance. At the same time, other fees, including unused printing funds, commencement fees and student activities fees, will seemingly not be returned to students. Furthermore, additional communication from YU has failed to provide a detailed accounting of YU's financial difficulties and how they have impacted its refund policy, which makes evaluating the policy's fairness to students nearly impossible.

The current policy returns many of the funds that students are owed, and YU deserves to be praised for formulating and communicating the policy clearly to the student body. Furthermore, by refunding all of our leftover dining plan funds, it has taken an important step toward helping those students struggling with financial burdens during this difficult time. Refunding 30% of our housing costs surely adds to YU's financial burden, and it is therefore admirable that YU has put forth a policy that rightly returns a portion of this fee to the students as well.

But the refund policy's narrow scope fails to account for student activities fees that will no longer benefit current students and unused printing money that students are no longer able to access, as well as other unrendered services that students have already paid for. Dismissing these costs without offering a justification to the student body does a disservice to the students, many of whom are struggling financially during this time.

It is reasonable for YU to argue that it is suffering financially from the current tragic situation. After all, food already purchased for the cafeteria would likely have had to be discarded when school was canceled, the swift and largely successful shift to virtual classes and support services surely comes with its own costs and YU would likely have had to continue paying maintenance fees to keep housing operational while student belongings remain in their rooms. But at the same time, the university owes its students a more complete accounting of why its financial burdens have compelled it to withhold refunding fees to students for other services that have gone unrendered.

One obstacle in particular that has made evaluating the refund policy so challenging is the university's frustrating

predilection to remain vague when it comes to its finances. For example, explaining its decision not to refund commencement fees, YU's Undergrad Refunds FAQ makes the sweeping assertion that the "graduation fee covers many aspects of graduation, not merely the Commencement event itself." These aspects of graduation, which include "students' final evaluation of their degree eligibility and other ancillary costs," are continuing even with no in-person commencement ceremony, and therefore, graduation fees will not be refunded.

Logically, this justification does not hold up: admitting that the commencement fee covers *additional* costs beyond the commencement itself indicates that at the very least, the portion of the fee that does cover the commencement itself *should* be refunded. But more troubling than that, YU has seemingly not felt any need to elaborate on what "ancillary costs" it is referring to, how much money an "evaluation of degree eligibility" costs, and how it arrived at the conclusion that it was justified in offering *no refund* for commencement whatsoever.

The university owes its students a more complete accounting of why its financial burdens have compelled it to withhold refunding fees to students for other services that have gone unrendered.

This frustrating lack of financial transparency carries over to other costs that YU has seemingly swept under the rug. In an email to the undergraduate student body explaining the refund policy, the university broadly dismissed reimbursing any additional fees beyond the housing and dining refunds, referring to the "full range of support services, including academic support, counseling center, tele-health appointments, academic advising, writing center appointments, career center, student events, etc." that YU is continuing to provide.

Although as students we should all be immensely grateful for the full range of services that YU is continuing to provide virtually, it is troubling that YU fails to specifically justify its decision to withhold student activities fees and other payments that students will no longer benefit from — including leftover printing money that will remain unused as well as costs associated with various student events that will either no longer happen or move online, including the Yom Haatzmaut BBQ, canceled Purim events and other club events that, moving online, no longer have the

same significant costs associated with them. The student councils, which no longer need to pay the costs of food and other supplies for on-campus events, have a surplus of money on their hands, and any decision not to return these funds to the students who paid them needs to be justified to those students.

Other universities have been dealing with similar struggles with mixed results. Some, like Columbia and Pace University, are facing repercussions for their financial decisions in the form of student suits for refunds. Experts are anticipating legal action from students across the country who are dissatisfied with the refund policies that their universities are enacting. It may not be possible to fully resolve these complex and difficult questions in a way that will satisfy the needs of both the student body and the university, but the university should still approach these matters with utmost transparency and a willingness to engage with its students.

Under ordinary circumstances, it would be unfair for anyone to expect a university to release an accounting of its financial situation or decision-making

process; surely the financial officers of a university have the right to make the decisions they feel are best for the university without justifying themselves every step of the way to the public. But these are not ordinary circumstances: the university has been forced to close its campuses, and students no less than the institution itself are suffering financially as a result.

It is not sufficient for YU to refer to "ancillary fees" and continuing virtual support services as justification for its limited policy. Instead, the university ought to account for its decision to push the burden of covering their costs on its students as opposed to absorbing these burdens through different means. A student-first approach to finances is not only the right thing to do, but would ultimately lead to greater benefit to YU down the line, with the potential for a larger pool of applicants to choose to attend YU knowing that it prioritizes its students, and more alumni thinking fondly of the university, which would surely lead to even more positive economic repercussions such as future donations.



1 Student volunteers and EMTs
You all deserve the world. I can't give you that, so here's a shoutout instead.



2 Sfirat HaOmer beards
Gentlemen, the time has finally come: will you go for the Karl Marx or the Santa Claus? The commie or the *kofer*?



3 The Cuomo brothers
More entertaining than my Netflix recommendations.



4 New Sy Syms curriculum
Seems like "Jewish Approach to Test Banks" didn't make the cut. On an unrelated note, *shkoiach* to Dean Wasserman for trying to find alternative summer plans to the entire student body.



5 Caf card refunds
Is the YU administration *cafdaddy*ing us? Gasp!



6 PPRDAB is a "man of the arts"
A great resume builder! To be added to philosophy major, rabbi, doctor, and university president. #SoWhyWon'tHeSaveTheArtDepartment?



7 YU buildings on Minecraft: Wilf edition
I never thought the sight of Belfer Hall would leave me teary-eyed. Did anyone notice the Commentator rack in Morg?

7 UP by Elisheva Kohn NMODL

YU buildings on Minecraft: Beren edition

This is why Wilf students ought to come downtown more often..



Commie-trashing on Twitter

Haters gonna hate.



TikTok

The fidget spinner of social media! The #AlexFromTarget of publicity!! The crème de la crème of censorship!!! #bobkes



Quarantine

No excuse for sending WhatsApp voice notes that exceed 50 seconds.



"Wishing you peace this Passover. May you have an easy fast."

YU recycles.



Student Council elections

The only thing worse than being bombarded with petitions on Google Docs is realizing that all the Facebook memes revolve around being bombarded with petitions on Google Docs.



Elevators

On the bright side, at least no one is being trapped and free-falling in them. (I think?) On the downside, there's no way they're getting fixed.



SHOSHANA SCHECHTER,
continued from Front Page

campus has been more of a *yeshiva*," Schechter remarked, adding that she hopes to make SCW a "*makom* Torah on all levels" because "the *beit midrash* needs to be a central focal point."

In addition to her new administrative responsibilities, Schechter will maintain her current position as director of the Mechina Program and continue teaching two Bible courses next semester. Schechter explained that she did not want to completely give up teaching for her administrative role. "Relationships with students for me begin by learning Torah together ... that relationship starts in the classroom," she said.

"We can't just keep doing what we did 20 years ago," added Schechter. "We need to continue ... innovating and improving on what we've had for so many years." She hopes to reshape Torah studies at SCW by increasing Beren students' exposure to YU *roshei yeshiva*, tackling low enrollment in advanced Jewish studies classes and inspiring students who come from a diverse array of religious backgrounds. "If people weren't so worried about their GPAs, they would be taking more advanced classes," Schechter explained. She also expressed worry that Beren students' "religious peaks" occurred during their year in seminary. "I want them to continue being inspired in Stern. Of course, we're a university, not a seminary, so it's more challenging but students' experiences at Stern should be religiously inspiring."

Schechter plans to work closely with faculty members, Department Chair of Judaic Studies Dr. Deena Rabinovich, the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS), the Office of Student Life (OSL), Director of Spiritual Life Rachel Ciment, Campus Rabbi Jacob Bernstein and Campus Rebbetzin Penina Bernstein to introduce new Torah initiatives to the Beren Campus.

Schechter's promotion was welcomed with warm enthusiasm by her students. "She teaches in a way that allows each student to feel cared for and listened to," said Laurene Dana (SCW '20), a student of Schechter's. "I trust her opinion and go to her for advice on my personal and spiritual life."

"I think that there is no one more fit to be Associate Dean than Professor Schechter. She is connected to students from all backgrounds, and with all levels of Torah knowledge," another one of Schechter's students, Neeli Fagan (SCW '21) commented. "I think that she will be able to improve the learning in Stern and help to create better Torah learning opportunities for people with all levels of Torah knowledge."

*JEWISH VALUES,
continued from Front Page*

what they learned in their shiur and classes and that some courses overlapped each other. Consequently, the aforementioned committee prioritized amending those issues.

According to its overview and course synopses sent to students, the new Jewish Values curriculum will offer “practical, experiential and actionable courses to prepare you for the workplace.” Students will study two types of issues: purely business and universal with a

business lens, each in the context of the “Jewish” and “non-Jewish” world. This culminates into four courses: Jewish Business Law, Practical Workplace Halacha, Jewish Public Policy and Jewish-World Interaction.

Three of the new courses are debuting this upcoming fall, and the fourth, Jewish-World Interaction, is scheduled to be offered in the spring of 2021. Rabbi Dovid Baskevkin will continue teaching Jewish Public Policy, Rabbi Itamar Rosenzweig paired with Rabbi Shlomo Weissman will

teach Jewish Business Law, Prof. Ari Wasserman paired with Rabbi Yoni Levin will teach Practical Workplace Halacha and Rabbi Dr. Ari Lamm will be teaching Jewish-World Interaction.

“I believe that the new Syms Jewish Values Curriculum looks promising and will expose students to the many different scenarios they will be in when they leave YU,” commented SSSB Student Council President Chayim Mahgerefteh (SSSB ‘20). “It is important for students to understand the proper way to conduct oneself in business

“I believe that the new Syms Jewish Values Curriculum looks promising and will expose students to the many different scenarios they will be in when they leave YU. It is important for students to understand the proper way to conduct oneself in business as an observant Jew.”

SSSB President Chayim Mahgerefteh (SSSB ‘20)

as an observant Jew.”

Students who have already completed the four JVCW courses are considered to have completed their requirements. Any students who have already completed at least one of the current curriculum requirements may select any of SJVC’s courses to fulfill their remaining requirements.

The last changes to the current JVCW series was in the fall of 2015, when former SSSB Dean Dr. Moses

Pava first introduced it as an option for Syms students.

“When we are judged, the first question we will be asked is whether we acted with integrity in our business dealings,” said Dean Wasserman, quoting Shabbos 31b. “For the Jew in the workplace this means both personally acting with integrity (despite the challenges that the workplace can pose to our Jewish values) and embodying our values for everyone around us.”

		Domain of Interaction	
		Within Jewish World	Within Non-Jewish World
Types of Issues	Purely Business	Jewish Business Law	Practical Workplace Halacha
	Universal with Business Lens	Jewish Public Policy	Jewish-World Interaction

According to its overview and course synopses sent to students, the new Jewish Values curriculum will offer “practical, experiential and actionable courses to prepare you for the workplace.”

*SIGNATURE COUNT,
continued from Front Page*

Section 1(2) identifies the proper procedure for proposing amendments: the Constitutional Amendments Convention that should be convened each semester to raise potential amendments and changes to the Constitution. “No such convention took place,” the Court noted in their decision, which was emailed to the Wilf student body on April 5. Additionally, Section 1(4) of the

same article explains that proposed amendments are voted on by a General Student Body Amendment Votes, as mentioned earlier. The fall’s vote should take place within the two weeks before Reading Week, while the spring’s should be “incorporated into the General Election.” This, the court explained in their decision, does not allow for amendments to be “voted upon and ratified” before the Spring General Election, which is what happened with the proposed amendment.

As of April 13, 33 Wilf students are running for 19 different government positions.

YSU President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB ‘21) defended the GA’s amendment proposal, reasoning that virtually gathering signatures could “potentially [be] a roadblock for serious candidates to get on the ballot.” Candidates have since alternated to collecting signatures through texting, WhatsApp group messages, Canvas mail and Facebook posts. Additionally, the Canvassing Committee has sent out several emails encouraging Wilf students to electronically sign petitions in support of candidates who still need votes.

Other candidates for student government share Greenberg’s sentiment. Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA) presidential-candidate Josh Leichter (YC ‘21) said the GA’s amendment was a “reasonable request, given everything that has been going on lately,” referring to YU’s campus closure due to coronavirus.

“When I gathered signatures in person [to

Continued on Page 5

Turell, Leifer Lead Men’s Basketball’s Awards Haul

By MITCH GOULSON

The NCAA Men’s Basketball Division III awards were announced on March 24, as Macs Head Coach Elliot Steinmetz took home the Coach of the Year Award, senior Gabriel Leifer (SSSB ‘21) made 4th Team, and sophomore Ryan Turell (SSSB ‘22) made 1st Team. The #13 Macs were set up for a thriller in the Sweet 16 against #3 Randolph-Macon, but as the team’s bus pulled into their hotel in Ashland, Virginia, news broke that the NCAA Tournament was canceled due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Dave McHugh of D3Hoops.com specified the criteria for Coach of the Year in this abbreviated season as a combination of “what you did on the court, what you did as a program, and what you have done overall.” Steinmetz and his Macs not only garnered national recognition as they reeled off a program-best 29 wins in a row, but they also tallied their first-ever wins in the Division III tournament this season. “They [YU], among others, had a legitimate chance to win the national title,” McHugh said.

In talking to McHugh, Steinmetz discussed the team’s reaction to the cancellation. “We’re competitors,” said Steinmetz. “And we wanted to see if we could go beat Randolph-Macon, the best defensive team in the country. It wasn’t enough for us to just say we didn’t lose.”

Steinmetz, a Sy Syms School of Business alum in his sixth season as YU’s head coach, works as an attorney in addition to his role as the Macs’ head coach.

Leifer, the 2018-2019 Skyline Player of the Year, led D-3 in triple

doubles (4) while averaging 16 points, 14 rebounds and 7 assists. He turned up his play when the games mattered most, notching 10/20/10 triple doubles in both the Skyline Conference Championship and the Tournament’s Round of

32. Leifer grabbed 412 boards and dished 199 assists this season, both of which set YU single-season records. Leifer already owns the YU record for career assists (408), and the 6-foot-5-inch power forward from Lawrence, New York will look

to add to it next year, his final season at YU.

Turell ascended from 2018-2019 Rookie of the Year to 2019-2020 First Team All American. He shot 64% from the field and 46% from three point range, fueling YU’s single-season points record with 646. After he eclipsed 1,000 points faster than any YU player ever had and ended the season with 1,190 for his career, he may blow past the all-time YU scoring record, held by Yossi Gev (‘02) with 1,871 points.

In the school’s first-ever tournament games, Turell scored 41 (the 4th highest single-game score in YU history) and 30 points against WPC and PSU, respectively. Turell hit 10 out of his 12 threes on his way to a 77% field goal percentage in those games. Many were eager to see if he could sustain those mind-boggling percentages against a top-three team in the country when facing Randolph-Macon, but COVID-19 quashed those hopes.

Regarding his reaction to the award as well as his goals for next year, Turell commented, “It’s great if you’re a senior, so as a sophomore it’s pretty exciting! But at the end of the day ... we’re chasing letters, not numbers. The only thing I got on my mind for next year is a National Championship.”

Coach Steinmetz and stars Leifer and Turell will be back next year, as the team will look to justify their #13 ranking and prove that their season was not a fluke.

“At the end of the day ... we’re chasing letters, not numbers. The only thing I got on my mind for next year is a National Championship.”

Ryan Turell (SSSB ‘22)



YU Macs embracing each other at a home game

THE COMMENTATOR

*SIGNATURE COUNT,
continued from Page 4*

be elected Freshman Representative] it took only a day or two to get all the signatures I needed," Baruch Lerman (YC '23) explained. "[It's] taken me at least two weeks just to reach the right amount of people." Lerman is running for SOY's Isaac Breuer College (IBC) Representative position, and it took him 17 days, from April 6 to 23, to gather his required 63 signatures.

Michael Stark (SSSB '22) previously ran for a student government position and similarly found it easier to speak with people in-person when asking for their signatures.

"Now," Stark contrasted, "I have to bother people via text, messenger, and spamming the YU Facebook groups to potentially get people to sign."

Signatures collected online carry a different kind of weight with candidates. Some, though they are grateful for the signatures, lament the loss of human connection in obtaining them. Benji Halpern (SSSB '21), who's running for YSU's Senior Representative position, questioned, "What's the point of an endorsement if I barely know the candidate, let alone can have a conversation face to face with them?" Leichter agreed with Halpern, saying "if someone receives

a text message saying that they should vote for someone, that human closeness gets lost in translation."

Others view it in the opposite manner. Students like Lerman think "any candidate who has gotten 1/3 of their hopeful constituency to vote for them is surely well respected by the student body they wish to represent."

"I had hoped that the Student Court, Canvassing Committee, and General Assembly (which I'm a part of) could have worked together to get this 'emergency' Amendment passed to prevent the hassle of the signature process," said Greenberg. "I had hoped that just as our university and

the world have been adjusting to this online period, so would the Student Court and Canvassing Committee."

Though he wished the amendment could have been approved, Lerman said he understood why it could not. "The court didn't really have a choice in rejecting the amendment — the way it was passed was blatantly unconstitutional."

In their decision, the court concluded, "This Court believes that the Student Body will rise to the occasion and help its peers who wish to lead this university secure the proper number of signatures."



In protest of the prospective changes, students covered up artwork around the Beren Campus.

ROCKY PINCUS

Plans to Reduce Art Floor Space Spark Student Protest

By NEELI FAGAN

Yeshiva University has drawn up plans to designate half of the 8th floor of 215 Lexington Ave. for the use of the Katz School of Science and Health's new cybersecurity master's program. The floor was previously reserved solely for the Stern College for Women (SCW) art department.

Students of the art department were notified of these plans at a meeting held by Prof. Traci Tullius, chair of the SCW art department, on Wednesday, Feb. 26. In protest, students covered up artwork displayed around Stern College, created fliers to inform students about the administration's plans, sent a letter to Senior Vice President Josh Joseph and created a petition that has amassed over 1,000 signatures.

As of the time of publication, the administration has denied making any changes despite the protests, claiming that plans for the art department have been put on hold due to the pandemic. "This issue is on the back burner until we deal with the more immediate concerns," stated Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon. In Yeshiva University's recent COVID-19 response call, President Berman

expressed that "cybersecurity is important, and building the cyber-lab is important, but it certainly should not and will not be on the back of the art department, which is also crucially important to us ... The people in charge are working on creative ways so that both programs have an enhanced space." President Berman also mentioned that there has been discussion amongst the administration regarding an update of the art department.

On Nov. 5, 2019, staff members of the art department were informed of some of the upcoming changes to the art floor. According to Tullius, the decision to utilize the art department for the Katz School was proposed by Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer Randy Apfelbaum. Dean Bacon first reached out to Tullius regarding the utilization of the computer lab on the art floor.

Tullius and her colleague, Prof. Mary Creede, decided to offer up Room 810 — a room primarily used for storage space — as an alternative location for the cybersecurity program to use. However, as Tullius explained, "since that original email, the amount of space planned for moving from art department use to cyber has quadrupled" to include the graphics

lab, video lab and Tullius' office. These rooms are planned to be converted into a classroom, computer lab, lounge and pantry.

Up until their meeting with Tullius, most students were completely unaware of the prospective changes and many feel that the university has not been transparent regarding these developments. "Students didn't appreciate that the process was happening in secret, and voiced to me that they viewed of respect and support for art students," said Tullius.

"Students didn't appreciate that the process was happening in secret, and voiced to me that they viewed the proposed renovation as a lack of respect and support for art students."

Prof. Traci Tullius

"I think that if they had consulted with anybody, they would have understood how those rooms are integral to our major," said Rocky Pincus (SCW '20), a studio art major. "The people making these decisions didn't know what these rooms were used for."

Upon hearing the university's plans, students immediately took

action to protest. Pincus and Yael Frank (SCW '20) initiated a plan to place coverings that stated, "no art floor, no art" on art pieces all over the Beren Campus. "We want people involved at this university to understand that art touches them every single day in ways they don't even realize," explained Frank. They felt that the most effective way to accomplish their objective was to rid the school of the artwork that art students over the years have created. Additionally, a petition to "save the art department"

was created by Basya Goldstein (SCW '20) to advocate for the alteration of these plans. Currently, over 1,000 students have signed.

Many students have described the plans as being a "personal attack" by reducing a space they regularly use as a place for study and a "safe haven" from the academic rigors of college life. "I spend a

majority of my days on the art floor. It's a place I jump out of bed to go to, and the place I feel most comfortable," expressed Talia Guttman (SCW '22).

As of the time of publication, Apfelbaum has declared that, "no decisions have been made about the space despite what students have claimed," and explained that, "the art department has been and will continue to be involved in conversations as we consider different options."

Provost Selma Botman said that plans are still in flux. "Yeshiva University is very proud of Stern's Art Department," she said in a statement. "We value the program and appreciate the feedback that we have received from faculty, students, and alumni. For some months, we have been in discussion with both the Art Department and the Katz School to identify creative ways to reconfigure the space to ensure that both programs have enhanced space. Particularly for the Art Department, this includes upgrading the video studio and outfitting several classrooms with state of the art AV systems."

"These discussions are ongoing and we will share updates as they become available," Botman added.

Events, *Shiurim*, and Student Services Move Online as University Goes Virtual

By **SHLOMIT EBBIN**

As Yeshiva University moved its classes online, school and student run extracurricular events and initiatives have adapted as well. Students, faculty members and clubs have turned to the online video conferencing service Zoom to host events such as *shiurim*, *mishmar*, Counseling Center sessions and talk shows for the YU student body to partake in from the comfort of their homes.

The student councils joined together to create “whereverYUare” WhatsApp groups, platforms they use to inform students of YU’s virtual extracurricular events, starting on March 15. After the initial whereverYUare WhatsApp group exceeded the limit of 256 members, another was formed to accommodate an additional 100 people. Admins of the groups regularly send out Zoom links to various social events such as *shiurim*, Counseling Center speeches, movie nights and other activities run by students and staff. Clubs have been advertising their events by sending out emails via the new Berenevents/Wilfevents email system or by posting on YU Facebook groups.

To make these social events possible, Student Council and the Office of Student Life are continuously working to get events approved, schedule events and send out Zoom links and updates. “Just because we left campus doesn’t mean we stopped having lives outside of class,” said Syms Student Council-Beren President Miriam Schloss (SSSB ‘20). “To the best of our ability, we are trying to do what we have been doing all year — making programming that benefits the student body. A lot has changed in the past few weeks, but that definitely hasn’t.”

Multiple *shiurim* have been offered for Beren students every day at different times throughout the afternoon. Segments such as “Torah With the Roshei Yeshiva” and “Netivot Shalom on the Parsha” with Beren Campus Rabbi Jacob Bernstein continue as they did on campus, now on Zoom, along with many other *shiurim* led by different speakers. On the Wilf side, Undergraduate

Torah Studies (UTS) continues to send out emails regarding *chaburot* and *shiurim* taking place via Zoom and has also provided WhatsApp groups for students who would like to receive updates about Torah-related events. *Roshei yeshiva* such as Rabbi Mordechai Willig and Rabbi Yonah Reiss gave several coed Zoom *shiurim* on relevant issues to the coronavirus and topics on Pesach over the last two weeks. Additionally, coed student-run *mishmar* began last Thursday over Zoom with approximately 20 people in attendance and will continue to take place weekly.

of company. Marnie Weingarten (SCW ‘22), co-director of Music Vs., explained, “We are trying to combat loneliness brought on by the virus while simultaneously fostering intergenerational relationships.”

YU academic resources have been open virtually with campuses closed. Both the Wilf and Beren Writing Centers are offering online tutoring appointments that can be booked using their websites, yu.mywconline.net and yu.mywconline.com, respectively. According to an email sent by the Wilf Writing Center, many stu-

counseling sessions for both men and women — facilitated by Dr. Debra Alper, a psychologist at the YU Counseling Center, and Dr. Jill Katz, professor of archaeology and academic adviser at Stern — were held on March 19 and 26, to “share tips on navigating these difficult times,” according to an email from the Counseling Center.

Additionally, the Counseling Center brought in Director of Staff Development and Clinical Research at Camp HASC Rabbi Dr. Benjy Epstein, who gave a session titled “A Practical Introduction to Mindfulness” on March 23. The

‘library’ open during the day and it wasn’t very well attended, so we discontinued the sessions.”

In the last two weeks, YSU President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB ‘21) has been hosting “Good Shtick! with Zack,” a lighthearted talk show on Zoom in which he interviews YU students on various topics including dating during the coronavirus pandemic, the *halachic* implications of water parks, and other relevant issues. The show takes place Mondays and Thursdays at 10 p.m. and has attracted roughly 80 viewers a night. Greenberg shared with The Commentator that his show is a way for people to feel connected and experience something new during the day. “I just want it to be fun,” he said.

“I think it’s amazing that Zack can bring everyone together during such a hard time,” said Ahuva Wakschlag (SSSB ‘20), who was featured on “Good Shtick! with Zack” on March 23. “Even though we’re social distancing, everyone who comes together to watch Zack’s show really feels like they are part of a community.”

Student leaders have been adapting their clubs to the new virtual system as well. The Stern College Dramatics Society (SCDS) put together a script reading of “Legally Blonde,” which was live-streamed on Thursday, March 26. Other clubs who have run Zoom events include the Social Media Club, which ran a content creation workshop on March 24; the Education Club, which hosted a female-only meet-and-greet event on March 31; and the Nutrition Club, which will be hosting a healthy eating event featuring certified integrative nutrition health coach Gila Guzman, known as Coach Gila, on April 1.

These social events have provided a way for students to stay connected to each other and maintain a campus life atmosphere without a physical campus to bring them together. “Taking part in these virtual events reminds me how fortunate I am to be a part of the YU community,” said Zahava Fertig (SCW ‘21). “Seeing so many familiar faces helps create a sense of comfort and camaraderie.”

“Taking part in these virtual events reminds me how fortunate I am to be a part of the YU community, and seeing so many familiar faces helps create a sense of comfort and camaraderie.”

Zahava Fertig (SCW ‘21)

Despite the health crisis, the Torah Activities Council (TAC) sent 500 copies of the Beren Campus Haggadah, which contains 96 pages of artwork and article submissions from over 50 students on campus, to students all over the United States. The PDF version of the *haggadah* was sent out via email to students all around the world. “We mailed 500 copies all across the United States so that every person would experience that feeling of opening a special book for them, and for some of them, seeing their name and biographical information published alongside their work,” said TAC President Bella Adler (SCW ‘20) about the initiative.

Even with complications caused by social distancing, organizations within YU continue to provide *chesed* opportunities for students. TAC recently partnered with DOROT’s Caring Calls program, which aims to build social connections between the younger and older populations. Similarly, Music Vs., a national organization that works with both the elderly and other people who are in need of company, has also adjusted its programming to fit the needs the virus brings. YU students who participate in these programs have been calling elderly people who are stuck in their homes and in need

of company. Marnie Weingarten (SCW ‘22), co-director of Music Vs., explained, “We are trying to combat loneliness brought on by the virus while simultaneously fostering intergenerational relationships.”

The Career Center continues to have walk-in appointments — now offered online — Monday through Thursday from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., in addition to 30 minute advising appointments and live chat for questions and answers during the day. Academic Advising is also providing virtual appointments which can be made using their regular website. According to emails from Academic Advising, peer tutoring is available to book for virtual appointments on the Beren campus, and students on the Wilf campus should reach out to peer tutors to see if they are continuing with Zoom tutoring.

The Counseling Center has continued to remain active and provide YU students with support. All individual therapy sessions are being conducted by phone or video sessions, and the counseling staff held conference calls for each campus individually on March 13 to discuss how to help manage the anxiety and feelings that these circumstances can produce, which approximately 50 students from each campus attended. They have also sent out emails advising students on how they can take care of their mental health. “Drop in”

session reached its 100 person limit capacity within minutes. “Dr. Epstein’s talk helped me embrace the uncertainty of the situation we are in,” said Jeremy Koffsky (YC ‘22). Dr. Epstein also gave a session on March 30. On March 31, Dr. Rochelle Aurubel co-led a group with the Career Center to address internships, how to pursue opportunities and how to manage uncertainty. “We have been doing several types of things to stay connected with students and to provide support as best we can without the usual face to face contact,” said Director of Counseling Staff Yael Muskat.

Beyond programs addressing students’ struggles with the stress of the pandemic, student councils took charge of an initiative to address students struggling with productivity. A virtual library “co-working space” was launched on Zoom when classes moved online, and remained open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the first week of online classes for students who needed the motivation of seeing other students working around them to get their work done.

These sessions were discontinued after the first week, according to Schloss. “Since [the] majority of the whereverYUare events are happening at night (EST),” explained Schloss, “we could only have the



President Berman Announces Refunds in Call with Student Body

By YITZCHAK CARROLL,
SRULI FRUCHTER and
YOSEF LEMEL

President Ari Berman announced full refunds for remaining caf card balances as well as a 30% refund of spring semester housing charges, among other updates, in a call with the student body on Wednesday, April 22.

According to President Berman, refunds will first be used to settle students' outstanding balances to the university, and will be credited to fees in the fall semester for returning students. Students who will not return to campus in the fall will receive refunds via direct deposit. More specific refund policy details will be released by YU online by Friday, Berman added.

Noting the plan for student reimbursement, President Berman referenced the financial hardships incurred to the university for housing and food costs even with no

students present on campus. He further urged students to "please keep in mind that this situation has resulted in significant financial consequences [for YU], and anyone who is willing to donate these funds — it is certainly very appreciated at this time as well."

opportunities for students to ensure they have a "meaningful and fulfilling summer," President Berman said.

Plans for the fall semester are "more of a question," according to President Berman, who added that the university is "planning for all contingencies." Fall 2020 could be

educating the leaders of the world of tomorrow ... There is a moral dimension, that we know that we need to be in session, that we will always be in session."

With regard to student belongings still in dormitory rooms, President Berman said that students will not be allowed to return back to campus to pack their rooms until "restrictions lighten up," citing New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's executive order aimed at curbing individuals from congregating. As of the time of publication, the governor's press office did not respond to The Commentator's inquiry on this matter.

Academic and athletic awards alike will be announced in the coming weeks, and a working group consisting of students and administrators has been assembled to make plans for commencement, President Berman said, noting that there has been "a lot of feedback for an in-person commencement at the right time."

According to President Berman, refunds will first be used to settle students' outstanding balances to the university, and will be credited to fees in the fall semester for returning students.

Turning to academics, President Berman shared that online summer courses will be offered, to consist of several options including separate secular and Jewish studies programs as well as a "Torah Umadda" option that would offer a mix of courses in both areas. While many students will be unable to work at in-person summer internships, Dean Noam Wasserman has endeavored to find remote internship and leadership

completely online, in-person or a hybrid of the two options. The evolving situation and the fear of a second wave of COVID-19 will be taken into consideration. He added that the university plans to train the faculty over the summer to be "online teachers," promising a "more enriched experience online" in the fall.

"Yeshiva University is in session," President Berman remarked. "We are

Redesigned Hebrew Program for Wilf Students Beginning in Fall 2020

By SRULI FRUCHTER

Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus Hebrew Department will be rolling out a new Hebrew program for students in Yeshiva College (YC) and Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). These changes were announced to Wilf students via email on April 6 and are set to go into effect for the fall semester of 2020.

In the current program, depending on Hebrew placement test scores given before the semester, all first-year students are placed into one of four Hebrew tracks: 1004, 1104, 1205 or 1306; the first two are three semesters, the third is two semesters and the last is only one semester. Courses in the 1004 track uniquely focus on Biblical Hebrew while the remaining three are based on modern Hebrew. The new program will replace that model with a new, three-course sequence of HEB 1010, 1020 and

1030. Students placed into either 1010, 1020 or 1030 will begin three, two or one semester(s) of Hebrew, respectively.

"Yeshiva College has had a Hebrew requirement forever. This is for good reason. Hebrew has long been the lifeblood of Jewish peoplehood, the language and symbol that bound Jews from around the world to each other and to the foundational texts of Judaism itself," shared Professor

to create an organized and measurable "competence level" that students will reach upon completing HEB 1030. If a student "places out" of HEB 1030, he will be required to take one semester of advanced Hebrew, selecting one of many newly-made courses, including Hebrew literature, biblical Hebrew and Hebrew for specific professions. All students who complete HEB 1030 are eligible to enroll in an advanced Hebrew course.

Academic Affairs Shalom Holtz of Yeshiva College, Koller told The Commentator.

"This [new] curriculum is a near-perfect fit for our student population," commented Holtz. "Apart from improving what will be taught, the program will be simpler to navigate, with only three sequential required courses, at most, all in a single stream. Students will be able to enter the sequence at the appropriate course, and complete

"...we were running four different programs, at five different times of the week, to accommodate all the students," explained Koller about the current program. "Some students had to take Hebrew during lunch, others had to run from shiur to Hebrew without a moment to pause, and overall it was very taxing." To remedy this problem, the new program will limit class sizes to 15-18 students and each course level will be offered at least four different times during the week, allowing students flexibility so they will not need to take their courses during lunchtime.

In the past, some students have tried to maneuver the placement test to place into a Hebrew level that was easier for them, rather than the Hebrew level appropriate for them. Koller explained that because of its streamlined system, the new program disincentivizes that decision and makes appropriate placement more appealing.

"These changes will hopefully produce YU graduates who are not just well versed in Hebrew, but passionate about Hebrew, and can use those skills and that devotion to build a vibrant Jewish present and future."

—
Dr. Aaron Koller

of Near Eastern Studies and Chair of Jewish Studies Dr. Aaron Koller. "It is inconceivable that a graduate of Yeshiva University would not be competent in Hebrew."

The new program will use the Brandeis Hebrew Series textbooks

These changes were developed throughout numerous conversations with SSSB Dean Noam Wasserman and Assistant Administrative Dean Debra Pine of Syms, along with Dean Karen Bacon and Associate Dean of

the sequence from there."

Additionally, the new program aims to fix the current program's long-standing problem of creating scheduling conflicts for students because of the Hebrew courses' limited time slots.

Continued on Page 8



The new Hebrew program is set to go into effect for the Fall of 2020.

Anti-Semitic Trolls ‘Zoombomb’ President Berman’s Message to Student Body

By SRULI FRUCHTER

Yeshiva University students and staff were subjected to a barrage of anti-Semitic messages and pictures as around a dozen anti-Semitic trolls abruptly joined a scheduled Zoom video conference call with President Ari Berman on Tuesday, March 31. The event, titled “A Special Message to Our Students,” began at 7:45 p.m. and was promoted via email to the student body.

This incident, a type of harassment known as “Zoombombing,” took place shortly after the video call began. Messages like “hail hitler,” “SHUT THE F--- UP JEWS,” and “IMMA GAS YALL” were sent into the Zoom chat, as President Berman spoke. The chat feature was disabled shortly after the messages began, prompting the trolls to begin holding anti-Semitic caricatures and memes to their video frames. One user showed a picture that read “THE HOLOCAUST NEVER HAPPENED.”

This incident transpired as YU has moved classes, events and programs online via Zoom, following the outbreak of COVID-19 at the Wilf Campus in early March.

“When the first [troll] account joined, and I saw a Hitler background on the call, I assumed it was a YU student playing a sick joke,” shared Elazar Abrahams (YC ‘22), a student on the video call who later tweeted about the incident. “But as the rest of them followed, it soon became clear what was happening ... We tend to forget how widespread anti-Semitism is.”

Once this incident began to unfold, Abrahams said, “YU locked the chat ... and tried to kick everyone out. I’m not sure if they got everyone because it was hard to

catch all of them.”

According to Abrahams, President Berman “had no reaction” and “did not acknowledge” the crude messages and anti-Semitic pictures being shared by the anti-Semitic infiltrators. “He completed the speech through the chaos,” Abrahams commented. “I think he made the right call by ignoring it in the moment and just continuing the talk as normal. We can’t let these people win.”

President Berman was addressing around 150 students and faculty members when the incident occurred. According to Jonah Loskove (SSSB ‘22), a student who was on President Berman’s video call when the incident occurred, the speech focused on “making the most” of the global COVID-19 pandemic because the current situation is happening “for a reason.”

The chat feature was disabled shortly after the messages began, prompting the trolls to begin holding anti-Semitic caricatures and memes to their video frames.

“It is disheartening to see this act of blatant antisemitism,” added Loskove.

“Zoombombing” is a new form of cyber-harassment that needs to be combated,” Anti-Defamation League (ADL) CEO Jonathan Greenblatt tweeted. “What happened to these Yeshiva classes is yet another example of why we cannot allow this #antisemitic & #hateful targeting to continue.” He also shared a link with guidance by the ADL on how to respond to Zoombombing.

Under the condition of anonymity, one *shiur* assistant shared that MYP *Mashgiach* Rabbi Ely Bacon informed his group chat

of *shiur* assistants that they “had to change things for *sichas mussar* tonight because Zoom accounts are getting bombed,” referring to the incident on President Berman’s video call. He went on to note that *sichas mussar shiurim* will be on a private channel that requires students to use a password to join, as opposed to sharing the information through email.

As classes move online to promote social distancing, Zoombombing has disrupted colleges nationwide, including the University of Southern California and Binghamton University.

Earlier April 1, a Keren B’Yavneh (KBY) *shiur* given by Rabbi Moshe Stav was Zoombombed by trolls making anti-Semitic and Islamophobic comments, according to Jacob Stern (YC and Katz ‘22). “[The trolls] were clearly talking to each other,” Stern ob-

served, commenting that the Zoombombing seemed to be coordinated.

During a Zoom call by renowned Jewish scholar Rabbi Asher Weiss on Sunday, March 25, another Zoombombing incident took place. According to NBC News, in the midst of the calls, unknown participants began shouting “Hitler did nothing wrong” and “Heil Hitler,” while another held a copy of “Mein Kampf” to their screen.

On Monday, March 31, a similar incident occurred during a Zoom video call by Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff (YC ‘09). Promoted on Facebook, the program was titled “The

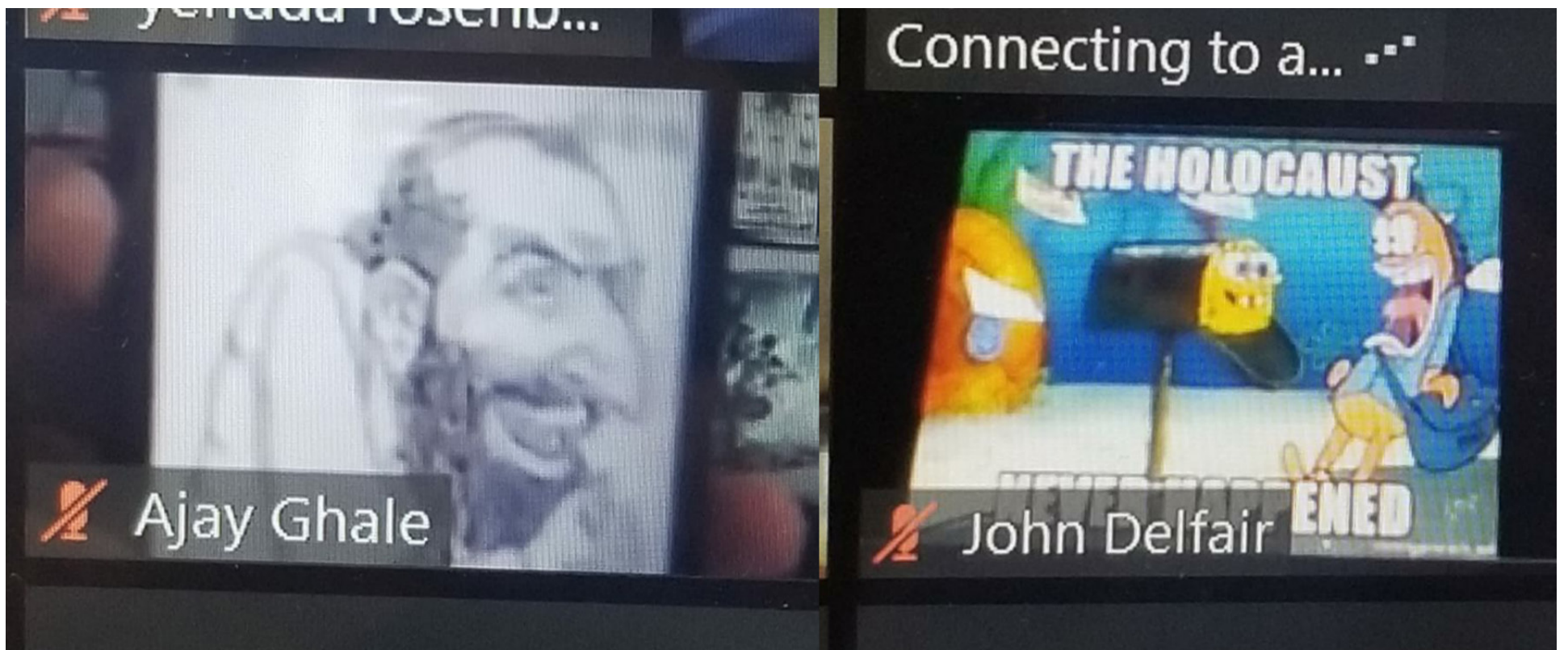
Rav” and featured a conversation with Dr. Tova Lichtenstein on Rabbi Joseph B. Solovetchik’s life and legacy. “About 150 people tuned into the class, including several rabbinic figures,” said Doniel Weinreich (YC ‘20), who was on the Zoom call when anti-Semitic trolls began to “Zoombomb” the program, shouting obscenities and screensharing pornography. According to Weinreich, after the conference was restarted with screensharing and chat disabled, most of the trolls left.

“We are deeply upset to hear about the incidents involving this type of attack,” a Zoom spokesperson told HuffPost about the YU Zoombombing incident, adding that Zoom “strongly condemns such behavior.”

YU has experienced incidents involving anti-Semitism before. Last fall, The Commentator reported that white supremacist forum Vanguard News Network posted hundreds of photos of former and current YU faculty and students, mocking Jews and ridiculing the YU community. The previous fall, numerous swastikas were found graffitied on various YU residencies, prompting an investigation by the New York City Police Department’s Hate Crime Task Force, The Commentator reported at the time.

In a statement to The Commentator, President Berman said, “The experience highlighted to me how one’s true character is revealed during times of crisis. Haters will hate and a time of anxiety and pressure will bring that out even more. We respond, however, with love. Our goal is not simply to mute the hate but is to add more goodness and kindness in this world.”

YU did not return a request for comment on whether they will be pursuing legal action or police involvement.



Two of the anti-Semitic images that were displayed on the Zoom call with President Berman.

ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

HEBREW PROGRAM,
continued from Page 7

According to the original email, the new placement test will first be administered online later this spring, but Hebrew Prof. Aliza Schachter began the first HEB 1030 course for Post Pesach students on Monday, April 20.

“My gut reaction is that the new system is positive and beneficial all around,” shared Yoni Mayer (SSSB ‘23), who will begin YU in the fall. “To be able to take Hebrew through a lens that you want with the many options [available] is great.”

Students in the current program who have completed 1205 or 1305 are, by the end of the semester, considered to have completed their Hebrew requirements. Those currently taking 1005 or 1105 will be able to

take 1006 or 1106 in the fall. Additionally, going forward, the option of fulfilling one’s Hebrew requirement through the Rosen School/Hebrew University Hebrew online course will only be accepted if taken for full academic credit and given prior approval.

Koller added, “I hope, therefore, that these changes will not only make the required Hebrew program itself more efficient, user-friendly, and educationally effective, but will also provide a spark to breathe some

life into the study of Hebrew on campus more broadly as well. And this will hopefully produce YU graduates who are not just well versed in Hebrew, but passionate about Hebrew, and can use those skills and that devotion to build a vibrant Jewish present and future.”

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Time Differences and Virtual Science Labs — Here's How YU Students Feel About Online Classes

By YOSEF LEMEL

Editor's Note: The Commentator's new "We Asked, Y(O)U Answered" column provides students with a forum to express their opinions and/or experiences regarding various aspects of student life.

As a result of the novel coronavirus pandemic, Yeshiva University has moved its classes online through Zoom, an online video conferencing service, for at least the duration of the 2019-20 academic year. The Commentator reached out to the student body via email and social media to provide their opinions regarding online classes. Students were asked whether online classes were more or less difficult than in-person classes. The responses of six YU students regarding this situation are provided below.

Ely Bloch
(SSSB '21)

Major: Finance

"Online class in 3 words: 'very not ideal,' but it works better than I thought. Admittedly, it's much harder to focus outside the classroom setting as the onus of attention is almost solely on the student. The absence of a physically-present professor to encourage participation and prohibit cell phone use — as is standard in many in-person classes — creates a challenge even for the most inclined student. While many students prefer not being mandated to attend class on campus, it's ironic how attendance levels have increased from the move online, though likely to the detriment of *real* participation. I'm generally a front row, take notes kind of student, yet even I falter in my studious attentiveness in this new format.

"Gratitude and praise must be given where it is due. The administration made swift moves to

educate and train the professors to equip them with the skills they need to run their classes as normally, efficiently and effectively as possible. And while some professors seem as though they haven't taken full advantage of the 2 week learning period of no classes, most have and it's encouraging to see, and helpful to students to bridge

(SCW '22)

Major: Biology

"The transition from in-person classes to online classes was very sudden. It feels different and not in a good way. [Classes] all seem the same now and there is no atmosphere of learning; I feel more disconnected. It's especially harder because [as someone who

on Friday, which runs from 6:30-9:00 PST (Pacific Standard Time).

"Since I have trouble falling asleep at night (which is partly my fault), I typically get about 4-5 hours of sleep on average. This has forced me to begin taking daily naps, further making a mess of my sleep schedule. I typically attend my classes, but I have certainly

"I found that overall it's a much tougher experience. Class somehow feels more boring... The constant threat of distraction makes class almost unbearable; I fail many a time. My lab is a total and utter failure, while music class takes an odd spin, as the lag on zoom forbids [the class from] singing together without sounding like squawking geese.

"I find that there is more stress than before, and the workload feels heavier, as if somehow the teachers are assigning more homework and harder tests without telling the class.

"Shiur and seder are harder too, as being in a *beit midrash* cultivates an environment for strong learning, laser focus and fewer distractions. Being at my desk doesn't ensure any of those things and it fails to give me the right incentive, the right push, to make it better.

"There is one thing about it that I like. I think now that we have all been under much stress, we can start to appreciate being in YU. Over the last semester, I heard a few people say, 'I just wish I could go home for the rest of the semester.' Well, now that we are all home, we all seem to want to go back.

"I wish there was a way to know you're in the good old days before you've actually left them." - Andy Bernard

Editor's note: We received many responses that did not make it into the column. Respondents raised many issues that affect their virtual classroom experiences, such as poor internet connection, professors ending classes overtime and the difficulty of collaborating with students living in different time zones for group projects. Thanks to everyone who responded to the survey! Stay tuned for the next column, which will be about lifestyle changes since the outbreak of the virus.

"Being in a beit midrash cultivates an environment for strong learning, laser focus and fewer distractions. Being at my desk doesn't ensure any of those things and it fails to give me the right incentive, the right push, to make it better."

—
Shuie Berger (YC '23)

the gap of difficulties which arise from the online format.

"Overall, nothing surprising from this obviously necessary switch to Zoom classes. Thank God I haven't heard or been privy to any classes which had students 'Zoom-bomb' their classes/professors. For the most part, it's classes as usual, but the added grade scale change and relaxed attitude of (at least) my professors towards grading help alleviate the stress of the 'college-from-home' environment. I simply wish students wouldn't use it as an excuse to relax their levels of study, but rather utilize it for what it's meant to be: a safety net, not a mattress on which to lie back and be comfortable."

CJ Glicksman
(YC '20)

Majors: Philosophy and Music

"I've found it significantly more difficult to focus during online courses. I end up sitting in the same chair all day, and looking at a screen simply cannot compare to the dynamics of a classroom. Online classes have proven to be extremely ineffective for my ability to focus and learn."

Elizabeth Kershteyn

lives abroad] I am several hours ahead of New York City time so my classes start at 4 p.m. and finish at 10 p.m. at the earliest and 2 a.m. at the latest... Thankfully, a lot of my professors are very understanding and willing to help.

"The worst part of my courses as a pre-med student who is majoring in Biology are labs. It's not even a class now. The instructors just send us the data and we complete lab reports. It doesn't feel like we're learning anything at all. I understand that there's not much they can do about it, but I feel like they can find a more interactive method. In the end, the whole Zoom experience is very stressful and extremely tiring but I'm happy for the opportunity to be home and enjoy some home-cooked meals in between the classes."

Mitch Goulson
(SSSB '23)

Major: Accounting

"Since I'm currently back home in Los Angeles, I begin my classes three hours earlier than those on the other side of the country. My schedule entails that I wake up at no later than 7 a.m. on any day. For instance, I have an Info Systems class with Prof. Brabazon

slept through a plethora of them in this online setting.

"I hope my grades don't suffer as a result of this, but even if they don't, I feel disadvantaged when compared to students on the east coast, who get to wake up at normal hours for their college classes."

Shifra Lindenberg
(SSSB '21)

Major: Marketing

"I find that online classes are more difficult than in-person classes. I take notes on my computer and it's extremely difficult to keep switching between the Google doc in which I take my notes to the teacher's notes or slides that are on Zoom. I've tried looking at my teacher's slides while they present but then I lose my place and I don't know what topic the teacher is up to. Zoom was made for conference calls, not classrooms. While I understand that the university is doing the best they can during this pandemic, most notably giving up the P/N option for classes, students like me are still struggling and unfortunately, there are some problems that just can't be solved."

Shuie (Joshua) Berger
(YC '23)

Major: Biology



Yeshiva University has moved its classes online through Zoom, an online video conferencing service.



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FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: 80 years ago, the Nazi Germans perpetrated an unprecedented mass murder of the European Jewish population. Many Americans during the early years of the war were either unaware of these atrocities or apathetic to the pleas of the victims. Published here are articles from a special six-page issue of The Commentator detailing the reactions of students at Yeshiva University to the horrors of the Holocaust in 1943.

From the Archives (March 4, 1943; Volume 8 Issue 7) — Save Us, O Lord: An Editorial

By **JOSEPH KARASICK**
and **THE COMMENTATOR**
GOVERNING BOARD OF
1942-3

Ten years ago in Germany there came into power a man who did not believe in man — or God. This man was the epitome of everything against which enlightened mankind had been fighting since the dawn of civilization, and his first official act was the sacrificing on his altars of animalic cruelty, debauchery, and supreme hatred the Jewish citizens of his state.

Yet, the world kept silent.

His slaughter benches became redder and redder with the blood of his people. The drops accumulated and became raging torrents, and as the years went on they bore ghastly witness to the extermination of a portion of mankind.

Yet, the world kept silent.

The tidal wave of chaos and havoc overflowed the sluice gates, and this flood of fury poured out all over Europe, tearing out everything in its path — appeased for

the moment only when mixed with Jewish blood. Rob the Jew! Kill the Jew! Exterminate the Jew!

Yet, the world kept silent.

The world did not realize that this stigmatized Jew was its pulse. It did not realize that rot and decay were setting in, that when the Jew suffers it is always symptomatic of a greater and far more deadly illness. And even when, finally, the world decided to take up arms, "expediency" prevented it from demanding justice for the first heroic soldiers who fought this monster.

Blasted appeasement and weak-kneed cowardice was all that it was! While the world was sacrificing itself on an altar of "expediency," the Jewish people was being sacrificed for all humanity, and that same indifferent world is now paying dearly for turning its eyes away, for saying "Peace, Peace" when there was no peace.

Conditions have now reached a head — late enough to be sure. With the blood of two million murdered Jews screaming out for revenge, rumblings of protest and demands

have dedicated ourselves to the task of making those rumblings stronger and stronger. We have taken upon ourselves the sacred duty of making every human being with a spark of mercy and righteous indignation bring pressure upon the leaders of the United Nations to guarantee for our brethren a fifth freedom — the freedom to live. Or if to die, to die as human beings, and not as helpless lambs being led to the slaughter.

This publication is our initial attempt. Through it we hope to create a militant nucleus — on the campus,

be translated into dynamic reality.

Whether we shall succeed or not depends wholly upon the reader. If what is presented in the ensuing pages is read with the proper measure of mind and heart and soul, we will succeed; if not, this will but be a hollow voice in the wilderness of indifference.

Yet, it goes still deeper. We are students of a theological seminary. Our lives are bound up in the work of the Lord. We hope some day to become leaders of Jewry, to mould a good and spiritual people.

But we, the living, cannot rest while our brethren are dying. The words in our holy books become blurred because of the burning tears which blind us. And although we know that the ultimate decision rests in the hands of G-d, we also feel that it is incumbent upon us to let our brothers know that we are not forgetting them in this, their darkest hour — to let them know, that besides our prayers, we are trying our utmost to make mankind itself create out of their black misery a new humanity and a real civilization.

"With the blood of two million murdered Jews screaming out for revenge, rumblings of protest and demands for action are finally issuing forth. The stomach of human decency is vomiting in revolt!"

Joseph Karasick and The Commentator Governing Board of 1942-3

"It might be said it is a Jewish war," furtively whispered so-called leaders of freedom. "It might lead to embarrassing complications if we bring the Jew into the limelight," worried so-called fighters of liberty.

for action are finally issuing forth. The stomach of human decency is vomiting in revolt!

We, the students of Yeshiva College and The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary,

from the pulpit, on the floors of Congress, in the schoolroom, on street corners, wherever a thinking being can be found — which will storm the gates of our leaders and demand that abstruse principles

From the Archives (March 4, 1943; Volume 8 Issue 7) — Students Condemn Nazi Atrocities; Demand Action

By **COMMENTATOR STAFF**

Representing all the departments of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and Yeshiva College, an overflow crowd of students, alumni, and faculty members assembled Tuesday morning, Feb. 23, and condemned the Nazi atrocities against the Jews. A vigorous protest was lodged against the United Nations' silence on the face of "the brutal obliteration of a who people."

The assembly gave its

unanimous approval to a strongly-worded resolution urging the American government to assume the lead in effecting the rescue of the European Jews now facing extinction. In addition, the resolution urged that the Palestinian immigration laws be annulled to allow the Jewish refugees from persecution "a haven in the Jewish National Home."

Retaliation for Atrocities

"The governments of the United Nations must impress the Germans that acts of atrocities against the

Jews will result in immediate retaliation," the statement continued. "We appeal to the leaders and statesmen of the justice-loving nations of the world to act now while there is yet time."

The resolution concluded with a plea for concrete action, rather than expressions of sympathy and commiseration. "In regaining the lost soul of the world, let us not discover that in the process, we have, by our own indifference, lost our own."

Preceding the adoption of the resolution, Abraham Zuroff '41, president of the Students'

Organization of Yeshiva, briefly outlined the state of the European Jews today. "The record shows," he stated, "that over two million Jews have already been ruthlessly slaughtered. The Nazis have already conceived and executed a satanic program beyond the grasp of the decent human mind ... What is needed now is action, not pity, action, not sympathy."

Walker Urges Action

Discussing the immediate problem of "what can be done by the individual student," Jacob Walker,

president of the Yeshiva College Student Council, declared: "Our own beloved country is, thank G-d, still a democracy and public opinion is still a powerful force. The voice of decent, justice-loving people must be heard." The speaker concluded with a spiritual plea to the gathering to send letters to its representatives in Congress, protesting America's indifference to the plight of the Jews.

Solomon Gopin, representing the alumni of the institution, then read the resolution which was unqualifiedly accepted.

From the Archives (March 4, 1943; Volume 8 Issue 7) — Text of Resolution

We the students of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and of the Yeshiva College, raise our voices in solemn protest against the iniquitous silence and callous passivity on the part of the United Nations, in the face of total annihilation of all the Jews on the continent of Europe.

Hitler and his accomplices in crime have committed themselves to a policy of barbarous extermination, the magnitude of which is unparalleled in the annals of human

history. Millions of Jews have already met a martyred death in the German slaughterhouses; millions more are facing imminent destruction at the hands of the ruthless Nazi butchers.

We, citizens of a free country where the torch of freedom still burns with unabated intensity, cannot resign ourselves to the belief that the conscience of mankind has become so morally numb as to view with equanimity the total obliteration of a people. For the Jews do not bleed alone. Israel's wounds are the

wounds of all mankind.

In view of the aforementioned we demand that:

1.) Immediate negotiations be started through the good offices of the Vatican or a neutral country, for the immediate release of all Jews imprisoned on the continent of Europe.

2.) That the gates of Palestine, the Jewish national home, be thrown open to these innocent victims as a haven of refuge. All restrictions on immigration must be lifted!

3.) That the governments of the United Nations impress the Germans that acts of atrocities against the Jews will result in immediate retaliation.

We appeal to the leaders and statesmen of the justice-loving nations of the world to act now while there is yet time. Recent reports from reliable sources indicate that thousands of Jews can be saved from the inferno created by the Nazi hordes.

If the United Nations fail to act now, they will have placed an

indelible stigma on themselves second only to the barbarism of the instigators and perpetrators themselves. Mere expressions of pity, sympathy, and commiseration are but empty gestures and a hollow mockery if they are not translated into concrete action.

In regaining the lost soul of the world let us not, G-d forbid, discover that in the process, we have, by our own indifference, lost our own.

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

From the Archives (March 4, 1943; Volume 8 Issue 7) — We Ask: “Give Us Back Our Homeland”

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Close to two thousand years the Jew has wandered from country to country from continent to continent; nowhere could he stay, nowhere could he rest so he trudged along the road to no man's land. A day here, a day there, so has he travelled across the length and breadth of the universe. When he sat down to think only one idea permeated his mind, “next year in Jerusalem.” So he has told his children throughout the ages, next year! next year!

There were periods in his life when he was subjected to the ruthlessness of mankind. There were times when he was robbed and murdered, pillaged and plundered. Whole communities were razed and communal populations annihilated. But never in all his history has he undergone a more complete and systematic extermination as in the past decade. Europe has become an inferno of hate and slaughter. Man stands arrayed on an opposite front from his fellow man and in the midst of all this misery of mankind stands the Jew, beaten and tortured in

the blood-caves of the continent.

The Cry of the Jew

To all mankind we cry out — why? What have we done to deserve this fate? Whom have we killed? We ask not riches, nor fame, nor fortune. Let us live!! Permit us just to rest our wearied bodies on the cold stones of your land. This, too, you do not grant us. Have we not given of our sweat and blood to the growth of the fatherland? Must the blood of the Jew forever grease the wheels of civilization?

To you, noble England, we can only say this: We are sick of being

butchered in all parts of the earth. We shall no longer be cattle to be herded for slaughter on chopping blocks. Can't you see that we are breathing our last breath? Can't you see that mother earth has reached its saturation point with Jewish blood? Do not mock at us because we are small in number or weak physically. Remember, Palestine is ours and shall be so forever because G-d in his infinite mercy has granted it to us. Remember, too, that our spirit is still high and shall never be daunted by the beastliness of men. G-d shall fight our battle.

“In That Day.....”

When this black age of unbelievable torture and suffering shall pass and the voice of freedom shall ring throughout the world and when the shackles of hate and despair shall forever be broken, our people shall come forth proudly and staunchly. Higher and higher shall we rise above the shoulders of man. Slowly but surely shall we march along the glorious road that leads to our everlasting homeland. Lo and behold the gates shall open. Israel shall forever be — a people!

From the Archives (March 4, 1943; Volume 8 Issue 7) — Proposals Must be Adopted — The Time to Act Is Now

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

It seems as if the entire democratic world of freedom-loving countries has become calloused to the extermination of millions of defenseless and innocent people. These deeds of savagery have undoubtedly strengthened the resolve of the United Nations to overthrow the barbarous Nazi tyranny. They have even effected the issuance of a statement declaring that “the people of the United Nations sympathize with all victims of Nazi crime and will hold the perpetrators of these crimes to strict accountability in a day of reckoning which will surely come.”

But, is a mere declaration unescorted by practical action commensurate with the ghastliness of a tragedy that has befallen an entire people? Has verbal consolation already been recognized and accepted as an adequate substitute for immediate action which alone may save the remnants of a martyred nation? Even in the arsenal of democracy — America — only faint clamorings for action have been audible. Evidence of severe shock has manifested itself neither in the American press, in public opinion at large, nor in the lawmaking bodies of this Republic.

We Must Awaken From State of Apathy

The apathy and indifference alone that greeted the publication by the American Jewish Congress of the documented story of Nazi atrocities against the Jews, is an exhibition of the complacency that has gripped the Christian peoples of the free world, and the most frightening aspect of the situation is the fact that even a large portion of American Jewry finds itself immersed in a pool of lethargy and smugness. Has the entire civilized world descended to a state of moral bankruptcy? Perhaps even the word bankruptcy is incorrect for it necessarily implies a prior assumption of obligations and responsibilities.

But maybe this attitude has

finally changed. Perhaps the conscience of a people has finally been aroused.

At any rate, the huge protest meeting of Monday night last served its purpose in finally setting forth a concrete platform to the leaders of the United Nations. They are proposals which no civilized being can refuse — and to refuse, or just as bad, to ignore them, is not civilized.

The following are some of the proposals — all of which we heartily endorse — which were addressed to our President and through him to the governments of the United Nations, and let every reader of this paper absorb them and realize once and for all that something can be done if he so wills it:

1. Through the intermediation of neutral agencies, the German Government and the governments of states it now partly dominates or controls — such as Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary — should be approached with the view to secure their agreement to the release of their Jewish victims and to consent to their emigration to such havens of refuge as will be provided.

2. The United Nations should take steps, without delay, to designate and establish a number of sanctuaries in Allied or neutral states to serve, under agreed conditions, as havens of refuge for those Jews whose release from captivity may be arranged for, or who may find their way to freedom through efforts of their own.

3. The procedure that now prevails in the administration of existing immigration law in the United States should be revised and adjusted to the war conditions and in order that refugees from Nazi-occupied territories may find sanctuaries here within such quotas.

4. Subject to the maintenance of national security, Great Britain should be asked to provide for receiving a reasonable quota of the victims escaping from Nazi-occupied territories and to provide for their accommodation for the duration.

5. The United Nations should

urge the republics of Latin America to modify such administrative regulations that now make immigration under the law extremely difficult and to endeavor under existing immigration law to find temporary havens of refuge for an agreed number of refugees.

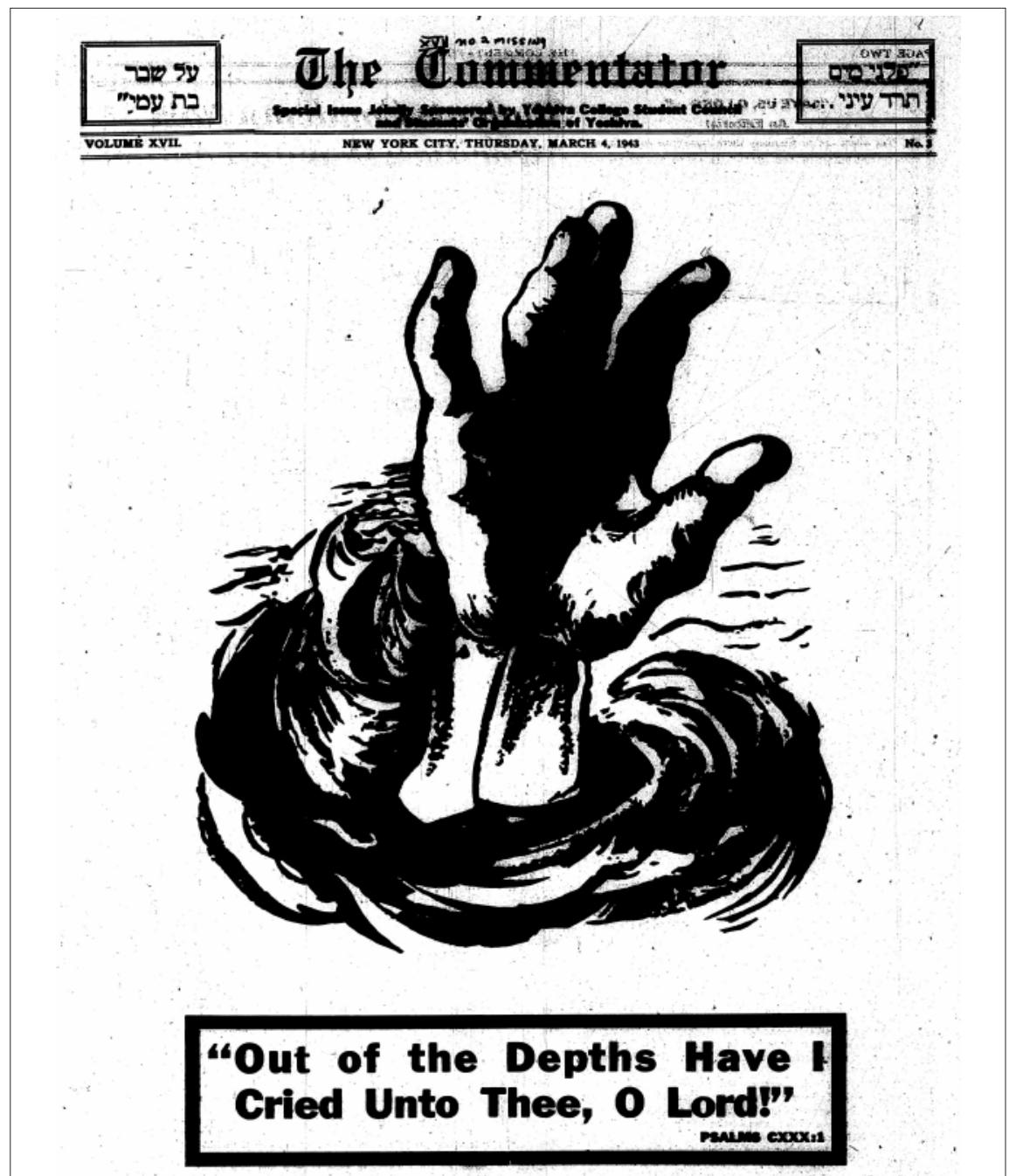
England Must Open Doors of Palestine

6. Overriding pre-war political considerations, England should be asked to open the doors of Palestine — the Jewish homeland — for Jewish immigration, and the offer of hospitality made by the Jewish community of Palestine should be accepted.

7. The United Nations should provide financial guarantees to all such neutral states as have

provided temporary refuge to Jews from Nazi-occupied territories. The transfer of such refugees to the designated sanctuaries should be undertaken without delay.

Remember, the time to act is now! Tomorrow may be too late!



Intro to Bible Offerings and Enrollment Plummet Following Requirement Changes; Future Uncertain

By DONIEL WEINREICH

Bible: Text, Context and Tradition — commonly known by its former title “Intro to Bible” — is not being offered in the Spring 2020 semester. This marks just the second semester since Fall 2003 (the earliest semester data is available on MyYU) in which there are no Intro to Bible classes being offered, the other being Spring 2019. In the single Intro to Bible class offered in Fall 2019, only one student was enrolled. The last semester in which more than a single student took Intro to Bible was Fall 2018, during which 83 students were enrolled in five Intro to Bible classes.

Intro to Bible features a curriculum composed primarily of sources from *Chazal* and *rishonim*, geared towards understanding the development and canonization of the Masoretic Text, the methodologies of various traditional commentators, and the ancient Near East context of biblical texts.

For decades, Intro to Bible has been a required course for men at YU and a prerequisite for all other Bible classes. It has often been considered the linchpin of a *Torah Umadda* education and part of the “bridge” between traditional Torah learning and collegiate studies. The course has also frequently been attacked by traditionalists who deem its content and tone religiously problematic, sometimes provoking disputes between religious factions at YU.

Past years have featured at least five Intro to Bible classes offered in the fall semester and slightly fewer in the spring, taught by many different professors. Usually, at least one is offered exclusively within the Isaac Breuer College (IBC). Intro to Bible classes have frequently been

overtallied, with most semesters having over 100 students enrolled in the course. Before the 2017-2018 academic year, the average fall semester had 199 students enrolled in eight classes, and the average spring had 99 students enrolled in four. The peak was in Fall 2008, when 309 students were enrolled in 12 classes.

justified the change, claiming — with sadness — that students in Yeshiva College no longer consider the topics raised in such Jewish Studies classes essential to their Modern Orthodox identity and that the department has failed to transmit this vision. He also noted that the changes allow greater flexibility and for more topics to be

changing the college requirements will counter declining enrollment and it yielded to students who want to finish their education quicker and with more convenience. He claimed that the decision was made under administrative pressure and without proper forethought, it undermines the place of Bible atop the hierarchy of Jewish Studies and

Koller explained that a significant short-term decline was expected given the elimination of the requirement and the fact that many interested students — especially upperclassmen — have already taken the course. Koller said that the department currently “absolutely intend[s] to continue offering [Intro to Bible]” and that he thinks it’s “a fantastic course.” While the department has not yet determined exactly how often the course will be taught in the future or the rotation of professors who will teach it, Koller hopes that one class could be filled each semester. However, he noted that since it is no longer a requirement, the course would be reevaluated and possibly subject to elimination if there is a persistent lack of interest — similarly to any other elective course.

Currently, there is one Bible: Text, Context and Tradition class listed among the course offerings for Fall 2020.

[Intro to Bible] has often been considered the linchpin of a Torah Umadda education and part of the “bridge” between traditional Torah learning and collegiate studies.

Some of the decline can be explained by falling enrollment. At the peak in Fall 2008, there were 1218 male undergraduates, whereas there were only 1029 this past fall. However, a significant portion of the decline can also be attributed to recent changes in the Jewish Studies requirements for men at YU.

In 2015, all of the traditional academic Jewish Studies requirements were made optional for men in the Sy Syms School of Business, who could now instead opt to take a series of three new courses on Jewish Values in the Contemporary World and one course on Business and Jewish Law. Enrollment in Intro to Bible has been on a downward trend ever since, tracking with a corresponding decline in YC enrollment from 599 students in Fall 2015 to 466 students in Fall 2019.

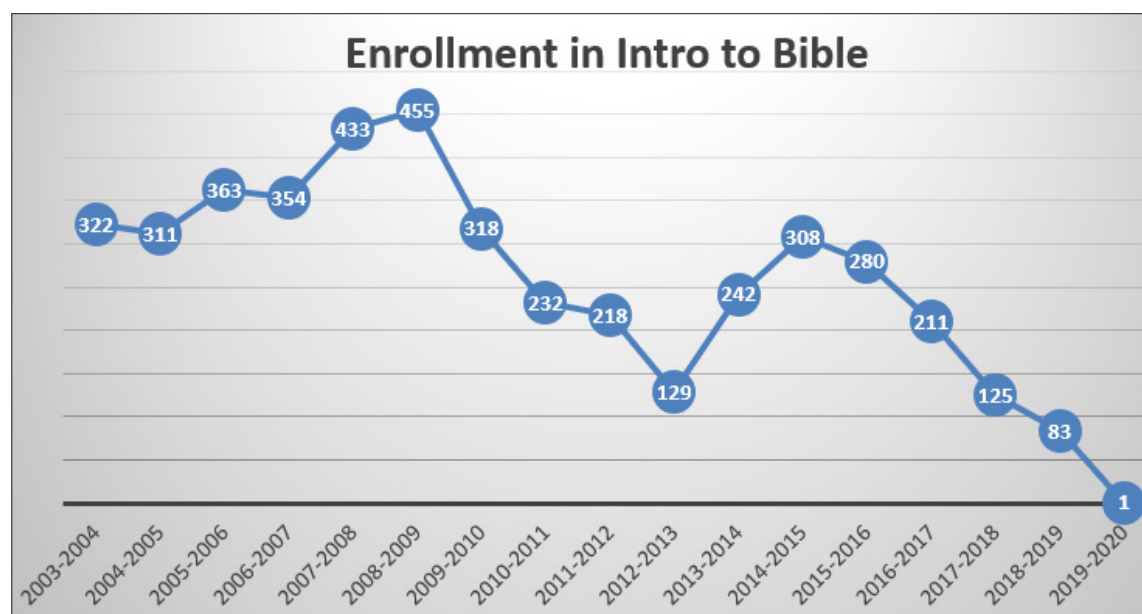
Last semester, the Jewish Studies requirement for Yeshiva College also underwent changes, among which was the elimination of Intro to Bible as a requirement and as a prerequisite for taking other Bible classes. Dr. Aaron Koller, head of the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies,

taught, which “will lead to more overall enjoyment on the part of the students.”

Professor Koller’s view was challenged by Professor Moshe Bernstein — a fixture of the Bible department for more than 40 years. According to Bernstein, the changes were driven by “the self-delusive administrative misconception” that

it is “but one more manifestation of a watering-down of the Yeshiva College liberal arts education.” Bernstein also insinuated that the change was a betrayal of YU’s distinct mission and a dereliction of its responsibility to mold the next generation of Orthodox thinkers.

When asked about the status of Intro to Bible, Professor



Over the past 17 years, enrollment in Intro to Bible has been on the decline.

DONIEL WEINREICH

Proposed Amendments to Revamp Wif Constitution

By DANIEL MELOOL

Editor’s Note: The author of this piece is a member of the Wilf Standing Committee on Amendments.

The Wilf General Assembly (GA) recently approved six amendments to the Wilf Student Constitution that will be voted on by the male student body in the Wilf general election. The approval comes after students were able to propose their own amendments at the constitutional amendments convention that was held on April 7. The Commentator was provided with the text of the proposed amendments from the Standing Committee on Amendments. To ensure that students have a clear understanding of each amendment before they go to the polls, The Commentator has provided

a summary of each amendment.

The first amendment contains the most changes of any amendment. Some of these include formally reinstating the position of Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) Vice President of Class Affairs and allowing Juniors to hold the position. The language in the current constitution is unclear about the standing of the Vice President of Class Affairs, as it is not listed as an official position but is still given a description due to an inconsistency in the passage of an amendment last year. The YSU Vice President of Clubs would also no longer be available to juniors as students running for the position would be required to be a senior. The Amendments Committee felt that if the Vice President of Clubs is next in line to succeed the YSU President, it is appropriate to require him to be a senior, since the president must be a senior. The amendment will

also require the YSU President to be eligible to serve in the GA. This seeks to clarify the issue that arose from the contested presidency earlier this semester. Further clarifying the issue, the amendment will include a clause that requires the Vice President of Clubs to resign his current position if that position conflicts with the eligibility requirements to sit on the GA.

would also be included in the Constitution, as per the amendment. The Senior Co-Chair of the committee is a member of the GA, thus the amendments committee felt it was best to add an article that outlines the role of the committee, which is currently not the case.

This amendment would also eliminate the requirement for candidates to garner signatures

Some of the more minor changes include changing the name of all Secretary/Treasurer positions to just Treasurer and removing the position of Sergeant-at-Arms. Another minor change includes the restructuring of the articles of the Constitution. For example, all student councils would have their own article instead of containing every council’s rules in one large article as is the current structure of the Constitution.

If passed, the Katz Undergraduate School would have its own representative as outlined in the second amendment. The representative would be part of YSU, similar to the class representatives, and must be a full-time student for at least two semesters. Only students in the Katz School would be able to vote

The proposed amendments aim to clarify some confusing points in the current constitution.

Another restriction would be added for eligibility to serve in the GA. The amendment would bar club heads, presidents, co-presidents and members of a club’s executive board from sitting on the GA. The addition of an article outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Student Life Committee

in order to appear on the ballot. Instead, the Canvassing Committee would be allowed to create its own by-laws regarding ballot qualifications. This change comes after an amendment to lower the signature threshold was denied by the Wilf Student Court over the Passover break.

Continued on Page 14

*WILF CONSTITUTION,
continued from Page 13*

for the representative who will be elected during the spring election.

The third amendment would give students in the Makor College Experience a representative to be voted on only by students in Makor. It should be noted that Makor is officially a separate program from Yeshiva University, but Makor students do pay student activities fees. The candidate would be nominated by the director of the program, currently Dr. Stephen Glicksman, who would then submit the candidate to the Canvassing Committee. Unlike candidates from other councils, the representative from Makor may not run as a write-in candidate.

The next amendment, if passed, would require the student councils to release their respective budgets. During the last week of each semester, each council would be required to release a budget from the previous semester that includes the amount the council had at the beginning and end of the semester. The amendment would also require the GA to release a more detailed record of club events that were requested and approved within the last week of each semester, the amount of funding requested by each club and the amount that was approved.

As per the fifth amendment, the General Assembly would be required to vote to approve or reject clubs petitions within one week after the petitioning period ends. The final amendment would

include a non-discrimination policy similar to that in the Beren Constitution. The policy would prohibit the Wilf student councils from discriminating against students based on many factors, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, nationality and sexual orientation.

One possible effect of this amendment's ratification could be the status of the YU Pride Alliance. Earlier this semester, the Pride Alliance filed a motion in the Beren Constitutional Council arguing that Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) President Aliza Katz (SCW '20) discriminated against the club by abstaining on a vote to approve the Alliance's club status; this, they argued, violated the Beren Constitution's non-discrimination policy. Ultimately,

the court refused to hear the case on the grounds that the Pride Alliance had filed a complaint against YU with the New York City Commission on Human Rights. It is currently unclear if a similar motion will be filed in the Wilf Student Court if the amendment is passed.

Originally, the committee decided to have one big amendment that included many structural changes and a separate amendment for each position being added. The non-discrimination policy, budget policy and the deadline to approve clubs were first proposed at the Constitutional Convention, and only approved afterward. Thus, they each received their own amendment instead of being included in a single, larger amendment.

The proposed amendments aim

to clarify some confusing points in the current constitution. For example, the new requirement for a member of the GA to resign from another position that conflicts with the eligibility to serve on the GA will hopefully avoid another contested presidency in the future. Removal of all mentions of the Executive Council and Student Senate, archaic and defunct bodies of student government, are changes that are a long time coming. The formal reinstatement of the Vice President of Class Affairs clarifies its role in the student council. The quest to clarify the uncertainties in the Constitution continues every year, and the latest amendments are a great next step to ensure that the constitution serves as a document that properly governs the student body.

YU Employee Statuses During COVID-19 Crisis: An Analysis

By TEMMI LATTIN

Following the cancellation of all Yeshiva University undergraduate courses on March 8, the subsequent decision to move all YU classes online on March 11, and in accordance with the New York State Executive Order on March 20 to close schools and places of employment, all YU employees, barring essential-workers, were ordered to remain home and work remotely as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following these developments, YU released a page of frequently asked questions (FAQ) regarding the university's response to the health crisis for students, faculty and staff on its website. A non-updated version of these questions that was online until April 23 stated, "Administrative offices and non-classroom functions will remain open, and (unless you are specifically notified to the contrary) the expectation is that staff report to work." According to the revised website, that is no longer the case: "only employees who have been designated as essential may come to campus," most of YU's staff can work remotely, and the university is "providing training and resources for individuals whose jobs can be performed in this manner." However, no specific policy was mentioned for employees who cannot do their jobs remotely and have not been designated by the state government as essential employees. These "employees should discuss options for redeployment or alternate tasks with their supervisors," the website stated.

In terms of employees who are sick or under a doctor/government-ordered quarantine due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the YU website delineates that they "will be entitled to paid leave in accordance with New York State's Executive Order." After that time, and for those who do not fall under this category, employees are told that they "may use vacation time and sick time to remain on payroll as long as possible. Once paid vacation time and sick time are exhausted, employees who cannot

work remotely will be furloughed and will be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits."

When further asked about the status of employees who can't continue their position remotely, a YU spokesperson explained, "We have been working with employees individually to try to reassign them if possible. Unfortunately, like many organizations coping with the COVID-19 crisis, there are some employees that can't work remotely due to the nature of their jobs. We are working with them to keep them on payroll as long as we can, and the University will continue to cover furloughed non-

to the movement online, and consistently kept their tutors informed through the transition process." While Verschleisser acknowledged some difficulties with online tutoring sessions, she expressed appreciation with "how the Writing Center management quickly organized an online method to meet student needs and [gave] tutors the ability to keep working and helping their peers." She noted that their "swift organization was also appreciated in dispelling the financial concerns of tutors, who may have uncertain income during this time."

Student employees can work

This policy includes student employees, but not those participating in Federal Work-Study programs. No broader YU communication has been sent to students regarding the status of this program, but a YU spokesperson confirmed that "students who are participating in the Federal Work Study program can get paid through the Federal program even if they cannot continue to perform their jobs."

Regarding the Work-Study payments, a source from the Wilf Campus waiting staff remarked, "There was never an official email that went out from HR to all student employees about compensa-

beyond me."

The YU spokesperson asserted that all student employees were directed to reach out to supervisors and given information about unemployment benefits, and then later added that it was actually unclear if they were informed or not. However, YU's FAQs for students were updated at some point during the week of April 20 to reflect these directives. The Commentator spoke to 13 student employees who are currently out of work, including teacher's assistants, research assistants, *meshgichot*, package center employees and cafeteria workers, all of whom confirmed, as of the time of publication, that they have not received any information about how to proceed if their job cannot be done remotely nor if they would be eligible for these benefits.

Adina Bruce (SCW '22), a student assistant *meshgicha* in the Schottenstein kitchen, was one of these students. "Having a job on campus gave me a steady reliable income that allowed me to be partially financially independent," she said. "Losing that source of income added to the worries of financial instability in my future." Bruce has still not heard any information from the university regarding her employment status and whether she should apply for unemployment benefits.

No earlier than April 23, the FAQ website for students was updated, stating that student employees "would have to apply through the New York unemployment portal to find out their eligibility and receive instructions on how and where to apply."

According to the NY State Department of Labor, to be eligible for unemployment benefits a worker must have "been paid at least \$2,600 in one calendar quarter" and "worked in New York State within the last 18 months." Those who cannot work remotely and are therefore not receiving a salary, including student employees, would seem to fall under the eligibility clause of having "lost employment through no fault of their own."

"Having a job on campus gave me a steady reliable income that allowed me to be partially financially independent ... Losing that source of income added to the worries of financial instability in my future."

Adina Bruce (SCW '22)

union employees who are on the YU Aetna or Oxford plans, subject to the terms of such plans. Union members should be in touch with the union leadership about their benefits."

As of the time of publication, the 1199 Union that represents many YU employees could not be reached for comment.

Student employees have expressed concern about serious financial hardships that they have been facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. A YU spokesperson communicated that "all student employees, including teaching assistants, should be in contact directly with their supervisor on how to conduct their jobs and enter their hours, if applicable. Student workers who continue to perform the functions associated with their jobs remotely may continue to work and get paid."

Some student employees have been able to conduct their jobs remotely, including resident advisors, *madrichot*, *madrichim*, peer tutors and Writing Center tutors, such as Sara Verschleisser (SCW '21). An employee in the Beren Writing Center, she relayed, "The writing center responded promptly

up to 15 hours a week, making them part-time employees and potentially eligible for part-time unemployment benefits if they cannot continue working remotely. Additionally, YU's sick leave policy states that "all Yeshiva University employees who work in New York City, and who work more than 80 hours in a calendar year" will "accrue sick leave time at the rate of 1 hour for every 30 hours worked." Sick leave can be used during the closure of an employee's place of business during a public health emergency.

... A few weeks ago, the Shabbat coordinator sent out an email to YU waitstaff students, saying that Federal Law allows YU to pay out Federal Work Study funds during limited disaster circumstances." They continued, "Work-study eligible students were told they would be paid for the estimated time they would have worked as a Shabbat waiter during the period of 3/4/2020 - 4/7/2020. Non-work study students received no such compensation, and whether or not the work study students actually received this compensation is



The employment status of employees who cannot do their job remotely is currently uncertain.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

This is a developing story.

Say the Right Things when Electioneering

By JOSH LEICHTER

I would like to preface the following piece with two statements: 1. I bear no ill will toward the Election Committee or the Student Supreme Court and 2. I am currently vying for a spot on the ballot in the upcoming Student Council election.

As we are all aware by now, the reality of our semester on campus has been radically changed on account of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this are far-reaching, from forcing our classes to switch to an online platform to changing the venue of the upcoming graduation ceremony in May. One new issue that has begun to boil on the stoves of our newly minted virtual campus is that of the upcoming student elections. Under normal circumstances, students would be expected to lobby for signatures from “one-third or five hundred members of the student body, whichever is less,” as dictated clearly in Article III 3(3) of the Wilf Constitution. As a result of the campus’ closure, it would be impossible for the prospective candidates to get physical

signatures, so the ballot petitions have switched to an online form.

The argument has now been raised that due to these extraordinary conditions, perhaps a new amendment should be drafted to accommodate the situation. The reasoning behind this was that it is far harder for prospective candidates to campaign for and receive signatures when all they can do is send out a link in an email, which can easily be ignored. An attempt to change this occurred on April 2nd when a proposal was written to lower the threshold from the aforementioned numbers to “five percent of the student body or fifty students, whichever is less,” yet the Student Supreme Court in their ruling on April 5th rejected the proposal on the grounds that the submission did not follow the proper protocols and “rules are still rules.”

This argument and clear rejection by the Student Supreme Court raises an important question over the role the system plays. In the United States, the Constitution is a deified document of strength whose sole purpose is to defend the rights of every citizen in the country, not to suppress them. With this

in mind, if members of this Student Body choose to dress up and play politics with their own Constitution and Supreme Court, then they have failed in their understanding of what the intention and purpose

appointed positions.

The purpose of the government is to have the best interests of the constituents in mind — not to blindly follow rules that exist to the detriment of the public.

Right now, in these difficult times, rules are being bent and accommodations are being made to reasonable degrees so that people can have an easier time leading their day-to-day lives. If those in power fail to understand this, then it would not be outlandish to make the case for their impeachment and removal from their appointed positions.

should be, as they have chosen to side against the People. Right now, in these difficult times, rules are being bent and accommodations are being made to reasonable degrees so that people can have an easier time leading their day-to-day lives. If those in power fail to understand this, then it would not be outlandish to make the case for their impeachment and removal from their

We often say that government is of the People, by the People and for the People, yet when we see leaders choose bureaucratic rules as opposed to a collective voice of students, it indicates that these officials have become derelict in their duties. The solution to this would be to put a new group of legislators in place to ensure that the government is fulfilling their

responsibilities in representing the students fairly, while still maintaining order and not creating a lawless society where rules don’t matter.

Sadly, this is simply repeating a cycle of events that we have unfortunately seen far too often over the past few years, where elected leaders have put their own self-serving interests ahead of the voices of those that got them their seats at the table. But real leaders are not the ones that abstain from votes or curtail voices of the public. If history books have taught us one lesson, it’s that we never look favorably upon those that ignore the will of the people. Only those that stand up for what they know in their hearts to be right and remain steadfast in their beliefs despite adversity ultimately emerge as true inspirations to their successors.

We have yet to see this, but I hope that the decision-makers understand that their response to the request will not go ignored. I hope that you, the students, will remember this when you receive that email on May 7 with instructions on how to vote, whether or not many of the candidates’ names are on the ballot.

YU Deans, We Need a Universal P/N Policy

By SRULI FRUCHTER

When rumors began to spread about approaching announcements of YU’s new Pass/No Credit (P/N) policy amidst the coronavirus pandemic, we were excited. After garnering over 1,000 signatures for the petition that requested these changes, we were ready for the administration to alleviate our stresses and even the playing field.

Then, we received the new P/N policy, and its failures became glaringly clear.

The Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) was the first to inform their students: a maximum of two courses are eligible for P/N, excluding any major or minor requirements. The Katz School follows those guidelines, too. Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women, however, allow students an unlimited number of P/N courses, but the policy cannot be applied to major-related courses.

While the new P/N policy was well-intentioned, it fails to fulfill the needs of all students. Since this pandemic began, disproportionate and arbitrary variables have been the greatest factor in determining many students’ grades, as opposed to their normal academic aptitude.

On the basis of time zones, students living in places like Austria or Los Angeles are facing inevitable disadvantages, as they must either watch pre-recorded classes or take classes on a different schedule than their tri-state-based counterparts. Forgoing geographical variations, substituting our classrooms for our bedrooms has implicitly introduced our living conditions into our grade assessment, making completing assignments and studying less than optimal, to say the least. Additionally, familial obligations may ensnare students from low-income families or parents needing assistance, detracting mental and physical energy and time traditionally devoted to academics. Students, their friends or their family members may even be plagued with COVID-19,

undoubtedly incapacitating their academic abilities. These few examples clearly demonstrate the imbalanced factors that make the standard letter-grading system ineffective in distinguishing students’ academic performance from their pandemic conditions.

The YU administration acknowledges these hardships engendered by the coronavirus, as they did introduce a P/N policy to address the situation. However, their policy has significant drawbacks.

At the base level, every course must be eligible for P/N, without any exclusions. If a student would decide to P/N his elective “Principles of Economics” course because of circumstances beyond his control, it would follow that said circumstances may also affect his “Programming Languages” major course; in the case of the latter, however, this student would be unable to do anything. Moreover, students with a course-load of mainly major electives or requirements are practically unaffected by this policy and cannot rely on this “safety net,” as Dean of the Undergraduate

choose to P/N a course, he is inherently placed at a disadvantage. As Dean Bacon told students in her announcement email, “choosing P/N is a serious academic decision with implications beyond YU.” Similarly, SSSB Dean Noam Wasserman’s email to students capitulated, “[Taking P/N for a class] can have negative effects when applying for graduate school and applying for jobs, and is a factor in the academic awards process.” Regardless of this P/N policy’s details, many students are left utterly helpless in this crisis; they are damned if they do and damned if they don’t.

Ultimately, these pitfalls point to one solution: a universal P/N grading system for all undergraduate students, an approach already implemented by universities like Columbia, Harvard and Yale. In this model, all students would be graded on a P/N scale, and transcripts would indicate the extenuating circumstances of the situation; students affected by the coronavirus would therefore not be indirectly penalized.

professors cannot substitute the need for an institutionalized measure to remedy the situation. In terms of Dean Bacon’s latter point, I would contend that it is only the privileged students, those practically unaffected by the coronavirus, who can actually enjoy the “rewards of high performance.”

Understandably, others have argued that some students, like those on the pre-med track, for example, need letter grades on their transcript, so it would be unfair to impose a P/N grading policy. However, I believe that point is moot when considering that students are no longer operating in equal learning environments, and by allowing an opt-in for letter grades, the administration enables the disparities brought about by the coronavirus. Furthermore, pre-med students are immediately discounted from an optional policy, as medical schools sternly frown upon a student who *chooses* to P/N a course. While one student may have the resources and environment to enable their usual academic abilities, another student can be crippled by them.

We are in wartime, and we need an equitable and uniform P/N policy that is sensitive to the plethora of issues facing students in this disproportionate climate. This is not about us choosing to “commit ourselves” or trying to leverage grades as incentives for hard work; we are college students trying to survive the rising tide of global coronavirus deaths without sacrificing our futures after college.

It goes without saying that YU’s deans care about and are deeply invested in their students. If all this article amounts to is a “bashing session” on the administration, then it has been egregiously misunderstood. This is a call for a P/N policy that is equitable and fair for every single student at YU, and we need our deans to partner with us in bringing about this essential change.

This is not about us choosing to “commit ourselves” or trying to leverage grades as incentives for hard work; we are college students trying to survive the rising tide of global coronavirus deaths without sacrificing our futures after college.

Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon characterized it. A similar caveat is found with the two-course limitations imposed by SSSB and Katz, as administrators cannot confidently say that the coronavirus will only affect a students’ performance in two courses. This policy further states that students wishing to P/N a course “must have declared a major in one of the undergraduate Schools before the end of the Spring 2020 semester,” limiting any benefit that students who have not yet declared their major can receive.

Nevertheless, even if a student does

When I emailed Dean Bacon about my aforementioned concerns of this P/N policy, she assured me that professors are “exceeding[ly] aware” of students’ challenges and are doing their best to be flexible. Additionally, she maintained that the current P/N policy allows students to receive the “rewards of high performance,” but still allows a “safety net” for matters beyond their control. Regarding Dean Bacon’s first point, the sensitivity of professors is very kind and well-appreciated, but to be frank, subjective determinations of flexibility and support by

Bulldozing Creativity in the Name of Convenience

By **BASYA GOLDSTEIN**

What makes Stern College unique? If you ask most students why they come to Stern rather than the much less expensive options of Queens College or Touro, they will tell you a number of reasons — the excellent Torah and Jewish studies programs, inspiring and dedicated teachers, the awesome student body, the opportunities it gives to religious athletes, and the excellent art department.

For me as well as many of my classmates, the art department was a huge draw that contributed to my decision to come to Stern. The eighth floor, which was renovated in the '90s specifically to house the Stern art department, blew my mind when I visited it as a high school senior. Students' artwork was proudly displayed all over, the atmosphere was warm and inviting and the whole place was humming with energy and life. Many graduates of the art major have gone on to achieve impressive accomplishments such as Sarala Pool (SCW '16) who is currently a properties apprentice at The Juilliard School and Leah Gottfried (SCW '17) who created the web series, "Soon By You." Current students

also consistently inspire and amaze with the immense effort, talent, and creativity they put into their work. Because of this, the Stern art department attracts students to come to Stern, with 108 current students taking art courses and 15 graduating art majors.

night, President Berman spoke about the importance of the art floor, that he cares so much about the art students of Stern and how he admires us for reaching out to him and the administration about this issue. He spoke of ways to compensate the art department for the loss

is an integral piece of the fluidity and convenience of the art floor.

Furthermore, if there is space elsewhere for the art department, why can't they find space elsewhere to give to the Katz graduate program? While the Stern art department is an established program

provided platitudes rather than an answer to our request, with a nonreassuring assurance that "nothing has been finalized." Even after sending a physical and digital petition, signed by over 1,000 students, alumni, faculty and friends of YU to President Berman, the administration has still failed to contact us art students directly and include us in the decision-making process.

At the end of the day the most concerning part about this decision is the administration's lack of foresight. I am currently a senior so the seizure of space will not affect me at all. The reason I and so many of my fellow graduating seniors are so passionate about this issue is that we want future students to have the same amazing experiences and education we've had. If the administration is transparent and consults with their faculty and students, perhaps we could work together to find an alternative solution that is beneficial for everyone. If, however, YU finalizes its plans to expropriate the space allocated to the art department, they will greatly weaken this highly successful department, alienate Stern students, faculty and alumni, and demonstrate that they are unbuilding tomorrow, today.

If there is space elsewhere for the art department, why can't they find space elsewhere to give to the Katz graduate program?

The YU administration seemed to appreciate the value of the art department. They use our art to adorn their buildings, and use our floor and its amenities as an attraction to help recruit potential students. Yet despite all this, YU appears to have thoughtlessly decided to give a large fraction of the department's precious space to a fledgling coed graduate program. If they chose to expropriate this space, YU would undermine a highly successful and growing department, negatively impacting student enrollment. No serious art student would sacrifice the opportunity to attend nearby FIT, Pratt or Parsons for a stunted art department.

In an aside during the town hall meeting with students about the COVID-19 pandemic Wednesday

of their space, but this acknowledgment indicates that President Berman does not understand the value of the *space* that is the eighth floor. The art floor is not like other floors, with separate classrooms; rather it is an interconnected system where each piece is needed to work efficiently and in harmony. For example, the computer lab portion, one of the main rooms that would potentially be expropriated, is utilized by every class either as a place to create reference material, an instructional space for classes like photography, graphic design, and typography, or for teacher and student presentations by classes in architecture, drawing, methods in media, printmaking, and more. Putting this space on another floor will compromise its purpose, as it

with a long history of being rooted on the eighth floor, the Katz graduate program is new, has no set place and can find its permanent home elsewhere, perhaps in unoccupied space on the Wilf Campus. Why must the success of the Katz graduate program come at the detriment of Stern College? The second concession, where the art department would get new equipment, does not address the negative impact that taking the space away will have on the art department. It is as absurd as taking someone's house away and offering them a bicycle instead.

Students have attempted to speak directly to administrators but to no avail. Senior Vice President Dr. Josh Joseph has yet to respond to our letter sent on February 27th and Provost Dr. Selma Bottman



Artwork in SCW was covered in protest to the alleged plan to take away part of the art floor.

In Memory of an *Isha Chashuva*

By DR. BACON and
DR. KANARFOGEL

Mrs. Mindy Lamm Z"l, wife of YU president emeritus Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, passed away on April 16, 2020. She was 88 years old. Born in Brooklyn, NY, Mrs. Lamm attended Beis Yaakov and studied education at Hunter College. In 1954 she married Rabbi Lamm and became deeply invested in the Yeshiva University Women's Organization. In her lifetime, Mrs. Lamm touched many people in the Yeshiva University community. Dr. Karen Bacon, The Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and Rabbi Ephraim Kanarfogel, former chair of the Judaic Studies Department at Stern College for Women, graciously agreed to share their thoughts about Mrs. Lamm with *The Commentator*.

It has been many years since Mrs. Mindy Lamm (a"h) and I sat together on a panel discussing the role of women in Judaism, yet I remember the event clearly. It was in another time, and now it feels as if it was also in another world. Women were taking up their positions in every walk of professional life, but the Orthodox Jewish community had yet to keep pace. I knew this well. As a faculty member in the Department of Biology at Yeshiva College in the mid-'70s, I often heard the "guys" talk about their imagined futures: they would be successful physicians and their wives would welcome them home each night with a hot dinner and a welcome smile. The only thing missing from the picture was a pair of slippers. And so, when Mrs. Lamm and I discussed the topic at hand, it was against the backdrop of the secular world of the liberated woman and the Orthodox world of the emerging woman.

That panel discussion was the first time I had the privilege of being in conversation with Mrs. Lamm, and a privilege it was. Everything about her reflected the characteristics of an *isha chashuva*. I am not sure she was so very tall, but she appeared tall to me, tall and imposing. And yet she was the epitome of graciousness, warm and smiling. After some introductory remarks, we each talked about our lives. The details were less important than the themes. Hers was a theme of commitment: commitment to Judaism, to husband, to family, to community. By comparison, my theme, women's professional development and achievement, seemed small and empty. Of course, women's lives need not be either/or of these two models, but in those days everything was polarized, or at least was presented as polarized.

Since that time I have had the opportunity to see Mrs. Lamm on many occasions. I saw her live out her commitments at all levels. I saw her courage in the face of adversity and her steadfastness in the face of criticism. I saw a noble woman fulfill her life's mission



Mrs. Mindy Lamm

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

and I encountered many who admired her. I also internalized the commitments she expressed so eloquently during our panel discussion. Regardless of profession or professional achievements, commitment to Judaism, to family and to community comes first. May her memory always remain with us as a blessing.

— Dr. Karen Bacon, The Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Mrs. Lamm (a"h) always expressed great interest in women's learning, including her own. Over a number of years, she attended classes at Stern College — and she brought with her a small group of bright and committed friends who did the same. Each student took courses in which she was interested, and they all prepared for class faithfully and well. My colleagues and I marveled at these efforts — none of them expected a "free ride" — they participated, they asked questions and they responded. Indeed, there

were more than a few times in my experience when these more mature students helped to raise the level of participation and intensity among the undergraduates. Mrs. Lamm was the informal, always understated, director of all of this, bringing friends along whom she thought would gain from the educational experience, which was her

Such was the hokhmah, sensitivity and generosity of Mrs. Lamm, yehei zichra baruch.

own quiet goal as well. She always expressed profound gratitude to those who taught, which was not necessary, and she was always thankful for the *nachas* that she experienced studying with the undergraduate women of Yeshiva University.

In addition, Mrs. Lamm organized lectures and shiurim in her apartment for larger groups of women. She would invite faculty members from Stern College and from other parts of the university,

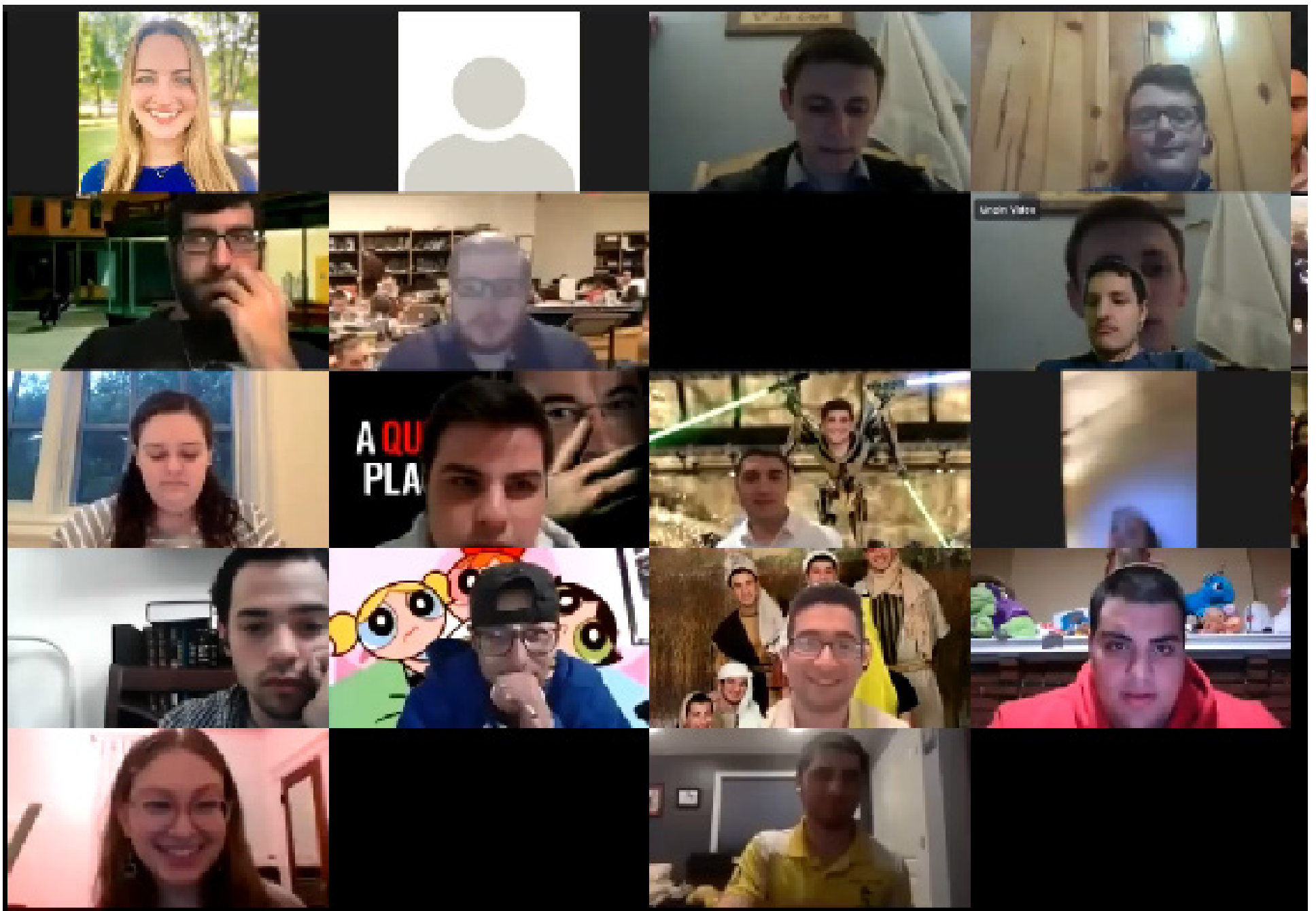
several times a year. (I suspect that at least as far as Stern College was concerned, her "consultant" in these matters was her daughter Sarah a"h, herself a wonderful presence at the college.) The groups that Mrs. Lamm brought together consisted of capable and interested women — she would introduce them to us and talk about

how we were the "illustrious faculty of Yeshiva University" even though some of us were too young and too inexperienced to be very illustrious. She always asked for "real Torah" and "real learning" for this group, and we were happy to try to live up to that request. Each time, Mrs. Lamm was careful to say that an honorarium would be sent along. Protests in that regard were met with the simple response that this is the right thing to do; very Mrs. Lamm.

At the end of these sessions, the audience seemed to be very happy (or at least very polite); and the lecturers were happy because they had just taught a great group of eager students something of importance to them. For her part, Mrs. Lamm always had a big smile for everyone and was full of compliments for those involved, because she knew that she had helped Jewish women learn in a substantive way, provided them with a pleasant social environment in which to do so and raised the reputation of Stern College and Yeshiva University, all at the same time. Such was the *hokhmah*, sensitivity and generosity of Mrs. Lamm, *yehei zichra baruch*.

—Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel, E. Billi Ivry University Professor of Jewish History, Literature and Law at Yeshiva University

‘Good Shtick! With Zack’ Review: It’s Good Shtick — and a Remedy for Quarantine Loneliness



Students display their shticky backgrounds during the third episode of “Good Shtick!”

THE COMMENTATOR

By AHARON NISSEL

“I think when Darth Vader and Luke fight, it’s, like, so beyond intense, when they, like, turn on their lightsabers in the dark, and, like, the flips, and when he chops off his hand in the reveal, it’s just crazy.” — Zack, Episode 4 of “Good Shtick! With Zack”

“Good Shtick! With Zack” is a new comedy talk show hosted by the perky and loquacious YSU President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB ‘21) which features a slew of student guests including student leaders, Seforim Sale staff and *shadchanim*, truly the A-list celebrities of Yeshiva University. Airing via Zoom conferencing on Monday and Thursday nights at 10 p.m., Zack and his guests discuss issues that are of interest to a wide audience, ranging from dating during the Corona Crisis to Star Wars to Disney to exclusive analysis of student council statistics to Star Wars to Disney. But that’s all tangential. Upwards of 60 people have been tuning in during the live shows, and dozens more have watched them on YouTube. At its heart, it’s a show about unity within our university, finding happiness in dark times and, above all, Good Shtick — but more on that later.

There is no doubt that “Good Shtick! With Zack” gets off to a shaky start. The pilot episode, which aired on March 16, is full of awkward pauses, serious conversation and forced banter. What should’ve been a fun and facetious conversation about issues of *tznius*

at beaches and waterparks, was instead, dare I say it, serious. The audience questions at the end provide the viewer with a well-deserved break from the all too somber conversation.

The second episode, the first to feature the show’s cinematographically brilliant intro clip, succeeds where the first episode fails. Perhaps this is because the episode featured not one, but two, guests, which makes it less awkward, with more people around to pop in and speak. Even the serious conversations feel fun and entertaining. This episode also saw an increase in audience participation, another area where this show excels, utilizing interactive polls and even allowing audience members to speak live on air! In one particularly inspiring moment of the episode, Zack

At its heart, it’s a show about unity within our university, finding happiness in dark times and, above all, Good Shtick.

strikingly declares, “My ultimate dream is to build Disney in Israel.”

The episodes, which have only gotten longer since the first, only get better from there as Zack and his team keep finding new ways to engage audiences. Episode three, for example, featured a virtual background contest, with viewers voting on which audience member had the “shtickest” virtual background.

Zack himself is an excellent host. His stentorian voice engages guests and audience members alike. He always has interesting

questions to ask, and, with rare exceptions, succeeds in his banter. He seems to always know the right thing to say or have the right prop to bring in at any given moment. The one issue, though, is that he refuses to sing, despite persistent requests from audience members — give the fans what they want!

Not everything on this show is all hunky-dory. The diverse subject matter can sometimes get nasty, such as the brutal shots that were fired between Zack and SOY president Yoni Broth (SSSB ‘20) in the show’s 4th episode over the *yeshivot* they went to in Israel and the lawsuit from earlier this semester, which were reminiscent of trashy reality TV shows. That being said, the stunning presentation that Broth offered displays an

incredible intelligence and academic acuity and is far more advanced than anything a Kardashian could do.

There have been some slight technical issues with the show, including lags, microphone mutings and background mishaps. While these can certainly be annoying at first, the more they happen, the more they resonate with the viewer. The constant lags are a constant reminder just how fraught our connections with each other are. At some points they even become the catalyst for amusing conversation.

If the show wants to succeed in the realm of “shtick,” we need to define exactly what “shtick” is. This is no simple task. This conversation comes up in several episodes. In episode two, for example, TAC’s VP of Shabbat Ariella Etshalom (SCW ‘20), who runs a matchmaking service called A(Z)A Connects, says that “shtick can be humorous, but it’s not the same thing [as humor].” I think most would agree. Humor is more subjective: there are different types of humor, and what’s funny to one person may not be funny to the next. But shtick exists on a separate plane, the realm of objectivity, and something is either good shtick, or it isn’t. In episode four, Yoni Broth asks Zack what he thinks are two essential elements of shtick.

“The best shtick,” proclaims Zack, “is when it’s serious and there are stakes. People can do funny gimmicks when it’s easy but then no one cares.” I wonder what the stakes are for this show. Are there stakes? The answer, I believe, is a resounding yes, and I now return to what we mentioned earlier.

This show goes far beyond the shticky hats, suit jackets, backgrounds and “Worst Grade on an Elementary Skool [sic] Test” graphs. When we all come together to discuss the crucial, and less crucial, issues of the YU community, when we truly all engage with each other in a casual and comedic setting, we win the battle against the existential loneliness coronavirus quarantines inevitably bring. Without this show, who knows where we would all be right now. The stakes could not be higher.

Navigating the Business World Amidst COVID-19: An Editorial Discussion

By **ELI FRISHMAN** and
EITAN LAVIAN

Editor's Note: The effects of the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis extend to all areas of life, including the business world. In this article, our Business editors discuss and analyze these developments.

In the wake of this pandemic, and the extra time afforded to students, how can students make the most out of their time to prepare for their future careers?

Eitan Lavian: Personally, I have been learning how to use Microsoft Excel. The career in finance I am on track to go into uses this application, and I have been using online courses to master it. In addition to that, I think students can use this free time to learn more about the career they plan to go into. Although they may have an idea of what it entails, reaching out to individuals within the career or reading books about it can always add more insight.

Eli Frishman: Echoing that, extra skills don't have to be completely connected to your career. You can read books you actually enjoy that will make you more knowledgeable and perhaps more appealing to recruiters. Also, you

don't necessarily have to focus on your career. The stress of all this means it's okay to binge some T.V. shows, explore your new-found culinary interests, or get into a good fitness habit. Additionally, now is a great time to learn how to have a structured schedule despite the stress.

Recent news has come out that many internships have been getting canceled. How would you respond to this?

EL: Thankfully, my internship has not been canceled. However, I recently saw a post from a recruiter on LinkedIn that noted they would sympathize with a candidate if they saw their internship was canceled due to COVID-19. At the end of the day, that person worked hard and qualified for the internship, and I also agree that credit should be given to them. I personally would also try to maintain a relationship with the employer. Frequently touching base with them can help with future internships, whether they provide you with another one or they recommend you to a friend. For this summer, I think it is worth a try to reach out to the employer, thank them again for the job, and note that you are currently home and would love to remotely help. They will certainly appreciate the note and might even offer employment.

EF: I was informed recently that my internship was postponed until July. At first, the news was disappointing but then I figured if the situation calms down in June, I could spend that time with friends I haven't seen in a while. Which is a much broader point: there's a positive to all of this. True, COVID-19 is upending just about everything, but analysts are talking about a surge in American manufacturing, the expansion of in-home services and major changes in the medical industry, to name a few. If your internship has fallen through, perhaps these types of industries interest you and this might be a very opportune time to explore them. Although it sounds clique, this situation is really what you decide to make of it.

There's been talk about certain businesses and industries closing or filing for bankruptcy. Should this affect the careers we're considering?

EL: No. Things will definitely be different, but the fear of uncertainty should not stop you from going into a career you are passionate about. The pandemic is terrible and many companies are preparing for the worst; however, unlike the financial crisis, we know that with the help of a vaccine, companies can return to a normal state. Back then, we were unsure of whether or not the

banking system would exist.

EF: Very true. Companies still require people to operate regardless of how well they are doing. But if your job is affected, it might be a good idea to think about pursuing a master's degree in the interim, and when the economy gets back to normal, you'll have an edge over other candidates. There's no denying you might have to wait a little longer for your dream job to come along, but don't give up hope; just be patient.

The recruiting cycle seems to be uncertain, is it worth my time to network with a looming recession?

EF: It's always a good idea to network and build connections, and perhaps even more so now. Expanding your list of prospective job leads is a great idea in case your original plans fall through and if it doesn't lead to an immediate job, it can still sharpen your interpersonal skills. The Career Center is still operating remotely and hosting virtual job fairs. Since there's no real timeline for when things will go back to the way they were, this might become the new norm for a while and you could certainly benefit by getting your feet wet at virtual recruiting.

EL: Building off of that, many

may look at this time as a break from recruiting, and they become lazy. People should recognize this and use that to their advantage — especially with all of the time on our hands. Now with people working at home, they might be more responsive to your emails. More calls are more people who can potentially help.

At the end of the day, we are all human and need to do other things besides studying. What have you guys been doing?

EF: I'd love to say I've had a consistent school routine and that my focus on tests and jobs hasn't changed, but that simply isn't true. I've yet to watch Tiger King so that's obviously next on my list. But we've been spending a ton of time indoors in front screens so I've tried to make it a priority to get some fresh air and exercise every day. Also, I've compiled a list of all the books I want to read by the end of quarantine and these long Shabbats have been great for that.

EL: Send that list my way! I have tried my best to work off of a schedule, but we are humans and that always is not the easiest thing to do. I have tried to do everything mentioned, but I have also made sure to stay active and, of course, have watched a lot of television.



A conversation between the editors

Stripe's Successful Strike

By NATHAN HAKAKIAN

With COVID-19 shutting down much of the economy, many companies are struggling to keep their heads above water. Some of the largest corporations have announced mass layoffs as they prepare for possible restructuring and bankruptcy. But despite this uncertainty, Stripe has defied all odds. On April 16th, 2020, Stripe announced a \$600 million raise of capital, bringing them to a valuation of \$36 billion and making them the 3rd most valuable U.S. startup ever. Stripe's improbable financial resilience despite COVID-19 is in large part due to the multitude of industries the company services.

The company was founded by Patrick and John Collison in Ireland. The college dropout brothers conceived of Stripe in early 2010 after Patrick complained about the difficulty of accepting online payments. While the brothers were working on a few side projects at the time, it wasn't long before Stripe had sold the platform to a number of companies and the brothers moved to San Francisco with Stripe as their full-time venture. In

2011, the brothers approached the owners of Paypal, Elon Musk and Peter Thiel. The brothers' pitch was simple: a simplified payment processing software compatible with a multitude of different cards and international currencies. Thiel was impressed with the pitch and the brothers' ambition to improve on existing online payment process-

year to account for over \$600 billion in transactions. Since its inception, Stripe has handled billions of dollars of online transactions. The company charges 1.4% plus 20 cents for European transactions and 2.9% plus 20 cents elsewhere, which is a more business-friendly payment structure compared to other platforms.

most recently, Zoom. Over the past year, 80% of U.S. shoppers have bought something from a Stripe client. Additionally, Stripe offers over 250 different payment methods and accepts 187 currencies, allowing companies to conduct business worldwide. As of early 2020, Stripe reported \$2 billion on its balance sheet. According to

location. In September 2019 Stripe announced the launch of the Stripe Corporate Card and Stripe Capital. Amongst corporate cards, the service is unique as it does not charge interest but instead collects a fee on every transaction. Additionally, Stripe Capital allows businesses to administer loans greater than \$10,000. With many different branches in the fintech industry, Stripe finds itself in a very opportune position.

Despite its dominance in the business services industry and promising future, there are still some questions about Stripe. Because it is a privately held company and not required to release audited financials, investors are unsure about Stripe's exact financial figures. Additionally, Stripe was expected to be a top IPO candidate in 2019 but decided to hold off due to the recent struggles of other start-up IPOs such as Lyft and Uber. But Stripe is trending in the right direction and will continue to solidify itself as both the leader in payment processing and an innovator in the rapidly growing fintech industry.

On April 16th, 2020, Stripe announced a \$600 million raise of capital, bringing them to a valuation of \$36 billion and making them the 3rd most valuable U.S startup ever.

ing platforms. The meetings led to a \$2 million Series A funding along with Sequoia Capital. Soon enough, smaller companies and other startups in need of a payment processing system approached the company, and Stripe became the hottest attraction in Silicon Valley.

Stripe makes its money acting as the brokers between company and consumer. With the world becoming increasingly digitized, companies have had to adapt to the new fintech trends and are relying more heavily on their online presence. In 2019 alone, the U.S. e-commerce ballooned 14.9% from the previous

On the customer side, Stripe allows consumers to connect their credit cards and banking systems to different websites and apps and takes a small percentage on every transaction. Additionally, Stripe provides businesses with a comprehensive payment platform, ranging from storing credit card numbers to preventing fraud. With a sturdy business model not dependent on any particular industry, Stripe looks to retain its position as the premier international payment processor.

Amongst the company's most prominent clients are Amazon, Postmates, Lyft, Facebook, and,

Robert Le, a Pitchbook analyst, Stripe represented around 10% of total e-commerce transactions before the pandemic. For the foreseeable future, as many businesses continue to operate online exclusive platforms, Stripe looks to further build upon its success.

Stripe's most recent funding is the 12th round, an anomaly amongst startups. With its new funds, it has been able to evolve into a fintech giant. In 2016 Stripe launched the Stripe Atlas platform, a \$500 service that allows entrepreneurs and their customers to use the service irrespective of

