

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

VOL. LXXXVI

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2020

ISSUE NO. 5

## MacLive Broadcasting Service Receives \$47,000 in Donations for Upgrades

By SRULI FRUCHTER

MacLive, Yeshiva University Athletics' official broadcasting service for games and tournaments, received \$47,000 in donations for equipment upgrades and enhanced broadcasting capabilities, according to a MacLive [press release](#) from Sunday, Nov. 14.

MacLive will upgrade from their single HD camera to four Sony a7S III cameras with greater live streaming capabilities. All four of the cameras will be stationed in the Max Stern Athletic Center, three of which will be wireless, allowing for a more efficient camera setup. New monitors in the MacLive control room will allow the broadcasting team to create faster and cleaner streaming for at-home viewers. Additionally, new technical equipment will allow MacLive "to put together packages and use in-game highlights for smoother transitions," the press release said. MacLive will also be collaborating with the Office of Student Life to livestream student council-related events.

Given the uncertainty of COVID-19 developments, when equipment will arrive and whether athletic seasons will follow as planned, it is unclear when MacLive's upgrades will be in full effect.

"A lot of exciting things have happened during my time at MacLive, but this takes the cake," MacLive President David Schwartzman (SSSB '21) told The Commentator. "This project doesn't just take us to the next level, but it now makes our broadcast capabilities far superior to any other broadcast in division three basketball... I can't wait for these new changes to not only help our MacLive staff have a more enjoyable time producing our broadcasts, but also look forward to all of the viewers



MACSLIVE

MacLive at the 2019 Red Sarachek Memorial Basketball Tournament

Continued on [Page 6](#)

## 2021 Annual Seforim Sale Cancelled due to COVID-19 Safety Concerns

By SRULI FRUCHTER

The 2021 Seforim Sale — North America's largest Jewish book sale held annually at Yeshiva University — was canceled due to COVID-19 safety concerns, The Commentator has learned. The next sale is scheduled for Feb. 2022.

"After much research and analysis, we have decided not to have the in-person Seforim Sale this year due to social distancing restrictions and health and safety guidance," 2020-21 Seforim Sale CEO Eli Seidman (SSSB '22) told The Commentator. "We explored many different options. However, given the ever-changing NYS and NYC guidelines, it was not possible to plan and host the event this year and a virtual sale was not an option."

According to Hudi Rosenfeld (SSSB '21), the 2019-20 CEO of the Seforim Sale, last year's sale sold over 28,000 books, amassing around \$740,000 in revenue. Roughly 89% of those sales came from in-person purchases, and the other 11% is through the online [website's](#) sales. In 2017, YUNews [reported](#) that the 2017 Seforim Sale collected \$750,000 in revenue.

According to its website, the Seforim Sale is run entirely by YU students and attracts about 15,000 customers for each sale,

which is usually held in February. A registered non-profit, the book sale was established in 1964 and its profits go toward "YU Student Life initiatives." Sy Syms School of Business Associate Dean Michael Strauss, who acts as the business and personal advisor to the student leadership of the Seforim Sale, told The Commentator, "Historically, the Seforim Sale has provided financial support to the Office of Student Life, for student programming. The Seforim Sale will be meeting with the Office of Student Life in the near future to discuss the 2020 contribution."

In past years, the Seforim Sale was held in Belfer Hall's Weissberg Commons on the Wilf Campus, involving [weeks](#) of approximately 100 YU students setting up before opening and afterward for disassembling. "In terms of spacing — which is totally fair by YU, as it's allowing students' education to take precedence — YU is using Weissberg Commons as a classroom, and the Seforim Sale cannot be held there," Seidman said. "In the time we're living in right now, they need these large spaces for socially-distant classrooms and other things. YU can't give up these important spaces for a long time as the Seforim Sale would require."

Beginning Oct. 21, undergraduate students [returned](#) to campus and YU facilities

Continued on [Page 4](#)

## International and Out-of-State Students Complete Mandatory Quarantine, Return to Campus

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

This article was originally published online on [Nov. 3](#).

International students and students from [restricted states](#) completed their mandatory 14-day quarantine and returned to campus beginning Oct. 26. During their quarantine period, many students opted into Yeshiva University's Quarantine Program, which provided for fully-paid hotel arrangements and other accommodations.

As a part of YU's program, 49 students stayed at the Hilton Garden Inn, a hotel located on 33rd Street near Beren Campus, for their isolation period. YU did not return a request to comment on the amount spent on the hotel for the students; according to the Hilton Garden Inn, the rate for 49 rooms for two weeks would be \$89 per room, per night. This estimate totals over \$61,000 and is a possible indicator of YU's cost for the hotel. The meal plan in quarantine — subsidized by the university, and for which students were charged \$20 per day — provided choices for three meals each day, as well as on Shabbat.

Students arrived at the hotel between Oct. 12 and Oct. 14, and YU staff distributed students' room assignments and keys each evening. The offices of Student Life and

University Housing and Residence, together with members of the YU administration, faculty and staff, provided a full program for the students at the hotel, including *shiurim*, mental-health support, fitness programs and virtual events.

The programming offered included daily men's and women's exercise classes, a Career Center LinkedIn challenge, virtual social events with fellow quarantining students, a virtual pre-Shabbat "*schmooze*" with President Ari Berman and daily video clips from the Counseling Center.

"It was important to us to know that we were promoting some of the basics of 'healthy quarantining' such as the importance of routine, exercise, embracing uncertainty, and thinking about values during hard times," said Counseling Center Director Dr. Yael Muskat. "The importance of self care and focus on psychological flexibility and resilience is something we hope the students internalize and nurture as they return to campus."

Some students appreciated the initiatives taken by YU during their two-week quarantine. "I think it's good to have things to occupy students because it can get really boring to be in a room by yourself all day," said Neeli Fagan (SCW '21), a student from Chicago who ended her quarantine

Continued on [Page 6](#)



# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## Returning to Campus: A 'Dimmer' Experience than Expected

By YOSEF LEMEL

It's halfway through the semester and the long-awaited return to campus arrives. If one were to judge by a video produced by Yeshiva University's PR team — perhaps to encourage more students to come to campus — they would come to the conclusion that students are being provided with a “robust” experience. Remarks from students include: “They definitely planned really well for us to come back and be safe” and “it feels great to come back.” While I do not discount the personal experiences of these students — and perhaps some elements of these comments resonate with me — I cannot help but think that a more nuanced view of the return remains unmentioned.

### Education

It goes without saying, in a very circular fashion, that the primary aspect of education is education. Campus life and student activities — while also important — are simply peripheral aspects of college that can be accomplished out of the classroom. In the COVID-19 “world of tomorrow,” students are provided with a lackluster student life experience and, for many, a complete repeat of last semester's remote-learning disaster. I am lucky to have just a few in-person Judaic studies courses and *shiurim*, a benefit many

best abilities, transitioning their classes and curricula to the online model while recognizing that it was not an optimal experience.

To my knowledge, though, there have been no substantive changes to the online education model that mitigate the defects. And woe unto us when the spring semester cometh, and alas, most classes are still online. Who knows? Students were not yet informed about any changes to the format in the spring semester. My fear is that nothing will change.

The university must incentivize professors to come and teach in-person classes — while obviously adhering to sensible health regulations — or else Madaa will, of necessity, be sacrificed; otherwise, current and prospective students will question the value of higher education.

### Student Life

Nov. 3 was my second day back on campus and featured the first, and only, in-person student event I attended: the election night watch party, if one can accurately call it a “party.” The chants and controversies of 2016's election party were absent in 2020's — which may have been a good thing. That being said, barely any students showed up and the televisions were only able to air the results on C-SPAN, not even something as “exciting” as CNN or FOX. The swag advertised prior to the event included America-themed

situation that must be ironed out. First, prices are undoubtedly much higher. For example, this year's pasta side course costs \$5.00, \$1.25 more than last year's \$3.75. There is a noticeable lack of variety. A student can't choose one slice of pizza, but rather the \$7.00 two-slice option. There are fewer sushi options. I can't even find something as simple as a tuna or salmon roll, unlike before, when my favorite sushi chef, Todi — God bless his soul — assembled my choice options into a culinary masterpiece. Nevermind the current lack of a salad bar for those who want to stay healthy. It's understandable that COVID-19 restrictions would necessitate the limitation of food items, but perhaps the options are so inadequate that students are incentivized to get food from restaurants and other sources instead.

Another change to the dining service was the institution of a sign-in system: If students would like to eat in the cafeteria, they must sign their name on a piece of paper before they eat and sign out before leaving the cafeteria. I'm not sure, though, that the pen is ever changed. If so, I have no knowledge of it, and have seen multiple students use the same pen to sign in and out. Interestingly, through this policy, by increasing the COVID-19 regulations, it could be that the university is heightening the risk, by the repeated use of a single pen.

Any semblance of campus life effectively shuts down at 10 p.m. The library

*There unfortunately seems to be little focus by the university administration on creating the “robust” educational and social environment that students were promised*

students don't have.

There is no question in my mind that the Zoom courses have deleteriously affected the educational welfare of the student body. From my personal experience, during remote classes, I feel less motivated, less focused and less involved in the educational experience. One need only look at the responses of students to a Commentator survey conducted last semester to understand that there are inherent problems with the online learning model. 40% found online learning to be more difficult than online classes and 86% indicated they use a smartphone more frequently during online classes when compared with in-person classes. In a different, more qualitative, survey, one student summed up his experience in quite similar terms to mine: “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 would be remiss if I failed to mention the experience of faculty members. As I heard one professor put it, “After we transitioned to Zoom, twelve years of pedagogical experience went down the drain.” Many of the teachers have children at home, some of whom disrupt their classes, and must balance their role as a family unit while teaching multiple courses. Nevertheless, being dealt with a difficult hand, most of my professors took the bull by the horns and taught to their

glasses and signs lying on otherwise-lonely tables. If there was any effort by the Office of Student Life in making the event exciting, it seemed to have failed. I left the event after 20 minutes to go to the library, where I could follow the election results with a small group of friends and with my preferred, and more exciting, media sources.

Organized campus life is, in essence, dead. There are individual pockets of friends, here and there, who hang out when possible, whether it's in the cafeteria or the library. However, there seems to be little effort by the university to create a social environment. Shabbos is a case in point. Students can either eat in a designated location set up by the university — which allows two people per table — or eat with a predetermined group of friends in a predetermined location, perhaps in a floor lounge, apartments or their dorm rooms. The first, more official, option sounds anything but alluring. But the latter options allow for more flexibility and less supervision by the university. For example, I witnessed a couple of students, not socially distanced, singing in a room with their masks off. Why would these students go to the YU-designated dining location when the lounge would allow for this flexibility? What incentives is the university providing to make sure that students follow the rules in these situations? Seemingly none.

There are a few issues with the dining

and gym, both necessary components of the college experience, close at that time. Gone are the late-night midterm study or workout sessions, and forget about ever getting a bite from Nagel. YU must adhere to the guidelines set by the New York State government, which means that it has no choice in whether the gym remains open after 10 p.m. or not. However, many students — including me — have classes and/or night seder before then and cannot find a reasonable time to exercise; our physical health is being neglected. YU should consider alternatives to mitigate this concern, including opening the outdoor basketball court at night, which, to my knowledge, remains locked.

It may also be prudent to reinstitute the local shuttle. There have been times, in recent weeks, where I felt unsafe walking the streets. One time, as I was strolling down 186th St., a group of young “gentlemen,” one of whom fired a menacing snarl at me, mentioned something about a phone being in my pocket after which I quickly turned the next corner and thankfully arrived safely back on campus. I would venture to say that it's more likely for the average student to be mugged — or worse — than to be critically damaged healthwise from COVID-19 because they rode in a local shuttle. If students reasonably feel unsafe in the Heights, the university administration

*Continued on Page 4*

## THE COMMENTATOR

2020-2021

*Editor-in-Chief*  
YOSEF LEMEL

*Managing Editor*  
ELISHEVA KOHN

*Executive Editor*  
YITZCHAK CARROLL

### News

*Senior Editor* SRULI FRUCHTER *Junior Editor* ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

### Features

*Senior Editor* JACOB ROSENFELD *Junior Editor* MITCH GOULSON

### Opinions

*Senior Editor* AHARON NISSEL *Junior Editor* JOSH LEICHTER

### Business

*Senior Editor* EITAN LAVIAN *Junior Editor* YAAKOV METZ

**Senior Layout Editor**  
MICAH PAVA

**Social Media Manager**  
SHIRA LEVITT

**Website Manager**  
JARED SCHARF

**Business Manager**  
MEIR LIGHTMAN

### Layout Staff

DEBORAH COOPERSMITH,  
RAFAELA KAPITANKER, SHIRA LEVITT,  
TEMIMA YELLIN

### Staff Writers

DEBORAH COOPERSMITH,  
SHLOMIT EBBIN,  
ZAHAVA FERTIG, ZACHARY GREENBERG,  
YONATAN KURZ, AKIVA LEVY,  
DANIEL MELOOL,  
JARED SCHARF, RAPHI SINGER,  
ALEXANDER WILDES

*The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.*

*For 86 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.*

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

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

Visit us online at  
[www.yucommentator.org](http://www.yucommentator.org).



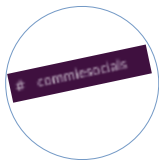
**1 When Life Gives You Saliva Tests Twice a Week**

... you turn it into a competitive sport and vie for the title of "The Fastest Spitter of Yeshiva University."



**2 What Are You Thankful For?**

Life, health, family, friends, home, functioning appliances, winter coats, wifi and you, our readers.



**3 #commiesocials**

The plural s is there for the sake of the optimists among us.



**4 Freshly Baked Chocolate Chip Cookies**

Chewy on the inside, crispy on the outside, which existential crises can't this ultimate comfort food fix?



**5 Professors Who Teach at Double Speed**

One of the only perks of watching class instead of going to it.



**6 4th Floor Vibes**

No coughing, sneezing, talking, singing, eating, moving, humming or breathing allowed. Dividers everywhere, sitting far apart, people are stressed and depressed in every corner. Sounds like the 4th floor has been living through a pandemic since it was renovated in 2016.



**7 T4**

/tē-fôr/ Effectively using all of PRDAB's "Five Torot" in conversation.

**7UP** by Zahava Fertig  
**NMODZ**

**How to Prevent Mixed Dancing**

First, there are no shuttles, then there is the 181st Street Subway construction. Coincidence? I think NOT! #That'sSus

**Midterms**

Still shocked I was supposedly taught this ... Did ANYONE take notes???

**Getting Our Priorities Straight**

When Dunkin closes at 2:30 p.m., the Gottesman Library closes at 10 p.m. and the Beis Midrash is shtieging all night long. #NoU'Madda

**"Hey, How Are You?"**

*Do I tell him all my world-shattering troubles and doubts or do I just squint my eyes and respond, "good, how are you?"*

**Hybrid Classes**

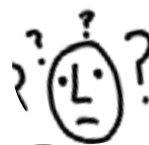
The view from the ceiling is quite flattering, professor.

**Don't Worry, It's Not Real**

Watching a movie and having a mini mental freakout every time someone goes in for a hug or handshake.

**The New Normal**

Deadlines are just friendly suggestions.





### RETURNING TO CAMPUS Continued from Page 2

should understand and accommodate them, subject to reasonable health protocols.

### COVID-19 Precautions

When I first came back to campus, I was told to take a spit test twice a week. The first time was a fairly unpleasant experience; I, unfortunately, took the middle table of the room which made me self-conscious about other people seeing me spit into the tube. Aside from that, the spitting took around 20-25 minutes, after which my throat was parched. I took the test one other time, on Wednesday of that week.

I received a call that Friday, Nov. 6, from Cayuga Health System — the organization that administers the tests — saying that I tested positive for the first test and negative for the second; to backtrack, I previously had the virus, after which I tested negative and was cleared to return to campus, and, therefore, I was dreading a repeat of experiencing isolation. After confirming the information with YU's COVID student line, I was told: "you are cleared and should refrain from testing on campus for now because you will most likely continue to receive false positives. You're all set."

Unfortunately, this information was not communicated to students prior to the return. I had no reason to believe that I — even while I previously had the virus — should not partake in the university's testing program. Further, a previous communication from the university mentioned that students *should* let YU know if they "have tested positive within the past 90 days as this may impact the results of [their] test," implying that those students should receive the test. The same email also explicitly stated that "all students who will be on campus" must take

the test. Later university communications, after my experience, included the information that students who tested positive within 90 days and provided documentation to the university "will be waived from this testing requirement." Hopefully, as a result of the update, this protocol was made clear to the relevant students affected.

There have been other miscommunications following the implementation of COVID-19 regulations. On the evening of Nov. 9, I witnessed a security guard stationed in Rubin Hall prevent two female students, who simply wanted to get dinner from the cafeteria, from entering the building. They were told by the guard and his supervisor that they were not allowed into the building because they were not dorming there, despite the fact that male non-residents are regularly allowed into the cafeteria. Both women confirmed that they participate in YU's rapid test program on the Wilf Campus and have submitted negative PCR nasal swab tests prior to arriving on campus. The students later attempted to clarify this information with a senior member of the administration, wondering whether this was actually the university's official policy, after which they were told, "Current students from either campus, may use the cafeteria." The administration sent the security office an email the next morning to affirm that the university policy was to allow individuals of either gender into the cafeteria. The Commentator has received reports of at least three other women prevented from entering buildings on the Wilf Campus, including the cafeteria and library, after this incident. It is unfortunate that YU students underwent this experience, due to miscommunication, and one wonders whether they will have warm memories of their college experience after they graduate. Miscommunication in general, I fear, will deleteriously impact the legacy of this institution, all the more so

during this unfortunate and uncertain time.

Every day, in order to enter campus buildings, students are to take a "COVID-19 Symptoms Pre-Screen Tool." Questions include: "Did you develop any fever?" and "Did you develop a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?" Students who successfully complete the survey and answer each question correctly are welcomed with a picture of a green smiley face with the date that they must show to a guard at the entrance of each campus building to enter. This protocol has become so routine that I barely focus on the specific questions anymore, and simply remember the order of the answers I must provide in order to be approved to enter campus buildings. Of course, if I ever show symptoms I would not try to cheat the survey, but I have no doubt that some students have cheated the survey.

One might hear frequent coughs in the library, even though that particular cougher may have indicated on the survey that they did not develop a cough. In addition, the popularity of the screenshot-sharing business allows lazy students the ability to skip the survey, for whatever reason. It's only a matter of time before someone develops a computer program that automatically creates a picture of the green "smiley-guy" for the applicable date. My point is this: The survey is a nice system to have and probably reminds people to take precautionary measures, but it's certainly not foolproof and has been abused in the past.

Of course, there are sometimes violations of health protocols. I will often see food left on the *hefker* table near the Glueck *beis medrash*, that can be taken and eaten by anyone, even while not knowing its original source. The YU administration should make a better effort at cracking down on these violations or else it will promote an environment of laxity.

### Conclusion

Coming back to campus was generally a nice experience, at least relative to the alternative. Seeing longtime friends and acquaintances after a long hiatus, "chilling" in the library and living the city-life are some of the wonderful aspects of the transition to on-campus life. These are positive aspects created independent of the university's actions; there is simply a space provided. At present, though, there unfortunately seems to be little focus by the university administration on creating the "robust" educational and social environment that students were promised. Of course, I, as a student, am not privy to all of the administrative behind-the-scenes work; this is simply my impression. Indeed, we all — students, parents, faculty and administrators — have to deal with the harsh reality of the COVID-19 era. However, we should still not ignore the aspects which must be fixed.

If the current situation continues, seniors will leave and first-year students will enter YU with a sour taste in their mouths. Seniors often wonder whether there will even be senior dinner, awards ceremonies and an in-person graduation, with all pomp and ceremony, to capstone a formative period of their lives, or whether we will tread down last year's *pitiful path*; first-year students won't even know what a real pre-COVID-19 college experience entails, perhaps ever. It is out of love for this institution and for its legacy that I urge the administration to change course and start providing students with an experience that will make them proud of calling themselves students of Yeshiva.

### SEFORIM SALE

Continued from Front Page

such as the libraries, *batei midrash* and cafeterias opened in a limited capacity. As of publication, YU's COVID-19 Tracker indicated that only three students or employees tested positive for COVID-19 since campus first reopened.

Some students were disappointed to learn about the Seforim Sale's cancellation, but they understood that it was necessary. "I really enjoyed working for [the Seforim Sale] last year," said Rivky Terebello (SSSB '21), who worked as a Hebrew Halacha section manager for the 2020 Seforim Sale. "I was looking forward to being on upper staff this

year and having the opportunity to be more involved. I think it's really sad that I will not have the opportunity, but I understand that it's necessary during this time."

"The Seforim Sale is definitely an event that YU and much of the wider Jewish community look forward to," said Zachary Ottenstein (YC '22), who worked as a Hebrew

Tanakh section manager in last year's sale. "It is amazing that this one event attracts everyone from Satmar chassidim to secular academics who all share in the pursuit of Jewish wisdom. While it is unfortunate that it will not run this year due to the pandemic; I am confident that when it does return, it will be all the more exciting to the public."



According to its website, the Seforim Sale is run completely by YU students and attracts approximately 15,000 customers each sale.



## Citing ‘Confusion,’ Curriculum Committee Merges Two SCW General Education Categories

By ELISHEVA KOHN

Two categories of Stern College for Women (SCW) general education requirements — “Foundations of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences” and “Contemporary US and Global Perspectives” — were merged to form the new “Foundations and Contemporary Perspectives of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences,” Meirah Shedlo, academic advisor and special projects manager, announced via email on Nov. 10.

“This change,” Shedlo told The Commentator, “was initiated by Academic Advisement staff, in consultation with the deans and the Curriculum Committee.” The Curriculum Committee is chaired by Dr. Miriam Hirsch of the Education department and consists of faculty members representing the academic divisions, according to Shedlo.

Prior to this update, SCW students were required to take a total of four courses, two in “Contemporary,” and another two in “Foundations.” Effective immediately, SCW students are required to take four classes, totaling 12 credits, in the newly-formed “Foundations and Contemporary” category;

eligible courses are in Economics, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology departments, though the number of total required courses, and the departments from which they may be chosen, remain the same. According to Shedlo, “current students who have already taken courses toward the previous requirement may choose to adhere to the former policy.”

In the past, certain classes within the

offered by the Political Science Department. Under the new guidelines, both classes would count towards the same general education category.

The Spring 2021 course catalog is expected to be “ready for student viewing by the end of November,” Shedlo told The Commentator.

“We hope this update will allow you to choose your courses with greater clarity and

“These new requirements seem to alleviate the confusion and stresses of students when choosing between seemingly similar categories and choices of courses,” said Yael Evgi (SCW ‘21).

According to Shedlo, the university will continue to “grant the same number of credits for qualifying AP scores” despite the update.

This update marks the second major change in SCW general education requirements in 2020. Last semester, SCW students were informed that the three-credit “Human Genetics” course would replace the four-credit “Human Biology” course, which fulfilled the “Science and Technology” category for students not majoring in the natural sciences and included a lab component. Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dr. Karen Bacon told The Commentator in April that she believes “this new course will be more valuable for non-majors than Human Biology,” explaining that the university had “decided to forego the required lab for non-science majors.”

---

*Effective immediately, SCW students are required to take four classes, totaling 12 credits, in the newly-formed “Foundations and Contemporary” category, which includes courses in Economics, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology.*

---

same department would count towards different general education categories. In Fall 2020, “Voting and Elections” counted towards the “Contemporary” category, and “Topics: Just & Unjust Wars” counted towards “Foundations,” while both were

flexibility going forward,” wrote Shedlo in her email to SCW undergraduate students, acknowledging that “[a]t times,” the former categories have “caused some confusion.”

Some students welcomed the merging of two former general education categories.



Two SCW general education categories have merged to form a new category called “Foundations and Contemporary Perspectives of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences.”



# Lerman to Hold IBC Rep. and Sophomore Rep. Positions, Student Court Rules

By **RAPHI SINGER**

*This article was originally published online on Nov. 3.*

The Wilf Student Court unanimously ruled in favor of Baruch Lerman (YC '23) in *General Assembly v. Baruch Lerman* on Sunday, Nov. 1 that he could hold both positions of Isaac Breuer College (IBC) representative and sophomore representative.

Daniel Melool (YC '22), an associate justice on the student court, delivered the ruling on behalf of the court and the other justices, Natan Pittinsky (YC '21), David Fleschner (YC '21) and Levi Zwickler (YC '22), and Chief Justice Bryan Lavi (YC '21). In their decision, the court held that, "that there was nothing in the constitution that prohibited the respondent, Lerman, from holding two positions simultaneously. Lerman is the rightful holder of both positions."

After Lerman won in the sophomore election on Oct. 11, Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB '21), Sy Syms School of Business President Adam Baron (SSSB '21) and Yeshiva College

Student Association President Ari Lowy (YC '21) asked the court to force him to resign from one of his positions. Their argument was that the constitution states in Article X Section 2 (3) that "any candidate may only run for office per election period," which would prevent Lerman from holding two positions at the same time. The three general assembly members' final point was that, by allowing Lerman to hold two positions, there

*The court decided that the results of the election were in fact constitutional, thus letting Lerman continue on as both IBC and sophomore representative.*

would inevitably be future candidates who would run and unduly hold both positions simultaneously.

While the court agreed that the constitution mentions that a student cannot run for two positions at the same time, it held that

it says nothing about a student holding both positions. The court decided that the results of the election were in fact constitutional, thus letting Lerman continue on as both IBC and sophomore representative.

YSU President Zachary Greenberg said, "While I don't agree with the court's ruling, I respect their decision. Baruch is an upstanding student and if there's anyone who could handle two positions simultaneously, it would be him. I hope to pass an amendment to prevent a situation like this from occurring though in the future."

The challenge in student court began after Lerman's win due to disqualifications of the initial winner and the runner up. The first winner, Jacob Goldsmith (YC '23), was disqualified due to a lack of up-to-date credits that would have made him a sophomore. The runner up, Shay Fishman (YC '23), was then declared the winner, but since he would only be a sophomore for Fall 2020 and become a junior in the spring, he was also disqualified.

"I love Yeshiva University, and I love the Constitution," Lerman told *The Commentator*. "I'm so honored the Sophomores and the IBC students have

chosen me to represent them in Student Government. I look forward to doing great things with them this year."



Baruch Lerman

EZRA TROY PHOTOGRAPHY

## MACSLIVE

*Continued from Front Page*

seeing what we have in store."

MacsLive Technical Manager Justin Safier (SSSB '19) thought of and designed the project to secure funding, and Executive Producer Akiva Poppers (SSSB '22) led the initiative. Alumni Lance Hirt (YC '87), Lior Hod (YC '88) and Mordy Leifer (YC '89) collectively contributed \$35,000 dedicated to former Coach Jonathan Halpert, while Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel collected \$7,000 from Neal's Fund,

in memory of Neal Dublinsky, and the Office of Admissions — which collaborates with MacsLive for the annual Red Sarachek Memorial Basketball Tournament — donated \$5,000.

Some students on athletic teams were excited about MacsLive's developments. "It's awesome and exciting," commented Gabe Leifer (SSSB '22), captain of the men's basketball team. "It's something that the broadcasting team has been trying to put together for a long time and it'll be awesome for people who can't make it to games."

As *The Commentator* previously reported, Director of Athletics and Recreation Joe Bednarsh emailed students on July 9 regarding the expected 2020-21 seasons for YU's athletic teams. Regarding impending government restrictions and rising cases, infection rates and deaths of COVID-19 across New York City, Bednarsh said, "In terms of the seasons, right now we are planning on continuing to practice and we're preparing to start competition in January."

"We have been closely following the COVID trends and numbers and are in

constant contact with YU's Medical director, the Skyline Conference, and closely following the State and NCAA's guidance for return to play decisions," Bednarsh said. "The health and safety of the student-athletes is our primary concern and the lens through which we view all of our activities. If at any point there is a concern about our student-athletes welfare we will pause or discontinue seasons as appropriate. We remain optimistic that we can provide full and robust seasons for all our student-athletes."

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

*Continued from Front Page*

to keep us entertained when we first got here. Overall, it's been a pretty smooth process."

"Things at the hotel are great, or at least as good as they could be," shared Joseph Yellin (SSSB '23) during his quarantine.

"The school is really doing their best with the cards they were given."

Unlike the rest of the students who returned to campus on Oct. 21, those who quarantined at the hotel will not need to take a COVID-19 test since they were already administered one about three days after arriving in New York.

At the end of the quarantine period, the

students were given transportation from the hotel to their respective dorms. On campus, all students must follow YU's COVID-19 Code of Behavior by wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and frequently washing their hands and using hand sanitizer, as well as receiving a saliva COVID-19 test twice a week.

"In general, we were so gratified and

impressed to see how well the students adjusted to quarantine," commented Muskat. "I believe it speaks volumes about the inner strength and determination of the YU students to participate and be part of the YU community, even through the hardships."



International and out-of-state students moved onto campus beginning on Oct. 26.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY



## YU Declines to Rehire Men's Only Theater Prof. and 2017 Adjunct of the Year

By TEMMI LATTIN

After teaching theater as an adjunct professor at Yeshiva University for over 14 years, Lin Snider was informed over the summer that she would not be rehired for the 2020-21 school year. Snider was Yeshiva College's (YC) only theater professor and also directed the annual Yeshiva College Dramatic Society (YCDS) production.

Snider was scheduled to teach an acting class for Fall 2020, but she was informed by Chair of the Department of Fine Arts and Music Dr. Daniel Belivsky in April 2020 via email that the Deans had cancelled the course, explaining that "their decision [was] based on the need to mitigate the serious

be renewed for the full school year.

Snider was named YU's Lillian F. and William L. Silber Adjunct of the Year in 2017. "[Snider's] productions are wonderful and the students benefit from her leadership and the exposure to the world of the theater," Associate Dean Fred Sugarman told YUNews at the time. The news of her termination comes soon after [The Commentator's reporting](#) that YU's 2017 Professor of the Year, Dr. Daniel Kimmel, was removed from his tenure-track position.

Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman commented on Snider's position with YCDS, attributing her dismissal to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that "theater productions are on hold and last spring's production was cancelled."

*"I will certainly miss being at YU and will welcome the opportunity to return if at all possible. For now, theater — like many other things — has had to take a turn away from past practices and onto new ones."*

Prof. Lin Snider

economic consequences of the pandemic." She proposed lecture-based alternatives due to this semester's [online](#) format in an email to Belivsky, but he did not respond.

After a request in Aug. for information about her status, and no commitment given about the spring semester, Snider received an email in Sept. informing her that her semester-by-semester position would not

She expressed that she "appreciate[s] the work that Lin Snyder has done to direct past YC plays," and that "future theater productions will depend on returning to a resumption of our in person theater program." Responding to requests for comment on the cancellation of Snider's acting course, Botman stated that she was "not aware of these details."

"I have valued so much the opportunity

to become a part of the lives of the young men and women with whom I worked - as well as the relationships I developed with the faculty and administrators who supported YCDS through the years," said Snider.

Snider began working at YC in the spring of 2006, which at the time had an official theater department and a theater minor. Over the years, she taught a range of theater classes, including Theater History, Directing, Advanced Acting, Playwriting and Theater as an Agent of Change, a course that focused on plays that addressed social issues.

According to current YCDS President Matthew Shilat (YC '21), there are no clear plans from YU about who will be taking over Snider's position. While Shilat hopes that "YCDS will return to the stage under Lin's directing in Spring 2022, there is no certainty." Referring to the recent construction and [downsizing](#) of Stern College for Women's Art Department floor, Shilat expressed that as a club, YCDS is "worried for the arts at YU," but with "cautious optimism" they will "press forward, trying new ideas to continue giving theater a place at YU."

"Lin [Snider] is the ultimate embodiment of a mensch, a person of deep integrity, replete with passion for her job and for her students," shared Ariel Meiri (YC '12), an alumnus who minored in theater. "I'm saddened by the knowledge that a whole new generation of students will not get the chance to benefit from Lin's vision, creativity, and passion."

"I will certainly miss being at YU and will welcome the opportunity to return if at all possible," Snider told [The Commentator](#). "For now, theater — like many other things

— has had to take a turn away from past practices and onto new ones. Hopefully the young men of YCDS will continue to find ways to explore their creativity and continue to build their own self-confidence and pride in the new projects they develop."



Prof. Lin Snider

YEHIVA UNIVERSITY

## 181st St. Subway to Close until Dec. 2021, Intercampus Shuttle Remains Suspended

By ELAZAR ABRAHAMS

The 181st St. 1 train subway station in Washington Heights will close for construction beginning Dec. 5 through Dec. 2021, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has [announced](#). With the intercampus shuttle on hiatus, YU undergraduates are left with limited travel options between the Wilf and Beren campuses.

*The 181st St. 1 train subway station in Washington Heights will close for construction on Dec. 5 and stay shuttered for a year, the MTA has announced. With the intercampus shuttle on hiatus, YU undergraduates are left with limited travel options between the Wilf and Beren campuses.*

1 trains will [skip](#) the 181st St. stop — which is just over three blocks from the Wilf campus — in both directions for the next year, according to signs posted at the station. The scheduled maintenance will include "replacing elevators and related equipment while making critical structural upgrades to the elevator shafts." The A train stop at

181st St. and Fort Washington Ave., as well as the 1 train stop at 191st St. will continue to run normally.

Since officially [reopening](#) their midtown and uptown Manhattan campuses on Oct. 21, YU has never formally addressed the shuttle ceasing operations this year. The service was not mentioned in the [Reopening Plan brochure](#) released in June nor in any emails from the administration. However, upon logging into [yushuttles.com](#), users find a message declaring a "TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF CAMPUS SHUTTLE SERVICE."

The university's "local shuttle," which in previous years has transported students to and from points within Washington Heights, is also unavailable.

"I have spoken to the security department about getting the shuttle running again," Alex Friedman (YC '22), a member of the Student Life Committee, told [The Commentator](#). "They expressed their support for the shuttle, but said that the decision is ultimately up to the administration. In every measure, the shuttle is the safer option, from both a health and public safety perspective. I hope the administration will do not only what is right, but what is safest for their students by restarting the shuttle."

Some students, especially those on the Beren campus, expressed dismay at the lack of transportation. "Our access to the uptown library is severely limited and that information was not properly communicated to students," said Rena Levinson (SCW '21). "It's hard to create a sense of community when the campuses are so divided. I'm also

concerned for the drivers that lost their jobs." "We expect to provide transportation between the undergraduate campuses for events on the Wilf and Beren campuses to the extent practicable," Chief Facilities & Administrative Officer Randy Apfelbaum commented. "We understand that our students are interested in having a more regular

intercampus shuttle, and we are looking into options that will meet our health and safety guidelines for maintaining social distance and other protocols. Unfortunately, our regular van shuttle is not a feasible option due to the inability to provide appropriate social distancing."



The 181st 1 Street Station

ELAZAR ABRAHAMS



# YU Undergraduate Fall 2020 Enrollment Numbers Remain Steady Despite COVID-19

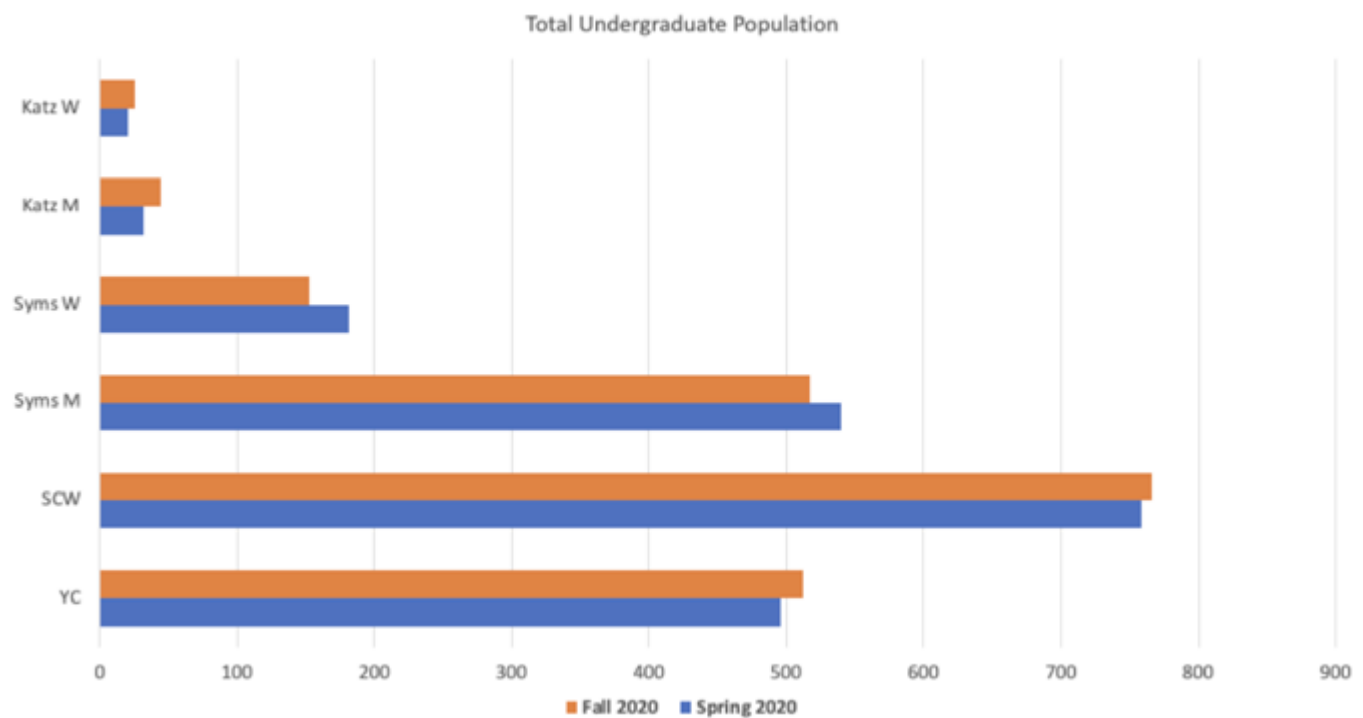
By MITCH GOULSON

For the Fall 2020 semester, the Yeshiva University undergraduate population stands at 2,017 students (full-time and part-time). Compared to Spring 2020 figures, this represents a loss of 11 students. This figure comes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enrollment in the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) decreased from 722 students to 670, a 7% decrease from the spring semester. The Wilf Campus lost 23 SSSB students (540 to 517) and the Beren campus lost 29 SSSB students (182 to 153). The largest gain in students came from Yeshiva College (YC), which added 16 students (496 to 512) for a gain of 3%. Stern College for Women (SCW), which has been steadily declining over the last few years, surprisingly gained eight students (758 to 766). The Katz School Associate Degree Program saw a massive gain in enrollment with a 33% increase of new students, 12 men (32 to 44) and 5 women (20 to 25).

Enrollment in the Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) program increased overall from Spring 2020, with an increase of 25 students (1048 to 1073), or 2%. The Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) gained 17 students (464 to 481), an increase of about 4%; the Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP) gained 27 students (270 to 297), an increase of 10%; and James Striar School (JSS) gained 2 students (122 to 124), an increase of 1.6%. The only decrease in enrollment among morning programs occurred in Isaac Breuer College (IBC), where enrolled students decreased by roughly 10% (192 to 171).

Since Fall 2008, when the YU undergraduate population stood at 2,318 stu-



The total undergraduate population from Spring to Fall 2020.

THE COMMENTATOR

dents, enrollment numbers have been slowly declining. Fall 2020 marks the twelfth consecutive fall semester YU has failed to enroll at least 2,300 undergraduate students. In fact, SSSB Men is the only school with a current enrollment higher than that of Fall 2008.

Enrollment among SSSB Men has remained mostly consistent since Fall 2015, not rising above 540 students nor falling below 517 during that time frame. SSSB Women, on the other hand, has been slowly rising; after falling to 90 in Fall 2012, the school peaked in Spring 2020 to 179 stu-

dents. This indicates that their Fall 2020 loss of 29 students, or 16%, may be an outlier.

SCW bucked their trend of negative enrollment numbers. Previously at 952 enrolled students back in Fall 2012, the school's enrollment had lagged in recent years, falling to 758 in Spring 2020, its lowest point since prior to Fall 2008. Among fall semesters, its gain of 3 students from Fall 2019-Fall 2020 represented its first gain in enrollment since Fall 2011-Fall 2012, when it gained 57 students.

YC's 3% gain in enrollment marked the

school's first gain in enrollment since Fall 2010, and its largest total undergraduate student population since Fall 2017. After reaching 754 enrolled students in Fall 2010, the school had lost an average of 32 students during the following nine fall semesters. Fall 2020's gain was a welcome surprise.

YU's slight dip in undergraduate enrollment fell in line with data from Inside Higher Ed regarding economic impact on enrollment (IHE). An organization devoted to delivering and analyzing higher educa-

Continued on Page 9

## Navigating the Agunah Crisis: A Shiur By Rabbi Yona Reiss

By AKIVA LEVY

In a recent shiur with the United We Stand club, Rabbi Yona Reiss, *av beis din* of the Chicago Rabbinical Council and *rosh yeshiva* at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, discussed the *agunah* crisis, its implications and how the Orthodox community can navigate it.

The word "*agunah*" can mean "chained" or "anchored," like a ship to the harbor. By unfortunate circumstances, an *agunah* is a woman who is chained to a past marriage and restricted from *halachically* remarrying. This can either be due to the fact that her husband is missing, there are no witnesses to testify to her husband's death or her husband refuses to grant his wife a get, a *halachic* divorce document. The question rabbis are left to deal with is how to navigate this crisis and allow these women to continue on with their lives. As Rabbi Reiss pointed out, some explain that the reason Masechet Gittin (divorce law) follows Kiddushin (marriage law) in the order of Talmudic tractates is that when a marriage reaches its end, we want to allow the woman to get remarried as soon as possible.

*Agunot* whose husbands died without a witness were common after the 2001 World Trade Center terrorist attacks. It was rare for a witness to be able to testify that they saw a particular person die in the tragedy, and bodies were seldom able to be recovered.

If it was known beyond a reasonable doubt that someone was on a floor above the point of impact, or if his body was recovered and identified, then he could be presumed dead. However, even in a case when it was known that someone worked above the 92nd or 76th floor of the north or south towers, respectively, it had to be proven he was at work

*The word agunah can mean chained or anchored, like a ship to the harbor. By unfortunate circumstances, agunot are women who are chained to a past marriage and restricted from halachically remarrying.*

that day. It seems somewhat pedantic and unnecessary for the *halakha* to say we have to prove his death with such high standards. Yet, even in modern times, we have seen deaths declared precipitously. This has been especially true after tragedies when authorities sometimes rush to declare a person to be dead when he is actually still alive.

A question arose for the Beth Din of America — a *beis din* that Rabbi Reiss once served as director of — regarding whether DNA collected from ground zero constituted evidence of death. *Halakha* calls for a *siman*, an identifying mark, to be on the body of the man that a person can connect to him. There are three types of *simanim*: a common *siman* has no uniqueness (such as height), an intermediate *siman* which is less common

(such as a scar) and an iron-clad *siman* that has less than 1 in 1,000 commonality. An iron-clad *siman* is usually considered a certifiable mark, a *siman muvhak*. In a case such as 9/11 which had more than 3,000 people missing, we need a *siman* that is less common than one in 3,000 people so that we know only one of the victims had this si-

man. It seems obvious for DNA to fall under this category; it is unique to every person. However, DNA is not a noticeable feature as it can only be identified in a lab. Does this eliminate it as a halachic *siman*?

Rabbi Reiss quoted Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg who explained that there are two types of *simanim* of a person: a precise, visible mark or a representation of the whole individual (*t'vius ayin*). Socially, we recognize people from the latter, what people look like as a whole, not by something specific like their dental records. As such, that type of *siman* is what is preferred by a *beis din*. Similarly, as long as DNA is handled properly in the laboratory, it should be accepted. DNA represents a person as a whole, not a specific characteristic.

That was the accepted ruling by the Beth Din of America. However, some *poskim* rule that DNA could be accepted as a *siman*, but it is not strong enough to stand alone in testifying to a death and one would also need at least circumstantial evidence. This evidence was commonly found for the victims of 9/11. Moreover, if the death was presumed as probable based on the evidence but not proved, the Rabbi Elazar Me'Vardun derives from the Gemara that after the passing of a significant period of time, two to four years, an *agunah* is free to remarry. So by the time the widow would usually be ready to remarry, she would not be considered an *agunah*. In the end, there were no remaining *agunot* as a result of the 9/11 tragedy.

Some may still think that 9/11 was an unfortunate anomaly and this case is not likely to happen again in modern times. However, it is still happening today. Due to COVID-19, men are dying in hospitals without witnesses being able to see the body before it is buried. The question is whether to trust the death certificates from the hospitals. As noted earlier, sometimes deaths are reported in error. Do death certificates provide a reliable proof of death?

Rabbi Reiss quoted a recent *teshuva* of Rabbi Yitzchak Stein to provide some clarity. To begin, the Chatam Sofer rules that death certificates are substantial evidence.

Continued on Page 9



## AGUNOT

Continued from Page 8

He lived in the 1800s, when death certificates were much more likely to be in error; this would obviously hold true today when the tools used and protocols the doctors have to follow before pronouncing death have exponentially evolved. Second, the hospital ID can count as a *siman muvhak* as it is representative of the total person and is rarely mixed up. Third, the call from the hospital to inform the family of the death can count as a testimony (in this case, non-Jews can be accepted as witnesses). This leaves the opposition without much of a counterclaim. The only practical option they have is to dig up the body and double-check. That causes such a disgrace to the body it has to be avoided as much as possible. Moreover, as noted earlier, after two to four years, it will be dismissed anyway.

Unfortunately, there are also cases where

the husband refuses to give a *get*. A *beis din* is not left with many options here. The case in the Gemara and *halakha* where the husband is physically coerced to give a *get* is not a practical option nor generally consistent with the *halakha*, and a *beis din* is made up of empathetic and responsible *poskim*, not *mafiosos*. Sometimes the best communities can do is shun him and socially persuade him to give the *get* (as suggested by Rabbeinu Tam).

It is a difficult case that too many rebbeim have to deal with. That is why the Ba"ch and the Maharsha say that one who solves an *agunah* case is considered to have rebuilt Jerusalem. The *batei din* of America are left to try to take proactive measures to prevent this from happening. That is why Rabbi Mordechai Willig formulated the *halakhic* prenup. It creates a legal basis to pressure a husband to pay a fine, and then some, if he does not grant a *get*. The prenup requires him to appear before the *beis din* and yield

to their ruling. He also agrees to pay for the wife's cost of living from when she asks for a divorce until he gives her the *get*, which according to the cost of living index, which most *batei din* in America follow, is \$150 a day. This adds an incentive for the husband to give the *get* as soon as possible. Rabbi Reiss emphasized that it is "extremely important" for all newlyweds to sign one and encourage their friends to sign one as well.

There are skeptics who propose, why not change how *halakha* formulates marriage and avoid *agunot* all together? Rabbi Reiss answers their question by saying it is because we believe in our institution of marriage. We are committed to the *kedushah* of weddings and the *halakhic* requirements for a *get*, and it is with a heavy heart that we tell *agunot* that there is no other option. To which there is a response of the common phrase, "Where there is a rabbinic will there is a *halakhic* way." To which Rabbi Reiss responds, "It is really where there is a *halakhic* way there

is a rabbinic will. We don't run the show."

After the shiur, someone asked about the *halakhic* impetus of *afkinhu*. *Afkinhu* appears in the Gemara as a concept that allows the *beis din* to retroactively nullify the marriage. However, as Rabbi Reiss explained, it can only be used in limited circumstances. Only when a *get* was already in place or the marriage was a *kiddushin b'teus*, marriage in error, can *afkinhu* be used, which were the explicit cases in the Gemara.

So what can we do? For starters, we can sign the *halachic* prenup (or postnuptial option) and ask our friends to do the same. We can also ask our local rabbis and schools to promote the signing of the prenup. Through organizations like [ORA](#) — Organization for the Resolution of Agunot — we can also become advocates to bring about positive change.



Rabbi Yona Reiss

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## ENROLLMENT

Continued from Page 8

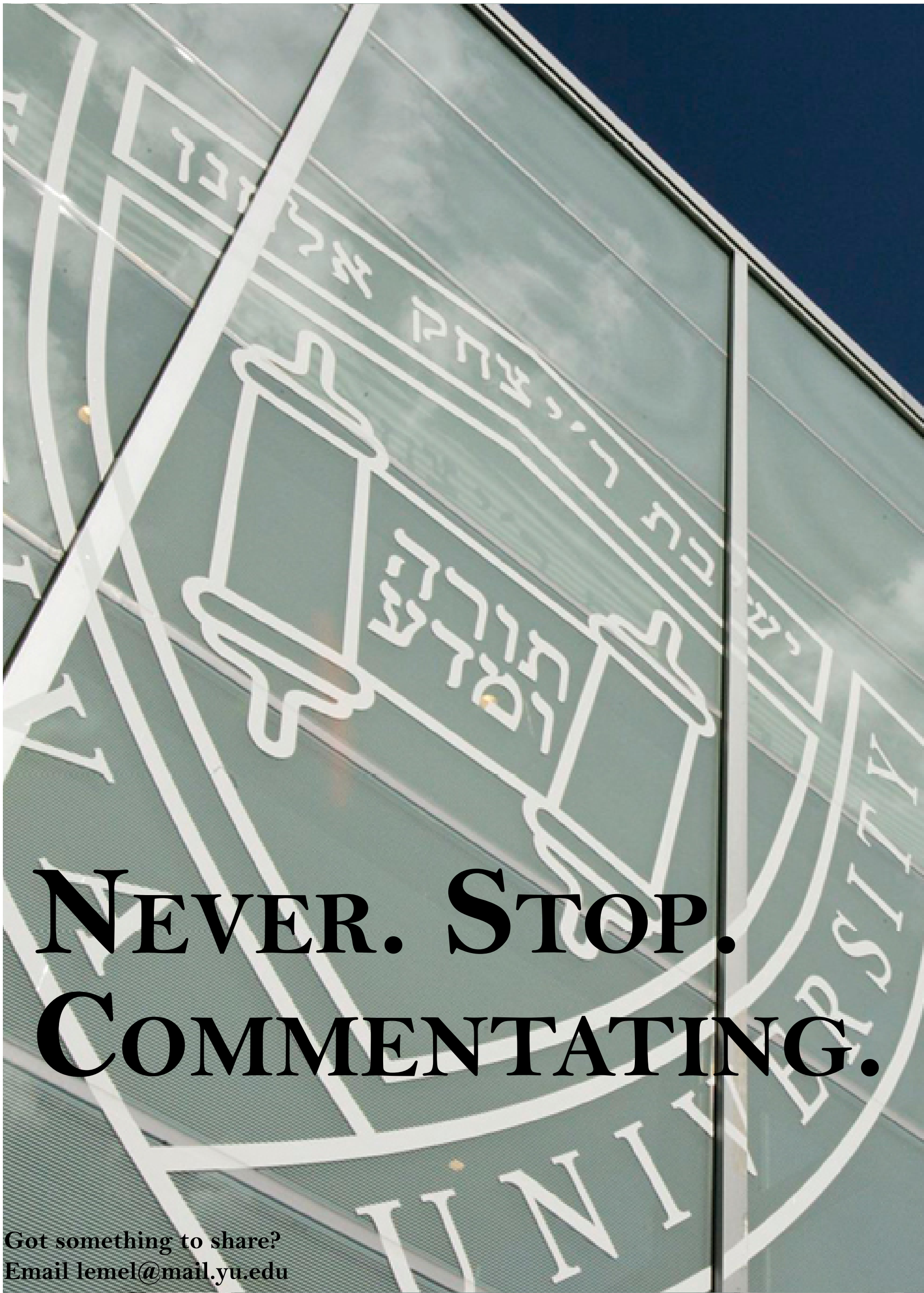
tion news, IHE found that "[In Fall 2020,] Undergraduate enrollments declined for both full-time and part-time students... At private nonprofit colleges, the number of full-time students declined by 3.7 percent." Despite this, YU managed to withstand the current negative economic trends of enrollment, only losing 11 students overall.

YU's Acting Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Marc Zharnest, gave credit to his team for keeping enrollment strong in the wake of COVID-19. "There is no book on how to recruit in the midst of a pandemic, but we have adapted to both maintain and increase our outreach in the virtual world. We have increased programming, added a virtual tour, and have continued to look for opportunities to meet with our students and prospective students," said

Zharnest. "Due to the resilience of our amazing recruitment team that we have in place both here and in Israel, our applications have continued to grow over the past cycles. There is no doubt that this is a culmination of the leadership of my predecessor Geri Mansdorf, along with the dedication of the team in Israel, our faculty, and staff to ensure that our students had the opportunity to learn both on campus and virtually."

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yeshiva University managed to maintain their part-time and full-time undergraduate student enrollment, only decreasing by 11 students overall. The administrators' diligence and persistence in reopening the school currently looks particularly astute, at least in terms of undergraduate enrollment.





# NEVER. STOP. COMMENTATING.

Got something to share?  
Email [lemel@mail.yu.edu](mailto:lemel@mail.yu.edu)



## Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z”l – Personal Reflections

By RABBI IAN SHAFFER

It is with a great sense of sadness and loss that I am writing these few lines about a person who was one of my teachers and mentors when I studied in Jews College in London in the late 1980s. Rabbi Sacks had already achieved a great reputation by then, for his breadth of intellect and knowledge. The course he taught that I attended was called “Comparative Ethics” where we examined some fundamental issues (e.g. abortion, capital punishment, amongst many others) from both a Jewish as well as a secular perspective. The secular sources we looked at

of the main supporters of Jonathan Sack’s bid for the Chief Rabbi position, which he achieved in 1991. This was a difficult time, as transitions tend to be, and the college was going through some difficulties (eventually the college lost its Victorian name and transitioned to become the London School of Jewish Studies, as it is to this very day). One of the great benefits of being there, in such a small setting, was to experience the close contact with both teachers, such as Rabbi Sacks, and all the academics who came to spend a sabbatical year in London, mainly from Israel. Rabbi Sacks was the principal of the college during these turbulent years, when the future of the college was hanging in the balance.

as well as boys, and Rabbi Sacks had been one of the educational advisors when the school was set up. I remember asking him where the idea of high level Torah studies for girls was going to lead to, in terms of what we now recognize, as *Yoatzot Halacha* and Rabbinic attorneys (*toanot*), which were then beginning to be recognized in Israel. He didn’t answer my question fully at the time, but in subsequent years I believe he saw the tremendous advances that were made in girls’ Jewish education in the UK at a high level, and was delighted by the subsequent achievements of many of the graduates of this wonderful school.

same soccer team in the UK. He took this in good humor and commiserated with Yecheil as their team had lost badly that day. This really typified the very down to earth side of this intellectual giant, and I am glad to have been able to make the introduction at the time.

I knew Jonathan Sacks in the earlier part of his career, and I have been very excited about his work, especially in the US, where I moved to in 1998. Yeshiva University benefitted from him for a number of years and especially his oratory and erudition have always been deeply admired here. To say that he was a *gadol* in the conventional sense is not accurate, as he was anything but conventional in so many ways, but that he was a *gadol* in terms of being a communicator and ambassador for Orthodox Judaism around the world, almost without equal. May his memory be for a blessing.

*Rabbi Ian Shaffer is an adjunct professor of Bible Studies at Stern College for Women.*

*To say that he was a gadol in the conventional sense is not accurate, as he was anything but conventional in so many ways, but that he was a gadol in terms of being a communicator and ambassador for Orthodox Judaism around the world, is almost without equal.*

were based on a book by Peter Singer, an Australian ethicist, who I had never heard of, but who fitted very well into the style of the course we were studying. Rabbi Sacks was very thorough in his coverage of the Jewish perspective and I was reminded of the written work he had done for a youth movement in the UK at the time, Jewish Youth Study Groups (similar to NCSY in the US) which ran two camps a year as well as regular meetings all over the country. It was not classical *kiruv* but many young people did become more observant during those years and Jonathan Sacks contributed very positively in this process, with some excellent pamphlets explaining basic Jewish concepts. This later became his trademark, being able to explain the most difficult ideas in an understandable and meaningful way.

As I was beginning my career in the rabbinate, I was very excited when Rabbi Sacks announced a “Traditional Alternatives” conference in 1990. This was a chance to hear from academics and Rabbis from both Israel and the US, who had not been well known in the UK up to that point. I remember being so impressed by the erudition of Rabbi J. Bleich from Cardozo Law School and Rabbi Emmanuel Feldman from Atlanta. Rabbi Sacks had pulled this idea together and my only disappointment was that it was not repeated in subsequent years of his Chief Rabbinate. Rabbi Sacks understood the benefit of the exposure in the UK to Rabbis and academics from America, and I was excited when these events happened and were so well attended at the time.

I returned from Israel in 1986 and began my studies at Jews College, (a college similar to YU, but with only approximately 50 students at the time) with the help of a scholarship from an English philanthropist, Sir Stanley Kalms, who eventually became one

Another interaction with Rabbi Sacks that I remember well, was when I began teaching at a new high school in London (Yeshiva day school) called Immanuel College, named after the former Chief Rabbi, Immanuel Jakobovits z”l. I was excited to be one of the pioneers in teaching Talmud to girls

Overall, I believe that I have been privileged to know a very special teacher and I followed his career with great interest. I met him when he came to address the 2014 YU Semicha graduates the evening before the YU Chag Hasmikha. I introduced him to my son, Yecheil, who was receiving his semikha at that time and explained that my son had something in common with Rabbi Sacks which was unique. They both supported the



Rabbi Sacks speaks at the 2014 Kollel Yom Rishon at the Schottenstein Center.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## Lessons in Spiritual Mentorship: A Personal Reflection on the Legacy of Rabbi Lord Sacks z”l

By RABBI DR. STU HALPERN

My friends would call me his “squire.” In 2013, I was asked by then YU President Richard Joel to arrange and oversee Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks’ tenure as the Kressel and Ephrat Family University Professor of Jewish Thought at Yeshiva University. Over the three years I spent working closely with Rabbi Sacks in this capacity, in the courses he co-taught with Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik at Stern College for Women and Yeshiva College and at countless guest lectures, major conferences and community *Shabbatons*, I was blessed to experience his greatness up close.

Welcoming Rabbi Sacks to a crowd of 1,100 people who had packed the main sanctuary to hear his guest *drasha* during a YU *Shabbaton*, one of the local rabbis quipped that he was proud that Rabbi Sacks could see how many people normally show up to one of that rabbi’s own *drashot* on a typical Shabbat. In my own community

in Englewood, NJ, the crowd was so large during one of Rabbi Sacks’ talks that a congregant joked that we might as well take out the *sifrei Torah* and start saying *Kol Nidrei*,

*Of crucial importance to him during his time at YU, as a visiting faculty member at NYU and throughout his career, was hearing from, learning from, and encouraging young people.*

since the shul attendance that day was matched only by that during Yom Kippur. Drawing millions of viewers, listeners and readers to his lectures, videos, podcasts and books, Rabbi Sacks was a master educator and source of inspiration to Jews and

non-Jews alike.

And yet, despite being the closest Modern Orthodoxy has had to a “rockstar rabbi,” despite the best-selling books, despite his serving as an unmatched spokesperson for Judaism on the world stage offering insight and inspiration to political, religious and industry leaders, despite being awarded 18 honorary degrees and winning numerous international prizes and accolades, Rabbi Sacks had an insatiable appetite for mentorship. Of crucial importance to him during his time at YU, as a visiting faculty member at NYU and throughout his career, was hearing from, learning from, and encouraging young people.

Countless aspiring Jewish educational leaders have reflected on social media how much his words meant to them and invigorated them. His thoughtful guidance and *chizzuk*, offered in one-on-one meetings, in inscriptions in one of his dozens of books or shared on walks to and from shuls in communities he was visiting, came alongside a sincere and passionate curiosity for what

these individuals were themselves learning and grappling with. His was a generosity of spirit that no one would have faulted him for setting aside given the extent of his professional obligations. And yet, on train rides to and from guest lectures, he would ask me to share with him what *shiurim* I was preparing, which books I was reading and what I thought about whatever was in the news that day. He and his wonderful wife Lady Elaine Sacks sent gifts for my newborn twins, despite their birth occurring after the Sacks’ had returned back to England following his visiting professorship. He also called to wish me the best of luck on my first day as a member of President Ari Berman’s new administration in 2017.

For years, both prior to and following his official teaching at YU, he felt a deep kinship with YU and a commitment to the spiritual flourishing of its students and community members. In a 1997 commencement address, he remarked that there is “only one group of people” who can heal the fractures

*Continued on Page 12*



## A Tribute to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

By SENATOR JOSEPH LIEBERMAN

We are blessed to be alive at one of the best times in Jewish history. I base this conclusion on many facts including the fact that the sovereign State of Israel has been re-established on its holy land and the fact that the Jewish people outside of Israel, especially in the United States, enjoy unprecedented freedom, opportunity and respect. Another fact which testifies to the

*Rabbi Sacks took the Torah and its faith and values out into the world for Jews at all levels of religious observance and to non-Jews of all religions.*

greatness of this age is that there has never before been such widespread availability, in print and on the internet, of Jewish texts, prayer books or commentaries.

I write this at the beginning of a tribute, in memoriam, to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks because the only source of comfort I have found from the pain of his death and the realization that I will never again have the opportunity to hear him speak or enjoy the pleasure and profundity of his company is that he will live forever in the extraordinary words he wrote and the videos he recorded. Rabbi Sacks left us a great body of work, and it is very special work.

Rabbi Sacks took the Torah and its faith and values out into the world for Jews at all levels of religious observance and to non-Jews of all religions. In that, and so many other ways, he was a great exemplar

of Modern Orthodox Judaism, and of the principles of *Torah Umadda*, the union of Torah and secular knowledge, which are the twin foundation stones of Yeshiva University.

A few years ago, Rabbi Sacks honored me by asking me to write a foreword to his book, "Essays on Ethics: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible." In it, I wrote:

A central theme of this book and in Rabbi Sacks' work is that ethical behavior is the essence of Jewish life and Jewish destiny...The Jewish people's ultimate reason for being is to bring to the world the values that were codified and transmitted by God to humanity at Sinai (pg. xiv).

I ended my foreword with very timely words by Rabbi Sacks from his commentary in the book on *Parashat Emor*:

Long ago we were called on to show the world that religion and morality go hand in hand. Never was that more needed than in an age riven by religiously motivated violence in some countries, rampant secularity in others. To be a Jew is to be dedicated to the proposition that loving God means loving His image, humankind. There is no greater challenge, nor, in the twenty first century, is there a more urgent one (pg. xvi).

In millions of words like these which Rabbi Sacks spoke and wrote during his life, he will continue to guide and teach us, if we listen and read.

*Joe Lieberman served as United States Senator for the State of Connecticut from 1989 until 2013 and was the Democratic nominee for Vice President in 2000.*



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Rabbi Sacks and Sen. Lieberman at an event hosted by the Center for the Jewish Future in Mar. 2015



From left to right: Rabbi Dr. Stu Halpern, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

RABBI DR. STU HALPERN

### HALPERN REFLECTIONS

Continued from Page 12

within the Jewish community. "Graduates of Yeshiva University ... almost alone in today's Jewish world, have learned to combine Torah and *chochma*, to integrate yeshiva and university." YU students are uniquely positioned to balance serving as "citizens of the universal enterprise of mankind" while being "Jews, heirs to the greatest heritage ever conferred upon a people." He received YU's Lamm Prize in 2010, and his keynote addresses assured the crowd that "there is not one challenge out there in the world today — moral, philosophical, political or societal — that we cannot face with total confidence that *"Moshe emet ve-Torato emet."* In recent years, he continued to speak at many major communal events on YU's campuses during his brief stays in the US, and this past January, he and Lady Sacks were kind enough to welcome a group of Straus Center students into their home for an unforgettable visit.

Much has already been written, and no doubt exponentially more will be said in the coming weeks, months and years, about Rabbi Sacks' communal leadership, depth of knowledge, eloquence and prolific output, which reached more individuals across the globe than any one Torah teacher in history. But what I will treasure most from our years together is the friendship he showed me and the entire Yeshiva University enterprise. He encouraged us, rooted for us, taught us and learned with us, inspiring us to fully realize the life-changing ideas of our tradition and our individual and collective potential.

*Rabbi Dr. Stu Halpern is senior advisor to the provost and senior program officer of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University.*



## Why I Don't Want a 4.0

By SRULI FRUCHTER

There's a certain infatuation people have with a 4.0 GPA. Maybe it's because it signals the payoff of discipline and hard work or because it props open doors for certain career opportunities. I don't discount the benefits of having a 4.0, but I believe there are practical drawbacks to grabbing those idyllic digits, matched with larger, philosophically problematic issues.

One of the scariest things about having a 4.0 is keeping your 4.0. Every homework assignment, research paper, quiz or test could be the feather that tips the scales, the single slipup that costs you semesters of perfect letter grades. Almost *invariably*, this can engender constant stress and anxiety, fretting over how well you need to score on your next assignments to counterbalance the A- on your last one or calculating which scores your class grade can afford to absorb while hovering over the A- marker.

These feelings can be amplified in certain classes where systems like the bell curve — in which grade ranges depend on their distribution over the class — are adopted. Here, it's not only your own grades that need to be accounted for but now your fellow students' success can weigh on your future. Courses can boil down this ecosystem of education

into a battleground for the survival of the fittest.

The effect on your education, however, doesn't stop there. Now, classes cannot be selected solely (or in large part) due to the professor's own merits or the class' value, but its rigor — in getting an A, that is — needs

is unattainable, one can finally understand that one's true greatness is found in the holy journey of constantly becoming just a little bit better" (Berachot 2, translation from Rabbi Ari Ze'ev Schwartz, "The Spiritual Revolution of Rav Kook," pg. 55).

Essentially, perfection is like a limit

---

*I don't discount the benefits of having a 4.0, but I believe there are practical drawbacks to grabbing those idyllic digits, matched with larger, philosophically-problematic issues.*

---

to be prioritized. For many, this all comes down to stress, angst, competition and a diluted college education. A 4.0 does not seem to be worth the hefty cost.

Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook, more commonly known as Rav Kook, has shifted my perspective on life, Judaism and everything in between; the pursuit of a 4.0 is no exception.

In "Ein Aya," his aggadic commentary on the Gemara, Rav Kook draws a profound understanding from the teaching that "A person should not take rushed steps" from Masechet *Berachot* 43b. Speaking with a broader application for life, he writes, "When one finally realizes that being totally perfect

in calculus: It's an end you never reach. Humans are not supposed to be perfect, not by ourselves nor any Torah standards. We are supposed to strive for perfection as a means for our true purpose: growth.

Rabbi David Aaron once shared the following analogy with me: If we were climbing up Mt. Everest, the true greatness, enjoyment and fulfillment would be found in every moment of the journey, the progression of our own betterment. Whether or not we make it to the top shouldn't affect the journey's value, as the focus is on a dynamic form of perfection, the dynamism of becoming perfect without expecting to be perfect. Thus, investing ourselves in *having* a 4.0

is centered on procuring perfection, being the best as the ultimate goal. However, to be human is to be flawed, to make mistakes and to have room for growth.

This should not be misconstrued as a call for mediocrity or condemnation of ambition — far from it. Everyone should be encouraged to achieve the best grades and accomplishments they can. Striving for perfection isn't bad per se, rather it's when we equate success with perfection that we're making a mistake. Striving for a 4.0 isn't wrong, but if getting that 4.0 is the only way you'll be "successful," then there's a problem.

Our lives — whether that be now in college or in the future with a career — are not going to be static, and that's okay. It's highly desirable to graduate on the dean's list or summa cum laude, but how much effort did we invest in that pursuit? This is a question that's too often ignored, and it's to our own detriment.

I want the best GPA I can get, and I'm going to work hard to ensure that. But the uneasiness of maintaining a perfect record — one unblemished by even a particularly difficult class, an unfair teacher or circumstances beyond my control — is not worth it. And while I want the best grades I can get, I know the more pressing focus is the effort I invest in my studies along the way.



Furst Hall

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## This Little Thing Called College

By AKIVA LEVY

Earlier this month I was struck by a snippet of a conversation I overheard. One friend said to the other, "I have to get through this little thing called college." I was caught in the moment, thinking what a terrible mindset that must be. College is not a mere "little thing," it is three to four years during one of the most formative periods of our lives. It is a place to learn, grow, have fun and find our place in the world. What a mistake it must be to approach this time as a painful stone that we must wait to pass. It is no mistake that those people who view college as a prison term provide the loudest voices of complaints. As Uncle Iroh from "The Legend of Korra" says, "[I]f you look for the light, you can often find it. But if you look for the dark, that is all you will ever see" (episode 2.10).

In the opening letter of his *sefer*, Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler struggles with the question of the pursuit of happiness. It is futile to place the pursuit of happiness on

material possessions. This misguided pursuit does not make sense due to the plentitude of upper-class citizens who are unhappy. The quest for money is deeply unsatisfying and never-ending. No economics class contains

happiness is provided from a life of meaning, noticing the many wellsprings of meaning in the world, not one that only notices the lack of meaning.

There are multiple scientific studies that

---

*At the end of the day, your level of satisfaction when you get your degree is dependent on how grateful you were about the journey to get there.*

---

the secret to happiness. As Rabbi Dessler explains, "There is no happiness in the world in material things; there is only happiness in spiritual concerns. The one who enjoys a rich spiritual life is happy. There is no other kind of happiness in existence ... The more energy, the more drive, we put into attaining these goals, the happier we shall be" (Translation from Rabbi Aryeh Carmel, "Strive for Truth," pg. 29-30). We need meaning and direction to guide our lives, and this can be provided by the Torah or certain outside sources. Full

look into the relationship between gratitude and happiness, including a 2014 [study](#) that specifically observed undergraduate students. Grateful thinking has been shown to [improve](#) moods and [counteract](#) the dreads of loneliness. This leads to a healthier mind, a healthier body and allows students to strive socially and academically. The evidence speaks for itself, having an attitude of gratitude and appreciation is likely to spur happiness and well-being in all aspects of life.

There can be many solutions to the

question of the pursuit of happiness, but it is evident what is not. The goal is not to ignore the bad parts of our life or sweep them under the rug but to not fixate on them and let them drag us down. A person can still improve their life with a gratuitous attitude. One can even argue that this will lead to greater productivity as they will be of greater mind and body due to a happier outlook.

There is no need to sugarcoat it, college is hard, expensive and a gritting challenge. Nevertheless, it is transformative, informative and meaningful. It is clear that letting complaints about college be the driving force in your life leads to disappointment. At the end of the day, your level of satisfaction when you get your degree is dependent on how grateful you were about the journey to get there. So no, college is not some little thing we have to deal with.



## Free Speech: Not So Free

By RAPHI SINGER

A few short weeks ago, terror struck, yet again, in the heart of France. A school teacher was [beheaded](#) in Paris, two people were [injured](#) in a stabbing outside the former offices of Charlie Hebdo, a French satirical magazine, and three churchgoers were [killed](#) in the city of Nice. All these attacks follow a rough eight years in France where scores of people have been killed in Islamist terror attacks. While the French have become accustomed to these attacks, the brutal murder of Samuel Paty, the school teacher who was beheaded after showing cartoons of the Islamic prophet Mohammed in class, struck a cord with ordinary people in France and around the world. By showing his class these images, Paty had committed a grave sin in Islam, where visual depictions of Mohammed is generally frowned upon.

After Paty's killing, thousands rallied all over France in support of free speech, thought and expression, and most leaders across the Western world spoke out in support of these ideals. French President Emmanuel Macron issued a [statement](#), saying that "France will not give in to terrorism," and President Trump [tweeted](#), "These radical Islamic terrorist attacks must stop immediately, no country, France or otherwise can put up with it!"

But there was also a different kind of outcry. Presidents of both of the Islamic countries of Turkey and Pakistan publicly protested [remarks](#) made by Macron, when he said that "Islam was a religion in crisis all over the world today," and when he [offered](#) to sign and pass a bill that strengthened France's secularism laws. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims across the world demonstrated against Macron and France by burning French flags, chanting anti-democratic slogans and calling for a boycott of French products.

disregard the importance of free speech in Western society, which is held in belief by a substantial number of people.

When the first Charlie Hebdo attack [occurred](#) in 2015, where 12 of the newspaper staff were killed in a terrorist attack by Islamist radicals who were angry about the decision to publish cartoons of Mohammed, some proponents of limiting freedom of speech seemed to side with the radicals who killed them. Of course no one actually praised the killers, but there was a subtlety to their criticism of the cartoonists. When the

should be allowed to criticize the government, religion and any and all other matters that come up.

Samuel Paty did not die from the actions of one radicalized man. He died because the idea of free speech has slowly vanished from Europe, and more importantly France, where people are becoming further hesitant to speak out or criticize different ideas for fear of being killed. In a country where a revolution took place over two hundred years ago for the specific purpose of democratic ideals which include freedom of speech, there is now a chance that a deranged Islamic radical can kill you for speaking, writing or showing pictures of Mohammed.

Western democracies like France now have a painstaking choice to make. Do they cower to the loud and oftentimes violent voices who use fear and hatred to subdue any and all criticism of Islam, or do they uphold the freedoms that their constitutions promise, guaranteeing free speech, freedom of religion and freedom of the press? French President Macron took a stand and was [called](#) a "The world's biggest terrorist" by thousands in countries halfway across the globe from France. It now remains to be seen whether he and secularist France will continue to stand up in the fight for their democratic values, or cave in to the anti democratic mob.

*In a country where a revolution took place over two hundred years ago for the specific purpose of democratic ideals which include freedom of speech, there is now a chance that a deranged Islamic radical can kill you for speaking, writing, or showing pictures of Mohammed.*

However, something even more troubling occurred. Leaders, such as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made some startling statements. In a press conference, Trudeau [spoke](#) about how, "In a respectful society such as ours, everyone must be aware of the impact of our words and actions on others." Comments like these completely

pictures were reprinted in September, one writer from Al-Jazeera [called](#) the decision, "Derogatory, and a form of domination." Democratic rights such as free speech are a given when living in a democracy, but criticism of the cartoonists is misplaced and wrong. Every member of society should have the right to criticize whoever they wish. They

## 40.7548° N, 73.9845° W

By JOSH LEICHTER

We look at childhood and adolescence as something finite, a bridge we cross and then seldom revisit. We remove the planted flag on the other end like we conquered a hole in golf and then march on to the next one. Occasionally, we think, a return is in order, a chance for some kind of deep introspection into the memories we made on each of the boards of the bridge stepped on, imprints

*How long have I been asleep that I missed the events of the world around me? How many moons have been born anew as I waxed and waned nostalgically over times better spent?*

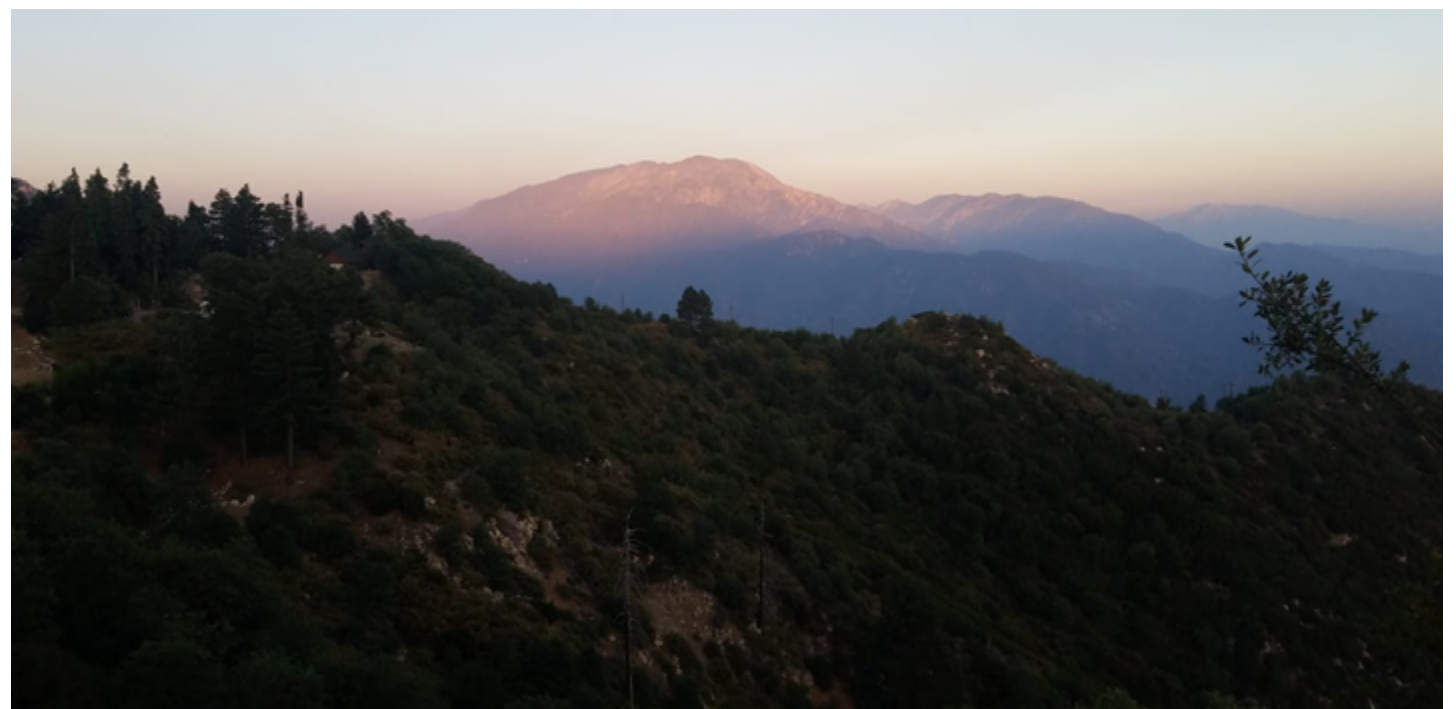
left from the trudging along. Stings may be felt, tears may be wept and laughs still echo in the wind as we reminisce with ourselves and the guests brought to these oft forgotten spots. Maybe it's to try to reclaim the magic once felt in these areas, the memories of adventures of a lifetime that fizzle out like the candle's dying flame, sensuously dancing a last time before retreating into the air, orange becoming black becoming nothing visible. To recapture these feelings is to venture out to harness lightning in a bottle a second time in a foolhardy attempt to reclaim lost gold. It's to say that these spots are truly *our spots*. That the countless other individuals who walk in city parks or ride the subway to those little places tucked away behind the billowing skyscrapers never thought to stop and mark their territory. We make ourselves the guardians of these locations, the caretakers delicately and nimbly pruning the weeds

and watering it, our own Edens among the desolate landscapes around us.

I know of a few places like this that I sometimes wander back to without realizing it. I find myself in these areas on the nights when nothing's doing and there's nowhere to really go. My legs carry me back there, shoes filling in the spots of earth from the last venture there. I hear the music I listen to as I go. Maybe it's something Kind of Blue

only slowly awakening in the midst of the universal slumber period. How long have I been asleep that I missed the events of the world around me? How many moons have been born anew as I waxed and waned nostalgically over times better spent? What simpler times they were, times I smile about with a shaky laugh as though I'm scoffing at them with a tinge of lemony cynicism. How we should all hold onto those experiences,

in vain) to shape them. To impart some sort of legacy, that our names be uttered on the lips of others even when we are long gone. Until, as though we were slapped awake by the open palm of reason, we realized perhaps the most important thing is to know for ourselves that everything we did was for the best. That we take all of our memories, the good and the bad (as uncomfortable as it may be to recall), put them in our bags



Mountains in California

JOSH LEICHTER

from Miles Davis.

These spots serve as my muses, my inspirations for articles like these. I come up with them on these long and cold winter nights when there's too much time on my hands but it somehow always seems to fall through the cracks of my fingers. If I closed them tightly, perhaps I'd be able to hold onto it for just a little longer, to stop even just one grain from getting through. But now September turns to December and I'm

fleeting as they are, tides of an ocean vastly biting the shores of beaches.

I was talking to a friend a few days ago about how much people change from one season to the next like the now dead and dying autumn trees, shaking the last of their muted colored leaves onto the ground. We spoke about how much we've changed over the past few years of knowing each other, understanding that our environments have shaped us as much as we've tried (possibly

and carry them with us. One day, we'll stop walking with that bag ever so larger on our backs and maybe we'll unpack the contents. They'll be rusted, that's for sure, but a blow and shine with the sleeve will sharpen their image. And though they may not shimmer, perhaps our eyes will, with quiet introspection and understanding.

I have many more miles to go before I stop. And many more before I sleep again.



## Sports Cards and COVID-19

By Alexander Wildes

When I was younger, I was fascinated with basketball cards and spent many Shabbat afternoons over the years trading cards with other kids from my community. When talking to my father about my cards, he would reminisce and tell me all about the basketball cards he had when he was a kid (including his favorite player, Julius “Dr. J” Erving). Yet, my father would never let me see them, as he was always protective of his cards — they were stored in my grandparents’ house in a “climate-controlled” area, and he was afraid that they would get damaged by being handled.

So, when my father decided to show me the boxes of sports cards a few months ago, I was pleasantly surprised. While looking through them, I found many basketball Hall of Fame players, such as Jerry West, Oscar Robertson and Kareem Abdul Jabbar. Clearly, these cards had a lot of sentimental value to my father, and, out of curiosity, I sent a picture of the cards to my friend who buys and sells sports cards in order to see if they had any real value. While I always thought the cards were just collectibles and fun to trade, I had no idea just how high-priced my father’s cards could be.

On the outside, the sports card industry seems to be a very niche market; only people who enjoy a particular sport would be willing to buy cards of that sport, and a vast majority of sports fans do not care about cards. However, the sports card and memorabilia industry is valued at around **\$5.4 billion**, and that number **continues to rise**. The question is: Why is the market so large? Who cares about a flimsy piece of

cardboard?

Why would someone shell out **\$3 million** for the ball that Mark McGuire hit for his record-breaking 70th home run of the season, or **\$11,000** for the hockey stick from Wayne Gretzky’s final game? It is the same reason why millions of other sports items are sold; sports memorabilia is the perfect way for fans of a sport to grasp a piece of history.

This concept also has applications outside of sports, as pieces of the Berlin Wall, coins from the Roman era and newspapers from 9/11 are sold, simply because people want to own a piece of history. Those who have a connection to a certain time period or a specific topic, such as sports, buy items like this in order to feel as if they are a part of a greater event, tragedy or triumph. As **nostalgia marketing** continues to dominate the current advertising market, the sports paraphernalia market is an embodiment of what nostalgia marketing aims to achieve.

After I sent my friend pictures of some of my father’s cards, he quickly video-chatted me back with a gaping mouth and wide

eyes, and then told me exactly how much some of the cards were worth. Many of the cards, such as the Kareem Abdul Jabbar, were recently sold for a few hundred dollars, although one card in particular stood out; Dr. J, my father’s favorite player. At the very least, the card was selling for \$500, and graded cards (cards that have been inspected for quality, rated out of 10) that were graded a 10/10 were sold for as much as **\$25,000**. It turns out that the **Topps 1972 Dr. J card** (of which my father has two) is widely considered to be his rookie card (a card made for a player’s first season), which is typically worth much more than other years’ cards because it is the first type of memorabilia depicting the player.

Interestingly, though, the cards that my dad had seemed to all be selling at higher prices than what grading agencies listed as the average prices. Why were they selling for more than the stated values?

A possible explanation is that COVID-19 was the best thing to happen to the sports card industry. Since COVID-19 hit, people

have spent more time in their homes, and many chose to spend that time doing deep house cleans and going through old boxes and spaces, stumbling upon their old sports cards in the process and bringing back waves of nostalgia. During this time, sports fans may also have gotten bored with the lack of sports on television (just about every **major sports league** shut down) and decided to look through their old sports cards to get their dose of athletic entertainment. Whatever the reason, people looked through their old cards, and their love for their memorabilia was reinvigorated.

As a result, many famous, expensive and rare cards were found and subsequently put on the market. This allowed card collectors access to many of these forgotten gems. On the flip side, other people decided that they wanted to buy cards, whether to supplement their collections with older legends, to relive their childhood by opening packs featuring newer stars or to buy packs and boxes to keep unopened for a long time, expecting a high return on investment.

Thus, we see the most basic economic principle in action: supply and demand. While the supply of older cards and newer cards may have slightly gone up, the demand has jumped up exponentially to the point that a box of 88 cards from this year **sells for close to \$200**, while a few years ago I could buy that year’s 88-card box for around \$20.

I am now going to keep my cards that I collected over the years in “climate-controlled” areas because if the value of sports cards keeps going up, my financial future will be a lot brighter.



Alexander’s basketball cards

ALEXANDER WILDES

## NBA Players and Endorsements

By Alexander Wildes

The pairing of athletes with consumer products that are outside the sports industry has a long history in the field of advertising. In 1979, star defensive tackle “Mean” Joe Greene was featured in an iconic and widely successful **Coke commercial**, and since then, using athletes as endorsers has become more and more popular.

Among all major sports, this **trend** has become most popular in the NBA. Not only do professional basketball players make a lot more money from endorsements than athletes in any other sports, but just about every player in the NBA has some sort of endorsement, whether it be an athletics company, like Nike, or those with no relation to sports, such as McDonald’s. Some of the current famous product endorsers are LeBron James (Sprite, Nike and Beats: **\$53 million**), Stephen Curry (Under Armour, Chase: **\$42 million**), and Chris Paul (State Farm, Nike: **estimated \$8 million per year**).

While we know that NBA players would love to grab these endorsement opportunities and earn extra money, endorsers aren’t going to pay just any NBA player to endorse their product. So, what can NBA players do to increase the amount of endorsement dollars they bring in?

Simply put, they can become better basketball players. Top players in today’s NBA, such as LeBron James, Stephen Curry, and Kevin Durant, may get paid even more from endorsements and advertisements than they do from their actual NBA salary. Therefore, becoming a top player is a lot more than just securing a bigger NBA contract; it opens the door to many more lucrative endorsement opportunities, which in turn can help secure financial riches far beyond what players may

make just from their NBA contracts.

Another thing players can do is play in a bigger market, namely New York, Miami, or Los Angeles. While players who do not play in these cities can still make significant sums in endorsement money, playing in bigger cities means brighter lights and much more exposure to fans, as the media capitals of the U.S. are in the bigger cities. When living in these bigger cities, players may also become more popular and can, therefore, capitalize on their fame with more endorsements.

A further thing players can do to maximize their endorsement money is to build up their social media following. As we have seen in the past few years, athletes, celebrities and especially influencers have begun to promote items on social media, sometimes making even more money from just one post than the median income of the US. Top NBA players with millions of social media followers like Kevin Durant, Stephen Curry, and Giannis Antetokounmpo can bring in the \$100’s of thousands per post, while the league’s most recognizable star, **LeBron James, may earn as much as \$1 million** for a single promotional post on Instagram.

Clearly, NBA players can earn a lot of money from advertising, endorsing and promoting products. But what do the companies on the other end of these deals get out of these partnerships?

The first thing companies may get is product quality assurance. For example, if LeBron James is willing to wear a clothing brand or to consume food from a specific restaurant, millions assume that the clothing or food must be very good. Given James chooses to wear or eat whatever he wants, and if he is willing to partner and endorse something, that product must be worth it. Furthermore, if James chooses to endorse a certain product, I, as a big basketball fan,

may subconsciously make a connection between the product and James’ skill, making it more likely for me to purchase the product.

Another boost companies get from having NBA players on board is more brand awareness. When a player with millions of followers posts a picture on social media or is featured in an advertisement of any company, the amount of viewers and purchasers can jump exponentially. Moreover, if a player consistently wears a certain company’s clothes, or consumes a certain product often, fans of that specific player will recognize the brand, putting the brand at an advantage to be bought over others.

Naturally, the most important part that companies can get from their athlete endorsers is more sales. While this may sound obvious, it is important to remember that there may not be any tangible number for this, as brand awareness and product quality assurance cannot be quantified, nor can the exact amount of sales that a certain player is responsible for. However, we can tell exactly how many items with a player’s name (such as LeBron James’ sneakers) were sold, and if a player posts a link with a code for a discount on social media, we can see how many times that code was used. For example, in 2012, **Nike sold \$100 million worth of LeBron James sneakers**, and James was getting paid only \$15 million from Nike, so we can see the partnership from Nike’s point of view was a fantastic idea. However, based on other metrics, such as overall company performance and social media following, the overarching effects of NBA endorsers can be seen.

Clearly, these NBA player and company partnerships work out exceptionally well for both sides when the player is well liked and respected. However, what happens if a player’s public image takes a turn for the

worse?

In 2004, NBA superstar Kobe Bryant was charged with sexual assault, and was subsequently dropped by McDonald’s and Nutella and was suspended by other brands such as Nike. However, it is likely that all these **companies were still contractually required to pay Bryant the remainder of his contract**, regardless of whether or not he was used in advertisements, as there was no opt-out opportunity for the company in case of a negative shift in public perception, which could potentially hurt their brand image.

Now, standard contracts have a solution to this issue: the morals clause, which protects companies from having to shell out big money to the NBA endorsers in the event that the player does something to negatively affect the perception of either the brand or the player himself. For years, many contracts had a morals-type clause that protected the company from the endorser doing something to hurt the brand, such as saying that the product is terrible quality. However, with the number of incidents inside and outside of the sports world of endorsers hurting their own public image (which may hurt the brand as well, as those people are linked to the brand), companies have gotten smarter and have increased the range that their morals clause can cover. Therefore, if a player is to get charged with drug possession, say something derogatory or do anything the company deems hurtful, companies can easily drop the players without the worry of having to pay their contract.

As technology and social media continues to develop, and athletes’ influence continues to spread around the globe, it seems as though this partnership between NBA players and companies will have an even brighter future.