

THE COMMENTATOR

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YU Temporarily Bans Students From Campus for Not Testing in COVID-19 Monitoring Program

By ARIEL KAHAN

Yeshiva University is temporarily banning students from campus for missing three consecutive COVID-19 tests in its COVID-19 Monitoring Program, which mandates they test twice every week. Vice Provost of Student Affairs Dr. Chaim Nissel first announced this policy in an email sent to the student body on Feb. 7.

Students who are on campus receive weekly reminders via email to sign up for their required COVID-19 tests. After a student misses two consecutive tests, they are sent an email warning them of their disallowance to return to campus if they miss another test. If they fail to test for a third time, their YU ID card — which is required to enter into any YU buildings — is deactivated until they provide YU with a negative PCR test.

“The health and safety of our campus community is our priority,” Nissel said. “Students who are non-compliant with YU’s mandatory Covid monitoring program have their access privileges to all YU buildings suspended.”

If students receive the email in error, YU asks them to notify the university. In addition, students who tested positive for COVID-19 are exempt from testing for 90 days following that test. Students who are fully vaccinated still must partake in the testing.

“I believe that it’s important for students to test weekly as it allows the campus to sustain a safe and healthy environment,” said Gilad Menashe (YC ‘23). “Students should do their part in contributing to the safety of the campus as a whole.”

However, Menashe noted that he thinks “students who have gotten vaccinated or have antibodies should not be required to test as well.”

The COVID-19 Monitoring Program recently changed its procedures for students returning to campus after Pesach in response to NYS lifting quarantine requirements for domestic travel. As such, students returning from states outside the tri-state area, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania or Vermont no longer have to quarantine in a hotel for three days before receiving a negative test to return to campus. As usual, all YU students will be required to submit a negative PCR test before returning to campus.

“I think it is a really smart idea to deactivate somebody’s card if they don’t get tested because consistent testing is the way YU has maintained the safety of its campus,” commented Neeli Fagan (SCW ‘22). She also noted that the system has some problems, such as with some students who had been locked out of their dorm buildings because their IDs were deactivated. “Other than that,” she said, “I think it is a really good idea; maybe it just should be a little more balanced.”



Students who are on campus receive weekly reminders via email to sign up for their required COVID-19 tests.

THE COMMENTATOR



YU’s commencement ceremony will take place virtually for the second year in a row due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Full story on page 4.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Macs’ Season Ends as Last Three Games Are Canceled

By ALEXANDER WILDES

This article was originally published online on March 19.

The final three games of the Yeshiva University Maccabees men’s basketball team’s season were unexpectedly canceled, according to the YU Macs’ website, bringing their 2020-21 season to a close.

Two games against Manhattanville College were canceled on Friday, March 12 and a game against Sarah Lawrence College was canceled on March 17. Originally, Sarah Lawrence College was removed from the YU Macs’ website, before being rescheduled for Wednesday, March 17 and finally being canceled that day. When asked about the volatile schedule, Macs Head Coach Elliot Steinmetz said, “Covid protocols is all I can say.” Multiple players on the team declined to provide further comment regarding the reason for the cancellations.

Since their loss in their first game of last season, the Macs have won 36 straight games — 29 last season and seven this

season— and are tied with University of Wisconsin-Platteville for second all-time wins in DIII history; SUNY Potsdam holds the record with 60 consecutive wins. With the game against Sarah Lawrence canceled, the Macs lost their chance to extend their win streak this season to 37, which would break the current second-place record and place them ahead of University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

In the current 2020-2021 season, the Maccabees have a 7-0 record. At least six games were canceled and others were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Games against Moravian College and Sarah Lawrence College were canceled, as well as two games against both Saint Thomas Aquinas College and Manhattanville College. Additionally, a separate game against Aquinas was first deleted from the website before being canceled. The Macs’ seven-game season leaves them with 23 less than last season’s 30.

The Macs as a team shot 49.9% from the field and 40.7% from the three-point line

Continued on Page 4

NEWS | 5

FEATURES | 7

OPINIONS | 12

BUSINESS | 15

Gottesman Pool Set to Reopen

Aloha Aviv: Shalom from Hawaii

Let Women’s Basketball Play at Wilf

Reebok, baby...

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

For This Year's Student Election Season, Get Your Act Together

By YOSEF LEMEL

Spring student council elections are right around the corner. Students, prepare yourselves for the perpetual bombardment of texts, posters, memes, signature requests and free — COVID-friendly? — donuts that invariably accompany election season. Candidates who have your “best interests in mind” will be lining up, begging for your support in the “most important election of our lives,” which will forever chart the path of our most esteemed and dignified student government.

On a less sardonic note, to say the past couple of student council elections at Yeshiva University have been contentious would be putting it lightly. The elections have been filled with unfiltered gossip and underhanded tactics unbecoming of a student body thought to be composed of adults, much less prospective student leaders.

The Commentator has received multiple pieces of gossip from student council candidates and presidents in past elections — both on the Wilf and Beren campuses — with the obvious intention of resulting in hit pieces and damaging the prospects of non-favored candidates either for ideological disagreements or because they weren't in the “right *chevra*.”

I could expand on this point in my own words, but a member of last year's canvassing committee summarized the situation quite aptly. I find it necessary to restate his observations now in advance of the coming storm. According to him, last year's Wilf Campus election season was filled with “dozens of Student Court lawsuits filed both against and by candidates, each more contentious than the last.” The canvassing committee member saw “textbook cyberbullying, with some candidates receiving aggressive, unsolicited phone calls and texts from unknown numbers, saying things like ‘I did not vote for you,’ or ‘You are not my president,’” and, shockingly, one student who said “in jest, that he ‘wishes death’ upon a particular member of the undergraduate community.” I can personally attest to seeing many instances of similarly disgusting behavior in advance of last year's election.

One thing I often tell readers is that they would be shocked at the amount of material left out of our pages. In previous elections, The Commentator's news team was restrained in what was published. Information that could have haunted the Google search results of candidates was deliberately left unpublished. We are not a forum for pointless *lashon hara*; that is not our mission. I hope to maintain our professional and *halakhic* standards for publication in the coming issues.

There are the obvious moral problems involved with dehumanizing fellow students. There is no excuse for that. On a more practical level, I would advise prospective student leaders that student government is just what it sounds like: student government. However much work student government does for the student body, it will not practically matter to alumni in five years from now when they are in the real world, working at banks, law firms or Lander College for Men. Candidates must ask themselves the following question: “Is it worth it to get in a cheap insult at an opponent if it will secure me one more vote in a student election that barely matters in the grand scheme of my life?”

For those that care deeply about student

government and see it as an instrumental tool to affect positive institutional change, there are still, however, problems that must be addressed, starting with the horrendous conduct of the canvassing committee in the Fall 2020 vote for amendments to the Wilf Student Constitution.

One member of the supposedly non-partisan canvassing committee texted a WhatsApp group chat, “It's very important that you vote NAY on the proposed amendments. The majority of them would be good for the heads of student government but bad for us little people.” The text speaks for itself. It was a blatant abuse of power by a “little person” of the canvassing committee to skew the results of the vote.

As of this writing, the student in question is still on the canvassing committee, there being no discernable effort from members of student government to force him out of his position. He is currently set to vote on issues that will arise in the next election, this after he discredited and debased the reputation of the canvassing committee.

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with unfiltered gossip
and underhanded tactics
unbecoming of a student
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leaders.*

The canvassing committee was also derelict in the release of last semester's ballot and the results of the vote. The chair of the committee sent an email with the ballot through a private email server with a message simply stating “Please respond if there are any issues.” There was no explanation in his email as to what the purpose of the “survey” was, nor was there a stated deadline for students to fill out their ballot. Furthermore, while the fall amendment voting process was held on a Wednesday, students had to wait until late Sunday afternoon to receive the final results via a WhatsApp group, the delay partially being a result of an error in tabulating the results. The official results were never sent to the full Wilf student body via email.

Perhaps The Commentator will be less restrained in its news coverage of future elections if student leaders will not hold their own to account. After all, when there is a *telos*, a positive constructive goal, there is *halakhic* room for news coverage of contentious issues.

This year's student leaders deserve special commendation for their efforts to amend the Wilf Student Constitution, clearing up many unclear aspects of that document. However, a constitutional government is only as good as the leaders who constitute it. A constitution is meant to provide a framework of government, but there is always potential for it to be twisted by demagogues seeking some temporary sense of power and authority or inept individuals unaware of their responsibilities and duties as leaders.

James Madison, the father of our American Constitution — a document that has generally proven to be the foundation of durable government — famously stated:

“To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is a chimerical idea.” An adoption of the classical conception of virtue — putting the public good before private and base ambitions — and a respect for the consistent rule of law is necessary for the continuous democratic governance of society. Otherwise, even under a constitution, government will be rife with demagogues or incompetents operating under the veneer of the popular will.

I fear that student government, if the ignominious conduct of the past few semesters is repeated, will descend into a deep and dark abyss. The inevitable, yet distasteful, resolution may be the autocratic control of student elections and governance by the Office of Student Life (OSL).

Indeed, OSL has already proven itself to be inept in the management of student elections. Generally, OSL verifies whether students are eligible to run for student government positions. In my first semester on campus, Fall 2018, two candidates were disqualified from running after initially being cleared by OSL. According to one member of that year's canvassing committee, he received a call from OSL on election night expressing that the candidates were not eligible. This oversight led to a student court case to deliberate on whether one of the candidates deemed ineligible won the election or not. This is but one of many examples of a generally careless atmosphere. If OSL were to take a larger role in the election process, one can expect there to be many more instances of incompetence.

OSL also has yet to update the student government section on the university's website with the updated Fall 2020 Wilf Student Constitution. When emailed by Commentator staff on Feb. 3 inquiring into why the site has not been updated, the senior director of student life stated that, before answering our legitimate questions on the matter, “any email correspondence needs to be viewed as of [sic] the record”; he did not explain why he was reluctant to state his opinion on the record. Over a month later, it is still unclear as to why the site hasn't been updated, whether it be due to incompetence, laziness or whether there was a conscious effort to obstruct the publication of the student constitution. One can only speculate.

If student leaders hope not to rue the day that their “power” — whatever is left of it — is transferred to administrative control they must assert the fact that they are adults and lead by example. They must ensure that free, fair and transparent elections are held in an environment of comity and civility befitting Yeshiva students.

I was debating whether to publish this editorial immediately following the abuse of power displayed by canvassing committee members during last semester's vote. Instead, I elected to wait and publish it now, as an exhortation in advance of this semester's elections. There was much information that was left out of this editorial due to adherence to basic journalistic standards, yet the information I was able to present speaks for itself — there must be reform. In consideration of basic Jewish values and democratic civility, I urge the candidates in the coming election to act like student leaders. In addition, the canvassing committee needs to reevaluate its position in student life, or else be externally reformed by the current student government, or worse, OSL.

THE COMMENTATOR

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1 Commie Swag Day
It's all about the sweatshirts.



2 The Pool's Back
3% of the university is ecstatic. 47% didn't realize it was closed for a year and the other 50% has now been reminded that YU has a pool that they are not allowed to use.



3 LinkedIn Premium
The ultimate stalking tool for people being stalked. #LinkedInConnects



4 We Got Yang!
Good thing he wasn't too busy making matzah for Pesach to come to "A Forum with the Leading Candidates Running for the Mayor of New York City" Mayoral Event for the "Greater Jewish Community"



5 P'sachim Countdown
They were *mamish* in the *sugya* in *Pesachim* all year and it's finally time to show the *oilam* how much they're holding ... What's *halacha l'meisah* again?



6 We Heart Business Exclamation Point
Unanimously voted the best section of The Commentator, every time. Well done, my friends.



7 My View from YU
I never thought I'd see the day. A Poli Sci major ... with a Syms minor ... we'll take what we can get.

7 UP by Zahava Fertig NMODZ

Daylight Savings Time 1

When one hour of sleep loss feels like eight.



Spring of Deception 2

When the good weather is the only good thing to talk about ... nevermind ...



Second Dose Vaccination Woes 3

Hameivin Yavin. IYH, soon by you.



Abrupt Endings 4

Sorry, Macs.



"You Have a Memory" Notifications 5

Reliving last year on social media one day at a time. *shudders*



Midterms ... Again 6

For some they never happened and for some they never end.



67 days until Commencement 7

We're sorry, the answer you provided is no longer acceptable, please hang up and try again.



2021 Commencement Ceremonies to be Held Virtually for YU Graduate and Undergraduate Schools

By **SRULI FRUCHTER AND ELISHEVA KOHN**

This article was originally published online on March 11.

All Yeshiva University commencement ceremonies for undergraduate and graduate schools will be held virtually this year, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman announced to students via email on March 11. The university is tentatively planning an in-person celebration for undergraduate seniors, pending “approval from local public health officials,” however, no further details were released regarding that event.

The 90th Commencement Ceremony for undergraduate students will take place on May 26 at 1:00 p.m. Graduate school ceremonies are scheduled between May 24 and June 10. The university “looked into many options” for indoor and outdoor venues “to make an in-person commencement a reality,” Botman said in her email. “Unfortunately, following the public health and safety guidance of New York City and New York State, as well as guidance from our medical director,” she wrote, “we came to the conclusion that we could not have an in-person event attended by thousands of people.”

This decision comes only a few weeks after the university administration sent undergraduate students a survey allowing them to indicate their preferences for commencement. Botman did not immediately respond to The Commentator’s request for comment regarding the results of that survey.

On Feb. 16, members of the administration — such as Aliza Berenholz, the

university’s senior director of events, and Linda Stone, the former director of student events — met with student council members from both Wilf and Beren campuses to discuss the possibility of an in-person ceremony.

— Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA) and Yeshiva University High School for Girls — organized in-person graduation ceremonies for their senior classes in parking lots with adherence to safety protocols in 2020. Following Botman’s announcement, the

“I would love to have the opportunity for student leaders to partner with the administration to re-examine the current plans in order to create a commencement ceremony that has as much of an in-person aspect as possible.”

Beren Senior Representative Leah Joshowitz (SCW ‘21)

“I was very confused when reading Provost Botman’s email — I personally left [the meeting] feeling that select administrators were passionate in exploring the possibilities on how to give the graduating seniors the graduation they always dreamed about while keeping everything covid safe,” said Beren Sy Syms School of Business Student Council (SSSBSC) President Alex Brody (SSSB ‘21), who was present at the meeting. “The conversation about commencement is still continuing and I see myself and other student leaders having many meetings with different administrators over the next couple of weeks.”

In light of recently loosened COVID-19 restrictions in NYS and at YU, many students were hoping for an in-person ceremony. Indoor dining resumed at the Wilf and Beren campuses on Feb. 12, and the Gottesman Pool on the Wilf Campus is set to re-open this semester after a year-long hiatus. Several in-person events for students were also held over the past month, including a comedy night on Beren Campus and a snowtubing activity. Additionally, YU’s high schools

“Yeshiva University 2021” WhatsApp group chat — which consists of 130 undergraduate seniors — saw an increase in activity of numerous students voicing their discontent about the university’s plans for 2021 Commencement.

“This is bogus,” wrote Yeshiva Student Union President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB ‘21) on the chat. “It’s so easy to just rent a football field somewhere, spread out some chairs, wear masks, and have a livestream.”

That day, after receiving Botman’s email, Greenberg submitted an event form to the Office of Student Life (OSL) requesting approval for an “IN-PERSON GRADUATION AT VOTEE PARK.” Senior Director of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg confirmed he received the submission and indicated that he cannot, at this time, answer “whether OSL will approve the event” due to the “many factors that need to be considered.”

Some seniors acknowledged YU’s efforts but were disappointed about the news and hoped that the plans would change. “I greatly appreciate all the effort that the university has already put into planning this year’s

commencement ceremony,” shared Beren Senior Representative Leah Joshowitz (SCW ‘21). “However, many seniors have expressed disappointment with the current layout. Therefore, I would love to have the opportunity for student leaders to partner with the administration to re-examine the current plans in order to create a commencement ceremony that has as much of an in-person aspect as possible.”

Other students felt the university should reimburse them for the commencement fee, given that it will be held online. “They charge seniors every year a \$150 graduation fee,” said Meir Tolchin (SSSB ‘21). “Somehow this wasn’t covered in the \$60k tuition, and the assumption is that the fee is to cover the commencement ceremony. As the ceremony is no longer happening, I think it’s reasonable to give the money back to students.”

In May 2020, commencement was held virtually, which received mixed reactions from the YU student body, as well as a petition by the Class of 2020 demanding that YU hold an in-person event at a later date, which did not receive a public response from the university.

“It was definitely frustrating to learn that this year’s commencement will be virtual instead of in person,” Wilf Senior Representative Benji Halpern (SSSB ‘21) told The Commentator. “While I’m sure this was a difficult decision for the administration, and one they would prefer not to have made, I would appreciate if the commencement decision was reconsidered and if student leaders were given an opportunity to collaborate with administration to create a commencement with as much of an in-person element as possible.”

MACS' SEASON

Continued from Front Page

this season. The team’s top scorers were: Ryan Turell (26 points per game and 8.3 rebounds), Gabe Leifer (13.1 points per game, 10.4 rebounds per game and 6.9 assists per game) and Eitan Halpern (18.1 points per game and 2.3 steals per game).

“We’re happy that we have the opportunity to play any game we can and games getting canceled at this point are to be expected,” forward Gabe Leifer (SSSB ‘21) told The Commentator. “If we’ve learnt one thing from this pandemic it’s that nothing is certain from one day to the next.”

The Macs are currently not scheduled to play any postseason games this year, as the Skyline Conference will not be hosting their playoffs and the NCAA decided to not host a DIII tournament this year.

Leifer believes that there is a chance that YU will be able to play more games. Leifer told the NY Daily News that “It’s highly unlikely, but possible, somebody puts together a four-team tournament. We want to set ourselves up for any possible opportunity.”

Commenting on the season, Ofek Reef (SSSB ‘23), guard on the team, told The Commentator: “[We] want to thank all our fans who made time to tune in online and continue to cheer us on through the screens. I’m very excited to see what we can achieve and how we can keep the Jewish community proud of what we’re doing and show everyone we are legit contenders.”



The final three games of the Yeshiva University Maccabees men’s basketball team’s season were unexpectedly canceled

YESHIVA ATHLETICS

Gottesman Pool Set to Re-Open After Year-Long Closure

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was originally published online on March 17.

Yeshiva University is planning to re-open the Gottesman Pool before Pesach with limited occupancy, in accordance with New York City COVID-19 safety guidelines. The announcement of the pool's reopening was emailed to the Wilf student body by

Associate Athletics Director Gregory Fox on Wednesday, March 3.

In order to use the pool, students will need to book a time through the current booking system used for the Max Stern Athletic Center and the basketball court. "Athletic Administrators and students have been working together to reopen the pool and I'm hopeful we can open the facility very shortly," Joe Bednarsh, director of athletics, told The Commentator. Only the pool will be reopened, while the sauna, steam room and hot tub will remain closed, as per NYC

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOH) rules. The facility will also be completely sanitized and cleaned every day as a COVID-19 safety measure. The university is currently seeking student lifeguards for the planned reopening to be paid at a \$15 per hour rate.

The Gottesman Pool, a 25-yard long and six-lane pool, has been closed since the COVID-19 pandemic forced Yeshiva University to go virtual in March 2020. Beginning on Sept. 30, the DOH allowed pools to reopen at 33% capacity but

prohibited the reopening of saunas, steam rooms and indoor spa pools. The NYC health regulations also mandate social distancing in and out of the pool and encourage people to wear masks or other face coverings when in the pool area. As per usual policy, the pool will not be accessible to Beren students.

"Athletic Administrators and students have been working together to reopen the pool and I'm hopeful we can open the facility very shortly."

Director of Athletics Joe Bednarsh

The DOH requires that a pool operator complete a form affirming compliance to the COVID-19 safety guidelines, submit a written safety plan to the DOH for approval and inform the DOH of the reopening date, among other pieces of documentation before reopening. The DOH also mandates water safety measures such as biocidal shock treatment and cleaning filters to prevent waterborne illnesses such as legionnaires disease.

Some students have expressed excitement about the reopening. Mitch Goulson (SSSB '23), a student who previously advocated for the pool's reopening, said, "I'm thrilled that the administration plans to reopen the pool. The students and I applaud Athletic Director [Joe] Bednarsh for looking out for our well-beings."

Gabe Gross (YC '24) shared a similar sentiment. "I am really excited about the pool reopening," he said. "I have been waiting for this since it shut down and look forward to going every day before Rav Rosensweig's morning seder."



The Benjamin Gottesman Pool, Wilf Campus

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

U.S. Amb. Daniel Shapiro Speaks About Obama, Netanyahu and Israel at Crisis and Hope: YU Voices Event

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

Former United States Ambassador to Israel Daniel Shapiro spoke to about 50 YU students about his time as an ambassador during President Barack Obama's administration in a Zoom interview with Rabbi Yosef Blau, *mashgiach ruchani* at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, on Wednesday, Mar. 16 at noon.

This event was part of a series titled "Crisis and Hope: YU Voices" — a project that "brings today's topics to life through in-depth interviews with leading experts in Jewish Studies and beyond from Yeshiva University." The series is sponsored by Judaic Studies at YU, the YU Center for Israel Studies, the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs and the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

Shapiro was appointed ambassador of the U.S. to Israel under Obama in 2011 and served until the end of Obama's term in 2017. At the event, Shapiro spoke about his role as an ambassador, which included being the intermediary between Obama and

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Shapiro also discussed his predictions about how some of the policies instituted under past U.S. presidents will play out under President Joe Biden.

"A US ambassador, any ambassador for their country, has one primary responsibility

During the program, Rabbi Blau asked Shapiro how he handled the "difficult relationship" between Obama and Netanyahu, which reached points of tension during Obama's two terms. Shapiro responded, "At the time there were very public disagreements between our governments. My job of

work together on many, many things and that's always going to be the case. There will be many things at times that we disagree on, and close friends can disagree. And it is not something that needs to be shied away from or ignored."

He added, "A strong, durable relationship can deal with those kinds of differences."

During the event, Rabbi Blau said Shapiro was "unique" as a former ambassador in that he decided to stay in Israel after his resignation. Shapiro has three daughters and currently lives in Ra'anana, Israel. Shapiro noted that he still frequently travels to Washington, D.C. and advises members of Congress.

"The Biden administration is rethinking American foreign policies. Yeshiva is the most important institution of Modern Orthodoxy and it has to be the location for the discussion about American's interaction with Israel and its neighbors," Rabbi Blau told The Commentator. "Ambassador Shapiro is a friend of Israel and has a knowledgeable and balanced perspective."

Jess Olson, an associate professor of Jewish History, facilitated the Q&A at the

"The Biden administration is rethinking American foreign policies. Yeshiva ... has to be the location for the discussion about American's interaction with Israel and its neighbors."

RIETS Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau

and that is to promote and protect and advance the interests of their country," shared Shapiro at the event. "It's an incredible honor and responsibility ... to stand before the American flag on behalf of the president of the United States, the secretary of state, the American government and the American people, and articulate what's important for the United States' interest. But it is a special pleasure and uniquely fulfilling opportunity to do that hosted by a close ally, a close partner. And in my case, I can say a country with which I have a deep personal connection."

course was to explain our policy and make sure it was understood, but it was also my job to be a channel through which the Israeli government could communicate their views back to Washington."

On the topic of Obama's decision to abstain from using the U.S.'s veto power on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 — which condemned the Israeli settlements in the West Bank — Shapiro, though having advised Obama against abstaining, said, "My understanding of his policy was that the U.S. and Israel are close allies and

Continued on Page 6

DANIEL SHAPIRO
Continued from Page 5

end of the event and added that he hoped the university would be able to host Shapiro again in person in the future.

"I appreciated the opportunity to speak with the Yeshiva University community about U.S. policy in the Middle East as the Biden-Harris Administration gets underway," Shapiro told *The Commentator* after the event. "Rabbi Blau's incisive questions, and those sent in by the audience, generated opportunities to delve into a number of important topics, from the U.S.-Israel security partnership, to the threat posed by Iran, to prospects in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, to the opportunities created by the normalization of relations between Israel and Arab states."

Shapiro also said, "I look forward to visiting Yeshiva University in person in the future to continue the discussion."



Shapiro was appointed ambassador of the U.S. to Israel under Obama in 2011 and served until the end of Obama's term in 2017.

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Aloha Aviv: Shalom From Hawaii

By JARED SCHARF

The COVID-19 pandemic has left university students scattered across the country. Many students find themselves living at home, others are residing on campus, and for 36 students, Honolulu, Hawaii is the center of their college experience on the Aloha Aviv program.

Aloha Aviv is a program being held exclusively during the Spring 2021 semester for Modern Orthodox undergraduate college students who want to spend the semester abroad in Honolulu, Hawaii while taking classes online. The program is located at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Alana - Waikiki Beach and is being run in conjunction with Chabad of Hawaii, an eleven-minute walk from the program's hotel.

“We want to make sure that we are a kiddush Hashem because we are representing Jews in its entirety. There aren't so many Jews in Hawaii.”

Ari Wax (SSSB '22)

The “About Us” section on the Aloha Aviv website reads: “Jewish college students are invited to experience all that Hawaii has to offer with Aloha Aviv! Kosher meals, Shabbat programming, minyanim, and endless adventure all while learning online. Aloha Aviv allows college students the opportunity to spend the spring semester in Honolulu, Hawaii at the beautiful, COVID-safe DoubleTree by Hilton Alana Waikiki Beach. You will connect with students from all over the country, build your network, and enjoy a vibrant Jewish community in partnership with Chabad of Hawaii.”

The program was created and is operated by Ari Wax (SSSB '22) and Yonah Freiden (Columbia University '23). The two, along with Doni Jacob (SSSB '22) were staying at Freiden's apartment in Manhattan in mid-November when they first conceived of the idea.

“In NYC there are many different Covid restrictions, and most things to do are limited or closed. It makes it very difficult to socialize and to have an enjoyable time, especially when we're young, so we decided that we needed to make a change,” Freiden told The Commentator. “We decided to take the status quo, transform it into something more fun and more social, and allow students our age to make the most of their time during the pandemic.”

The three had already discussed traveling to Hawaii, thought that it “logistically made sense” and decided to make it the location for their program. The three immediately began planning, making phone calls, and finally launched their website and began advertising on Dec. 8. They then traveled to Hawaii in mid-December to plan out the logistics. They advertised through Jewish news sources, such as Yeshiva World News, and through WhatsApp and Facebook, and word spread quickly. “We went to Miami about a week before the program started, and everyone knew about Aloha Aviv,” said Wax. “I've been in class breakout rooms, and students have said, ‘Oh, you made Aloha Aviv.’ It was shocking to witness how quickly word has spread.”

After launching their website and

advertising, the program received 200 applicants, of which 145 were interviewed. “We wanted to make sure that the values of the students on the program aligned with Modern Orthodox values,” said Freiden. “We were looking for people who would add to this environment.” Additionally, Freiden and Wax spoke with many parents of prospective attendees to discuss logistics. In the end, they received 35 full-time commitments.

While Jacob was not an operator of the program, he attended the program, and according to the other two, was “a huge help in constructing this program.”

According to Freiden, “Ari, Doni, and I relied only on ourselves to develop the entire program. Everything was constructed by students and for students.” A week before the program began, Freiden and Wax arrived at the hotel to begin signing contracts and preparing. The staff they were working with had not seen them in person until that point and were surprised to see how young they looked, as both are 20 years old.

The program began on Jan. 25 and will run until May 11. Additionally, the program is open to taking short-term students at any point. While 36 students are attending the program in its entirety, there are 45 total students including students attending in the short-term. Students on the program come from many different universities, including, inter alia, Yeshiva University, University of Penn, Colombia, NYU, Queens, Baruch College, FIT, Florida Atlantic University, Maryland and Touro.

The program maintains two floors of the hotel, one for males and one for females, separated by one floor in between. Additionally, the program maintains a designated “hang-out” room in the hotel exclusively for the program. “When we came to visit, this hotel appeared to be the most fitting for the long-term and student-based nature of our program” commented Wax. “Everything is perfect for our program's success.” According to the website, “The Hilton Hotel Alana is located on the edge of Waikiki, within a mile of Waikiki Beach, Duke Kahanamoku Lagoon, and the Ala Moana Center, and within three miles of the Waikiki Aquarium, Royal Hawaiian Center, and downtown Honolulu.”

There are three daily *minyanim*, with

shacharis at the local Chabad and *mincha* and *ma'ariv* after lunch and dinner, respectively. Additionally, there are learning opportunities, including *chavrusas* and *chaburas* with the Chabad rabbis and the rebbetzin. “We wanted students to have an opportunity to learn. There is a great opportunity for people to engage with their Yiddishkeit,” said Wax. On Shabbos, they eat meals at the Chabad; many secular Israelis reside in Hawaii and they hang out there on Shabbos.

The trip includes three Glatt Kosher meals a day catered through a chef hired by Chabad. Additionally, there are weekly excursions organized by Freiden and Wax, such as hiking across mountains, swimming in the ocean, waterfall hikes, mermaid caves, shark diving, snorkeling, water park and visits to the beach. Two notable trips included a scavenger hunt with limousines and Tour Surfbus, a party bus with different stops for waterfall and local fruits. In addition to the weekly excursions which take place on Sunday, participants are offered optional daily trips for those who have a lighter class load. “The amount of hikes in Hawaii exceeds the amount of restaurants in NY, it seems,” commented Freiden. Because of the time difference between Hawaii and New York (five or six hours behind), classes begin very early for students on the program, therefore enabling a longer day and a larger vacuum for activities.

Hannah Gabay (SCW '21), a participant in the program, told The Commentator about her experience on the program. “I signed up for the program not knowing anyone and I have to say that the people on the program are incredible! Everyone came with the same mindset- just looking to have an amazing time! The directors, Ari and Yonah, take care of everything for you. You let them know you want to come, book your flight and the rest is taken care of,” she expressed. “Everyone wakes up early to attend zoom classes and then the rest of the day is spent exploring the island. There is always a hike, beach day or excursion planned by the students which never leaves a dull moment! Some of the most memorable things I have done in Hawaii are shark diving, hiking Maunawili Falls and swimming in the Makapu'u Tidepools. I couldn't have envisioned a better way to spend my last

semester at Stern.”

For Pesach, about half the students are returning home, while half will remain in Hawaii and participate in a *seder* with the Chabad's Pesach program. In order to enter Hawaii, one must test negative from a diagnostic test within 72 hours of arrival. Masks are mandatory; additionally, in the beginning of the program, the State of Hawaii mandated five students in separate groups, but that number has currently been raised to 10. “We want students to have a great time and abide by the regulations,” said Freiden. There is a colossal gap between the number of COVID-19 cases in Hawaii and NY. As of March 16, the former has had 28,357 total cases, while the latter has had a total of 1.76 million cases. Aloha Aviv only tests people who are displaying symptoms or who may have been in contact with someone with COVID-19; so far there have been zero reported cases on the program.

The program costs \$9,750.00, or a monthly rate of \$2,760.00. Financial aid is available as well. Wax and Freiden intend to use the money earned from the program for future business ventures of similar nature. “This is just the beginning, and under this programming umbrella, Ari and I hope to pursue other things in the future,” commented Freiden. “There are some people who wanted to take over and still operate next semester.” Wax added that “we were asked if we were interested in selling Aloha Aviv, and we are not. We want to operate further. There is more stuff coming.”

“We are active students running a program for other students and it's really a full-time job. Yonah and I are going to sleep at 2 a.m. and I have *shiur* at 5 a.m. We both sleep for a few hours a night and then nap throughout the day,” said Wax.

“Seeing this progress from an idea to a successful program has been amazing,” reflected Wax. “We are now able to socialize and have a great time while abiding by all the restrictions that exist in Hawaii.” Wax added: “As some of the only religious Jews on the island, we want to make sure that we are a Kiddush Hashem.”



Aloha Aviv is giving students the chance to spend their spring semester in Hawaii.

YUJA

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY JOURNAL of the ARTS

Beckoning - a photograph by Moshe Wolberg

Latched - fine art by Bracha Teigman



I Will See You When it's Light Out

a poem by Rena Levinson

We will see you when it's light out.
Sing me a lullaby? I insist.
In prayer, they vowed.

What if it's pink when morning comes about?
God is a surprising artist,
We will see you when it's light out.

I sight a sliver of sun peeping through a cloud.
Their door creaks open with my slow twist.
In prayer, they vowed.

But why? I whine, we ride the question round-a-bout.
With a hug her necklace swings, a hypnotist.
We will see you when it's light out.

They hear my cries and find me inside out.
Then the moon's pale glow and us coexist.
In prayer, they vowed.

Tear-filled eyes search the skies for a route.
Blessed be the Name for His glorious kingdom persists.
I will see you when it's light out,
Hamalach Hagoel,
In prayer, they vowed.



Submit your work at yeshivaarts.com/submit

Leifer's Lasting Legacy

By JEREMY KOFFSKY

On March 8, 2021, after three-and-a-half seasons, Gabe Leifer (SSSB '21) donned the Blue and White for what may have been the final time against the Stevens Institute of Technology. When Leifer arrived on campus three years ago, the YU men's basketball program was far from what it is today. The Macs had never won a Skyline championship, never mind visited the NCAA DIII tournament.

"He's the most unselfish superstar I've ever seen."

Ryan Turrell (SSSB '22)

Leifer joined the team in the middle of the 2017-2018 season, and his impact was felt immediately. Having gone 6-8 in the first half of the year without Leifer, the Macs managed a 9-2 record after his arrival, making their way to the first NCAA tournament appearance in school history.

The 6'6 forward leaves a Macs team with quite big shoes to fill. Leifer was named The Skyline division player of the year for the 2018-2019 season and was selected to the D3hoops.com All American fourth team last season. Over his three-and-a-half years on the court, he has scored more than 1,000 total points and racked up 973 rebounds. For one who is so dominant on the court, one might expect a haughty personality, but Leifer is humble, kind and calm.

His style of play also exudes calmness. There is rarely unnecessary movement in his play. On defense, his size and presence creates relentless pressure against the opponent. On offense, he makes shooting a three or posting up for a lay up look effortless. "Gabe is the ultimate winner, a genius passer and all-time rebounder ... he's the most unselfish superstar I've ever seen," Ryan Turrell (SSSB '22) told The Commentator.

With Leifer at the helm, the Macs had a better overall record in the 2018-2019 season than in the previous year but failed to win the Skyline Championship; they fell to Farmingdale State College in the finals of the tournament. When asked what changed going into the 2019-2020 season, Leifer answered: "experience." As Leifer pointed out to The Commentator, if one were to look

at most of the successful DI and DII teams, their rosters are mostly made up of seniors.

With an experienced core consisting of Simcha Halpert (SSSB '20), Turrell and Leifer himself, last year's team put together the greatest season to date. They had the best record of any DIII team in the nation, won the Skyline championship and made it as far as the Sweet 16 of the NCAA DIII tournament before it was canceled due to COVID-19.

Leifer told The Commentator he does not have regrets over the 2019-20 season's outcome. "Regrets? No. Do I wish the 2020 tournament had happened? Do I wish there was one this year? Yeah." But he's not looking back at what could have been with disappointment. "What happened [in 2020] was bigger than basketball; a lot of people had it worse," expressed Leifer.

In 2021, after a significant hiatus, the Macs have picked up right where they left off, winning their first seven games this year. They have yet to lose a game since last season, marking 36 straight wins, the second-longest streak in DIII history. 30-plus game win streaks are familiar to Leifer. In his senior year at DRS high school in 2016, Gabe not only dunked in the Yeshiva League semifinals, but led the DRS Wildcats to a 33-0 season, which included winning the Red Sarachek Tournament at YU.

As the fanless, truncated 2021 season comes to a close, Leifer is proudest of the community the team has fostered. Over the last three seasons, the Macs have been about as big as a DIII NCAA basketball team can be. They have had articles written about them in Tablet, The Daily News and AP, and even garnered attention from the respective owners of the New England Patriots and the Milwaukee Bucks. Throughout it all, Gabe is proud he and the team have represented the Jewish people in a positive way.

Leifer's selflessness, and the team's *middot* in general, have served as a great influence to many. Gabe recalled that at a wedding someone came over to him and told him that his son never wore a *kippah* while playing basketball. But after seeing the Macs play with their *kipot* on, his son changed his mind. "It's something I would have never known about," explained Leifer.

As he moves on to a full-time job, Leifer told The Commentator that he will miss being part of the team, creating relationships with teammates and being a mentor.

When asked what he was looking forward to about not being on the team, Leifer had a very simple answer: "Sleep." This makes sense, as the Macs practice four to five times a week from about 6 a.m. to 8 a.m.

As Leifer leaves the Max Stern Athletic Center for the last time, without any fans in the stands, it may leave a sour taste in the mouths of many. But Gabe does not look at it that way. He is proud of what he has accomplished. Speaking on Leifer's legacy, former

MacsLive President David Schwartzman (SSSB '20) said, "Gabe's presence brought leadership, talent, energy and confidence. His impact was so tangible[.]" Leifer's influence on the court helped shape the Macs into a formidable contender. As he leaves, a new era dawns, but the impact of his years as a Maccabee on and off the court will not be easily forgotten.



Leifer making basketball look easy.

YESHIVA ATHLETICS

The Guardian of Grain

By YONATAN KURZ

Sometimes, there are unsung heroes who operate "under-the-radar" and enable the continuity of tradition with little recognition or public display. While these people may not be household names that engender common recognition, their impact is immeasurable, and their actions can leave an impression on others for years to come.

John Joseph Brown was one of those figures. For 42 years, Brown, a real estate agent from Riverdale, New York, took on the role of the non-Jewish buyer in the process of *mechiras chametz* preceding the period of Pesach, purchasing the forbidden grain products of countless Jewish communities around the Tri-State area.

The institution of *mechiras chametz* comes as a solution to the prohibition of possessing *chametz* for the duration of the holiday and after it ends. To circumvent this prohibition in a legal and upright manner, there is an idea of selling *chametz* to a

non-Jew before the holiday begins; once Pesach is over, the non-Jew sells it back, and the *chametz* can once again be consumed.

Brown's role began in 1977, when the Young Israel of Riverdale was seeking a person willing to buy *chametz* from them before that year's Pesach. Rabbi Mordechai Willig, rabbi of the shul and *rosh yeshiva* at

And so the relationship between the two men began. Every *Erev Pesach*, Rabbi Willig would read the contract of the transaction to Brown, who would pay for the *chametz* using piles of quarters to represent the down payment toward what he was purchasing. After that, Brown would take numerous actions to denote completion of the sale, including

alumni of RIETS who had become pulpit rabbis to sell the *chametz* of their congregants to Brown, who quickly became adept and very knowledgeable in the procedure; in fact, on numerous occasions, Brown would correct newer rabbis upon realizing their errors in the process.

Each year, Brown continued to take part in the sale, crediting his longevity to his role in buying millions of dollars worth of *chametz* from various local Jewish communities, as well as to Rabbi Willig's annual *b'racha* (blessing) of well-being. Brown, an alum of Fordham University and Columbia Law School, in addition to being a veteran of the Korean War, worked for Fieldston Real Estate and Property Management and would often attribute his financial success to Rabbi Willig's blessing for sustained success.

This tradition carried on over four decades, and even when Brown moved to Minerva in upstate New York, he made

This was a man so committed to taking part in the sale of chametz every year that it became one of the defining lines in his obituary.

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), suggested Brown, who was involved in the purchase of the shul building four years prior for the role in the transaction. Rav Willig assumed that Brown's business acumen would be a tremendous asset in navigating the legal nuances of the procedure.

lifting a pen from a table and putting it down, signing a transactional document and shaking Rabbi Willig's hand. After the holiday ended, Brown would sell the *chametz* back to Rabbi Willig, jokingly bemoaning his inability to complete the original transaction.

As the years passed, Rabbi Willig would begin to bring some of his students and other

Continued on Page 10

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Perspectives on the Vaccine

By DEBORAH COOPERSMITH

It's only been a few months since a COVID-19 vaccine became available to eligible members of the public. The Commentator reached out to students to hear their opinions on who they thought should be eligible for vaccines, whether they chose to get vaccinated if they were eligible, general thoughts about vaccine distribution and YU's policy on not notifying individuals who are eligible. Due to the personal nature of these entries, some have chosen to remain anonymous. The responses of six students are provided below.

Anonymous (SCW '22)

Major: Computer Science
Vaccination Status: Moderna-Fully vaccinated

"I work at HASC homes as direct support staff on some Shabbats.

"I chose to take the vaccine because I believe that it's my responsibility to protect the women at my group home as much as I can and also take the opportunity to protect

everyone I interact with. I believe that once I was deemed eligible, it was my *halakhic* and *hashkafic* responsibility to get the vaccine, especially after listening to Rav Willig speak about it. It's scary to receive a new vaccine, but it is the best I can do with the knowledge I have right now.

"It was not hard to get an appointment because my group home was allotted special times for their essential workers. This was about a week before all these sites were backed up with waiting lines."

Jacob Shiner (Sy Syms '21)
Major: Accounting/Finance
Vaccination Status: Fully vaccinated

"I work for YU in the Admissions Office as a student ambassador and I have asthma, which allowed me to get early eligibility. When I had the chance to get vaccinated, I jumped on it so I could resume normal life.

"The eligibility list doesn't make sense to me. In particular, hospital administrators, who don't interact with patients or doctors, were among the first to be vaccinated. Also, people with medical conditions that they've

overgrown were also among the first groups eligible. While I don't think I should have been in one of the first few groups to be eligible, it is my job to get the vaccine when I am eligible.

"The NYS portal was very difficult to navigate, but my aunt who volunteers for an organization that registers elderly individuals for vaccine appointments helped me find an appointment time.

"I'm from Illinois, but I got vaccinated in New York. In Illinois it is more complicated to get a vaccine. I blame it on our politicians who seem to be corrupt, power-hungry, two-faced and inept individuals. They prioritized minorities in an attempt to push 'equity,' similar to the Biden administration, but I think there is a difference between equity and equality.

"YU should start following science instead of stringencies. For example, I don't understand why I test twice weekly since I am fully vaccinated and display zero symptoms."

Jonah Goldstein (Makor '21)
Major: Culinary
Vaccination Status: Moderna-Fully vaccinated

"I took the Moderna vaccine because I want to spend time with my family and my nephews and nieces. I took the vaccine because I want to be in good health and stay healthy.

"At first, it was very hard to get an appointment. My father knows someone who works in a hospital and he helped us make an appointment."

Adina Bruce (SCW '22)
Major: Computer Science
Vaccination Status: Not Eligible

"I would have liked YU to be more communicative about which of their student workers were eligible. The wording from

NYC's eligibility site is vague as to which college workers are actually eligible. In the end, I concluded that I do not personally qualify for the eligibility requirements. Since then, I have heard of other student workers who were able to get a vaccine. However, there has been no communication from YU as to which of their student workers are eligible. I do not believe that I should be relying on rumors from other students when we are in the midst of a global pandemic. I would argue that there are clear ethical issues in YU not notifying their employees about their vaccine status."

Shuie Berger (YC '23)
Major: Biology
Vaccination Status: Not Eligible

"I think the eligibility list is fine. It's important to make sure that those who are most at risk are vaccinated, such as people over a certain age, as well as immunocompromised people, old age home workers and others. I think the list prioritized those and that's good.

"However, I believe that vaccines should have been distributed by the federal government rather than by states. States like Georgia are failing to effectively inoculate people, while places like NY and NJ are already rolling out eligibility to people with the widest range of jobs. If it were federally distributed, it might have been more effectively given out everywhere rather than in a few states. Perhaps they should have given the vaccines in proportion to the population. That way every state could effectively distribute the same percentage of vaccines. Overall, it isn't so bad, but it could be better.

"I honestly didn't even know about YU's policy of not telling employees and student workers if they are eligible, and I think it's stupid because everyone should know

Continued on Page 11



PIXABAY

The Commentator reached out to students to hear their opinions on the COVID-19 vaccines.

THE GUARDIAN OF GRAIN
Continued from Page 9

sure to never miss a single *Erev* or *Motzaei Pesach*, driving over four hours each way to Riverdale to ensure that he would be able to buy and sell back the *chametz* of the Tri-State area's Jewish community in a prompt and timely manner. However, this streak ended in 2020, when Brown's wife became sick and his son was struck with COVID-19. While Brown was prevented from traveling to Riverdale for the sale, hope nonetheless

remained that he would be able to do it the next year.

Unfortunately, that opportunity never arose. A month and a half ago, Brown died peacefully at his home in Queensbury, NY at the age of 88. His online obituary from his family included the following: "John was honored, for decades, to serve as the non-Jewish buyer of 'chometz', or forbidden bread products, during the Passover period from rabbis and congregants around the world. He performed this duty until 2019." Rabbi Gidon Shoshan, Rabbi Willig's

son-in-law and senior manager and director of educator recruitment at Olami, described Brown as "a legend in the Willig family, in the Riverdale Jewish community, and — for those that knew his name — actually an important role player in the lives of many thousands of Jews each Pesach for decades."

This was a man so committed to taking part in the sale of *chametz* every year that it became one of the defining lines in his obituary. As Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, director of *Semikhah* at RIETS, tweeted out on March 9, "Mr. Brown left this world armed with the

collective merits of more than 4 decades of service." His dedication was unbelievable, his keenness was inconceivable and his merits remain laudable. We should all aspire to engage in *mitzvos* with the same continuous level of sincerity and fervor provided by John Brown, a Bronx realtor whose role in the annual *mechiras chametz* has left a lasting impact on Tri-State Jewry with just a signature, a handshake and a few rolls of quarters.



John Joseph Brown, who recently passed away, was an unsung hero of the Jewish community.

JOSH WEINBERG (YOUTUBE)



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

(May 8, 1985; Volume 50, Issue 7) — Fifty Years of Yeshiva Basketball in Retrospect

By MOREY WILDES

Editor's Note: In honor of The Commentator's 50th anniversary, a 50-year history of Maccabees basketball was published in 1985. This article is being re-published in light of the great success the team has enjoyed in the past few seasons.

It was in 1935 when the first Yeshiva College basketball team was formed and played their first game, a loss to St. John's freshmen. Coached by Milt Trupin and led by Max, Jerry and Dov Muss, they recorded a 5-4 fledgling season. In the ensuing years, the Quinthoolets compiled several winning seasons, including an 11-5 record in 1937-38 behind captain-coach Abe Averick's ballhandling skills.

"Red" Sarachek

In 1942-43 the able and excitable Bernard "Red" Sarachek assumed the coaching duties and used his knowledge and experience to produce a 10-5 season, led by high-scoring Stan Doppelt. World War II forced Sarachek to temporarily relinquish his coaching position for two years, but the Mighty Mites continued their winning ways, going 9-6 and 12-8. The highlight of this period was a Doppelt-led 42-35 upset over NIT-bound Fordham.

The 1945-50 period saw the Blue and White record fall to a cumulative 26-55, despite Sarachek's return. Meanwhile, Marvin Freedman averaged 17.8 ppg and received honorable mention on the All-City squad.

The 1950s brought the era of Marvin Hershkowitz, who helped bring the Mighty Mites back to respectability. In his Junior year, Marv averaged 15.7 ppg and proceeded to become Yeshiva's first 1000-point scorer. As captain in 1952-53, he was joined by the brawny Abe Sodden to lead the Mites to a 10-10 record, a record which was equaled the next year behind Sodden's average of 19 pts. and 16 rebounds per game.

The Blumenreich Era

The next three years, 1954-57, are known as the Blumenreich era and are unparalleled in Yeshiva history, as the Mites compiled a 41-17 record. It began in 1954-55 when the Mites were 13-8 behind captain Abbey Gwritz, Sodden and newcomer Irwin "Red" Blumenreich, who set a season scoring record with 513 points for a 24.4 average.

In 1955-56, the Mites achieved their best season to date with a 16-2 record (.888 pct), the third-best mark in the entire New York City area that year. Captain Abe Sodden wrapped up his career with 1207 points and Red averaged 24.7 ppg, then a YU record. In his senior year, the 6'4 redheaded Blumenreich made All-City first team and led the Mites to a 12-7 slate, graduating with numerous records, including the highest career average (23.5 ppg) and a total 1360 points, then the highest point total in YU history and a record for three-years play. This was also the rookie season of a fellow named Irving Bader.

After Blumenreich's graduation, the

Mites faltered to 9-12 in the 1957-58 season, but then rebounded strongly in 1958-59, Irv Bader, averaging 20 ppg, and captain Sandy Ader took the team to a 14-4 year, as the Mites were sound in small-college shooting percentage. In the next season, Bader's last, the Blue and White were 11-5 as 6'3 Sam Grossman led the team with 15.6 ppg and Bader (one of three captains that year) ended his college career with 1374 points, eclipsing Blumenreich's record total.

In 1942-43 the able and excitable Bernard "Red" Sarachek assumed the coaching duties and used his knowledge and experience to produce a 10-5 season.

In 1960-61, the not-so Mighty Mites compiled a 3-14 ledger, their worst mark until then in their history (.176 pct). The lone bright spot was the 21.3 ppg average of Sam Grossman, who was chosen as a member of the U.S. team for the Maccabiah games. In 1961-62 the Mites achieved what was to be their last .500 season (10-10) for 23 years, with Grossman again the top scorer with 21.1 ppg. as he finished with 1117 points.

The 1962-63 season was the first in a very long dry spell for the Mites, who managed only a 6-14 record. Co-captain Arthur Aaron led the team with a 15-3 average. The following season, the Mites were 7-12 and again were led in scoring Aaron (14.8).

Rokach Stars

Though the team was only 7-13 in 1964-65, the play of powerful Junior forward Sheldon Rokach provided the only bright spots by breaking many Yeshiva records; he averaged 23.5 points per game and 21.5 rebounds per game while setting a new YU single-season rebounding record (411). The highlight of that season was the triple-overtime 100-96 victory over Queens, in which Rokach scored 48 points, breaking Red Blumenreich's single-game point record

(44).

Yeshiva was 7-13 again the next season under captain Johnny Halpert, as Rokach, in another incredible season, scored at a 22.6 clip and averaged 20 rebounds a game, He also set a new YU rebounding record for a game (33) and finished his career as number three on the all-time YU scoring list with 1226. For the second successive year he was named to the Knickerbocker Conference All-Star team.

In 1966-67, the Mites were losers again, finishing with a 5-15 ledger. They were led by the burly playmaker Sam Stern who scored 359 points while averaging 17.8 ppg.

Poloner Leads Mites

1967-68, the rookie year of the heralded Stuart Poloner, was another dismal season, as the Mites won seven and lost fourteen. Poloner, playing brilliantly, scored 433 points for a 22.1 avg. and center Ray Aboff averaged 15.4 ppg. In 1968-69, after going 6-4 in the season's first half, the Mites lost Aboff to injury and fell to 9-12 overall. Public school star Richie Salit lit up the backcourt by averaging 18.1 ppg and Poloner had another great year, scoring 405 total points at a 19.3 pace.

With Poloner in Israel for the 1969-70 season, the Mites slipped to a horrible 3-17, under new coach Sam Stern. Sharpshooter Dave Gettinger averaged 16.9 ppg, but Salit, after averaging 26.9 in the first half of the season, took his talents elsewhere, leaving a depleted team behind.

The 1970-71 season was even worse; Gettinger transferred and the Mites finished at 2-17 (.105 pct). Poloner, however, set single-season records for total points (534) and average (28.1), while becoming Yeshiva's all-time leading scorer with 1378 points (breaking Blumenreich's three-year record, as well).

The 1971-72 season brought continued failure to the Mites, who won only two of their eighteen contests, David Wilzig (17.9 ppg) and Ira Shraga (16.6 ppg)-were the top scorers. Johnny Halpert took the coaching reins for the 72-73 season with a recruiting system in mind and improved slightly to 4-15; he followed that with a horrendous 1-19 season in which Wilzig again led the

Mites (17.9 ppg) and graduated with 1052 total points. This season was the worst ever in YU history (.050 pct).

1974-75 was not much better as the team was only 5-19 and the bearded Paul Merlis led the team with a meager 13.5 ppg. They slipped to 3-18 in 75-76 as Merlis was the top scorer with 17.1 ppg and Robert Rosenbloom continued 14.4 ppg.

Kufeld and the Maccabees

The following season was the rookie year of YU's tallest starter ever. The 6'8 David Kufeld scored 349 points at a 16.6 ppg pace, second to Rosenbloom who pumped in 434 points for a 20.7 average, as the team was 4-17. In their sixteenth consecutive losing season, 1977-78, the team, now known as the Yeshiva Maccabees, were 5-15 and Robert Rosenbloom completed the season with 1247 college points.

The next season, freshman Harvey Sheff splashed onto the scene, leading the Macs with a 17.9 ppg average on 357 points as Kufeld placed second with 17.7 ppg and 354 points. Despite these heroics, the Macs fell to 3-17,

1979-80 was Kufeld's final season and he closed it with a bang, scoring 341 points on 17 ppg. Kufeld hung up his sneakers as the #1 all-time YU rebounder (1223), the #4 all-time YU scorer (1250) and the 5 all-time rebounder in NCAA Division III history. Following the season he was drafted by the NBA Portland Trailblazers. The Macs, however, were only 6-14, while Sheff had 318 pts. for 15.9 ppg.

Another post-graduation depression followed: the 1980-81 Kufeld-less Macs fell to 3-20. Sheff was the lone luminary with 18.6 ppg on a whopping 427 points.

At last, Halpert's recruiting began to pay off, as Joey Eaves and Sally Krevsky gave the Macs a much-needed shot in the arm. They won their first five games but then dropped to 10-12 overall. Sheff averaged 21 ppg (on 398 pts.) and finished his college career as YU's all-time #1 scorer with exactly 1500 points, Eaves had 371 points for a 16.9 average.

Sheff's graduation left the 82-83 Macs center-less, as they posted a 7-13 ledger. Eaves (16.4 ppg) and Krevsky (13.8) led the team as smooth-shooting Ron Schwartz, another Halpert recruit, averaged 10.6 ppg. In 1983-84, while Eaves spent the year in Israel, the Macs were 5-15. All-IAC guard Schwartz paced the team with 18 ppg.

After 23 years, the YU Maccabees attained a winning record, going 11-8 and narrowly missing the playoffs in 1984-85. The fastbreaking duo of Eaves and Schwartz scored 391 and 320 points for averages of 20.5 and 16.8.

Next year, with both Eaves and Schwartz returning for their senior year, the two Hod brothers maturing and the completion of the Max Stern Athletic Center, basketball at YU should be more exciting than it has been in years.

Yeshiva Basketball: A Fifty Year Recap

(Continued from Page 12, Col. 5)

In 1966-67, the Mites were losers again, finishing with a 5-15 ledger. They were led by the burly playmaker Sam Stern who scored 359 points while averaging 17.8 ppg.

won only two of their eighteen contests. David Wilzig (17.9 ppg) and Ira Shraga (16.6 ppg) were the top scorers. Johnny Halpert took the coaching reins for the 72-73 season with a recruiting system in mind and improved slightly to 4-

(1250) and the #5 all-time rebounder in NCAA Division III history. Following the season he was drafted by the NBA Portland Trailblazers. The Macs, however, were only 6-14, while Sheff had 318 pts. for 15.9 ppg.

Another post-graduation depression followed: the 1980-81 Kufeld-less Macs fell to 3-20. Sheff was the lone luminary with 18.6 ppg on a whopping 427 points.

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The 1981-82 Yeshiva Maccabees had a 5-0 Start

The Commentator archives

THE COMMENTATOR

WE ASKED, Y(O)U ANSWERED
Continued from Page 10

whether or not they're eligible. Getting the vaccine is crucial to stopping the pandemic and if people don't know they're eligible, they won't get it and it could enable the

virus to continue spreading. YU needs better people at the helm when dealing with coronavirus issues.

"I think YU needs to address the issue of vaccinated people. They should put out new rules for vaccinated people. One rule could be that if there are only vaccinated people in a room, then masks don't need to be worn."

Rachel Mauda (SCW '21)
Major: Biochemistry
Vaccination Status: Pfizer-Fully vaccinated

"I am currently in Israel where everyone above the age of 16 is eligible to get the

vaccine. There are many doses available in Israel. I chose to take it because I would like to avoid quarantine. The Ministry of Health has put up many stations, often not requiring an appointment."

It's Time to Let the Women's Basketball Team Play in the Max Stern Athletic Center

By DANIEL MELOOL

Imagine the following: You are a college basketball player devoted to your sport. Much of your time is spent practicing to improve your skills. The time you spend practicing is on top of the time you spend studying and takes away from your sleep and social life. You put in this time and effort to represent your school on the collegiate level. Despite all of your time and effort, you are told that you can neither practice nor play in your school's basketball gym and are instead forced to practice and play in other schools' gyms. This would be quite frustrating, right? The least your school could do for you for representing them on the national stage is let you use its gym.

Well, dear reader, there is no need to imagine. This scenario is real. It actually happens every day, right here in Yeshiva University. The women's basketball team, for years now, has not been allowed to practice or play their home games in the Max Stern Athletic Center on the Wilf Campus. Instead, they have been forced to practice and play at Baruch College. Team Captain Chana Boltax (SCW '20) informed me that because of the irregular availability of the Baruch court, the team has not really had a home court over the years. During the 2017-18 season, the women's team "could not practice or play at Baruch because they had filled their schedule with other teams." Instead of allowing the women's team to practice and play in the Max Stern Athletic Center, YU tried to find

other schools where they could use a gym. After that proved unsuccessful, YU finally allowed them to practice at the Max Stern Athletic Center.

Notice that they were only allowed to *practice* in the gym. So, where did the women's team play their home games? Not in YU, of course. Boltax told me that they

actually had several different home courts, such as CCNY and Fordham. The latter,

Continued on Page 13



The women's basketball team, for years now, has not been allowed to practice or play their home games in the Max Stern Athletic Center on the Wilf Campus.

YESHIVA ATHLETICS

Helping Others and Myself: Reflections of a Writing Center Tutor

By ARI ENGLANDER

My journey to the Writing Center started last year, in my dorm room, on the phone with a friend a few years my senior. While giving me advice on how to bolster my professional resume he mentioned that he had been a tutor in the Writing Center and that his law school admissions officers were very impressed by that. The ability to think quickly on your feet, analyze and present key issues at hand and work collaboratively are all in high demand. I figured that this would be a great opportunity to increase my involvement on campus and add something significant to my professional resume. I decided then and there that I would take the steps to become a tutor myself.

The other main reason I wanted to become a tutor was the paid tutoring. On many a late night, friends would ask me to skim through their various papers and give feedback, and I found myself enjoying this process — I found it very fulfilling. So I thought to myself, "if I'm doing this anyway, I might as well do it more often in an organized, structured setting, and get paid for my time and effort."

The application process was fairly simple and straightforward. I had to ask two professors to fill out brief recommendation forms, submit a recent writing sample and answer a few questions, including how I would approach giving feedback on a provided writing sample. After a Zoom interview, I was happy to be notified of my acceptance as a Writing Center tutor. Then came the summer and a reading and writing assignment which we new tutors had to complete as part of our pre-tutoring training. Once the fall semester began, the new tutors were required to "sit in" on two Zoom tutoring sessions

from veteran tutors, in order to get a better sense of what a tutoring session may look like. Finally, after this long — but not too arduous — process, I was knighted as a full Writing Center tutor.

feared I simply would not know what to do and how to do it.

I quickly discovered that my fears were for naught. Through organized training workshops and discussions with other tutors

knew I could do.

Looking back, I can fondly identify a couple of additional reasons to become a Writing Center tutor, and how they have positively impacted me. The first is the opportunity to meet new people. Last year in YU, it was hard enough to do so, with the unique load of Torah learning, afternoon classes and schoolwork taking up much of my time and headspace. Obviously, the pandemic has made that much harder during the past year. But working in the Writing Center has allowed me to stumble upon new faces here and there, people whom I otherwise would likely never have had the opportunity to meet. The second is the improvement of my own writing. Having the consistent opportunity to see how others think and write has provided me with new insights into how to approach assignments and my writing—and in some delightful cases, what not to do!

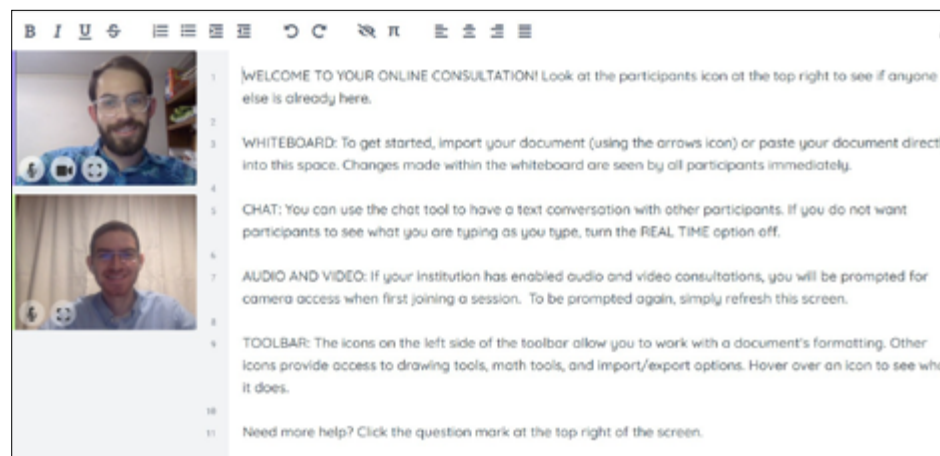
So come visit me or any of the other talented tutors in the Writing Center. Whether you're a lowerclassmen or upperclassmen, in a First-Year Writing course or in graduate school, you can make an appointment and find out more information online. There are few reasons to not come — you can bring in any stage of writing (finished product, a draft, or even just the assignment prompt), and it's completely free of charge! Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Appointments for the Wilf Campus Writing Center can be made at <https://yu.mywconline.net/>. Wilf students interested in applying to be writing center tutors should follow the instructions at that link. The deadline to apply for the Fall 2021 semester is Apr. 18.

Looking back, I can fondly identify a couple of additional reasons to become a Writing Center tutor, and how they have positively impacted me.

Allow me to be candid here — I did not feel like I was ready. I had too many concerns swirling through my mind: What if I freeze up and don't know what to say at any given moment? I am supposed to be the all-knowing tutor after all. What if I am woefully unfamiliar with the type of writing brought in? The Writing Center caters to all types of writing, including but not limited to lab reports and creative writing, cover letters and resumes, graduate papers and faculty publications — the list goes on. I

— not to mention good old practice and experience — I realized that I was overthinking things, and many of these "problems" were not problems at all. I learned that there were resources available for when I needed help. I learned that sometimes, a spell of silence in a session is a good thing. But most of all, I learned that as a tutor, it is not my job to ensure and guarantee that the paper will be an "A"; it is my job to help the tutee with whatever he is requesting with his writing, and to try my best. That was something I



Writing Center appointments are happening online this semester due to COVID-19.

AHARON NISSEL

When Rabbis Die

By AHARON NISSEL

While death is never an enjoyable topic to discuss, we ought to consider it from time to time, in order that we maintain a healthy, rational attitude towards this deeply difficult subject.

It seems as though in the past year rabbis have been dying at an alarming rate. Perhaps, the ongoing pandemic is a contributing factor. We've lost figures from Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks to Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski to Rabbi Dovid Feinstein. With the news of each passing comes the expected wave of sorrow. (These feelings are further conflicted when mass funerals are held in ways that are unsafe given the pandemic.)

I do not have statistics as to whether the rates of rabbinical deaths have actually increased, but what is clear is that in recent times, each death has been significantly magnified. Within minutes of a rabbi's passing, the news spreads to all corners of the globe through all sorts of channels, most notably WhatsApp. There are two valuable takeaways from this. Firstly, that so many *gedolim* are

dying means that there *are* so many *gedolim* in the first place. Secondly, *Am Yisrael* is more connected than ever; we celebrate together, we mourn together.

Some individuals may make all sorts of claims about whatever "message" God is

work on improving ourselves immediately.

There is an odd but understandable phenomenon that happens when a rabbi dies. Suddenly their Torah becomes studied like never before. (This phenomenon, of course, is not limited to rabbis; when a famous mu-

sician dies, people suddenly start listening to their music, when a famous author dies, people suddenly start reading their books.)

I find that in the week after a *gadol* passes away, I learn more of their Torah than I have in the rest of my life combined!

The question is why do we wait until the rabbi has passed away before delving into their Torah. The obvious answer is that there are simply too many rabbis, and we could never learn *everyone's* Torah. But once a rabbi passes away, we are "reminded," as it were, of their work, and we study it. Eventually, though, we move on, to return to

the next rabbi God and nature remind us of. But this paradigm is not all bad. The knee-jerk reaction to start spreading their Torah en masse reminds us that the way that we honor the memory of these rabbis should, first and foremost, be by studying their wisdom. For every rabbi that passes away, there are countless students who become armed with their Torah.

In addition to learning their Torah, we can also emulate their *middos* and embody their values. It is therefore important that we remain intellectually honest when speaking about *gedolim*, and avoid turning them into flawless saints. Personally, I find that stories about *gedolim* overcoming real challenges are more inspiring than stories that simply reflect some innate perfection the rabbi seems to have.

Yes, it is incredibly heartbreaking to hear the news of a rabbi passing away. But we should not be moved to despair. The next step after mourning is to recognize the opportunity to improve ourselves. At the very least, it's what the deceased, *zichronam l'beracha*, would have wanted.

With every death, we are reminded that eventually time will run out for all of us and we must work on improving ourselves immediately.

sending us, but we should not go crazy trying to "understand" why a specific individual has died. We cannot know why God causes things to happen; this is especially true of natural occurrences such as death. Most of us understand that death is inevitable, even for the greatest rabbis. (And we understand the dangers of groups that deny this.) But just because we do not understand why something has happened (and even if the answer is simply nature), does not mean there is nothing we can learn from that thing. With every death, we are reminded that eventually time will run out for all of us and we must

work on improving ourselves immediately.

Eventually, though, we move on, to return to



Yahrzeit candles

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Continued from Page 12

Boltax explained, they were told was a "present" for them for playing so well, since it is a Division I (DI) gym.

This volatile schedule is present even in years that the Baruch court has availability. Remember, Baruch is its own school and has to plan events around its own students' schedules. This means that there are times when the women's team will have to relocate to a new home court. Boltax told me that last season, for example, they once again played some of their home games in CCNY. They even played a home game against Sarah Lawrence College in their gym in Bronxville, NY. Yes, you read that correctly: They played as the home team on the opponent's court. If that is not the pinnacle of absurdity, I don't know what is.

The team has been in talks with the administration about what it would take for them to practice and play in the Max Stern Athletic Center, but they have been so far unsuccessful in their efforts. The time has now come for YU to allow these women to play their home games on their actual home court. They have played there this season due to the current pandemic resulting in stricter rules from all schools for using their respective facilities, and it has worked out just fine. Of course, this was not before YU attempted to find another place for them to play. Indeed, even during a pandemic, it was thought more logical to have the women play basketball somewhere else. While they were fortunate to play their home games in

the gym this season, it remains a mystery if that policy will continue. I strongly believe that it should.

Let me be clear: I am in no way dismissive of those who object to the women's team playing basketball in the gym. I recognize that there are valid concerns about allowing the team to play there. By no means do I think that those who object do so in bad faith. What I do think is that those who object have been unwilling to recognize that this situation is not impossible to solve. Their concerns can be accounted for while still allowing the women's team to play in the gym.

The main objection to women playing basketball in the Max Stern Athletic Center is the attire they wear while playing. Many of the players on the team, as well as those of the opposing team, play in shorts and sleeveless jerseys. YU is a yeshiva just as much as it is a university. This institution is home to many observant Orthodox Jews. For them, this would pose an issue of *tzniut*. This is an honest concern that should not be dismissed with haste, but addressed with careful consideration.

There are several ways to resolve this issue. One is to not go to the gym when the women's team is there. Those who wish to avoid seeing women dressed in athletic attire can simply avoid going to the lower level of the Rubin building. Of course, this solution works well during the current pandemic, when the campus is not as busy. What about when campus life — hopefully very soon

— returns to normalcy? There is also the fact that the lower level is where the cafeteria and laundry room — the latter of which is right next to the gym — are located. What are those who wish to go to the cafeteria or wash their clothes supposed to do if they do not want to see women who are dressed in athletic attire? These too are legitimate concerns that can be resolved.

During their final home game of the season against Sarah Lawrence College this past Sunday, there were several measures taken to ensure that *tzniut* was not an issue. First, the windows to the gym were covered up, so nobody could see inside. Second, the doors to the gym were locked with a security guard outside. The guard would inform anyone who wanted to enter the gym that a women's game was taking place and refuse them entry, unless they were performing work of some kind for the game. The person would then enter through the side door from the locker room, or, if the women were changing there, call for someone to open the doors to the gym. These measures prevent the possibility of someone having to look inside or walk in by accident. If someone needs to go to the lower level for whatever reason, he can be assured that he will not run the risk of seeing the women dressed in shorts or sleeveless shirts.

The dilemma is almost resolved, but there is one more point to address. The aforementioned solutions are useful so long as the women are in the gym. What about

when they finish practice or a game? At this point, they are free to walk around, and the measures taken are useless. For those who have this concern, there may be a solution. However, let me emphasize that this proposal does not reflect my views about what should be done. The proposal would be the following: Institute a policy that the women must wear long sleeves and sweatpants or skirts when they exit the gym. Some of the players will, no doubt, be annoyed at this requirement, but I am sure that they will have no trouble complying if it means that they would have access to the gym. If it were up to me, the women would be able to play in the gym with no strings attached. Alas, it is not up to me.

While the women's team does not get the same attention as the men's team, they still represent our school at the collegiate level just as much as the men's team does. Unfortunately, they have not received the same treatment. I will reiterate that I reject the assertion that this disparate treatment has come from animus. Although there will still be those who object to the women's team playing basketball in the gym, I hope to have outlined reasonable solutions that will respect the religious atmosphere on the Wilf Campus while also allowing for the women's basketball team to play in the gym that is rightfully theirs.



NEVER. STOP. COMMENTATING.

Got something to share?
Email lemel@mail.yu.edu

It's Not You, It's Ree

By ALIZA LEICHTER

In 2005, Reebok launched its global “I Am What I Am” marketing campaign on TV screens and billboards around the world. Their mantra targeted consumers in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Tokyo, London and Paris, encouraging them to embrace their individuality; music icons, Jay-Z and 50 Cent, were signed on for endorsement deals to further spread their message. In a statement about the campaign, Reebok’s global chief marketing officer Dennis Baldwin described the brand’s goal to “encourage young people to find their own voice by celebrating contemporary icons who have accomplished their dreams by being true to themselves and following their own unique path to greatness.” One year later, German-sportswear company Adidas purchased Reebok for \$3.8 billion in an acquisition intended to pave a similar “unique path to greatness” for the second-largest company in the sportswear industry.

After 15 years of ownership, Adidas has confirmed its plans to divest from the struggling Reebok brand. According to Reuters, Reebok is currently worth an estimated \$1.2 billion, a value that is threefold lower than the sum Adidas paid for the company in 2006. Prior to the acquisition, Reebok’s performance was stellar; several of their iconic shoe styles were heavily promoted in pop culture and the athletic world, while business remained steady.

Reebok’s success reached its peak when it eclipsed Nike as the leading fitness brand in the late 1980s, a decade ubiquitous with big hair, aerobic exercises and neon workout gear. In recognition of the athletic trends shaping the market, Reebok debuted the first-ever aerobics shoe, their Freestyle, in 1982. The following year, the company’s sales were at \$13 million, half of which can be attributed to the Freestyle. With the understanding that aerobics and aerobics programs such as “Sweatin’ to the Oldies” by Richard Simmons were weight-loss

fads, Reebok expanded into the apparel and children’s footwear markets. In 1986, the brand started producing fitness attire and accessories, along with a line of children’s athletic shoes, called “Weeboks.” That same year, Reebok implemented strategic product placement as an additional way to bolster sales. In the 1986 film “Aliens,” Sigourney Weaver popularized Reebok’s “Alien Stomper,” a clunky, futuristic high-top sneaker. Two years later, sales were at \$1.8 billion, and Reebok dominated the market as the largest athletic brand in the United States with a 26.7% share to Nike’s 23.3%.

According to Reuters, Reebok is currently worth an estimated \$1.2 billion, a value that is threefold lower than the sum Adidas paid for the company in 2006.

The brand’s blazing success was rapid but short-lived; with multiple iconic products distorting their identity, it remained unclear as to whether the chameleonic Reebok brand was fitness or fashion. When earnings fell 20% in 1988, American sportswear brand Nike seized the opportunity to become the largest manufacturer in the U.S., claiming one-quarter of the market share by the following year.

Reebok’s signature shoe, the Reebok Pump was released in 1989, and the innovative design made them a “cultural phenomenon.” At the 1991 NBA Dunk Contest, an annual competition in which players showcase their most creative dunks, champion Dee Brown of the Boston Celtics wore his Reebok Pumps on broadcast television during his winning no-look slam dunk. Over the next decade, Reebok became much more relevant in the world of professional sports. In 1992, up-and-coming Los Angeles Lakers player Shaquille O’Neal signed an endorsement deal with Reebok worth \$15 million. Four years later, Allen Iverson of the Philadelphia 76ers did the same in a unique deal estimated at \$800,000 a year, and an additional \$32 million in a trust fund. Reebok relied on endorsement deals

to increase its appeal among sports enthusiasts, but this was still not enough to secure a much-needed edge.

In 2000, Reebok signed a ten-year deal with the NFL to manufacture and sell licensed apparel and shoes for all 32 teams. The following year, Reebok negotiated another ten-year contract to become the exclusive outfitter for the NBA teams and the manufacturer of NBA merchandise. This agreement would have been lucrative for Reebok, and analysts predicted it would generate annual sales of \$120 million. The question remains, if Reebok secured these

coveted partnerships, why did Adidas sell the subsidiary over a decade later?

Following the acquisition, Adidas stated that the two brands would maintain “separate identities, marketing campaigns, distribution and sales forces.” Less than one year later, in an attempt to increase their presence in the U.S., Adidas renegotiated the NBA deal to replace Reebok as the official supplier. The newly brokered arrangement was an eleven-year partnership with increased opportunities for the brand, including exclusive manufacturing for the WNBA, and the right to include the Adidas stripes on warm-ups and practice gear. In their efforts to promote the Adidas brand, the company competed against their own subsidiary, Reebok, while the world’s largest sportswear manufacturer, Nike, thrived.

Where Adidas acquired a brand that was their competition, the synergy of Nike’s diversification strategy led to the purchase of the dress shoe company Cole Haan in 1988. This allowed Nike to enter a new industry without losing its identity as an athletic brand. In 2003, Nike acquired Converse for \$315 million. Under Nike’s leadership, the casual sneaker brand went from bankruptcy to nearly \$2 billion in sales, which

was possible in part by Nike’s recognition that the lifestyle aesthetic and canvas-and-rubber material were Converse’s specialty. Reebok attempted to master both the fashion and performance-driven sides of the shoe market, therefore the brand was ultimately forced to surrender to Adidas’ takeover.

After Reebok’s sacrifice to strengthen the Adidas brand, by transferring their NBA contracts, the once competitive company was no match for Nike. Adidas established popularity for their own brand through celebrity endorsements. In 2014, Pulitzer Prize-winning hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar signed on as an endorser, and Kanye West was enlisted to design his Yeezy sneakers two years later; the former was recruited to Nike in 2017.

In a half-hearted attempt at nostalgia and with the intent to revive sales, Reebok relaunched a limited version of their famed “Alien Stomper” sneaker in 2016, but the release backfired. Although the 426 (a nod to LV-426, the “Alien” franchise’s planet) available pairs sold out within an hour, the sneaker was only available for purchase in men’s sizing, alienating female consumers who had watched the character of Ellen Ripley wear them in the film. Reebok clarified that the shoe was miscategorized in men’s sizing and actually a unisex style, but the Twitterstorm was unappeased. Recently, Reebok ventured into the hip-hop world by releasing a collection with rapper Cardi B. However, her influence is incomparable to LeBron James of the Lakers, who signed a \$1 billion deal with Nike.

In June of 2019, NBA hall-of-famer O’Neal, who has an established history with Reebok, expressed his interest in purchasing the company, commenting that Adidas “diluted [the brand] so much to where it’s almost gone.” Not only did Adidas lose \$2.6 billion in their failed acquisition of Reebok, but the resulting damage inflicted to both brands propelled Nike to the front of the sneaker war, and Reebok’s potential for comeback remains uncertain.

Financing China: Reading Between the Lines

By Yoav Zolty

When one thinks of the China of the last decade, increasing sentiment depicts an image of a growing superpower, be it cultural or economic. With Chinese corporations generally growing and increasing their global market share of the world economy, it seems like China’s rise to the top is inevitable. The Chinese government has made it a priority to increase global economic partnership, whether it be through its new Belt and Road Initiative, physically connecting over 64 countries using Chinese capital as the link, or its new major trade deal with the EU, which promises significant increases to the already \$700 billion a year market between the two.

China was the only major economy that did not contract in 2020, posting a GDP growth rate of 2.1%, which is a major difference from the U.S.’s -3.5% GDP growth rate and even worse than the EU’s -6.8% GDP growth rate. The Chinese stock market (Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Hong Kong) has a total market capitalization of over \$14 trillion, and while not as big as the total American stock market, is still the

second-largest in the world. In 2019, China accounted for 41% of all total global economic growth.

With all this momentum, it may seem like a great idea to invest in Chinese corporations. Unfortunately, one reason for this lack of understanding is that, for a wide

Far too many investors don’t understand the risks associated with investing in a Chinese company.

range of industries, the Chinese government prohibits non-Chinese nationals from investing in them directly. To circumvent these laws, Chinese companies have utilized VIEs (Variable Interest Entities), which are, essentially, shell companies based offshore, that allow one to use financial instruments as a go-between to fund the actual Chinese companies. While it allows foreigners to access Chinese companies, it’s also a very grey area in both Chinese and American law. Further, while on paper, an investor owns a portion of that company, in reality, they actually own much less and have no voting rights.

There have been significant cases in which Chinese companies went through major decisions without consulting their foreign investors. In 2010, Alibaba decided to sell off its Alipay division without Yahoo’s consent (which owned up to 40% of Alibaba), leaving Yahoo with no legal recourse. Even

though Alibaba claims that Yahoo gave their consent on the deal Yahoo disagreed, releasing a statement stating that the deal was “... without the knowledge or approval of the Alibaba Group board of directors or shareholders.”

Aside from the legal difficulties in owning Chinese stock, an investor also has to consider China’s political climate. China is a one-party state being governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which dictates the country according to its whims. In fact, there is a legal mandate maintaining that any corporation with over 50 employees must have a party representative on

staff. The party has no issues with possibly tarnishing its image in the global market to maintain control. Recent examples include their complete takeover of Hong Kong, which entirely dismissed the Sino-British Joint Declaration, a legally binding document, and, in the process, destroying a beacon of political and economic freedom. Another example of China’s strong governing tactics is the prevention of Jack Ma’s Ant Group from going public (projected to be the biggest IPO in history) because of his comments directed at the CCP a few months earlier. Additionally, there are issues with China’s trading partners, border disputes, and a major trade war with the world’s largest economy.

Ultimately, while the Chinese economy will continue to grow, a smart investor should be wary about investing in a market where they aren’t legally allowed to fully own stock and where the lack of checks and balances allow the government to have an uncontested final say on all matters.

A Shift in the Power Lift

BY WILLIAM MOGYOROS

In an interview with BBC in 2011, Bill Gates said “the advancement of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don’t even notice it, so that it’s part of everyday life.” This idea has proven true now more than ever. We can think of countless examples such as Uber and Airbnb, where the emergence of technology and innovation has not only disrupted industries but has physically altered our perception of the world around us. A year of lockdowns and social distancing presented yet another example of this technological disruption, and this time, within the fitness industry.

Almost immediately following the initial spread of COVID, the CDC quickly deemed gyms as “hotspots”, due primarily to the disease’s ability to rapidly spread through respiratory droplets. The closing of gyms abruptly uprooted the daily exercise routines of many Americans, and gyms suffered tremendously. Per a report from the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association, “Heading into the pandemic, the U.S. had roughly 40,000 health clubs generating \$35 billion in annual revenue. At the end of 2020, the industry has lost \$20.4 billion in revenue, while about 6,400 clubs—17% of the total—closed permanently.” Additionally, nearly half of the three million jobs within the health industry were lost, and major corporate chains such as 24-Hour Fitness

and Gold’s Gym filed for bankruptcy.

It’s no secret that due to the pandemic, fitness has shifted from the gym to the living room, with companies like Peloton, Mirror, and Tonal leading the charge. As Peloton’s COO Tom Cortese put it in a recent interview with CNBC, the firm’s initial goal was to shift the fitness industry from commercial gym environments into the most convenient place on earth. Consumers, desperate to maintain their routine, shelled out lots of cash to purchase technologically advanced equipment to replicate their gym experience. Despite

upscale chain like Life Time may not have seen at-home fitness products as a threat whatsoever. Now, companies like Peloton offer live classes that directly replicate the niche fitness instruction that Life Time provides. The numbers justify this concern. A recent survey by consulting firm McKinsey & Co. found that “68% of those who started using an online fitness program during the pandemic said they planned to continue for the long term.”

The newfound convenience of at-home workouts leads to another benefit: people are

trainers and members’ eyes, beginners can truly feel comfortable starting their fitness journey. However, the success of online fitness can also be attributed to a seemingly opposing factor. With the introduction of live-streamed classes that connect consumers with others through online groups and message boards, online fitness platforms aim to replace in-person classes, just as Zoom has done for meetings and classes. In a certain sense, this may be the most alarming truth that gyms face because it takes away their primary service of in-person care. People have been able to replace the connection that they had with a real trainer with one that they’ve never met and probably never will. As one dedicated Peloton customer remarked in an interview with CNBC, “Peloton has such a personal connection for me, specifically Robin (referring to a Peloton trainer) when she is talking to that screen, she is talking to me.”

From their convenience to the balance between privacy and interconnectivity, the new online connected fitness industry poses a major threat to the future of traditional gyms even as restrictions ease and capacity limits increase. The question of whether gyms can adequately respond and return to their previous successes is yet to be seen. But as the world attempts to return to “normal,” the traditional fitness industry is undoubtedly facing a new normal.

“Many of our members have developed habits in a significant way, routines they never had before Covid.”

Jeff Zweifel, Chief Operating Officer of Life Time, Inc.

its high initial cost of \$1,995, Peloton’s recent fiscal fourth-quarter sales surged 172%, generating \$607.1 million in revenue and swinging an \$89.1 million profit, far exceeding expectations. This success has caused major concern across various venues, from chain gym companies to boutique spin gyms. Jeff Zweifel, chief operating officer of Life Time Inc., voiced this concern in a recent report by the WSJ where he stated, “many of our members have developed habits in a significant way, routines they never had before Covid.” Before the emergence of such sophisticated fitness machinery, an

working out more. A recent study conducted by Mindbody, an online wellness platform, showed that 56% of respondent consumers work out five or more times a week. Additionally, Peloton recently reported that “connected fitness subscribers are averaging 24.7 workouts per month, up from 12 a year earlier”. When respondents in the Mindbody study were questioned on the benefits of working out at home, there was a surprising recurring theme. Many attributed their increase in working out to the ability to try new things without fear of judgment. Removing themselves from experienced



There has been a shift during COVID-19 to at-home workouts.