

THE COMMENTATOR

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Wilf Students Approve New Vice President of Chesed Position in SOY Vote

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

This article was published online: Apr 7.

Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) will replace its public relations secretary position with a new role of vice president of chesed after 207 Wilf students voted to approve the move in an emergency amendment on Thursday, April 7.

Yeshiva Student Union President Elazar Abrahams (YC '22) emailed Wilf students about the vote the day prior. He explained that the constitutional amendments to make that change — which he linked to the email — were approved by two-thirds of the Amendments Committee and four-fifths of the General Assembly, so all that was left was a student vote.

Students had from 7 a.m. Thursday morning until 11 p.m. that night to vote. 238 students voted, with 208 voting “yea,” 30 voting “nay,” and five abstaining. The threshold to pass the vote was 80%.

The amendment is: “The SOY Vice President of Chesed must be a student in good standing and belong to a Judaic studies morning program, and can be from any class. The VP of Chesed will oversee chesed initiatives on the Wilf campus, both generating and organizing ideas, as well as being the point of contact for the student body when they have a chesed opportunity.

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President Berman addressing Glueck Beit Midrash during a program.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

36 Hours of Giving Raises \$2.6 Million, Falls Short of \$3 Million Goal

By CHAIM BOOK

This article was published online: Apr 8.

Yeshiva University's 36 Hours of Giving fundraising campaign — which began on April 5 at noon and ended on April 6 at midnight — raised \$2,621,322 from 582 donors, the fewest number of donors in the campaign's history. All donations were to be matched one-for-one by anonymous donors with the goal of raising \$3 million.

Donors had the option of directing their contributions to a number of different causes across the university's undergraduate and graduate programs, including Student Scholarships, Student Experiences, Athletics, Cardozo School of Law, Empowering Talented Faculty and Elevating Our Campus Experience.

The largest contributions with 349 donations totaling \$2,178,560.04 were directed to the general Annual Fund, an “unrestricted” fund in which donations “can be applied to wherever they're needed most.” The Athletics Department was

the fourth most profitable cause, raising \$33,338 from 27 donors.

In 2016, YU started a ‘Giving Day’ initiative as a “24-hour blitz,” raising over \$6 million in an attempt to grow the number of YU donors. In 2018, the YU Giving Day campaign was repeated on April 25 - April 26 with a telethon run by student volunteers and university employees as its main event. The campaign raised \$4,538,697 from 3,004 donors, exceeding the original \$3 million goal. In 2019, the Giving Day campaign was dedicated to raising funds for student scholarships. Over \$5.7 million was raised from 1156 donors, exceeding the campaign's \$5 million goal. Last year, the campaign was renamed “36 Hours of Giving” and surpassed its less ambitious goal of \$2 million, receiving money from 613 donors, fewer than the expected 800 donors.

This year's 36 Hours of Giving added momentum to “Rise Up: The Campaign for 613,” YU's recently announced campaign that will “fund scholarships, facilities and

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YU to Hold TEDx Event in Late April

By ARIEL KAHAN

The Sy Syms School of Business will host a TEDx talk on April 26 in the Koch Auditorium on Beren Campus, the first since 2017.

This year's event will feature six speakers comprised of two students, two faculty members and two members of “the broader Yeshiva University community,” according to Jonah Loskove (SSSB '22), the Student Life Committee senior co-chair and an organizer of the event. The theme of this year's conference is “Jewish Values in Action,” and applicants were expected to complete their proposal with this theme in mind. Although the list of speakers is not yet finalized, it is expected to be released within the next two weeks. Transportation will be provided by the university for students on Wilf Campus.

This year's conference is headed by Yeshiva College Student Council President Jonah Chill (YC '22), Sy Syms Student Council Beren President Abigail Lerman (SSSB '22) and Loskove.

TEDx is an event organized independently by groups, such as schools,

businesses or neighborhoods and licensed by TED, a non-profit organization that aims to spread innovative ideas to global audiences through videos that present a “great idea in 18 minutes or less.” TEDx events follow the same standards of regular TED conferences, which include the time limit for talks.

“This is a special opportunity. It does not happen every year. [Students] should jump on the opportunity to come.”

Student Life Committee Senior Co-Chair Jonah Loskove (SSSB '22)

Student speakers will be chosen from the application process shared with students on March 2, which required them to submit a 700-800 word written proposal or a two-three minute video proposal of their presentation that was due on March

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Film and Fame

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It's Time for YU To Make Aliyah

By SRULI FRUCHTER

In March 1928, a revolutionary moment hit New York City. The first liberal arts college for Jewish men was founded in the Lower East Side, shortly before it moved to its current location in Washington Heights. It was called Yeshiva College.

Less than 20 years later, that college would become a university, and in 1954, it would set another landmark in history: Yeshiva University would be home to two Jewish liberal arts colleges, one for men and one for women. Thus, Stern College for Women was born. The Sy Syms School of Business would be built in 1987, completing the trifecta of its undergraduate schools.

We may not consider this timeline to be particularly laudable, but the truth is that those milestones were unprecedented. It took vision and grit to create a Jewish university that could sit beneath the banner of *Torah Umadda*, and look at what we have today: a top-ranked university with unmatched Torah-learning opportunities and a thriving Jewish environment. What has already been created is extraordinary, and it does not need to stop there. YU has the opportunity to mark another historic stone in its journey, one that could reroute the course of the Jewish story.

Earlier this year, Dean Karen Bacon announced the university's Torat Tziyon Pilot Program, a new initiative that allows qualifying undergraduate and graduate students to take classes in Israel, just as if they were in YU. The program will begin this fall and is currently only available to Stern and Syms students, as well as for select graduate programs. This can be more than just a passion project — it can finally bring YU to Israel.

There is a wide gap in the market of Israeli higher education. While there is no shortage of Israeli colleges and universities, none can claim to be Torah institutions. YU set a

new standard for Jewish students in America: They need not sacrifice their secular studies or their Torah studies to attend college. The State of Israel was founded 74 years ago, and an institution parallel to Yeshiva University has yet to find a home there. If we see the importance of YU here, why can't we see it there?

Torat Tziyon is giving YU the chance to revolutionize the future of the Jewish state... It is time for the flagship Jewish university to make its way to Israel.

Over 27,000 Jews made *aliyah* in 2021, 4,000 of whom were from the United States. More than half (55%) of all immigrants were under 35, reflecting a very young pool. These numbers only include Jews who formally made *aliyah*, not the many who live and work in Israel without citizenship. Beyond those already in Israel, there are others who are making their way there, whether as post-gap year students, post-college students or young couples. Think about what a YU in Israel could offer them.

The Torat Tziyon program is replicating what makes YU such a novelty: high-level courses, serious Torah study and a Jewish environment. The first batch of students will be small, likely around 40 undergraduates split evenly between Beren and Wilf, but being based in Jerusalem will make that community even larger. Torat Tziyon is doing something extraordinary.

On April 1, 1925, Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, the chief rabbi of Israel, delivered a historic speech at the inauguration of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He declared that the day's ceremony was "on a reduced scale — the living fulfillment

of the holy vision of this prophecy," referring to Isaiah 60:4-5, which speaks of the Jewish People's redemption. Rav Kook's eloquent words and formulation told the crowd of thousands what they likely felt: They were in messianic times. Despite that high praise, Rav Kook noted that Hebrew University could not be the end goal.

"It must be understood that the Hebrew University by itself cannot fulfill all the educational requirements necessary for the success of our national life," he emphatically proclaimed. "We must realize that, first and foremost, it is the great Torah *yeshivot*, those that now exist and those to be constructed that are worthy of the name ... that uphold the spirit of the nation and provide for its security."

What would Rav Kook say if he saw Yeshiva University today?

We need not destroy YU in America to build YU in Israel. (Though I concede that, as a die-hard Zionist, I would be happy for us all to move together.) Setting aside the language barriers, Jews already face an uphill battle in making *aliyah*. The pay is cut, the culture is different and the community is new. Throw in the complicated academic and professional factors and the trek can seem hopeless for most. If we had a Yeshiva University in Israel, imagine what it could offer. Imagine the opportunities it could provide, the *aliyot* it could inspire.

The Torat Tziyon program is the seedling of a great tree that is growing, a vision of tomorrow never before seen in Jewish History. There is so clearly a need for an Israeli institution that brings together Torah and *madda*, and we have a tried-and-tested model that works. Torat Tziyon is giving YU the chance to revolutionize the future of the Jewish state. We should seize the moment. It is time for the flagship Jewish university to make its way to Israel.

THE COMMENTATOR

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 87 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

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

Read more at yucommentator.org



1 Spring is Springing
I hope everyone's prepared for exposed calves in the beis



2 HackYU is Back
I'll invest my caf money in whichever team can figure out a way to get me out of weekly testing



3 OpenAI Launches DALL-E 2
Stay tuned for the AI generated memes



4 YCDS Hits a Grand Slam with 'Oldtimers Game'
Our very own Daniel Melool killed it in his 3-piece



5 Elon Musk Buys 9% Stake in Twitter
Expect your feed to reflect this with a 9% increase in schtickposting



6 Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson Confirmed to Supreme Court
YU Department of Biology acknowledges bittersweet departure of beloved professor



7 Democracy Works Sometimes
Wilf student body passes 80% vote threshold to amend constitution

CORRECTION: Rabbi Blau Profile

The profile on Rabbi Yosef Blau from last issue, No. 10 — "Overseeing Generations of Growth: Rabbi Yosef Blau's Historic Career at YU" — was updated online on March 28 to correct several errors regarding his professional career. The article said that Rabbi Blau never left YU, but it was since corrected to note that he spent 12 years, from 1965-1977, teaching and heading various schools around the U.S., including Maimonides School, Skokie Yeshiva and JEC. Additionally, the article corrected that Rabbi Blau served as president of the Religious Zionists of America, not the Rabbinical Council of America. Other minor errors — including details about his family and his work in developing countries — were also amended.

Letter to the Editor

Thank You Rabbi Blau

To the Editor:

Kudos on the wonderful tribute to my teacher and mentor, Rabbi Yosef Blau; his contribution to the religious and emotional growth of generations of YU students; and his courageous contributions to making our Orthodox community more sensitive and committed to confronting its flaws and working to correct them.

A small but important correction is, however, in order. The author writes that Rabbi Blau arrived at MTA in 1951 and "has been in YU ever since" assuming the role of mashgiach ruchani in 1977 (the year I entered MTA).

In fact, during the mid-1960s through 1977, Rabbi Blau served as assistant principal at the Maimonides School in Brookline, MA, going on to later serve as principal of the Skokie Yeshiva High School in Chicago, IL, followed by his tenure as principal at JEC in Elizabeth, NJ.

My *chevra* at Yeshiva College and YU, who later went on to *semikha*, graduate study and *kollel* learning at YU in the late-1970s and 1980s were very close to Rabbi Blau during those formative years (and beyond). (I was at YU from 1977 through 1989 and then worked part-time at YU in the early years of the *Torah Umadda* project in the early 1990s.) . We always felt that the fact that he did not remain at YU, in "the ivory tower" without interruption, but had gone out to various communities to work in the trenches was a key element in Rabbi Blau's tremendous impact and success as a guide and mentor. His real-world experiences out of the NY community and being out of the Yeshiva bubble for more than a decade and a half, gave him great insight, empathy, wisdom and understanding of so much of the richness and complexity of American Jewry in general and the Modern-Orthodox community in particular. He is one of the treasures of our community who continues to be a polestar for so many of us in *chinuch*, the rabbinate, lay leadership and beyond.

With Torah blessings,
Nathaniel Helfgot
MTA, '81, YC, '85, RIETS, '89, AZ '89

7 UP by Raphael Alcabes DOWN

Will Smith Wins Best Actor for King Richard

I heard it slaps

Wilf Students Attacked

Guess they didn't hear about Torat Chesed

COVID Testing Continues

The one thing that can make Monday even worse than it usually is

School on Wednesday

Touro would NEVER

Commentator Not Being Twitter Verified

We must #RiseUp to right this wrong

One More Commie Issue Remaining

This is so upsetting that I want to throw away the remaining issues

Chametz

Leave thy leavened bread in the trash!

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



Honors Program Scholarships No Longer Tiered

By CHAIM BOOK

YU has changed the financial structure of the merit-based scholarships for its honors programs so that all accepted applicants will be awarded the same fixed annual sum — \$25,000 for early decision and \$20,000 for regular decision.

Previously, the scholarships for the honors program were tiered. Qualified students were evaluated and could be awarded either \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$25,000 annually.

When asked for the reason of the change, Director of Admissions Marc Zharnest told The Commentator that the merit-based scholarships are “periodically reviewed and

upgraded to keep them in sync with the cost of education.” The cost of tuition for the 2021-22 academic year is \$47,500, including undergraduate fees.

and Entrepreneurial Leadership Program at the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). The S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program reduced its maximum scholarship award

changed, Zharnest hopes the new financial structure will raise the stakes of the admission process. “Our honors programs have always been very competitive,” he told The Commentator. “We anticipate that this change will make them even more highly sought after by qualified applicants.” Honors students are required to participate in select courses and complete a senior thesis.

The YU Honors Program was established in 1999 and is designed to “recognize and cultivate the academic achievements of outstanding students,” Zharnest shared. According to figures provided to The Commentator, there are approximately 520 honors students in YU, broken down to be about 200 in YC, 200 in SCW and 120 in SSSB.

“We anticipate that this change will make them even more highly sought after by qualified applicants.”

Director of Admissions Marc Zharnest

Currently, the honors programs are divided between the three undergraduate schools: Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program at Yeshiva College (YC), S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program at Stern College for Women (SCW) and Business Honors

from \$36,600 — covering full tuition — to \$30,000 in 2014, The YU Observer reported. It is unclear when that maximum number was then reduced to \$25,000.

Although the admission criteria for acceptance to the honors programs has not

36 HOURS OF GIVING

Continued from Front Page

faculty to help move Yeshiva University into its next great era.” Rise Up began in 2018, though it was not announced until this year. It is aiming to raise a total of \$613 million within the next five years, \$250 million of which was already raised at the time of announcement.

Director of Annual Giving Kurt Deschermeier told The Commentator that the Rise Up campaign has “fueled increased participation and giving since its announcement.” According to its website, the Rise Up campaign has already raised over \$256 million.

The promotion of this year’s 36 Hours of Giving was less than in past years. The campaign was announced via isolated posts on social media without emails being sent

out to students. There was also no specific branding on campus, and last year’s theme — “Deeply rooted, forward focused” — was recycled. Additionally, unlike past years, no special programs or events were associated with the campaign.

so. YU did, however, have a sign-up form for student ambassadors to help spread the word about the campaign, though it was not actively promoted to students. Ambassadors were provided with sample texts and social media posts to use, and they were rewarded

Director of Annual Giving Kurt Deschermeier told The Commentator that the Rise Up campaign has “fueled increased participation and giving since its announcement.”

In an email to The Commentator, Deschermeier thanked student volunteers and *rebbeim* for their help in “outreach to friends and family,” though he did not mention any organized efforts by YU to do

for their efforts with a coffee tumbler “to help you rise up in the morning.”

However, many students did not even realize that a campaign was taking place. “I did not hear about this campaign at all,”

said Yitzchak Tollinsky (YC ‘23). Another student added, “I got some email from my UTS rabbi but it didn’t say anything more than ‘post on your social media please.’”

The campaign had fewer donors than ever before, continuing a trend noticed in the past. When asked if disappointed with the results, Deschermeier responded that the campaign “surpassed 2021’s 36 Hours of Giving by more than \$500,000, and exceeded our expectations heading into the event.” He added, “We are never surprised, but always humbled, by the generosity and passion of the YU community. Thank you to all who took part!”

SOY CHESED POSITION

Continued from Front Page

He will also handle PR for SOY.”

VP of chesed is a position that exists on Beren Campus as part of the Torah Activities Council (TAC), but it does not exist on Wilf. Part of the role of this newly elected position is to be the point person for all chesed activities, as well as the contact for male undergraduate students with chesed initiative ideas. Additionally, the VP of Chesed will also be responsible for PR for SOY.

“We’re excited to have someone on the SOY student council fully dedicated to enabling chesed opportunities and emphasizing its importance,” said SOY President Yoni Laub (YC ‘22). “It’s a true testament to one of our *yeshiva’s* core Torah values — Torat Chesed.”

The amendment was inspired by the YU Ukrainian refugee relief mission in Vienna. “Our mission aiding Ukrainian refugees in Vienna over Purim has all student leaders

Chesed position will allow us to streamline all chesed initiatives through one channel.”

Vice Provost of Values and Leadership and Sacks-Herenstein Center Director Erica

“We’re excited to have someone on the SOY student council fully dedicated to enabling chesed opportunities and emphasizing its importance.”

Student Organization of Yeshiva President Yoni Laub (YC ‘22)

thinking about how we can increase chesed opportunities at Yeshiva University,” the email stated. “Creating a dedicated VP of

Brown, who played a major role in taking students to Vienna, was a big part of the inspiration for this new position. “On our trip

to Vienna, Dr. Erica Brown discussed what she called “the feminization of chesed” — this growing sentiment that chesed is something only for women and that men should be spending all their time in *beit midrash*,” shared Abrahams. “It got me thinking about what we can do to combat that, and it starts with making this dedicated student council position.”

“I’m delighted that SOY will now have a VP of Chesed,” shared Brown. “It’s long overdue since it is one of Judaism’s foundational values and central to the ethos of the religious persona. It is the glue that creates and sustains community.”

Sruli Fruchter contributed to this story.

TEDX EVENT

Continued from Front Page

11. Applicants were also required to explain their relevant background to the topic that they proposed to speak about.

According to Loskove, the impetus behind this effort was to give students who have not had normal events because of COVID-19 and experienced an atypical campus experience a cool event to enjoy. It took over six months for YU to get a TED license and start preparing.

“This is a special opportunity. It does not happen every year. [Students] should jump on the opportunity to come,” Loskove said.

Michael Strauss, associate dean of Sy Syms School of Business and the faculty advisor behind the event, is just as excited. “TEDx Yeshiva University will provide a unique opportunity for YU students, faculty, alumni, and members of the extended YU family to share their unique and innovative ideas with the student body, professors, administration, and alumni on a very exciting

topic, Jewish Values in Action,” he said. “We are all looking forward to this very unique event.”



TEDxYeshiva flyer

YU Awarding Students \$3,600 for Summer Research Scholarship Fund

By **SAMMY INTRATOR**

Yeshiva University will be offering summer research funding for a small number of student positions, YU announced in an email sent to the student body on Monday, March 21. Students must be nominated in order to be eligible for the research funds, either by themselves or by faculty members actively engaged in research projects.

“Summer research is an invaluable tool for students to discover what most interests them, where they are most talented, and where they can contribute the most.”

Professor Edward Berliner

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Selma Botman and the rest of the selection committee are looking to select at most 10 students ideally choosing one student from each discipline taught at YU. The disciplines include the sciences, humanities, social sciences and Judaic studies, each with one student from Yeshiva College (YC) and one from Stern College for Women (SCW). There will also be a business discipline in which two Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) students — one from Wilf and one from Beren — will take part.

The stipend awarded to the chosen students will be \$3,600 for a two-month research opportunity. For the possibility of shorter research projects, the stipend will be prorated. In total, the university will be

allocating \$36,000 to students' research this summer. The money comes from the budget of the provost's office.

“The YU Administration wants to provide opportunities for undergraduate research to those students who can not or have not been able to obtain external positions,” said Dean of Science Management and Clinical Professor of Physics Edward Berliner, who is on the selection committee. “Summer

research is an invaluable tool for students to discover what most interests them, where they are most talented, and where they can contribute the most. In addition, it gives them an opportunity to interact with scholar practitioners who can help provide guidance and network contact in the years to come.”

Faculty members who nominate students will need to draft a short, two-paragraph summation of the research and the student's opportunity for growth from said research.

If students self-nominate, they must submit a one-page summary of their proposed research with details including how long their research term will be, what their role will be in the research and what materials they will need. Such students will also need their research summary to be signed by a

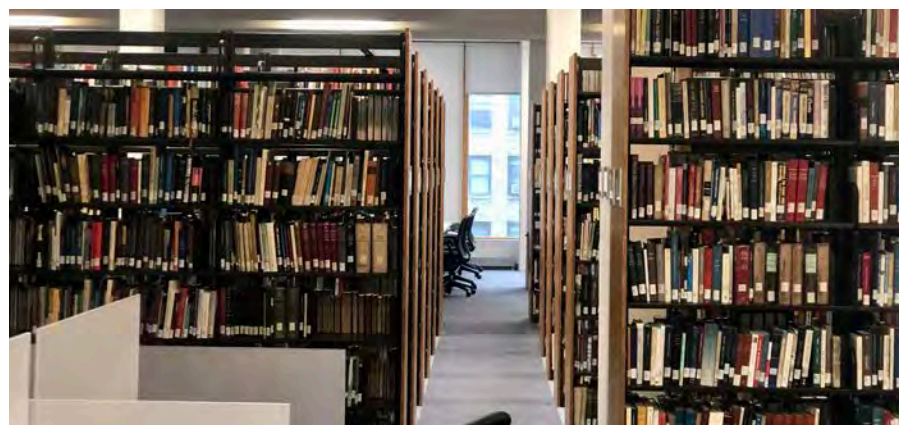
faculty member agreeing to serve as the student's mentor over their research. An unofficial transcript must also be submitted to the committee.

Nominations are due by April 6. The March email stated that the committee will meet in mid-April to confirm and conclude their selections and will be announcing the results to students and faculty soon after.

According to Berliner, the committee will be looking for students who have the talent, proficiency and aptitude to construct and complete a research initiative with the help and counsel of a faculty member over a two-month maximum period. The committee will decide on these traits of a candidate in addition to factors including GPA, a letter of recommendation from the mentor and the quality of a proposed research project.

The summer research scholarship fund

has been long-standing, starting in 2009, and is making its return since being discontinued from the onset of COVID. This returning initiative will be structured slightly differently than its pre-COVID predecessor. Students are no longer being required to continue their research for eight weeks. Additionally, the committee will consider two students from the same discipline under certain circumstances, such as unsatisfactory candidates or a lack of candidates nominated from a discipline. Furthermore, the committee is allowing faculty members to nominate two students and have the students potentially split the stipend under the condition that each student works a month instead of one student working both months.



THE COMMENTATOR

Nominations for the program are due April 6.

YU Observer Announces Male Editor in Chief for First Time in Paper's History

By **SHLOMIT EBBIN**

This article was published online: March 27.

The YU Observer will have its first male editor in chief next year, it announced via social media on Sunday, March 27. The editor in chief and managing editor will be Benjamin Gottesman (YC '23) and Aaron “Yitzy” Shaykevich (YC '24), respectively.

The Observer was founded in 1958 — four years after the establishment of Stern College for Women (SCW) — as SCW's sole student newspaper. Since 1935, The Commentator was Yeshiva College's (YC) sole newspaper, but over time, both papers began to serve the larger YU community. Both papers are independent student newspapers of YU.

On Nov. 22, 1998, The Observer was renamed The Yeshiva University Observer and began to include writers from YU's Wilf Campus, according to the Yeshiva Academic Institutional Repository (YAIR). Until now, there was never a male editor in chief or managing editor.

The application for editor in chief and managing editor of The YU Observer was open to all Observer staff members. The Observer did not release how many students applied for these positions. “All of our staff were given an equal playing field to apply for this position,” said YU Observer Editor-in-Chief Shoshanah Marcus (SCW '22). “We reviewed all the applicants and chose, not based on the fact that the position has always been held by women, but rather regarding their ability as a potential editor-in-chief

and managing editor.”

Gottesman is currently one of three editors for the arts and culture section of The Observer, which is a position he has maintained since his first semester on campus in Fall 2020.

“As a woman, I would not want my gender to be a hindrance to my extracurricular, academic, or professional success; so too it would be morally irresponsible to apply a double standard to qualified male candidates.”

YU Observer Editor-in-Chief Shoshanah Marcus

“We're really excited to hit the ground running next semester,” Gottesman told The Commentator. “We're going to do our best to make our paper a vehicle for *Ratzon HaShem* and engage the entire YU community.”

Shaykevich has been an Observer editor for the opinions section since September 2021 and has been writing for the Observer since July 2021. When asked if Shaykevich, having two years left at YU, will matriculate to being editor in chief the following year, Marcus said that it would be Gottesman's decision. “Yitzy has shown tremendous talent and leadership skills this past year, and it is my hope that he is being set up to be the most successful in whatever capacity is right for him and the paper,” she said.

“I applied for this position with the hopes of being selected based on my qualifications, commitment, and ideas,” shared Shaykevich. “I am incredibly thankful that Shoshanah

and Dani looked beyond my being male to see my passion for the YU Observer.”

The current editor in chief and managing editor of The Observer are Marcus and Danielle Lane (SCW '22), respectively. “Dani and I hope that we are setting a precedent

that the leadership of the YU Observer will continuously appreciate the past but be able to have the vision to forge a new path into the future,” said Marcus.

In May 2018, The Commentator announced that Shoshy Ciment (SCW '19) would be its managing editor for Volume 84, the first woman to hold that position since the paper's founding, and two years later in May 2020, Elisheva Kohn (SCW '21) became the second student to lead in that role. The Commentator has not yet had a female editor in chief.

“We at the YU Observer strive to provide the highest quality content to our readers, which requires having the most capable leader,” shared Marcus in a statement to The Commentator. “As a woman, I would not want my gender to be a hindrance to my extracurricular, academic, or professional success; so too it would be morally

irresponsible to apply a double standard to qualified male candidates.”

Gottesman expressed his desire to continue to give a voice to both Beren and Wilf students. “The job of the Editor in Chief is to make sure that the best possible content is being disseminated and ensuring that both women and men on campus have a forum in which they are represented and highlighted fairly,” said Gottesman. “I am committed to this objective just as much as my predecessors and am confident in our team's ability to execute this imperative.”

“We picked candidates who honor and respect the long standing history of the YU Observer and seek to elevate female voices,” added Marcus. “My hope is that Benjy and Yitzy continue to spark much-needed conversations and change as well as continue to highlight the many different voices in the YU community.”



THE COMMENTATOR

The YU Observer's latest issue on Wilf Campus

Weissberg Commons to be Renovated with \$1 Million Grant

By AVIGAIL GREENBERG

This article was published online: Apr 7.

Yeshiva University will renovate Wilf Campus's Weissberg Commons with a \$1 million federal grant secured by Senate

"I am delighted to deliver this federal funding to assist in the renovation of the Weissberg Commons and help further the university's mission as an educational institution and strong community partner."

Congressman Adriano Espaillat

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13), it announced on Facebook.

In the announcement, the university stated that the renovations would turn Weissberg Commons into a center for academic programming and community events. The facility will continue to be used and rented out by the wider community for events, Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer Randy Apfelbaum shared. Renovations will also ensure the space is useful for future university events by including "new lighting,

flooring, wall finishes and a built-in sound and video projection system." Renovations will likely begin in the summer of 2023.

Weissberg Commons is located in Belfer Hall and is adjacent to the building's security desk in its lobby. Last year, the space was transformed into a COVID-19 vaccination site for all eligible New Yorkers, and later

used as part of YU's COVID Monitoring Program for Wilf students. It is also used to host the annual Seforim Sale, as it did this past February.

However, the space is due for an update. It "has not been renovated in many years and is used often for special events and lectures. The acoustics are poor and there is no built-in audio or video," noted Apfelbaum.

According to his deputy chief of staff and director of communications, since Espaillat is a member of the House Appropriations Committee, he has the ability to "request local projects in his congressional district

to receive direct federal funding through the Appropriations process in upcoming annual federal spending bills." Espaillat was glad to be able to secure Community Project Funding to support YU in their work for students, university faculty and the residents of NY-13. He believes that this project will "foster economic development, making a real difference in the lives of so many in our community."

"Yeshiva University is an epicenter of education in the Jewish community, both in the United States and around the world," said

Espaillat. "I am delighted to deliver this federal funding to assist in the renovation of the Weissberg Commons and help further the university's mission as an educational institution and strong community partner."

The funds were part of the Fiscal Year 2022 federal spending bill.

As of publishing, Senator Schumer's office did not respond to The Commentator's requests for comment.

Jonathan Levin contributed to this story.



Belfer Hall's Weissberg Commons

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

YU Restores Policy Allowing Guests on Campus

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

YU will restore its policy allowing guests onto Beren or Wilf campuses beginning Thursday, April 7, Assistant Dean of Students Sara Asher emailed on April 5.

Guests were prohibited in the dormitory and academic buildings since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. The new policy — which outlined the rules for both daytime and overnight guests — states that guests must be fully vaccinated and the student host must receive prior approval by the university.

The visiting policy maintained that YU "reserves the right to remove or restrict any visitor at any time and for any (or no) reason as it may deem necessary or desirable." Additionally, the person will be asked to leave if they are coughing or exhibit any sign of illness.

"We commend you all for your patience and understanding as we worked towards this policy change this semester," said Asher

in her email. "Please read carefully, the details are important! Your adherence to the guidelines will ensure a better guest clearance experience."

"It's always fun to show friends outside of Stern what dorming here looks like."

Meira Axelrod (SCW '22)

Attached to Asher's email was a four-page document outlining the specific requirements for guests, breaking it down between daytime and nighttime/Shabbat visitors.

For daytime visitors, the student host is only allowed to have a maximum of two visitors between the hours of 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. Visitors coming to campus for more than three days must be up to date on their COVID-19 booster vaccinations.

For overnight and Shabbat visitors, the student host cannot have more than one

guest at a time and the guest is not permitted to stay more than three nights. The guest must be between the ages of 16-25 "and otherwise deemed suitable," fully vaccinated including a booster if eligible and have submitted a negative COVID test at most 72 hours prior.

Visitors are permitted to go to the host's residence hall, *minyanim*, the *batei midrash*, the dining halls and the Sherk Shul. However, visitors are not permitted to use the campus shuttles, the libraries or the athletic facilities. Additionally, guests are not allowed to attend university events unless those events are open to the public. Visitors must always be accompanied by their student host.

The Commentator reached out to several resident advisors (RA) from Beren and Wilf campuses, all of whom declined to comment, citing instruction from the Office of University Housing and Residence Life. RAs were not consulted on the policy nor was it explained to them beforehand; however, the housing department will host a meeting with

the RAs to explain it to them on Wednesday, April 6.

The email sent to RAs about this policy did not differentiate between the roles of RAs on the Beren and Wilf campuses, which contradicted certain points in Asher's email. The email stated that for overnight and Shabbat visitors "the student host must receive prior approval from their RA and University Housing at least 48 hours prior to the visit" and "the guest form must be approved by their RA." These statements are only true for Wilf Campus. Beren students should only be contacting Housing prior to the visit, and should request a signature on the approved form from the RA on duty when the visitor arrives.

Even with these difficulties, other students are excited about the policy. "It's always fun to show friends outside of Stern what dorming here looks like," said Meira Axelrod (SCW '22).

YC, SSSB Students Require Permission From Deans to Use Zoom for Class

By RIKKI KOLODNY

Students in Yeshiva College (YC) and Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) must receive special permission to use Zoom for in-person classes. The policy, announced in late February, originally applied to Stern College for Women (SCW) students but was retracted due to sustainability issues.

The initial email was sent to students from their respective school dean between Feb. 21-23. It stated that to use Zoom instead of attending class in person, students must either submit a positive COVID-19 test, a medical note from a physician or email their school dean — Michael Strauss

for SSSB, Fred Sugarman for YC and Ethel Orlian for SCW.

Orlian emailed SCW students about the policy on Feb. 23, but five days later, the policy was retracted.

Orlian stated that the "Zoom Dean" system was "impossible to maintain" and that SCW would return to the original policy for attending class by Zoom. This policy stated that a student who tested positive for COVID-19 or has a COVID-19 related issue must contact the Student COVID Line through email. From there, the relevant faculty would be directly informed of students who need to be accommodated. For all other emergencies, medical or otherwise, students must directly reach out to their instructors

who will decide how to accommodate each student based on their specific needs.

"[This policy] creates a pre-covid environment and it is helpful for students with COVID."

Rivka Margalit (SSSB '23)

SSSB and YC students are still following the new policy.

These changes came as the university transitioned back to in-person classes

following the end of Fall 2021 moving over to Zoom amidst the Omicron outbreak.

Some students were happy with the new Zoom policy. "I like this new policy," said Rivka Margalit (SSSB '23) "it creates a pre-covid environment and it is helpful for students with COVID because they don't miss class."

Others felt that allowing Zoom-usage had its pitfalls. "Zoom classes are only helpful if you are on Zoom," said Sara Nava Weiss (SCW '24). "If you're in the classroom, a lot of times it takes the professor a while to figure out how to set it up and it sets the class behind."

‘There’s Nothing Like It’: Rabbanit Margot Botwinick Makes The Case for YU in Israel

By RIVKA BENNUN

Editor’s Note: This interview was edited for clarity and length with the approval of Rabbanit Botwinick.

This past December, YU announced the launch of its Torat Tziyon Pilot Program, which, starting this upcoming fall, will allow students to study abroad in Israel. The program is set to offer a range of courses, a *beit midrash* program for both campuses and a YU community in Israel. I had the opportunity to speak to Rabbanit Margot Botwinick, who, together with her husband Rabbi Josh Botwinick, will be running the program that will be based on the YU Israel campus in Jerusalem. We sat down to discuss more about the program, what the draw is and what this means for YU.

Rivka Bennun: Thank you for sitting down to speak with me. Can you tell me a little bit about the nature of the program and what it is going to look like structurally and logistically?

Margot Botwinick: Yes! Situated in YU’s Jerusalem campus, there will be learning in the morning from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. for the women, and from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. for the men. For the men, there’s the Gruss *rebbeim* (Rav Bednarsh and Rabbi Eisenstein) and my husband teaching shiur; for the women, Rabbanit Shani Taragin is the *rosh beit midrash* and there are class options with myself and other *rebbeim* and educators around Israel. There are afternoon secular classes, with renowned professors around Israel, and then night *seder*. For example, they just confirmed Gil Troy will be teaching a Zionism/History class, which will be incredible. On Shabbat, the men and women will daven together with Gruss. The graduate students will be part of the morning *beit midrash* learning too, which is a new concept for YU graduate programs.

RB: So it’s going to be a similar structure as to what the men now have up-town? Because that structure does not exist for the women at Stern.

MB: Exactly. With Rabbanit Shani as *rosh beit midrash*, they are able implementing a new kind of vision. She structured the classes in a way that there is learning for the women from 9-12. But that’s only one option — if you don’t want that, or you’re not a *beit midrash*-type learner, there’s also the regular Judaics classes where people can fulfill their Judaic studies requirements too.

RB: So the idea is that no matter what form of learning you’re doing, everyone across the board is learning in the mornings.

MB: You’re in the *beit midrash*, and some of the classes might even have a *beit midrash* element. There are also graduate students who are doing it, so the *beit midrash* is full, similar to how GPATS works here. By the way, this is another great article. Forget YU Israel — write about how the 9-12 *beit midrash* learning structure can be brought to the Beren Campus, too! Many before me have noted that women generally have to wait until they are post-graduate to have a full morning learning program. Maybe if this takes off, they’ll consider offering a similar structure for undergraduates in Midtown, too.

RB: What do you think this means for YU on a broader scale? Do you think the future of YU is in Israel?

MB: I’ll say this. It used to be that when people have an amazing experience in their seminary/yeshiva, and they decide they want to live in Israel, they’re told to go to America for college and then make *aliyah*. That’s often a backward and impractical plan — you get settled in America, you make connections there, you don’t improve your Hebrew, you don’t learn the lay of the land, and you’re not set up for success in Israel. Yet, somehow, that was the only option. We’ve been at IDC [Herzliya] for the past five years, and what we’re seeing is that that’s no longer the only option. For the first time, students are not listening to their teachers’ urges to go to YU or other colleges in America, they’re just choosing Israel. They’re not choosing Maryland over YU, or Barnard over Stern, they’re choosing Israel over America. When

Shabbat life, community feel and religious life at IDC and other Israeli college campuses are as inspiring as it gets, and are a crucial landing space for young olim. But a YU Israel would offer a structure, environment and Torah opportunities that are new to the Israel college scene, and it would serve such a clear need.

My husband and I went to YU and Stern, and thank God we eventually made it back to Israel. But my friends are all in America, my connections are in America, and we didn’t do the army which further distances us from mainstream Israeli society. It’s harder to make an impact in Israel until you become more Israeli and understand the lay of the land. Doing college in Israel and joining Israeli society at that stage of life is a huge advantage that we didn’t have.

RB: Right, because here there is a whole system of Torah learning and classes.

“I think people don’t realize that when you’re here, the whole world feels like America. But the moment you get to Israel you realize there is a whole world there.”

Rabbanit Margot Botwinick

we started with OU-JLIC at IDC 5 years ago, there were only 30 or so yeshiva day school students; now there are hundreds. In fact, Nefesh B’Nefesh recently reported that for the first time, 18-34-year-olds are now the highest demographic that is making *aliyah*. It’s no longer young couples or retirees, it’s college students, who are going to IDC, Bar Ilan, Hebrew U, Tel Aviv, Technion, etc. Now here’s the critical question — how many of those hundreds of yeshiva day school graduates making *aliyah* would have chosen YU Israel, if it existed? I’m not exaggerating, there are at least 50 students in IDC alone right now who have told us they would be in YU in Israel now if it was an option. The

MB: Yeah, there’s such an obvious need for it there. I think people don’t realize that when you’re here, the whole world feels like America. But the moment you get to Israel you realize there is a whole world there. YU knows this and is rising up to the occasion. There’s nothing like it there right now.

RB: When I first heard about the program, the idea that I got was that students who would otherwise go to YU are making aliyah, so if we have YU in Israel we will attract that group.

MB: That’s exactly it. People are choosing places in Israel, and the religious

environment and Torah learning opportunities are amazing, but YU is offering something unique. So the idea was, let’s build a YU in Israel. It’ll look a little different — we might have more of an emphasis on Hebrew classes to help people integrate into Israeli society — but YU recognizes it has a responsibility to do this. They’re watching yeshiva day school students making *aliyah* at unprecedented rates, and have no choice but to attend “secular colleges” in Israel.

RB: It almost feels like it’s about time YU did something like this.

MB: My group chat with Shani Taragin and Stephanie Strauss (executive director of YU in Israel) and my husband is called “ShehechianYU.” That’s really how it feels.

RBL Something I was wondering is, how was news of this pilot program received by the roshei yeshiva and Torah educators of YU?

MB: Of course, well received! The *roshei yeshiva* Josh has spoken to are very excited and supportive. Rabbanit Shani has been in touch with Rav Schachter and others throughout the process. It might be that this is launching this year, but it’s been a conversation for decades. Many have suggested having a rotation where they can each spend a year teaching on the Israel campus. Apparently, this has come up before, and the *roshei yeshiva* are excited to be a part of it.

RBL From the perspective of the administration, do they view this as a mere addition to YU’s overall programming or do they see this going further?

MB: I think for now, the idea is to just get it started — we’re calling it a pilot program because we are focused on getting it launched. It’s very clear that there are long-term goals, but how long that should take, how it should happen — that’s a big question.



Rabbanit Margot Botwinick

OHR TORAH STONE

The Need for Values: Sacks-Herenstein Center Launches Inaugural Event With Bret Stephens

By ARIEL KAHAN

It was 8:05 a.m. on Sunday, April 3. I overheard a security guard tell a high school student from Yeshiva University High School for Boys, "Don't put your bag in the hallway — there's an event today."

This piqued my interest, and I walked into Lampport Auditorium, where many people were already working hard in preparation for the inaugural event for the Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership. To begin preparations, Dr. Erica Brown, the director of the Sacks-Herenstein Center, and her team, had gone to Lampport by 8 a.m., two hours before the event.

From the moment I walked into the auditorium, it was obvious that this was not a standard event or the launch of a standard new initiative. It would mark the beginning of something special. The birth of a center that would greatly impact YU with amazing programming and content for years to come. Although she was working feverishly, Brown gave me a few minutes of her precious time to answer questions about the event and the new center.

Needless to say, the planning for the event did not begin at 8 a.m. on April 3. According to Brown, preparations for the event lasted for over three months. The event was put together by Brown, Senior Program Director for The Leadership Scholars program Aliza Abrams Konig and YU's Office of Events.

The event team was interested in planning an event based on what the Herenstein family wanted, as they were dedicating the center as their brainchild. True to the mission of the new center, the Herensteins did

not want a standard dinner — they wanted people to immerse themselves in a morning of study. After all, that's what Rabbi Sacks, who the new center is named after, would have wanted, I was told.

The Herensteins grew close to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks after he spent a Shabbat at their home when he was a scholar-in-residence and maintained a close relationship with him for the rest of his life. Much of the program's aim was to paint a picture of Rabbi Sacks and his legacy, and included a video presentation by his daughter and a speech by his brother, who now resides in Israel.

Brown, a former colleague of Bret Stephens, personally reached out to invite him to join the event and contribute to the discussion, demonstrating Brown's and the center's ability to bring in scholars and ideas that can have a tremendous impact on the YU community.

Both Brown and Stephens agreed that the program would go better as a relatively unscripted conversation. It was essential to Brown that, in addition to the room and externalities looking nice, the event itself needed to have a lot of content. After all, that is one of the main prerogatives of the Sacks-Herenstein Center—to deliver incredible intellectual depth and content to YU, Brown shared.

Luckily, Stephens shared the same goal. When asked what he hoped to get out of the program, Stephens responded that he hoped to have "a great conversation that covered a wide range of issues that matter to this community as a university and as a Jewish community and an American one."

Indeed, there was a lot of content and relevant issues covered. The program began with opening remarks from Dr. Brown and then transitioned into a video with Gila

Sacks, the daughter of Rabbi Sacks, who discussed her father's Pesach Seder and thoughts on the importance of freedom.

She was then followed by Alan Sacks, the brother of Rabbi Sacks, who was introduced by Dr. Shira Weiss, the assistant director of the center. Sacks spoke about many of the important lessons he learned from his brother, especially about leading by example. Sacks stated that his brother would be incredibly proud to see the development of the Sacks-Herenstein Center and would delight in its mission.

Later that morning, President Ari Berman emphasized the importance of the mission, emphasizing that "as Jews, we need people to bring our values out to the world." Berman mentioned that in addition to simply fighting antisemitism and hate against Jews, which is certainly important, it is also crucial to demonstrate our values to the rest of the world.

Berman's remarks were followed by a brief presentation about YU's humanitarian trip to Vienna, which the Herenstein family helped fund along with the new center. Aliza Abrams Konig then spoke about how driven she was to try to help the situation in Ukraine. She spoke about how YU planned the mission to Vienna under extreme time constraints, which they could only do with the help of the Herensteins. Konig's speech was then complemented by the perspective of Romi Harsztark (YC '23), a student who went on the mission. Harsztark discussed the importance of only being satisfied and comfortable if others are comfortable also. This mission was embodied by the Herensteins, he said, who did not relax while others were suffering. Instead of simply supporting the mission, the Herensteins went themselves on the plane.

The presentation was followed by the

highly anticipated conversation between Brown and Stephens. This sit-down was done in an interview format. Stephens was asked for his opinions and insights regarding a plethora of topics, including religious freedom, identity politics and his journeys and encounters with the world of Judaism. Among the many highlights from the dialogue was Stephens stating that "cancel culture" will end on its own the way the French Revolution ended, with those in charge being removed from positions of power. Stephens also emphasized the importance today of understanding key texts and sources when making an argument and not letting any particular narrative dictate that argument. Stephens ended his part of the program by emphasizing that it is now up to current YU students to change the world and that young people "have the potential to do great things."

The Herensteins were thrilled with the event and were tremendously grateful. Asked for a comment after the event, Mrs. Terry Herenstein simply responded, "Once again, Erica Brown was at the pinnacle of being the ultimate director and leader, and we are honored and thrilled to be a part of YU and the Sacks-Herenstein Center, and we hope to see amazing things from the amazing students."

Brown expressed to me that if she wanted everyone from the event to leave with one takeaway, it would be that "Pesach enabled us to express our religious freedom, which is foundational to a democratic society, and we should use the platform of democracy to express our religious identities with pride. That was singular to Rabbi Sacks' legacy, to be *mekadesh shem shamayim*."

The event on Sunday was representative of what is to come from this new center — tremendous content and opportunities that YU has never seen before.



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Of Pipes and Pianos: A Brief History of the Schottenstein Center, Home of Shenk Shul

By YITZHAK GRAFF

Those who have davened in the Shenk Shul are certainly aware of its imposing presence over 185th St. From the dramatic white columns contrasting with its red brick facade to the colorful stained glass window forming the backdrop of the impressive marble pediment of the *aron kodesh*, the story of this old synagogue has largely remained untold.

The story begins in a time before the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) was even planning on moving uptown. In 1914, the young middle-class Jews of Washington Heights formed a new congregation they named Temple Israel of Washington Heights. Their mode of observance fell mostly in line with the Reform movement at that time. They held services in both English and German accompanied by an organ and a choir. The congregation also ran a Sunday school for the children of its members to educate them in German and in Hebrew.

For the first five years of its existence, the congregation didn't have a permanent home. It was first located at 523 West 173rd St. By 1918, the congregation was renting space in the subway building at 587 West 181st St., the building that sits above the entrance to the 1 train's 181st St. station. In 1919 they began planning to build a permanent home. They purchased the property on 560-566 West 185th St. (back when land was cheaper than construction) and began a \$100,000 fundraising campaign to finance the construction. The building committee planned to construct a building that would house a large sanctuary to accommodate the rapidly growing congregation, and ample classroom space to accommodate a growing Sunday school.

Construction of the building began in 1921, but by then the estimated cost had risen to \$165,000. Despite this increase in cost, construction and fundraising proceeded smoothly. The 1922 high holiday season brought in new members and more money. Unfortunately, the project began to go significantly overtime and over budget. The exact causes remain obscure, but by 1925, tensions over delays in construction caused a schism in the congregation, leading a significant portion of the congregation to take their money elsewhere.

The building was eventually finished in 1927, costing a total of \$400,000. The Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank financed the entire cost of construction through a

by the \$400,000 mortgage. The congregation had negotiated directly with the manufacturer, M.P. Moller, to pay the \$9,500 cost of the organ in four installments over the course of one year. Temple Israel of Washington Heights was able to pay the down payment of \$2,000, but failed to make any more payments.

By 1934, Moller was frustrated that they hadn't received any money for their organ. The \$7,500 loan had accumulated interest since 1926 when the congregation purchased the organ and was now worth \$13,000. Temple Israel of Washington Heights had no money, and basically no longer existed. The Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank was not interested in paying for the organ, as in

organ during Friday night services. The congregation doesn't seem to have ever gotten their finances in order, but they were saved from losing the building by another up-and-coming local Jewish organization.

When RIETS moved uptown to the corner of Amsterdam and 186th, they began to foster an Orthodox community in Washington Heights. As this small, young community grew, Jewish parents started trying to organize a Jewish elementary school in the neighborhood. A number of local community leaders advocated for the establishment of such a school. The most famous among them was Rabbi Moshe Soloveichik, then *rosh yeshiva* of RIETS. The first class was opened in 1937 and probably met on the premises of one of the synagogues in the area. The school was initially called the Yeshiva of Washington Heights, but when Rabbi Soloveichik passed away in 1941, it was renamed in his memory.

Irving Weinberg (RIETS '33) was appointed as the Rabbi of Congregation Gates of Israel around 1941. He seems to have been active in pairing the destitute Congregation Gates of Israel with the growing Yeshiva Rabbi Moshe Soloveichik (YRMS). In 1945, YRMS officially moved into the building on 185th St. and assumed ownership of the property in 1948. Irving Weinberg became the religious studies principal. The other administrative staff at the time, Norman Abrams, chairman of the board, and Joseph Lichtenberg, secular studies principal, worked down the street in Yeshiva University High School (now MTA). The congregation seemed to have been very pleased with this arrangement. One of the more senior members of the congregation, Harold Pescovitz, a plumber by trade, volunteered around the school in his retirement.

YRMS followed the Mizrahi religious Zionist curriculum. They taught religious subjects in Hebrew and educated both their male and female students in Tanach and Talmud. The school operated up into the mid 1980s, when it began having serious financial issues. YRMS permanently shut its doors in 1988. Jerome Schottenstein purchased the building for YU in 1985 and it opened for YU operations in 1989 after some restoration work. The upper stories of the building were outfitted to house the Cantorial Institute (now the Belz School of Jewish Music), and the WYUR student radio station, which, throughout the '90s and '00s, broadcasted popular music and a variety of student-hosted radio shows. The basement was renovated to be a theater, still used today by the student dramatic societies.

Congregation Gates of Israel continued using the synagogue for some number of years after YU purchased the building. The current Shenk Shul congregation was formed about a decade ago.

So, dear reader, as you climb the front stairs and awkwardly reach up and out to open the door, think about the joy that the faithful congregants must have felt when the building was finally ready for use after six long years of construction. And as you gaze upon the majestic marble staircases that flank the entrance, think about all the grumpy little children trudging up those stairs every morning to be on time for class, carefully gripping the green banisters. And as you sit down this Friday night, spacing out during Rabbi LeVee's 30-second *drasha*, remark to yourself, "How pleasant are your tents O Jacob, your dwellings O Israel."

From the dramatic white columns contrasting with its red brick facade to the colorful stained glass window forming the backdrop of the impressive marble pediment of the aron kodesh, the story of this old synagogue has largely remained untold.

mortgage made out to Temple Israel of Washington Heights, but the waning congregation was unable to make any payments on their \$400,000 loan. They defaulted and the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank assumed ownership of the property. The congregation still wanted to use their fancy brand-new building, equipped with such amenities as an electric pipe organ and large classroom space, so they reincorporated under the name Congregation Gates of Israel in 1931. Then this "new" Congregation Gates of Israel somehow convinced the bank to sell the building back to them.

The communities' woes were not over. The electric pipe organ was not covered

their eyes it was Temple Israel's responsibility. Congregation Gates of Israel claimed that the organ belonged to the bank, so when they purchased the building from the bank, they didn't have to pay for it. Naturally, Moller sued all three. The trial was held in May of 1935 and at first the jury ruled in favor of the defendants. Moller appealed, and the circumstantial evidence suggests that they won the rights to resume ownership of the organ.

This particular episode seems to have shaken up the congregation significantly, because in a 1939 survey, the congregation strikingly reported that they were Orthodox, just four years after regularly playing the



Street view of the Schottenstein Center, home of the Shenk Shul

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Food 4 Thought Club: A Chessed Slam Dunk

By ZACHARY NOTKIN

If you spend a lot of time at YU events, you might have wondered what happens to all the leftover food, especially after Shabbos meals. Unfortunately, while some food on Wilf goes to the *hefker* (ownerless) table, most of the leftover Shabbos food — an unexpectedly staggering amount of chicken, rice and vegetables — goes directly into the dumpster, perhaps a symbol of our wasteful culture. However, merely wandering the neighborhoods around the campuses paints a starkly contrasting picture. People, seemingly without a home or support system to turn to live in a pitiful state. According to a 2021 government report, there are nearly 80,000 homeless New Yorkers. Despite Torat Chessed's prominence as one of our Core Torah values, we neglect this opportunity on our doorstep.

I witnessed some of the giving myself, and saw many expressions of gratitude that would bring warm feelings to anyone's heart.

However, a new club, started on the Beren Campus, changes this paradigm. It gives food that would otherwise go in the trash directly to needy people who live near the school. Called the Food 4 Thought Club, I wanted to find out more about what sounds like an incredible movement.

I started by speaking with Racheli Jian (SCW '24), the club founder and president. "I founded the club when I saw how food waste was an increasing problem on campus, now that food-related services had to be COVID conscious," Jian said. "I knew that many people were upset and I am happy that

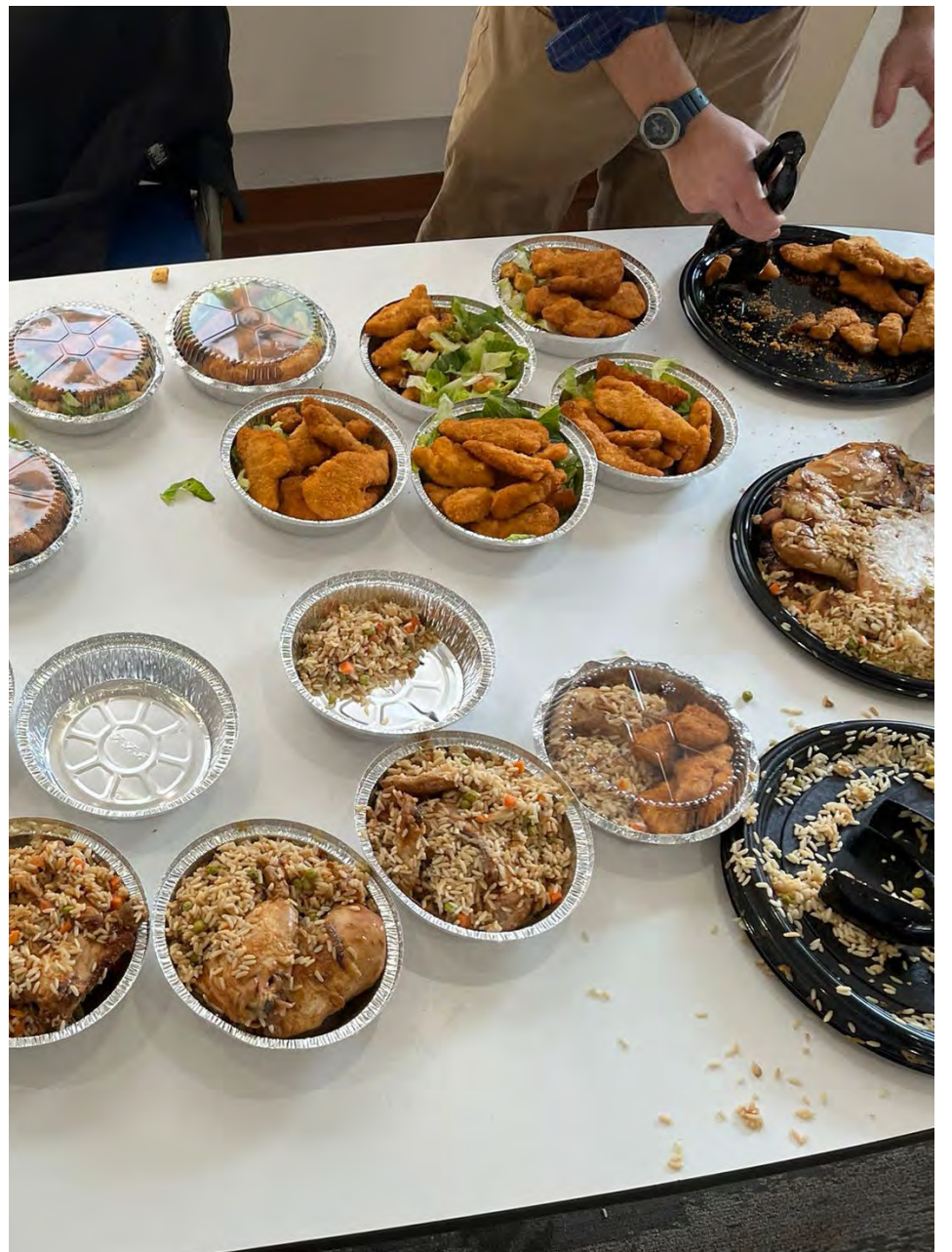
this club provides somewhat of a solution to this big problem."

It works like this: Members volunteer to collect food that school employees would normally throw out. They then package them into meal containers and distribute them on the streets around both campuses. So far, the project has been a great success, and a large number of meals have been distributed every week.

To find out more about the club, I spoke with one of its volunteers. Rafeal Abecassis (SSSB '23), who gave the first ever meal from the Wilf campus, and he told me he enjoyed his volunteering experience very much, saying, "It felt very good to give without expecting anything back in return." I witnessed some of the giving myself, and saw many expressions of gratitude that would bring warm feelings to anyone's heart. Showing sensitivity, the club chooses not to photograph these moments.

Going forward, Jian has big plans. She told me that she hopes that she can continue to expand the club's charitable activities by working with the university. As of now, the food is given out by students who act of their own accord, as the school is afraid of potential liability that could arise from giving food to strangers. The club is also looking into the possibility of working with some sort of food bank or homelessness support organization. I personally think that a big part of the club's success has come from its dedicated, passionate and grassroots membership, and that by working together, it can bring this project to great heights.

Surely, no matter where you find yourself on YU's ideological spectrum, you can agree that this is a noble project deserving our support. Hopefully this project can serve to not just unite us as a school, but act as a bridge of peace between the YU community and its many, often overlooked, neighbors. New volunteers are always welcome.



Meals for homeless being prepared on the Wilf Campus

RAFEAL ABECASSIS

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

(May 5, 1976; Memorial Issue) — Belkin Overcame Hardships: Served As A Great Leader

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Editor's Note: This is taken from the first Commentator edition after the death of YU's second president, Dr. Samuel Belkin, whose yahrtzeit was observed this week by the YU community.

When a true leader has fallen, there is left a void and the rest of us are left enshrouded in a cloud of helplessness and insecurity with no sense of direction. "Dr. Belkin's death," remarked Professor Irving Linn to his English Class last week "is the kind that will be felt more and more as time passes." For here stood a man who singlehandedly developed and molded Yeshiva University, and consequently, one might be led to say, the modern Orthodox Jewish community.

Samuel Belkin, born December 12, 1911 in Swislicz, Poland was the son of Solomon, a rabbi, and Minna Belkin. Of his early childhood, we know little, but his later life, we know to have been scarred with tragedies and so it might seem reasonable to expect much of the same when he was a youth. His father who was also his rebbe was dragged off and murdered for being a "Communist." When Samuel was 6 his mother, brothers

and sisters were barely able to sustain themselves by scrounging in the woods for berries and mushrooms. One can easily understand Dr. Belkin's reluctance to speak about himself or his childhood.

On his own already at the age of 13, he learned under Yisroel Hakohen, a leading scholar in Europe, and a man whom Dr. Belkin only recently said "left the profoundest influence on me of anyone." He went on to learn at the yeshivas of Mir and then Radin where he received semicha from the Chofetz Chaim at the age of 17.

To America

Sensing the new crushing wave of anti-semitism he decided to leave Europe and with the aid of relatives in Canada, he arrived at Windsor, Ontario only to come to the US a year later in 1929. Only 18 years old, he could speak Polish, Yiddish and Hebrew, but no English. Five years later, having mastered the language, he was accepted to Harvard and a year later in 1934 he was awarded an honorary fellowship to Brown where he soon received his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Greek, his fifth language, and was elected Phi Beta Kappa. Appointed an instructor and later full professor at Yeshiva College,

he soon became a rosh yeshiva in RIETS under Yeshiva's founder, Dr. Bernard Revel, first president of Yeshiva College and the seminary.

With Dr. Revel's death in 1940, Dr. Belkin became Dean of RIETS and three years later on May 25, president. He began an expansion program that led to the granting of university status to Yeshiva by the State Board of Regents in November, 1945.

As an instructor of Greek and as the school president, Dr. Belkin formed indissoluble bonds with other faculty members and students, many of whom are faculty members today and recall his warmth and sincerity. He knew all of his students and referred to them by their first names. It was perhaps the most painful part of being president of a rapidly growing university, and though he tried, it became simply impossible to maintain close personal relationships. It hurt him greatly, as Prof Linn put it, that his students now had to make appointments weeks in advance to speak with him, and that his time was no longer his own. Now he had new obligations to the school and the community and the simple life of Torah and scholarship and the direct transmission of knowledge to the next generation was past. For here was a man of extraordinary genius

and talent and charm. Gritting his teeth, he endured the formalities that the presidency of a growing institution called for and all the protocol which he hated so. With single mindedness of purpose he forged on ahead with an aggressiveness that bordered on "arrogance."

Expansion

Under his leadership the university rapidly rose to gain prominence in the worlds of religion, science, and liberal arts. In 1954, Stern College, the first liberal arts college for women under Jewish auspices was established. A year later, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, the first medical school in history under Jewish sponsorship opened its doors in the Bronx. In the past twenty years it has mushroomed into an expansive campus with a mark of excellence and achievement noted around the world, all under the watchful eye and guiding light of Dr. Belkin. This past year, AECOM was rated by medical school deans as being one of the top ten medical schools in the United States. The list of "firsts" goes on and on.

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SAMUEL BELKIN

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Dr. Belkin's famous "Blueprint for the Seventies," adopted on YU's 75th anniversary in 1961 ended in 1970 and the university, which at the time consisted only of the one domed structure in Washington Heights, now consisted of four complete campuses. Ruben Residence Hall was followed by Furst Hall and Morgenstern Residence Hall. In the spring of 1969 the Mendel Gottesman (central university) Library was completed and a half year later, the \$20 million Belfer Graduate School of Science was dedicated. The Brookdale Graduate Center at 55 Fifth Avenue consists of the Ferkauf School of Humanities and Social Sciences and Wurzweiler School of Social Work. Its newest addition is Dr. Belkin's final work, the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. The Midtown Center (Stern College) was expanded and various research centers were added: the Ulman Research Center for Sciences, the Rose F. Kennedy Center for Research in Mental Retardation and Human Development, and the Educational Center for Health Sciences. Ground has also been broken for the \$8.5 million Irwin S. and Sylvia Chasin Institute for Cancer Research.

Almost everything a visitor sees on any one of YU's four campuses is the product of Samuel Belkin; this is a Belkin University. While ultra-rightists, who couldn't possibly understand, angrily maintain that "synthesis" is impossible, under Dr. Belkin's eyes, YU grew never too big for its "britches" and he sternly admonished YU's schools from RIETS to AECOM to keep this in mind.

Reflections

While the American campus was a scene of unrest in the 60's, YU remained calm. As Dr. Belkin put it during a CBS-TV interview with Alexander Kendrick in 1969, "students have the right to protest, to criticize, to demand... but no violence —because violence produces violence, when the sword ascends, the book descends. So the violence of the sword cannot live together with the reason of the book." if today's child had been taught to love his parents first, then relatives, the

people among whom he was born, then the country, and after these particulars, the universals, instead of the other way around there would not have taken place the insurrections of the day. Yet, Dr. Belkin never advocated authority or possessive rights of a parent over a child. When a Jewish boy reaches the age of thirteen, the father has completed his obligations, but while he may not control the child, he still has responsibilities to him; he must give them guidelines. The failure of the American family is due to a lack of cohesiveness in this country on wheels.

Dr. Belkin reflected on the problems man faces in this age. "Our modern age has produced many tools, new things, but the modern age cannot produce a new man, a new woman... The destruction which can be produced in the modern age in our day would have taken thousands of years in previous ages. So whatever man has created by his ingenuity can be used for his benefit and for his destruction, for his service and for his disservice."

Dr. Belkin's achievements in the world of Torah, his remarkable insight into the Talmud and his dissemination of its teachings, greatly overshadowed his second love Hellenistic literature. "You see this library?" he remarked to an interviewer. This library consists half of hebraic studies and less than half of Greek studies." He studied and wrote extensively on the works of Philo and is the author of **Philo and the Oral Law**, published as part of the Harvard Semitic Series. He was an acknowledged leading authority on the Greek contribution to Western civilization.

Dr. Belkin discussed the relationship between the Jewish and Greek contributions to the Western world. "The Greeks were philosophers. They were interested in theory, metaphysical speculation... Plato, Aristotle." They were interested in the nature of man, the universe, G-d, the body, the soul. But they lived in ivory towers; they were not interested in the community in its totality, in the average man. The Hebraic heritage is one of moral activism... his brother's keeper.

And the difference between philosophy and religion is that religion tries to do something about it. Therefore, Judaism became the fountainhead of all the great religions, and Greece became the fountainhead of all the great philosophical schools. One was interested primarily in theory, and one was interested in translating theory into practice.

A self-declared "divine optimist," Dr. Belkin advocated a return to family life. "The fall of the Roman Empire was primarily due to the fact that the family had disintegrated. Once the family had disintegrated, the empire became disintegrated. We must go back to the family, we must go back to the home. If the home will become better, parents will become teachers, teachers will become parents." Seven years later, in an interview with Mr. Kendrick last January, Dr. Belkin attributed the quiet campuses to a growing sense of pragmatism. "They realize that those who were engaged in destructive activism never found a place for themselves, and they are now concerned only with studies." Somewhat remorseful, he added that the new approach is also harmful. Students find society filled with corruption and come to the conclusion that there is no purpose in rebelling; so they become isolated and choose to "live in an ivory tower and forget the needs of the community in general. If this is the case, I think it is almost as bad as destructive activism."

Israel and the Jew

Was it ironic or purposeful that Dr. Belkin never visited Israel since his arrival here 46 years ago? Speaking on Zionism on CBS-TV last fall, Dr. Belkin felt that a Jew in America is not a Zionist "in the sense that his loyalty is to the government of Israel. He has loyalty to the land of Israel, but not to its government."

In his essay "What Makes a Good Jew" Dr. Belkin explained that a good Jew is one who observes the Torah not merely as a book of theological dogma but follows its design for living "a harmonious blending between his moral obligations to humanity and his divine attachment to God; a synthesis between his

contemporary environment and his sacred heritage."

The Talmud prescribes the basic philosophy of the Jew, the emphasis on the individual. "When one man causes a single soul to perish, the Torah imputes to him the destruction of the world... a single man was created to proclaim the greatness of God, for man stamps many coins with one seal and they are all alike, but the King of Kings has stamped every man with the seal of the first man, yet not one of them is like his fellow. Therefore, it is the duty of every man to say, "for my sake the world was created."

Dr. Belkin, who was quite fond of quoting this passage, wrote, "these immortal words of our sages, concerning the immortal dignity and worth of the human soul, contain the basic philosophy of the Jew, and such a philosophy, which is the essence of any democracy, helps toward the making of a good Jew!"

To us, today, "synthesis" means little more than Jewish studies in the morning and secular studies in the afternoon. To Dr. Belkin, though, it was his greatest goal in life. Social activism was very noble indeed, but could not succeed without these social responsibilities being based upon Divine laws, the authority of one's heritage. Today's houses of worship make distinctions, he claimed, one as a social part and the other as a religious part, with the result that "we have a dichotomy that will not serve any good."

"Let us hope and pray that, in the not too distant future, the world will rid itself of tyranny in every form, and that every individual and every nation will be able to proclaim: For my sake the world was created!"

On April 18, 1976, the scholarship dreams and energy came to an end. Dr. Samuel Belkin died at the age of 64 at the Hospital of Albert Einstein College of Medicine. A gina in Torah scholarship in our day, his tragic loss, which represents the stilling of one of orthodox Jewry's most brilliant and eloquent voices, will be keenly felt.



Israel's Continued Terror Wave and How to Respond

By AVIGAIL WINOKUR

In the last two weeks, there have been four terrorist attacks in Israel.

As I'm writing this on April 7, there are reports that up to 15 people were shot in the heart of Tel Aviv, including at least five on Dizengoff Street. As of now, there isn't much more information than that.

Right now, we wait to hear whose blood has been spilled on the streets we've all walked before in the past.

On March 22, Doris Yahbas (49), Laura Yitzhak (43), Rabbi Moshe Kravitzky (50) and Menahem Yehezkel (67) were killed in an attack in Beer Sheva. On March 27, Yazan Falah (19) and Shirel Abukarat (19) were killed in Hadera. On March 29, Amir Khoury (32), Yaakov Shalem (36), Rabbi Avishai Yehezkel (29), Victor Sorokopot (38) and Dimitri Mitrik (23) were killed in Bnei Brak.

11 people are dead, and up to 15 lives currently hang in the balance. These attacks did not take place in contested areas like Judea and Samaria, but in the places we've all safely frequented. Places we've gone for Shabbat, places we have family, places we have friends.

It is also currently Ramadan, the holiest month in all of Islam. At its core, Islam is a religion of peace, and Ramadan is meant to be a month of prayer and reflection. Ramadan marks the revelation of the Quran, the central text of Islam. However, Ramadan has also been historically correlated with an uptick of violent terrorist attacks acting against Israelis.

This year, Ramadan also coincides with Passover and Easter. Jerusalem, home to all three of the Abrahamic faiths, is in a constant state of tug of war. All three religions hold claim to a region of Jerusalem, with much overlap. This is especially important as Ramadan, Passover and Easter are times of pilgrimage for their respective followers.

As Muslims trek up to the Al-Aqsa

mosque during Ramadan, Jews will pray by the thousands at the Western Wall during Passover. Nearby, many Christians will make the trip to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to mark the day of Jesus's resurrection.

So, naturally, this should be a time of immense celebration. However, Ramadan, especially given its overlap with Passover and Easter, is often a time of contention. It's a cycle that Israelis are all too familiar with: peace, terror, de-escalation, empty promises and repetition of the whole thing until relevant parties decide temporarily to press pause.

And yet, if you ask a Jewish person living in Israel, chances are they'll tell you they still feel safer living in Israel as opposed to any other country. Because in Israel, we are protected, defended and fought for. We have our own army, our own resources and our own means to continue living despite our safety constantly being in flux.

I'm not sure how much more there is to say, to analyze or to demand. The only thing we can all truly do is to continue to believe in our right to self-determination. Continue to advocate, and continue to memorialize the name of each life lost in the name of terror.

Continue to defend our right to exist, and continue to pray for those stolen from us. The most powerful action we can take to combat terror is to simply continue existing because, at its core, Islamic terror in Israel is about ending our existence. Continue to build relationships with Palestinians, and continue an open dialogue about establishing peace in our shared Holy Land. But the most important thing of all is to never forget the lives lost and to continue to celebrate and establish our presence in our ancestral homeland.



Israel has been hit with a spate of terror attacks at a scale not seen since the Second Intifada.

ISRAEL POLICE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Existentialism and Senescence in YCDS' 'Oldtimers Game'

By NAFTALI SHAVELSON

Peanuts. Cracker Jack. Home runs. Glory. And bad backs. And bad knees. Looking back on life and not liking what you see. The existence of a baseball player, warns playwright Lee Blessing in his 1982 play "Oldtimers Game," is full of torment and contradiction.

Directed by Prof. Reuven Russell and performed by Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS), their first production in three years, the show tells the story of the Northshore Otters, a Minnesota minor league baseball team and the annual oldtimers game they're scheduled to play against a ragtag bunch of Otter alumni. Normally a sleeper of a matchup, this year's game turns explosive thanks to sparring personalities and worldviews, an unconventional new owner and a terribly timed thunderstorm.

We meet the current Otters in their locker room, populated by props master Moshe Hecht and backed by Russell's own set design. Battered wood and metal lockers on the back wall frame a door to the manager's office; light coming through its frosted glass greets us even before the stage is illuminated. A slow fade up reveals out-of-touch manager Cal Timmer (SJ Tannenbaum) giving hitting tips to Sut Davis (Zev Granik), a supremely talented batter who's itching to make it to the majors. Sut's frustration pretty quickly devolves into existentialist

questions about the purpose and identity of a minor league baseball player, foreshadowing issues the play will address over the course of its feature-length runtime. Jesus Luna (Rami Levin), himself a career minor-

the team in the name of grander wins and increased profits. Apparently, some literal storm clouds hover nearby too.

As Crab lauds Old John's storied throwing arm, much to young Sut's chagrin — "I know

"Oldtimers Game" tries its hand at life's most pressing questions, explored through its snazzily-dressed cast of ball players-turned-philosophers.

leaguer who's accepted he'll never make it out of Triple-A, and Harly Nix (Josh Segal), a qualified player whose pregame beers and practical jokes have gotten in the way of his ambitions, sit on locker room benches and trade jabs to the side.

They're soon joined by Oldtimers "Lucky" Jim Nealy (Aharon Nissel), a promising player-turned-broadcaster whose heyday was cut short by an untimely injury, Crab Detlefsen (Isaac Nahmias), whose amiability and sincerity can't quite make up for his forgettable career, Dave Pearl (Eli Sandhaus), a current star player in the majors, and Old John Law (Yitzy Warren), jeremiad-spouting Hall of Famer who has quite a lot to say about the sorry state of the modern game of baseball. Hanging over the match is the recent purchase of the Otters by ruthless advertising executive Mr. Thompson (Daniel Melool) who promises to radically reshape

[he was] good, but I like playing the game, not hearing about it" — Mr. Thompson rattles off the changes he plans to make to the team. Aside from yes man Timmer, most shake their heads at his bizarre promise that "everyone on my team will work like a dog even though he's paid like a king," willing to sacrifice everything for newsreel-worthy replays. Old John in particular warns against selling body and soul to owners and managers, literally "running into the fence" to catch a few fly balls, but the young players don't seem to internalize his message. As the game approaches, we learn that Old John would rather sit it out — he's sick of performing, doesn't want to exacerbate his dormant injuries and is afraid of making a fool of himself in front of the "kids." Crab eventually convinces him to join; the former's fears are validated when he hurts his back in the first inning.

Unfortunately for everyone else, the looming storm clouds choose that moment to crack open (paired with deep thunderclaps from sound designer Zakkai Notkin). Diamond flooded, the game is cut short and peers and rivals all gather together in the locker room to ride out their rotten luck. There, Mr. Thompson announces big changes to the roster, surprising and angering most Otters. In a searing, intricately choreographed fight scene (courtesy of fight director Joe DiNozzi), they lash out at each other and turn to blows, wreaking further havoc on the fragmented locker room and already fragile web of interpersonal relationships.

"Oldtimers Game" tries its hand at life's most pressing questions, explored through its snazzily-dressed cast of ball players-turned-philosophers. Among former Otters, Yitzy Warren's Old John Law serves as the play's moral conscience in his warnings against myopic decision-making and gambling away of prospects, with a multidimensionality that delicately skirts the fourth wall and makes audiences wonder whether he's talking straight to them. Eli Sandhaus's Dave Pearl cogently and heartily juggles the energy of success with the weight of expectations, while Isaac Nahmias's warmth as Crab Detlefsen redeems the other players despite their best intentions, and Aharon Nissel's Jim Nealy charts a professional path forward

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A College Course of Action

By YONI MAYER

The job or the experience?
The future or the moment?

This personal adage is how I've framed my college journey and how I've approached the tightrope walk of plotting out my three years at Yeshiva University. The question being: Is college simply a preparatory step and a way station before we're released into the world at large? A breeding ground for future lawyers, bankers and doctors? Is it a place that educates its student body in the skills necessary for the workplace and leaves it at just that?

Or is college an oasis before we *have* to start our professional careers? A three-or-four year opportunity to soak up all the culture, wisdom and extracurriculars we can before we chain ourselves to a nine-to-five job? A forum to interact with and relate to like-minded and differently-minded individuals, experiment with comfort zone-altering experiences and expose ourselves to areas of knowledge we'd never previously considered?

The job or the experience.

The future or the moment.

Do we choose to take classes only because they will prepare us for the workplace, and in so doing, choose the job-oriented perspective of college? Or do we choose the classes which aren't directly correlated with our career or future, opting instead to dive into the experience of the isolated four years of college and the present moment, indulging in our interests and not looking too far ahead?

I chose the latter option, experiencing college and all it has to offer besides career preparation, and I'm proud of my decision.

I was originally enrolled in Sy Syms

School of Business when I came to YU. I knew I wanted to be in the business world but didn't know what I wanted to do. I figured that the business school would be a good way to figure that out and get exposure to the corporate world. What I learned, however, was that my appetite wasn't sufficiently whetted by the business classes. Here I was in an institution of higher learning and the

"experiences." These experiences, the ones I've chosen like The TAMID Group or summer internships, can be done from whichever undergraduate school you're in. If you can speak about more than just finance and accounting and reveal parts of your personality, parts which are supposed to be molded and discovered during your time in college, you'll be more personable and hireable.

I'd rather spend my time in school learning subjects that interest me, making me a more knowledgeable and cultured person, and further develop my business skills on the job.

classes I was taking all had to do with numbers, graphs and finance.

So, I spoke with friends and mentors and soon realized that a degree in economics would open the same corporate doors as the actual business school. Plus, my elective classes would be more interesting to me, courses like Art of Film and Stranger Things: The Art of the Unreal; classes that fulfilled my urge to learn more about the world and not just how to navigate the competitive world of business. If I was going to be required to take any classes outside of my major, I'd rather they be classes that I felt a genuine interest in.

Furthermore, my mentors told me that skills for the workplace are generally learned on the job. So, I thought, why spend four years learning skills which will ultimately be taught in four months? I'd rather spend my time in school learning subjects that interest me, making me a more knowledgeable and cultured person, and further develop my business skills on the job. Additionally, candidates are more appealing to firms if they're unique; the bulk of the resume is

Lastly, once we get to the workplace, our time is, for the most part, spent. For several years, we won't have opportunities to dive deeply into topics that interest us. College has these classes built into the system. You don't have to look far to learn about "France

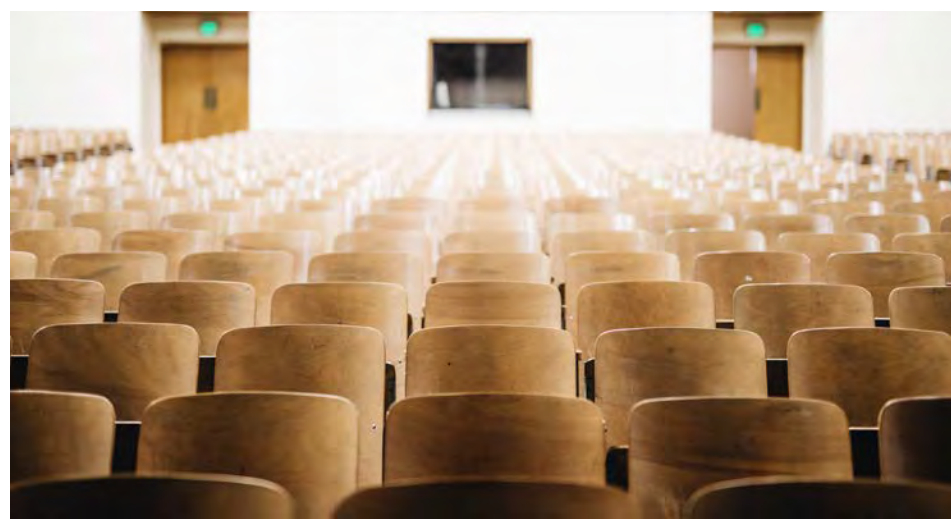
and its Others" or "The Art of Film"; you just have to be enrolled in a program and a school which encourages exploration of those disciplines.

I understand my situation is unique; of course there are jobs which require certain classes and courses of study during college (medicine, accounting, etc.). However, the argument still applies broadly to the experience at large and the attitude some people may have to their time here. My suggestion: don't turn your nose up at events, extracurriculars and programs but indulge in them. Utilize the time in college to expose yourself to opportunities you won't get later on in life because it is specifically those opportunities, and not your physics and accounting classes, which mold you and become the moments you remember forever.

So, I pose my question to you:

The job or the experience?

The future or the moment?



How you design your college experience is highly important, and totally up to you.

NATHAN DUMLAO/ UNSPLASH

YCDS

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for those facing radical shifts in circumstance due to injury. (His particular path involves a hilarious mess of tape recordings and off-the-record quotes).

But while the oldtimers philosophize, the young 'uns grapple, sometimes literally. Save for Rami Levin's ferociously cool Jesus Luna, they trip over themselves and claw at each other for that coveted boost to the major leagues. SJ Tannenbaum's cha-

meleon manager Cal Timmer realizes his way in is yelling at players and groveling before Mr. Thompson, himself fully assimilated by powerhouse Daniel Melool. Sut Davis and Harly Nix think their tickets are their batting average and peerless "attitude," respectively, but both are ultimately proven wrong. Their processes of discovery are masterful; entranced, we follow Zev Granik's Sut from cocky one-track

overachiever to clear-eyed player and person. And Josh Segal delivers a sweeping, full-scale performance as Harly, jumping the character across the emotional map, dispatching double entendres and dazes both with grit, fervor and investment.

It's notable, though, where the players' invectives are directed. Sut and Harly have issues with Mr. Thompson and the broader baseball establishment, so they throw

punches at ... each other? From the audience, it's sickening to watch the Otters act so paranoid that they're unable to quarrel with the man and system which are causing all their trouble in the first place. And such troubles! By the end of the play, injuries have wiped out half the players and peer over the shoulders of all the others. Old and young, all they know of baseball are those bad backs and bad knees. 65-year-old John and 20-year-old Sut are resigned to the same rehab facilities and hospital beds. Get well cards if they're lucky, if they have anyone who would care to write.

Blessing's play reminded me of "Twelve Angry Men," another character-driven clash of (male) personality that unravels and coalesces over two hours in a single room. Both stories are rescued from potential ivory towers of moralization by dexterously fashioned dramatis personae, a foundation of "real" people working out real issues beneath their enigmatic vaultings. Built on such solid bedrock, "Oldtimers Game" shines as an exploration of the fragility of the body and the transience of youth, the value of perspective and how it always comes just a little too late. It scrutinizes the thrall of free-market power dynamics and the hidden price of playing one more game. It questions the meaning of change. And, over a few beers laced with irony and imagination, it ponders our deliciously haphazard place among the stars.



The cast of "Oldtimers Game" at the curtain call

THE COMMENTATOR

The Pundit

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's Nomination and the Jewish Approach to Textual Interpretation

By ALLIE ORGEN

The recent political news cycle has been dominated by the Feb. 25 nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson for associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. This nomination has captivated the attention of Americans spanning the entire political spectrum, with many celebrating the historic nomination of the first Black woman to the Supreme Court, and others lamenting the nominee's selection based on the premise of race and gender rather than merit.

There are those saying that this runs directly against Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, where he wished for a future where people "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Others counter the opposition to this nomination by quoting a 1980 Ronald Reagan campaign speech where he promised to nominate the first female justice to the Supreme Court, asserting "It is time for a woman to sit among our highest jurists." Reagan later fulfilled this promise by appointing Sandra Day O'Connor to serve as the first female Supreme Court justice.

While I have my own strong opinions regarding this nomination, the news cycle has produced enough articles representing both sides. However, I believe that there is a far greater issue facing the Supreme Court, with ramifications that have the potential to change America as we know it, and it is not getting the proper press attention it deserves.

The nomination of an ideologically liberal judge highlights the inherent difference between judicial activism and judicial restraint. While the former fundamentally threatens the integrity of the Constitution, it also seemingly contradicts one of the core principles of our Jewish observance.

Judicial activism can be defined as a

judicial philosophy holding that the courts can and should go beyond the applicable law to consider broader societal implications of their decisions. This is typically depicted as the embodiment of the living document theory, and a style of interpretation that believes that the Constitution is dynamic and is intended to adapt with the times, even without being formally amended.

Judicial restraint is fundamentally the opposite, and encourages judges to limit the exercise of their own power. Advocates of judicial restraint argue that judges do not have the authority to act as policy makers. This approach seeks to respect the liberal democratic values upon which the United States was founded, and the liberties which the Constitution protects, when making legal decisions. This practically relates to originalism, the ideology of textual interpretation that believes that the Constitution must be interpreted with the meaning in mind the day it was written.

Ideological and philosophical originalism has been present since the first bench of Supreme Court justices, yet is rarely discussed without reference to former Justice Antonin Scalia. When deliberating cases, Scalia was meticulous in reading the text of the Constitution, and was precise in his opinions, always taking into account the exact wording and meaning of the text. Despite his personal opinions and the growing challenges modernity brought on, he stayed firm in his view — that following the letter of the law was the proper approach to take in interpretation — and would rule against his own political opinion if the text was different from his personal belief.

Scalia was not the first to formally utilize the principles of originalism, as the letter-of-the-law interpretive approach dates back centuries. It is the common practice of Orthodox Judaism to rigorously examine Jewish laws and traditions and follow them the same way as our ancestors were instructed to at *Har Sinai* when receiving

the Torah. When conflicts arise in contemporary society, especially regarding the challenges of modernity, we still look to halacha and tradition to see how to proceed, and maintain a strong adherence to Jewish law. Modern problems do not always require modern solutions, and in the case of Judaism, we are directed back to the source to unpack questions that arise in changing times.

The first *Mishnah* in Pirkei Avot states that "Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly." Not only were the words passed down, but the interpretations and hidden meanings were as well. The Torah applies from one generation to the next, and its implications, laws and teachings are meant to be passed down and instilled, rather than adapted to fit with modernity. In Rambam's introduction to seder *Zeraim*, he states, "Know that prophecy does not help in the explanation of the Torah and in the extrapolation of its derivative commandments." Rambam agrees that the text is the basis for understanding Judaism, and that interpretation must rely on the original meaning. He is not dismissive of the fact that a major element in Judaism is debate over textual interpretation, as done throughout the Talmud and over the centuries of active Jewish life. The meaning of the text is not always simple, and interpretation of Torah and Mitzvot is rarely ever straightforward.

Rambam's introduction perfectly aligns with the originalist approach to Judaism. Originalism does not imply that the text should be interpreted at face value, but rather that it should be thoroughly analyzed to discover the meaning as the writers intended. Texts are multifaceted and their interpretation raises complexity and debate, whether in the Supreme Court or the *beit midrash*. If interpretation was simple, there would be no need for the Supreme Court,

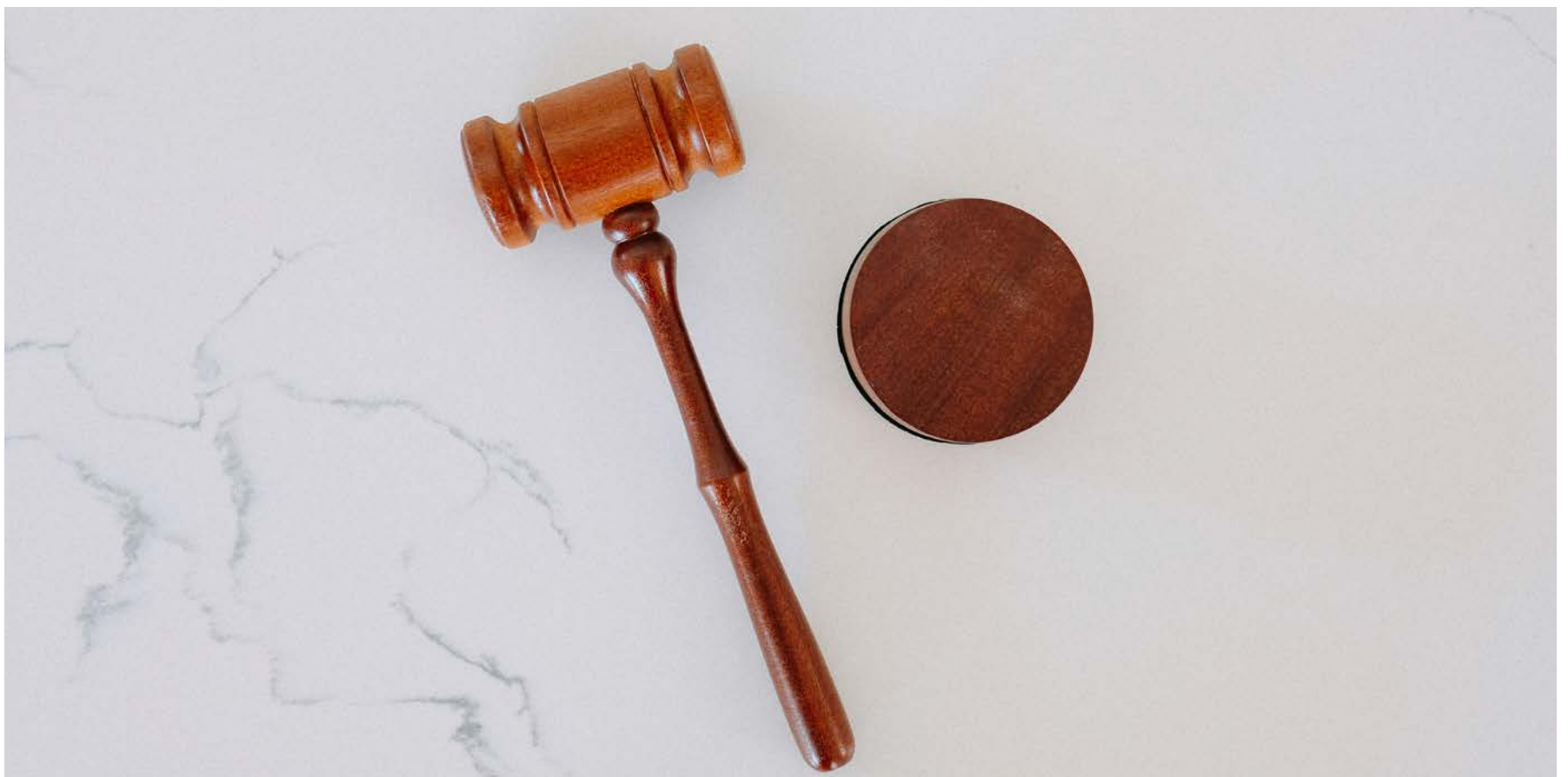
and the Talmud would not exist. Many aspects in the Constitution, from the Second Amendment to the Necessary and Proper Clause, cause debate over the intention of the framers, and to what extent they apply. Antonin Scalia, Rambam and those who preach textual originalism and judicial restraint alike understand that texts need to be closely read, analyzed and understood beyond surface level, while staying within the framework of the text.

This is the majority view of the current justices ruling from the Supreme Court bench, and this method protects the integrity of the founding documents that created an outline for how to run and maintain the government of the United States.

However, the living document theory encourages texts to be interpreted as the reader sees fit, and this interpretive style provides a basis for opposing outcomes: any verdict could be justified and explained without a textual basis. Judicial interpretation in this style leads to overstepping the constitutional jurisdiction of the Judicial Branch, and a complete violation of checks and balances. If you want to shape policy, run for Congress, but leave the Supreme Court out of it.

My own personal appreciation for the letter of the law is fueled by both my religious observance and my political ideology. Textual originalism is a practice that has been utilized for centuries, and its ramifications and implications play a major role in shaping our daily lives.

President Biden stated that "the Constitution is always evolving slightly in terms of additional rights or curtailing rights." With a claim like this threatening the very integrity of the Constitution, I recommend we focus more on the judicial-political philosophy at stake with Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's nomination than the unfortunate identity politics that have stolen the headlines.



Justices' judicial philosophies have the power to reshape the Supreme Court, for better or worse.

Russia Has Invaded Ukraine, But Let's Not Let the Conflict Invade Our Values

By DANIEL GANOPOLSKY

As a child of Ukrainian immigrants, Russia's brazen and criminal attack on Ukraine and her people hits close to home for me. Since Russia launched a full-scale military invasion into Ukraine on Feb. 24, fighting has caused over 2,600 civilian deaths and driven over 4 million Ukrainians to flee to neighboring countries.

As the conflict in Europe rages, the effects of the war are starting to be felt around the world. Institutions like Israel's Immigration and Absorption Ministry and the Jewish Agency have had to deal with a new wave of immigration. According to the Jewish Agency, over 4,000 Ukrainian "Jews," have immigrated to Israel since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine last month, and thousands more are expected to arrive in the coming weeks under Israel's law of return.

As a result, Israel has introduced new immigration policies to combat the issue. Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked announced that Israel is willing to accept 5,000 non-Jewish refugees fleeing the fighting in Ukraine, in addition to waiving deportation for about 20,000 non-Jewish Ukrainians who had been in the country before the war. These revelations are rather troubling. The intentions of the Israeli government are clear and simple: they have an opportunity to help, and want to take it. It is in their Jewish DNA. Not to mention that this operation will result in great PR. They can finally reaffirm their commitment to peace and democracy on the world stage by supporting Ukraine, a fellow underdog.

The liberal international community may be in support of such actions, but Jews need to ask themselves: what will be the cost to Israel and Jews worldwide? Jews need to stop sacrificing Jewish ideals for world approval. Israel is not America. America may be a "melting pot," but Israel needs to be a Jewish enclave. Israel exists for the sole purpose of providing a safe haven for Jews.

A safe haven for the Jews of today *and* for the Jews of tomorrow. It cannot afford to let non-Jews immigrate and/or continue to stay in Israel without any restrictions. The

America may be a "melting pot," but Israel needs to be a Jewish enclave.

Israeli government needs to do everything in its power to make sure there is no threat to a Jewish majority in the State. Not to mention the economic drain all the helpless immigrants will have on the already poor Jewish population and struggling Israeli economy. 23% of Israeli citizens and 31.7% of Israeli children are living below the poverty line, including 49% within the ultra-Orthodox sector alone. Setting up a field hospital in Ukraine is noble, but Israel cannot and should not prioritize the complex problems of the world, no matter how dire, when Jews within the State are suffering day-to-day and are being murdered on the streets of Tel Aviv.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attempted to manipulate Israel during his speech to the Knesset on March 20 by pulling on emotional chords of the Holocaust. However, President Zelenskyy gave, at the very least, a false-hearted and tone-deaf address. "Why hasn't Israel seriously sanctioned Russia? Why aren't you putting pressure on businesses?" asked the Ukrainian leader, who warned that Russians were engaged in their own "final solution." "Ukrainians made their choice 80 years ago. We saved Jews, and that's why there are Righteous Gentiles among us. People of Israel, you too now have a choice. Thank you!"

Frankly, Zelensky is lucky he is Jewish. His speech was bordering on Holocaust denial; it was not just ahistorical but was actively perverting history. Israel may side with Ukraine, but it does not owe the besieged country anything. Ukraine was one of the most violently antisemitic nations in Europe

during WWII. At Babi Yar, over two days in 1941, at least 34,000 Jews were stripped of their possessions and clothing, led into ravines, shot and dumped into mass graves.

The Jews of Babi Yar were often herded, guarded and shot by Ukrainian police, militia and collaborators.

As much as I want to see Ukraine stand victorious and her people bask in her sovereignty, it is not Israel's job to provide that. Perhaps you can make an argument for Israel's involvement if all of her internal and external issues had been solved, but obviously that is not reality. Instead, Israel should focus on helping Jews that desperately need its support. A glaring example is the current situation with Jews in Ethiopia. Israel was swift to mobilize and help Ukraine

but is taking its time with keeping to the agreement it signed to rescue Ethiopian Jews back in 2015. As war rages on in Ethiopia, putting more and more Jews at risk, Israel continues to prioritize the non-Jews of Ukraine. That decision is unforgivable. It sets a poor precedent for future international conflicts Israel will undoubtedly take part in, directly or indirectly. The Israeli left is already complaining that the State is not accepting enough non-Jewish refugees. 25,000 refugees are not going to flip the majority today, but this attitude can and will upend the Jewish majority in the long run. Israel is meant to be the refugee home for Jews, only. Herzl famously titled his book describing his vision of the founding of a future safe haven for Jews, "The Jewish State." Israel should continuously work to perpetuate his vision instead of transitioning into a mere State with Jews.



Illustration of the Israeli and Ukrainian flags

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Film and Fame

BY EMILY SAFIER

The 94th Academy Awards of Merit, better known as The Oscars, was held at the LA Dolby Theater on Sunday, March 27. The annual award ceremony dates back to 1929 as Hollywood directors sought to promote their image through celebration and the show was made available to the public when televised in 1953. This prestigious event celebrates the entertainment industry through musical performances, red carpet appearances and the main event: presenting the Oscar Award to the actors and directors worthy of it. The winners of these esteemed awards are accomplished individuals who are actively involved in the creation of any 24 categories that range from best picture, original song, animated short, documentary, feature and more. For a film to be nominated, they must have been shown in the U.S. for at least a year.

This prestigious event celebrates the entertainment industry through musical performances, red carpet appearances and the main event.

Who votes on the winners? The honor of nominating Hollywood's candidates is exclusive to members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, of which there are 7,000 members. The winners are released to the press before the event but they are prohibited from leaking the results until after the televised awards show. Oscar winners have much to gain including

increased prestige, career advancement, additional success for their film and an average 60% salary increase. 2022 Oscar Winners include Troy Kotsur for Best Supporting Actor, Ariana DeBose for Best Supporting Actress, Don't Look Up for Best Picture, Spider-Man: No Way Home for Best Visual Effects, No Time to Die film for Best Sound, Billie Eilish's No Time To Die theme song for Best Original Song, and others. This year's show was co-hosted by Regina Hall, Amy Schumer and Wanda Sykes and presented by several celebrities including Lady Gaga, Zoë Kravitz, Samuel Jackson and comedian and disruptor Chris Rock. Attendees arrived to the red carpet dressed by elite designers. Included on the best dressed list were fashion icon Zendaya in Valentino, Nicole Kidman in Armani Privé, Timothee Chalamet in Louis Vuitton and Billie Eilish in Gucci. The award itself is a 24-karat gold plated statue of a knight on a reel of film holding a sword. It was designed by MGM Art Director Cedric Gibbons. The Oscar statue costs \$400 to make and winners are forbidden from selling their award.

Due to COVID-19 and its resulting limited occupancy and travel restrictions, the Oscars' revenue dropped by 60% compared to pre-pandemic numbers.

This year's show cost an astronomical \$42.9 million, with Disney currently holding broadcasting rights for a sum of \$1 billion. Vanity Fair's Oscar after-party cost an estimated \$80,000 per couple, making it the most expensive after-party to date. A-list actors may pay up to \$10 million for their couture, show stopping outfits. This lavish party is beneficial especially for the economy of Los Angeles which earns \$130 million in revenue yearly. ABC — the network with the rights to the ads and red carpet show — gains an estimated \$120 million from ads and \$21 million from the red carpet. The 60 commercial ads

that were displayed throughout the three hour televised event cost companies \$1.7 million per spot. The 2022 Oscars attracted an audience of 16.6 million people which is 58% increase from the 10.4 million viewers

last year. The social media attention saw an increase of 139% compared to last year's broadcast of 9.5 million, making this year's award show, as one Variety writer stated, "the most social Oscars telecast on record."



Oscars Award

PIXABAY

A Passover Horror Story

BY YOAV ZOLTY

With inflation rising higher than ever, this year's Passover shopping will prove to be a very costly endeavor for most Jewish families. Incredibly, inflation across the board for all products has grown to over 7% in just the last month of January when compared to prices last January. This will undoubtedly affect kosher consumers more than average, as there are analyses that kosher products have increased in price by over 15% as compared to last year. This is already on top of the existing price difference between

kosher products when compared to their non-kosher counterpart which ranges from 20% to almost double the price. However, the product that seems to have seen its price increase the most across both the kosher and the non-kosher industry is the wine and hard-alcohol industry. Big agricultural commodity trader Agritel is quoted as saying "Galloping inflation has started on energies and raw materials and is moving now toward consumer prices." With rising costs associated with manual labor prices, logistical traffic, a low supply of necessary bottling and storage equipment, and a dramatic increase in price for raw agricultural materials, the

average alcoholic beverage is predicted to cost a significant amount more than last year.

Alcohol and wine have always been more expensive than other consumer beverages, but this year buying an alcoholic beverage such as liquor or wine will do significantly more damage to the consumer's wallet compared to last year. When it comes to wine, a variety of factors are pushing the price dramatically up in stores across the nation. The first is the scarcity of herbicides in vineyards. Herbicides are normally used to prevent bugs from damaging vineyards, as well as killing weeds, which allow for uncompetitive access to soil nutrients. Without the herbicides, the vineyard industry has to rely on manual labor, which can normally drive up production costs by ten to twenty percent. On top of that, with the labor shortage in the U.S. caused by factors such as the Great Resignation and COVID-19, manual labor costs have skyrocketed. A third blow to the vineyard industry, dealt by a variety of climate change effects, has caused crop yields to shrink from 40% to 20%. To add to the consumer's woes, due to the fact that crop yields have declined, the average grape quality has markedly increased due to fewer competing crops. While this is great for the flavor of grapes and their associated wines, due to the quality increase, farmers and wine producers are asking for higher prices. After the farming factors, come the production issues which, due to logistic issues associated with the COVID pandemic and its related lockdowns, has led to a scarcity of wood-related products used to age and

store the wine, which, too, has increased the price for wine.

With rising food costs, consumers will find their wallets a lot lighter after Passover shopping than in previous years.

COVID has made its impact felt on the wine bottling industry. The most popular bottling product for wine, glass bottles, have become increasingly hard to produce and distribute to wine producers. This strain of COVID logistical problems has led bottlers to pass on the price increase for glass bottles to consumers. Finally, the last factor that has influenced the marked rise of costs of wine for consumers in stores, is the large demand increase. When the pandemic was in full swing, people spent an above-average amount of time entertaining themselves by drinking. That increased appetite for alcoholic products has remained with the lessening of COVID restrictions.

Ultimately, all these factors, increased inflation, disruption in the supply and raw material lines, and increased demand, will all cause Passover shoppers to have to spend significantly more for their holiday wines and beverages.



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