

THE COMMENTATOR

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Stenhouse to Replace Holtz as YC Associate Dean for Academic Affairs this Fall

By JONATHAN LEVIN

William Stenhouse, a professor of history at Yeshiva College (YC), will replace Shalom Holtz as associate dean for academic affairs this August, Yeshiva University announced in an email to undergraduate students on April 7. This move is part of YC's practice of periodically rotating faculty into administrative positions.

YC's associate dean for academic affairs oversees the curriculum, class schedule, faculty promotions and tenure, and serves as an intermediary between the faculty and the administration, Holtz explained to The Commentator.

The search for a candidate to replace Holtz was conducted by Karen Bacon, dean of the undergraduate faculty of arts and sciences for YC and Stern College for Women (SCW), and Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Selma Botman. One factor in Stenhouse's selection was his past work on the academic standards committee for YC, which he has led for the past three years. Stenhouse is not scheduled to teach any courses next semester.

Holtz, a professor of Bible, has been associate dean of academic affairs since August 2018, when he replaced Dr. Joanne Jacobson, a professor emeritus of English.

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Shalom Holtz (left) will be replaced by William Stenhouse (right) as associate dean for academic affairs for YC.

THE COMMENTATOR

Student-Athletes Receive Priority Registration for Fall 2022 to Minimize Scheduling Conflicts

By FLORA SHEMTOB

Student-athletes at Stern College for Women (SCW), Yeshiva College (YC) and Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) received priority academic advising and registration for the Fall 2022 semester, the university announced in an email sent to student-athletes last month. Priority registration took place in the last week of April.

"Priority registration is very important for us student-athletes because it allows us to get the right balance between playing sports for the university and working hard with the academic side."

— Asher Martin (SSSB '24)

All athletes in SCW, YC and SSSB were eligible for early registration, regardless of which team they belonged to. Katz students were not eligible. The students were only allowed to register for classes that were required for their majors.

The reason for the priority registration was to avoid conflicts between students' practice and game schedules, Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon told The Commentator.

The deans have been working with the Athletic Department to make it easier for student-athletes to do well in classes and on the field, she said. While early registration has always been informally offered to student-athletes, this is the first year that it became officially sanctioned.

Bacon elaborated that since "there are many options for [general] requirements," students can only choose courses for their majors, of which there may be less options.

According to the email athletes received, academic advisors reached out to student-athletes to help them decide what classes they needed to take. Advisors were also equipped with each team's probable

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Kahan Named 101st Editor-In-Chief, Jonas to be Managing Editor

By NAVA KATZ

Ariel Kahan (YC '24) has been selected to be the 101st editor in chief of The Commentator for the 2022-23 academic year by outgoing Editor-in-Chief Sruli Fruchter (YC '22). Fruchter reached out to Kahan at the end of March to discuss the transition, which will officially take place May 11.

Kahan, a rising junior and political science major, came to YU after spending a year and a half at Yeshivat Har Etzion. He began writing for The Commentator his first semester on campus in Spring 2021. By the end of his first semester, he was promoted to the position of junior opinions editor under Naftali Shavelson. In November 2021, he was promoted to senior features editor.

"As a writer and editor, Ariel is creative, intelligent and passionate," shared Fruchter. "His experience in the news, opinions and features represent his breadth of journalistic experience. Under his leadership, the Features section thrived, with high-quality content, wide readership and immense growth. There is no question in

my mind that Ariel should be leading the paper next year."

Kahan shared that his passion for journalism blossomed during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he moved beyond the sports section and began reading the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and the Bergen Record to fill the extra time he had.

"I want to thank everybody in my life who has helped along the way and can't wait to work with the rest of our amazing staff next year."

— Incoming Editor in Chief Ariel Kahan (YC '24)

"Ariel has always been an avid reader of newspapers," attested Kahan's parents when asked for a comment. "For many years he focused mainly on the sports

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FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

In Retrospect

By SRULI FRUCHTER

I was never supposed to come to YU.

Over four years ago, I published my first controversial article in The Jewish Week, writing that “Jewish students have to understand that attending a secular college is okay.” I was the fervent voice that students could, and perhaps should, look elsewhere than the classic schools for Orthodox Jews. It was something I encouraged to others and intended to follow myself. Then my plans began to shift.

The university and program in which I had hoped to enroll told me that I could not defer my offer of admission to take a gap year in Israel. 17 years old and full of internal conflict, I felt ill-prepared to choose between the two. But not choosing was not an option. So, as my senior year of high school neared its end, I turned down the college of my dreams to attend Yeshivat Orayta the following year. That was the best decision I have ever made.

During my time in Israel, the question of what came next did not escape me. It pecked at my mind as my options narrowed and my deadlines neared. Ultimately, in April 2019, I swallowed my pride and sealed the script of irony: I would be going to Yeshiva University.

That was the second best decision I have ever made.

My year at Orayta was transformative, and through it, my goals for university transformed as well. (To be blunt: I mean that I flipped out.) YU had everything I wanted in an institution: top-tier Talmud Torah, a Jewish environment, competitive professional opportunities, serious academics and a strong community. I thought those were enough to fulfill my undergraduate years, but as I now prepare for graduation, I realize that was not the case.

I have some words, and I have some thanks, lessons gleaned from a year I will never forget. It is my hope that they can lead us somewhere better.

The Hebrew word for love is “*ahavah*.” Rav Binny Freedman, one of Orayta’s *roshei yeshiva*, taught us that love is all about giving, pointing out that within “*ahavah*” is the word “*hav*,” to give. The last three years on The Commentator have codified and grown my love for this university. They were my service to the community. They are what define my YU

experience.

There were many times this year when I wanted to quit. When the flood of emails became daunting. When the anxiety of fast-approaching deadlines became overwhelming. When the weight of making consequential decisions became unbearable.

Obviously, that didn’t happen. The reason is as Rav Kook writes in “*Iggrot HaRayah*”: “I am writing not because I have the strength to write but rather because I lack the strength to remain silent.” That is why we at The Commentator consistently wrote about the rape allegations, about LGBTQ issues, about institutional failures and about every other story we would rather have ignored. Our love for Yeshiva University — for what we know it can be — would not allow us to sit quietly.

Now that all comes to a close. In a few days’ time, a new editor in chief and managing editor will rise, and I will join the last 99 editors as a semblance of the past. There is something sad about that permanence, but the passage of time does not ask for permission. But when writing this parting editorial, I wondered: What can I give to you, our readers, our university, in this final article? I have some words, and I have some thanks, lessons gleaned from a year I will never forget. It is my hope that they can lead

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A Reflection: What YU Has To Offer

By DANIEL MELOOL

As I sit here and write what is to be my final piece for The Commentator, I still have trouble believing that my time at YU has come to an end. My senior year has been filled with finales. I have called my final basketball game as a member of MacsLive. My time at The Commentator is slowly winding down. Confronting these facts is difficult, considering that I still vividly remember the first day I arrived on YU’s Wilf Campus – Aug. 20, 2019. That day began a journey for me, a journey whose end didn’t become clear until quite recently. But I am proud to say that this journey has been the best time of my life.

Coming to YU was a big change for me. My high school is by no means a feeder school for YU, though two other boys from my grade have attended with me – an outlier that will likely never be matched. For that matter, not everyone from my high school even attends college. The number of boys who are currently enrolled in or graduating from college can be counted on one or two hands. Though it had some strong points, the high school’s secular education left much

to be desired.

Additionally, I have lived my entire life in the yeshivish world of Brooklyn where YU does not even appear on the radar. YU’s and Modern Orthodoxy’s approval in that community is, shall we say, subpar. The ideas and values they profess are quite different from those of my hometown. For example, the people in my community might support Israel, but they will take a hard stop before referring to themselves as Zionists. Moreover, while the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a revered figure in Modern Orthodox circles, he is unknown in my community. One could only imagine how I felt coming to what is the bedrock

My final words to the students continuing their education at YU are quite simple: Enjoy your time here. As I have noted, there are many opportunities in various fields at this institution.

institution of Modern Orthodox Judaism having lived my entire life in the yeshivish world. Indeed, this was a major paradigm shift for which I was not certain I was prepared.

Thoughts swirled in my head about what the future would look like: Could I succeed in this academic environment with my lack of preparation? Would I be able to make friends despite not having gone to the same high school or yeshiva in Israel as any of the students? These questions and others raced in my mind throughout orientation and the first few weeks of classes.

Eventually, things began to change for the better. I was succeeding in my classes, and I was making new friends along the way. I might have never written a research paper or heard of MLA or AP style guidelines, but with some extra effort, I performed well. Thankfully, I found people with whom I share values and beliefs. I will be leaving this institution having acquired new friends for life.

Along with succeeding in my classes and making friends, I partook in many extracurriculars, my favorite of which has been (of course) The Commentator. Being a student

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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 Vol. 87 of The Commentator

Let's be real: This is the best 7up of this year.



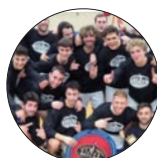
2 Rise Up: The Campaign for 613

We are only \$360 million away from cheaper caf prices. Stand strong.



3 A Return to Normalcy

Going on Facebook during in-person class is way better than virtual class.



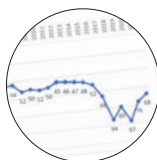
4 50-Game Win Streak

Big stuff is big stuff.



5 Ukraine Humanitarian Mission

Once we got over the excessive LinkedIn posts, we could appreciate this.



6 YU Rising in the Rankings

Can Touro have a glo up like that?! I think not!



7 The Five Torot

What can we say? They're starting to grow on us.

7UP A Year in Review NMODL

Threats and Attacks at YU

The PR team needs to amp up its Torat Chesed advertising.

Disposed Commentator Issues

You can voice your anger in other ways — WE ARE A NEWSPAPER!

COVID Troubles

Bringing it back to when we had no restrictions ... for the first day.

Anti-Vaxx Movement at YU

Entertaining, for sure.

Caf Prices

Is this becoming the new elevator obsession?

Elevator Issues

Oh, wait. This is also its own issue.

7up/7Down Going on Summer Break

You know you're going to miss us. #RiseUp and stay strong.

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



IN RETROSPECT
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us somewhere better.

Good vs. Good for Me

"For me personally, the status quo is actually fine," Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt, a successful and prolific Orthodox journalist, wrote in an Instagram post. "Let's be honest, it can greatly benefit a woman in my position. Just because you have it good, doesn't mean it is inherently good. Because it's not about me. It should never be about 'me.'"

Sometimes I wonder what my years at YU would have been if I had taken a different route: done my class readings, consistently gone to night *seder*, committed minimally to extracurriculars, spent more time for myself, chosen to keep quiet. For me, as Avital wrote, things are naturally set to be really good. I have close friends, inspiring *rebbeim* and professors, and I enjoy my *shiur* and classes. Few things will disrupt that for me. But things should not always be about me.

In The Commentator's work, we sought to look beyond the "me" that pervades our experiences. The planets may stand strong in our personal orbits, but that tells us nothing about the orbits of others.

During my tenure, I was privileged to meet students challenged in ways I could never imagine, facing problems that I hope to never face. Those meetings turned them from abstract ideas into real people with real challenges. I wonder what our communities would look like, what our priorities would look like, if we paid more attention to the more vulnerable among us. It is much easier to dispel issues when you don't see the people affected by them. It makes it much easier to only consider "me."

We are taught, "All Jews are guarantors for one another" (Shevuot 39a). That is something we should not take lightly.

Find Your Chachamim

My ego would love to believe that I have all the answers. Sometimes I like to think that I do, and then I am quickly humbled. Over my time on the paper, I learned the importance of knowing when and what I do not know. Successfully navigating those impasses relies on Rambam's teaching (Hilchot Deot 2:1) that we each need *chachamim* — balanced

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A REFLECTION
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journalist was not something I could have imagined coming into YU. I never quite envisioned myself as a writer. For that matter, my writing started off as abysmal. But I jumped into this new opportunity to see where it would take me, and it has taken me to new heights.

The importance of student journalism in highlighting the virtues and flaws in an administration has been demonstrated by this paper time and again. Throughout my years on the paper, some of the biggest changes undertaken by the YU administration have been influenced by Commentator pieces. Whether it was the administration's changing the dining plan, changing course to hold an in-person commencement or providing clear guidelines and resources to ensure student safety, The Commentator has led the way. Besides being a force for change, The Commentator also plays a role in giving the student body a voice. There are thousands of students at this institution, each of whom has their individual perspectives on various topics. Elevating those perspectives makes for a better environment and allows us to tackle pressing issues forthwith. In many ways, working for The Commentator feels more like a part-time

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YU Hosts Inaugural Wexner Kollel Elyon Conference on Shemittah Values in Modern World

By YONATAN KURZ

The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) hosted the inaugural Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon Conference in conjunction with Mizrahi America on the Wilf Campus on Sunday, May 1.

The conference, titled “Beyond Agriculture: The Values of Shemittah in the Modern World,” included both an introduction from President Ari Berman and opening remarks from Susan Wexner, followed by keynote addresses from Rabbi Mordechai Willig, the *rosh yeshiva* and *rosh kollel* of the Wexner Kollel Elyon, and Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, *rosh kollel* at Yeshivat Har Etzion and chief rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council.

Following the keynote addresses were presentations in breakout rooms from the members of the kollel, who provided Torah perspectives on modern topics. Some examples included “The Moral Implications of Debt Transfer” by Rabbi Shimmie Steinmetz; “Bankruptcy in Halacha, Morality, and the Ideal Jewish Society” by Rabbi Tzvi Benoff; and “Capitalism vs. Socialism: The Torah’s View of Private Ownership” by Rabbi Meir Finkelstein. Rabbis Shua Katz, Robbie Schrier, Ben Zion Feld, Tyler Pere and Shai Kaminitzky also presented during the

“We don’t live in a laboratory under controlled conditions. Oftentimes, there are crossroads of conflicting values that must be balanced through the discerning, immutable light of the Torah”

—
Rabbi Tzvi Benoff



Members of the Wexner Kollel Elyon pose with President Ari Berman, Rosh Kollel Rabbi Mordechai Willig and other roshei yeshiva

breakout sessions.

This conference comes on the heels of a trip organized by YC Jewish Studies Adjunct Professor Rabbi Ari Bergmann featuring nine undergraduate students as well as three RIETS *semikha* and Kollel Elyon members to Israel in January to advocate for the concept of an Otzar Beit Din for the *Shemittah* year. Rabbis Hershel Schachter, Elchanan Adler, Daniel Feldman, Tanchum Cohen, UTS Dean Yosef Kalinsky and RIETS Dean Rabbi Menachem Penner also joined the trip.

Wexner Kollel Elyon Member and participant of the *Shemittah* trip Rabbi Tzvi Benoff was grateful for the occasion to present. “It was an incredible opportunity to explore and share how the timeless precepts of *Yiddishkeit* address the contemporary issues of our rapidly changing world,” he remarked. “We don’t live in a laboratory under controlled conditions. Oftentimes, there are crossroads of conflicting values that must be balanced through the discerning, immutable light of the Torah as refracted through the fractured lens of our revered *mesorah*. It takes rigorous Torah scholarship, *yiras shamayim*, and *ahavas Yisrael* to approach the issue in our nation’s eternal quest to triangulate the *ratzon hatorah*.”

STENHOUSE HOLTZ DEANS

Continued from Front Page

Once Holtz steps down, he will conduct research related to his field of Assyriology and biblical studies, before returning to teach classes at YC in Fall 2023.

The university hosted a “Dinner with the Deans” event on May 3 at the Sky Cafe, located on the twelfth floor of Belfer Hall, discussing the transition and the Fall 2022 semester schedule.

The event featured a “dialogue” between Holtz and Stenhouse, a question and answer session, and featured Deans Bacon, Sugarman, Holtz and Stenhouse as speakers. A Carlos & Gabby’s dinner was served to the attending students.

“I’m looking forward to serving Yeshiva University in my capacity as a researcher and a member of the faculty,” Holtz shared

with The Commentator.

As dean, Holtz broadened the YC core curriculum to give more flexibility and choices to undergraduate students and oversaw promotions and tenure appointments for faculty, two areas he pointed to as his proudest achievements.

“He knows Yeshiva College and is truly devoted to the faculty and students. His appointment represents a strong vote of confidence in the future of the College.”

—
Associate Dean for Student Affairs Fred Sugarman

Stenhouse sees much work ahead of him as dean, with a focus on evaluating

lessons learned during the pandemic, such as virtual learning, to best support students. Additionally, YC will look to grow in the future, using recommendations from Middle States, a college accrediting group, which is scheduled to visit next year. The provost’s office is currently preparing a report for their

Stenhouse told The Commentator, “but I look forward to working with the faculty, Dean Bacon and Dean Sugarman.”

Administration members are excited about Stenhouse’s promotion. “Dr. Stenhouse is tremendously well-regarded by Faculty and students, a first-rate academic and someone who has led the Academic Standards Committee for the past three years,” Associate Dean for Student Affairs Fred Sugarman shared.

He continued, “He knows Yeshiva College and is truly devoted to the faculty and students. His appointment represents a strong vote of confidence in the future of the College.”

upcoming visit, Stenhouse shared.

“Dean Holtz’s are big shoes to fill,”

KAHAN, JONAS

Continued from Front Page

section, but in recent years we have seen how voraciously he devours news and opinion pieces.”

Kahan is looking forward to assuming the role. “I am honored and humbled to be promoted to this great position,” he shared. “I would like to specifically thank Sruli, who is the best mentor a person can ever ask for. I don’t think it’s possible for anyone to fill the shoes that he left, but being able to learn from him is one of the greatest privileges in my YU career. Additionally, I want to thank everybody in my life who has helped along the way and can’t wait to work with the rest of our amazing staff next year.”

The position of managing editor for next year will be held by Seffi Jonas (YC ‘23). The rising senior and English major started writing for The Commentator this year, and was soon promoted to the editorial board as a junior opinions editor.

“I’m obviously really excited to work with Ariel,” Jonas commented. “He’s not only an extremely talented editor, but he also has great ideas to improve the paper and the school. He is a huge asset for this paper

and for YU more broadly. Coming from the opinions section, I hope the paper will be the ideological home for lovers of YU, but also for people who want to pitch their ideas on where YU can improve. We want this paper and this school to be top tier.”

“Consistently recruiting and editing diverse and important articles, he strengthened the Opinions section as a platform for the community’s voice,” said Fruchter about Jonas. “Outside of his formal work, Seffi cares deeply about YU. He is the editor for the managing editor job.”

Outgoing Managing Editor Daniel Melool (YC ‘22) also expressed his support for the board. “Having worked with everyone on the incoming editorial board, I have full confidence that they will continue the indispensable work that makes The Commentator so crucial to the student body,” he said.

Kahan will be replaced by Rivka Bennun (SCW ‘24) as senior features editor. Other senior editors of the 2022-23 board include Jonathan Levin (YC ‘24) as senior news editor, Avigail Greenberg (SCW ‘24) as senior opinions editor and Aliza Leichter (SSSB

‘23) as senior business editor. Leichter will be the Business section’s first Beren editor.

“The Commentator is an avenue to serve the institution and community we call home,” said Fruchter. “Next year’s board

is composed of YU’s finest journalists and students who are ready, willing and able to embrace this important responsibility. With God’s help, they should find unbound success.”



Incoming Editor-In-Chief Ariel Kahan (right) and Managing Editor Seffi Jonas (left)

THE COMMENTATOR

Spring 2022 Wilf Election Results Released

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Student election results for Yeshiva Student Union (YSU), Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY), Yeshiva College Student Council (YCSC) and Syms Student Council (SYMSSC) positions on Wilf Campus were released shortly after midnight on May 4, less than two hours after polls were closed. Additionally, all six amendments on the ballot were passed and will now be incorporated into the constitution.

751 out of 1103 eligible students voted, and all but two races had winners declared.

In executive YSU races, Baruch Lerman (YC '23) was elected president, Moshe Nasser (SSSB '24) vice president of clubs and Benny

“Baruch Hashem this year was amazing and I hope to continue Elazar's legacy by working tirelessly for the student body,” he continued.

Halbert, elected SYMSSC president, felt similarly. “I would like to thank my friends, family, and voters for their support throughout this election process, and I am excited for what my Syms team and the rest of the student council will accomplish,” he told The Commentator.

“If this election process has taught me anything,” Halbert continued, “it is that hard work, dedication, grit, and endurance are key to achieving one's goals. As your president, I will apply this valuable lesson to all the work I do for my constituents.”

“I am excited for what my Syms team and the rest of the student council will accomplish.”

Yoel (Cody) Halbert (SSSB '23), president-elect of Syms Student Council

Klein (YC '24) vice president of class affairs.

In YSU class and school representative races, Zachary Notkin (YC '24) was elected junior representative after Joseph Greenberg (SSSB '24), who garnered the most votes, intentionally disqualified himself from the race; Moshe Cohen (Katz '22) as Katz representative and Akiva Sasson as Makor representative. The race for senior class representative was inconclusive as no write-in candidate secured at least twenty votes.

In YCSC races, Romi Harcsztark (YC '23) was elected president, Jacob Tollinsky (YC '24) vice president and Dov Schulman (YC '23) treasurer.

In SYMSSC races, Yoel (Cody) Halbert (SSSB '23) was elected president, Ezra Emerson (SSSB '23) vice president and Moshe Benhamu (SSSB '23) treasurer.

In SOY executive races, Ephraim Klein (YC '23) was elected president, Asher Schreier (YC '23) vice president, and Yedidiya Schechter (YC '24) as Wilf Campus's first vice president of chesed.

In SOY school representative races, Jacob Sundel (YC '24) was elected Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) representative, Yaakov Baker (YC '24) as Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies (IBC) representative, and Oze Botach (YC '24) as James Striar School of General Jewish Studies (JSS) representative. The race for Irving I. Stone Beis Medrash Program (SBMP) was inconclusive as no write-in candidate secured at least twenty votes.

“I'm incredibly thankful to Hashem, and for my family, friends, and all the wonderful people who have helped me get here. To the Wilf Campus Student Body: Thank you for electing me — I won't let you down,” Lerman, elected YSU president, told The Commentator.

Schechter, Wilf's first vice president of chesed, which replaced SOY's public relations secretary position, spoke about his role and future plans. “My mission is to bring the value of the importance and cruciality of chesed to the forefront of people's minds in YU and to guide our fellow students towards thinking and viewing our daily lives with a chesed oriented lens,” he told The Commentator.

“This will be by organizing events, think tanks, *sichas mussars*, and speakers with *roshei yeshiva* and respected teachers and leaders, in addition to organizing volunteering opportunities and trips to express this value of chesed.”

“As always, this was a busy election season, with all student council positions on the ballot,” Natan Ehrenreich (YC '23), chair of the canvassing committee, told The Commentator. “We had excellent turnout numbers, and I think that speaks to the quality of the candidates who ran.”

Daniel Melool contributed to this story

Candidates

The following is a breakdown of the election results with vote totals and percentage of votes per candidate:

YSU President

Baruch Lerman - 392 (60%)
Eitan Northman - 194 (30%)

YSU Vice President of Clubs

Moshe Nasser - 513 (84%)

YSU Vice-President of Class Affairs

Others felt similarly. “The priority registration is very important for us student-athletes because it allows us to get the right balance between playing sports for the university and working hard with the academic side,” Asher Martin (SSSB '24), a player on the men's soccer team, said.

He continued, “It means no conflicts with matches and academic classes and allows us to really excel at both sides of the university.”

Benny Klein - 291 (47%)
Jacob (Koby) Rosinsky - 188 (30%)
Isaac Silverman - 87 (14%)

YSU Senior Representative

Write-In - 111 (100%)

Breakdown of Write-ins

Netanel Kramer - 16
Seffi Jonas - 14

Race inconclusive as no candidate received twenty write-in votes

YSU Junior Representative

Joseph Greenberg - 108 (54%)
Zachary Notkin - 80 (40%)

Joseph Greenberg intentionally disqualified himself from the race and Zachary Notkin was elected with the second-highest tally of votes

YSU Katz Representative

Moshe F. Cohen - 2 (33%)
Write-In - 4 (67%)

Breakdown of Write-ins

Moshe Muehlgay - 2

Given that 20 write-in votes are required to allow a write-in candidate to declare victory, Moshe Cohen won this race

YSU Makor Representative

Akiva Sasson - 7 (100%)

YCSC President

Romi Harcsztark - 136 (48.23%)
David Lifschitz - 134 (47.52%)

YCSC Vice-President

Jacob Tollinsky - 162 (58%)
Sammy Intrator - 99 (36%)

YCSC Treasurer

Doc Schulman - 122 (50.00%)
Yitzhak Graff - 105 (43.03%)

SYMSSC President

Yoel (Cody) Halbert - 157 (42.43%)
Josh Hirt - 136 (36.76%)
Elie Burg - 66 (17.84%)

SYMSSC Vice President

Ezra Emerson - 134 (40.00%)
David Price - 133 (39.70%)
Andrew Warren - 53 (15.82%)

SYMSSC Treasurer

Moshe Benhamu - 265 (83.07%)

SOY President

Ephraim Klein - 427 (67.03%)
Ethan Schuman - 168 (26.37%)

SOY Vice President

Asher Schreier - 555 (90.98%)

SOY Vice President of Chesed

Yedidiya Schechter - 328 (52.90%)
Adam Goldfeder - 249 (40.16%)

SOY MYP Representative

Jacob Sundel - 257 (89.24%)

SOY SBMP Representative

Write In - 89 (100%)

Breakdown of Write-Ins

Jacob Katz - 14
Gavi Ciment - 8
Eddie Tawil - 8

Race inconclusive as no candidate received twenty write-in votes

SOY IBC Representative

Yakov Baker - 72 (86.75%)

SOY JSS Representative

Oze Botach - 15 (39.47%)
Eli Izhaky - 14 (36.84%)
Eli Anina - 8 (21.05%)

Amendments

The following is a breakdown of the vote totals and percentages for the amendments to the Wilf Student Constitution:

Amendment 1 (Edits for Consistency)

PASSED
Yea - 256 (81.27%)
Nay - 59 (18.73%)

Amendment 2 (Clarifying Intent-to-Run Process)

PASSED
Yea - 628 (77.46%)
Nay - 78 (22.54%)

Amendment 3 (Eliminate Fall Amendments Convention)

PASSED
Yea - 186 (61.39%)
Nay - 117 (38.61%)

Amendment 4 (Changing Budgetary Accounting Release Requirement to be Monthly)

PASSED
Yea - 282 (78.12%)
Nay - 79 (21.88%)

Amendment 5 (Index Fund Freeze for Failure to Comply with Budgetary Accounting Release Requirement)

PASSED
Yea - 236 (69.62%)
Nay - 103 (30.38%)

Amendment 6 (No Discrimination from Canvassing Committee Between Requirements for a Position)

PASSED
Yea - 240 (74.07%)
Nay - 84 (25.93%)

STUDENT-ATHLETE PRIORITY REGISTRATION

Continued from Front Page

practice and game schedule. Students who failed to respond and schedule a meeting with their advisors “may be subject to a Registration hold for failure to meet with an advisor.”

Some students had a lot of trouble focusing on academics and their teams, and were pleased with the move. “It was so hard for us to stay on top of our sports and academics schedules. I had to miss some important games in order to stay on top of my school work,” Tova Hakakian (SCW '24), a player on the women's softball team, shared with The Commentator.

Student Court Rules Three Constitutional Amendments Unconstitutional

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Three clauses of the Constitution of the Yeshiva University Wilf Campus Undergraduate Student Body were declared to have been passed unconstitutionally last year, the Student Court of the Yeshiva University Wilf Campus ruled on April 27 in a case titled Wilf Amendments Committee v General Assembly (GA).

The first two clauses stipulate that the General Assembly, by majority vote, must approve a student official taking temporary leave and that it can file for the dissolution of any Wilf Campus Student Government club to the Office of Student Life. The third clause declared unconstitutional stipulated that the ratification of any proposed amendments would require 40% of students to participate in the election.

The court's ruling has two implications: One, all proposed amendments no longer require approval from the Amendments Committee, which now serves a secretarial role. Two, in the future, proposed amendments must be voted on and approved by the General Assembly one week before the student election, or risk being declared unconstitutional.

The matter settled by the court case dates back to the 2020-21 academic year. Previous readings of the constitution, which the court now invalidated, stipulated that the Amendments Committee needed to approve proposed amendments, which subsequently, in their final form, would be voted on at least one week before the election by the General

Assembly to decide if they should show up on the ballot. Once on the ballot, students would decide whether to approve the proposals and incorporate them as clauses in the constitution.

Last year, not following the Amendments Committee, then-Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB '21) submitted four of seven proposed amendments — originally rejected by the committee — to be voted on by the General Assembly.

According to court documents, Greenberg's approval of the rejected amendment proposals was requested by the then Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) representative of the Irving I. Stone Beis Medrash Program (SBMP), who had originally submitted the proposals to the Amendments Committee at the start.

After the General Assembly approved three of these to appear on the ballot, occurring six days before the election, the Amendments Committee filed suit with the student court to prevent its inclusion.

The court declined to hear the case, allowing the election to proceed, and the amendments were approved and incorporated into the constitution.

In an emergency resolution this April 7, a vote to strike one of these clauses — the one stipulating that 40% of the student body was required to vote to ratify new amendments — failed to secure the 80% threshold required for emergency amendment votes, as outlined in the constitution.

Four days later, on April 11, David Tanner (YC '22) filed a second suit against the

General Assembly in student court on behalf of the Amendments Committee, which he chairs, requesting that they rehear the case it rejected last year.

On April 15, four days later, the General Assembly filed a brief with the student court requesting it "overrule" the General Assembly's own actions "post-facto" and remove the amendments passed the previous year, which the General Assembly recognized as "illegal," from the constitution.

The General Assembly's brief argued that in the previous year, it had illegally bypassed the Amendments Committee, had illegally changed the text of the proposals in the middle of its vote and had voted to approve the proposals after the one-week deadline had passed. Based on these arguments, filed as its third, fourth and fifth arguments, the General Assembly requested that the student court strike the clauses from the constitution.

On April 27, the student court made its decision, ruling unanimously that the clauses were illegally passed due to the General Assembly having failed to approve them before the one-week deadline, consenting to the fifth argument from the General Assembly's brief.

However, rejecting their third and fourth argument, the court stated that the Amendments Committee serves a secretarial role and that no clause in the constitution empowers them to approve proposed amendments before sending them to the General Assembly.

In practice, the court's ruling declared that the General Assembly can create new proposed amendments and edit preexisting

ones without the input or approval of the Amendments Committee.

This case also witnessed the student court partially overruling a previous case, Yeshiva University Canvassing Committee v YSU, dated to the 2019-20 academic year. This is the first known instance of the student court overruling a previous court's decision.

In Yeshiva University Canvassing Committee v YSU, the student court ruled that amendment proposals must be deliberated by a constitutional convention, allowing students to raise any of their opinions and propose new amendments. The court's partial overruling of that case declares that amendments need not be deliberated at such a convention.

After the court made its decision, the student court's chief justice, Daniel Melool (YC '22), authored a concurrence, joined by justices Adam Auerbach (YC '22) and Akiva Cooper (YC '23). Melool issued two points, the first being that court decisions are not final and can be subject to court decisions in the future. Additionally, Melool wrote that in practice, the court does not order unconstitutional amendments to be struck from the constitution, but just won't enforce them. (Disclosure: Melool is managing editor of The Commentator. He was not involved in the reporting or editing of this article.)

Tanner was pleased with the court's decision. He told The Commentator, "I'm glad the court ruled in favor of the Amendments Committee and that the illegally passed amendments have been deemed unconstitutional."

Gerri Mansdorf, Previous Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Returns to YU as the Assistant Vice President of Enrollment

By CHAIM BOOK

Gerri Mansdorf, the previous director of undergraduate admissions, returned to YU as the assistant vice president of enrollment this February, The Commentator learned. Mansdorf left her previous post in September 2020.

"It is difficult to escape the gravitational pull that YU has on anyone who has been a part of the institution in any capacity."

Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Gerri Mansdorf

Her new capacity as assistant vice president of enrollment involves supporting and advising the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, the University Registrar and the Office of International Students. Mansdorf hopes to create collaborative partnerships within and between those offices and other offices within the university.

As the previous director, Mansdorf made greater use of technology and social media to recruit new students, leading the undergraduate admissions office in a new direction and increasing its footprint. The Commentator reported in December 2020.

After almost a year and a half away from YU, Mansdorf was approached by the Marketing and Communications Office and agreed to return this February. "It is difficult

to escape the gravitational pull that YU has on anyone who has been a part of the institution in any capacity," she said. "As much as I was enjoying my new position and the

flexibility that it offered, I was intrigued by the opportunity to contribute to Yeshiva in a new capacity."

"I am thrilled to be able to work for and with Mrs. Mansdorf again," Director of High School Recruitment and Admissions Marc Zharnest said. "Her knowledge and vision for our department are unparalleled and I look forward to continue to have her mentorship."

In September 2020 Mansdorf stepped down from her position and later worked as the director of faculty recruitment for the Yeshivah of Flatbush. "The pull of family was strong," she told The Commentator, "and I felt that it was time to explore other options which might allow more flexibility." Upon her leave, Zharnest was named acting director and was later promoted to his current position as YU's director of undergraduate recruitment.

Mansdorf is enthusiastic about returning to work with her former co-workers. "I felt privileged to have had a tenure of nearly 16 years at Yeshiva. My time here allowed me to grow as a professional and at the same time learn so much from our esteemed deans, *rebbeim* and faculty," Mansdorf remarked. "It has been a truly humbling experience to enjoy the warm welcome and camaraderie of former colleagues for whom I have only the greatest respect, as we begin our important work together once again."



Gerri Mansdorf, former director of undergraduate admissions, has returned.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Ishay Ribo to Perform at YU Rise Up Siyum and Concert

By **ARIEL KAHAN**

Yeshiva University will host a *siyum* and concert on May 26 at the Arthur Ashe Stadium in Queens, New York, followed by a concert by popular Israeli singer Ishay Ribo as part of its Rise Up campaign. Akiva and Alex Clare will also star as guest singers.

Doors are expected to open at 6:30 p.m., followed by the *siyum* at 7:45 and the concert at 8 p.m. The concert is expected to be an hour and a half to two hours long. The *siyum* is part of YU's new initiative for its students to learn different parts of Torah and make a *siyum*. Much of the initiative relates to the goal of allowing YU students to incorporate learning into their day even after graduation.

As of May 3, regular tickets for the concert were sold out. The cheapest tickets sold for \$50 while the most expensive tickets went for up to \$230, according to ticketmaster.

Premium tickets, which include preferred

seating and a chance to meet Ribo off-stage after the concert, are still available at a cost of \$1,000. Corporate sponsorships, which range from \$5,000 to \$100,000, are available as well.

The event is part of the larger Rise Up fundraising campaign that YU has launched this year. The "Rise Up" campaign seeks to raise \$613 million over the next five years to meet the evolving needs of YU students

in YU history thanks to the events team," Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) President Elazar Abrahams (YC '22) shared with The Commentator.

"We're all really excited to dance and celebrate together later this month," Abrahams continued.

Other students were similarly excited. "I can't wait to enjoy the concert with my friends," said Daniel Malinsky (YC '23), who is planning on attending. "It is a great way to celebrate the end of finals and complete a successful year."

Transportation will be provided for all YU undergraduate students leaving from Wilf and Beren campuses. Those not eligible for transportation are able to park in Lot B of the Citi Field parking lot for \$25.

In accordance with the updated health guidelines of the UTSA Billie Jean King Tennis center, attendees will not be required to mask or show proof of vaccination.

"What started as a pipe dream between student council and OSL is now going to be one of the biggest gatherings in YU history thanks to the events team."

YSU President Elazar Abrahams

There will be kosher food options on site including Kosherboyz Grill, Rita's Italian Ice and Frozen Custard and others selling light refreshments. Outside food and drink may be brought into the venue. Accessible seating and ushers will be available to assist individuals with disabilities. Separate seating will also be available.

and faculty, create more innovative and entrepreneurial initiatives and develop state-of-the-art facilities.

Planning for this event was done by the student council and the Office of Student Life (OSL). "What started as a pipe dream between student council and OSL is now going to be one of the biggest gatherings

YU Raises \$210,000 in Donations for Ukrainian Refugees After Herenstiens Match Funds

By **ELISHAMA MARMON**

Terri and Andrew Herenstein, the founding donors behind the Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership, matched the \$105,000 raised by YU students to help Ukrainian refugees hosted by Vienna's Jewish community.

The money was sent by Yeshiva University's finance department just before Pesach and was used to provide food, housing, clothing and other general and holiday needs for the over 800 refugees that Vienna's Jewish community has taken in.

This fundraising effort was a part of "Operation Torat Chesed," the mission to help Ukrainian refugees fleeing from the Russian invasion. YU students campaigned on various platforms to try to raise the money, and 480 people stepped forward to donate over \$105,000 dollars to the cause. In addition to the fundraising effort, YU previously sent 28 students and two administrators to Vienna to assist the refugees over the week of Purim, which the Herenstiens joined.

"I believe the Herensteins decided to match the student campaign because they were very proud of the hard work students did in getting the word out, in writing,

posting, tweeting and making videos about the trip and the campaign to feed Jewish refugees," Dr. Erica Brown, founding director of its Sacks-Herenstein Center told The Commentator.

Yedidya Schechter (YC '24), one of the students who went on the Vienna trip, reflected on his time there with the Herensteins. He said "They personally

played games with refugee kids, talked and cheered up the adults and genuinely expressed their care and thoughtfulness to all they encountered."

"They had even brought a bag of cookies to personally distribute to the YU students on the long plane ride," Schechter added.

Oskar Deutsch, the president of the Jewish community in Vienna, sent a video

on behalf of the community thanking the students, President Ari Berman and the Herensteins for supporting their efforts to save the lives of these refugees.

"We have answered the call of the highest Jewish value: *pikuach nefesh*, the protection of life," said Deutsch in the video. "Each and every one of you [students] lives up to this value."



YU students pose with President Ari Berman in Vienna, on a relief mission for Ukrainian refugees.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

News Briefs

Post Pesach COVID-19 Testing Changes, Inaugural Leadership Scholar Cohort Announced

By **YONATAN KURZ**

This article was published online on April 15.

Post-Pesach COVID-19 Testing Changes

A change in university COVID-19 policies will take place after the Pesach break, including switching all tests to rapid antigen, introducing a mandatory testing requirement once classes resume in place of submission of external tests before arriving to campus and the relocation of testing to Furst Hall room 501 on Wilf Campus.

According to the email outlining these changes, students will not be required to submit a test to return to campus, because "return to campus tests taken over Pesach are unlikely to pick up COVID infections." However, students will be required to test on one of the first two days that classes resume, with student IDs being deactivated on the evening of April 26 for those that don't.

A notable change on Wilf Campus will be the relocation of testing from Belfer Hall room 921 to Furst Hall room 501, where testing had taken place last year and earlier this year. Testing on Beren Campus will remain at 215 Lexington room 501.

Additionally, beginning after the Pesach

break, the university will be returning to using NAVICA rapid antigen tests for weekly testing. Students must present the unique QR code from the downloaded NAVICA app to the testing site administrators in order to test, according to the email sent to students. Previously, if students did not have the app, they were required to add their names on a Microsoft Excel sheet at the testing site.

YU Announces Inaugural Cohort of Leadership Scholars

Ten current and incoming Yeshiva University students were announced as the inaugural cohort of Leadership Scholars,

the Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership reported in a digital newsletter sent through email to undergraduate students on April 12.

The cohort, composed of five women and five men who showed leadership potential through communal service and activism, will develop and hone "their leadership skills through seminars, mentorship opportunities and travel programs," Dr. Erica Brown, director of the Sacks-Herenstein Center, said in the release.

This announcement comes following the launch event of the Sacks-Herenstein Center, held in Wilf Campus's Lamport Auditorium on April 3.

The Out-of-Town In-Towner: Rabbi David Bashevkin and Authentic Religious Experience

By ARIEL KAHAN

This was not the response I assumed I would get when I asked Rabbi David Bashevkin where he sent his children to day school. However, nothing about my sit-down with Rabbi Bashevkin went as expected. 18Forty was not mentioned once. Twitter essentially didn't exist. The subject of the discussion started with North Adams, Massachusetts and ended with the conclusion that *bochurim* in Ner Yisrael know how to be *mevatel Torah* in healthier ways than YU guys.

Most people who have heard of or know Rabbi Bashevkin on a superficial level would assume he is a typical person from Lawrence, NY, who grew up influenced by the regular social norms of the community. This could not be farther from the truth. "Who I am as a human being comes from the upbringing of my parents," he said. "My religious life is a composite of the generational reaction of my parents to their parents." Bashevkin believes his parents' unique cultural background of budding Orthodoxy in small-town America in the '50s and '60s has made him the person he is. The organic and unique influence they brought to his childhood through an authentic and pure form of religious growth nurtured in a small town sticks with Bashevkin until today.

Indeed, Bashevkin's parents grew up with a less traditional background than many of his contemporaries. His father hails from North Adams, Mass. Bashevkin's grandparents on his father's side were less educated and observant. His bubby (grandmother) did not read Hebrew and his Zaidy (grandfather) worked on Shabbos until his retirement. However, they were deeply committed to Jewish values in an authentic and pure form. Bubby would travel to a Price Chopper supermarket in Albany to buy kosher meat. They stressed the importance of all their kids marrying Jews.

Bashevkin's background is also untraditional on his mother's side. His grandfather graduated Chofetz Chaim and was a rabbi in Portland, Maine, where his mother grew up. Ultimately, Bashevkin's parents decided they wanted more infrastructure in communities more deeply rooted in *halachik* observance. Yet the Bashevkins never forgot to instill within their children the importance of independent commitment to Jewish education and the wholesome organic religiosity that their upbringings fostered. "I couldn't go off the *derech* if I tried," said Bashevkin.

This balance of community infrastructure and organic small town Judaism is the balance Bashevkin seeks to balance in his own house. "I try to take the average of organic plus education," he explained. "It is likely that we have moved too far into the direction of the educational pedigrees as the sole arbiter of one's religious character."

Bashevkin described our contemporary Orthodox world as "airplane food and not home-baked." He explained that it feels like it was made to serve mass production. Yet Bashevkin's religious search is for a sincere religious moment in his life. "Religious life is so programmed, and a private moment of religious service and practice are harder to find," he commented.

However, Bashevkin's religious outlook and search for authenticity were not merely shaped by his parents' upbringing in western Massachusetts and southern Maine. It was shaped for four years in central Maryland, where he studied in the hallowed halls of

Ner Yisrael.

Bashevkin went to Ner Yisrael right after his years in Yeshivat Shaalvim. Although when he first arrived he was an outsider, by the time he left, he was "considered one of them." He went in with a large cohort of students from Modern Orthodox schools who excelled in yeshiva. His morning seder *chavrusa* married Rabbi Moshe Tendler's

that they only have 5 hours a day to learn and be *shtark*," he said. Bashevkin believes that the learning at YU is tremendous and that students leave YU and "know a *velt* (world) of Torah." However, the culture of hock and schmoozing in the context of Yeshiva between people who share a purpose is special, and Bashevkin thinks it is much more prevalent in Ner.

Yeshiva community into his daily life.

"It doesn't matter." Where Bashevkin sends his kids to school is not important because he has a different relationship with education. "It's a decision we took seriously, but the role of my kids' schooling turns it into a personality that is systematic and inauthentic," and that is not what Bashevkin wants. He wants his kids to be exposed to many different communities and influences that allow them to grow purely and organically.

Bashevkin believes that a lot of the exposure to his organic background is done through family. "We have a very diverse family," he explained. "I have a *chareidi* sister, a sister in the Five Towns, a sister in Edison, and an uncle in Bennington, Vermont. I have cousins across the religious spectrum. I make it a point to expose my kids to all family members because that's the best way to create a family connection."

Whether it has been through his roots in small-town Massachusetts and southern Maine or his time learning in the hallowed halls of Ner Yisrael, Bashevkin has always tried to create his own religious growth, fostered by independence and bravery to diverge from communal expectations. "There is a place to have courage and live fearlessly. Anyone has a point where they can lean into the norms and desires of a community and a point where they can say we are doing things a little differently." And that has shaped who he is today and how he raises his own children.

"There is a place to have courage and live fearlessly. Anyone has a point where they can lean into the norms and desires of a community and a point where they can say we are doing things a little differently."

Rabbi David Bashevkin

daughter.

Most of all, Bashevkin appreciated the authentic experience he got at Ner. "Ner Yisrael is a self-contained campus. Everyone stays for Shabbos, and after Succos, you stay until Chanukkah," he explained. Bashevkin believes this created bonding with a *chevra* (friend group), creating a wholesome and warm atmosphere. Similarly, Bashevkin appreciated the authenticity of a group solely committed to Torah. "There is a real culture of movement and the way people speak," he noted. "A culture of commitment and dedication to learning. And a dedication to healthy *bitul Torah*."

Interestingly, Bashevkin noted that much of this authentic Yeshiva culture, and even the culture of healthy *bitul Torah*, is missing in YU. "YU is a very adversarial culture between *beis medrash* and the rest of your life because people have such little time

"I don't think guys in YU know how to be a *mevatel Torah* like Yeshiva guys," Bashevkin said. "There is a holiness in the way a Yeshiva guy knows how to be *mevatel Torah*. A walk with a *chavrusa*, a hock session in the coffee room. Learning how to take a *geshmak beis nap* or Shabbos nap."

"In YU, guys need to grow out of a Shana Aleph and Shana Bet mentality," he remarked. "Because *chevra* growth is not as much a factor in YU, many guys cling onto the Shana Aleph/Shana Bet model."

After four years, Bashevkin left Ner because he thought the community he could serve best would help integrate his religious and professional identity. All his friends in Ner became doctors and dentists. But becoming a rabbi in that community is harder — if he wanted to become a dentist, he probably would have stayed in Baltimore. He still tries to incorporate the authenticity of the



Rabbi David Bashevkin is an out-of-town in-towner.

RABBI DAVID BASHEVKIN

The Fight for Philosophy in Medieval Provence

By DOV PFEIFFER

Often, medieval Jewry is conceived through the simple binary of Ashkenaz and Sefard. However, this binary view erases many distinct regional identities that existed at the time. One of these is the unique culture of medieval Provence, located in Southern France, which by and large combined commitment to Judaism with the belief that this was enhanced in conjunction with general wisdom.

Much of this article is based on Moshe Halbertal's "Bein Torah l'Chochmah" and Howard Kreisel's "Judaism as Philosophy: Studies in Maimonides and the Medieval Jewish Philosophers of Provence."

The unique culture of medieval Provence "by and large combined commitment to Judaism with the belief that this was enhanced in conjunction with general wisdom."

Halbertal, in his introduction, chronicles the development of Provence's philosophical culture through the arrival of many Spanish Jewish families fleeing Almohad persecution, as well as the ties forged between Ri MiLunel and Rambam, culminating in the translation of the Moreh Nevuchim (Guide of the Perplexed) into Hebrew.

A primary agent of this change was the ibn Tibbon family. Upon his arrival in Provence, Yehudah ibn Tibbon translated many works of Jewish philosophy from Arabic to Hebrew, including Chovot HaLevavot and the Kuzari. His son, Shmuel, best known for his translation of Rambam's Moreh Nevuchim, was also an extremely

influential philosopher, whose Ma'amar Yikavu Hamayim and commentary on Kohelet were widely read in Provence. In those works, he presents radical approaches to harmonize Aristotle and the Torah. For example, he develops a theory wherein the world is in a constant natural cycle between being submerged in water and drying up to reveal land, which he felt harmonized Aristotelian science with biblical creation. His writings founded an interpretive movement commonly called Maimonideanism which is notable for its broad use of allegory, esoteric reading, and radical Aristotelian beliefs. Shmuel's son, Moshe, followed after his father, translating many works, including Rambam's Sefer Hamitzvot, Euclid's Elements and several works of Averroes. He also wrote various works, including

allegorical-philosophical commentaries on Shir HaShirim, and on many *aggadot*. He is cited extensively in Rabbi Levi ben Avraham's Livyat Chen. Another important Tibbonide, Jacob Anatoli, wrote a collection of sermons on the weekly *parsha* titled Malmad Hatalmidim. This work frequently employs allegory and is devoted to Maimonidean thought. Although it was somewhat controversial in other locales, with Rashba strongly criticizing the work, it gained tremendous popularity, even being utilized in homilies written by Rashba's own students.

As these philosophical trends developed, the *halakha*-focused rabbis of Provence responded in various ways. Halbertal chronicles how talmudists from Provence accepted Rambam's philosophical writings, though

they generally seem to have followed a less radical path than Shmuel ibn Tibbon. An extreme example of this sort of conservative approach is that of Rabbi Meir ben Shimon Hameili. In an unpublished commentary on Rambam's Yesodei HaTorah, he often defends Rambam by defanging his philosophical implications. Relatedly, he expresses discomfort with allegorical interpretation of certain *aggadot* in his talmudic commentaries. As may be expected, he was sharply critical of Shmuel ibn Tibbon, even accusing him of corrupting the translation of the Moreh. On the other extreme, we find Rabbi Reuven ben Chaim. A noted Talmudist with many important students, he was educated in philosophy. The surviving fragments of his "Sefer haTamid," a commentary on the siddur, demonstrate a commitment to radical Maimonidean methodology, exemplified in his interpretation of Psalm 91. It is worth noting that there were significant rifts between the philosophers and the halakhists on many issues, beyond the scope of this article.

In the next generation, a rabbi named Abba Mari enlisted the Rashba to help quash the spread of heretical ideas. Although he was himself a moderate Maimonidean, he spells out the reasons for his opposition in the beginning of his Minchat Kenaot, a collection of letters related to the campaign, as denial of God's knowledge of particulars, creation and providence. One of the main figures who was targeted in this campaign was Rabbi Levi ben Avraham, nephew and likely student of Rabbi Reuven ben Chaim, whose encyclopedic work Livyat Chen, a collection of both Jewish and general knowledge, garnered controversy for reports that he took extreme allegorical approaches and denied miracles.

Many Provençal rabbis opposed this campaign, of whom two will be listed here. The first, Menachem Meiri, also a student of Rav Reuven ben Chaim, was a noted Talmudist. His main works — most notably, his Beit HabaChirah, a massive *halakhic*



The rich history of medieval Provence is often overlooked.

PIXABAY

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We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Senior Reflections

By ETHAN SCHUMAN

The time people spend at YU can be the most exciting, impactful and life-changing years of students' lives. There are many ways YU can impact students' lives, including through religious and spiritual growth, educational advancement and social maturation. At the end of their time on campus, seniors typically take time to reflect on their overall experience at YU. As a result of this, The Commentator reached out to several seniors, asking them about their experience at YU.

SJ Tannenbaum (SSSB '22)
Marketing, Finance and Strategy & Entrepreneurship

"I loved YU. I was able to participate in many different extra curricular activities such as the baseball team, creating and running a few clubs, working for the school's Innovation Lab, sideline reporting at Macs basketball games and more, all in an environment that didn't ask me to sacrifice my religious values. I made some amazing friends along the way and have memories

that will last a lifetime.

"Obviously with any experience there are positive things and negative things and there were definitely some negative things about my time as YU, but looking back on

"I couldn't name a single other college that offers a simple Jewish lifestyle without forfeiting your right to an education."

Eden Taranto (SSSB '23)

the grand scheme of things, I'm glad I chose to attend YU and feel I was able to try everything I've always wanted to. I wish all my fellow graduating classmates the best of luck in all their future endeavors and hope we can keep in touch."

Anthony Lallouz (YC '22)
Biology

"My experience in YU has been the best college experience I would have dreamt of. It represents all my values and it fits all my interests such as being part of the tennis team and many social activities, with a great quality of studies, and of course everything

fully rooted and animated with Torah learning and learning of our Jewish history and identity. More than learning Torah, we lived the Torah in a full experience."

Talya Schreiber (SCW '22)
Speech Pathology- Audiology

"I enjoyed my experience at YU. I believe the YU community is one of a kind. Through the environment at Stern I was really able to find myself spiritually, emotionally and career-wise. I don't think I would be the person I am today without YU. No university is perfect therefore there are aspects that could be improved, such as the elevators. However, overall I had a very positive experience and would not change it for the world."

Eden Taranto (SSSB '22)
Finance

"After 3 years here, I still don't get why people hate YU. Sure, it has PLENTY of problems (elevators, professors, career and advising centers, COVID testing well after the pandemic ended, student censorship and many more) but YU is still an amazing place to be in. I couldn't name a single other college that offers a simple Jewish lifestyle without forfeiting your right to an education. Not to mention all the friends I made here made every annoyance with this school worth it."

Menachem Aharon Wallach (YC '22)
Jewish Studies

"I absolutely loved my time at YU! In particular, I loved working for the YU Seforim Sale, and each year was greater than the previous in terms of friendships and Jewish experience. I also loved being team manager for the YU basketball team. Finally, I am grateful for all the relationships I made with people from both Wilf and Beren campuses and the friendship I have made with President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman."

Together, Shenat Hasheva and YU are Changing the World One Fruit at a Time

By HANNAH POLLAK

If one would ask different people across the social and religious spectrum what main internal challenges the Jewish community in Israel faces today, answers would cover a rather wide range: poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, pollution, ignorance of Torah, weak belief in G-d, divisiveness between different “types” of Jews and low levels of Jewish pride and identity, among others. In short, notwithstanding the tremendous blessing of our land, no introspective individual would say that our society in the Land of Israel is close to perfection. However, as it is quite easy to recognize the problems and the many challenges to address, it is also easy for the simple Jew, the young college student living in America, to think that they are not in the position to help to solve these titanic issues, and thus, that they’re exempt at even attempting to contribute in any form.

Shenat HaSheva, an organization founded by YU professor Rabbi Dr. Ari Bergmann, invites the Jewish People, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, to tangibly participate in and create change. While this project encompasses and embraces every single Jew, it is especially relevant to the YU community. YU and RIETS have partnered with Rabbi Bergmann “to unite the Jewish people through the spirit of the *mitzvah* of *Shemitta*.” As some YU students were privy to seeing how Shenat HaSheva is changing *Shemitta* in Israel during the *Shemitta* trip last winter break, every student in the university will be able to participate in the surreal initiative that addresses and raises significant awareness about the challenges listed above. Shenat HaSheva balances financial, logistical and educational variables to enable the farms in Israel to operate efficiently while upholding the *halachic* requirements of *Shemitta*. At the same time, it allows the larger Jewish population in Israel to feed both their bodies and their souls with the fruit of the land that

“flows milk and honey.”

In any case, Shenat HaSheva’s initiative is not merely a project that attempts to fix the less than ideal *halachic* observance of *Shemitta*. Shenat HaSheva, or the *mitzvah* of *Shemitta* itself as Jewish thinkers explain, comes to heal Jewish society broadly and holistically.

Shemitta is a mitzvah that belongs to every single Jew—the more Jews we involve, the better!

The controversy and divisiveness this *mitzvah* creates is well known. Some farmers sell their fields to non-Jews and work the land during *Shemitta* as if it were a regular year — this method is known as *Heter Mechira* and was approved back in the day by Chief Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. Others opt to buy fruit from other countries at a costly price or buy from Palestinians in Gaza, since they do not consider the selling of the land a legitimate device to override the prohibition of *Shemitta* — this follows the view of the Chazon Ish. Clearly, both nominally selling land and buying fruit from other countries or Gaza are not ideal ways to solve the economic distress that *Shemitta* creates. Furthermore, both “solutions” create imperfect *halachic* realities and intense divisiveness in the Jewish community. Ironically, while *Shemitta* was intended to be a year of reunion and shared experience, since the late 1880s it has been a cause of strife and internal quarrel. However, after decades of debate, leaders of the Jewish community in Israel from across the spectrum — Rav Kanievsky zt”l, Rav Edelstein, Rav Rimon and others — have endorsed Shenat HaSheva’s initiative as the most ideal way to observe the *mitzvah* today. Fortunately, Shenat HaSheva offers realistic opportunities so that this year every one of us can help to end the polemic and create unity in the Jewish people.

Shemitta is more than the religious ripple effects it creates. Shenat HaSheva will also

bring about significant social change. The organization coordinates the distribution of produce and guarantees affordable access to it, preventing a tremendous amount of fruit waste and naturally, a significant amount of carbon emissions. Moreover, *Shemitta* is essentially about the owner of the field and the farmer selflessly dedicating their shared work

and produce to their Jewish brothers and sisters. Rabbi Bergmann noted in an episode of the 18Forty podcast that even though the Torah recognizes the obvious benefits and efficiencies of a capitalist economy, at the same time, it is aware that capitalism without rest is also dangerous. The tireless pursuit of personal success could strip people of their innate altruistic humanity. And thus, the Torah prescribes the Jewish farmer to be a capitalist for six years and then a socialist during the seventh.

Even beyond the socioeconomic or environmental “benefits” of *Shemitta* kept properly, Shenat HaSheva also fights ignorance. They do more than the logistics of getting the fruit from the farm to the masses: they educate Israeli society about the holiness of the Land of Israel and the practical laws of eating and discarding fruit of the Seventh Year, and transmit more general ideals such as the unity of the Jewish people or G-d’s mastery over nature and the world. Shenat HaSheva brings holy fruit to “secular” Israeli college students to feed their Jewish identity with an appreciation for the Jewish people and the Holy Land.

From the several projects Shenat Hasheva is undertaking, Pri Yomi is its crown Jewel. And in fact, Pri Yomi, the flagship project of the whole *Shemitta* revolution, is where the YU community comes to the scene. In a nutshell, this will bring “a fruit a day” to over 77,000 students from over 300 yeshivas

and seminaries in Israel from across the Orthodox spectrum. Both Israeli students and youngsters coming from the Diaspora to learn for a year will be eating *Perot Sheviit* for 30 weeks. Pri Yomi is not only about nourishing brains and hearts with holy food or about teaching students how to properly consume *Shemitta* produce, but comes to bind the Jewish people together in a practical and existential way. The youngsters, the new generation, from Chareidi, Bnei Akiva, Sefardi and Chassidish backgrounds will come together to enjoy the *Shemitta* fruit, to learn about the nation’s essential oneness and to rejuvenate our common attachment to the Land of Israel.

YU students are invited to join Pri Yomi. By contributing \$18.50, they will be able to partner with a *talmid* or *talmidah* learning in Israel providing “a fruit a day” for 30 weeks. Moreover, YU students are also the Pri Yomi’s ambassadors, so to speak. We are all encouraged to reach out to our former high schools, shuls and movements we belong to to spread awareness of the *mitzvah* of *Shemitta* and help encourage the broader Jewish community to get involved and join the crowdfunding for Pri Yomi. *Shemitta* is a *mitzvah* that belongs to every single Jew—the more Jews we involve, the better!

There is so much to work on. Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in Israel, as individuals and as a community, have the privilege to participate in this special project. It could feel overwhelming and somewhat beyond the capability of the average YU student. However, this Yom Ha’Atzmaut, as we do a collective balance of our strengths and challenges, we can take something upon ourselves: Actively engaging in the *mitzvah* of *Shemitta* through the Shenat HaSheva initiative and deeply contemplating on the philosophical ideals behind the *mitzvah*. We will change the world one fruit at a time.



Shenat HaSheva makes *Shemitta* accessible to every Jew.

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

((May 20, 1948; Volume 27, Issue 5) — Yeshiva Rejoices at Birth of Israel; Zionists Applaud Historic Occasion

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Editor's Note: Below is one of two articles published six days after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, which was recently celebrated on Yom Ha'atzmaut by YU and the greater Jewish community.

Garden Filled to Capacity as New York Salutes Israel

At a giant rally held in Madison Square Garden on Sunday, May 16, representatives of all branches of the Zionist organizations joined together to pay tribute to the new Jewish State. A capacity crowd packed the Garden itself while 75,000 others braved the rain to hear the orators, via loudspeakers, announce their support for the Yishuv's fight and denounce the arms embargo.

"What logic and justice decreed, what prophecy foretold," Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, one of the keynoters of the affair stated, "is now an accomplished fact." He reminded the defenders of the new state that the one admonition given Joshua was "Have no fear," and continued confidently: "They will fight

and they will win."

"Confusion" in Palestine

Dr. Silver said that the Palestinian Arabs had nothing to lose and everything to gain from the initiative, skill, and progress the Jews will bring to the Middle East. However, he emphatically stated that the neighboring Arab states have absolutely no business in Palestine, and warned the Egyptians that the distance between Cairo and Tel Aviv is the same as the distance between Tel Aviv and Cairo.

He commented on Britain's refusal to recognize the new Jewish state because of the confusion existing in Palestine by saying, "I only hope that Britain does not add to the confusion." It is only proper, as continued, "that the oldest democracy in the world was the first to recognize the youngest democracy, the youngest democracy with the oldest people." However, he argued, "If you believe in a people, you must make it possible for them to defend themselves." Dr. Silver concluded with a plea that the United States embargo be lifted.

Miracle of Miracles

Dr. Stephen S. Wise, speaking in a choked voice, announced that he was happy for two reasons and explained that the second cause for his rejoicing was that, "I am at home again with my fellow Zionists." Calling the Jewish state a miracle of miracles, he declared that the sons and daughters of Israel could not have fashioned this miracle without Divine aid. He was convinced that, "G-d has not forgotten those who did more than just sit and weep by the rivers of Babylon."

He then related that Theodore Herzl had said to him several months before his death, "I shall not live to see the Jewish state, but you are younger, Wise, you will live to see the Jewish state." He concluded by stating that he was overjoyed at seeing this prediction come true.

Protection Against Aggression

Senator Taft, speaking for a cause he had long championed, declared, "I never saw how a Jewish state would affect the loyalty of a Jewish-American any more than an Irish state affects the loyalty of an

Irish-American." The Senator concluded, "We must, of course, lift the arms embargo now." He continued, "We must urge the Security Council to recognize the state of Israel and to give it the same protection given any other state against aggression." He concluded by notifying the assembled that "the American people have always sympathized with a people fighting for their freedom."

Israel In The U.N.

Mrs. Rose Halpern, president of Hadassah, said that the Jews had a double task, "To fight for defense and to build for the future." The ambassador to the U.N. from Guatemala, Jorge Garcia - Granados, announced that he will continue the struggle "until I see that Israel has taken the position it deserves in the U.N." Mayor O'Dwyer, in a statement addressed to President Truman, remarked, "We love you for what you have done, but follow through, lift the arms embargo."

Among the other speakers were Herbert Lehman, Henry Morgenthau, Hayim Greenberg, Emanuel Newman, and Rabbi Max Kirschblum.

"This is The Day Made By The Lord . . ."

The Commentator

Official Undergraduate Newspaper Of Yeshiva College

. . . Let Us Be Happy and Rejoice in it."

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No. 5

YESHIVA REJOICES AT BIRTH OF ISRAEL; ZIONISTS APPLAUD HISTORIC OCCASION

President, Faculty Acclaim Yishuv's Accomplishment

With the establishment of the Jewish state, "Commentator" felt that it would be of interest to record the reactions of various members of our school's faculty to this historic occasion.

The following are the statements we were able to obtain.

ה'שנת החדשה

With the official proclamation of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, we join with our brethren throughout the world in rejoicing at this epoch-making event. We pray to the Almighty that the stone which the builders of the world structure often rejected may become the cornerstone of the building. We pray that this small state may become a symbol of justice and righteousness to the persecuted and oppressed of the entire world, and that the Torah shall once more go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

"Above all, we pray that harmony and peace may reign."

New Premier



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תחי המדינה

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The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

PROVENCE

Continued from Page 9

work arranged on the Talmud — reflect some of the best of Provencal talmudic analysis. Nonetheless, in his comments on *aggadot*, as well as in his commentaries on Tehillim and Mishlei, Meiri often utilizes philosophical allegory. While his philosophical positions appear relatively moderate, Halbertal argues he also has some esoteric approaches close to the radical Maimonideans. Meiri is also noteworthy for his attitude toward gentiles and women that was unusually progressive for his time. The second figure, Yedaiah ben Avraham Bedersi, was a poet and ethicist. He also wrote commentaries in a philosophical-allegorical style on many midrashim, including the Midrash Rabbah, Midrash Tanchumah, Midrash Tehillim, and

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer. While not known for talmudic acumen, he studied under Rabbi Meshulam ben Moshe, an important halakhist who wrote the Sefer Hahashlamah, from a young age. In their letters responding to the ban, they stress the importance of philosophy to Judaism and Provencal culture, as well as the good *halakhic* standing of the community.

In later times, many more authors emerged from Provence. Among these were Nissim of Marseille, whose radical commentary on the Torah sought to naturalize miracles as much as possible. To give one example, he suggests, based on a Midrash, that the divine origin of the laws means that Moshe utilized God-given wisdom to

legislate effectively. Another was Rabbi David haKochavi, a moderate Maimonidean who wrote two works, which he later grouped into one. His first presents philosophical justifications for Judaism and gives reasons for the mitzvot. The second, which has only partially survived, is an ambitious *halakhic* code modeled after Rambam's Mishneh Torah, but with sources and other opinions included. Other figures include Aristotelian philosopher Yosef Ibn Caspi, noteworthy for elitist sentiment and negative views of women that were extreme even for his time, who wrote over twenty works spanning various disciplines including grammar, biblical interpretation and philosophy. In a work titled Tam HaKessef he has the prescient

suggestion that it is plausible the Jews may one day be able to take back the land of Israel without miraculous means. Another important figure was Ralbag, one of the great Jewish polymaths, who excelled in fields as broad as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and biblical interpretation.

Ultimately, works from Provence in its philosophical epoch were rarely quoted by outside writers, and many of these works have only been published recently. If you ever find yourself lost in the library, looking for some new *sefer* to read, perhaps give a writer from this oft-overlooked locale a shot.

A REFLECTION

Continued from Page 3

job than an extracurricular activity, but one so enjoyable that it leaves you with a keen sense of purpose and meaning.

In addition to being a student journalist, I was also a basketball announcer for MacsLive. Sports broadcasting is something that always interested me, but something I never had the chance to try. There is so much more to announcing games than merely stating what everyone can see on the camera. Countless hours are spent researching film, reviewing statistics, speaking with coaches and learning team rosters. All the work that went into every game made for a better broadcast, and those listening voiced their appreciation. Announcing games for both the men's and women's basketball teams has been fantastic, and the experience has been everything I imagined.

Though my experience had surpassed my expectations, my excitement came to an abrupt halt when YU announced in March 2020 that it would be closing campus due to the looming COVID-19 pandemic and continuing classes virtually. The campus excitement I had felt vanished, and so many events that were set to take place in the spring never did. I wondered if my semester-and-a-half on campus would be the extent of my experience at YU and if we would ever return to campus again. That being said, I made the best of what was available.

I continued to write for The Commentator. I announced games for MacsLive. Slowly but surely, the light at the end of the tunnel shined brighter.

When YU announced that it would fully reopen and return to normal after more than a year of hiatus on Zoom, I was ecstatic. My final year would close on a high note, and I would get to experience events that had to be canceled because of the pandemic. For example, until this year, I had never witnessed a Sarachek Tournament. Though there were some bumps in the road, I could not have asked for a better ending.

Watching and even participating in my first Sarachek Tournament lived up to the hype that had been described years ago. This tournament was incredible, and the atmosphere around campus for that weekend was electric. I was not sure what to expect from high school basketball, especially considering that I was accustomed to watching the Macs. But these kids were incredible and did not disappoint. Nearly every game came down to the wire and was a showcase of exquisite competition. A big shoutout is in order to Johnny Dan of the Valley Torah Wolfpack for displaying sublime athleticism in the final moments of the tier I championship game with a magnificent chase-down block that swung the momentum behind his team. An even bigger shoutout to Valley

Torah for winning the tournament for the first time. These guys were the real deal and even made me an honorary member of the Pack. The opportunity that I had missed years ago due to the pandemic had finally come to fruition, and it was worth the wait.

My final year at YU has also seen some of the most historic moments in school history. The Maccabees embarked on an incredible 50-game win streak, the second-longest streak in NCAA Division III history. Ryan Turell (SYMS '22) became the all-time leading scorer in Macs' history. A delegation of students was sent to Vienna to aid the Ukrainian refugees in a time of crisis. YU brought TEDx back to campus. I could never imagine there would be this much action packed into my final year.

Of course, YU is not perfect, with a lack of administrative transparency and communication that costs the students their trust. Why did it take so much time for YU to explain how their new dining plan functioned? Why was there no clear guide to whom questions should be posed? Why did the elevators always seem to be broken? With COVID protocols, who was on the committee that was deciding mask, vaccine and testing policies? How did YU conclude that requiring students to receive the booster shot was the best policy? How did they address the concerns of those who did not want to receive

the shot? What about this year when YU's Title IX policies were put under the microscope? Why was it so difficult for students to know to whom they should turn when they felt their safety was compromised? Why did these changes require a student to come forth with an article that she had been raped by another student to come to fruition?

What YU will do to alleviate these problems remains to be seen. That being said, there is so much to appreciate about the institution. The atmosphere, the people, the professors, the rabbis, the career opportunities, the ability to grow and so much more – YU does offer a lot. The opportunities are there, and they are yours to take.

My final words to the students continuing their education at YU are quite simple: Enjoy your time here. As I have noted, there are many opportunities in various fields at this institution. There is plenty of programming intended to provide students with entertainment. Overall, there is so much YU has to offer. If you focus on the positive aspects of this place, you will succeed and you will have the time of your life. Take it from me, I have seen another world up close and personal. Coming from that world has allowed me to see that the experience YU offers should not be taken for granted. Thus concludes my final thoughts. The rest is up to you.



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From the Opinions Editor

Such Sweet Sorrow

By NAFTALI SHAVELSON

I've been discussing a fair amount with friends recently — in tones, depending on the day, ranging from distracted amusement to excitement or trepidation — about how commencement and what follows will be the first time in many of our lives where our next steps are no longer presupposed. Of course, the LSAT and MCAT class will respectfully disagree; conversely, neither yeshiva nor college were always obvious parts of many of my fellow graduates' assumed trajectories. But for most of us soon to be set free on the Arthur Ashe Stadium dais, yeshiva high school, Israel gap years and six or eight semesters of higher education were obvious pieces of our essentially uncomplicated coming-of-age puzzles.

Straightforward no more. We now must reckon with freedom of choice, with internships and jobs and advanced degrees, with Washington Heights and the Upper West Side and Givat Shmuel. With what our professors and *rebbeim* have been terming, with percipient alarmism, “the real world.” We need to figure out not just what we want to study but what we want to “do,” and why we want to do it. We need to grow up and to move on.

Reaching the end of the mandated yellow brick road is frightening and exhilarating. It is also, I believe, what our entire Yeshiva University experience has been all about. It's the real test of Gemara *shiuur*, Interpreting

the Creative and the indispensable conversations with friends and teachers and ourselves that tie the two disciplines together. The personal and professional trails we blaze will tell us quite clearly whether our education “worked.”

will doubtless inform my journey, and I hope will only be strengthened by my impending rendezvous with a sharper kind of reality.

More viscerally ... I'll miss walking down 185th Street to my morning classes squinting toward a West Bronx sunrise. I'll miss

We now must reckon with freedom of choice ... with what our professors and rebbeim have been terming, with percipient alarmism, “the real world.”

Kaleidoscopic banners drowned campus this year with talk of Core Torah Values, some more intuitive than others if all equally difficult to remember. But call it *Torah Umadda* or *Torat Emet* (etc. etc.) — I think both represent the same understanding that Torah is meant not only for study hall contemplation but as a guide for bettering the world — YU's platform communicates on a fundamental level the notion that academic credits are nothing if not actualized. On that note, YU seems to me a rare institution driven by manifest values rather than, say, vogue socio-political fascinations. It isn't isolated enough to be immune to those trends, not that it intends to be, but rather aims for its vision to shape the moment rather than the other way around.

I'll miss that, though I also know I don't have to leave it behind in Furst Hall or the Glueck Beit Midrash. The lessons I've learned from my *rebbeim* and teachers about the human condition and the Jewish experience

jousting with deadlines, salmon Thursdays, Shabbos on and especially off campus. I'll miss those fantastic chills (and *Maariv*!) on the fifth floor of the library, a forum where many of the above topics were aired and examined like 6th Avenue diamonds. I'll miss the fantastic Commentator team, the news we broke and the platforms we extended to a wildly vibrant spectrum of YU community voices.

YU is far from a perfect institution. I specifically lament the renunciation of humanities and academic Jewish studies to the beckon of the white-collar vocational. Would Yeshiva College really crumble under the weight of a humble art history survey course? However, these are, in context, small things. YU remains the only school in the hemisphere that offers a full-throated, de jure dual curriculum, top-tier Torah and general studies under the same historic roof. For that it remains invaluable to students and indispensable to American Judaism.

Over the past three years, I've sometimes found myself high up in Belfer Hall, YU's Streamline Moderne-meets-International Style brick-clad ivory tower, after a late event or night class. Walk up to a south-facing window there and you're greeted with one of Manhattan's most expansive views, a sprawling panorama of Harlem and Morningside melting into Midtown and Hudson Yards. The lights of “real” Manhattan shimmer in the distance like outlying neighborhood stars. It's really quite beautiful, but stand there too long and you get restless. Eventually you need to take the (hopefully operational) elevator down a dozen or so flights, board a crowded southbound subway and get off in those business districts you've been peering at from your scholastic perch. Roll up your sleeves, chart yourself a rough path on the back of a Starbucks napkin, and consult it now and then to dodge complacency as you wander the streets of reality.

You don't need to have everything figured out — I certainly don't — but you should try to hold on to the ideals you sipped or knocked back during your YU tenure, no matter how hard bitter realism and tax forms try to snatch them away from you.

Letaken Olam B'malchut Shakkai. The Sixth Torah? Maybe. A roadmap for an era beyond the prescribed itinerary of youth? Absolutely. Slide aside your tassels, throw your caps to the skies and go do impossible things.



Students celebrating commencement

Torah Umammon

By RABBI YITZCHAK BLAU

Torah Umadda takes different forms each with its own challenges. For Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, it involves serious study of the great works of literature. Others, wary of the exposure to heretical material and foreign ideologies, focus more on the religious benefits of science. While this seems a safer field of inquiry, the presence of today's rabid scientific atheists reveals a far more complex equation: The materialism and determinism of much of science work against a religious worldview. A third approach basically rejects *Torah Umadda* but still appreciates how a college education enables a livelihood. As we shall see, this approach too has dangers; indeed, no ideology comes risk-free.

On the one hand, Hazal certainly value earning a salary supporting one's family. A father must teach his son a trade and people without professions are liable to engage in theft and deceit (Kiddushin 29a). Furthermore, the significant cost of today's Modern Orthodox lifestyle including yeshiva tuition, summer camps and neighborhoods with expensive housing generates pressure to earn an even higher salary. Thus, we value an education enabling the material means necessary for an observant way of life.

However, let us take note of another side of the coin. The Sy Syms School of Business has steadily grown more dominant in the larger Yeshiva University culture. In 2017, enrollment in Sy Syms grew larger than that of Yeshiva College for the first time. Moreover, the business school consistently cut down on non-business requirements. They recently announced a shift from an English writing requirement to one that teaches "business writing, presentations and professionalism." Syms students have fewer Jewish studies obligations than their Yeshiva College counterparts and they need not ever take a class in Bible, Jewish history or Jewish philosophy. In summation, more

YU undergraduates study marketing, accounting and finance and those who enroll in Syms experience more of an "all business, all the time" education.

study Gemara in an impressive fashion each morning but current requirements discourage those students from taking a Tanakh or Jewish philosophy class with Rav Shalom

employers may like the broader skillset such students bring to the table. More importantly, why should the business school endeavor not incorporate exposure to Tanakh and writing courses?

None of this reflects an attack on Dean Wasserman who is, by all accounts, a very fine and idealistic person. However, good people also make mistakes and do not always foresee the impact of their decisions.

Majoring in business does not generate a safe haven from religious difficulties nor does it even protect us from the influences of foreign cultures. The entire pragmatic turn at YU actually reflects a broader trend in the Western world where college students flee from the humanities towards the sciences and business. We would hope that those of a religious bent could resist the larger materialistic zeitgeist.

Rabbi Yitzchak Blau is a rosh yeshiva of Yeshivat Orayta.

The entire pragmatic turn at YU actually reflects a broader trend in the Western world where college students flee from the humanities towards the sciences and business. We would hope that those of a religious bent could resist the larger materialistic zeitgeist.

What are the potential implications of this transformation? As a generality, business schools emphasize making a lot of money, and that can become life's paramount ideal. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a good deal of cheating goes on in Sy Syms examinations. While we could suggest multiple explanations for this problem (multiple-choice exams lend themselves to copying), one wonders if a get-ahead-at-all-costs atmosphere impacted on the students.

Secondly, the pragmatic mode of thinking crowds out idealism. Many students feel the need to spend every summer in internships advancing their future careers rather than participating in chesed-based programs. HASC and Yachad retain their popularity but what has replaced YUSSR, Achi, and Tchiya? Admittedly, students in some fields truly need an internship after junior year, but the summer after sophomore semesters should remain open for more idealistic pursuits. We need a culture that promotes ideals divorced from the financial bottom line.

Finally, the business-centered approach creates a much too narrow educational focus. Writing courses teaching sensitivity to language enhance the students' ability to study Torah on a much deeper level and to express themselves with greater precision and power. Even if Goldman Sachs does not care much about this loss, serious religious Jews should. Syms undergrads may

Carmy and experiencing the profundity and inspiration of our tradition.

Perhaps this brief essay does not adequately acknowledge the intense financial pressures involved for contemporary college students. Even so, majoring in business may not be the royal road crucial for a lucrative career. Students can major in literature and history and still get a business job. Potential



The Sy Syms School of Business has steadily grown more dominant in the larger Yeshiva University culture.

THE COMMENTATOR

Mammon In Light of Torah

By RABBI DANIEL FELDMAN

I read the recent essay "Torah Umammon" by my friend Rabbi Yitzchak Blau with great interest, as I do his writings in general. In fact, I have been enthusiastically sharing one of his previous articles, "Rabbinic Responses to Communism" (Tradition, Winter 2007), with my students at the Sy Syms School of Business for more than 12 years.

Part of the beauty of that richly researched and greatly valuable article is how it was able to take an issue that to many is a matter of money, income, labor and capital, and display how beneath the surface, major principles of our worldview were at stake, being honored or breached.

I am privileged to have the opportunity to attempt something similar (if not as skillfully) several times a week, in teaching multiple courses at Syms. It is true that Syms is different in many ways from Yeshiva College. However, the differences do not reflect negatively on either school; Syms is structured to best accomplish its particular mission, which is unique in the world.

The students at Syms are indeed largely headed for a world that is defined by a goal to succeed financially at all costs, as quickly and as single-mindedly as possible. Recognizing that, the leadership of the school has created a framework that is dedicated to preparing these students to encounter that world

equipped with the values to navigate its challenges, the moral grounding to appreciate its implications and the internal fortitude to maintain their character throughout.

needs of the *inei* Torah who will confront the modern marketplace.

Further, it is not only the Jewish Values Program that is harnessed to this purpose.

It is an unavoidable reality that the demands of the business world will govern the circumstances of our students' lives. A YU/Syms education can, nonetheless, govern their minds, and, most importantly, their souls.

Yeshiva University as a whole is committed to both protecting and projecting its traditions and its values within the modern world. Every division of YU ideally seeks to accomplish those directives in the fashion best suited to its particular aspects. For students who will eventually be told that the dollar is everything, a program must first be provided that will teach them what it is and what it is not, what it can accomplish and what it cannot, and what must not be sacrificed in its pursuit.

Over the course of many years and with much careful attention, focus, collaboration and creativity, the Syms administration has created and recreated, refined and then refined again, a program that surrounds its top-notch preparation for business success with a deep and broad grounding in Jewish values. Courses are crafted with a deliberate, tailored approach to best fit the specific

The class in which I teach Rabbi Blau's communism article is "The Ethical and Legal Environment of Business." It is a secular class with a secular textbook. Still, on the first day, I tell the students, "a class such as this in Yeshiva University must be different than this class in any other university."

The Yeshiva this year is learning *Masechet Bava Basra*, and when I gave the first *shiur* in *Elul* to my students in MYP/RIETS, we introduced the first mishnah with an explanation of the foundations of *halakhic* ethics. It was exhilarating to realize how much overlap there was with what I would be teaching a few hours later, in the introductory "Ethical and Legal" class. It was of further inspiration to me that I was able to share that realization with Dean Wasserman (along with the recording of the *shiur*) and know just how meaningful that would be to him as well.

The Talmud teaches that a professional gambler is disqualified from testimony because he is disconnected from any productive employment (*eino osek b'yishuvo shel olam*; Sanhedrin 24b). It follows that, conversely, one who is actively involved in building up the settlement of society — and does so with honesty and integrity — is accorded affirmative credibility. It is not merely that he is fulfilling the imperative of supporting his family in dignity; he is making contributions to the advancement of society that ideally reflect his value system, and, through implementation, expand it further.

Rabbi Blau makes reference to the high cost of Orthodox Jewish practice, due to tuition and other expenses. This is undeniably true, and it is relevant to Syms for more than just the school's ability to train financially successful professionals. The ever-increasing problem of the affordability of Jewish life is an existential challenge practically, and a profound and underappreciated moral challenge in the priorities it creates and the decisions it provokes.

Syms did not create this problem, but perhaps it will be some of our school's students who will solve it. Perhaps our students, proficient in both the principles of business efficiency and the values of a Jewish community that cherishes family harmony, genuine spirituality and broad educational

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Torah UBusiness

By DR. NOAM WASSERMAN

In the fall, I was asked an interesting question by a YU student: “Does *Torah Umadda* apply to Sy Syms? Isn’t ‘Madda’ just the sciences and arts that can help us understand the Torah, not the business studies?”

I asked him which volume of the Talmud he’s learning this year. “Bava Basra.” What does it cover? “Ownership, partnerships, property rights, acquisitions, legal documents.”

I asked him who had been having a big impact in *shiur* at helping add insights to what they were learning: non-business students or business students? “Business students — they understand the economics a lot better and they can explain ownership issues. The rest of us are learning the basics while they can see the nuances, and can help us understand them.” In that case, which type of knowledge was enhancing the Torah learning at YU this year? “Business.”

Every day, he and the rest of the YU *talmidim* have been seeing our powerful combination of Torah UBusiness.

In fact, I told him that he should look at the last mishna in Bava Basra, and the last line of that mishna. Elsewhere, in one of the most prominent debates in the entire Talmud, Rabbi Yishmael, one of the all-time greats, has a debate with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Berachos 35b) about earning a livelihood. Rabbi Yishmael emerges there as the major proponent of Torah U’Madda. At the end of Bava Basra, what does Rabbi Yishmael tell us? “One who wants to become wise should study monetary law, as there is no greater discipline in the Torah, and it is like a flowing spring” (Bava Basra 175b).

Especially today, Sy Syms embodies YU’s values, not only in substance but also in its ethics.

The Missing “U”

In Torah Ubusiness, the Torah itself is world-class and we similarly aspire to excellence in business studies. A particular focus is the “U” (“and”) that connects them. Otherwise, students are left to themselves to figure out how to wed the distinct parts of their lives.

Two years ago, Sy Syms introduced its Jewish Values curriculum to fill in the “U.” This is perfectly consistent with Sy Syms’ mission: To develop Torah-grounded professionals who excel in the workplace and in the community.

The Jewish Values faculty are world-class *talmidei chachamim* who also have real-world experience in the fields in which they are teaching, making them much more effective at conveying the “U.” The courses they teach include practical workplace *halacha*, which prepares students for the challenges faced in every workplace by teaching from the sources and from role models how to be a *kiddush Hashem*; Jewish public policy, which prepares students to play a leading role in the community by understanding communal issues; and Jewish business law, which helps them understand the overlap and contrasts between American and Jewish law.

This semester, we added three electives to complement those three required courses. Students can develop their historical thinking and knowledge by taking “Commerce, Community, & Leadership Through the Ages.” They can learn how to think rigorously about key life decisions in “Designing Your Jewish Life.” Lastly, students can develop their knowledge of both economic theory and moral and political philosophy in the new Syms Honors course “Jewish Law, Economics, and Philosophy.”

These courses make the disciplines of history, philosophy and psychology tangible by connecting them to real-world experiences

our students will soon be having, as well as to their Judaism.

Today’s Sy Syms embodies Jewish values, instills ethics and excellence, prepares students to be communal leaders, and shows how excellent Torah UBusiness can be achieved.

Ethics and Integrity Across the Curriculum

Every Sy Syms student is required to take a business ethics course. Students appreciate the course so much that they awarded Rabbi Robert Greenberg, one of the course’s professors, their Professor of the Year Award at the first Sy Syms Awards Dinner I attended. In addition, all honors students take an ethics course taught by my predecessor as dean, Dr. Moses Pava, a leading expert in business ethics.

However, the coverage of ethics and values isn’t limited to those courses, but instead suffuses the curriculum. This was captured beautifully by Tomer Weider, a Sy Syms student who was featured in the Undergraduate Torah Studies newsletter before Pesach. Answering a question about “My Favorite Part of YU,” Tomer said: “Outside of the *beis medrash*, many of my Sy Syms classes have been infused with Torah values. My finance, accounting, and other secular professors deliberately include topics about and stress the importance of acting honestly and amicably in business.”

When it comes to examinations, projects, and academic integrity, Sy Syms has also been a leader. Two years ago, Sy Syms spearheaded the formation of the YU-wide Academic Integrity Committee (AIC). The AIC has developed best practices and review processes that have had a significant impact on academic integrity across the undergraduate schools.

Service to the Community Outside the Curriculum

The summer of 2020, when other college students experienced the Summer of Crisis with nothing to keep them busy amidst COVID, three dozen students participated in the new YU Consulting Force. Through

the Consulting Force, those students led high-impact projects for more than a dozen Jewish non-profits, making it the summer of *chessed* and helping fulfill the “excel ... in the community” part of the Sy Syms mission.

Since then, amidst the ups and downs of COVID, we hoped that we wouldn’t have to continue operating the Consulting Force. However, each spring, students have requested to help non-profits, which themselves have asked to participate in our Consulting Force. Those students could take more lucrative jobs for the summer but instead prefer to make a positive impact on the Jewish community.

Outside of those formal routes to helping the community, individual students and groups of students provide endless *chessed* for the community and beyond. We would expect that of the graduating students on whom we bestowed our Character & Service awards this week. However, even our academic stars take time away from their coursework to do *chessed*.

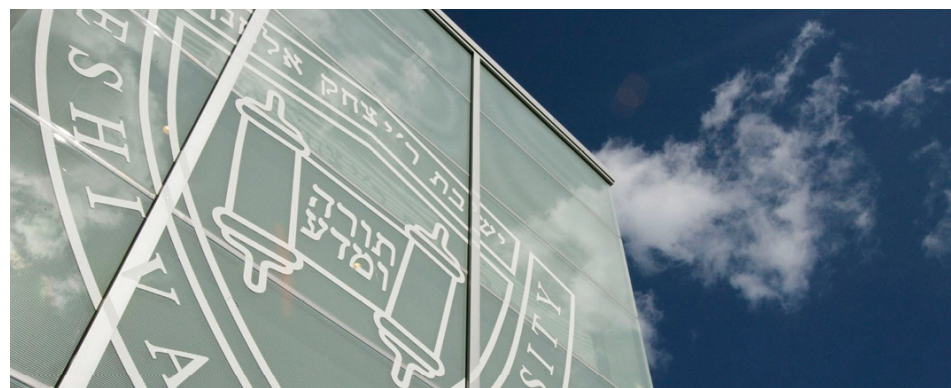
For instance, this year’s women’s valedictorian, Shoshi Tuchman, works with the homeless every Super Bowl Sunday, helping them feel cared for rather than alone. Shoshi is a top accounting and finance double-major, but instead of taking a high-paying job working for a Big Four accounting firm or investment bank after graduation, she plans to specialize in non-profit organizations. Last week, during TEDxYeshiva University, she explained her decision in a stellar talk entitled “Allowing Your Values to Impact Your Career.”

Our men’s valedictorian helped the broader community in a different way. Amidst COVID, in order to help small businesses survive, the government provided a lot of funding but many small businesses lacked the knowledge of how to apply for it. Jonah Loskove took time away from work and school in order to help 700 small businesses apply for and receive the desperately needed government funding, a feat of *chessed* for which he was awarded a Congressional commendation.

Bottom Line

Today’s Sy Syms embodies Jewish values, instills ethics and excellence, prepares students to be communal leaders, and shows how excellent Torah UBusiness can be achieved.

Dr. Noam Wasserman is the dean of the Sy Syms School of Business.



Every day, he and the rest of the YU *talmidim* have been seeing our powerful combination of Torah UBusiness.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

RABBI FELDMAN
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opportunity (and knowledgeable that this, too, is a *sugya* in *Bava Basra*) will have the initiative, insight and inspiration to positively remake our society.

Rabbi Blau wishes that Syms students would take a class with Rabbi Shalom Carmy. As a grateful student and tremendous admirer of Rabbi Carmy, I share that wish. However, college requirements are not the only or even the most effective way to encourage exposure to great teachers. The overall impact of the Syms educational message is to instill the students with an appreciation for Jewish practice, ideals and learning so that they will seek out inspiration and instruction throughout their lives, in and out of the classroom, during and after their college years.

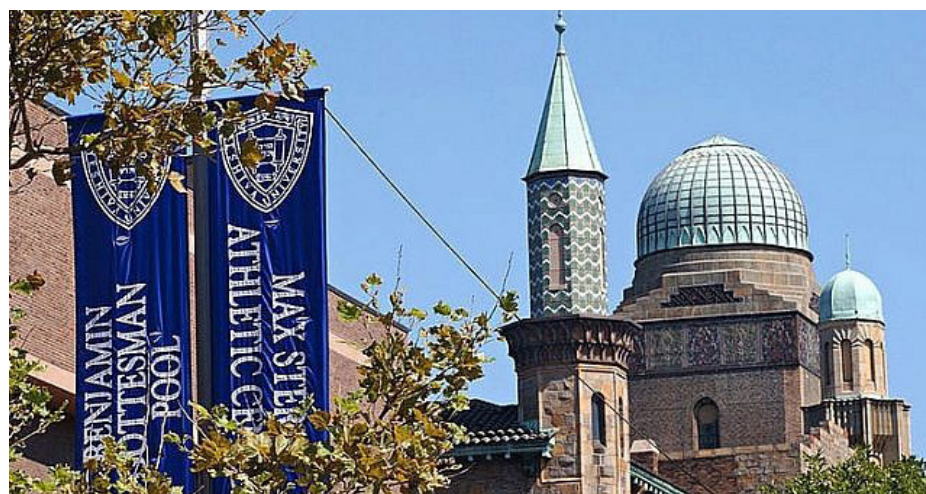
I know this to be true because I see it every day. I see it in the questions I get from current students, that are not only about

their final requirements or attendance records but about navigating the demands of their internships and interviews while maintaining their integrity and intensity. And I know it because so many of these questions come a year, five years, 10 years after graduation.

This past week, the yeshiva hosted a conference in which fellows of the Post-Semicha Kollel Elyon presented to the public on the themes of the values of *Shemittah*. I take some pride in the fact that a number of these fine young rabbis were my students — in courses at the Syms School. And all of them were taught Rabbi Blau’s communism article in preparation for their presentations. Together, this deepened the message that while to too many in today’s world, the dollar is the goal, we know it to be a tool: a tool of kindness, to establish one’s integrity and to build and perfect the world in G-d’s Majesty.

It is an unavoidable reality that the demands of the business world will govern the circumstances of our students’ lives. A YU/

Syms education can, nonetheless, govern their minds, and, most importantly, their souls. For that, we can all be grateful.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Wilf Campus Needs More Security Presence

By AARON SINGER

You never think something rare will happen to you until it does. This past week, I was taking the 1 train from Penn Station to 191st St. with my wife when we realized the service was interrupted after 148th St. We got out of the subway at 125th St., hoping to catch a bus ride. The night would end with our catching a ride in a police car.

As we got off the subway at 125th, a man held the door for us. We had a lot of belongings, including two suitcases, so we thanked him and walked toward the station exit. The man followed us, first asking and then demanding we give him \$10 for his favor. We kept walking, pulling our suitcases along behind us, but the man got more and more aggressive. I started noticing that we were getting concerningly close to the tracks, and another train was coming. We were walking as fast as we could when the man grabbed the suitcase in my hand, attempting to yank it from me. My wife screamed at the man to stop, and I was able to hold on to the suitcase and tug it away from his hand.

We ran up some stairs and a woman showed us a badge and said she was an undercover police officer; after we blurted out what had happened, she and her partner went to arrest the man. The man tried fighting off the arrest, but backup officers quickly arrived and were able to subdue and handcuff him. The police officers were even nice enough to give us a ride home after we filled out some paperwork.

This happened on Saturday night, and I thought I had learned my lesson: bad neighborhoods are dangerous, and an extra level of alertness and protection can be necessary depending on the location. But what I didn't realize is that not all bad neighborhoods

are unfamiliar.

Around 8:00 p.m. the following Tuesday night, less than three days after this whole

I thought I had learned my lesson: Bad neighborhoods are dangerous, and an extra level of alertness and protection can be necessary depending on the location. But what I didn't realize is that not all bad neighborhoods are unfamiliar.

incident occurred, I was walking along Amsterdam Avenue to Belfer Hall. I looked across the street and saw an eerily similar situation to what had happened to me: a man was aggressively asking a YU student for money while pursuing him down the sidewalk. In a matter of seconds, the man jumped in front of the student, cornering him against the busy traffic of Amsterdam Avenue. I felt myself getting closer to the train tracks.

The student, with fear in his eyes, felt he had no other choice but to run across the street to safety. He narrowly avoided an incoming car and made it across the street. I noticed that I was right outside the YU security office, so I ran inside and told the security guard that there was a man harassing a YU student. I ran back outside with the security guard so as not to lose track of the man, and I saw him approaching another YU student, this time cornering him against the wall of the library.

The student looked terrified, and then extremely relieved and surprised to see the security guard running to get the man away from him. The security guard separated the man from the student and led him off campus toward 188th St. The student kept on walking, and so did I.

What I didn't realize after my incident near the subway is that seemingly "safe" places, like YU's campus, are not as safe

as they might seem, at least not with the current increase in violent crime in NYC. Without security guards monitoring the

campus grounds rather than just the entrances to buildings, I personally don't think I can feel safe walking around campus by myself. I would add the phrase "at night," but the incident on YU's campus occurred in the daylight. Clearly, YU security needs to be walking around campus at all times of day.

These are not isolated incidents. I have seen other similar, albeit less scary situations occur on campus, and I've spoken to my peers about their experiences with disturbed people asking for money on campus, but it seems as though the aggression of these people has increased over the past months. In March alone there were two

cases on Wilf Campus that were a real threat to the lives of four YU students in total. If *chas v'shalom* any of these aggressors were armed, the situations may have ended much differently.

During situations of heightened risk, YU has increased security in order to better protect its students. When there was a rise in antisemitic violence nation-wide, YU increased security on campuses and at events. When there were some uncomfortable situations on Beren Campus, security was intensified then as well.

In 2018, Jewish Activism Club co-president Philip Nagler (YC '20) called for more armed security on Wilf Campus. Armed or not, the uniform itself is a deterrent and I trust that our security guards are capable of keeping us safe, as long as they are there when an incident is occurring.

I've enjoyed my time at YU. COVID was a major setback for campus life, but the revival was swift and vibrant. If YU wants their students to be safe and happy on campus, they need to increase security presence there, inside the buildings and on the grounds.



YU Campus Security

THE COMMENTATOR

What Makes Ishay Ribo So Unique?

By JOSHUA SHAPIRO

Yeshiva University recently announced plans for a May 26 *siyum* and concert starring none other than the famed Ishay Ribo. As part of its 613 million dollar "Rise Up" campaign, YU is hosting Ribo featuring Alex Clare and Akiva Turgeman in the 10,000 seat Arthur Ashe Stadium in what is being



Ishay Ribo

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

termed by the university as the biggest Jewish concert ever. Ishay Ribo has risen to the pinnacles of both Jewish and Israeli music, following the release of his first album *Tocho Retzuf Ahava* in 2014. However, to fully appreciate the concert on May 26, it is crucial to first understand who Ribo is, why he is deserving of such a big event and why he became so popular in the first place. In other words, why is Ishay Ribo different from everyone else?

Ishay is 33 years old and was born in Marseille, France. His family slowly became more observant before he made aliyah when he was eight years old. He then proceeded to attend both Religious Zionist and *chareidi* yeshivot in his childhood, followed by a yeshiva designed for French *olim*. After this, he served in the Israeli army for two years as part of the Technology and Maintenance Corps and also was a member of the IDF choir.

The Purim 5782 edition of *HaMizrachi*, Mizrachi's magazine, ran a feature on the rise to stardom of Ishay Ribo and other Israeli singers, including Turgeman. The article briefly gave a biography on Ribo, followed by a commentary on various themes throughout his songs. Mizrachi beautifully pinpointed one aspect that makes Ishay so unique: his lyrics.

Before he transformed the genre, Jewish music generally followed the simple formula of putting Biblical verses and sayings from Rabbinic literature to song. Ribo, however, writes powerful and

poetic lyrics infused with Biblical and Midrashic references that are nevertheless astonishingly original. He has recreated the traditional piyut, giving ancient texts and teachings a fresh form that speaks powerfully to 21st century Israelis and Jews of every religious background.

Ribo dexterously fuses old biblical and rabbinic references with his own creative lyrics, crafting a dual religious and exuberant tone to his songs. For instance, in his song *Od Yishama*, he takes some of the lyrics from Jeremiah 33:10-11 that can be heard at any Jewish wedding for his chorus. However, the verses of the song consist of beautiful imagery and rhyme schemes that capture the essence of the special day. He sings of "the day when the heavens are open" and the "sound that connects souls here." (It sounds better in Hebrew, trust me.) Songs like *Tocho Retzuf Ahava* and *Kol Dodi Ribo* feature never-before-used verses from *Shir HaShirim*. With the resonance of romance from verses like those in *Shir HaShirim*, Ribo's songs often sound like love songs that a husband would sing to his wife; however, in classic *Shir HaShirim* fashion, they are actually love songs about God and Torah, carrying with them this same beauty. This distinctive side of Ribo's lyricism can be found in his love song about Torah, *Or HaChaim*:

How they're captivated by Its charms. / Follow blindly after It.

And all of Its sides are pure truth. / All seventy of Its faces.

More precious than gold and wealth. / Can only be bought with hard labor and honesty.

And It is the way. / And It is bliss.

Aside from his magnificent ability to lyricize, the instrumentation in Ribo's songs is also different from other artists. Some songs like *Sibat HaSibot* have the feel of a typical American pop song, and this is especially true of the "Triangle Remix" of the song which still can be heard all over Israeli radios. Alternatively, Ribo's 2019 "Elul" album features a mix of classic high-holiday tunes like *Ochila* and *Meloch* and original hits like *HaLev Sheli* and *Nafshi*, which features Hasidic singer Motty Steinmetz. The songs on the album exclusively feature acoustic and string instruments, including Middle Eastern ones whose names I do not know, evoking a feeling of serenity and warmth. Ribo's versatility allows him to produce songs of all different types of tempo and moods, including the fast, rock song, *Hinei Yamim Baim* and the slow, chill *Ben Yakir Li*.

Additionally, the greatest part of Ribo is easily his live performances. I have fortunately attended three concerts of his, most recently the Hasidic Tzama concert this past *Kislev*. When I first went during *chol hamoed* Pesach of *shana alef*, I remember walking to the *Binyanei Hauma* convention center and being confused by the large number of ultra-orthodox people walking in

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Why I Write Opinion Pieces

By YONI MAYER

This is not a feature. It isn't an editorial. It certainly isn't news. It is an opinion piece, and it is just that.

I have a certain proclivity for writing opinion pieces for the school newspaper, but I never really understood why. They don't get as much traction or viewership as the featured articles and certainly aren't as informative about the school's proceedings as the news articles. A few weeks ago, I was prodded to introspect and think not only about why I enjoy writing opinion pieces but why I think it's valuable.

"Well, you didn't really say anything novel ... it was just your opinion," came the comment from my critic which motivated this article. "Finally," I remember thinking, I had finally received criticism about an opinion piece I had published for The Commentator that I could use to better my writing, rather than the typical blasé "Oh, your article was so nice" comment from someone who may or may not have actually read it.

Besides the obvious irony in critiquing an opinion piece by noting that it was an opinion, my critic had a point which I'd recently been thinking myself: I'm not really adding anything valuable to the cultural, philosophical or intellectual discourse. More often than not, I'm just complaining about something or praising something else. What's the point of that?

So why publish opinion pieces? No, I'll go one step further: Why would a college student, with a full course load, dual curriculum, too many extracurriculars to count and hopefully some sort of social life, choose to spend their free time writing out their thoughts, then going through the arduous and rigorous process of having that piece analyzed, scrutinized and reorganized by a member of the newspapers editorial staff? I know — from this description, it doesn't seem too appealing. The thought of voluntarily doing extra work for a possibly non-existent audience initially halted me when I first considered writing pieces for the school newspaper. Now, with my tenth and final opinions piece I'll be writing for this academic year, I want to share some thoughts I've had about why I write these at all. My perception has thankfully been reconfigured. The following are some of my primary motivations in writing opinion pieces.

The first is intellectual stimulation and mental organization. Writing in the pursuit of publication requires me to do a thorough analysis of my claims. I have to ponder my opinion, understand my claim well enough to defend it, and often do further research and self-introspection to fully understand my own ideas. When I begin writing out the piece, I have to organize my thoughts in a coherent way so that it is cogent and understandable not only to myself, but to

the future reader as well.

Second is the audience. Although it may be small (and trust me, it is), it is possible that a reader will resonate with the ideas I share. Even if only a few people read the piece, and even fewer actually enjoy it, I still find it rewarding because I know it will have

made an impact. Through my own experience and feedback I've received, I know that reading an opinion piece on a belief you hold is enlightening and stimulating. You feel validated by seeing your opinion in print and comforted by having a source to reaffirm your beliefs. If it's an opinion opposite your own, hopefully you won't disregard it, but will engage with it, become a more thoughtful human being and learn from it nonetheless. I'm excited by the thought that my writing could cause someone to grapple with an idea.

I believe everyone has a unique creative fingerprint and an individualized way of reading the heartbeat of the human condition. Tapping into this, and sharing that outlook, is the way you provide to the perpetually unfolding story of the world.

The third reason is for posterity and reflection. Because I've written multiple opinion pieces at this point, through various life events and stages in my college

career, I'll be able to look back through the newspaper archive and better understand my own thoughts during different points in my life. What was I thinking when x happened? What influenced and motivated me during junior year? What was I obsessed with? I'm motivated by this treasure trove

of my thoughts and opinions that I'll be able to refer to for the rest of my life. The more I write, the more I'll remember. The fourth is creativity. I believe everyone has a unique creative fingerprint and an individualized way of reading the heartbeat of the human condition. Tapping into this, and sharing that outlook, is the way you provide to the perpetually unfolding story of the world. We all have a responsibility to share our unique outlook with the world and not rob it of our contributions. Building, creating and contributing is how we're remembered and how we become more than just a cog in the ever-turning machine of mundanity. Be creative. Share something inventive. Allow others to see the unique insight you have.

Creativity is expressed in many ways; it's not just about the message, but also the way in which it is presented. I enjoy finding fresh ways of getting my message across in these articles. I hope to express my own creativity across multiple disciplines throughout my life, but for now, writing is the most accessible way of accomplishing it. I don't need a good camera, musical instrument or expensive equipment. I just need paper and a pencil.

Truthfully, I write these opinions more for myself than for anyone else. I love the challenge they give me: the challenge of writing, organizing my thoughts, understanding my beliefs and the ultimate challenge of creating something to share with the world. So no, opinion pieces don't have to add something "novel" and groundbreaking to the cultural, philosophical and intellectual discourse of the world. This list I've shared of alternative reasons is extremely short and doesn't cover the gamut of why I like writing opinion pieces, but hopefully you see value in the ideas I shared, understand why a busy college student would write an opinion piece and are motivated to write something yourself. Or maybe you think my arguments are all ridiculous and you wasted your time reading this article. I wouldn't be offended in the slightest. After all, this is an opinion piece and it is just that.



Newspaper clippings

CREATIVE COMMONS

ISHAY RIBO

Continued from Page 16

the same direction as I was. I was even more perplexed by the number of people lined up to buy discs for their portable CD players. I soon realized that Ribo's popularity and love for Torah and music transcends any sect or religious affiliation in Israel. While my concert was male only, I remember speaking to friends who went to a concert in Caesarea the night before with every type of Israeli: Ultra-Orthodox, Religious Zionist, Secular, Man, Woman, Child. The first concert I attended initially had the aura of an Ed Sheeran concert, with bright lights and multicolored

video boards illuminating the room, but in only a few minutes it would be a bunch of Religious Zionists, Hareidi Jews and me singing Hebrew songs together. Suddenly, Ribo walked on stage with his all black outfit and tzitzit out and the crowd erupted. The first set of songs was incredible, with Ishay's Breslov guitarist absolutely shredding some solos, and in the intermission, Ishay proceeded to give a Dvar Torah about Pesach. At the end of the night, I was confident that it was the hyped concert I had been at since the Maccabeats performed Candlelight at my

elementary school.

Finally, Ribo is such a genuine and friendly person, and he has a fun and engaging stage presence. I was told that at that concert in Caesarea there were American seminary women chanting his name, and he responded: *Ah, Americayim*. I have friends that snuck backstage to meet him, and instead of kicking them out, he took pictures with them and wished them a *chag sameach*. He also regularly invites famous guest singers to share the stage with him, and he encourages the crowd to alternate lines with him every

performance. While Israeli political sects and religious denominations often generate tension and hard divides amongst each other, Ishay is able to unite them all. He is truly the epitome of a *Kiddush Hashem*. It is for these reasons that Ishay Ribo is so unique and why I am so excited to see him perform again. But this time, everyone at YU will have the privilege of coming as well.

A Letter to Stern College

By RABBI IAN SHAFFER

As many of my current students know, I will *im yirtzah Hashem* be moving with my wife to Israel at the end of this May. We have previously lived in Israel, in the '80s, and it has always been our dream to return.

My thoughts are focused now on the last 21 years that I have had the privilege of teaching at Stern College for Women. I started in August 2001, about two weeks before the most terrible event that I ever remember witnessing in my lifetime. It is still traumatic



Stern College for Women

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

to think of those days, yet I also remember the fantastic *kiddush Hashem* made by students from Stern who went down to ground

Hashem has always been one of the great features of Yeshiva University in general; in this regard the focus has not changed, as we

My hope for Stern is that it will continue to go from strength to strength and will shine the beacon of Torah and Jewish values to an even wider audience than it does at present.

zero to say Tehillim following the tragedy in the hope of finding any survivors, as well as afterwards when it was confirmed that so many people perished in this terrible attack. The concept of making a *kiddush*

saw recently with students' trip to Vienna to be with Ukrainian Jews fleeing the Russian invasion of their country.

Another strength at Stern which has not changed is the passion that so many students have for studying Torah. I have always used a line from one of my teachers, Rabbi Isaac Bernstein *z"l*, that "it was worth getting up today just to hear the following Torah thought," and inevitably, there is a smile around the room and a show of appreciation for the idea being shared. I have always enjoyed the great interactions with the students over the years, and have tried never to "preach down" to the classes I have been giving — on the contrary, I look forward to what I can learn from them in so many ways. I have always demonstrated the importance of being passionate about Torah study, especially when learning *Nach*. My guideline is always to explain how learning about great biblical personalities teaches us a little about who we are today. Our spiritual DNA comes from the great men and women of the past, and *Nach* becomes "*torat chaim*" in terms of explaining our lives as Jews in the

modern world.

I have occasionally allowed my British sense of humor to have free reign, and I probably need to apologize to many biblical personalities, because I inevitably have asked whether the students would date David, Jonathan or other such figures after learning about them. I believe that we must bring these amazing people to life as much as we can, and I am grateful when the classes have been respectful even while wondering what I am saying or asking, especially when I try to bring humor into the discussion. I have also enjoyed sharing many anecdotes with my students and I hope these remain with them for many years, as I learned from Nechama Liebowitz *z"l* that anecdotes are an important tool in any teacher's "arsenal of weapons" when trying to convey an important point.

My hope for Stern is that it will continue to go from strength to strength and will shine the beacon of Torah and Jewish values to an even wider audience than it does at present. I look forward to meeting former students in Israel (please say hello as I do not have a good memory for names), and I am sure that the achievements of the young women coming out of Stern will continue to give everyone a sense of pride, especially to teachers who have invested so much passion and energy in transmitting to them the word of Hashem.

With the greatest respect to students, teachers and administrators: may you continue to go *michayil el chayil*.

A Message to Underclassmen From The Comedy Club Guy

By JEREMY KOFFSKY

Overwhelmed. That's the feeling I felt on Aug. 26, 2019, my first day of Yeshiva University. My teachers were talking about the syllabus, a word I just learned. My *shiuur* was confusing and most of my friends were having fun back in Israel for their *shana bet*. Why did I jump in here so fast? There was so much to learn. Too much. As these thoughts entered my brain, so did others. Fleeting feelings of excitement popped in. A feeling of infinite potential. A strong voice entered my head saying "I know I can thrive here."

The next six months at YU were a blast. I made dozens of friends and went to every event I could. The Seforim Sale, YUNMUN, Torah Tours and Poetry Night. All around me I saw Juniors and Seniors making the most of the community and executing their visions.

It felt like so much was happening all the time, and I loved it, until one day, all of a sudden, that stopped. We had a COVID case. I went home abruptly, leaving all my belongings behind, assuming I'd be back soon. I wasn't.

In the year that followed, I longed for everything I had gotten in those first six months. A basketball game, a barbecue, a lunch with more than one other person. Summer turned to fall and fall to spring, and while being on campus during the 2020-2021 school year and making a Purim *Shpiel* was somewhat satisfying, it was nothing like that community I had seen in my first six months.

Thank God, that all returned this year. That fleeting excitement I had felt was no longer overwhelming; it felt like a call to action. I sat in the library that first week and thought to myself, "what can I do?" I need to create something like what those upperclassmen had done my first year here. One day, a wide-eyed sophomore approached me and asked if there were any stand-up comedy opportunities on campus. Not that

I'm aware of, I answered. Then it struck me: The YU Comedy Club.

I thought for weeks about how to design an event that would make people comfortable expressing themselves. I formed a board to help me. We put together an Open Mic Night on Oct. 19. I had it all figured out in my head, though lingering questions remained. Would people show up? Would enough students perform? I hoped for 30-40 students, but we got over 80. I hoped for five perform-

Two more events followed, through which an astonishing thing happened: a collaborative community of performers discussing methods and jokes sprang up. People kept asking when the next event was. It was amazing to see. I scribbled an idea on a notebook, and all of a sudden, 100 people were coming to see the idea come to fruition.

My message to underclassmen reading this would be to dream big. It's cliché, but it's true. If you set up a club or event the right

executing simple things can be difficult. But there is nothing like the feeling of executing a vision and bringing joy to others. This community has infinite potential. I sincerely hope I can inspire those younger than me to do everything they can to bring people together as the upperclassmen did for me back in 2019.

One final note: When Conan O'Brien lost The Tonight Show, a job he had dreamed of having for years, his final monologue included a statement about his situation. "I hate cynicism — it's my least favorite quality, and it doesn't lead anywhere. Nobody in life gets exactly what they thought they were going to get. But if you work really hard and you're kind, amazing things will happen." Throughout YU there is plenty to be cynical about: COVID testing, core requirements or course registration. Pick your poison. It changes every month. But if you look past that and try to elevate the community instead of harping on its shortcomings, I'm telling you: amazing things will happen.

There is nothing like the feeling of executing a vision and bringing joy to others. This community has infinite potential. I sincerely hope I can inspire those younger than I to do everything they can to bring people together as the upperclassmen did for me back in 2019.

ers, we got 15. To help give people a space to be creative and vulnerable was immensely meaningful to me.

way, spectacular things can happen. There will be challenges: Funding might be hard, your date may conflict with others and even



The first Open Mic Night, Oct. 19, 2021

SJ TANNENBAUM

I Never Thought I Would Be Here, Let Alone Miss This Place

By ZACHARY OTTENSTEIN

If you had asked me when I was a senior at TABC where I was planning to go to college, the answer probably would have been anywhere but Yeshiva University. This was not due to anything personal against YU, but simply based on the fact that it was not on the radar for someone who was descended from many *baalei teshuva* who had gone to other prestigious universities. I vividly remember sitting down in the living room with my Cambridge-educated grandmother and her asking me where I was applying in the end. I rattled off a list of



The Glueck Beit Midrash
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

colleges, both private and state-run, that did not include YU. My grandmother looked at me incredulously, and, in her perfect accent, a unique mix of Austrian and English, said

Even before I had set foot on YU's New York campus, I felt a sense of connection to the luminaries that have graced its halls.

"How come you are not even applying to YU?" When Granny Susi, as she was affectionately known to me, asked a question in that manner it was her way of being subtly disappointed, but as an overly confident high school senior, I did not think twice about it and ultimately did not apply to YU. I applied and was accepted into what I thought was my first-choice college, a small liberal arts university in the Boston area.

As the Yiddish proverb wittily states, a *mensch tracht un Got lacht*, man plans and G-d laughs. But my eventual journey to YU was less G-d laughing than His inspiring me to laugh at myself, something I feel happens quite frequently. Along with virtually 100 percent of my high school classmates, I embarked on a year of yeshiva study in Israel. Being that I was not the most conventional or well behaved teenager, a long-haired devotee of various rock bands, I was motivated to find a "brand" of Judaism that was deep, intellectually rigorous and encouraging of individual creativity. It was at Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi, an institution to which I am eternally grateful, that I found such a form of Jewish learning and practice. As my year of yeshiva progressed, I realized that there was nothing I enjoyed more and found more meaningful than deep immersion in *limmud hatorah*. As late teenage years are times when many question their values and life choices, often leading to the rupture and reconstruction

of their personas, I realized at this time that attending this other college would not further my goal of deep immersion in Torah. Without hesitation, I withdrew.

As any good yeshiva student without a plan for the future would do, I "kicked the can down the road" by deciding to spend another year in yeshiva. It was in my second year of study that I started to contemplate a future at YU. I initiated contact with Rabbi Jonathan Cohen from YU's Israel Office. Before I knew it, I had filled out an application, been accepted to and enrolled in Yeshiva College. Even before I had set foot on YU's New York campus, I felt a sense of connection to the luminaries that have graced its halls. Rav Soloveitchik, Rav Lichtenstein, Rabbi Lamm and countless other *gedolei Torah* were no longer just larger than life figures that crafted my personal religious ethos from afar via their writings — I started to view them as my *rebbeim*, sages who shaped the character of the yeshiva that I was to attend.

As I look back on my three years at YU, a few distinct images remain in my mind as representative of my Yeshiva University experience. I vividly remember my foray into the Glueck *beit midrash* on my first day, when the overwhelming sound of *chavrutot* deeply engaged in their study filled the air. Naturally I had seen *batei midrash* before, but one of this size and grandeur was a sight to behold. Obviously, beyond the buildings themselves are the hours I spent in YU's various *batei midrash* and the people I spent them there with. I am eternally grateful to all

of the *rebbeim*, *mashgichim* and *chavrutot* who pushed me to think, to learn and to connect with the *mesorah* as it has been passed through the generations from *Har Sinai* onward.

In a similar vein, the sight of coming down to *daven* in the basement of Morgenstern Hall and seeing Professor Barry Eichler wrapped in his *tallis* and *tefillin* is one that resonated with me deeply. Seeing my professors not only as academics, but also as Jews, epitomizes YU's values and my experience here. Later that day I would sit in Professor Eichler's class and discuss the densest of Ancient Near Eastern texts with the same person with whom I had *davened* that morning. He was not simply a professor, but a role model for life as an intellectually curious and committed Orthodox Jew. I vividly remember his telling me at the end of one class that he heard from Nechama Leibowitz herself that "Torah is a prism — a singular set of texts with each style of interpretation, academic or traditional, being one color that is refracted by the original texts." With that one sentence of his I felt that I had made the right choice by coming to YU to see for myself the "prism" and all of the "colors" comprising it.

Naturally, there are many more members of the faculty that I would like to thank for making my YU experience the meaningful journey of Torah Umadda that it has been, but there is not enough space in this short vignette to express my immense gratitude to all of them. However, I will end by saying that as I embark on my own career as an educator, I hope to imbue my future students with the lessons and skills that I have gained from my invaluable time at Yeshiva University.

The Pundit

The Dangers of Overturning Roe v. Wade

By AVIGAIL GREENBERG

On Monday evening, a draft opinion by Justice Samuel Alito to overturn *Roe v. Wade* by the Supreme Court was leaked to Politico and then to the public. This ruling would mean the end of the federal, constitutional protection of abortion. The power would go to the states, nearly half of which would declare abortion illegal almost immediately.

This is a vile infringement upon our freedoms that would open the door to dismantling further civil rights. In the words of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "the decision whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity. It is a decision she must make for herself." She warned that "when the government controls that decision for her, she is being treated as less than a full adult human responsible for her own choices." With this disturbing opinion from the Supreme Court, that is exactly what will happen. It will deny women autonomy and equality to men. Here are some of the many horrifying implications:

First of all, overturning *Roe* will not stop women from getting abortions — it will stop women from getting *safe* abortions. Women will find a way. Some will go to other states. Others won't have the means and will turn to harmful methods that could lead to injury, inability to have children in the future or even death, not to mention serious mental health effects.

This decision will also have devastating

economic implications and increase poverty, as studies have shown that families who are forced to keep unwanted pregnancies are

This is a vile infringement upon our freedoms that would open the door to dismantling further civil rights.

more likely to lack full-time employment and to live below the poverty line. They are also more likely to require welfare. Funnily enough, these politicians trying to force women to carry pregnancies to term are the same politicians who oppose welfare and public assistance. These economic impacts would be exacerbated in a country with no paid maternity leave, subsidized child care or universal healthcare.

The economic effects will disproportionately affect people of color, who have higher rates of abortions, and poor women who wouldn't be able to afford leaving their state and taking time off work to get an abortion. These people are also the ones who would not be able to afford to raise unplanned and potentially unwanted children. It would exacerbate their economic struggles, locking them in vicious, generational cycles of poverty.

Let's think beyond this specific decision: overturning a decision in this manner has grave implications for the future of America's court system, which ensures legal stability and equality. Overturning decisions that add necessary civil liberties to the Constitution, a living document, is dangerous.

The draft stands on the idea that *Roe* was unconstitutional. Justice Alito states that it's "egregiously wrong" to constitutionally

protect a right that was not originally in the Constitution. This reasoning is absurd. By this logic, plenty of other Supreme Court decisions would be deemed unconstitutional as well, including aspects of desegregation,

interracial marriage, the right to buy contraceptives, the right to child custody and parents' rights to choose how to raise their children, to name a few.

Their unsound logic could unravel our fundamental liberties. In what world could we consider this a free nation if an immensely personal decision about our own bodies that doesn't affect other people's health is controlled by politicians? This isn't an issue of whether or not you believe abortion is unethical. This is about control. This is about taking away women's rights.



Protests at the Supreme Court

The Case of Cancel Culture

By CHAYA ROFFE

Thirty years after his death, Dr. Seuss got “canceled” by Dr. Seuss Enterprises, the company in charge of continuing his legacy. They discontinued over 60 Dr. Seuss books due to “hurtful racial stereotypes.” The price of these canceled books ironically increased. Some sold for thousands! The popularity for Seuss’ books depended on the communities’ political views; some increased their celebrations for Dr. Seuss Day, while others threw out all their Dr. Seuss books. The communities who shunned his books must ask themselves if, while reading Seuss, they ever thought he “portrayed people in ‘hurtful and wrong.’ ways.” If not, they are letting other people think for them. That is the problem with cancel culture.

Even though it is widely accepted and taught today, when Maimonides’ “The Guide for the Perplexed” came to Europe, it was banned by prominent rabbinic leaders and burned as a heretical work. It was burned because of its content, the ideas contained within it being against societal views at that time. Ironically the controversial aspect of the book was how Maimonides tried to bridge Judaism and Aristotelian philosophy — Torah and science. The Rambam wanted to prove that faith and reason were not mutually exclusive. This is now a fundamental idea of Modern Orthodoxy, but when it first arose, people’s responses ranged from hesitancy to hatred. Later in Europe, the ban was lifted and the burning ceased.

While book burnings are more extreme than angry tweets, J.K. Rowling, like the Rambam, has also been hit with cancel culture. In her case, it was not her books’ being disputed, it was her LGBTQ+ beliefs. Even after receiving death threats, Rowling didn’t back down and continued to defend her views. Although minimally, “Harry Potter” sales actually increased. Much like Dr. Seuss.

It is imperative to understand the reason behind the canceling. Is the author’s view disagreed upon? Is the artwork insulting? Understanding the reason will give insight and knowledge to the viewer. The Rambam’s case shows how the people of that time felt about their religion mixing with other views. They were okay with Jewish philosophy, but not the idea of *torah umadda*.

The communities who shunned his books, must ask themselves if, while ever reading Seuss, they thought he “portrayed people as ‘hurtful and wrong.’ ”

Earlier this year, Chaim Walder, the author of “Kids Speak” came into the limelight for alleged child abuse and molestation. His books were promptly pulled off the shelves in Judaica stores in New York and later in Israel. People wanted no mark of Walder in their houses or stores; they did not want to read the books of a rapist. The canceling was not about the quality of Walder’s books, it was about showing support to the survivors of Walder’s horrific abuse. Walder was a renowned individual. The shock and sense of betrayal when the allegations started produced major responses, including burning Walder’s books by his grave.

In addition to censorship, there is also canceling at Yeshiva University. Most modernism, postmodernism or French Revolution classes at other schools would bring up the modernist slogan of the late 1800s and early 1900s: “make it new.” It was coined by Ezra Pound, a raging anti-semitic. In no English class in YU would you ever read Pound’s poems because we don’t want to continue his legacy by reading antisemitic poems.

Ezra Pound was a prominent poet. He edited “The Waste Land” by T.S. Elliot and reviewed James Joyce, Robert Frost, Gertrude Stein and other famous artists.

But few are taught about him because of his beliefs. The main problem people had with Pound was that he was a fascist. Pound was infatuated with Mussolini; in 1941, his radio show blasting Jews, Roosevelt and American intervention in the war took off. Some say “he contributed to a climate of opinion that enabled the Holocaust to happen.” He was arrested for treason and put

into a mental institution in the U.S., but was released after campaigns by Robert Frost and T.S. Elliot, two prominent poets. Pound’s poems showcased his control over clarity; he had the ability to be extremely articulate or ambiguous. His works would have been taught alongside Frost and Elliot had he not broadcasted his views regarding Italy during WWII.

Cancel culture is a hot topic in debates



Dave Chapelle, one of many “canceled” public figures

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A Moral Dilemma in the Glueck Beit Midrash

By BINYAMIN JACHTER

Recently, an experience in the Glueck *beit midrash* left me shocked and upset by our Yeshiva’s student body. Tens of high-caliber Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) *bachurim*, the alleged cream of the crop, stared their morals in the face, and, in my eyes, neglected to rise to the challenge.

I was learning on the second floor of the Glueck *beit midrash* during morning *Seder* that day. At some point, someone from our *Shiur* crowd’s nest noticed a young kid, maybe a middle-schooler or high-schooler, sitting on the first floor in one of the front seats of the *beit midrash* demarcated with immobile *Schtenders* as reserved exclusively for the *Roshei Yeshiva*. Around his neck hung a visitor’s pass, indicating he was not a YU student, and was perhaps a prospective student. His choice of seating was truly an innocent mistake.

So what stuck out in this scene before me? As the prospective student sat there on his phone, it was clear to me he was not being malicious. I cannot be angry at someone who is completely oblivious to the actions they are taking, especially when a quick word would immediately resolve it.

It is this exact point in which my distress lies. For that half an hour, as I studied, I periodically looked back up to see the teen still in that seat. I, sitting a floor above the chair in question, had been relying on those Talmidim below me to remedy the situation.

An entire section of the *beit midrash* had walked within three feet of him to go to early *Shiur* and yet not a single person said anything to this kid. I assumed at least one guy in that large area of the room would

one of the *Roshei Yeshiva* were to come up to him and ask him to move. A regular guy quietly informing of his mistake would be a much easier pill to swallow and would surely reduce any social anxiety or awkwardness he

We in our Yeshiva pride ourselves on how we respect our rebbeim and Roshei Yeshiva ... The moment they are not around, do we stop caring about their kavod?

notice and take care of it. To my dismay, I watched every person stare at this oblivious boy, some commenting to each other about his clear mistake, but passing on without a word to him. One by one, each MYP *bachur* took their turn to gawk at the scene and do nothing about it.

Perturbed, I sent a WhatsApp message to two different *bachurim* on the first floor. While one didn’t have his phone on him during *Seder*, the other looked up at me from where he stood, a few steps away from remedying this kid’s obliviousness, and made a gesture that said “who am I to tell him?” I would answer to my friend that he himself is someone we, as a community, should hold to a standard.

This Talmid might ask, “Why should I even say anything? What’s the harm in letting the kid sit there?” The answer is twofold. There is a component on the child and a component on us, the Talmidim of YU.

Firstly, this kid would be mortified if

might feel upon being approached by a Rav.

Secondly, we in our Yeshiva pride ourselves on how we respect our *rebbeim* and *Roshei Yeshiva*. *Kavod HaRav* is a standard in this institution where MYP guys like to think themselves the elite. We stand up for our *rebbeim* when they walk in the room and we hang on to their every word. Supposedly. The moment they are not around, do we stop caring about their *Kavod*? Under the threat of slight awkwardness in approaching a prospective student, one who is not being malicious and is simply unaware of his actions, do all our morals drop away? Does a fleeting moment of social anxiety hold us back from our duty?

By the time I had concluded no one would take care of the problem and had gone downstairs myself to quietly speak to the kid, a courageous Tzaddik had finally come and made a quick comment, and the seats were quickly changed.

I believe, from the second floor of Glueck,

about free speech, censorship and the idea of “separating the art from the artist.” Cancel culture is also known as “call-out culture” and was used in the #MeToo movement. It should be talked about and debated before banning someone or their work because of a difference in opinion. With Rowling, Walder and Pound, it is not about the art, it is about the artist. Their artwork is not appreciated due to their actions and opinions, while the Rambam’s and Dr. Seuss’ work was objected to because the content was viewed negatively.

No matter what pseudonym is used, the act of revolting against someone due to a difference in beliefs has always existed. However, cancel culture gets out of hand when the cancelers try to prevent others from reading the work of that author without thinking about it for themselves. Before canceling something, that work must be read critically. People must ask themselves if this is something they don’t want anybody else reading. Cancel culture isn’t black or white, each case needs to be analyzed critically for the sake of knowledge everywhere.

I am privy to witnessing the future *Gidolei HaDor* at the beginning of their journeys. But perhaps some fear is warranted for our community’s future when *Psak* will have to be made by these up-and-coming *Gedolim* who may only make decisions based on what is easy, not what is right. It is a shame that this is where we are and I can only hope that these amazing people, who have all of the right morals and Torah knowledge, grow a spine and stand up for all we hold dear.

But in every moment of *Mussar*, there is a moment of self-reflection. There is a fellow student in my *Shiur* who is known for his strong sense of duty, who will drop everything and run to accomplish his goals. This is true even if he sees another going to do the same task. So while I was convinced at the time that the others down below would take care of this mission of *Kavod HaRav*, and that I was too far away and too busy with my own learning, perhaps these are simply excuses against my jumping up and running down myself. Even if someone would have told the kid to move before I arrived, my *Sechar* would be the same for just trying. The minimal effort I put in doesn’t cover my own lack of *Zerizut*. So in this period of *Sefirat HaOmer*, when we mourn the tragic result of a lack of *Kavod HaTorah*, I call upon myself and my peers to introspect and rise to the challenge when duty inevitably calls.

A “FOMO” That Requires a “Slap”

By SHUIE BERGER

On Sunday, March 27, one famous celebrity slapped another on stage at the Oscars. This immediately blew up on social media as everyone started discussing the incident online and in group chats.

I like to consume my news from a wide variety of sources to understand a broad scope of approaches to different topics. While browsing Twitter, I noticed there was no ‘blue check’ that did not weigh in on the topic. It dominated the news cycle, and commanded every conversation. This was not a single day news topic. It did not blow by the news outlets after one short segment before being overshadowed by a new topic. This was talked about for almost a week.

I want you to take that in. One man hit another on live TV, and it was the talk of the news for a week. Of course there was a lot on the Ukraine-Russia conflict, but as the situation continues, it becomes less pressing in the media. News is only news as long as it’s new, which makes sense, but I believe it points to a larger problem.

I assume most people would agree that our attention spans have decreased over the years. Our news cycles can last less than a day, while 40 years ago, a news cycle might have lasted a few days. You couldn’t see your

favorite celebrity’s take on climate change, and you couldn’t tell someone across the world what you had for lunch. It was a simpler life.

The fact that a celebrity slapping another celebrity got so much coverage made me rethink how I view online activity. We are so roped into whatever is going on in the world that our minds crave it. We need it. It becomes compulsive and reflexive. Our need to see what’s going on in the world takes us away from our own worlds; it is a distraction from our own lives that relies on the extreme societal interaction that social media provides. Our minds are so overstimulated that we fail to see the important things going on right in front of us.

In October, I wrote an article about the Facebook outage that led to mass online upheaval and so many people feeling lost. I mentioned how we should try to become less reliant on technology and being online in order to free ourselves. I attempted to focus on solutions outside of technology, like reading a book. I tried my best, but could not maintain my devotion to it as I continued to be enveloped by technology. The claws were in too deep already, and to take them out would mean to unhook completely by going offline.

I had the time to think about this issue over the last few weeks, and “The Slap” gave

me a “slap,” helping me once again recognize this addiction. It may not manifest itself the same way other addictions do, but it is still harmful to our health. Our attention spans have collectively shortened as many of us joined the droves of people moving online to keep up with the world. As news cycles became shorter and faster, we had to stay current and involved by checking the news as often as possible.

Social media has its benefits and its flaws, and although I have considered taking myself offline more times that I can count, I have always stayed. The desire to be connected with everyone is definitely a big one. I need to see that person decorate a cake, cut a bar of soap into small pieces, play with a dog or make a chocolate sculpture. This compulsive need is obviously problematic, yet I feel like I can’t let it go. The solution is simple, yet to carry it out is one of the hardest things to do; the fear I have of being bored or not filling the void left by social media is harrowing. I know what I have to do, yet I cannot pull myself to do it.

This extreme outgrowth of FOMO (fear of missing out) hides behind the screen of technology. Generally, FOMO is thought of as missing a friend’s birthday party or a family trip. If you physically miss an event, you are physically sad about it. Here, there is no tangible sadness, so while it is difficult

to see this form of FOMO, it is undeniably there, and it took me years to see it.

I’m sure many of us have toyed with the idea of quitting social media, yet never took the drastic steps necessary to do so, perhaps in order to avoid the FOMO on the newest social issue or a friend’s cute baby.

If we really want to break the cycle and get past the FOMO, we have to get rid of our social media. That may be something none of us ever thought necessary, but I believe that it is. Optimally, deleting accounts is the way to go, but it might be helpful to just delete the apps first, and deleting the accounts as a final resort.

And what will I do without social media? I am not sure how to answer that question, but I know that in the long run, I will be better off from quitting cold-turkey. I am not asking that you join me in this bold quest. I only ask that you consider these ideas and how you connect with the world. Is it positive? Is it something to be proud of? Are you making a difference? Aside from the fact that most of it is a waste of time, we need to consider *why* we are not letting go of something that is not absolutely necessary to our lives. These questions are often asked about our impact in the real world, and the online world has somehow been neglected from this introspection. So I ask you: do you believe you need a “slap”?

IN RETROSPECT

Continued from Page 3

individuals of ethical excellence — in our lives. (This, too, was taught to me by Rav Binny.)

Such people need not be experts in all areas of life, but in the areas you seek advice. I am blessed to have many *chachamim* in my life, and their guidance has unraveled webs of problems that appeared to utterly constrain me. Both in and out of YU, I experienced the importance of building healthy relationships with those I trusted to help me move forward.

It sounds simple enough — and it certainly can be — but I found that, for myself, if I did not actively seek out those *chachamim*, then I would not have had them.

The Commentator’s Role

When interviewing new staff members, I always asked them: “What role should The Commentator have at YU?” I suppose now it’s my turn to answer the question.

On Aug. 23, the first day of this year, The Commentator published an article we are all now familiar with: a student alleging that she was raped by a male athlete and that the university subsequently failed to help her. The backlash was swift. Immediately after the article went live, administrators tried to intimidate me and other staff members, community members blasted the paper and others accused the survivor of lying. They railed against the paper and the survivor.

But there was another voice from our community, louder than the first, and this voice called for justice and accountability.

The day after the article’s publication, YU released a tone-deaf statement on the allegations. The following week, Dean Karen Bacon emailed students about a new committee formed to tackle campus sexual assault and harassment. It finally seemed that YU would right its egregious wrong, so we waited. But despite our emails and inquiries, months went by with radio silence.

The Commentator Editorial Board then penned an editorial calling for accountability from the administration as the fall semester came to an end. Before publishing, we finally received a response with two of the committee’s planned initiatives. Two

weeks later, President Ari Berman emailed students that YU would be restructuring its Title IX Office and recruiting professionals experienced in handling sexual assault and harassment. Two months later, Vice Provost Chaim Nissel announced the university’s new deputy Title IX coordinator.

One student faced the worst of our institution, and we gave her a voice. Our close coverage of this issue led to important communal conversations, but more than that, it led to real change. Things are not perfect, but they are better. This is The Commentator’s role.

Of course, we cover the better parts of YU — the Rise Up campaign, the Ukrainian humanitarian mission, GPATS’ growth, new elevators and much more — but if that was all we did, then YUNews would more than suffice.

Even in the face of bureaucracy, communal pressure, institutional injustice and the like, The Commentator will never stop reporting. This paper is here so that every student, faculty member, rabbi and administrator will know that they are never helpless.

Appreciation

Thank yous are perhaps the most difficult part for me. There would not be enough pages in this final issue for me to even fractionally thank all those who deserve it. Nevertheless, it is a daunting task I must attempt.

To my professors, thank you for teaching me with care, patience and wisdom. Your lessons formed not just my mind but my character. I am especially grateful to Prof. Maria Zaitseva, who taught me for all five international relations courses she offers and an independent study, and Rabbi Dr. Ari Bergmann, who taught me academic Talmud for two semesters. Their commitment, kindness and brilliance are among the many reasons they are fan-favorites at Yeshiva College.

For my morning *seder* program, I had the distinct privilege to learn under Rabbi Etan Schnall, Rabbi Dovid Hirsch and Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky — *talmidei chachamim* greater than I can even fathom. More than they

deepened my understanding of Torah, they deepened my love of Torah. To Rabbi Schnall, whose *shiur* I was in for two of my three years, thank you for your support, availability and authenticity. Your loving dedication to your students is palpable to all, and I will always appreciate that.

I would also be remiss not to thank the administrators I have met and connected with over these years. Specifically, I would like to thank President Ari Berman for always greeting me with warmth, respect and a smile, regardless of what was being published in our pages. I must also thank Mechal Haas, YU’s executive director of communications who was The Commentator’s go-to person — by email, call or text. Beyond her responsiveness and reliability, Mechal was always caring and respectful. I cannot recall the number of times when, during our conversations, Mechal would pause and ask me, “How are you doing? Not you as editor in chief, but you as Sruli.” To recycle the sentence from two past editorials: “YU is lucky to have her.”

I am also appreciative of *Mashgiach Ruchani* Rabbi Yosef Blau, who, though I never formally learned under him, has been a great teacher to me. He helped me through The Commentator’s most difficult times this year. His office door was always open, and his wisdom and guidance were always invaluable.

In my personal circle, my friends were constantly a great source of support and confidence. They acted with such benevolence, lending a helping hand and listening ear whenever needed. Their friendship shaped this year and my YU experience. (Special shoutout to my roommates — Gabe, Liav, Sammy and Yoni — who, at this point, probably know more about this institution than any other student. Thank you for everything.)

My family was my rock. My mom and dad’s advice, like everywhere else in my life, always proved to be the best. Their excitement for me made this all the more exciting, and I held their wisdom close to my heart. Beyond all that, the love I received from them, my siblings and my extended family kept me motivated and focused every day.

Words cannot express how much they did and how much it meant. I love you all.

The Commie Folk

Daniel, you have been the best managing editor over this last year. You are still the copy-editing master, but more than that, your passion and professionalism made our operations smooth and successful. No matter what the task or crisis, you handled it effortlessly, and it made all the difference. We had a great run.

Ariel and Seffi, your dedication to The Commentator and love for YU demonstrate why you should be leading the paper next year. Your conviction and experience are the greatest testament to that. I look forward to seeing where you take this paper.

To The Commentator staff, this paper would not exist without you. I am in awe of you all. Our team — composed of section editors, layout editors, social media and website managers, business managers, staff writers and contributing writers — was incredible. I wish I had the space to acknowledge you each individually. You are masterful writers, managers and editors, and this paper has flown to tremendous heights from your work. Your service to the community is immeasurable. Thank you for all that you do.

Hashem

“Hashem is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? Hashem is my stronghold; whom should I dread?” (Tehillim 27:1)

There is no greater blessing than my growing relationship with Hashem. He is my Light, the Soul of my soul, my Best Friend, my God. His love fills my world, and I want nothing more than to be in service to Him. This was all for Him.

This is my last article for The Commentator, a paper I have grown to love with every fiber of my being. Goodbyes are never easy. I leave it in the hands of an exceptional staff and in the hands of Hashem. I look forward to what comes next.

“Hope for Hashem. Be strong, and He will strengthen your heart. Hope for Hashem” (Tehillim 27:14).

Netflix's Downfall

By SHOSHANAH GHANOONI

Over the past few months, Netflix has made the news multiple times. Stock prices have plummeted in the past six months from \$677 to \$190. To add to this, Netflix just had its worst two quarters: in the last quarter of 2021, Netflix's subscriber base grew by 9% compared to previous quarters of 22% growth. And in the first quarter of 2022,

Unless the company creates exceptional content and renews licenses for popular media, this could be the demise of Netflix.

Netflix lost 200,000 subscribers for the first time in a decade.

Although it is impossible to point to one specificity causing Netflix to decline, the company has recently been cracking down on password sharing. They also have had difficulty renewing licensing agreements and keeping media on the platform. Furthermore, they've raised prices in January 2022 after increasing them just over a year ago at the end of 2020. All together, these actions have led to Netflix's downfall.

Although password sharing goes against their terms of service, Netflix has been indifferent until recently. In 2016, the company stated that there's only so much password sharing they can prohibit — for example, with a spouse or child — and therefore it was difficult to enforce the no-password sharing rule. Today Netflix estimates that 100 million households share their passwords; they intend to impose an additional cost for every additional user. The company expressed a plan to test a program in South America with only two profiles per Netflix account,

with any additional profile incurring a \$3 fee, with the expectation to bring this to the U.S. Interestingly, 79% of people sharing an account said they wouldn't be willing to pay for their own account if Netflix cracks down on password sharing. They may even lose customers if a group shares an account and splits the cost.

Netflix raised their prices in January 2022 and anticipates to raise prices by \$3 per additional user if the South American pilot program appears successful. The company announced they did so to bring better

in-house entertainment to its users, although the quality of the content has been in decline which may allow for more users to leave Netflix. The company also has been viewed negatively for canceling successful shows, including "I Am Not Okay With This" and "The Society", after just a couple seasons despite high ratings. For these reasons, viewers have been turning to Netflix's competitors — Disney+, Hulu, HBO Max and Amazon Prime.

One more thing to note is licensing agreements. Many users are leaving Netflix

because their beloved shows and movies are no longer on the streaming platform due to expiration and a lack of renewal contracts. Production companies have started their own streaming services and stream their own content, causing Netflix to lose out on these popular movies and TV shows and thus a large fanbase. For example, Disney+ has rights to any Marvel shows on Netflix and will only offer them on their own platform.

Unless the company creates exceptional content and renews licenses for popular media, this could be the demise of Netflix.



PIXABAY

Are Competitive Simulation Exercises the Future of Learning?

By YOSSI FRIEDMAN

With great rapidity, digital technology has incorporated itself into all aspects of modern life. College students are all but required to purchase a connected device to complete their classwork, take their tests and check their grades. In addition, many educational systems are moving online, yet the archaic teaching methods limit the professors' ability to engage students in a classroom. As a result, a new creative method of education has risen in many college courses across the United States. I have participated in three online educational simulations in the past few college semesters as part of a course's curriculum. Based on my previous experiences, I will prove why this increasingly available and innovative educational alternative should become a permanent fixture in future curriculums.

At the start of the Spring 2021 semester at Yeshiva University, my professor introduced the class to an online simulation as part of a social media marketing course. Our professor instructed each student to purchase the Stukent Simulation for \$120. In this simulation, the student's objective was to score highly on several key performance indicators (KPIs) and outwit their classmates in a race to generate extensive brand awareness, engagement and conversions as CMO (chief marketing officer) for a company called BUHI Bags. The simulation

captivated the students, engaging them in a fierce competition filled with banter, trash talk and a desire to outwork each other. This genuine competition was far more engaging than playing versus a bot. In addition, because Stukent's software would process the data entered each week and spit out a leaderboard, students had something to look forward to at the beginning of each week.

The simulation captivated the students, engaging them in a fierce competition filled with banter, trash talk and a desire to outwork each other.

There are many judgments a student would be required to make throughout the simulation which directly determine their overall performance. For example, one decision could be finding a reasonable percentage of their weekly budget to spend on a specific social media platform. Another is whether to pay for an influencer to promote their brand online or hire a photographer to generate original content, enabling the student to pair higher quality photos with their original captions and relevant hashtags on the official BUHI Bags social media pages. The quality, relevance and amount of money spent on promoting posts could directly lead to an increase in the number of likes/comments on posts and clicks to the website, resulting in greater sales revenue and a higher leaderboard ranking. Similar to real-world

situations, students may use data to discover better ways to position themselves to prospective consumers. For example, they may do this by scheduling posts directed at the brand's target market with promotions for products that would fit their lifestyle when the consumer is active on social media. I experienced firsthand how Stukent's simulation effectively encouraged its participants

to test their social media marketing abilities, operate strategically and learn quickly from their mistakes.

While there are clear benefits to incorporating a simulation into a college curriculum, it is crucial to assess the potential downsides to this educational methodology. Firstly, all simulations require students to pay an initial fee to participate. On top of already expensive books and tuition, additional costs will hardly elicit positive reactions from the typical college student on a budget. Secondly, the Stukent simulation has recently shown signs of age as the marketing industry enters a new paradigm — specifically, the nascent outbreak of TikTok and a potential meta-verse revolution. Another issue is that the formula for which the simulation determines KPI results and crowns a winner must be

constantly tweaked to represent the industry accurately. Occasionally, the simulation would appear outdated due to its ranking of popular social media platforms, its failure to incorporate Tik Tok and its exclusion of short-form content. Lastly, the simulation can be time-consuming and thus requires professors to devote their precious class time to work on it. This leaves less time for the students to learn through lectures and other case studies. Therefore, the professor should work with the administration to determine a simulation's costs and benefits to see if it suits their specific educational requirements.

A few weeks ago, I led my team to a first-place finish in my class's "Marketplace Simulation," an integral part of my marketing capstone college course. As CEO of a crew of four, I led my team to make strategic decisions regarding the pricing, promotion and distribution of a portfolio of brands by targeting popular consumer segments based on various factors such as unmet needs, market potential, budgets and competitive forces. As the group leader, I asked my team to reflect on the lessons we had learned during our time together. One of the lessons I learned is that a leader's ability to delegate is essential to optimizing the workflow and efficiency of their team. At the start of the marketing simulation, there were times when our entire team would work solely on one specific task. However, I recognized

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Festival, Fans and Fashionistas

By EMILY SAFIER

After a two year hiatus due to COVID-19 and its resulting restrictions, the iconic music and arts festival Coachella was back on! The two-weekend events took place during mid-April in Indio, California. The Coachella party is followed by its sister event, the country music festival known as Stagecoach. This

The event highlights artists, musicians, celebrities, influencers, networking, product marketing, and more.

music festival extravaganza was established in October 1999 by Paul Tollett and his company Goldenvoice as a way to celebrate the music and concert world. The event highlights artists, musicians, celebrities, influencers, networking and product marketing, among others. The hot desert grounds of the Coachella venue covers an expansive 614 acres dedicated to artists, fans and fashionistas. Coachella 2022 was headlined by Billie Eilish, Harry Styles, Swedish House Mafia and The Weeknd. Originally Kanye West was set to headline but he ended up canceling, resulting in a dramatic 32% drop in ticket sales. Over 150 artists across the seven Coachella stages performed this year. And

over 125,000 people attended each of these concerts. Coachella tickets, excluding single day general admissions, sold out within 75 minutes of being released to the public.

So how much do these elite Coachella tickets cost? Three-day General Admission tickets sell from \$500-\$600 and VIP tickets range from \$1,000-\$1,300. Tickets were sold from the Coachella website and resale sites like Stubhub and Vivid Seats. The exclusive invitation-only party called Revolve Festival takes place on the first weekend of Coachella and is off-grounds. This party is a place for celebrities, influencers and Hollywood elite to network. Tickets for this VIP party are a steep \$2,000 a ticket. Performers for this music festival are paid from \$10,000 to, in the star statuses of Lady Gaga and Kendrick Lamar, \$3 million and \$4 million, respectively. Coachella generated an estimated \$700 million this year. This success boosted the local economy by up to \$400 million due to concert-goers and the festivities. Companies strategically sponsor Revolve Festival attendees and all the major players in the fashion game with their products, designs and brands. They especially target influencers to boost sales and spread brand awareness across their social media platforms and audiences.

Next to music, fashion is one of the main features of Coachella. The festival holds a reputation of having trendy and stylish influencers, models and fans in attendance. Bold, eccentric clothing, hair and accessories



Fans at a concert

PIXABAY

are popular and to be expected. The style of the season is largely influenced by looks from the festivals. This year, the overall aesthetic was casual and color-coordinated. Oversized outfits were favored, colorful makeup trended and cropped tops or shorts were commonly found.

After an unfortunate two-year delay, Coachella was cleared to take place and be

opened to the public. The event did not require masks or proof of vaccinations; instead, they administered a COVID test for concert attendees to enter. After the first weekend of Coachella, there was a reported 77% increase in COVID cases. The two-weekend Coachella fest is a jam-packed and carefree arts and music festival that is back and better than ever for its twenty-first year.

The Musky Smell of New Age Twitter

By SHUIE BERGER

On April 25, it was confirmed that Elon Musk would be purchasing Twitter for the negligible price of \$44 billion. Musk is the world's richest person, with a net worth of approximately \$265 billion, almost \$100 billion more than the next person on the list, Jeff Bezos. Spearheading the electric vehicle movement, Musk's company, Tesla, has produced the most popular electric vehicles ever, placing Musk at the forefront of the EV industry.

However, Elon Musk is no ordinary billionaire — he is what some might call “eccentric.” One might say that to be the richest person on Earth, eccentricity is part of the deal, and he's always been a character; after all, he named his child X Æ A-Xii. However, his most recent dealings have thrown him into even more controversy than usual.

On March 24, Musk tweeted a poll asking the public if the Twitter algorithm should be open source, meaning the public would have access to the code that determines what shows up on their feeds. Out of 1.1 million voters, almost 83% of them said “yes.” The next day, he tweeted another poll saying “Free speech is essential to a functioning democracy. Do you believe Twitter rigorously adheres to this principle?” Out of over two million voters, over 70% of them said “no.” The day after that, he tweeted “Is a new platform needed?” These tweets went viral among the many who have felt that Twitter has been unfairly banning people for small things. A common argument one might hear is, “they banned a former president, but the leaders of many terrorist groups, or official accounts groups themselves, still have Twitter accounts!”

The people who have been fed up with Twitter's seemingly partisan algorithm and grounds for banning lauded Musk for asking these basic but fundamental questions. He

hadn't even done anything about it yet, but the supporters saw Musk's way of thinking as almost revolutionary, especially after it seemed that most corporations and billionaires, the ones best suited to bring about change, were never going to speak up.

Then, on April 4, in a wild and unexpected move, Musk bought up over 9% of Twitter shares, making him the company's largest shareholder. This became the news story of the week. While the purchase of the very specific percentage seemed ironic and almost funny in a sort of trolling fashion, Musk conveyed serious concern for the direction of the de facto town square. Every social media platform, Twitter, in particular, was buzzing with views on Musk's purchase. Everyone had something to say about it. Some spoke about the consolidation of power and prevention of letting one man control the media, and some spoke about how this would enable more free speech, allowing more ideas to be exchanged.

Musk accepted but then declined a position on Twitter's board. Then, on April 14, he made an offer to buy out the remaining shareholders for about \$43 billion, in one of the largest Take-Private offers of the decade. While the offer was profitable for shareholders, the board adopted a “poison pill,” or shareholder rights plan, which would dilute Musk's stake in the company by discounting other investors' shares if he sought further control. This plan would discourage a hostile takeover by any single investor. After securing the funds to acquire the company, Musk spoke with the board, and on April 25, they agreed to sell Twitter to Musk for \$44 billion. Musk will take the company private after the acquisition is finalized.

The whole saga was exciting to follow on Twitter. While I have yet to implement my own personal erasure of social media, I had to stay updated on the developing situation. As with many similar events, people tend to polarize to one side of the story, bifurcating the issue. If we analyze the different sides

of the coin, we can see where each party is coming from.

Failing to understand the basis of both sides' arguments prevents anyone from gaining any ground. It is partially responsible for the increasingly polarized and politicized America we see today. The way I understand it, from the various reasons I have found on Twitter itself, the people who oppose Musk's buying the platform are afraid of hate speech and the potential for an extreme form of “free speech.” Unmoderated free speech, such as death threats and gross misinformation, can be dangerous. The way they see it, if Musk allows more free speech, there will be a lot of harm done to many already-marginalized groups.

On the other side of the coin, the supporters of Musk's buyout view it as a revolutionary vehicle to finally combat the long-lasting effects of what has begun to reek of partisan censorship. The promises of open source code and more transparency are big reasons many support Musk's moves. The advocates for the sale of Twitter, who may have long felt that they

were being unfairly censored, see it as a move toward freedom of speech, something that is protected by the First Amendment. Twitter, the de facto town square for political discourse, should be equally censored, or not at all.

Now that we understand why each side of the issue thinks the way it does, what does that mean for Twitter and free speech in general? As with other constitutional disagreements such as gun control, there is no simple answer, and there will always be someone who doesn't like the outcome. The people against Musk's purchase don't like it, and, maybe some will leave in protest. However, the future holds nothing certain. Perhaps the proclamation of “freedom of speech” may be a mask for hateful comments or misinformation, or perhaps it will directly lead to the transparency that many have wanted for so long. We don't know what will come of Twitter, but Musk brings a new age to social media as a whole. Regardless of what happens, Musk has done something no one has done before, squarely placing himself as a hero and villain on the front page of today's society.

SIMULATIONS

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that trusting my group members to complete particular tasks and avoiding micromanaging them would be essential to our team's success. As Richard Branson says, “Success comes from delegating, risk-taking and having a good TEAM!”

Higher education is constantly seeking to infuse engaging technologies into its curriculum and teaching styles to match the ever-changing professional landscape. Implementing online competitive simulations into the classroom represents a

tremendous opportunity for students to test their knowledge and gain authentic experience in their field of interest. In addition, if implemented and encouraged correctly, simulation education can provide students with exciting opportunities to test their skills and win awards which demonstrate to potential employers their work ethic, talents and desire to learn.

Never. Stop. Commentating.



Got something to say?
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