

THE COMMENTATOR

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NYPD Investigating Two instances of Assault and Harassment Against Students On Wilf Campus

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was published online: March 25.

Four students were victims of assault and antisemitic harassment on Wilf Campus last week in two separate incidents, leaving one student with minor injuries. Both incidents took place along West 187th St. between Amsterdam and Audubon avenues, beside YU's Zysman Hall building, home to Muss Residence Hall and Yeshiva University High School for Boys.

YU's Security Department sent out an advisory to students last Friday about the assault, but it never notified students about the harassment. The New York Police Department (NYPD) told The Commentator on Wednesday, March 23, that an investigation is ongoing in both cases, although no arrests have yet been made.

According to the NYPD, the first incident, which occurred at 12:15 a.m. on the morning of March 15, involved a man walking up to two students, telling them to "Get the f--- out of the way" and yelling "I have a gun and will kill you guys!" Shortly afterward, he yelled, "You f----- Jews," before walking away.

One of the two students involved,

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The NYPD is investigating both cases, though no arrests have yet been made.

THE COMMENTATOR

Sy Syms School of Business to Replace First-Year Writing Requirement

By AVIGAIL GREENBERG

Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) will be replacing the standard first-year writing requirement — First Year Writing (FYWR) for Wilf Campus and English Composition for Beren Campus — with two of its own sequential courses, which will take effect in the fall.

In the past, SSSB students have taken both the standard writing requirement and SSSB's Business Communications. Now, the system has been redesigned so that SSSB students will focus on strengthening skills in business writing, presentations and professionalism, according to SSSB Dean Noam Wasserman.

Wasserman said that the adjustment was made due to student requests over the last few years and in an effort to strengthen business communication skills. It has been spearheaded by Head of Business Communications Prof. Marc Spear and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Selma Botman, with input from SSSB faculty and alumni, he added.

"We are replacing FYWR (and English Composition) with the new Sy Syms course in order to improve the students' business-writing skills, incorporate the lessons we've learned from the existing BCOM course, and add the professionalism and life skills prioritized for us by alumni and students," Wasserman told The Commentator.

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Sy Syms School of Business, Beren Campus

MOSES PAVA

Ann Todd Appointed Deputy Title IX Coordinator of YU

By SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was published online: March 10.

Ann Todd, a Title IX investigator and consultant, recently joined Yeshiva University's Title IX Office as deputy Title IX coordinator, announced Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Title IX Coordinator Chaim Nissel via email on Thursday morning, March 10.

Title IX is a federal law that requires universities to investigate sexual assault and harassment claims on campus. Todd's appointment comes in response to recommendations made by a university committee that was formed after the alleged mishandling of a rape case last year, which brought YU's compliance with Title IX into the public eye.

In her role, Todd will assist students with all Title IX and sexual harassment and assault-related issues, Nissel wrote. He added that Todd will help YU launch a new website

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A Week with Ukrainian Refugees

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Can You Hear the Ukrainian Cries?

By SRULI FRUCHTER

It felt like something out of a movie. One month ago, a global superpower invaded a sovereign country hoping to come, see and conquer before supper. But that didn't happen. Instead, Russian forces were met with Ukrainian people unwilling to relinquish the land they call home. Bearing everything in its arsenal, Ukraine has since been fighting for its life so successfully that even experts are perplexed at Russia's military miscalculation.

On second thought, it felt like something out of a history book — our history book.

The parallels between Israel's War of Independence and the Russia-Ukraine War are striking to me: Both are telltales of the ancient David-Goliath faceoff with the former's very existence on the line. In 1948, Goliath was the Arab states hoping to destroy the Jewish State, and in 2022, Goliath is Russia seeking to overrun Ukraine. In both wars, despite international support or lack thereof, the promise of tomorrow rested with David and David alone. When I thought about the war in that way, it took on a different tone.

All my life, I learned about Israel and its military successes against all odds. The constant presence it held in my educational upbringing, along with my personal closeness to Jewish pain, made that war sit in a place closer to my heart. Those associations made the Ukrainian crisis feel different to me. When my relation to Ukraine shifted from a country abroad to a country I could see, it became less like a circumstance to analyze and more like a crisis to fear. Ukraine as an abstraction is shocking, but Ukraine as a reality is horrifying.

As of this writing, Ukraine has seen over 2,400 civilian casualties with 3.7 million refugees fleeing

the country, but we are so desensitized to international crises that we read right over those numbers. The Beren and Wilf campuses are home to around 2,200 students; 3.6 million people are more than double the population of Manhattan. What would a twice-over empty Manhattan look like? Could we, God forbid, imagine the casualties to more people than our own student body?

*Ukraine as an
abstraction is
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horrifying.*

These relative comparisons are also limited. Thinking of individuals crowding in their homes for shelter is painful, but it cannot hold a candle to looking at real pictures. Photographs show us the reality: Citizens carry clothing and personal belongings from a small house aghast in flames; a portrait of a young woman sits beside her grave with a bouquet of roses; two men, one woman and one child lie lifeless on the streets, their multi-colored winter coats zipped all the way with streaks of blood across their faces.

To think of Ukrainian suffering is almost insufferable. As valiant as their efforts may be, the war seems unwinnable. When their horrors become something real to us, it finally sets in that they are helpless in that war. You can almost hear the Ukrainian cries that rise to the skies with the smoke of its decimated cities. "I cry, 'Violence,' but am not answered. I shout, but can get no justice" (Iyov 19:7).

That helplessness is unbearable — not just their helplessness, but ours. One of the unfortunate realities

of international atrocities, and why I believe we so quickly become emotionally detached from them, is that we can do so little to change them. There is a great distance between what we want to do and what we can do. We are desensitized to them by necessity.

Yet, like most, I still find a restlessness within myself that is enraged by Russia's active violation of Ukraine. My soul aches from its inability to right this wrong. In that regard, we are not allowed to simply step back; as Rabbi Tarfon teaches us in Pirkei Avot, "It is not on you to finish the work, but you are not free to neglect it" (2:15). We may not be able to save Ukraine, but we are also not free to abandon it. I look to the Yeshiva University community for inspiration on embodying this.

In the days after Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, YU spoke up and issued a statement standing in solidarity with Ukraine. Since that first day, the Glueck Beit Midrash and various *minyanim* have been saying Tehillim for Ukraine's safety. The following Monday, a roundtable of YU political scientists and historians broke down Russia-Ukraine history and the unfolding war. Several other panels have been held since, and the Tehillim have continued, but the efforts did not stop there. Two weeks ago, YU led nearly 30 students on a humanitarian aid mission to Ukraine, an experience that surely changed lives. On top of that, the university collected more than \$75,000 for Ukraine. This is the essence of Rabbi Tarfon's message.

It hurts to think about Ukraine, and that makes sense. But at the same time, we cannot turn a blind eye to our Jewish and human families when they need us most. When they cry, "Violence," we must answer. When they shout, we must fight.

THE COMMENTATOR

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represented at Yeshiva.*

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ideals of Torah Umadda, and a commitment to
journalistic excellence.*

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1 Purim 5782
From what we can remember, it was a 7Up



2 YU in Vienna
According to LinkedIn it was lit



3 Swag Day
Now you too can be a walking YU advertisement



4 Ishay Ribo Coming to YU
The Five Torot will be getting their own theme song ... coming soon



5 YU hires President Zelenksy as PR director
"We need the Torot, not a ride"



6 Sy Syms Midterms Taken Online
Despite drop in COVID cases, this is "just kinda easier for everyone involved."



7 Elon Musk to Compete with Twitter
Buckle up for the meme revolution

Letter to the Editor
The Academy and the Yeshiva Need Not Conflict

By DOV PFEIFER

To the Editor:
A recent Commentator article on Torah Umadda, in which the author posited that YU had abandoned its motto and lost its way, surprised me on several fronts. This response is not meant to be comprehensive, but to focus on two main points.

The driving force of the academy is to question the status quo, reexamine evidence and come to bold new conclusions. The driving force of the yeshiva is to continue a venerable tradition, project it into our times and try to live by it.

First, the author's characterization of supposed anti-religious and antisemitic attitudes among professors seemed odd. Although I am not privy to the exact details, is it anti-religious to comment that Orthodox participation in the civil rights movement was lackluster or that Orthodoxy has an issue with sexism? Is criticism of Israel's wartime actions antisemitic? As a religious student here who thinks Orthodoxy largely failed to join the fight for civil rights, who feels that sexism remains prevalent in the Orthodox community and who is uncomfortable with many of Israel's aggressive actions, am I the radical secularist antisemite the author wants kept away? While I hesitate to judge the author without more information, it seems that he conflates reasonable criticism with an attack on his beliefs.

Second, a main point of the article is that there is a conflict between YU's morning Juda studies and afternoon secular studies. The author suggests that the appropriate response is for rabbis to rise up and reshape YU's secular departments as they see fit, freeing us from the challenges of biology and the dangers of literature. If, indeed, the two halves of YU are engaged in battle, this notion makes sense. What this dramatic presentation hides is that there need not be any war. We can and should let each side exist in its own sphere.

The driving force of the academy is to question the status quo, reexamine evidence and come to bold new conclusions. The driving force of the yeshiva is to continue a venerable tradition, project it into our times and try to live by it. To me, the challenge of Torah Umadda is to combine these two realms without compromising either. One aspect of this is extending the meaning derived from the yeshiva into the world of the academy and broader culture. Another aspect is expressed by incorporating the best of academic methodology into our analyses of Torah and Gemara without replacing the existing methods, and by examining the best ideas the world puts forward through a Jewish lens. Within this approach, where we can choose how the two realms interact, there

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7UP by Raphael Alcabes
NMODL

Macs Historic Season Comes to an End

Night Seder returns with a vengeance

Robert Kraft Donut School for Sufganiyot Millions in Debt

Scandals abound as allegations of embezzlement and stale memes emerge

Brookdale Elevators to be Replaced

Column preemptively renamed 7up/6down.

Belfer Construction

First time I've stepped foot on that turf since freshman orientation 2019

Saracheck Takes Over Wilf

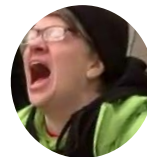
When you start bumping into your campers and NCSYers around campus... it's probably time to graduate

Congress on Daylight Savings Hours

Shacharit minyan turnout for next year is predicted to be ... bad.

Summer Internship LinkedIn Posts

We get it: Your dad is letting you staple papers in his office for the summer. No need to tell the world on LinkedIn.



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NYPD INVESTIGATION
Continued from Front Page

who requested anonymity from The Commentator, said that the man, who appeared to be a white male in his thirties and “clearly high,” first yelled at them “to get out his way,” prompting them to move to the side. After passing them, the man turned around and claimed that the students were talking about him, which the students reassured him that they weren’t.

The man then threatened to kill them with a gun, prompting the students to attempt to de-escalate the situation while walking away. (The NYPD noted that a “firearm was not observed or simulated by the suspect.”) The man then followed them for a bit as they left, yelling “you f----- Jews,” before leaving and walking north on Amsterdam Avenue. At the advice of YU Security, one of the students filed a police report, which prompted a hate crimes investigation.

YU Security did not respond to several of The Commentator’s inquiries as to why students were not notified about this incident.

The second incident occurred at 7:45 p.m. on Purim, March 17, at 526 W. 187th St., which is right next to Muss Hall’s 187th St. entrance. The incident was sparked by two cars running a red light, almost striking two students, the NYPD shared. The students were subsequently chased by the driver and two passengers. One of the students was then assaulted, leaving a bruise on the left side of his face and causing his mouth to bleed. The student refused medical treatment at the scene.

Either before or during the chase, the students had some verbal altercation with

the driver and passenger, though it is unclear due to discrepancies in YU Security’s and the NYPD’s emails.

In response to the assaults, the NYPD will patrol the area and YU Security vehicles will patrol past Muss Hall, according to information provided by the hall’s residents. It is unclear how often patrol vehicles will drive by nor what periods of the day that will be.

“YU needs to step up and take better control of the situation.”

— Yoel Halbert (SSSB '22)

Following YU’s email regarding the assault, students living in Muss raised questions about the available entrances to the building. A passageway to Muss, accessible through Zysman’s main entrance on Amsterdam Avenue, closes most nights at 11 p.m. and only reopens at 7 a.m., forcing students to the West 187th St. entrance at all other times. Some students told The Commentator that they find that entrance to be discomfoting, as there is frequent “party-ing” and alcohol and drug usage.

“I think it would be safer for students to enter Muss Hall through the Zysman building,” said Daniel Malinsky (YC '24), who lives in Muss. “Otherwise, they need to walk through the 187th St. entrance, which is notorious for incidents that cause students discomfort and brings up concerns about

safety.”

As of publishing, Wilf Director of University Housing and Residence Life Avi Feder declined to answer inquiries as to why the Zysman entrance continues to close at its current time and referred The Commentator to YU Security, citing the issue as being a “security related matter.”

Even for those not living in Muss, the incidents still feel unnerving. “This is really concerning because we are all just trying to live our best lives, go between classes and our apartments, and we want to feel safe in the process,” said Yoel Halbert (SSSB '22), who lives in an apartment near Wilf Campus. “YU needs to step up and take better control of the situation.”

Halbert suggested more security hours and self-defense courses as possible ways for YU to be proactive.

“It’s concerning,” said David Brodskiy (SSSB '23). “You should always keep your eyes open in general, and I will probably be more cautious when walking around.”

He added, “I suggest people walk with a buddy [in Washington Heights] when they can.”

In recent months, many students have witnessed “reckless driving” along Amsterdam Avenue, including drivers speeding, running through red lights and performing “donut” maneuvers.

In response to a Commentator inquiry about this, the NYPD said that Peter Andrea, the commanding officer of the 34th Precinct covering Washington Heights and Inwood, is aware of the concerns people have with

reckless drivers and encourages people who see this behavior to call 911.

“If residents make such an observation, we strongly encourage residents to call 911 so that the groups can be tracked and the NYPD can alert adjoining precincts,” the NYPD said.

The NYPD also said that officers will take “appropriate action” if officers can stop any of the vehicles, and that body cameras worn by responding officers will help gather more information.

Outside of the March 15 incident, students have faced infrequent instances of antisemitism. Several years ago, the NYPD investigated swastikas carved along buildings in the YU area, and back in January, a phone call threat was made to YU and investigated by the NYPD, though it was not concluded to be antisemitic in nature.

In the security advisory sent to students, security advised students to be aware of their surroundings and if possible, travel with friends when traversing the streets. If students encounter suspicious individuals, security continued, they should leave the area and report the incident to YU Security or the NYPD.

The Commentator has also reached out to the Department of Transportation (DOT) to ascertain whether Yeshiva University or YUHSB will receive traffic and speed cameras as part of NYC’s Vision Zero Program, which has now received authorization to install cameras within a quarter-mile radius of 750 New York schools. As of publishing, the DOT has not provided the information.

ANN TODD

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dedicated to sexual assault and harassment-related issues and help the university “expand our educational programs,” two of the committee’s other recommendations.

The Title IX Office for undergraduates was composed of Nissel and Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh who held the role of deputy Title IX coordinator. At this time, it is unclear if Todd comes in addition or to replace him.

According to her LinkedIn page, since August 2014, Todd has worked as the Title IX and Clery Act investigator and senior consultant at D. Staffords & Associates LLC, a consulting firm that specializes in campus safety and security, including compliance with state and federal law regarding sexual assault and harassment. In his email, Nissel wrote that Todd, who has a JD from the University of Nebraska College of Law, “has conducted hundreds of external investigations on behalf of colleges and universities” on issues relating to sexual violence and discrimination.

“I just want YU to change, to change their policy — if not for me then for other people.”

— Anonymous Student

Before working at D. Staffords & Associates, Todd worked in Davidson College as its manager of training and development from 2007 through 2010. Nissel’s email says she worked as Davidson College’s associate director of human rights and deputy Title IX coordinator for eight years, though Todd’s LinkedIn says she worked in the associate director position for five years and does not mention the Title IX position.

While the announcement of Todd’s appointment came today, she has already begun working on Title IX issues at YU,

specifically with the case from last year.

After Nissel told the female student back in May that its investigation did not prove that the other student had violated its policies, she requested an appeal of her case, which was rejected. Then, in the beginning of February, the woman again emailed Nissel requesting that YU review evidence that its investigators had not retained in its initial investigation, such as her rape kit and interviews with some of her friends. Nissel responded that he will determine if YU can do this. After a few weeks of silence and a brief email exchange, the student received an email from Todd on March 2.

The two spoke that day, but for the female student, the roughly 15-minute call went south shortly after it began. “At first, she was friendly over the phone, and then she basically said that it doesn’t matter that [the investigators] don’t have the kit because they already went through all the evidence,” the woman told The Commentator. “She didn’t seem to have answers, and she was basically saying that the school didn’t violate anything, but she wouldn’t explain why.”

The student said that Todd spoke to her about an issue related to her case that she requested The Commentator keep private. Even so, she does not feel reassured by Todd’s appointment. “I don’t know Ann Todd’s background, but after that one phone call, I don’t think she’s the right person.”

The Commentator reached out to Todd and Nissel regarding that phone call, but as of publication, neither has immediately responded to the paper’s inquiries.

Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon, who headed the committee formed after the anonymous student’s article was published, felt the addition of Todd was a positive development.

“It is a very welcome first step,” she said regarding Nissel’s announcement. “And I know it will lead to further steps as the other recommendations are implemented.

I believe I share with all the students a feeling of gratitude to the University for moving us forward in this very important matter.”

Cayla Muschel (SCW '23), co-president of the Students Against Sexual Assault Club, felt similarly. “Having an experienced coordinator whose primary focus is Title IX has been in the works for a while,” she said. “This is excellent news.”

While Muschel was not spoken to by the university regarding Todd’s appointment, she has been sharing feedback and ideas with Bednarsh regarding YU’s planned website for sexual assault and harassment. Looking

toward the future, Muschel added, “The next step is following through on the other parts of [the committee’s] letter: reformed harassment training and widespread access to resources, information, and SHARE counselors,” which stands for sexual harassment and assault response & education. In his email, Nissel noted that those aspects will be forthcoming.

For the anonymous student herself, she is also hoping for something better. “I just want YU to change, to change their policy,” she told The Commentator, “if not for me then for other people.”



Todd’s appointment was announced on March 10.

YU Cancels Cardozo Event Featuring Palestinian Scholar, Citing Her Past Support of Terrorism

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Yeshiva University canceled a student-organized event at its Cardozo School of Law slated to feature Palestinian scholar Prof. Rabab Abdulhadi as its main speaker, citing her past support of violence and terrorism, namely of infamous airline hijacker Leila Khaled.

President Ari Berman announced the decision in an email to students on March 15. The event, titled “Forms of Activism for Liberation in Palestine,” was organized by Cardozo on Israel and Palestine (CIP) co-Presidents Sydney Artson and Heidi Sandomir, and scheduled for March 1. According to a press statement the second-year law students released, Berman canceled the event at the end of February, one week before it was set to take place.

“As the flagship Jewish university, Yeshiva University proudly supports Israel and its right to exist as central to our core values,” Berman wrote in his email. “Dr. Abdulhadi is a professor who has supported violence by inviting students to meet with

terrorists and even praised those who hijacked planes and held innocent civilians as hostages.”

He pointed to several of her past comments and social media posts, including one in which she said, “We really idolize somebody like Leila Khaled, somebody who actually stands up for herself, speaks for herself, actually goes to a plane and hijacks it,” and another in which she wrote, “I wanted to grow up to become another Leila Khaled.” Khaled hijacked two civilian airliners in 1969 and 1970, one of which was Israel-bound, and is a leader in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a United States-designated terrorist organization.

Abduhali has also called terrorists executed by the British for their role in murdering Jews during the 1929 Hebron massacre “martyrs.”

“While I know that our students were well intentioned,” the email continued, “all people of good conscience must stand against hate. Spirited debate about government policy and actions cannot descend into advocacy of violence. The current anti-Semitic vitriol on college campuses today

that so often uses anti-Israel rhetoric will find no home or harbor at *this* university.”

Artson and Sandomir condemned YU’s decision in their press statement and rejected Berman’s reasoning.

“CIP previously hosted controversial speakers,” they wrote, referencing events that featured an Israeli Defense Forces soldier and a board member of the Jewish National Fund. “Neither Yeshiva University nor Cardozo raised any objections to these events. We appreciate that our events may be controversial and provocative; CIP must bring speakers of all identities and perspectives to achieve its foundational purpose.” The statement also noted that Artson spoke with Abdulhadi about some of her views before she invited her to speak, including her “conceptualization of antisemitism.”

Responding to a Commentator inquiry, Artson and Sandomir expressed confusion and frustration with YU’s response. “President Berman publicized his statement without speaking with us or other Cardozo students directly,” they wrote. “His statement fails to recognize the continued silencing of critical discussion on complex topics that Yeshiva University, and by extension Cardozo, should welcome.”

The students, both of whom are Jewish, said, “Antisemitic vitriol is not and would never be welcome on this or any campus,” adding that it is unclear what Berman finds problematic.

“President Berman seems to imply that Dr. Abdulhadi represents violence by association, and perhaps that we are perpetuating antisemitism by inviting Dr. Abdulhadi,” they wrote. “His lack of clarity stifles the Cardozo community so that professors and students cannot have these conversations in classrooms, clinics, and events.” The two doubled down on their decision to invite her, arguing that inviting her does not endorse “every person or movement with which she previously associated.”

In the past, Abdulhadi has expressed support and made statements that have been accused of antisemitism. Speaking at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2019, she said that Zionists are white supremacists, earning condemnation from the Anti Defamation League (ADL), the Simon Wiesenthal Center and StandWithUs. She

has also asserted that Israel engages in apartheid and ethnic cleansing, and that Palestinians face “genocide” and a century-long campaign to erase their “indigenous connection” to the land.

A year prior to the UCLA event, she posted a message on an official university website saying that she considers welcoming Zionists to campus “to be a declaration of war against Arabs, Muslims, Palestinians and all those who are committed to an indivisible sense of justice on

an off campus,” earning condemnation from over 60 organizations. She has since reaffirmed that statement and asserts that Zionism is a form of racism.

Abdulhadi also supports the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, recognized as antisemitic by the ADL, Germany, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and condemned and penalized by Congress, the Federal Government and 35 states.

In their email to The Commentator, Artson and Sandomir did not mention Abdulhadi’s history with antisemitism and took offense to implications that the event was antisemitic. “[A]s Jewish women, we reject any accusations linking us to antisemitism and we condemn the implication that criticism of the Israeli government is antisemitic,” they wrote. “The ability to engage in controversial topics is fundamental to our Jewish identities and is equally essential to the study of law. Fear of the beliefs with which one disagrees does not excuse unjust censorship and discrimination.”

According to the ADL, campus and academic and student debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often veers into antisemitism, causing many Jewish students — 50% according to a Brandeis study last spring — to hide their Jewish and pro-Israel identities.

Abdulhadi’s actions and her role in academia have repeatedly sparked controversy. Including her controversial comments at UCLA in 2019 and her invitation to Khaled to speak with students at SFSU, she has also been accused of using university money to visit members of terrorist groups in a 2015 trip to Israel, the disputed territories and Jordan.

Sruli Fruchter contributed to this story.



Cardozo School of Law

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

FIRST YEAR WRITING

Continued from Front Page

Once this is implemented, the current FYWR course will still be offered for another semester for current students who already took FYWR or English Composition.

Professors in the Yeshiva College (YC) English Department have voiced disappointment regarding this change, saying that the first-year writing requirements provided all students in YC, Stern College for Women (SCW) and SSSB with a shared experience in which they can learn from their peers and meet other students in their greater YU class, building a community.

“We feel that having YC and Syms students together in FYWR is beneficial to both groups of students, and that the more the undergraduate students from different academic programs can interact and learn from each other, the better,” Prof. Rachel Mesch and Director of Writing at YC Professor Liesl Schwabe, who oversees FYWR, wrote in an email to The Commentator. The two noted that they were “disappointed” to learn about the course’s replacement.

They shared that YU’s FYWR program

was crafted “in accordance with national standards” to serve all students with a broad area of focus. “Our course seeks to help students understand that writing is always contextual: how we write, the kinds of language & evidence we use, are dependent on context,” they wrote. “The more students understand this, the more equipped they become to ask necessary questions of themselves and their writing.”

“The new Sy Syms course [will] improve the students’ business-writing skills, incorporate the lessons we’ve learned from the existing BCOM course, and add the professionalism and life skills prioritized for us by alumni and students.”

SSSB Dean Noam Wasserman

Mesch and Schwabe also explained that the FYWR classes give students the ability to take skills from one discipline and apply them to another and an understanding of

how writing impacts thinking. They believe it crafts students into critical thinkers and sharpens analytical skills. “We believe these skills are important for all students, regardless of major or area of expertise,” they said.

English professors from SCW were contacted by The Commentator, but they declined to comment, citing their lack of involvement in this change.

Some SSSB students are unsure what this

change will look and feel differently about how it will play out. “Personally, Business Communications was a very important class for me because it helped me face the fears

of public speaking, especially because I am an international student,” shared Reouven Elharar (SSSB ‘23), who is from Morocco. He added that “it would be a bad idea to change or cancel it at all.”

Isaac Shapiro (SSSB ‘24) shared that FYWR and Business Communications were classes he really enjoyed. “I’m hopeful for [the change],” he said, noting that he is unsure what this new change will look like. “The way it was before, I really enjoyed it. First Year Writing taught me a lot of writing techniques and Business Communications taught me a lot of speaking techniques.”

Abigail Lerman (SSSB ‘22), SSSB’s Beren student council president, hopes that the change will work in students’ favor. “I hope that the new requirements ensure that all Syms students have the ability to effectively articulate and communicate their thoughts and ideas in writing,” she said, “as future employers will expect this skill set of all new hires, regardless of their major or position.”

Brookdale Elevators To Be Replaced This Summer

By FLORA SHEMTOB

Both of the elevators in Brookdale Residence Hall are going to be replaced this summer after breaking down multiple times over the past few years. The rest of the elevators throughout YU are going to be replaced in a “phased out manner, as

necessary,” according to Chief Facilities & Administrative Officer Randy Apfelbaum.

All of the renovations will occur while the buildings are empty so as not to affect the student body. During a normal year, Apfelbaum said, elevators take about six months to complete, but because of the supply shortage, the replacement process will take a little over nine months. The budget

for the replacement of the elevators is being funded through the facilities department. Until the elevators can be replaced, an elevator maintenance worker will come once a week instead of once a month, and the security guards will have the fire department’s elevator squad on speed dial.

Since then, some elevators have continued to stop in between floors and plunge all the way to the basement as a safety mechanism. According to Apfelbaum, every time the elevators break down, completing repairs is getting harder and harder. The elevators are over 20 years old and finding the parts

“Truthfully I’ll believe that they’re fixing the elevators when I see it. It should’ve been dealt with a long time ago.”

Gaby Rahmanfar (SCW ‘24)



The Brookdale elevators are over 20 years old.

THE COMMENTATOR

Throughout recent years the elevators have broken down multiple times. In May 2019, one Beren student was in an elevator when it fell four floors to the basement, leaving her with a mild concussion. There was also an incident in October 2021 when the elevator fell from the fifth to third floor and opened unaligned with the floor.

Additionally, YU has been fined several times over the years due to building code violations for elevators on both campuses. In October 2019, YU was fined \$2,500 for having a “cracked copestone on the 18th floor” of the Brookdale elevators.

The university’s original plan was to fix the Brookdale elevators in May 2019 after the Beren student’s fall, Apfelbaum told The Commentator. They attributed the delay to COVID-19, though the pandemic did not hit America until March 2020, nearly one year later.

needed to fix them are nearly impossible and the university must get them specially manufactured.

Many students are thankful to the school for fixing the elevators. “This is a big improvement, thank you for listening to us and replacing them,” said Miriam Mizrachi-Nacca (SCW ‘24).

But other students, such as Gaby Rahmanfar (SCW ‘22), who had been in a Brookdale elevator when it malfunctioned in October 2021, are traumatized and skeptical. “For the first couple of days after the incident I was genuinely afraid to take the elevator,” she said. “I try to take the stairs as much as I can but living on the 14th floor doesn’t make that easy. Truthfully I’ll believe that they’re fixing the elevators when I see it. It should’ve been dealt with a long time ago.”

YU To Send Student Delegation for Ukrainian Relief Mission

By SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was published online: March 9.

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine nears its third week, Yeshiva University is set to send undergraduate students to Vienna next week to participate in a Ukrainian refugee relief mission. The trip, which will take place from March 13-20, will be led by Vice Provost of Values and Leadership and Sacks-Herenstein Center Director Erica Brown and Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Josh Blass.

Students will leave this coming Sunday evening for Vienna, where they will assist the Jewish community’s refugee assistance efforts, helping hundreds of Ukrainian refugees through entertaining children, sorting donations, delivering supplies and completing relevant forms, Brown explained. More than 1.5 million Ukrainians fled to neighboring countries, according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, in what he called “the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.” It was this crisis that motivated YU to lead this initiative.

On Sunday night, March 6, President Ari Berman called Brown to discuss how YU should respond to the “increasingly dire situation across Russia, Ukraine and Europe,” Brown told The Commentator. “When he said we need to encourage student activism, I suggested the trip and he was immediately supportive. We’re calling it Operation Torat Chesed, a way to live our values in real time,” a nod to YU’s five Core Torah Values.

From there, Brown worked with Director of Alumni Engagement Aliza Abrams Konig, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel and Office of Student Life (OSL) Senior Director Rabbi Josh Weisberg to plan the trip. “Over the next 24 hours,” Brown said, “we worked on this virtually non-stop,

figuring out what community/country needs help in addressing refugees, what was safe and also where students could access kosher food and a Jewish infrastructure for Purim.”

Speaking about how he became involved, Rabbi Blass shared that he had previously emailed different administrators to discuss how YU could help in the Ukrainian crisis. After the plan for the mission was formulated, Rabbi Blass was selected to join in leading it.

“[F]or all of us — either on the trip or not — we have an obligation to be informed, to give charity and to do what we can to rise to the moment.”

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

“In the same way that we wanted others to be concerned about our plight during the Holocaust because of the idea of the brotherhood of man,” he told The Commentator, “then of course we take full part in this. If that’s the case, then how could I not be involved?”

Just after 12 a.m. last night, Rabbi Weisberg emailed students about the opportunity, and this afternoon, a Zoom info session was held for interested students. The deadline for applications is tonight at 10 p.m. Rabbi Blass shared that the cohort will likely be between 15 and 18 students. Students’ leadership on campus will be taken into consideration.

The cost for students to participate is \$500, though limited scholarships will also be available. The trip is financed by a grant from the Sacks-Herenstein Center, the Esther and Richard Joel Service Missions Scholarship Fund and OSL.

YU chose Vienna as its destination since it was close enough to the conflict zone to

receive Ukrainian refugees but not close enough to endanger students, Brown explained. Students will eat two meals daily with the refugees, who are staying at two Jewish-owned hotels.

The trip will extend over Purim, which begins Wednesday night, March 17 through Thursday night, March 18, but Brown sees that as one of the most important parts of the trip. “We will join in the community celebrations for Purim,” she said. On an-

opportunity to live our values.”

“I’m gratified by both the number and the quality of students who stepped forward,” Rabbi Blass shared. “As of a few minutes ago [at 4:30 p.m.], we had 88 applications from students.”

For students like Yoni Mayer (YC ‘23), an opportunity like this could not have come soon enough. “I’ve been wanting to do something tangible to aid the Ukrainians, but anything in America felt too distant for me,” he shared. “This would be direct support to the refugees.”

Stern College for Women Student Council President Talia Leitner (SCW ‘22) agreed. “I’ve always been very passionate about helping the Jewish community and advocating on its behalf,” she said. “I am excited about the YU mission to help Ukrainian refugees because it is an incredible way to actualize my passion in a hands-on way.” Leitner, like Mayer, hopes to join the program.

This mission is not the first thing YU has done in response to the situation in Ukraine. Last week, the university held a panel of YU professors who discussed the conflict and its context. Tonight, another panel will be held discussing “the legal, cyber and economic fronts of the war,” according to a promotional email sent to students. Additionally, the Glueck Beit Midrash has been saying Tehillim each day as of two weeks ago, one day after Russia first invaded Ukraine.

For Brown, her past experience with humanitarian missions — including ones to Cuba, Ethiopia, Moscow, Kyiv and Belarus — still impacts her life to this day, and she expects this trip will be no different. “These trips have each changed me, and I hope that they will change every student who comes with us,” she said.

But even for those not attending, Brown shared, “we have an obligation to be informed, to give charity and to do what we can to rise to the moment.”

other level, Brown finds the message of the Megillah to be appropriate for this mission. “To paraphrase from the Megillah, maybe we are here, alive at this very moment, to do this very thing,” she shared. “That’s leadership.”

Aside from the trip’s overlap with Purim, it will also interfere with some students’ midterms. Brown said that YU is discouraging students who have conflicting midterms from applying, and any participating students must clear their absences with their professors. Acknowledging the communal responsibility to the situation, she said, “First and foremost, our students are students while they are here as undergraduates.”

It’s the busyness of the week that some students find to be the most inspiring part. “We have midterms, YUNMUN, and Purim coming up,” said Yeshiva Student Union President Elazar Abrahams (YC ‘22), who hopes to join the mission. “And yet, so many have applied! It’s remarkable to see my peers willing to drop everything to help those in need. This seems like an incredible

As Russian Invasion Continues, YU Issues Statement In Support of Ukraine

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

This article was published online on Feb. 27.

YU issued a statement supporting Ukraine on social media on Feb. 25 in response to Russia's military offensive in the country, which began on Thursday, Feb. 24.

"Yeshiva University stands with all people of conscience in our support of Ukraine," the university's statement read. "We pray for the safety of the innocent and the quick arrival of peace. May this Shabbat usher in peace and tranquility to Ukraine and the world at large." While the statement was not sent to students or faculty, it was posted on YU's official Facebook and Twitter accounts.

After amassing over 100,000 troops at the Ukrainian border over the last few months, Russia launched a full-scale invasion into the neighboring country on Thursday. Ukraine has managed to slow the Russian advance near Kyiv and in other regions of the country.

Many countries throughout the world, including the U.S., Israel and the European Union, condemned Russian President Vladimir Putin's actions as a flagrant violation of international law. President Joe Biden and other Western leaders have already implemented new sanctions on Russia. As of publication, Russia and Ukraine have agreed to send delegations for talks at Ukraine's border with Belarus on Monday morning, Feb. 28.

Since Friday night, those *davening* in the Glueck Beit Midrash have been saying Tehillim for Ukraine and the world, *Rosh Yeshiva* and *Mashgiach Ruchani* Rabbi Yosef Blau told The Commentator. "Rabbi Penner's talk at Seudat Shlishit [this past Shabbat] included a condemnation of Putin's invasion of Ukraine and of China's treatment of the Uyghurs," he added.

YU is also set to hold a roundtable on Monday, Feb. 28 of YU historians and political scientists to discuss the "unfolding

situation in Ukraine."

The round table is co-sponsored by Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs, YU Political Action Club, Dunner Political Science Society, Bernard Revel

in the Middle East"

Alex Friedman (YC '22), co-president of the Dunner Political Science Society, felt that student engagement is critical. "As Russia continues to attack Ukraine, it is important

the escalation of violence as it turns from the killing of individual combatant to full-scale mass murder targeting innocent civilians. We, who know what the past of Europe was like, have to do anything to stop the violence

"As Russia continues to attack Ukraine, it is important for YU students to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people and concern for what is happening."

Dunner Political Science Society Co-President Alex Friedman (YC '22)

Graduate School of Jewish Studies, YU College Democrats, YU College Republicans and the Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The event will feature Prof. Joshua Zimmerman, Director of Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies Shay Pilnik, Associate Professor of Jewish History and Associate Director of Center for Israel Studies Joshua Karlip, Clinical Assistant Professor of Political Science Maria Zaitseva, Associate Professor of Jewish History Jess Olson and Adjunct Professor of Political Science Dina Shvetsov.

Zaitseva shared insight with The Commentator on the unfolding situation. "For now, the situation is going from bad to worse," she said. "While Putin's endgame remains largely unclear (although speculations about it abound), I suspect that he foresaw a rather quick takeover without significant amount of resistance from Ukraine. He was wrong. The next 24-48 hours may be critical."

"Our history has taught us that while wars can change the reality on the ground, they never resolve these conflicts and that only dialogue and collaboration between partner nations can lead to peace," added Pilnik. "The worst case scenario is that this conflict will intensify and turn into a full scale war, resembling the Russian war in Chechnya more than a decade ago. I also fear the possibility that it would spill to other countries, including Israel and other nations

for YU students to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people and concern for what is happening," he said. "Fortunately, we have a group of experts from within our own university who can give us perspective and clarity on this tragic situation," a reference to Monday night's event.

"The history of the Holocaust, and particularly in Ukraine ... has taught us that violence has a powerful and dangerous numbing effect," said Pilnik. "It is easy to get used to

now, before it is too late".

"As difficult and upsetting it is to see the leadership of your country of birth wage a completely senseless and unprovoked war on another state, I am heartened by the massive outpouring of support for Ukraine and its people from so many places and peoples around the world," said Zaitseva. "These are unnerving times, and the world has been here before. May we learn at least some lessons from the past."



Yeshiva University stands with all people of conscience in our support of Ukraine. We pray for the safety of the innocent and the quick arrival of peace.

May this Shabbat usher in peace and tranquility to Ukraine and the world at large.



The statement was posted on Friday, Feb. 25

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

YU Announces \$50,000 Book Prize Honoring Rabbi Sacks' Legacy

By SARAH ROSENFELD

Dr. Erica Brown, director of the newly established Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership, announced Yeshiva University's Sacks Book Prize on Jan. 28. The prize, awarded annually, will be worth \$50,000, and will be awarded to the book's author

submission. The quality and Jewish content will be reviewed by the judges as well.

The winner and two finalists will be chosen by a closed committee of six judges who will be working with The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust, an organization based in the United Kingdom dedicated to ensuring the perpetuation of Rabbi Sacks' teachings. Lady Elaine Sacks will sit on the board as one of the judges.

This prize has been established to bring forth and provide encouragement to Jewish book writers of the coming generations and contribute to the modern Jewish bookshelf.

along with additional help from the center in distribution, marketing and promotion.

According to the prize's website, the award will be presented for a nonfiction book that contributes to the canon of modern Jewish thought. The prize will help to raise awareness regarding important concerns of contemporary Jewish society and the intersection of faith and modernity, which were some of the main goals of Rabbi Sacks' literature. The prize will be awarded to one author but two other finalists will be named in addition as honorable mentions.

The prize is funded by the Rhor family and will be distributed to an author who has published — or will publish — a book of Jewish thought within six months of

This prize has been established to bring forth and provide encouragement to Jewish book writers of the coming generations and contribute to the modern Jewish bookshelf.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks was Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom from 1991-2013. He was a visiting professor at YU in 2013.

The Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership is a recently-established department in Yeshiva University dedicated in memory of Rabbi Sacks and his teachings of philosophy, theology and politics.



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

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Ryan Turell Declares For NBA Draft

By DANIEL MELOOL

Yeshiva University Maccabees star guard Ryan Turell (SSSB '22) will be declaring for

the 2022 NBA draft instead of playing one more season of collegiate basketball, Turell announced in an Instagram post on March 15. Turell has the option to play one more season with the Maccabees thanks to all NCAA players' being granted an extra year of

eligibility due to the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons' being cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several teams have expressed interest in Turell, requesting footage of him playing. Throughout this season, a number of teams sent scouts to the Max Stern Athletic Center to observe Turell playing, such as New York Knicks President Leon Rose, who attended a few games.

DIII is the Miami Heat's Duncan Robinson, who eventually transferred to a DI school. As of now, Turell is not expected to be selected by any teams.

The draft occurs once a year, with two rounds each consisting of 30 selections for a total of 60 players' being drafted each year. The minimum requirement to be eligible for the draft includes being at least one year out of high school and being at least 19 years

"Being the first Orthodox Jew in the NBA would mean the world to me, and a dream come true, God willing."

Ryan Turell (SSSB '22)

Throughout this season, Turell has continued to impress on the court, breaking several Macs' scoring records. On Nov. 28, he scored 51 points against Manhattanville College, a personal career-high and Macs' record for points scored in a single game. Later, on Feb. 1, against Merchant Marine Academy, Turell became the all-time leading scorer in Macs' history.

Declaring for the draft does not guarantee getting drafted. According to the NCAA, just 1.2% of college players are actually drafted to the NBA. Additionally, nearly all of those players are from Division I, compared to Turell who played in Division III. Currently, the only player in the NBA who played in

of age. Once players have been drafted by a team, they can sign a contract. Even if a player is not drafted, they can still sign with a team as an undrafted free agent. Several notable players have entered the NBA this way, such as Knicks legend John Starks.

If Turell is drafted or signed by a team, he will be the first Orthodox Jew to make the NBA. Speaking about the significance of this possibility, Turell told ESPN: "Being the first Orthodox Jew in the NBA would mean the world to me, and a dream come true, God willing. But, just as importantly, it would mean the world to others that never saw this as a possibility."



Ryan Turell is attempting to be the first Orthodox Jew in the NBA

YU ATHLETICS

Macs Win 2022 Skyline Conference Championship

By RIVKA BENNUN

The Macs won the Skyline Conference Championship game on Sunday, Feb. 27, beating the Manhattanville College Valiants by a score of 74-40. This victory has earned the Macs an automatic bid into the NCAA Division III Men's Basketball Tournament.

"The Most Outstanding Player goes to my coaches and teammates for trusting in me."

Matan Zucker (YC '23)

The Macs have played in four straight Championships since 2018 and won three of them; this is their second consecutive championship win.

The game started off strong with Eitan Halpert (SSSB '21) scoring nine points for the Macs. By the end of the first half, the Macs were leading with a score of 25-16 as the Valiants kept a strong defense. Halpert scored a three-pointer in the opening of the second half, opening up a 40-18 lead for the Macs. With eleven minutes left, Gabe Leifer (SSSB '21) set up an alley-oop with Ryan Turell (SSSB '22), raising the score by 23 points. Additionally, Oren Betesh hit three three-pointers throughout the game, and Ryan Bokor (SSSB '23) hit a turnaround jumper in the last 38 seconds of the game.

President Ari Berman opened the game with a prayer for the welfare of Ukraine. Famous basketball players Amar'e Stoudemire (now known as Yahoshafat) and Enes Kanter Freedom attended the game. At the Macs' semifinals game on the Thursday prior, New England Patriots Owner Robert Kraft was invited by the President's Office and honored by Berman at the game.

Following their loss to the Illinois-Wesleyan Titans on Dec. 30, which snapped their 50-game win streak, the Macs won four straight games but then fell into a slump again, losing to Farmingdale State College, barely surviving against Old Westbury and then losing again to St. Joseph's Long Island. After this loss, they were victorious in the following six games they played, including the undefeated University of Saint Joseph Blue Jays, which at the time was undefeated and ranked No. 5 in the country.

Matan Zucker (YC '23) was named "Most Outstanding Player" of the Skyline Conference Championships. Zucker contributed to the win by "scoring 10 points, grabbing seven rebounds, dishing out a pair of assists, and forcing two steals," according to d3hoops.

"This was a great accomplishment for our team," Zucker told d3hoops. "It's the first box we can check off of our ultimate goal. The Most Outstanding Player goes to my coaches and teammates for trusting in me."

On Monday afternoon, the NCAA released its Division III men's basketball bracket, announcing that the Macs, currently ranked No. 19 on d3hoops, will be playing the No. 10 Johns Hopkins Blue Jays in the NCAA Tournament's opening round. The game will take place at Stockton University in Galloway, NJ, on Friday afternoon, March 4. This will be the team's third national tournament ever played.



The Macs won the Skyline Conference Championship for the second year in a row.

YU ATHLETICS

What One Week With Ukrainian Refugees Taught Me About Building a Better World

By YONI MAYER

It was shrieks of joy that interrupted my Google Translate conversation. I was speaking with a 31-year-old Ukrainian refugee named Alex at dinner on the first night of Yeshiva University's humanitarian aid mission to Vienna, Austria. Alex was recounting how he had spent the last 10 days traveling across multiple borders, until he had finally made his way to Vienna. His shoulders relaxed throughout our conversation, his body language relaxed and pleasant, as though he'd been waiting to share his story with us. I wanted to understand what Alex and the other refugees were going through, so dinner time was spent listening.

*These families were not here
because they wanted to be.
They were here because they
needed to be.*

We were seated in the dining room of an old age home that had been converted to host meals for the refugees. Low-hanging Purim decorations descended from the ceiling, and hand-drawn Purim posters covered the front doors. Yeshiva University students sat with about 25 refugee families at the other tables around the room, attentive to the stories of their passage into Vienna.

Alex had been in Vienna for eight days and had left his mother, father and siblings back in Ukraine. Even though his mother could have left, he told us in a matter-of-fact tone, she decided to stay behind because, as a physician, she felt she had a duty to her fellow Ukrainians. Still, he spoke with her five to six times per day because, as he said, "You know how mothers are." His English was quite good, but every so often we would

need Google Translate to decipher a phrase or concept.

But those shrieks pulled me out of the trance I found myself in when speaking to Alex. I had other friends at the table who were now speaking with Alex, so I excused myself and left the main dining room to investigate the source of the sounds I heard.

What I found was half of the Yeshiva University student volunteers playing with dozens of Ukrainian children, ranging from six to 15 years of age. The children were giggling and shouting, ecstatic to be spending time with us, their new friends. They were dressing up in costumes, throwing around frisbees and footballs and sprawling over coloring books with an assortment of colored pencils we had brought. I walked around the common area and saw my classmates struggling to communicate verbally but communicating nonetheless. They were laughing and smiling with the children, gesturing with their hands, and hoping their facial expressions would be enough to entertain the children. Some of the parents stood on the side, staying close by their child's side, not wanting to leave them out of sight. I looked back in the dining room and noticed some families huddled together at tables, the parents looking nervous and on edge, as they didn't yet know what to expect of their new life.

These families were not here because they wanted to be. They were here because they needed to be.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24. Now, with thousands of civilian casualties and millions of refugees, Ukraine is struggling to stay afloat and ward off Russian forces. Understanding the gravity of the situation, Yeshiva University took action. Just after midnight on Wednesday, March 9, it announced a humanitarian mission that it was leading to aid Ukrainian refugees who took asylum in Vienna. Less than 24 hours later, over 120 students applied, and by the

following morning, 28 were selected to join. Led by Vice Provost of Value and Leadership Dr. Erica Brown and *Mashgiach Ruchani* Rabbi Josh Blass, we embarked that Sunday night and arrived Monday morning, March 14 to stay through the following Sunday. Our goal was simple: help in any way possible.

*It was through people like
Alex, Hadassah and Tonya
that I learned my lesson about
building a better world from
halfway across the world.*

The direness of the situation planted exaggerated images in my mind of what we would be doing to help. I imagined the tragedies of war, floods of tears and wails haunting our ears and an extreme inability to provide support. Who was I to help? What qualifications did any of us have? We weren't doctors who could provide medical assistance nor diplomats able to provide bureaucratic help, and we were by no means millionaires who could donate hundreds of thousands of dollars. But even though we didn't have the means to support them in these grand ways, we supported them in other ways. Throughout the trip we were able to work on the seemingly innocuous tasks of organizing donations, codifying refugees' information and playing with children, and that was no less valuable.

Our "can-do attitude" was primarily motivated by our desire to help, but it was amplified by the Austrian Jewish community's approach to this crisis. On our first day, we spoke to the secretary general of the Jewish Community of Austria, Benjamin Nagele, and his words humbled us. "I don't first look at our budget to see if we can afford it or think about how we're going to do it," he told us.

"I say yes, because of course we are going to do it, because it is the right thing to do, and I'll worry about the logistics later. Helping is in Jewish blood; it is just the right thing to do." We felt the same.

On the second night, we hosted a Purim pop-up shop in the old-age home and brought the costumes we had received as donations. (We brought around 30 duffel bags full of donations to Vienna — items personally donated as well as those generously given by community members back at home — which consisted primarily of costumes but included medical supplies, clothing and Judaica.)

We arranged the costumes on tables in front of the dining room, laid them out in order of size, and waited for the refugee children to come and pick out their Purim costumes. Four-year-old girls tried on tutus and princess costumes, while young boys threw on silly wigs, and firefighter costumes. We riled them up by dressing in our own very absurd-looking costumes. (I was a banana.) The cognitive dissonance of putting on a happy face in these circumstances was not lost on us, but we were reassured by the happy faces looking back at us.

That night, I met a five-year-old girl named Hadassah. She had golden-blond hair and a crooked-toothed smile that illuminated her face for the entirety of the night. I sat with her for around 15 minutes, giving her different headbands and costumes that she motioned for. We weren't able to communicate with language, so instead, we resorted to facial gestures. I would pass her a bunny ears headband, she'd push it over her little, blond head, and I would make a silly face for her to laugh at. Then, she would take it off, and I met her with a frown, prompting her to put it back on or try a different headband, giggling all the while.

After some time, her mother approached

Continued on Page 12



YU students sitting with Ukrainian refugees in Vienna, Austria



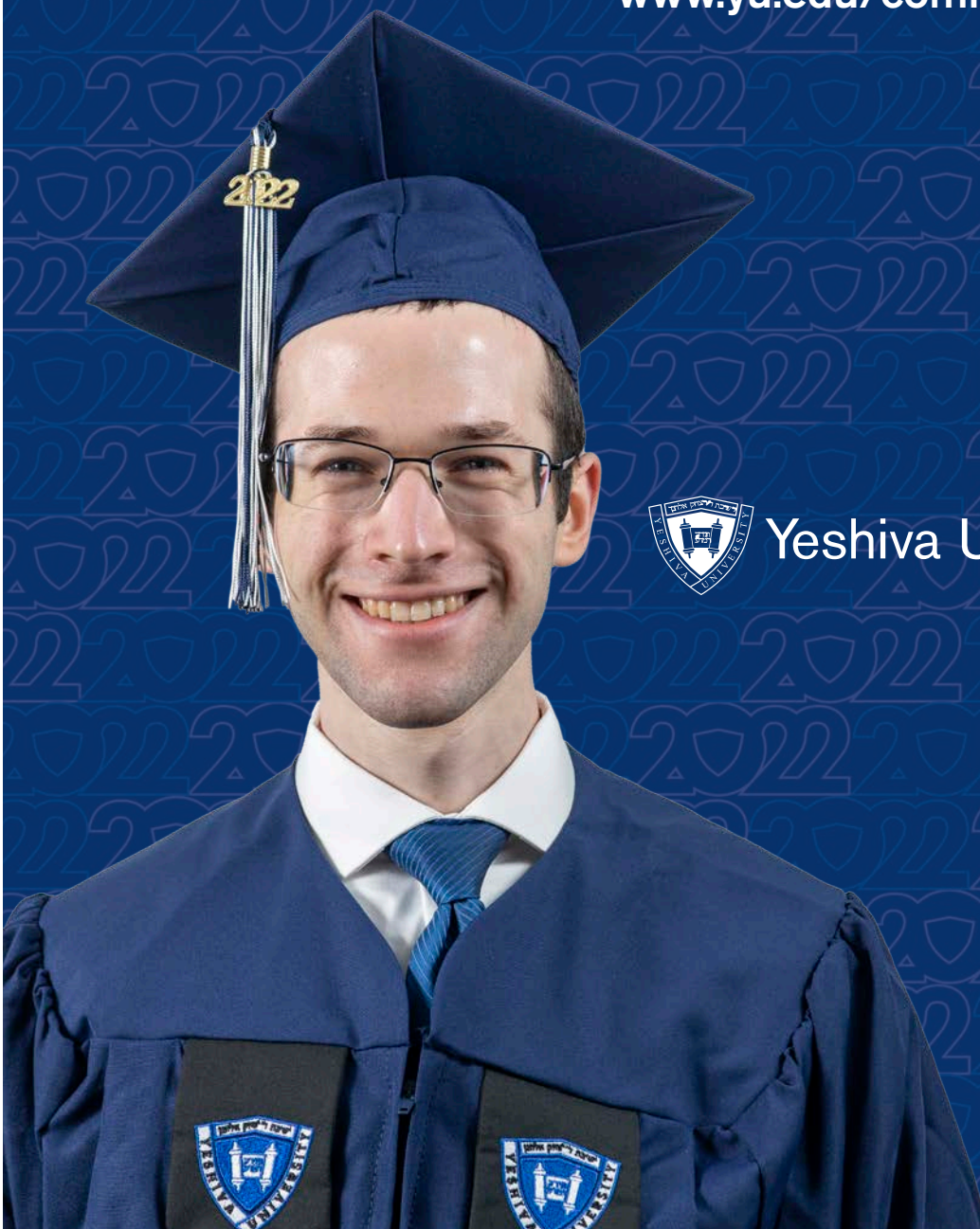
Undergraduate Cap and Gown Distribution

**Class of 2022 pick up your attire and tickets
for Commencement at your campus
Undergraduate Cap and Gown Distribution event.**

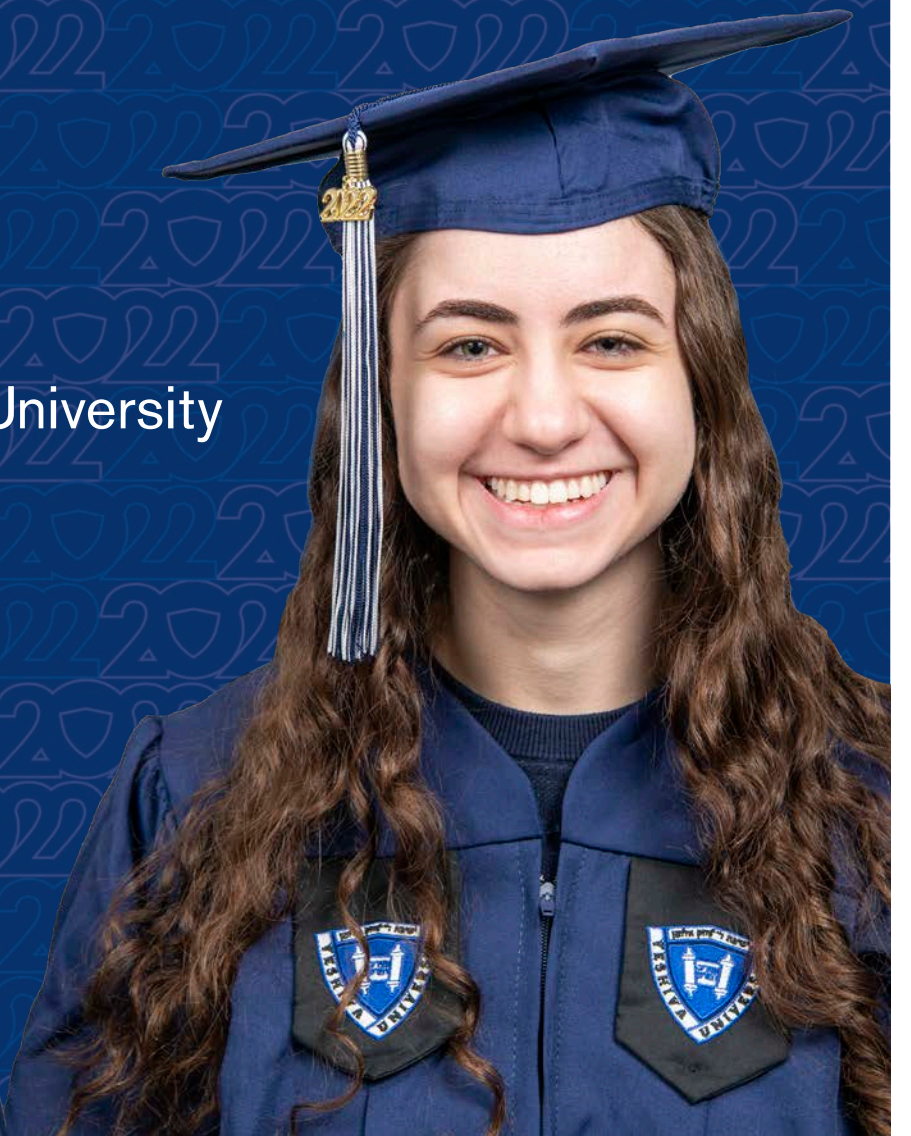
**Beren Campus: Tuesday, May 3, 2022
11 a.m.–2 p.m. | 245 Lexington
Gottesman Boardroom, 5th floor**

**Wilf Campus: Monday, May 9, 2022
11 a.m.–2 p.m. | Heights Lounge**

www.yu.edu/commencement



Yeshiva University



Overseeing Generations of Growth: Rabbi Yosef Blau's Historic Career at YU

By GABY RAHMANFAR

YU has stood at the heart of American Orthodoxy for over a century. What started as a small yeshiva has grown into a renowned institution with numerous undergraduate and graduate programs and thousands of students. While many educators have come and gone throughout YU's years, Rabbi Yosef Blau has been, and continues to be, a beloved member of YU for over 70 years. Not only has Rabbi Blau witnessed YU's development in the last decades, he has also actively and generously nourished its growth.

In 1951, Rabbi Blau entered YU as a freshman in the boy's high school, and has been in YU ever since. Following high school, he earned a bachelor's degree from Yeshiva College, a master's from the Belfer Graduate School of Science and received *semicha* (rabbinic ordination) from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) in 1961.

The YU that Rabbi Blau entered as a student is immensely different from the YU we know today. It's hard to imagine yeshiva completely conducted in Yiddish with just one *rosh yeshiva*, but this is the YU that Rabbi Blau started out in. Influenced by its European *rebbeim*, the yeshiva portion of YU resembled that of a traditional European yeshiva. With the destruction of European Judaism by the Holocaust, there were no longer European *rebbeim* to teach at YU, which caused YU to shift and Americanize. Part of this transformation was to hire a *mashgiach ruchani* (spiritual guidance counselor) who could help YU segue into a yeshiva model that better fit this new wave of American students. In 1977, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l and Rabbi Norman Lamm zt"l, the heads of YU at the time, felt that Rabbi Blau was the perfect figure for this role, and Rabbi Blau has held the position ever since.

When asked about assuming the position, Rabbi Blau mentioned that he "couldn't imagine taking a role in yeshiva as an American." He was tasked with creating a new model for this position since the previous model of Rabbi Yaakov Moshe HaCohen Lessin zt"l, his predecessor, was so different and no longer befitting in the new model

of YU. "The job was never very clearly defined, not from day one until today, it was very much what I made of it," Rabbi Blau remarked. As one of the only American *rebbeim* in YU at the time, students were more comfortable with him and felt that he was relatable, which Rabbi Blau believes is a crucial element to being a *mashgiach ruchani*. Rabbi Blau feels that the most important part of his job is to be available for students on both campuses. Rabbi Blau is known to go up to every student in the *beit midrash* to strike up conversation; this is Rabbi Blau's method of forming relationships with students. "I've focused very much, from the outset, in not so much the formal talks, but on being available... I'd be [in yeshiva] all the time," he commented.

Rabbi Blau's influence on the men's campus is undeniable; however, he felt that it was important to extend his role to the women's campus as well. He expressed that "[he] always felt that the women in Stern weren't getting things that are available to the men

in yeshiva," and decided to start commuting to Beren to sit in the *beit midrash* and be available to the women there. Rabbi Blau believes it is important to support the women's *beit midrash* on Beren Campus, and many students, like Noa Berkowitz (SCW '23), feel that his presence greatly enhances its atmosphere as a Torah environment. "Having someone like Rav Blau in the *beit midrash* on a consistent basis greatly contributes to the Torah atmosphere at Stern," she said.

Rabbi Blau has dedicated his life not only to *chinuch*, but also to activism and *chesed* in many shapes and forms within the Orthodox world. In his youth, Rabbi Blau served as the president of Yavneh, an organization founded to help make Orthodox life sustainable on secular college campuses, along with his wife who was one of its founders. Although this issue isn't as prevalent today, in this time, it was extremely difficult to be an observant Jew on a secular college campus. Rabbi Blau and his fellow Yavneh members would travel around the country to different

colleges to assist Orthodox Jews with any issues they had with observing *halacha* on campus. He was also involved in *chesed* missions on a global scale. Rabbi Blau traveled to many developing countries in South America with NCSY and was involved in Counterpoint in Australia.

As a member of the rabbinate, Rabbi Blau has been involved in various religious organizations, using his knowledge of Torah and *halacha* to enact change in the Orthodox community. He served as the president of the Rabbinical Council of America for twelve years, which is the world's largest organization of Orthodox rabbis. Rabbi Blau is heavily dedicated to working with organizations for victims of sexual abuse in the Jewish community in both Israel and America. He is an executive board member of Magen, an organization in Israel committed to "developing and implementing programs and services that create a culture of transparency that prioritizes the well-being of victims, holds predators accountable, and eliminates the stigma surrounding sexual abuse," according to their website. Additionally, he serves as the *halachic posek* for Za'akah, an American organization whose website claims is "at the forefront of the fight against child sexual abuse in the Orthodox Jewish Community." In his work with Za'akah, Rabbi Blau was instrumental in the formation of the organization's Shabbos & Yom Tov Peer Support Hotline, the first and only Jewish support hotline available on Shabbat and the holidays. His work with victims of sexual abuse is just one example of how Rabbi Blau uses his rabbinic title to be a moral voice in the Orthodox world. Recently, Rabbi Blau spoke at the YU Stands with Uighurs' event, proving once more that he is a moral beacon in our community.

If you ever have a conversation with Rabbi Blau, you are sure to hear about his children and grandchildren. He and his wife, Dr. Rivkah Blau, have three sons who are all rabbis and involved in *chinuch* all over the world. Their oldest, Rabbi Binyamin Blau, is the *rosh yeshiva* of the Fuchs Mizrachi School in Cleveland, and like his father, serves as the president of the Rabbinical Council of America. Their second son,



Rabbi Yosef Blau serves as mashgiach ruchani at YU.

YUTORAH

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Rediscovering A Lost World: An Afternoon On The Lower East Side

By ARIEL KAHAN

It was drizzling with gloomy 55-degree weather when I met my friend Yaacov at the corner of East Broadway and Rutgers Street on Sunday, March 7. After a long subway ride downtown and a quick Uber ride across the city, I was frustrated that I spent over an hour of my Sunday schlepping down to the Lower East Side to research a history paper. As I shook my friend's hand, I gave him a wry smile while looking at my watch, wondering if I would make it back to YU for dinner. But after the tour, I was too touched and inspired to be thinking about chicken and burgers.

The assignment was simple: gather information on the Lower East Side for a history paper. The paper was for Prof. Jeffery Gurcock's History of NYC class, one of my favorite classes in my YU experience thus far. Without going into the nitty-gritty details of the assignment, the main point was to choose one street in New York City and demonstrate how it has evolved over the

past century. While most students chose to do this research from a computer, I believed it would be better and more productive to walk one of the streets and get a tour from my friend, who was once a licensed tour guide of the Lower East Side and generously agreed to take me around. Not only did this strategy help me gather information on East Broadway (the street I selected to study), it put images and thoughts on my mind that have yet to fade. While it would be too long to share all of the poignant imagery and recollections from the afternoon, I hope to share the highlights that are now deeply ingrained in my heart.

The tour began at MTJ, Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalayim. The Yeshiva was founded in 1907 and moved to its current location on 145 East Broadway in 1912; eventually, the Yeshiva was headed by the great American rabbi and *posek*, Rav Moshe Feinstein, when he came to America in the 1930s. At its peak, the yeshiva had hundreds of students. Today, less than half of the original number remains. Across from the Yeshiva is a lighting store, Aladdin Lighting. At one

point, the building was a coffee shop where Yeshiva students would have coffee during their breaks. At the end of this part of the tour, I saw two *bochurim* in white shirts and black hats leave the building. I immediately imagined myself in a time when the entrance to the building was a revolving door.

After crossing the street, we looked at Wu's Wonton King, formerly known as "The Garden Cafeteria." Many Jews frequented this eatery, including renowned Yiddish author Isaac Bashevis Singer. Legend has it that Singer used to get a coffee and bagel every day while working on his writing all morning. It was hard to imagine that a place covered in Chinese letters was once a popular Jewish eatery.

Yaacov and I then looked at Seward Park, once the home of many large Jewish events and gatherings on the Lower East Side. While the park got sketchy and dangerous in the 1950s and 60s when Jews left the area, the newly gentrified area is home to kids smiling on swing sets while their parents "watch" them while looking at their phones. All I could think about was how none of those

kids probably understood the history of the park they were playing in (not that it would be normal if they did). None of them realized that hundreds of Jews would gather in the park for community events in a place that was merely a jungle gym a century ago.

Looking South from the Southwest corner of the park, one's eye is drawn to a giant white building that says "Forward" in Hebrew letters. Indeed, this building was once the headquarters of The Forward, one of the 37 Jewish newspapers on The Lower East Side during the 1920s. Interestingly, The Forward was once a socialist newspaper, demonstrating that there were many different types of Jews with many different values living on the Lower East Side during its heyday. Although the newspaper is still in existence, its original home has been turned into luxury condominiums.

Walking back to the central part of East Broadway, one can see the Educational Alliance. The Educational Alliance was the home of settlement houses opened by

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Hundreds of Students Attend YU's Museum March Around New York

By RAFAEL SAPERSTEIN

Over this past month, four hundred YU undergraduates have taken advantage of Museum March, the student council's newest programming initiative. Sponsored by both the Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) and the Yeshiva Student Union (YSU), the goal of Museum March is to help YU students get to know New York City and take advantage of the opportunities that going to college in the city provides by offering YU students free tickets to attend an assortment of museums throughout the month.

Elazar Abrahams (YC '22), the president of YSU, expressed that one of the ideas behind Museum March was to show that "New York City is our campus and it's the best campus in the world." He emphasized that "this month of programming encourages our student body to take advantage of all the cultural opportunities that surround them every day, and this is just a taste of what New York City has to offer."

The student council had distributed tickets to RiseNY, which, according to the RiseNY website, is "a breathtaking journey

that lifts and connects you to New York City's most famous sites and moments" as a test run to gauge interest for Museum March. After the 100 tickets allocated to the event sold out in half an hour, the student council knew that the idea would be a success. Even after that test run, though, Abrahams remarked that the student participation in Museum March "exceeded our expectations," with a "wide group of people" attending each trip.

Elazar Abrahams (YC '22), the president of YSU, expressed that one of the ideas behind Museum March was to show that "New York City is our campus and it's the best campus in the world."

The student council kicked off the programming with a trip to the Museum of Illusions. With its eye-popping illusions and mind-bending picture opportunities, it was an instant hit with the students who attended.

Jacob Katz (YC '24) called it an "exciting" trip and a "great way to start off the week." He observed that "there's a lot more to the

city than [he] thought" and that he would never have known about this "unique experience" if not for Museum March.

The week after, the museum-goers marched to the Color Factory, an interactive art museum that, according to its website, "wants its visitors to experience artful wonder and to inspire them to bring that joy back into their everyday lives."

That joy was reflected in the students who visited the Color Factory. Amalya Teitelbaum

Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum, the retired battleship that looms large off the coast of Manhattan. From flight simulators to spaceships, the museum has become "part of the fabric of New York City and a world-class cultural institution," according to the museum's website.

Yitzhak Graff (YC '25), a student who went on the trip, took the opportunity to hear veterans talk about their experience on the Intrepid and see the decommissioned Enterprise space shuttle. Afterward, he reflected on the experience and pointed out that "allowing students who may not be from New York City to experience the local culture and interesting museums for free" was a unique aspect of the Museum March programming.

To finish off the month, Museum March will continue to cover ticket prices for YU undergraduates to attend the Museum of Modern art on Friday, March 25, and to Spyscape on Sunday, March 27. Going forward, Abrahams hopes that it will become an annual event, and that "student leaders next year continue Museum March with a new lineup."

(SSSB '24) appreciated the opportunity to "do activities, take pictures, and just have fun," and "[hopes] that YU offers more trips like that in the future." Elan Koshner (SSSB '24) made use of the "great opportunity to explore the city," and was "glad to see YU utilizing and taking advantage of all the great museums in New York."

The most recent excursion was to the

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

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us and beamed at her daughter trying on all these different costumes. I was able to speak with Hadassah's mother as well as a few of the other parents that night. They all shared that similar expression of profound happiness. They had left Ukraine at a moment's notice to a foreign country and had only brought a few bags with them. Naturally, Purim costumes were not a priority, but they were still saddened that their children could not properly celebrate the Jewish holiday. That was where we came in.

They were so happy and grateful that we had brought along costumes to help their children celebrate Purim and make their transition to a new country that much smoother. The kids appreciated us and had such a joyous time that night at the pop-up shop, but the parents' smiles resonated more with me. Their happiness was in the face of all the sadness they'd been through the past week and we could tell that the joy we brought the night before Purim meant the world to them.

We had many other experiences during the week. We experienced the richness of Vienna, heard from the President of Parliament, attended a Purim party with the refugees and Austrian Jewish community, spent time with the Bnei Akiva and went on a Jewish History tour of Vienna. But the experiences that taught me the most were the ones fundamental to the greater message the trip bore. I learned that *Tikkun Olam*, which is understood to mean building a better world, and the broader category of *chesed*, loving-kindness, are not dependent on the impact you have on the entire world, but rather your community and the people around you. This understanding works seamlessly with the mindset that one's home community is, in essence, their whole world; an understanding I ironically had to travel

across the world to learn.

Another day, I went to a local hotel that had begun hosting refugees. While our activities were underway and I was trying to find some quiet from the commotion, I spotted a woman I met at the first night's dinner named Tonya. She was crouched over her laptop working on something intensely, her brown curls hovering above her eyes that had bags of fatigue setting in. I approached her and asked what she was working on, and she motioned for me to take a seat. Though Tonya had a sullen expression on her face, when she started to speak, her hands would fly about, gesticulating with excitement. I could tell she was a very passionate person and was eager to share.

She explained that since she had left Ukraine, she had been writing to her neighbors to see if they needed anything. She wasn't particularly close with them before, but she took it upon herself to make sure they were safe and assist however she could. One of her neighbors from Ukraine is a 25-year-old handicapped, legally-blind man whose only family is a mother who's unable to take care of him. Tonya learned that he needs medications that could only be picked up from several miles away. So, over the past 10 days, she had been speaking to him about those medications, finding a pharmacy that carries them and organizing a driver to pick them up. All this for some neighbor she did not know all too well, from hundreds of miles away. I was dumbfounded. She was going through all this trouble for someone she wasn't close with while she undoubtedly had problems of her own to manage. She felt a profound sense of community and had become responsible for this person's world. It left an impression on me.

It was through people like Alex, Hadassah and Tonya that I learned my lesson about

building a better world from halfway across the world.

The quality of the world is not measured solely on large-scale projects. The amount of money one donates or the number of institutions one creates is important and admirable but is not the only way to change the world. I originally had the misguided thought that to build a better world on this trip, we would be totally changing the landscape of Vienna and the lives of the refugees. I knew that we wouldn't be able to do all that, but the thought of a "humanitarian aid mission" carries a sense of grandiose ambition, and I was eager to see what that would look like.

I learned that the Jewish value of *Tikkun Olam*, building a better world, is not exclusively found in the structures we build or the permanent impacts we leave on a society.

It is found in the donations we received from our community members who were eager to support a good cause. It was in the conversations I had with Alex, urging him to tell his story and, in doing so, providing him comfort. It was in the phone call Tonya has been making daily for the past 10 days to supply medicine to her disabled neighbor who had to stay behind in Ukraine. It was in the smiles we gave parents, encouraging them to worry about one less thing in their family's upheaval and enabling them to give their children a normal holiday.

We raised over \$150,000 for the refugees and brought over 30 bags of donations. We spent time indexing refugee information, cleaning hotels for refugee use and organizing donations. But this isn't how I'll remember the trip. What I, along with the other Yeshiva University students brought, and what we palpably felt through the refugees, was a sense of community. We saw it within the refugee families and the unending support they'd give to people they might not

have known before; their home country and this refugee crisis being their only link. We saw it within the Austrian community and their willingness to accept refugees into their community without a plan or the resources to back it but an understanding that it's the right thing to do. And I saw it in the Yeshiva University community; the sense of companionship and friendship we fostered within the student volunteer group and the energy and spirit we created together. This was a trip about *chesed* and *Tikkun Olam*, and it was expressed through the smaller communities we encountered.

The success of our trip cannot be measured by metrics; that's not how *Tikkun Olam* or *chesed* can be evaluated. As Rabbi Sacks writes in "To Heal a Fractured World," "Chesed is the love that is loyalty, and the loyalty that is love ... It is love moralized into small gestures of help and understanding, support and friendship: the poetry of everyday life written in the language of simple deeds."

Our trip was a success because we made a little girl named Hadassah happy. It was a success because we gave her mother a sense of comfort on Purim. If we had only done that for Hadassah and her family the trip would have been a success, but the fact that we did that for so many refugees means our trip was a success beyond anything I could have imagined. It was a success because we brought what we could, helped where we should and comforted those in need of comfort. We spread happiness, joy, and love throughout every corner of the Ukrainian refugee community in Vienna. We did our little part in *Tikkun Olam*, building a better world, and we did it by focusing on the details.

RABBI BLAU

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Rabbi Yitzhak Blau, is the *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivat Orayta and a teacher at Midreshet Lindenbaum in Israel. Finally, their youngest, Rabbi Yaakov Blau, is a principal at The Frisch School in New Jersey. Dr. Rivkah Blau, like her husband, has been involved in different religious organizations and has been an educator for many years. She is now

an English professor at Stern College. It's clear that Rabbi and Dr. Blau set a great example to their sons as they follow their footsteps in education and religious outreach.

It is quite evident that Rabbi Blau has a tremendous impact in the orthodox community, whether that's through his quiet influence in YU or his active involvement

in various organizations. Rabbi Blau was asked out of all the work he does, which is the most important to him, and his answer is a true testament to his care for those around him. "I would like to think my concern for the people in need, for those vulnerable, is most important," he said.

It's difficult to fully capture the impact

that Rabbi Blau has had on the Orthodox world and do justice to all he has done. What is certain is that YU, and the Orthodox community at large, will forever be indebted to Rabbi Blau for all he has done and continues to do for our community with his morals, wisdom and tremendous kindness.

'Evil is Coming': YU Professors Discuss Ukraine, Russia and What To Know

By ELISHAMA MARMON

This article was published online: March 8.

On Monday evening, Feb. 28, Yeshiva University held a round table of six YU historians and political scientists focusing on the conflict in Ukraine, part of a variety of programming organized by the university in response to Russia's large-scale military invasion of Ukraine. Over 280 people attended the Zoom event.

The event, entitled "Ukraine Under Attack," was moderated by Prof. Ronnie Perelis, head of the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs, and featured six speakers who brought their knowledge and expertise to bear on the current conflict. President Ari Berman gave opening remarks on the conflict and YU's duty as a Jewish university to not just pray for the situation but to study it. He expressed the fear that, in an unfortunate reversal of the prophecy of Isaiah, our generation may be forced to study war once again, as it becomes increasingly relevant to our lives. "We thought we had a period of time of 'Lo Yisah Goy El Goy Cherev'; we thought that was our reality...Patterns that we thought were broken now can be learned once again."

The panel discussed a variety of topics related to the current conflict. Some of their addresses overlapped, with various professor's fields of expertise touching on each other.

Prof. Jess Olson, an associate professor of Jewish history at YU, debunked Putin's claims that Ukraine was somehow lacking in history or culture. He explained some of the history of Western Ukraine and the recent moves that Ukraine has made toward increased liberalization.

The focus then shifted to Prof. Joshua Karlip, the Herbert S. and Naomi Denenberg Chair of Jewish Studies, who spoke about the similarities between the Ukrainian story and that of the Jewish people, as well as the ties between the Jews and Ukraine. Both were stateless people for generations but have, in recent years, finally gotten their own

country, he noted. Both, however, are faced by a larger and more powerful enemy with no compunction about arbitrarily attacking innocent civilians.

Prof. Joshua Zimmerman, the Eli and Diana Zborowski Professorial Chair in Holocaust Studies and East European Jewish History, brought a comprehensive understanding of both the history of Ukraine, particularly as it relates to world Jewry, and an interesting view of the Russian perspective on the European Union and NATO that may have started this war. Russia, after losing millions of soldiers and civilians in WWII, Zimmerman told the audience, is naturally fearful of the encroaching of the West, and the EU has in recent years expanded to the point that only Ukraine stands between the EU and Russia. This perceived Western threat may be a significant factor in this aggression.

"Patterns that we thought were broken now can be learned once again."

—
President Ari Berman

Prof. Maria Zaitseva, one of the professors in the Department of Political Science who grew up in the Soviet Union, spoke about the developing nuclear situation in Russia, which is the worst, she said, since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Russia has put nuclear forces on high alert, a situation which greatly increases the possibility of accidental or unauthorized use. This is on top of the risk that a weakened Putin may just be desperate enough to do something rash.

Also originally from the Soviet Union, Prof. Dina Shvetsov of the Department of Political Science, shared a fascinating perspective on the war based partially on correspondence with Russian protesters. Despite facing brutal repression, these brave protesters, she said, continue to remind us that the Russian people are not all guilty for Putin's crimes. Many are standing up to him,

despite the intense consequences. She also pointed out that this war shakes up the world order significantly: Taiwan, Georgia and other small struggling democracies all over the world are now less sure about their futures than they were just one week ago. This is ultimately a fight for democracy and the continued existence of sovereign democratic nations. She ended her speech by reading a letter from a Russian protester who had been injured by the police while protesting, who wanted his story to be spread. "The only thing you can do now is to spread the word of a terrible danger that is looming over the whole planet. Please make people understand that what we see here is evil is coming."

Prof. Shay Pilnik, director of the Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, approached the topic from the perspective of a descendant of Holocaust survivors who has spent his life studying the Holocaust. Ukraine, he said, has a tendency to glorify certain Ukrainian heroes, some of whom have a significant amount of Jewish blood on their hands. While this might make some Jews hesitant to support Ukraine, we must try to bypass these feelings and fully support them. He also mentioned that while Russia may have had some legitimate complaints to make against NATO or the EU, Putin nullified any moral complexity in this situation by starting this war.

After these engaging speeches, the event opened up to the audience for questions. Among the questions was one about the Western response to this newest Russian aggression, and whether we have done enough. Zimmerman expressed the firm belief that we shouldn't have taken the military option off the table, and we may well come to regret that we did later (referencing his article on the topic from earlier in the day). Zaitseva pointed out that while many Russian citizens do support the war, Putin needs the backing of the Russian oligarchs and elites to keep his power, and we can work to help undermine that backing.

Another question was about whether Russia might be getting so aggressive in response to the fact that they are losing their

status as an energy superpower. Zaitseva was quick to point out that Putin likely doesn't feel that way, given that he met only days ago with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan to discuss building a new oil pipeline. Shvetsov also pointed out that even as countries turn to nuclear power, Russia is in control, based on maintenance and other factors, of over half of Asian nuclear power. Both agreed that Russia is not ready to give up on being an energy superpower just yet.

Another interesting discussion was how this situation will affect Israel. Karlip pointed out that Israel has a very close relationship with Ukraine, based in part on immigration and sympathizing with a fellow democracy facing hardship. Olson discussed the fact that this moment appears to be, despite all the hardship, a realization of the dream of Jewish and Ukrainian greatness, embodied in President Zelensky, the Jewish president of Ukraine. Perelis mentioned that there is a truly thriving Jewish community in Ukraine, which is easy to overlook in a time of struggle like this one.

Finally, the event closed with Rabbi Arthur Schneier, rabbi of New York's Park East Synagogue and a global leader on the topics of religious freedom and human rights, utilizing his personal knowledge of the actors in the conflict, specifically Putin and his foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, to give unique insights into the conflict, as well as pointing out the particularly tricky position Israel is placed in.

The event was sponsored by a range of YU clubs that are involved with various political issues: the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs, YU Political Action Club, Dunner Political Science Society, Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, YU College Democrats, YU College Republicans and the Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

A tremendous amount of appreciation is owed to the organizers, co-sponsors, and speakers of this incredible event, which helped many people to better understand the current war and the ramifications it may create for the Jewish community, Ukraine, and the world as a whole.

LOWER EAST SIDE

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wealthy New Yorkers to help immigrants acclimate to America. The Educational Alliance was intended to be a "Jewish" settlement house funded by New York Jews. A large part of the mission of the Educational Alliance was to teach new Jewish immigrants how to live daily life in America, including filing taxes, making a resume, and finding a job.

Walking south, we approach the intersection of Jefferson Street and East Broadway. Across from Jefferson Street is known as "Shtiebel Road." In the early half of the 20th century, this block was home to over 100 shtiebels, one or two in each building. Now, there are under 10. The Young Israel of The Lower East Side is on this road, which was knocked down in the early 2000s by real estate developers. However, the real estate developers could not complete their project due to the great recession. Thus, a *minyán* is held in the space once a summer to prevent a squatter from seizing the land through unprotected occupation.

At the end of the tour, my friend Yaacov and I stopped at a local kosher bakery for a snack. As we walked in, a woman that seemed to be in her eighties opened the door. As I selected my dried-out brownie,

my friend Yaacov, who knows some Yiddish, began talking to the lady in Yiddish. She let out a smile broader than the neighborhood as he did this. As I watched this interaction, I began to get emotional. At first, I didn't know why. Quite frankly, I was just happy to be done gathering research for my project. And then I realized. She was representative of the world that was. And my friend was giving her a last taste of that world that is slowly making its way to only history textbooks. As I paid for my brownie (cash only), I began recreating an old world in my head. It's like I lived in it, but I never did.

Ultimately, I am not upset that I never got to experience this world firsthand. The pasuk from Kohelet of *dor holech v'dor ba* kept on flashing in my head. The neighborhood that was is now a *dor holech*, and I guess that is how it is meant to be. But after my afternoon on The Lower East Side, I felt a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that I am doing my job as the *dor ba*, the future — taking an afternoon to recreate and reimagine ancestors' lives to help give our generation a direction for the future.



MTJ

Hundreds Listen to Students' Mental Health Journeys at Stomp Out The Stigma

By RAFAEL SAPERSTEIN

Hundreds of YU students, alumni and faculty packed into Lampton Auditorium on March 1 to attend the twelfth annual Stomp Out the Stigma event, hosted by YU's Active Minds club.

Consistently the highest-attended event of the year on the YU campus, Stomp Out the Stigma provides a platform for YU students to speak out about their struggles with mental illness and work to destigmatize reaching out for help in the Jewish community. Last year's event was held over Zoom due to COVID-19 limitations.

To kick off the proceedings, Active Minds Co-President Sarina Hilowitz (SCW '22) introduced President Ari Berman as the opening speaker. Berman spoke about the power of a supportive community in dealing with suffering and the helplessness associated with mental illness. He expressed that although "sharing does not resolve the suffering, it spreads it. It helps ease the sense of loneliness" that is so easy to feel when dealing with mental illness. He added that "when we listen to someone else's story, we are reminded, quite viscerally, that everyone is carrying something," ending his speech with thanks for attending the event.

After Berman's speech, Hilowitz returned to the podium to give an opening statement. In her statement, she emphasized the importance of creating a "more compassionate culture around mental health" and how the Stomp Out the Stigma event provides an "opportunity to speak openly about mental illness." After thanking OSL Assistant Director Rabbi Herschel Hartz and the Counseling Center for their assistance in planning the event, she gave the floor to Miriam Bluth (SCW '24) to introduce Eli Sandhaus (YC '24), the first speaker of the night.

Sandhaus walked up to the stage as "Leave Me Alone" by NF played in the background. He opened up about his experiences with OCD with depressive tendencies, and how it influenced him throughout his life. As he was growing up, Sandhaus's OCD manifested as unhealthy and obsessive rumination and influenced his responses to stressful situations throughout his childhood. Sandhaus told the story of his experience as a survivor of sexual assault and how it caused long-term damage to his mental health.

a cycle of falling into destructive thought patterns, making it easier to cut oneself off and engage in a "constant battle with [oneself]." He stressed the importance of accepting support when needed, and not compromising on loving yourself and others to the fullest extent. Ending his speech, Gross highlighted the aspect of the Stomp Out the Stigma event that provides a "forum to be able to speak about our community." He pointed out that the Jewish community has an obligation to care about mental health, to reach out to

to being "ready to move forward" with a more robust mental health, having not had suicidal thoughts in years. Fishman ended by acknowledging those in the audience who may be suffering from depression and suicidal thoughts but may not feel confident enough to tell others, assuring them that it can get better and that it is important to get the help that they deserve regarding mental illness.

Closing remarks were made by Dr. Yael Muskat, director of the Counseling Center at YU. She thanked the faculty of the Counseling Center in attendance and emphasized that "strong mental health holds the key to true success," urging all of the students struggling with their mental health to contact the Counseling Center and to get the professional help that has been highlighted throughout the night's speeches.

After the event wound down, students felt deeply moved and inspired by the speakers and their dedication to destigmatizing struggles with mental health.

Jordan Stebbins (SSSB '24), who attended the event for the first time, reflected that "as a new student, [he] didn't know what to expect going in" to Stomp Out the Stigma, but found himself inspired by "the bravery of the speakers" at what he called a "one-of-a-kind event."

Bluth, a member of the board of the Active Minds club, said that she "could not have imagined the impact this event has had on me and on all the students who attended. It's one of the most moving things I have ever witnessed and I am extremely grateful that I got to be so involved in such an amazing cause and with such incredible people."

Consistently the highest-attended event of the year on the YU campus, Stomp Out the Stigma provides a platform for YU students to speak out about their struggles with mental illness and work to destigmatize reaching out for help in the Jewish community.

Eventually, through counseling, Sandhaus "began to accept [himself]" and now hopes to "educate and raise awareness about mental health." Although he stated that he was "just getting started" in his battle with mental health, he showed how he has made significant progress in that battle and has a lot of hope for the future. At the end of his speech, he urged all victims of sexual assault to seek the help they need, and he called on the audience to be aware of how "insidious" and "hard to spot" mental illness can be. Going forward, Sandhaus sees a new beginning in his confrontation with mental illness, the difference being that "this time around, I won't be alone."

Sruli Fruchter (YC '22) then came up to the stage to introduce the next speaker, Gabe Gross (YC '24). Gross described his struggles with depression and anxiety. He emphasized the isolating aspect of depression that creates

those suffering within our community and to "love for the sake of love."

The final speaker, Shay Fishman (YC '23), was introduced by Josh Segal (YC '22). Fishman spoke about his battles with suicidal thoughts and depression, which began when he was a child. He noted how people struggling with depression "only have the occasional shot or two to ask for help," otherwise suffering in silence, sometimes unbeknownst to those around them. Shay also shed light on the stigma surrounding receiving care for mental illness in a psychiatric ward, showing how he was there not because he was "crazy," but because he was "deeply hurt" and in need of help.

Through a strong familial support system and professional help, Fishman was able to reflect on his progress in dealing with mental illness. He has gone from "being torn apart" by depression and suicidal thoughts



Shay Fishman (YC '23) was the final speaker at Stomp Out the Stigma.

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Purim Sameach

By ETHAN SCHUMAN

Every year, Yeshiva University plans exciting and ambitious Purim events on campus for students to partake in. Along with this, many students and Rabbeim plan out great meals and activities for Purim. This provides students with numerous options and ways to celebrate Purim. As a result, The Commentator reached out to several students, asking them about where and how they celebrated Purim this year, and if this year's Purim was unique compared to previous years.

“It was my first Purim on campus ... I had also never attended a woman-led megillah reading, which turned out to be beautiful.”

Ella Aaron (SCW '24)

**Miryam Serfaty (Katz '24)
Business Management**

“I was in the Heights at night and during the day over Purim this year. I went to a lot of different friends' apartments throughout the chag and had a great time with many friends.

“I can definitely say that Purim this year was better and more exciting than last year.”

Amit Ben Shoshan (Katz '25)

Psychology

“I was on campus throughout Purim this year. I celebrated by hanging out with friends and going to a bunch of seudot hosted by Rabbeim.

“This year's Purim was very unique and special to me. I got to experience being at my Rabbi's *seudah* for the first time ever, and I got to hang out with a lot of different friends both new and old as well.”

**Ella Aaron (SCW '24)
Psychology**

“I spent Purim in the Heights, at night, and at home, during the daytime. I celebrated by eating, partying, and spending quality time with people I am close to.

“This Purim was amazing! It was my first Purim on campus ... I had also never attended a woman-led megillah reading, which turned out to be beautiful.”

**Gavriel Factor (YC '25)
Undeclared Pre-Law/Business**

“I was at YU for Purim this year. As an out of town student with not many options where to go, I celebrate Purim at YU. It was a beautiful Purim, with friends, Rabbis, and the YU community filled with lots of singing, dancing, and the YU spirit. Seeing all the different Purim costumes, such as JSS guys dressing up as YP guys and doing the 4 *mitzvot* of Purim with my YU community was a great way to spend my Purim.

“This year's Purim was extremely unique compared to other years. I was away from

my family and my community which was a change.”

**Anthony Jonathan Lallouz (YC '22)
Biology**

“I was in the Heights and Brooklyn for Purim this year. I celebrated Purim at

Yeshiva University's party, Rabbi Shippel's place and at my family in Brooklyn.

“It was a very exciting and activity-filled Purim this year which made it amazing!”



Purim on Wilf Campus

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YU's COVID Testing Policies are Archaic and Counterproductive

By ZACHARY NOTKIN

On the morning of March 21, YU's COVID Student Line sent out an email clarifying the updated policy for student testing. When I saw the email pop up in my inbox, my first reaction was relief, since I assumed that it would contain a positive development. COVID has become a virtual non-concern on campus, and, to our immense joy, life has returned to normal with the exceptions of weekly testing and the minority of teachers who still require masks.

Of these vestigial remnants of the peak pandemic COVID policy, weekly testing, is by far the most disruptive. The only time available for testing leaves students sacrificing some of their precious midday break, and the highly inconvenient location overwhelms the already inundated Belfer Hall elevators. It is worth noting that the testing itself runs relatively smoothly without the long lines that once plagued the process.

While students could once fulfill the testing requirement with an outside test, perhaps receiving a free donut in the process, third-party testing was outlawed at the beginning of the semester. The official reason is that outside tests are hard to verify, but the school still requires outside tests under certain circumstances. It may be related that Kenny Rozenberg, an alumnus whose son recently bought El Al airlines, owns the company that performs the tests, which are paid for by students' insurance. Previously, the government subsidized the cost, but that is no longer the case.

The consequences of this seemingly minor adjustment became clear when some students accidentally missed the official testing times and had their IDs deactivated, meaning they could not enter any buildings on campus. When they reached out to the COVID Student Line to remedy the situation, they were told they would have to get an outside test and wait for it to be approved. Meanwhile, their IDs would remain deactivated. Inexplicably, these make-up tests could only be performed after ID

deactivation.

Other policy decisions have compounded this issue. The university has decided that students without a doctor's note must attend class in person, precluding a Zoom option,

If students miss university testing, they must have their IDs deactivated for at least a day before they can remedy the situation.

in a clear movement away from past COVID concerns. Therefore, any day without an ID is a day of missing class entirely. However, it is my understanding that students with deactivated IDs have universally sidestepped this issue by sneaking into campus buildings, making a deserved mockery of both the COVID policy and the security arrangements. Over the past couple of weeks, it seems that the number of students who have suffered from deactivated IDs has skyrocketed, and several people have asked me if I could help them sneak in.

So, when I saw an email in my school inbox on the subject of testing policy, I assumed that some steps might have been taken to remedy the situation, something I now consider laughable. Instead of outlining fixes, the email simply enumerated the problematic policy. While I am glad that the administration has chosen to communicate openly in this case, that doesn't improve its terrible policy. Students still must have their IDs deactivated for a day if they miss official testing.

When I asked some students for quotes for an article about the testing policy, I almost entirely received complaints about specific issues, and instead of quoting them, I chose to write this article as an opinion piece to amplify their voices. They complained to me about the unnecessary and inconvenient tests, and expressed frustration at the COVID team's poor communication and lack of transparency or accountability. Multiple students claimed that their IDs were not reactivated on time, as had been specified in emails sent to them by the COVID team.

The policy feels vindictive. As punishment for forgetting to test, students must wait for an email telling them that their ID has been deactivated, wait a day, get an outside test and wait up to two days for it to

be approved. I don't see any reason that the school cannot send out warning emails the same way it sends out deactivation emails, or why students must wait a day in order to remedy the situation. The email refers to this consequence as "loss of campus access privileges," as if a student can get by without access to the campus!

This policy of ID deactivation makes students feel unwelcome on their own campus. Recent policy has disregarded students' concerns in favor of convenience for administrators, who in this case, with one exception hide behind the anonymity of the COVID team, and do not face their

policy's consequences. While students have mandatory weekly testing, faculty has random testing. The very administrators who disallow Zoom classes officially work from home two days a week and are only available sporadically.

Recent trends indicate that student action on this issue will lack teeth. Attempts to boycott the cafeteria in protest of recent price increases as well as protests of the booster mandate both fizzled out. When I look around YU, I see students who have lost the energy and will to create change, sneaking into buildings rather than affecting policy. We choose to view our relationship with the institution as transactional and zero-sum.

This situation benefits neither students nor administration in the long term. If students and administrators ignore each other and choose to pass by like ships in the night, they have failed in the goal of the university, to create an environment of rigorous intellectual and religious development. The callous and vindictive testing policy, as well as the student response, are merely symptoms of that failure.



Students waiting in line for COVID tests on the Wilf campus

ZACHARY NOTKIN

A Team That Changed the World

By JEREMY KOFFSKY

The phrase March Madness is a double-edged sword. It's madness when a No. 15 seed can knock off a No. 2, when the legacies of two whole fanbases come down to just a few seconds. It's inherently fun, of course, but also stressful, cruel and maddening.

For the first time in two years, the YU Maccabees men's basketball team played a full season. They looked unstoppable at first, winning 14 straight games and extending their winning streak to 50. They were ranked No. 1 in the NCAA Division III. Then came their matchup against Illinois Wesleyan University, which they lost handily, ending their streak. They appeared to be unraveling, losing games to Skyline opponents Farmingdale State College and St. Joseph's Long Island.

What followed was an impressive resurgence: The Macs squared off against the No. 5 nationally-ranked University of Saint Joseph Connecticut. Down five to start the second half, they clawed their way back to a decisive and resounding victory. The skyline playoffs were a party. Amare Stoudamire, Robert Kraft and Marc Lasry all stopped by to join the fun. Gabe threw an alley-oop to Ryan, tickets ran out in 4.5 seconds and

the Max Stern Athletic Center was rolling for three straight games.

Off to Galloway, NJ they went for a hard-fought loss against one of the country's best teams, Johns Hopkins. Down eight with one minute left, Ryan Turell used all his might to bring the team back within striking dis-

As President Berman said to the New York Times, this team played for a people, and attending games at the Max Stern Athletic Center, it's easy to see what he meant.

ance. A 3-point foul, a long three and two turnovers somehow gave the Macs a shot with 15 seconds left to tie it up. But alas, March is madness; Ryan got a good look but couldn't line up the ball, and the clock ran down torturously slowly as Macs players realized that their dreams would not come to fruition.

That loss was brutal and will be hard to get over. But as a fan there are so many other things that are hard to get over. Good things. It's hard to get over the fact that our tiny DIII school attracted national press coverage, from the New York Times to ESPN to a tweet from the NBA. It's hard to get over the thrill of watching this team of peers work together so beautifully on the court and be so nice

off of it. Over and over the Macs pulled off incredible plays. Whether it was fan favorite Alon Jakubowitz dunking, Ryan Turell on an exhilarating fast break or the alley-oop from Gabe to Ryan in the Skyline championship, the Macs could turn a mundane school night into a rave at any moment.

As President Berman said to the New York Times, this team played for a people, and attending games at the Max Stern Athletic Center, it's easy to see what he meant. Old and young fans came out to see their team work magic. This team inspired people. That will last far beyond any accomplishments on the court.

For the Macs core, Ryan Turell, Gabe Leifer and Eitan Halpert, their careers wearing the blue and white are most likely over. All three players helped radically transform the team from one which had never been to a NCAA tournament in its history to one that made three in four seasons.

Gabe Leifer was there for it all. Returning this year as a graduate student, transforming

from a shooter to a passer over his five-season career, he saw all the team's growth and was instrumental in making it happen. Eitan Halpert was very much the team's heart. Passionate, gritty and a sniper from three, Halpert came up with a big shot whenever it seemed the Macs needed one.

Much has been written about Ryan Turell's skill set, his decision to play for YU as opposed to the Division One schools recruiting him and his NBA potential. But not enough has been said about his leadership as a teammate. Before the games he kept guys loose, and during them, his intensity and enthusiasm never ventured into disrespect. His emotional expressiveness was infectious. He often led chants in the stands or looked at us fans trying to pump up our energy. When Matan Zucker won the Skyline championship's Most Valuable Player award, Turell led a chant in the gym which had been exclusively reserved for himself all season: M-V-P! M-V-P!

Turell's NBA draft potential remains to be seen. Many scouts came to view games this season, but it's hard to know whether that will result in one of the coveted 60 picks selected on June 23, 2022 at the NBA draft. Turell certainly had a phenomenal season,

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The Olympics Are Not a Kid Friendly Venue

By CHAYA ROFFE

With Olympic medalists becoming younger and younger and abuse stories coming out more and more in tandem, one must ponder the connection. In the recent Winter Olympics, Kamila Valieva, 15, was caught doping. Although it is not the first time this happened to a Russian athlete, people were outraged because she was only a teenager. Many argued that she was not fully to blame due to her age and the pressure put on her by her coaches. Some even said that Valieva might not have even been aware that she was doping, although this point is hard to prove. She ended up being allowed to compete, but if she would have placed, there would not have been a ceremony. In the end, Valieva had multiple mistakes in her program and earned fourth, but the most newsworthy moment was when she got off the ice; she was immediately berated by her coaches

for her failed performance. The head of the International Olympic Committee even issued a rare statement, saying that “it was disturbing” how her coaches treated her. Valieva is 15. After getting caught doping, she fell during her program, only to be verbally harassed by her coaches. All this should shock anyone who cares about child welfare and safety.

When training for the Olympics, a lot of

understand that it is for their Olympic training and success. Having a good coach is a huge advantage, so kids in training try their best to follow their coaches’ orders lest they be dropped – child-athletes are always replaceable. What a coach says a player follows, even to the point of withholding water and forcing sexual favors. These athletes are often so sore and exhausted they effectively become robots.

and performance enhancement. Even without the doping aspect, many painkillers are addictive and can cause intestinal issues. Athletes can also injure themselves during training, the event itself or even after competition due to muscle overuse. Children and adolescents usually aren’t aware of the consequences of painkillers or muscle strain; in fact, in the Valieva case, some reported that she might not have been aware that three drugs were in her system or that it was illegal to use them.

All the cameras show all the angles. The Olympics are streamed for all the world to see and scrutinize, and many Olympic sports lead to idealizations of perfect images of what gymnasts, figure skaters and others should look like. This is where dieting and body shaming begin. Shawn Johnson, a USA Gold Medal Gymnast, weighed 110 pounds and consumed a mere 700 calories a day during her training for the 2008 Olympics. She reported that she would pass out during or after practice. She was 16 when she realized she wasn’t developing properly, and only got her first period after her appearance in the 2008 games. There are many gymnasts and Olympic athletes like Johnson who are body shamed into extreme dieting which leads to disordered eating.

Kids aren’t prepared to start this conquest for gold. Their coaches control their lives, what they eat, how they are treated and what drugs they are given. Young athletes almost never openly disagree with their coaches, so their peers learn by example not to say no either. Olympic coaches, both unintentionally and intentionally, isolate their athletes so that they have nowhere to turn. These children aren’t making a conscious decision during their training to give everything up, they just want to be accepted. Enough is enough. Say no to children in the Olympics.

These children aren’t making a conscious decision during their training to give everything up, they just want to be accepted.

time and money goes into perfecting technique and gaining skill. It is understood that coaches and trainers help their athletes win gold, so those athletes listen to them. Olympic competition is stiff. If a coach says to do push-ups because it will help, athletes listen. If a coach says to do push-ups with no explanation given, athletes implicitly

If one is training for the Olympics, it is common that their education gets put on the back burner; this is typically true for any athletes who want to go pro. So, with little to fall back on, athletes train hard and put all they have into their sport. Their parents often send them away to training camps and schools. In some communist countries, parents get subsidized for sending their kids away to train. Often, the only adults in these facilities are the coaches. Given the children’s natural inclination to listen and their need for approval and acceptance, it is common for abuses of power to take place. Coaches are allowed to physically beat athletes in China if they do not perform well. In Japan kids are beaten with bamboo sticks, withheld water and verbally and sexually abused as punishment. These kids often are in a bubble, lacking friends other than their fellow athletes, and they do not have any other adult figures to look up to except their coaches. They adopt a “no room for error” perfectionist mentality at an early age which often leads to anxiety and depression.

Even without the horrible physical and sexual abuse at coaches’ hands, consistent training at an Olympic level puts a strain on the body. Due to constant pain from muscle tearing from doing high-level exercises day in and day out, athletes take pain killers or prescription medication for easy recovery



Olympics: the place where coaches’ dreams come true

THE COMMENTATOR

Credit Where Credit is Due

By YONI MAYER

I saw a funny tweet this past week.

It read, “Thank rid got Editing award matter what Oscars god cares order.”

The post was in reference to the Oscars’ recent decision to not present the documentary short, film editing, makeup/hair-styling, original score, production design, animated short, live-action short and sound awards in front of a live audience. Instead, the Academy announced, the awards will “take place inside the Dolby Theater an hour before the live telecast commences, will be recorded and will then be edited into the subsequent live broadcast.”

For those unfamiliar, the Academy is a group of over 9,000 film professionals, and the Oscars are an annual awards ceremony it hosts, which are meant to honor achievements in the craft and are often considered the most prestigious awards in the film industry.

With that being said, I don’t particularly care about the Oscars. Anyone with knowledge of the industry knows that the ceremony is often not a recognition of the best films and best productions but a testament to powerful campaigns from production companies, which influence and push academy members to vote for their movies. Even though the awards are corrupted, mere nomination brings great acclaim to production companies, directors, actors and everyone else involved in a movie.

The decision to pre-record portions of the awards ceremony has had members of the Academy and its affiliates up in arms. The Board of Directors of the American Cinema Editors came out with a statement expressing their dissatisfaction with the Oscars decision. They wrote, “It sends a message that some creative disciplines are more vital than others. Nothing could be further from the truth and all who make movies know this. As a group of artists wholly dedicated to advancing the art and prestige of film editing, we passionately believe that editing — and all other creative disciplines that are part of

in the 1950s and was characterized by the rejection of traditional techniques as well as experimentation with new approaches in film editing, visual style and narrative. It is considered one of the most influential eras in modern cinema. The idea of an “auteur,” or author, refers to a filmmaker with a distinct visual approach and unbounded control over the direction of a film. The filmography of an auteur can often be found to have recurring themes and preoccupations as they are manifestations of a sole author’s creativity. However, the idea that a director is the sole author and visionary behind a film is far from the truth.

ratings and making drastic changes to increase viewership and should instead cater to the people who still do care about the awards. The Academy’s mission statement is to “recognize and uphold excellence in the motion picture arts and sciences” and it has lost sight of that goal. Its recent decision shows that it panders to networks, ratings and campaigners in production companies instead of actually recognizing excellence in film in all facets of production.

That’s why I loved the tweet. It highlighted the importance of something which might not seem necessary but is, in fact, crucial. Take away editing and you’ll have 10 hours of unrepresentable film. Take away the score and your audience won’t feel the emotions as strongly as they could. Take away the script and you’re left with a silent, plot-less film.

The Academy should repeal its decision to pre-record some awards, not only because of the general public, but for the professionals as well; the professionals who spent months and years working tirelessly at their crafts so that we could have two hours of escape and introspection. Let them feel honored, live, in front of the audience their movies were made to entertain. The Oscars’ popularity is declining because the Academy has lost sight of the people who actually care about receiving the awards. It’s time to repeal those decisions, regain a sense of credibility in recognizing great films and honor the filmmakers who give a platform for this awards show to exist in the first place.

The Academy should stop focusing on ratings and making drastic changes to increase viewership and should instead cater to the people who still do care about the awards.

the collaborative art of filmmaking — should be treated equally. Our contributions to that collaboration may sometimes appear invisible but they are undeniable.”

I recently wrote an article about the incredible amount of creativity and effort that goes into the production of a film. The common misconception that the Director is solely responsible for the overall look and feel of the movie originated during the French New Wave era of cinema with its promotion of “auteurism.” The French New Wave was an era in film which emerged

The average movie-goer will often not ruminate about how a Spielberg movie may look and feel different depending upon the cinematographer or editor. “It’s a Spielberg movie,” they’ll say, and they’ll leave it at that. This attitude discredits the incredible amount of collaboration that is necessary for the completed product — the movie — ultimately projected in cinemas. I value the creativity and the efforts of all the artists involved and believe they deserve a great amount of credit.

The Academy should stop focusing on

In Defense of YU

By **SAMMY FRIEDMAN**

“The grass is always greener on the other side,” as goes an oft-repeated quote that was adapted from the ancient poet Ovid. It is also a quote by which we, as humans, tend to live. We look to where we are not and fantasize about its wonders. We see the successes of others and the failures of ourselves and wonder why we are trapped in our current position. It is this idea of looking at what we lack that causes us to focus on the bad of our current situation.

We can and should ask about what we don't have, but we should not let that be our only focus as we look at YU.

Being a part of Yeshiva University in my fourth full semester, I have had the privilege of meeting many different people from various backgrounds, all with very different passions. While everyone has their own ideas, their own interests and their own passions, there have been some ideas that have remained fairly constant. One of those ideas, both on Beren and Wilf, from freshman and seniors alike, is that YU is a bad school. The claim is not that students cannot achieve while here, but rather that the administration does not strive to create an environment where students can pursue their dreams.

Of course, everyone has their own opinions, after all, as students we see parts of how YU is run that might not appear to be for the best. I've complained about YU as well, and I've used my own free speech to publicly call out YU policies and values, both to my classmates and even to members of the YU faculty. While meetings with advisors and deans do not always see immediate change they do make it clear that the administration listens to, and tries to implement student suggestions. Unfortunately, amidst the complaints, what is often missed is that YU is a

good place to be. As we rant about the dual curriculum, course schedules, the different campuses, and the caf prices, what we often miss is how lucky we are to be in this school, which, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, does care about students. The administration's attention, even if we don't recognize it, is directed towards our success.

When complaining about YU, something that is often the target is the split values of the institution. What is missed with these complaints though, is that Yeshiva University is just that, both a yeshiva and a university. It values both our religious education as well as our secular one, giving us the tools to pursue both simultaneously. In how many other colleges can you walk up the stairs from a Gemara shiur to a master's level management course? Where else can one truly find classes that allow them to explore the philosophy behind the Rambam's teachings right after completing Multivariable Calculus? YU seeks to allow its student body to grow in any area they want, whether they dream of sitting and learning Torah all day or of learning about stocks. In almost any other college in the country we would need to choose to pursue religious studies on the side, but here, your Judaic studies are a part of the schedule. YU wants us to grow both as Jews and as members of society, so we have a schedule that reflects that idea. We can each decide how much time to allot to our religious studies, because YU values our religious growth while recognizing that each student here values religion and secular studies to varying degrees.

Yeshiva University looks to empower its students beyond the classroom as well. How many times have you seen a WhatsApp alert for a club for something that you wouldn't have imagined exists? Of course, having a venture capital club and an engineering club is great, but how many of us would have thought that there would be multiple volunteering clubs, a fantasy book club and even a club dedicated to bringing packages to campus? While many colleges have a variety of clubs, that doesn't take away from the fact that YU gives its students the freedom

to pursue what they want to pursue. We can shape our own majors, we can connect directly with alumni who have walked in our shoes, we can even travel to Israel and Vienna as part of school programming. What YU does for its students to let them lead, to allow them to interact with owners of sports franchises, to bring in members of United States embassies from across the globe, to let them Rise Up is something that might go unnoticed, but should not be unvalued.

YU is not perfect. They don't offer every course each semester, their COVID policies make less sense than their multiple semesters of Hebrew requirement, the elevators at Beren work less often than their attempts to stop test cheating, and I hesitate to even mention the apparent contradictions between the Yeshiva and the university. That said, these problems should not blind us to

the good that we are given here. The ability to explore career opportunities while being able to pick religious studies that match our personal level is not something to scoff at. Having a school that seeks out chances for its students and is eager to help them find their own passions isn't a common thing. While many schools have great courses, professors, and communities, we shouldn't let that take away from all the wonderful things that YU has to offer. Just as there are things that don't make sense about YU and that we can complain about, we should also remember the good. Instead of only focusing on what we don't have, let us look at what we do have and use the resources YU provides to pursue our dreams. We can and should ask about what we don't have, but we should not let that be our only focus as we look at YU.



Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus

THE COMMENTATOR

MACS

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leading all of Division III in points per game with 27.1.

Key bench players Ethan Lasko's and Jordan Armstrong's NCAA careers are over as well. Next year's team will most likely feature Ofek Reef, Matan Zucker and Adi Markovich in more prominent roles.

Overall, for the team, it's hard to walk away from a season in any sport without winning a championship. Throughout, players work as a unit toward the singular goal of a national championship title. But in a tournament of 64, that is a torturous way to operate. The Macs won the Skyline championship, they dunked and they shot and they transcended.

While their season didn't end how I had hoped, it is impossible to quantify how many people this team inspired. The 2021-2022 Yeshiva University Maccabees were thrilling and enthralling. The architect of the roster, Coach Elliot Steinmetz said it best to YU Athletics: "This team changed the world."



The Macs after winning the Skyline Championship, Feb. 27, 2022

YU ATHLETICS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Continued from Page 3

is no reason that we should fear or shy away from the best modern society offers. There is no reason the ethical propositions posited in "Frankenstein" and "Slaughterhouse-Five" should have any less relevance to Judaism than the ideas of "Altneland" and "The Source."

With this characterization established, I would like to address the general question of finding further meaning in our Judaism through academic methodology, even in our most sacred scriptures. In my experience with such topics, such as in Ancient Near Eastern studies, I have found that the academy offers an additional path toward relating to and finding meaning in the Torah. Such methods, when taught responsibly as I have seen done in YU, should not be controversial. We are accepting of many approaches: the rational and mystical, the Sepharadi and Ashkenazi, the Litvish and Chassidish. Our sages tell us (Shabbat 88b) that one verse can be understood in many different ways. Is it so hard to respect the academic method as another way to connect to God?

The Federal Reserve System

By ZACHARY NOTKIN

Faith in the political system is at a historic low. Inflation ravages the American economy in a way it hasn't since the 1970s. Recent stock market and crypto gains have gone up in smoke. One thread connects all of these events, and it is the Federal Reserve system. You may be familiar with the Federal Reserve from conspiracy theories and cursory glances at the business section on your way to the sports section, but you probably don't know what it actually is.

Understanding the Federal Reserve requires understanding the history of banking in America. A bank borrows money from depositors in the short term, and lends that money to borrowers in the long term, profiting from the difference in interest rates. During the so-called free banking era of the early 1800s, banks were basically unregulated, and relied on consumers trusting that their gold deposits were secure. However, only a fraction of the deposits were actually held in reserve. If the bank went bankrupt, depositors could lose everything. If rumors, even untrue, spread that a bank was facing trouble, it could lead to run on the bank. With every depositor demanding their gold at the same time, the bank would be unable to function. In order to facilitate transactions, banks would issue paper notes in exchange for gold deposits. Since these notes would be worthless if the bank went under, they would trade for less than their face value. So called "wildcat banks" would issue more notes than they could ever redeem, effectively stealing from their depositors. (It should be noted that a form of modern cryptocurrency called "stablecoins," are effectively wildcat banks.)

In order to help pay for the Civil War, Congress eventually authorized the

creation of one paper currency, nicknamed "greenbacks," that would be accepted throughout the country. They also replaced the unregulated local banks with more reputable "National Banks," nearly eliminating all other currencies in circulation. However, without a strong central authority backing them, even these banks were subject to runs and panics. After financier J.P. Morgan personally bailed out several banks in 1907, demand grew for stronger government action. However, that demand did not defeat the longstanding resistance to the creation of a single government-run central bank. At a highly secret meeting on Jekyll Island, America's financial elite agreed on a proposal for the creation of the Federal Reserve System that was passed by Congress in 1913.

The system, which remains in place to this day, requires all major banks to hold stakes in their regional Federal Reserve Bank, of which there are twelve. While the regional banks are theoretically equal, the New York Fed is practically the most important. A politically appointed Board of Governors officially oversee the system, but the Federal Open Market Committee, which includes the seven members of the Board of Governors and the presidents of the regional banks, make the most important decisions. Generally, all twelve regional presidents sit in on meetings, but they only receive five total votes, which they assign on a rotating basis, except for the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, who has a permanent seat. By tradition, the chairman of the Board of Governors, currently Jerome Powell, is elected chair, and the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York is vice chair.

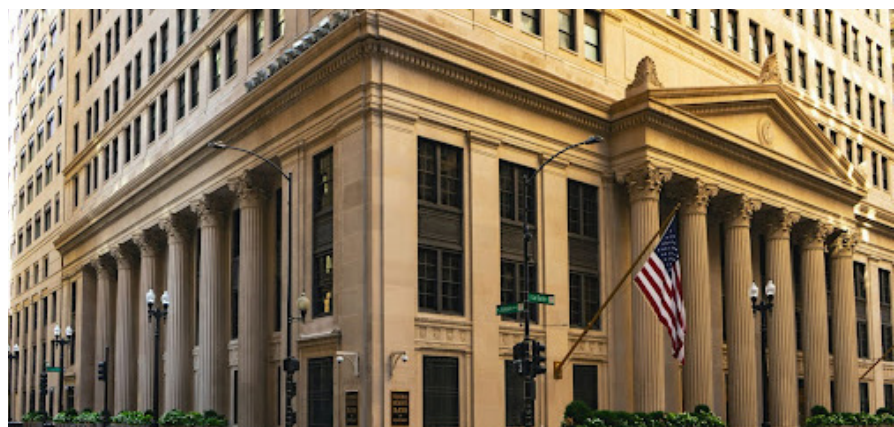
The question of what exactly the Federal Reserve does is complicated, since the financial system has changed so much since its inception. The overall goal

of the system is to maintain the nation's economic stability by minimizing inflation and maximizing employment. The system failed its first test, now known as the Great Depression. During World War II, the Fed helped the war effort by allowing the government to borrow money at low rates. However, the desire to avoid the many international money crises during the Great Depression prompted all of the free nations of the world to send representatives to Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where the modern global economic system was founded. At that time, the United States made up the majority of the global developed economy, and held most of the world's gold reserves. Therefore, the U.S. Dollar, still at this point redeemable for a fixed amount of gold, was set as the global reserve currency, with every other currency exchangeable to it at a fixed rate. This meant that the Fed had to maintain the value of the U.S. Dollar at precise levels. However, in the 1970s, a combination of high unemployment and inflation, called stagflation, punished the American economy, and the Fed could do nothing about it. So, after a secret meeting at Camp David, President Nixon formally abolished the gold standard, sending global

currencies to the whims of the free market. This meant that the dollar is fiat currency, backed by nothing, valued at whatever the market thinks it is valued at. However, since people need dollars to pay their taxes, buy stocks and bonds from regulated exchanges and basically everything else, the value of the dollar isn't disappearing anytime soon.

The Fed has continued to expand its role in the U.S. economy. Since money is now fiat, it can print as much money as it wants to pump into the economy. After the market crash of 2008, the Federal Reserve increased its role in the U.S. economy, and the COVID crisis has only exacerbated this. Due to the uncertainty among even the greatest economists regarding how the Fed can best fulfill its dual mandate, it has a lot of leeway in choosing how to act. Historically, this has allowed it to make choices that increase its own significance and power, regardless of how well it does.

This has served as merely a cursory glance into the working of the Federal Reserve. Hopefully, in a follow up article, we can discuss what exactly the Fed does in the modern economy, and how that might change in the future.



Chicago Federal Reserve Bank Building

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Management Consulting: A Peek into the World of 'Strategy'

By SHMUEL METZ

Advertising executive Carl Ally famously remarked, "A consultant is someone who borrows your watch to tell you the time, and then keeps the watch."

Consulting is a large industry that is in high demand and attracts the attention of the brightest college students from around the world. According to IBIS World Statistics, the management consulting industry in the US, alone, is estimated at \$263.5 billion and is expected to grow to \$357.2 billion by 2026. Nearly all Forbes 500 companies call in management consultants at least once every 12 months. Over one-third ask for help more than four times annually. "Whenever I read the Wall Street Journals 'Who's News' column, I ask, 'Gee, which consultant did that?'" said George Whitmore, a consulting business owner. Ivy League graduates flock to consulting firms after their undergraduate studies. According to the school's newspaper, 22% of Harvard graduates entering the workforce after college enter the consulting field. Even the Vatican engaged McKinsey & Co. and other consulting firms. So, what makes "watch thievery" such an attractive industry? Where did it all begin?

The first spark of what later developed into management consulting emerged from a book titled "The Principles of Scientific Management." In his work, Frederick Taylor argues that management must be thought of as a science, with clear rules and structures. He said to his fellow engineers that, "adoption of scientific management would readily

in the future double the productivity of the average man engaged in industrial work." He saw that companies would perform tasks haphazardly and believed that there was a "best" approach for each given task. Taylor's methods saved railroad companies millions of dollars and were the inspiration for the revolution of strategy in the 1900s.

Arthur D. Little, a chemist from MIT, believed that Taylor's approach was too systematic and that there needed to be a more individual methodology for each client. He founded a consulting firm that would later adapt to a more structured approach and is one of the oldest and largest consulting firms to this day.

A consultant is someone who borrows your watch to tell you the time, and then keeps the watch.

In truth, strategy dates back all the way to the ancient era. In the Bible, Moses led millions of people out of Egypt and did not have an effective way to manage the numerous problems and questions of the nation. His father-in-law instituted a more effective system that allowed for every individual to be heard.

Fast forward to the 1930s and the reputation of consultants was not the strongest. One consultant remarked that he was too embarrassed to tell his mother that he was a consultant and, instead, relayed that he was a pianist in a brothel. Things changed when McKinsey & Co. arrived at the forefront

of strategic management. With a focus on highly educated MBA graduates, and in an attempt to distance himself from the Scientific Management crowd, James O. McKinsey began McKinsey & Co. His emphasis was on "why" managers did things instead of how they did them." Using the title of consulting engineers, the firm focused on the combination of accounting and engineering, as well as law, to shape the first stage of the company.

By the 1960s, other firms followed McKinsey's lead and the Boston Consulting Group arrived on the scene. In an attempt to shape the narrative of business leaders and not just provide advice behind the

scenes, BCG broke down the notion that consultants were only hired when companies went through hard times and instead focused on the future of the company and its growth aspirations. In this time period, many now popular frameworks and structures emerged, like Porter's Five Forces, SWOT Analysis, and The Rule of Three and Four.

Although the emergence of powerful, widespread business ideas was generally good for business, one consulting firm found that a better business model was to create long-term relationships with clients rather than short-term strategy work. So in 1973, Bill Bain left BCG to begin Bain & Co. and

would join McKinsey and BCG to be recognized as what is known today as "the big three."

Then, in the 1970s, came the race for globalization. Before this era, all of the major firms had most of their revenue come from the US. After 1970, McKinsey led the global race with more than 50% of its revenue coming from outside the US. The firm spent years building long-term relationships with companies overseas and it paid off.

Over the years, other consulting firms focused on strategy emerged, such as Parthenon, LEK, Monitor, and others. Many firms began focusing on implementing the strategies they were recommending in order to have longer engagements and build client relationships.

Consultants today can be found working on a variety of projects aimed at using data to optimize businesses by solving complex business problems. Many large companies as well have dedicated internal teams that focus solely on their own strategic initiatives. Companies have to make crucial decisions and they are willing to pay big for those decisions to be made for them. This is why they hire the best and the brightest to help them decide the future of their company.

This new wave of strategy has taught many businesses that they need to think about each component of their business as one entity in which each component affects the other. Even though strategy will morph with the constant advancement of technology, it will be a crucial core piece of every business for years to come.



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