

THE COMMENTATOR

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YU Must Allow LGBTQ Club To Form Immediately as Court Denies Motion to Stay

By ELISHAMA MARMON
AND ARIEL KAHAN

A judge ruled that Yeshiva University immediately recognize the YU Pride Alliance as an official campus club, rejecting the school's motion to delay the execution of a previous court order to recognize the club.

The ruling, issued on Tuesday, Aug. 23 by Associate Justice Angela M. Mazzarelli of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, denied Yeshiva University's motion to delay the execution and enforcement of the previous ruling that YU must recognize the Pride Alliance as an official campus club.

Several students representing the Pride Alliance sued the school for discrimination in April 2021. The court concluded on June 14 that YU violated the plaintiffs' rights in this case and must immediately allow the club to form, prompting an appeal and an application for interim relief from YU, attempting to stop the court from enforcing the creation of the club until after the appeal had been decided.

YU argued after the initial court ruling that they believed a stay was "necessary to avoid irreparable injury and to [protect]

Defendants-Appellants' First Amendment Rights, to avoid prejudice and maintain the status quo, and [since] the appeal is likely to succeed on the merits." The plaintiffs in the case then filed a Memorandum of Law, arguing that the stay should be denied because YU would lose the appeal. Additionally, they also argued that YU had failed to prove how having a club, even on a temporary basis, would irreparably harm the university, and that "the only irreparable harm here will fall on the Plaintiffs."

A university spokesperson gave The Commentator the following statement:

"The New York Appellate Division's ruling today to deny our stay deepens significant historical concerns about government interference in religious institutions. This decision leaves unchecked the order from the lower court to intrude on the internal matters of religious schools, hospitals, and many other faith-based organizations. This decision follows the lower court's claim that Yeshiva University is not religious, and that religious education is not at the heart of what we do.

"This is obviously wrong. As our name indicates, Yeshiva was founded specifically to impart Torah values to its students through providing an outstanding education, allowing them to robustly live out their faith as



YU Pride Alliance

THE YU PRIDE ALLIANCE

noble citizens and committed Jews. We love and care for all our students—each one created in God's image—and we firmly disagree with today's ruling. We will continue to fight for our First Amendment right to instill Torah values in our students, and we will immediately move to appeal this decision on

the stay to the New York Court of Appeals." The YU Pride Alliance did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Jonathan Schwab Appointed As New Director of Office of Student Life

By ARIEL KAHAN

Jonathan Schwab (YC '11) has taken over as the new director of the Office of Student Life (OSL). Schwab began this new role on July 27, replacing Rabbi Josh Weisberg.

Multiple administrators invited Schwab to interview for the position in mid-June. The position was subsequently offered to Schwab in mid-July by Provost Selma Botman following his interviews with many deans and administrators including Dr. Erica Brown, Dean Chaim Nissel, Dean Shoshana Shechter, Dean Yosef Kalinsky, Dean Dr. Sarah Asher and Provost Botman. Schwab accepted the position on July 18.

After leaving his position as director of University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL) at Wilf Campus in November 2020, which he held for five years, Schwab earned a doctorate in higher education administration from the NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development.

When asked by The Commentator about what he was most excited about doing in his new role, Schwab responded that he looks forward to developing relationships

with students. "I studied it in graduate school, and I am really passionate about the developmental changes that happen during college—this is my life's passion," Schwab told The Commentator.

"I studied it in graduate school, and I am really passionate about the developmental changes that happen during college—this is my life's passion."

Jonathan Schwab

Additionally, Schwab told The Commentator that one of his primary goals is to make OSL as "student-centric" as possible. He wants to make it easier for students to find ways to impact life on campus, such as by simplifying the process for students founding clubs. Instead of

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YU Suspends Booster Requirement for Most Undergraduate and Graduate Students

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Yeshiva University's COVID-19 booster requirement has been suspended for most undergraduate and graduate students and all employees, the university's COVID-19 response team announced in an email July 11.

Citing medical research on the limited effectiveness of boosters in preventing infection, the COVID Team announced the immediate suspension of the booster requirement for all students expected to remain on the Wilf and Beren Campuses for classes. The booster requirement remains for students whose studies require off-campus work.

"The most recent data from the medical establishment, informed by available studies, show that while booster shots are effective and strongly recommended to prevent serious illness and hospitalization, they appear to offer little added protection against contracting or spreading the virus once someone has received the original vaccination dose(s)," the COVID Team stated in their email.

The booster requirement remains for

undergraduate students majoring in education at Stern College for Women (SCW), Cardozo and Ferkauf graduate students, Wurzwiler students attending on-campus programs and Katz School of Science and Health students enrolled in allied health programs or attending classes on Albert Einstein College of Medicine's campus. Students in these programs are expected to

"Certainly, if the dynamics of the virus shift or other relevant details emerge, we would reevaluate."

Joe Bednarsh

do fieldwork or externships in off-campus settings and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine requires a booster.

"The decision was made by YU's medical director and a committee of professionals who reviewed medical research

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Come and Experience a Golden Age

By **ARIEL KAHAN**

Our time at Yeshiva University is jam-packed and passes quickly. In fact, Professor Judah Diamant's article in a recently published guide to getting the most of the Yeshiva University bemoans the tendency of many Yeshiva students to attempt to complete their undergraduate years in as few years as possible, with an overloaded schedule.

There are (as, to be clear, Professor Diamant acknowledges) understandable financial pressures that impact how much time most of us spend here and how we spend that time. However, it would be a shame not to appreciate the opportunities this place offers while we are here. As we embark on a new year at *The Commentator*, we are mindful of the tremendous opportunity we have to chronicle life at YU—from debates over the big ideas of the day to the rhythms of daily life at the flagship Jewish institution in North America. The more time I spend at YU, my fascination with, and appreciation for, what is occurring in a small section of Washington Heights grows. Students who realize these opportunities will have an easier time getting out of bed after a lackluster YU night of sleep (and we all know what that feels like).

This place is rich with culture, academic and spiritual opportunities and provides an opportunity to identify and analyze sociological trends in a particular segment of the Jewish community that will surely someday be part of history books. There is a strong Yeshiva culture that dominates the life of many male YU students. These students take advantage of tremendous opportunities to learn from the

tremendous *Talmidei Chachamim* whose Torah will live on forever. There are YU and Stern students who are vocally uncomfortable with this more pervasive black and white (pun intended) view and whose university experience is not formed or shaped by this more Yeshiva-style world. There are also less weighty cultural trends that are worthy of attention, whether it is the fact that hundreds of guys wear the same Charles Tyrwhitt shirts, stretchy pants, and Cole Haan shoes, or the fact that some students feel that night seder is inviolate for almost any reason, while others look for a different balance and spend their nights focusing on different clubs and extracurriculars. Many YU students spend every minute they can in Washington Heights or Midtown while others don't even bother unpacking the suitcase they packed on Monday morning to last them until Thursday night.

YU is going through a golden age filled with growth, advancement and sociological trends that must become a history textbook.

We of course expect to cover important and controversial developments such as the recent lawsuits. At the same time, we hope to address the impact of these issues on students' daily lives. Yeshiva University offers a microcosm for exploring important issues related to the tensions between traditional Orthodox values and modernity, and we will aim to cover all

stories fully and promptly, and hopefully in a manner that offers a platform to a diversity of viewpoints.

And this is all happening while the school is expanding and improving. Undergraduate enrollment numbers are higher than ever before. Many new initiatives have been started over the past few years including the launch of the Sacks-Herenstein Center, the Torat Tziyon program and even chesed relief missions in Europe. In my opinion, this is the best time to ever be a YU student as the institution, while not without its flaws, stands tall and strong and is (hopefully) entering a post-pandemic phase.

No part of daily life at YU should pass in the blink of an eye. YU is going through a golden age filled with growth, advancement and tensions that must become a history textbook.

It is our job to write this textbook. First and foremost, it is *The Commentator's* job to record the history. Ultimately, I do not view Volume 88.1 of *The Commentator* as a newspaper. Of course, we will report on all the news promptly and objectively. Of course, there will be opinion articles that are more relevant to the current political climate in America than they are to YU. That being said, this year's *Commentator* will aim to be the most fantastic time capsule and primary source ever created to understand the questions and atmosphere of YU and the Orthodox world in 2022 and 2023.

So, we should all start our years and journeys appreciating where we are and how special this place is—it is our job to write the history book. Yeshiva University is shining; will you be a part of the Golden Age?

THE COMMENTATOR

2022-2023

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 88 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

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

Read more at yucommentator.org

YU Sued for Covering Up Student's Alleged Rape

By CHAIM BOOK AND
JONATHAN LEVINZ

The student allegedly raped by a Yeshiva University men's basketball player sued the university Monday, claiming a "purposeful and orchestrated" cover-up of her assault, according to a press release by the student's attorney.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court, accuses the university of purposefully disregarding Title IX rules and crucial evidence to exonerate the alleged rapist and prevent disruption to YU's Rise Up campaign. The suit also claims that YU has fostered a "rape cover-up culture" in the university for decades and failed to protect students.

"Plaintiff is eager to make sure that Yeshiva University leadership finally understands that it simply is no longer acceptable for school administrators, officials, and/or directors to turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the rapes and/or sexual assaults of its students," Kevin Mulhearn, the student's attorney, said in a statement. (Mulhearn also represents the former Yeshiva University High School for Boys students in their ongoing sex abuse lawsuit.)

The alleged assault occurred in January 2021, and a complaint was filed with YU's

Title IX office the following month. That August, the student, identified as "Jane Doe" in the lawsuit, went public with her assault in an anonymous opinion article and discussed it in further detail in an interview on Jeff Lax Live this January.

"The allegations against the university asserted in this complaint are categorically false," a university spokesperson told The

137-page complaint accuses YU of failing to apply Title IX as mandated by law and treating the assault as an internal disciplinary affair. The complaint also stated that Seyfarth Shaw, the firm YU hired to conduct the investigation, has a conflict of interest because they received millions from YU defending it against claims of sexual assault by former YUHSB students.

a former Title IX coordinator at a top five national university, conducted a thorough investigation and submitted a conclusive report supported by all the evidence. We also engaged an additional investigative firm to review this matter led by a former Manhattan Sex Crimes prosecutor, who validated the earlier process and agreed with the conclusion."

The lawsuit names the university; Andrew Lauer, YU's general counsel; Chaim Nissel, vice provost of student affairs and former Title IX Coordinator; Seyfarth Shaw; and Dov Kesselman and Emily Miller, the attorneys who conducted the investigation, as defendants.

Based on recommendations by an internal committee on addressing campus sexual assault, YU has since restructured its Title IX office, hired a new Title IX coordinator and improved sexual assault and harassment resources throughout the university.

The student has not specified what damages she is seeking.

"We at Yeshiva University take seriously our duty to do all we can to prevent and address sexual assault within our campus atmosphere and surrounding areas."

YU Spokesperson

Commentator. "We are fully confident that this matter was appropriately and thoroughly investigated. Our professionals ... work tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of our students and they have taken extensive steps to provide assistance in this matter specifically.

"We at Yeshiva University take seriously our duty to do all we can to prevent and address sexual assault within our campus atmosphere and surrounding areas."

The complaint further alleges that the investigation did not request access to a "rape kit," ignored photographs of bruises sustained during the assault, failed to interview key witnesses and did not provide the student with security measures despite her repeated requests.

The university pushed back on these claims in its statement to The Commentator. "The firm hired by Yeshiva University, including the female lead investigator who is

SCHWAB APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF OSL

Continued from Front Page

"expecting students to reach out with fully developed plans," he "hopes OSL can work together with students to brainstorm and plan events while guiding them throughout the whole process."

Administrators expressed confidence in Schwab's new role. "I am thrilled that Dr. Schwab has returned to YU in his new role, and am confident that all who interact with him will appreciate his professionalism, his creativity and his passion for enhancing the student experience," Vice Provost of Student Affairs Chaim Nissel told The Commentator.

Schwab has been involved with Yeshiva University for over a decade. He began as a Yeshiva College honors student in 2007 after attending Rambam Mesivta for high

school and spending two years of study in Israel at Yeshivat Har Etzion.

Schwab was active as a student at YU. He was senior editor of The Commentator, a member of YC's Honors Council, a research assistant for multiple professors, an actor in the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS) play, and a Presidential Fellow at the Office of the President. Schwab even starred in a YouTube video, YU Boys will be Stern Girls.

Schwab graduated in 2011 with a major in English and minors in chemistry and languages, literature and culture.

After graduating, Schwab worked for the Office of Admissions, handling recruitment for the undergraduate honors programs. Schwab and his wife Esty (SCW '10), who

he met at YU, became the campus couple on the Beren Campus in 2013, working to enhance the Shabbat experience.

Schwab worked in the Office of Admissions until late 2014, when he joined YU Global, a new office set to oversee online education. In 2015, after the then director of UHRL, Sean Hirschhorn, resigned, Schwab applied, was accepted, and began as director of UHRL that March through November 2020.

Weisberg did not respond to multiple requests for comment.



Jonathan Schwab

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

SUSPENDED BOOSTER REQUIREMENT

Continued from Front Page

before coming to this decision," Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh told The Commentator. All undergraduate and graduate deans participated in the process as well.

"The Yeshiva University Faculty Council, which serves to include the university's various faculty bodies in creating academic and governance policies, was not consulted or involved in this decision," co-chairs Gabriel Cwilich and Abraham Ravid told The Commentator. As of publishing, the council has yet to meet or take a position on this.

In January, shortly after YU announced a booster requirement for the spring 2022 semester, an online petition gathered over 1,400 signatures calling for the requirement's cancellation. In response, the university organized a zoom call with its medical director, Dr. Robert Van Amerongen, to reassure parents and students.

On July 11, Yishai Kornwasser, the petition's creator, declared victory in an update posted to the petition's page. (No student contacted by The Commentator in the original article about the petition knew who Kornwasser was or whether it was a

pseudonym.) "While rescinding the booster requirement is clearly a full-throated admission of bad policy," Kornwasser wrote, "the administration has not yet apologized for coercing their students into taking it. But the students — and their parents — haven't forgotten."

Some professors felt that the decision's timing was ill-advised.

Gabriel Cwilich, a physics professor at YC, told The Commentator that "I, as an individual, would have perhaps waited until a couple of weeks before the semester starts to make a policy change, as opposed to deciding this in the middle of the summer, particularly because circumstances change almost daily and new and elements might inform the decision better then."

Abraham Ravid, a professor and chair of SSSB's finance department, agreed. "My personal view is that cost benefit analysis dictates a very cautious return to normalcy given the state of the pandemic. Relatively low-cost preventive and protective measures can pay big dividends in terms of health and money." (Cwilich and Ravid, who are both

co-chairs of the Yeshiva University Faculty Council, informed The Commentator that these views are their own and don't represent the council.)

Some students had mixed reactions to YU's decision. "I am very happy Yeshiva University made this decision, which is great for new freshmen and students coming from yeshiva," said Isaac Nahmias (SSSB '25). "Unfortunately, many students such as myself were not given a choice whether to get a booster or not. At least new students can have this freedom."

Bednarsh told The Commentator that if the situation changes, YU would reconsider the booster requirement. "Certainly, if the dynamics of the virus shift or other relevant details emerge, we would reevaluate," Bednarsh said.

Students are still required to get two doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. According to YU's website, other vaccines approved by the World Health Organization (WHO) are also acceptable.

Other colleges in New York still require

students to receive boosters, including NYU, Columbia University, and the CUNY system.

YU is currently assessing its testing policy for next semester.

This article was published online on May 12.



YU has suspended its booster mandate for most students

THE COMMENTATOR

Housing and Cafeteria Costs Rise on Beren and Wilf Campuses

By **SAMMY INTRATOR**

Housing and cafeteria plans for the 2022-23 academic year have risen on Wilf and Beren campus.

A Commentator review of Beren and Wilf campus housing prices found increases of varying amounts across both campuses. Cafeteria price plans on both campuses rose by 10%.

“Food prices in general and specifically kosher prices charged by our suppliers have been increasing significantly recently and this will result in higher caf prices.”

Randy Apfelbaum

On Wilf Campus, the cost of a standard double room in Morgenstern and Rubin Halls increased 5.3% from \$9,500 to \$10,000 for the 2022-23 academic year. The cost of a standard double room in Muss Hall increased 2.2% from \$6,850 to \$7,000.

On Beren Campus, the cost of a standard room increased 5.3% from \$9,500 to \$10,000 in the 36th Street, Schottenstein and Brookdale Standard/Suite Residence Halls. In the Brookdale Deluxe and IHP 251 Lexington Residences, costs increased at a similar rate, from \$10,000 to \$10,500 and \$9,750 to \$10,250, respectively.

The 35th Street Residence Hall had the lowest rate increase as a percentage on either campus, rising 1.6% from \$12,300 to \$12,500. The IHP apartments at 200 East 30th street, previously listed as independent housing apartments (IHA), increased 14.3% from \$10,500 to \$12,000. This increase is the largest rate increase as a percentage on either campus.

The 2022-23 rates were originally announced to students through email on May 17.

“As prices of goods and services continue to increase both nationally and locally, Yeshiva University continually explores options to mitigate, as much as possible, the impact to students and facilitate affordable living on campus,” a YU spokesperson told The Commentator. “In reassessing costs, as we do every fiscal year, it has become necessary to make modest price adjustments for campus housing, commensurate with

the upkeep and management cost of each residence.”

Cafeteria plan rates increased 10% across both campuses. The most expensive plan, the “high plan,” rose from \$2,000 to \$2,200 per semester, the “standard plan” from \$1,750 to \$1,925 and, the “reduced plan” from \$1,500 to \$1,650. Enrolling in a cafeteria plan is mandatory for students enrolled in university housing.

Students in non-university housing are required to enroll in the “non resident plan,” which unlike the other plans, allows students to spend their funds at the cafeteria and at local vendors participating in the campus dining program without restrictions. The non resident plan increased from \$450 to \$500.

Randy Apfelbaum, YU chief facilities & administrative officer, explained that the cafeteria plan increases were due to increased prices of kosher products and that YU is trying to keep plan prices as low as possible. “In general, the ‘buy in’ cost of the meal plans is raised so that students have enough funds in their plans to cover the cost of the meals.

Food prices in general and specifically kosher prices charged by our suppliers have been increasing significantly recently and this will result in higher caf prices. We endeavor to keep these increases to a minimum wherever possible.”

“Each meal plan was increased slightly,” Apfelbaum added. “Students are free to choose any plan that works for their needs. One can always add funds at any time during the school year.”

Some students were not happy with these increases. “As a student who lives off-campus and doesn’t go to the caf all that often, it is disappointing to see a 10% price increase for meal plans,” Jacob Korman (SSSB ‘23) told The Commentator. “Off-campus students are forced to buy a meal plan, and now they all need to pay more for something that is not a necessity. Considering YU’s previous record with price hikes, this is disappointing but not at all surprising.

This comes after food prices at the cafeteria rose between the fall and spring semesters.

Other students felt similarly. “What the YU administration has been doing with prices the past few years is unacceptable,” Ben Bruder (YC ‘24) told The Commentator, “especially in regards to the meal plan. As we all know, the YU meal plan food is insanely overpriced as it is.

“Additionally,” Bruder added, “most other colleges only require freshmen to be on a meal plan, while YU demands it of all students of all students living on campus. I doubt any of us are looking forward to paying \$15.00 for a salad this fall.”

YU housing costs are available here:

For Wilf Campus: <https://www.yu.edu/student-life/housing/men>

For Beren Campus: <https://www.yu.edu/student-life/housing/women>



Housing and cafeteria plans rose for undergraduate students

THE COMMENTATOR

Ten Professors Honored for Excellence in Teaching this Spring

By **RIKI GREENBERG**

Yeshiva University honored ten professors across Stern College for Women (SCW), Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) and Yeshiva College (YC) with annual awards for excellence in teaching this spring.

The Professors honored this year were Dinolis Panzarelli and David Puretz at YC; Harvey Babich, Matt Miller, Nechama Price and Alyssa Schuck at SCW and Gabriela Coiculescu, Pablo Hernandez Lagos, Steven Mayer and Travis Oh at SSSB.

The faculty awards recognize outstanding teaching and contributions to students and the colleges, Dean Bacon told The Commentator.

Seven of the awards were decided by undergraduate students in online surveys, and the other three by faculty and deans. Voting took place in late March through mid-April and results were announced through mid-May, depending on the school.

Two awards, the Lillian F. and William L. Silber Professor of the Year award at YC and SCW, and the Dean Karen Bacon award at SCW, were accompanied by an honorarium.

The Lillian F. and William L. Silber

Professor of the Year award, endowed by Lillian and William (YC ‘63) Silber, carries an honorarium of approximately \$1,800. The Dean Karen Bacon Faculty award, endowed by the late E. Billy Ivri, a long-time supporter of YU and YU’s first female trustee, carries an honorarium of approximately \$1000.

All of Yeshiva University awards, including awards presented to graduating stu-

“It is a privilege to be acknowledged by such a prestigious, accomplished group of individuals.”

Harvey Babich

dents, are established when donors create a fund (an endowment) with the university to finance them. All endowments are then collectively invested for perpetuity, with the average rate of return over the previous three-year period dispensed to awardees as the honorarium. According to Dean Bacon, the average rate of return is usually around

5%.

Bacon told The Commentator that variations in the sums of honorariums come from the initial size of endowments and the number of individuals receiving the award, and are not statements of an award’s importance.

It is unclear whether any SSSB awards carry an honorarium.

“I am greatly honored,” Babich, chair of SCW’s biology department and winner of the Lillian F. and William L. Silber Professor of the Year Award, told The Commentator, “as I have much respect for the students at SCW. Thus, it is a privilege to be acknowledged by such a prestigious, accomplished group of individuals.”

Other professors felt similarly. Dr. Gabriela Coiculescu, an Assistant Professor of Finance at SSSB who won the Full-time Professor of the Year Award, said, “I feel very happy and honored to receive this award. My students continuously inspire me, and I have learned a lot from them on many dimensions.”

Jonathan Levin contributed to this story

The following is a listing of the awards:

Yeshiva College

Lillian F. and William L. Silber Professor of the Year - David Puretz

Part-Time Faculty Award - Dinolis Panzarelli

Stern College for Women

Lillian F. and William L. Silber Professor of the Year - Harvey Babich

Senior Class Professor Award, General Studies - Alyssa Schuck

Senior Class Professor Award, Jewish Studies - Nechama Price

Dean Karen Bacon Faculty Award - Matt Miller

Sy Syms School of Business

Full-time Professor of the Year - Dr. Gabriela Coiculescu

Adjunct Professor of the Year - Steven Mayer

Sy Syms Dean’s Award for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching - Dr. Pablo Hernandez-Lagos

Sy Syms Faculty Research Award - Dr. Travis Oh

Two Longtime Hebrew Professors Announce Departure From YU as University Restructures Hebrew Department

By ARIEL KAHAN

Professors Chaya Glaser and Sigal Shalom, two longtime instructors at Wilf Campus's Hebrew Department, will not be returning to teach at YU for the 2022-

"I feel fortunate to have met so many wonderful students. I am proud of them all for the interest they showed, and the effort they put into learning. I am going to miss teaching at YU, and I will miss the special connection, the 'kesher' I had with my students."

23 academic year. This news follows the planned implementation of YU's initiative to restructure the Hebrew Department to asynchronous instruction for the upcoming academic year.

Professor Glaser notified Judaic Studies Department Chair Aaron Koller, Dean Shalom Holtz and Dean Karen Bacon of her plans to depart on June 1. Glaser told The Commentator that she made her decision after learning the details of the Hebrew Department's restructuring.

"As soon as I understood the exact details of the new Hebrew program and what it entails, I knew that I could not stay at YU," Glaser, who began teaching at YU in 2011 and taught all levels of Hebrew, told The Commentator.

Glaser explained what made the new program unappealing to her. "In this program, there is no real teaching involved ... The teacher might suggest a remote group discussion, but there is no real *kesher* (bond) with the students. This is not a good way to learn a *safa* (language)."

"My passion is teaching," Glaser explained, "and I can't picture myself staring at the computer correcting papers instead of interacting directly with the students themselves ... To learn/master a language, it is

extremely important to have another person present to constantly converse with, practice, and use the language. You cannot do it with an asynchronous program."

Though she is leaving, Glaser is grateful for her years of teaching at YU. "I feel fortunate to have met so many wonderful students. I am proud of them all for the interest they showed, and the effort they put into learning [Hebrew]. I am going to miss teaching at YU, and I will miss the special connection, the *kesher* I had with

my students."

Professor Sigal Shalom began teaching at YU in 2010 and taught intermediate and advanced Hebrew.

Shalom and Bacon declined to respond to The Commentator's requests for comment.



Professors Glaser and Shalom

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Two New Campus Couples Selected for Beren Campus, Set to Replace the Bernsteins

By RIVKA BENNUN

Rabbi Azi (YC '19) and Ellie (SCW '20) Fine and Rabbi Avrumi (YC '19) and Michal (SCW '19) Schonbrun have been selected as the new Beren Campus couples by Associate Dean of Torah Studies Shoshana Schechter and the Office of Student Life (OSL) after a year-long search. The Fines will join as campus rabbi and rebbetzin and the Schonbruns as scholars in residence this fall as part of the Office of Spiritual Life at Stern College for Women (SCW).

The Fines will replace Rabbi Jacob (YC '15) and Penina (SCW '14) Bernstein, who are departing SCW after four years of serving as campus rabbi and rebbetzin.

This will be the first time there have ever been two rabbinic couples on Beren Campus.

"Having two couples is an expansion of the Office of Spiritual Life and the building of an even stronger Torah community."

Dean Shoshana Schechter

Schechter was primarily responsible for recruiting the Fines to replace the Bernsteins, with additional input from OSL and Vice Provost Chaim Nissel. Schechter explained that the process was not simple. "Filling the Bernsteins' shoes is a big job, and they were here for four years," Schechter told The Commentator. "They were the first couple that consistently stayed for a few years."

The Fines were recommended by Rabbi Dovid Miller, *rosh kollel* on YU's Israel campus, where Fine studied last year, leading to their hiring. Miller previously recommended

the Bernsteins in 2017, prior to their coming to YU.

During the year-long search for a new couple, the Schonbruns were rabbinic interns on Beren Campus and showed an interest in joining the Office of Spiritual Life in some capacity, which led to their appointment as scholars in residence.

Schechter explained that during the Bernsteins' four years on campus, they introduced many different innovations which changed campus life for students. Now, the Office of Spiritual Life hopes "to continue building on what they've been building."

During their four years at SCW, the Bernsteins added more *shiurim*, invited more speakers to come to Beren campus, introduced significant changes to campus Shabbat programming to encourage students to stay for Shabbat and helped create the Office of Spiritual Life. The Office of Spiritual Life comprises the campus couple, Director of Student Life Mrs. Rachel Ciment and Dean Schechter. The Bernsteins plan on moving to Israel this summer.

"The Bernsteins have completely changed what this position is," Schechter remarked. "When they were hired four or five years ago, the job was very different than it is now, because they really developed this and created a community in a way that nobody did before."

Schechter also commented that "One of the things our campus was always lacking was a community," pointing out that Wilf Campus has several couples and families living on or near campus, who are involved in the informal Torah education and programming on campus. "Having two couples is an expansion of the Office of Spiritual Life and the building of an even stronger Torah community."

Both couples will live on Beren Campus in Midtown, with housing provided by YU. Due to the recent departure of Dr. Elisheva and Rabbi Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig, the

long-time *av* and *eim bayit* of Beren Campus, a second apartment became available, allowing for two rabbinic couples to join campus.

The Fines are currently spending the year on YU's Israel campus, with Rabbi Fine studying at the Gruss Institute *kollel* and Ellie studying at Matan Women's Institute for Torah Studies. Rabbi Fine is in his third year of *semicha*, and is simultaneously studying at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration as well as the RIETS/Ferkauf Joint Graduate Program in Pastoral Counseling. Ellie is currently in both the Eshkolot and Lapidot programs at Matan, and plans to pursue a master's in social work.

"Ellie, Etiel [the Fines' newborn child], and I are really looking forward to joining the Beren Campus Community and Beit Midrash," Rabbi Fine shared with The Commentator. "We are really excited about working together with Dean

Schechter, Mrs. Ciment, Rabbi Avrumi and Michal Schonbrun, and all of the student leaders to continue to build the feeling of community on campus."

Rabbi Schonbrun is finishing *semicha* at RIETS and will be studying full time at the Beren Kollel Elyon next year, while Michal will continue to her third year of the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS).

"Additionally we are really excited to continue and create new Torah programming to foster the students' growth in their *Avodas Hashem*," Rabbi Fine added. "We are already working hard on exciting learning opportunities and events for Elul, and cannot wait to meet everyone soon!"

Shlomit Ebbin contributed to this story.



Rabbi Azi and Ellie Fine (left) and Rabbi Avrumi and Michal Schonbrun (right)

AZI & ELLIE FINE AND AVRUMI & MICHAL SCHONBRUN

YU Must Allow LGBTQ Club to Form On Campus, Court Rules

By CHAIM BOOK, SEFFI JONAS, NAVA KATZ AND JONATHAN LEVIN

Yeshiva University is legally required to grant the YU Pride Alliance official club status, a judge ruled Tuesday, June 14 in a landmark case that began April 2021. YU will appeal the decision, the university told The Commentator in a statement.

Judge Lynn Kotler of the New York County Supreme Court ruled that YU is a non-religious organization subject to the New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL), and directed it to "immediately grant plaintiff YU Pride Alliance the full equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges afforded to all other student groups at Yeshiva University."

"The court's ruling violates the religious liberty upon which this country was founded," a YU spokesperson told The Commentator. "The decision permits courts to interfere in the internal affairs of religious schools, hospitals, and other charitable organizations. Any ruling that Yeshiva is not religious is obviously wrong. As our name indicates, Yeshiva University was founded to instill Torah values in its students while providing a stellar education, allowing them to live with religious conviction as noble citizens and committed Jews. While we love and care for our students, who are all – each and every one – created in God's image, we firmly disagree with today's ruling and will immediately appeal the decision."

In April 2021, the YU Pride Alliance,

along with a group of former and current students, sued the university for discrimination. They alleged that YU violated its anti-discrimination policies and the NYCHRL, and requested the court order the university to recognize it. This came after years of the alliance trying to gain recognition as a club through YU's formal club approval process and the administration refusing to grant them recognition multiple times.

In court, YU argued that its non-sectarian status, which it received in 1970, was based

"While we love and care for our students, who are all – each and every one – created in God's image, we firmly disagree with today's ruling and will immediately appeal the decision."

YU Spokesperson

on its non-discriminatory practices in its admissions process, not on its administrative decisions. YU further added that despite not being a "religious corporation," its internal processes were guided by its religious beliefs and it therefore functioned as a religious entity, exempting it from NYCHRL regulations.

Students' efforts to gain recognition for an LGBTQ club began in Feb. 2019, then under the name Gay-Straight Alliance. Following the university overruling their club approval, the students behind the effort restructured themselves as the "YU Pride Alliance" in Jan. 2020, hoping to gain approval by avoiding using LGBTQ terms in its name.

That effort failed as well, with student council presidents abstaining from approving the club and deferring to the administration, who refused to grant the club recognition. In Sept. 2020, the administration released a statement announcing new LGBTQ inclusivity policies, but maintained that the club would not be recognized at YU since it would cloud the Torah's "nuanced message."

In April 2021, after multiple failed attempts at gaining recognition, the YU Pride

Alliance, Molly Meisels (SCW '21), Amitai Miller (YC '20), Doniel Weinreich (YC '20) and an anonymous student sued YU, President Ari Berman and then Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel for LGBTQ discrimination.

In her ruling, Kotler rejected YU's assertion that it is a religious institution, citing numerous pieces of evidence that "do not expressly indicate that Yeshiva has a religious purpose."

YU amended its charter in 1967, which previously stated that its religious purpose was "to promote the study of Talmud." In the amended charter, YU wrote that it "is

and continues to be organized and operated exclusively for educational purposes." Kotler rejected YU's contention that the original charter's "religious educational purpose carries through."

In 1995, YU's then Director of Public Relations David M. Rosen, in response to an inquiry about "gay groups on campus," wrote that "Yeshiva University is subject to the human rights ordinance of the City of New York, which provides protected status to homosexuals. Under this law, YU cannot ban gay student clubs." YU's attorney argued that YU would be willing to add "a more direct statement of religious purpose." Kotler ruled that YU's attorney's words, along with Rosen's statement, conceded the point that YU is an educational institution bound by the Human Rights Law.

In a 2021 letter to State Senator Robert Jackson, Jon Greenfield, director of government relations at YU, indicated that YU is a "not-for-profit institution of higher learning." Kotler argued that YU represents itself as an educational institution, not a religious corporation, declaring that "Yeshiva is either a religious corporation in all manners or it is not."

Plaintiffs contacted by The Commentator did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Ariel Kahan and Rivka Bennun contributed to this story

Deborah Lipstadt, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, to be Keynote Speaker at Commencement

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Deborah Lipstadt, the State Department's special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, will deliver the keynote address at Yeshiva University's 91st commencement at Arthur Ashe Stadium on May 26, YU announced in a press release.

"It is a huge honor to have her share her wisdom with us."

Jonathan Linsider (YC '22)

Lipstadt will also receive YU's first Presidential Medallion of Exemplary Leadership.

Following Lipstadt's speech, Kenneth Jacobson, a YU alum and the deputy national director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), will receive an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters for his work combatting antisemitism, the press release stated.

The YU Siyum and Concert, featuring Ishay Ribo with Akiva and Alex Clare as guest singers, will follow commencement.

The Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, a division of the U.S. Department of State, was created in 2004 and is tasked with monitoring antisemitism in foreign countries and coordinating

the U.S. government's response to it. The office's role was expanded under a 2020 congressional bill, which also bestowed the rank of ambassador on the special envoy and stipulated that a nominee be chosen by the president instead of the secretary of state.

Lipstadt was confirmed by the Senate on March 30. The position was unfilled since her predecessor, Elan Carr, ended his tenure as special envoy at the conclusion of the Trump administration.

Lipstadt is an international expert on antisemitism and holocaust denial. She fought

and won a six-year-long court battle with Holocaust denier David Irving, who accused her of libel – the trial later served as inspiration for the movie "Denial," released in 2016. Lipstadt has also written several books and taught at multiple universities.

Students were pleased with the news. "Having Ambassador Lipstadt as the commencement speaker for YU is a huge honor, considering that she is at the forefront of efforts at combating antisemitism today," said Jonathan Linsider (YC '22), who will be graduating at commencement. "It is a huge

honor to have her share her wisdom with us."

This will be Lipstadt's second time speaking at YU. She previously spoke about antisemitism at an event marking Yom Hashoah in 2005.

Multiple university departments declined to answer multiple inquiries from The Commentator regarding the university officials involved in securing Lipstadt as a speaker.

This article was published online on May 25.



President Berman speaking at Yeshiva University's 90th commencement

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Spring 2022 Beren Election Results Released

By RIVKA BENNUN

Beren student council election results were released on Friday, May 13, a day after the student body on Beren Campus cast their votes. Polls were open until 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 12 and results were sent to Beren students late Friday morning.

Beren student council election results were released on Friday, May 13, a day after the student body on Beren Campus cast their votes.

The Beren Election Committee, which oversees the student government

committees, did not release the vote totals. The following are the results from the Beren elections:

SCWSC President: Meital Lindenberg

SCWSC Vice President of Academic Affairs: Avygayl Zucker

SCWSC Vice President of Clubs: OPEN

SCWSC Vice President of Programming: OPEN

SCWSC Vice President of Public Relations: Amanda Poupko

SYMSSC President: Yael Levy

SYMSSC Vice President of Clubs: Miriam Sternberg

SYMSSC Vice President of Public Relations: Mila Krugman

TAC President: Hannah Adler

TAC Vice President of Chessed: Rachel Piontnica

TAC Vice President of Public Relations: Sadie Engelsohn

TAC Vice President of Shabbat: Gillian Herszage

TAC Vice President of Speakers: Racheli Schachter

Senior Class President: Natalie Barbanel

Senior Class Vice President: Rebecca Aducalesi

Junior Class President: Ety Goldstein

Junior Class Vice President: Keren Raskin

Sophomore Class President: Lior Morgenshtern

Sophomore Class Vice President: OPEN

In an email to the student body, the Beren Election Committee stated that the open positions will be up for re-election in the fall.

YU Suspends COVID-19 Testing for Remainder of Year

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Weekly COVID-19 testing will be suspended for the remainder of the academic year at Wilf and Beren Campuses. This change was announced by the COVID Team in an email sent to undergraduate students on May 11.

12 students tested positive on Wilf Campus and 14 on Beren Campus last week, according to information from YU's COVID-19 tracker. This number includes results from both university and off-campus testing.

The regular academic year ends with commencement on May 26 and The Post Pesach Program on Wilf Campus ends on June 2.

The university raised the possibility of testing being resumed if "unforeseen events" occur.

Students who test positive through off-campus testing will still be able to isolate in the university's isolation rooms, provided that the results are sent to YU's COVID Team.

In the email, the university thanked students for following its testing protocols. "We are so appreciative of your participation in the weekly COVID testing," the email read. "We know that there are differing feelings and opinions about the COVID protocols and want to genuinely thank you for helping us do what we think will best keep the campus community safe."

"I am very happy to hear that YU has decided to get rid of testing before finals," Baruch Nochlin (YC '23) told The Commentator. "Testing was stressful knowing I risked my ID getting shut down. This is one less stress to have during finals."

COVID testing began as a bi-weekly requirement for students in October 2021,

"We know that there are differing feelings and opinions about the COVID protocols and want to genuinely thank you for helping us do what we think will best keep the campus community safe."

COVID Student Line

before being changed to once a week a month later. After Pesach, tests were changed from PCR to rapid-antigen.

The city's COVID-19 alert level is currently at "medium," indicating a "medium community spread of COVID-19," according to the NYC Health Department. The city raised it to this level last week from "low." The COVID-19 alert level is a measure meant to reflect current transmission rates and health care capacity.

Dean Bednarsh did not respond to The Commentator's requests for comment.

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'Make YU a Destination:' An Interview with Dean Joe Bednarsh, Part I

By RIVKA BENNUN

In June 2021, Joe Bednarsh assumed the position of Associate Dean of Students at Yeshiva University. However, Bednarsh has been working at YU for three decades, previously directing all of his endless energy and passion into the athletics department. Bednarsh has many responsibilities as associate dean, as well as many plans for how to make YU the best place it can be. The Commentator sat down for a two-part interview with Bednarsh to hear more about who he is, what he does and his dreams for the university.

Rivka Bennun: Thank you so much for meeting with us! We're really looking forward to this conversation. I wanted to first ask if you could give a bit of your background and how you came to working at YU. I know you also started off in athletics, which I think is an interesting shift in roles. I'd love it if you could tell me a little bit about that.

Dean Joe Bednarsh: I kind of fell backward into working for YU. I started high school at MTA in 1988; in 1991 they built the pool and I became a lifeguard. I was working an incredible amount of hours a week and going to school. It helped support me through my college years and every couple of years I got a promotion. In 2005 they named me athletic director and I had some pretty lofty goals at the time. The first was to double the size of the women's athletic program within five years, and we more than doubled it in three. I also wanted athletics to be a point of pride and a front porch for the university, and I think it did become that. During COVID, I was asked to step up and take on a lot of additional responsibilities. I'm guessing based on how I performed at those responsibilities there was a discussion about whether I wanted to move on to an assistant or associate dean role. I thought about it, I put in a proposal of what I thought would be the kind of things that I would be really interested in doing, and we came to an agreement.

Being responsible (not on my own, of course) for working with students' success and the student experience, and the idea of making YU not just a place where students

go, but a destination for students, was a really intriguing thing to me. I thought, what a great use of my skills and personality. I was really excited to do it; unfortunately, I didn't get to do enough of that last year because we still had a lot of COVID-related things that took my attention. But we've been working feverishly over the summer on so many different things just to find a way to make YU even more special than it is, and again, make it a destination.

RB: I love that. I'm curious what exactly you mean by making YU a destination.

DJB: I think what tends to happen in our community is you know somebody in shul who went to YU and you talk to them and you ask them about YU. Or your mother went or your father went or your brother went and you ask them about YU. Everybody has a different experience. What I'd really like is for everyone to have a unique but almost the same experience. What I mean by that is that every student at YU feels that their voice is important, their voice has been heard, they've had the ability to opine on things that will affect them. When they go to any office, they know that somebody is going to be warm and kind and straightforward and an advocate for them and have their backs. Having seen it from my end, I know that it's true—people didn't come to work at YU to work in higher education because they don't care about students. But based on the things that I've seen from students and my conversations with them, I don't think we're doing a good enough job of showing students how much we care, how much we have your backs, how much we want you to be part of the process and how important you are to literally everything that happens.

We had a values summit where we were talking about the Torot, and there were a whole number of students there. I opened up my comments at the end to say, 'Let's never forget that students are our true north.' That's how I see my job—you're my true north, you're my responsibility, you're the direction my compass always has to be pointing. I'm trying to use that platform to improve the experience here. Twenty years from now, if I see you on the street Rivka, and I ask you if you'd repeat the experience, I don't want you to think for a second—I want you to say 'absolutely.' Then I'll know

collectively we did a great job. When you say, 'I'm definitely sending my daughter/son here. This is the place for Jews to get an education.' We can be even more amazing than we are now, and that's really what I mean by making it a destination—a place people want to come, not a place people feel like they're supposed to go. I want students in high school to say 'that's the place I need to be.'

RB: That's very special. So what exactly are your current roles and responsibilities, and how do you view those responsibilities?

DJB: There's a bit of a shift right now in the area of deans of students, so we're trying to figure out exactly where each of us are going to fall in terms of our responsibilities.

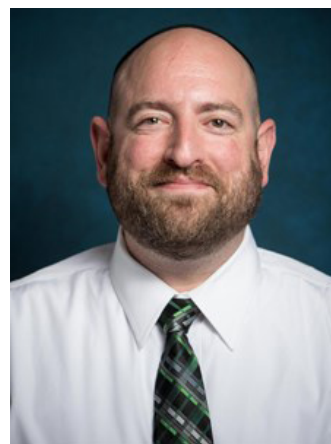
Student success is going to be my primary responsibility. This essentially means that admissions brings you in and hands you off to me, generally speaking. I am here to help, to be an advocate, to direct you when you don't know where to go. I'm here to facilitate, I'm here to be a guide. I want to get you successfully over the finish line. I want you to have a great experience while you're here and then I want you to graduate and go out into the world—this is student success, amongst other things.

Student experience is another primary responsibility: How do we communicate with students? What's the experience like when a student goes to an office? When a student is trying to find an answer? When a student isn't sure to whom to reach out to? I've been here for thirty years and it's

amazing how much I don't know. One of the things I learned this year was if you lose your ID card, the first place to go is student finance. I would never have guessed that; I would've thought to go to security. Those little things and making sure students know the answers make a tremendous difference. This is what I mean by student experience. Once a month, I will sit in front of the students and take questions. If I know the answer, I will be open and honest and give you the answer. And if I don't, I will get back to you. I might not always give you the answer that you'll like, but I will always give you an answer that's truthful and accurate. I'm taking what I learned in athletics and extrapolating it from 300 students to 2,000 students.

At the moment I'm [also] still responsible for COVID-related matters. We're also working on finding better ways to share information and connect with students so that your experience is smoother. For example, we'll be introducing a new platform where if you speak to one adviser, they'll have your information at their fingertips and then they'll be able to take notes on the meeting. Then if you come to speak to me after, I'll already have access to that information, I won't have to track it down, as it will all be in one place. This way everything works well and smoothly. This way, we have the ability to give you the right answer because we have all the right information. I get so frustrated when I don't have all the information I need and I want to give a student an answer but I never want to give the wrong answer. By the same token, if a student goes into the system, there will be a virtual hand raise in this system—you don't need to know who the right person is to reach out to, the question will get to the right person. I know sometimes it is difficult to know who's the right person—personnel changes, offices shuffle, there are thirty people in an office with different titles. Those kinds of things make it easier for students and make the experience better.

Stay tuned for Part II of this interview in the next issue of The Commentator, wherein Dean Bednarsh discusses his goals for the academic year and how to better communicate with students.



Dean Joe Bednarsh YUNews

Meet the YU Student Who Won Three Medals at the 2022 Maccabiah Games

By ZAKKAI NOTKIN

I first became acquainted with Jacobo Vahnish (SSSB '24) when we were in a finance course together, and was unaware of his table tennis stardom. I was pleasantly surprised when I saw him in Israel over the summer, and asked him the purpose of his visit. In his usual easygoing fashion, he told me he had just finished competing in the Maccabiah Games. After a brief conversation, I inquired as to his results in the tournament, and only then did he inform me that he had won three medals, adding modestly that the competition was very tough.

Jacobo won the bronze medals in the Teams, Men's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles table tennis tournament at the 21st Maccabiah Games held over the summer. This follows his already impressive string of victories, including four Latin American

and five Central American championship victories in various youth divisions, and most recently the New York State Championship. As a proudly Modern Orthodox Panamanian Israeli, he has been the subject of international headlines.

While I am unfamiliar with the world of table tennis, I was able to watch a video of him playing, and was struck by the incredible intensity and ferocity of his game, making shots that mere mortals like myself who play on basement tables can barely dream of.

Later, Jacobo agreed to speak with me so I could learn more about him and his success in table tennis. He explained to me that his mother introduced him to the sport by buying him a table, and after taking some classes, he began to succeed playing competitively. Eventually, he decided that in order to take his game to the next level, he would have to go to China, the table tennis center of the world, to train. After many weeks,

he returned to a string of championship victories in the under 11, under 13, under 15, under 17 and under 19 Central American and Latin American tournaments. He credits much of his success to his mother, who, in addition to introducing him to the sport, has traveled with him every step of the way, maintaining their Orthodox lifestyle in every conceivable environment, including mainland China, which is no easy feat.

Continuing on a religious vein, Jacobo persistently thanked G-d throughout our conversation for the many blessings and achievements He has granted him. It was a desire to live in a Jewish environment that drew him to Yeshiva University, which he called "the best decision I ever made." This emphasis on Jewish solidarity also applied to the Maccabiah Games, where, despite the intense competition, "at the end of the day, it feels like we are all really on the same team."

Looking to the future, Jacobo wants to

maintain his current level, despite practicing less due to schoolwork. He still managed to take home gold at the New York State open Tournament this past spring, and is open to starting a table tennis team at the school, but Sabbath observance makes most tournaments difficult. He is also hoping that his high intensity table tennis will translate somewhat to the high intensity world of finance.

Asking him if he had advice for any young stars out there, he replied, "Take all the opportunities that Hashem gives you, in sports and in other things, but remember to focus on the important things, like family... Then Hashem will help you succeed."

Overall, Jacobo can serve as inspiration to all of us who value our religious lifestyle while maintaining high aspirations in every endeavor we find ourselves in. I wish him only success going forward.

Eicha Esa Levadi: Our Role in Ensuring Israel's Safety

By EZRA SEPLOWITZ

Editor's Note: This article is the first in a new Commentator column called Unpack with YUPAC developed in partnership with YUPAC, the Yeshiva University Political Action Club. This section will serve as a platform for students to express opinions on Israel policy and the U.S.-Israel relationship. Additionally, it will serve as a forum to feature issues and topics affecting the Jewish community at large, including terrorism, elections, antisemitism and relevant legislation.

For more information about YUPAC, to get involved, or to write for the section, email Allie Orgen at aorgen@mail.yu.edu or Jacob Schwartzman at jschwar7@mail.yu.edu.

At 3 a.m. on a temperate morning in May 2021, my friends and I at Yeshivat Sha'alvim awoke to the sound of the Iron Dome missile defense system intercepting rockets fired towards Modiin (a neighboring city) by Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists from the Gaza Strip. We were then ushered into the *miklat* (bomb shelter) on the fifth floor of the dormitory. On our way there my roommate and I quickly glanced out our window and saw another rocket intercepted by an Iron Dome missile. We all waited in the *miklat* for ten minutes and then headed back to sleep. The same routine continued for the rest of that week until a cease-fire was reached. Despite the fact that 1,100 rockets were mercilessly fired toward Israeli civilians

within less than a week, we felt safe knowing the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and its defense systems were protecting us. As such, the *limud* Torah resumed as usual. Once again, the Iron Dome missile defense system protected Israeli citizens from a barrage of rockets fired by terrorists, as the world rained down a barrage of condemnation upon the State of Israel.

Major effective improvements have been made to ensure the safety of Israeli citizens and many can be attributed to American supporters like students at Yeshiva University.

This past *Erev Tisha B'Av*, on Aug. 5, the rocket fire recommenced and the Iron Dome was put back into use. However, as we lamented the loneliness and isolation of *Yerushalayim* "*Ha'ir Rabati Am*," [Jerusalem, the city once full of people] our brothers and sisters in Israel were also alone and isolated in their bomb shelters with Megillat Eicha in hand. Their cries of "*Lama LaNetzach Tishkacheinu; Ta'azveinu Le'Orech Yamim*" [Why have You forgotten us utterly, forsaken us for all time?] (Eicha 5:20) should not go unanswered. The question is simple: What can students at Yeshiva University do to answer these cries?

If one were to research the history of this bloody, fierce and complex conflict, it would appear as if there is no clear end in sight. However, major improvements have been made to ensure the safety of Israeli citizens and many can be attributed to American supporters like students at Yeshiva University. We can undertake several important tasks that can greatly impact the safety of the

Israeli people.

The first is voting for Congress members who are ardent supporters of Israel's right to defend itself and who will continue to provide Israel with the necessary funds to do so. Israel is the greatest ally of the United States, and it is the only democratic country in the Middle East, which makes the country a valuable asset in a strategic region for U.S.

intelligence. It is imperative to note that American funding for defense systems like the Iron Dome and David's Sling has ensured survival and safety for millions of Israeli citizens. As Israel's right to self-defense becomes a more partisan issue, our votes can make a difference.

The second is visiting Israel whenever possible. Religious reasons aside (though they are primary and unequivocally important), visiting Israel deepens one's connection with and love for the land, culture and people. By visiting Israel, you can see the crisis first-hand, which will likely leave an indelible impression. Fostering love and care for the Israeli people along with concern about the predicament in Israel is valuable in and of itself.

The third is being informed and knowing the facts. Devote time each week to read up on the latest news in Israel and to brush up on the country's short yet complex history. (A great place to start is by reading the Israel Report, which—*I"YH*—will be circulating

throughout the Beren and Wilf campuses this coming year.)

Finally, it is crucial to inform others about the situation in a pleasant and tranquil manner. As BDS is on the rise amongst youth in America, our greatest enemy is ignorance. Most young Americans are not hostile towards Israel, but rather, are unaware of the issue entirely. Celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, march in the Israel Day Parade and purchase Israeli products. Have discussions about Israel whether it be related to politics, culture or Torah. Make Israel a more significant part of your daily life and share that with others.

If we implement these solutions into our lives, then the next time our brothers and sisters are in their bomb shelters, they will know that they are safe and not alone.



There's a lot we can do to help ensure Israel's safety.

PIXABAY

AIPAC Sees Success as it Begins Endorsing Candidates

By ELISHAMA MARMON

For the first time, AIPAC, the "largest bipartisan American organization that advocates for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship," has begun supporting and endorsing candidates. Previously, the organization had focused all of its efforts on lobbying—taking its message and pro-Israel views directly to elected officials in the hopes that they would further the American-Israeli relationship by voting for bills and funding designed to strengthen it.

Now, in a significant move, AIPAC has launched a political action committee—AIPAC PAC—and a super PAC—United

Democracy Project—to endorse and directly advocate for pro-Israel candidates in their elections. AIPAC PAC has endorsed and supported 329 House and Senate candidates this November. As of June 30, United Democracy Project (UDP) has raised over \$27.5 million and, as of Aug. 19, has spent over \$26 million on supporting various candidates this cycle. AIPAC PAC has raised nearly \$12 million and spent over \$10 million, as of June 30. This makes the influence that AIPAC now has on elections quite significant, and allows it to pursue its goal, as stated in an email from AIPAC's president Betsy Berns Korn, of being "able to ensure our friends had the resources they needed to win [their] primaries and their opponents faced insurmountable challenges to winning seats in Washington."

This new model has already proved successful for AIPAC. AIPAC's endorsed candidates have overwhelmingly won their primaries, with a success rate of 98 percent as of the middle of August. Meanwhile, in the eight critical races in which UDP has advocated for one of the candidates and worked against the other, six have gone AIPAC's way.

AIPAC's endorsed candidates have overwhelmingly won their primaries, with a success rate of 98 percent as of the middle of August.

One of the candidates that AIPAC spent the most money supporting was Haley Stevens (D-MI), who defeated Andy Levin (D-MI) by a sizable margin. Levin was endorsed by JStreet and Rashida Tlaib. Other AIPAC-supported candidates who won their primaries were Glenn Ivey of Maryland, a progressive lawyer and politician who was formerly a state's attorney, Valerie Foushee of North Carolina, a member of the NC State Senate, and Don Davis of North Carolina, also a member of the NC State Senate. Adam Hollier and Steve Irwin, of Michigan and Pennsylvania respectively, are the two UDP-supported candidates who lost their primaries, though the margins by which they lost were slim compared to initial polling in their races, potentially in part due to the contributions of AIPAC's PACs. It is worth noting that while AIPAC has drawn some criticism from people on both sides of the

aisle for UDP only intervening in Democratic primaries thus far, AIPAC is a bipartisan organization that will support candidates who are good for the American-Israeli relationship regardless of their other political opinions. The bias of their primary support is due to the simple political fact that there are a number of more radical Democrats who are outspokenly anti-Israel, and no seriously competitive Republicans who are. In the general election, they will support candidates on both sides.

So far, this new experiment of directly supporting and endorsing candidates and targeting key races with millions of dollars through UDP appears to be quite successful for AIPAC. The stated goal of this endeavor is to keep radically anti-Israel candidates, of the type who cannot be lobbied successfully regarding Israel, out of Congress. So far dozens of candidates with a range of anti-Israel views have lost their primaries in favor of their more pro-Israel challengers, in part thanks to AIPAC's support.

Now that the 2022 primary season is over, AIPAC will begin focusing on key general elections. Specifically in closer elections, AIPAC will throw its support behind candidates who are either more pro-Israel or more outspoken champions of the American-Israeli relationship than their opponents, be they Republicans or Democrats. Whatever effect they can have on these races, the impact that they've already had on the primary elections has been palpable.



The AIPAC-supported candidates who won their races

AIPAC PAC

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Welcome Back

By FLORA SHEMTOB

At the start of every school year students find themselves excited for new clubs, reconnecting with old friends and starting new classes. They are excited for spiritual growth and academic advancement. As

“With the skills I have inherited thus far, I will now have the chance to invest my time in opportunities, and in the long term, my future.”

Jacob Katz (YC '24)



The annual welcome back barbecue on Wilf Campus

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

year, The Commentator reached out to several students asking them what they are most excited for this coming year.

Yaffa Goldkin (SCW '24)
English - Media Studies

“I’m excited to be part of student life again and getting back to all my clubs, doing really fun events and being part of really fun events. And just getting to be part of student

life again. I’m also excited to see my friends and meet new people.”

Alayna Higdon (SCW '24)
Psychology

“I’m excited to be back in New York City with the friends that I made my first year on campus, to really delve into my studies for my major, and to really enjoy my time

at Stern with my friends.”

Ezra Emerson (SSSB '23)
Strategy and Entrepreneurship

“I’m excited to meet new people, see my friends again, say hi to professors and rebeim. I also want to take my experience in YU so far and put that into my new position of Syms VP. I want to take the experience I’ve gotten and give it back to the new people. And also, being a head of certain clubs and being on the board of clubs can be very fun for me.”

the Yeshiva University community gets ready to start another new

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Advice for Incoming and Returning Students

By RABBI DR. NORMAN LAMM &
RABBI YOSEF BLAU

Editor's Note: As the school year begins, students may feel an array of emotions, whether they are returning or incoming. Below is a pair of articles written by

President Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm zt"l and mashgiach ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau containing advice and encouragement as students begin the new year.

(August 23, 1998; Volume LXIII, Issue 2) — Message from the University President, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm: Some Friendly Advice

By RABBI DR. NORMAN LAMM

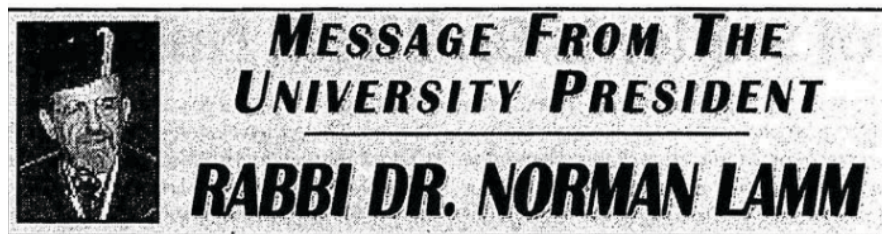
On behalf of the faculties and the administration, I am delighted to welcome you all -- old students and new ones -- to our undergraduate campuses. *Berukhim ha-ba'im!* Your main function is to grow -- intellectually, Jewishly, academically, culturally. The program of *Torah U'Maddah* is a most demanding one, especially because it insists on the integrity of each of the two poles and expects that you will commit your every effort to excelling in your studies. If you are merely smart, you will figure out all kinds of ways, legal or devious, to get out as soon as you can. But if you are wise, you will take full advantage of the remarkable resources of both *Torah* and *Maddah* that you will find here at Yeshiva. There is no other place where you can have available for you such an array of distinguished *talmidei chakhamim* for your Jewish studies, and outstanding academic faculty for your college studies. Exploit this golden opportunity; do not neglect it!

But there is yet one other precious opportunity you have here for the next few years, and that is--the friends you will make, the networking of like-minded young Jews and Jewesses who are resolved to exploit the fantastic intellectual assets of Yeshiva and are determined to rebuild and enhance the Jewish world beyond the one they find before

them now. Nourish these friendships well. In years to come you will reap the benefits of this kind of social and intellectual ideological companionship.

Immediately before sounding the shofar, we recite the words of *Tehillim* (Ps.47:6) "*Alah Elokim bi'teruah,*" which loosely translated means that God, as it were, is exalted at the sound of the *teruah* or straight blast of the shofar. Hasidim have an interesting interpretation of that verse. They say that *teruah* is derived from the word *reia*--both words from the root of *resh* and *ayin*--which means friend or friendship. (I have seen this in the name of R' Shlomo Leib of Lenchno and, a bit earlier, R' Shneur Zalman of L'ady.) The love and loyalty amongst friends is important to the Almighty, and he is exalted when those who serve Him do so in fellowship and mutual love and esteem.

I hope that you will succeed not only in your studies but also in finding and holding on to these deep and mutually fruitful friendships, and that the spirit of camaraderie will indeed assist you in growing from *ve'ahavta le'reiakha kamokha* to *ve'ahavta et Hashem Elokekha*. May you be inscribed *le'shana tovah ushenat chayyim ve'shalom*.



SOME FRIENDLY ADVICE

The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

(August 23, 1998; Volume LXIII, Issue 2) — Anticipation and Anxiety by Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau

By RABBI YOSEF BLAU

For returning students the start of a new school year at Yeshiva is filled with excitement and anticipation. These years are a time of religious and personal growth. At Yeshiva, one has the opportunity for strengthening friendships and developing life-long relationships with mentors, while values become internalized and career plans are firm.

Emotions are different for the beginning student. For those returning from Israel doubts exist about the permanence of changes made and how to integrate the old and new elements in their lives. Those coming directly upon graduation from high school and early admission students are nervous about the extent of the changes from high school. The anticipation of the returnees is balanced by the anxiety of the new students.

While the bulk of responsibility of making the welcome positive and easing the tension rightfully falls on the administration and staff, much can be done as well by older students. Warmth and friendship can come from all of us. For most students Yeshiva is the largest yeshiva or school they have

attended, and by far the most complex. The opportunities are not obvious to those who are overwhelmed and the demands appear to outweigh the potential rewards. A pleasant smile and a little friendly advice and support can accomplish wonders.

Perhaps balancing anticipation and anxiety would be healthy for all of us as we start the year. It is the beginning of Elul, a time for reflection. Complacency limits growth as much as fear. Let us recognize the great potential that exists for deepening our commitments while studying at Yeshiva while not ignoring the full extent of the challenge. Working together is a critical component in maximizing success.

The Academic Calendar Got Updated. Again. Here's Why.

By **BARUCH LERMAN**

So the academic calendar just got updated. Again. Here's why:

I could write an entire article about the process of making an academic calendar at YU, but for this specific article let's look solely at the month of May.

At the end of the day, making a calendar for YU is extremely difficult. There are no easy solutions.

Initially, the academic calendar was as follows: study days were Friday, May 12 through Tuesday, May 16th, finals on Wednesday, May 17 through Wednesday, May 24, and commencement/graduation was on Thursday, May 25. This setup was beneficial for students setting aside both Monday and Tuesday as study days. However, one major factor was accidentally overlooked when making this calendar: Shavuot.

As you can imagine, having commencement on Erev Shavuot or Erev-Erev Shavuot on May 24 is a non-option, so it was decided that commencement would be on May 23. To accommodate this change to the date of commencement, some adjust-

ments needed to be made to the calendar. The best plan of action was to remove a study day from the total count of study days and a finals day from the total count of finals days.

The calendar committee consulted with some students, the presidents of the student councils and some other student leaders and took their input to create this current version of the calendar. The calendar they created was as follows: study days from Friday, May 12 through Monday, May 15, finals from Tuesday, May 16th through Monday, May 22, and commencement on Tuesday, May 23. This is not very different from what the initial schedule was.

Another possibility that was considered was extending the academic year to include more study days and days for finals, and maybe even more days for a winter break. However, this solution had its flaws. Shavuot is immediately followed by Memorial Day weekend, which cannot have academic activity. The first possible day for commencement would then be Tuesday, May 30. Would people really want to travel all the way back from where they were for Shavuot to NYC for their commencement? Is that really a calendar that you would prefer? And what about all of the summer programs, internships, and activities that begin right at the end of May after Memorial Day? Would students then have issues with finals conflicting with their internships?

At the end of the day, making a calendar for YU is extremely difficult. There are no easy solutions. In fact, I would go so far as to say there are no good solutions, there is only the best solution given the circumstances.

I know it's frustrating. There are only three study days, two of which are part of the weekend. I know it feels like our interests are not considered when these decisions are made. But please, before making snap judgments and assumptions, take a second look at the calendar and the cir-

cumstances surrounding it and think about what you would do.

Disclaimer: *This is only the best option that I can see. If you figure out a way to give us more study days and breaks while still holding to academic standards that we need to follow and following all the Jewish holidays please let me know. My email is balerman@mail.yu.edu. We can bring your suggestions to the calendar committee and change things for the better.*



Man Holding his Face

PEXELS

Wear a Kippah in the Workplace

By **YONI MAYER**

The hours have been logged. The company laptops have been returned. The ten weeks are done and the summer internships have now officially come to an end. However, there were valuable lessons that I learned that I'll be taking with me throughout my life. This summer, I reaffirmed and reinvigorated my belief that a Kippah should ALWAYS be worn in the workplace.

In a paradoxical way, my summer in a secular, corporate American environment, enabled me to grow in my *yiddishkeit*—and it was all thanks to my Kippah. This little circular piece of knotted string (a Kippah *srugah*) was the beacon to my coworkers and also to myself that I was a proud Jew in the office. The Kippah wasn't the introduction of my religion to my coworkers, but it's what enabled me to so easily and practically maintain this aspect of my identity as the essence of who I am.

My Kippah did this in a number of ways. The first is by being "bageled" on multiple occasions throughout the summer. "Bageled" is when, realizing that you're Jewish, other Jews will come up to you and explain to you how they're also Jewish and find common ground with you, whether it's regarding halakhic observance, holiday rituals or general familial dynamics. This would happen to me a few times a week. Noticing my Kippah, someone would come up to me and say something along the lines of, "Oh, I love Israel. I did a Birthright trip there a few summers ago," or "I went to a Pesach seder last year, and it was really great," or my personal favorite, and the one I cherished responding to the most, "I tried keeping the Sabbath once, but it was too hard. I had to turn my phone on after an hour." I loved these comments; I was their Jewish sounding board. I could hear about the Jewish experiences they'd had and I could explain my own connection to the parts of Judaism they described. I would

explain the reasoning behind why I had to wake up extremely early to catch a *minyan* in the morning, or why my food had to be from specific restaurants and separate from theirs. I would explain how Shabbat wasn't just a day of restrictions, but an opportunity to be with your friends and family; a day to disconnect from the world at large and focus on yourself, your relation-

This summer matured my Jewish identity by instilling within me a deeper understanding of my own values.

ship with G-d and your community. I was transported back to Shana Aleph, recalling the shiurim I had on the reasoning behind the *mitzvot* and different *minhagim* and learning to love Jewish law, in addition to observing it. In a way, I got to give a mini shiur to unaffiliated Jews. There is no better way to reaffirm one's beliefs and the reasons for those beliefs than by teaching them, and I was given the opportunity to do just that.

The Kippah further grew my *yiddishkeit* by gently reminding me that there are values to which I adhere that might not be significant in the secular environment; most prominently my manner of speech and the conversations with which I would engage. There were workplace topics that I did not feel comfortable discussing, and words that I did not like that were used constantly. However, with the Kippah on my head and the constant reminder of a life led by values, it wasn't hard for me to close myself off from certain topics and jargon. In fact, I felt proud to.

Lastly, and this might be the most important point, I don't believe a layer of one's identity should be shed because he or she is in a foreign environment. Different environments are exactly when you latch onto the best and most important parts of your identity. If religion is one of those parts, why would you remove the most outward symbol of your religion? If that is so eas-

ily dropped, who can tell which other traits and beliefs will be dropped in the pursuit of corporate conformity? Your beliefs, opinions, values and character traits are what make you uniquely you! Moreover, I've found that people respect passion and authenticity. If you become chameleonic, is the real you friends with the coworker or is it the new persona you've created? Stay-

ing true to yourself and your values begins with the most important values in your life. Keeping the Kippah on your head reminds you that religion is at the top of the list.

I understand that wearing a Kippah in the workplace might not always be as black and white as I purport it to be. Offices are complex social landscapes and people have legitimate reasons to refrain from wearing one. Jews perceive the Kippah as a risk because it inherently sets them apart regardless of intent; it is a form of separation and, understandably, in a competitive and sometimes unforgiving office environment, there's a risk of putting an unnecessary

target on your back by wearing a Kippah. However, the reason I share these ideas is not to denigrate those who choose not to wear a Kippah, but to motivate and legitimize the alternative route from firsthand experience and to share what worked for me. I grew as a Jew this summer because I chose to wear my Kippah and would love nothing more than for another Jew to use this article as inspiration and confirmation that it's rewarding to do the same.

So the company laptops have been returned, the hours have been logged and the summer internships have come to an end. But they didn't feel like a separate part of my existence—a corporate Yoni, so to speak, separate from the Jewish undergraduate student who learns in the mornings, attends Yeshiva University and lives his life with Torah at the forefront of his mind. Rather, this summer matured my Jewish identity by instilling within me a deeper understanding of my own values.

There is often no better way to learn than to be challenged on your beliefs. Corporate America encouraged me to introspect and develop my *yiddishkeit* in ways I didn't expect. My Kippah was the guiding light that constantly reminded me and my coworkers of the life I'm proud to lead.



A man wearing his kippah

UNSPASH

Stop and Listen to the Music

By SHUIE BERGER

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

Yoni Mayer’s article “A College Course of Action” poses an important question about how we view our own experience in college. Mayer discusses the importance of realizing where we are and thus treating this stage in our lives as more than just a stepping stone. Are we here to simply get our degrees, or is it possible to gain something greater from this experience? I, like many others, have struggled with this question since I entered university.

Our society has shifted its focus slightly more towards becoming a finance-oriented workforce. In 2017, the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB), after being the smaller school for thirty years, overtook Yeshiva College (YC) as the largest school on campus.

The enrollment numbers at our comparatively small university are consistent with the national trends. This marked shift in our educational system is not directly a consequence of the students’ own decisions. As our society values money and education more and more, the key to success has become quick schooling coupled with a degree in the financial world. However, it is not just the business world that incentivizes this approach to a college education. As computers become more and more central to our lives, the need for programmers and software engineers has only gotten stronger. Students with a degree in Computer Science can find six-figure jobs around many corners, while a six-figure job for someone with a degree in the arts is significantly harder to find. There are many more reasons for this apparent change in education pathways, but they cannot fit in this article and merit a much longer discussion of socioeconomic trends and educational priorities.

So the question for incoming students becomes: what is the path to choose? Do you spend three years in school and find your way into the financial world, bringing in a healthy income almost immediately, or do you spend those three years getting a degree in the arts, a path that all but guarantees more schooling will be needed to make a living?

When I started YU, I was prepared for a rigorous pre-med track, filled with difficult science classes and complicated math classes. I tried to take the common path, checking off boxes to make it to the next step. As I struggled to fit each requirement into my schedule, preparing to sign up for classes was not simply a task of filling the time, but also making sure each class fulfilled as many requirements as possible, to not have to take

any extraneous classes that did not help me. A three-year college experience is now the norm for pre-med students at YU, and staying for a seventh semester is becoming less common.

However, just one semester in, I was blessed with an opportunity that changed my college experience in ways I could not have imagined. In my second semester,

Music has always been central to my life, and although I don’t play an instrument, I learned the theory, history and philosophy of music, culminating in an appreciation for it that I would never have thought I could have.

Spring 2020, I signed up for a class called “Early Modern Theories of Music,” taught by Professor Daniel Belavsky. I had heard of Professor Belavsky from a few friends who took his honors course in the fall. They told me that he was very nice but a very strict essay grader. Wary of the warnings, I decided to take the class anyway, mostly because it fulfilled a CORE requirement and a Writing Intensive requirement. In the first class, Professor Belavsky sat us in a semicircle around the room and we all went around saying our names. This was not an uncommon occurrence, but what followed was something I had never seen.

Professor Belavsky looked around and told us that we were going to have a hard time in this class unless we were familiar with basic musical terms and music fundamentals. He relayed that it wouldn’t be impossible, but it would be much harder if we don’t have that background. Quizzically, I looked around and saw that others had the same face. Was he actively discouraging students from taking the class? (Wasn’t that just a science thing?) I had believed that in the humanities, teachers would only encourage students to take their classes. After all, dwindling numbers would suggest that they need more students to sign up.

Professor Belavsky went on to say that he was teaching Music Fundamentals, the introductory class, and that we should look into that first. I was curious, so I asked him about it after class, and he told me to observe the Fundamentals class that night. It is safe to say that I was hooked. I joined the class, which only had about six students, and we had a blast. No tests, not a lot of work and a very relaxing course. We learned the nomenclature and other basic elements of music. COVID hit in the middle of the semester, and we were forced online, but it was still fun. By often plugging his other music classes, Professor Belavsky did a

great job convincing us to continue the music track, and a few of us signed up for Diatonic Harmony and Counterpoint 1, now known as “Music Theory 1.” The subsequent two semesters were filled with laughter and learning, and Professor Belavsky fostered a wonderful learning environment and an easygoing atmosphere.

Towards the end of the spring semester

last year, Professor Belavsky informed us that the music major will be shutting down at Wilf, due to the extremely low numbers. Only one person graduated in 2021 with a music major, and there were none this past year. Professor Belavsky urged me to submit the major declaration form in case I wanted to finish the major, and the school would have to honor it. If I didn’t wish to finish the major, I could always drop it. I decided to try to do both pre-med and music, and it is safe to say that I made the right choice.

I don’t plan on doing much with the major, as I am no musician. But the experience of learning something that interests me is one I will cherish forever. Music has always been central to my life, and although I don’t play an instrument, I learned the theory, history and philosophy of music, culminating in an appreciation for it that I would never have thought I could have.

I am not asking you all to become music majors—you can’t even find the major on the form anyway. However, I implore you to take advantage of the humanities classes you can. I know that many people would not take humanities classes if they didn’t have to fulfill CORE requirements. So, before you finish your class schedule, I want you to look at the music classes and other classes in the arts that are being offered. Many of them are taught by excellent professors who are highly underrated because they don’t have a lot of students. A music minor took me less than 4 semesters; there are not very many credits to take. You could do whatever you wanted to do and still minor in something. As someone who is pre-med, I have no solid requirement to major in anything specific, so I chose to major in music. This allowed me to take full advantage of YU’s assets, some of which, unfortunately, are ignored. Like many other professors in the arts, Professor Belavsky is a gem, and I urge you to try taking just one of his laid-back classes, like Music Fundamentals. If a path in music isn’t for you, any of the arts offer similar avenues for growth while not giving up your dreams for success.

I am not begging you to change your life plan to try this out. All I ask is to consider what you need to complete your major, and what you can do with the extra time you have. I found out that I can still reach my ultimate destination even with a music major. I know not every occupation allows a deviation from the path, but if you can, try to think about Yoni’s question. Everyone around is moving too fast to hear the music. Can you be the one to stop and listen?



Man standing in a blurred crowd

PIXABAY

Should Vaccines Be Required for Children?

By AVISHYE MOSKOWITZ

Since the turn of the 20th century, medicine has rapidly progressed toward innovation and new scientific breakthroughs that help prolong our quality of life. During this time, vaccines have become a monumental development in the treatment of diseases and other illnesses. Ever since the introduction of vaccines in the 18th century, people have debated the benefits and risks of vaccination. While future vaccines have the potential to eradicate many illnesses from the world, a poorly concocted vaccine has the potential to have long-lasting side effects or other unknown issues. The possibility of harm causes understandable concern about how vaccines might hurt children who could otherwise live a healthy life. Therefore, the conversation

around vaccine safety has shifted to focus primarily on whether vaccination is safe as a whole to whether parents should be required to vaccinate their children.

Although there are many proven advantages of vaccination, that’s not to say there isn’t room for improvement.

One of the main criticisms regarding vaccination of young children is the high levels of mercury and aluminum contained within the doses. Studies show that these metals can have neurotoxic effects on the nervous system and cause adverse effects on children during critical periods of brain development. Government-run, peer-reviewed studies on the toxicological profile of aluminum have shown that it can cross the placenta and

accumulate in fetal tissue. This could mean that babies are being exposed to high doses of neurotoxic substances long after parents were made to believe that vaccines were puri-

fied and safe. While this information about vaccines raises valid concerns, these metals also serve a beneficial purpose as well. I will now discuss why vaccines contain metals and how these agents serve to increase the body’s immune response.

There are many different components of vaccines that work in tandem to increase the body’s immune response and reduce the overall risk for infection. On a basic level,

most vaccines are made of water, an antigen (a small dose of the virus), aluminum (an adjuvant to increase the body’s response) and sometimes thiomersal, a mercury-based preservative used to prevent contamination. Together, these ingredients produce immunity that protects people from life-threatening illnesses. As time progresses, the scientific community continues to fine-tune various components of vaccines to increase efficacy and reduce some of the negative side effects. At the present time mercury and aluminum based ingredients are necessary for the overall effect. And yet science continues to develop and research other replacements.

Another criticism is a common misconception among the masses that it is advantageous to build immunity by contracting the

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Whoever Saves One Life Saves the Entire World

By MIRA SCHREIBER

I graduated Yeshiva University in 2019 and remain a proud member of the YU community. Like so many, I've followed the various posts and writings about the recent Supreme Court draft leak. Having friends at all points on the political spectrum, I keep an impartial profile online. However, as I look at my seven week old son, I am compelled to respond to the pro-abortion article recently published by The Commentator.

With respect to the author, I believe that her article misses the bottom line of the Roe v. Wade debate. It is not about control or women's rights, as the article's author believes. The pro-life versus pro-choice debate can be narrowed down to a single question: when does life begin?

Roe v. Wade states that viability ends a mother's constitutional right to a choice (Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113, 163-164 (1973)). When a baby is capable of living outside of his/her mother, s/he is a living human being. Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973. Knowledge about a baby's development in utero and scientific advances have grown astronomically in the last 50 years. Today, fetuses as early as 22 weeks can survive outside of their mothers. A fetus at 25 weeks has a 67-76% chance of

viability. One might deduce from this that Roe v. Wade is outdated and a second look at this ruling is overdue.

Most Americans agree that a fetus is a baby by five or six months, and it is a fringe opinion that fully viable babies deserve no protection. To view this topic solely as a

she has a choice on and should decide for herself; although listening to her physician's opinion is certainly advisable.

The article goes on to say that the Supreme Court's "ruling would mean the end of the federal, constitutional protection of abortion." The Constitution was not writ-

Roe v. Wade is outdated and a second look at this ruling is overdue.

feminist issue means that an eight-month-old fetus, fully capable of living an incredible life, is meaningless. I would be sorry to believe anyone reading The Commentator could take such a stance.

Let's look at the popular slogan "my body, my choice." Women should make choices regarding their bodies without interference. This is not being refuted. Such choices include but are not limited to: should I have relations with someone who will be unreliable and undependable in an accidental pregnancy? Will I have unprotected sex? What kind of birth control do I want to use? If I do get pregnant, will I have an epidural or birth naturally? If I raise my child, will I breastfeed or use formula? These are all questions involving a woman's body that

ten to protect abortions. It was written to protect the rights and liberties of American citizens. The Declaration of Independence states that the American government's objective is to defend each person's rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" — in that order. The woman's constitutional right for liberty is trumped by the baby's constitutional right to life. No one is at liberty to drive on sidewalks in pursuit of happiness as that risks a pedestrian's right to life. So the question is at what point does the baby have a right to life.

The article goes on to say that with this new ruling, "the power would go to the states, nearly half of which would declare abortion illegal almost immediately." This is correct and goes to show just how free our country

is. The point that half the states would outlaw most abortions means that the elected officials will make decisions reflecting the opinions of the majority of citizens in that state. The other half of the states will do the same. Every state will act based on the will of its residents. Such is the democratic system that was built on freedom and provides freedom to this day.

Still, it is unlikely that many states will abolish abortion entirely. The overturning of Roe v. Wade allows states to answer the main question for themselves. When does life begin? Abortions will be legal until that point in pregnancy and illegal after that point. That is the point when the mother's liberty takes a backseat to the baby's life. That is when the mother is no longer making a choice for herself, but for another living being.

I would like to respond to three other defenses that the article brings for a federal legalization of abortion. First, the Supreme Court's draft "will deny women autonomy and equality to men." Again, the author's point is correct. Nature denies this equality by giving one sex the ability to bear children and not the other. The American Constitution did not have a hand in this blatant imbalance of the sexes and therefore cannot be faulted.

Second, that "families who are forced to keep unwanted pregnancies are more likely to lack full-time employment and to live below the poverty line." There is a leap here from pregnancy to raising the baby. No one is forced to keep the child of an accidental pregnancy. There are families who wait for years to adopt an unwanted child and dream of providing a loving home for him or her.

Lastly, the author goes on to quote the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who stated that "the decision whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity." Correct again. All women should decide for themselves if they wish to bear children. As they say, "my body, my choice." However, once there is a physical life in question, the decision is not whether to bear the child but whether to raise the child.

There is no constitutional right for the mother to exercise her liberties when pregnant with a baby that is ready to live. That baby is the full image of a human being. Only 36% of countries worldwide allow for abortions without restrictions and most of them have a gestational limit of only 12 weeks.

So, I ask again, when does life begin? Each state will have to decide that for itself. So it should be in the land of the free.



Ultrasound of a fetus

UNSPASH

VACCINES

Continued from Page 12

virus rather than by vaccination. However, this assumption could result in a more severe and contagious disease than the potential response to the vaccine. Additionally, if children can stay up-to-date with their vaccinations, it will strengthen future immunity since they will have the correct dosage spread out over optimal time for a maximized immune response. If enough children get vaccinated and stay up to date, the chance of infection decreases due to herd immunity. Herd immunity is the resistance to the spread of an infectious disease within a population that is based on pre-existing immunity of a high proportion of individuals due to previous infection or vaccination. Vaccination is extremely helpful since, without it, infection amongst the elderly and immunocompromised could prove fatal.

Lastly, some academics believe that vaccination could increase the likelihood of developing other neurological diseases. At first, this belief might seem credible since it is highly endorsed by the media. However,

further analysis shows the neurological diseases shown to have been caused by vaccines aren't so well understood, so the claim is purely speculative. While it is true that depending on the person, negative side effects of vaccines could range from a mild cold with slight arm ache to a life-threatening allergic reaction, the latter only occurs at a minuscule rate of 1 in 1,000,000 cases. A Canadian-run cohort study on dementia also showed that vaccination against some easily preventable illnesses can decrease the chances of developing worse illnesses, such as Alzheimer's. Vaccines can have many benefits, some even spanning beyond the specific illnesses they are intended to treat.

Vaccination of children will continue to be a point of controversy as long as people remain uninformed about the proven benefits. The research to support vaccination points to many health benefits that will continue to protect children many years after vaccination. Although there are many proven advantages of vaccination, that doesn't mean that there isn't room for improvement. As science continues to develop, we should

demand that vaccines continue to become safer and more effective. This will help to encourage more people to vaccinate their

children and will ultimately contribute to a healthier society.



Child receiving a vaccine

UNSPASH

Are Ads Now Vogue; Big Streaming Corps are Increasing Ad Supported Offerings

By **KOBY ROSINSKY**

This past April, Netflix made the surprise announcement that it was open to offering an ad-supported version of its popular streaming service. They later brought this announcement to fruition and announced that they would be doing this via a partnership with Microsoft. This represents a major shift in business strategy for Netflix, as their previous business model was based entirely on paid subscriptions, even going so far as to limit product placement in their original content. Historically, this business strategy has served them very well, as their stock had a return of over 3,500% over the 2010s, making it the best performing stock of the decade.

Anytime a company with a history of such high performance changes its business model, it is worth noting. This is especially true because of Netflix's size — despite an increase in competition the past few years, it remains the world's largest streaming service. It currently claims over 200 million subscribers. According to a recent report by Nielsen, it's also the most-viewed streaming service, with about 22% of all streaming time, more than HBO Max and Disney+ combined and even beating free services such as YouTube.

Netflix's decision does not seem to be an isolated incident. Disney recently announced plans to introduce an ad-supported plan for Disney+, which would be \$7.99 a month, and raise prices of the ad-free subscription to \$10.99. Disney stated on its website that "Expanding access to Disney+ to a broader audience at a lower price point is a win for everyone—consumers, advertisers, and our storytellers." Disney's turn to an ad-supported Disney+ is an attempt to reach their goal of over 230 million subscribers globally by 2024, which is looking a lot more difficult as domestic growth is close to turning negative. Disney currently owns a majority stake in Hulu, so it has exposure to ad-supported

streaming.

More recently, on August 4, Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav, announced that his company, which owns HBO, was looking into a free ad-supported streaming service. This announcement came on the heels of a \$3.4 billion loss for the second quarter of

by the end of this year.

This growth may help explain why so many companies are turning to ads: if they are becoming more profitable, then the opportunity cost may be too much to pass up on. Google, in its 10-K, stated that an improvement in ads format and delivery was

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2022. Entirely free ad-supported content is already available to consumers. Peacock, Tubi, and Freevee, owned by Comcast, Fox and Amazon, respectively, are just a few of the streaming services that are free or have a free subscription plan; however, unlike Warner Bros. Discovery, none of those companies are major players in the streaming world. While Amazon does have many subscribers, its focus is not on streaming in the same way that Disney, Netflix, and Warner Bros. Discovery are.

At this point one might ask just what type of impact ads can have these companies' bottom line. When people think of ad-supported streaming services, they may think to the likes of YouTube or Freevee, both of which have little in the way of original content and, generally speaking, offer lower quality content. However, that should not be confused with low profit potential. In 2021, Netflix reported just under \$29.7 billion in revenue. However, Google reported YouTube's ad revenue for 2021 to be \$28.8 billion. This demonstrates the incredible power of ads. YouTube's revenue from ads was nearly as much as Netflix's, and their ad revenue growth was a lot more significant than Netflix's. From 2020 to 2021, YouTube's revenue growth was around 45.8% while Netflix's revenue growth for that period was just 18.8%. If growth continues at a similar rate, YouTube will be making more off ad revenue than Netflix makes in total revenue

one of the factors that caused the increase in ad revenue. With these improvements, advertisers are willing to pay more for them, and as such, increase the margins of the companies providing the advertising services.

No matter how good an ad is, it needs a lot more to succeed. A corporation like LVMH, the conglomerate which owns luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Dior, is more likely to find success advertising in fashion magazines such as Vogue or Vanity Fair than it would in Popular Mechanics. While this is an extreme example, the concept is easy to see: a major part of ads is getting them to the right people. A way to make sure that digital ads reach the right consumers has the potential to be very helpful to advertisers and to be very profitable. One company which specializes in this area, The Trade Desk, is, as of mid August 2022, trading at a P/E ratio of over 1,000. The P/E ratio of a company is the price to earnings ratio and represents what multiple of a company's earnings the combined value of all its stock is trading at. If a company has a high P/E ratio, it means that the value of the stock is many times what the company is currently earning and as such is usually a sign that investors expect it to earn significantly more in the future. If it was not expected to earn significantly more in the future, investors would be unwilling to pay such a premium. This means that higher P/E ratios are generally associated with companies with high

earnings potential. To put into focus how significant a P/E ratio of over 1,000 is, it should be noted that the average P/E ratio of a company on the S&P, as of mid August 2022, is around 22, and the P/E ratios of growth companies such as Nvidia and Tesla are 50 and 107, respectively. This shows that investors expect The Trade Desk to have a substantial increase in earnings in the future.

What does The Trade Desk do? It operates a marketplace for connecting companies wishing to advertise with the best possible advertisers for them. A big part of how they do this is with data they collect from various sources. They then use this data to help companies focus more spending on ads that are best for them and less on ads that are less beneficial. Companies like Netflix, Disney and Warner Bros. Discovery will be able to utilize strategies like this particularly well. As they have access to what clients watch, they can build a profile on these clients regarding what ads they would most want to see, and also run ads in the most ideal place in a film. Think about seeing a car in a highway chase in an action film and then seeing an ad for that car. This is very similar to traditional product placement in films, which can be very significant, often valued in the 10's of millions of dollars for large films.

It is likely that technology for focused ads will help companies providing digital ads to become significantly more profitable. Many investors believe that this form of advertising has substantial growth potential. This may be one of the reasons why so many companies that in the past have rejected advertising are now turning to it. While there are other influential reasons that probably influenced their decisions as well, recessionary spending habits of consumers in the face of rampant inflation and the slowdown in subscriber growth these past few quarters are most apparent. More efficient ads capable of making a higher profit than in the past may be too much a temptation to avoid.

The King Of Rock N' Roll

By **EMILY SAFIER**

Elvis Week, the famous annual celebration of the late Elvis Presley, took place last week! This year's festivities ran from Aug. 9–17, and marked the 45th anniversary of Elvis's death.

The celebration takes place yearly in Memphis, Tenn., the rocker's hometown, and is full of festivities

The celebration takes place yearly in Memphis, Tenn., the rocker's hometown, and is full of festivities such as concerts, panels and a vigil to honor the life and legacy of Elvis. These exciting celebrations bring in, on average, a \$10 million economic boost to the southern city of Memphis yearly. Daily and weekly tickets can be purchased online with packages selling for as high as \$1840. Participants screened the "Elvis" movie and participated in a Graceland vigil. A virtual Elvis Week option was available for its second year where viewers could see live concerts, special guests and additional fan experiences for prices between \$130-\$225.

Memphis is home to several large

events, with two major ones being Elvis Week and the PGA Tour FedEx St. Jude Championship. Due to the PGA tour being moved from July to mid-August this summer, the two Memphis-based festivities occurred simultaneously! This is expected to boost the Memphis economy by millions of dollars. It is still too early to determine an exact number but forecasters are expecting significant financial gain. Memphis is expecting tourists to gather around the iconic street downtown, known for blues music, entertainment and "the true birthplace of Rock n Roll": Beale Street.

Elvis Week activities are based in Graceland, the famous estate of Elvis Presley that approximately 500,000 fans visit yearly for tours and tributes. The estate contains the Graceland Mansion, Soundstage, Guest House, Guest House Ballroom and Meditation Garden. This iconic landmark is one of the South's biggest tourist spots, generating an estimated \$150 million annually for the city of Memphis. Behind only the White House, Graceland was America's second-most visited home for years. Due to COVID-19, revenue from the landmark decreased. However, a 450-room hotel and other new additions were added to the estate, which accommodated and contributed to revitalizing Graceland and its incoming revenue.

Elvis Week consisted of many events

designed to memorialize Elvis and bring fans together. The itinerary included concerts performed by Elvis's backup singers or artists who sang with the "King of rock n' roll," an emotional panel featuring the rock icon's friends and family, a screening of "Elvis" and the main event: a nightlong candlelight vigil at the Gates of Graceland, where Elvis and his family are buried. Thousands of fans, amidst a sea of candles, trekked down the estate to his burial site to pay their respects.

An incredibly important component of Elvis Week for the fans is the Elvis Tribute Artist Contest (ETA). This contest is where Elvis impersonators don his costumes and replicate dance moves to compete for the title of best Elvis impersonator. Pre-Elvis Week, thousands of ETA performers competed in licenced preliminaries to qualify for the prestigious showcase. Elvis Week is, in part, about recognizing and appreciating fans from across the globe, who looked forward to this event after a two-year break caused by the pandemic.

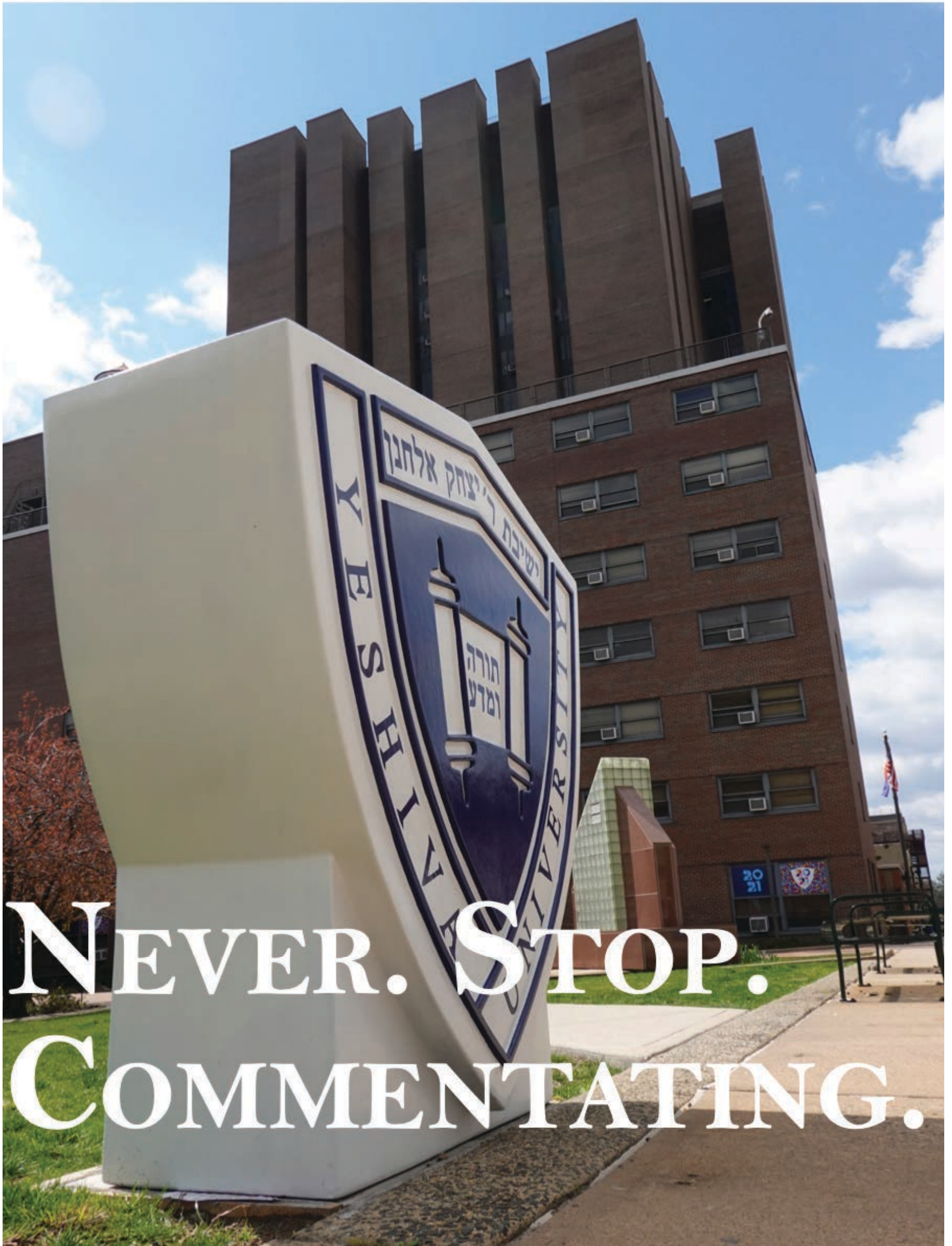
This year's Elvis Week saw larger, younger crowds which is largely in part due to the groundbreaking "Elvis" movie that came out this June. The musical and drama film, directed by Baz Luhrmann and starring Austin Butler, tells the emotional tale of Elvis Presley's life, family, managerial abuse and spectacular rise to fame. This movie is still in theaters and has already made over

\$140 million domestically and \$260 million worldwide, making the film the third-highest grossing music biopic ever. This movie resonated with Elvis's old fans and introduced Elvis to the younger generation. As Action News reporter Kelli Cook pointed out, "Thanks to a growing younger fan base, Memphis could see huge crowds for the annual event for years to come."



Elvis Presley

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