

# The Yeshiva University OBSERVER



ISSUE 66 VOLUME II

OCTOBER 2022

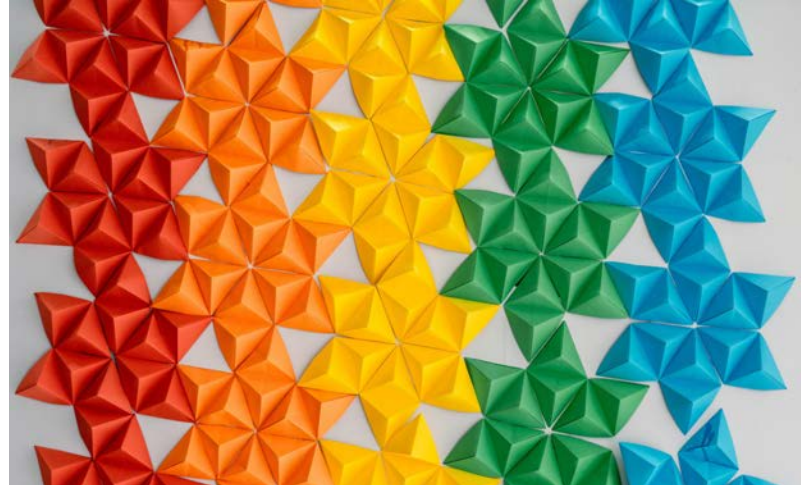
CHESHVAN 5783

## THE PRIDE ALLIANCE: AN ALTERNATIVE ANGLE

BY DOV PFEIFFER,  
STAFF WRITER

During my time at MTA, I prayed at the Klein @9 Minyan. I heard about Rav Shulman's comments against the uptown Shabbaton. I consumed the YU Commentator and Observer religiously through my years in Israel, and read many articles relating to the fight for greater LGBTQ representation on campus.

Since the legal battle related to a student-run LGBTQ club on campus – the YU Pride Alliance (YUPA) – has burst into the public consciousness with the recent Supreme Court appearance, many writers from our community have seen fit to address the philosophical side of the issue – the potential place a club such as this could have at YU. In the responses arguing against any place for YUPA, as well as in many conversations I have had with students in YU, I felt that the critiques and commentary were constructing an image based solely on the words “Pride Alliance”, constructions that were completely different from the goals expressed by past YUPA organizers. Similarly, I have encountered many assumptions, both explicit and implicit, about the LGBTQ community in YU and the circumstances leading to YUPA's filing a lawsuit, assumptions that I felt presented an inaccurately simplistic picture. I hope that by constructing a narrative based on the expressions of YUPA and its organizers on several issues, those opposed will reevaluate how much their views actually reflect the



reality of what YUPA is, has done, and stands for.

The YU Pride Alliance describes its mission as “a group of undergraduate YU students hoping to provide a supportive space on campus for all students, of all sexual orientations and gender identities, to feel respected, visible, and represented.” There is no judgment about Halakhah expressed in this statement. This separation between YUPA's goal (to have a space for LGBTQ students at YU) and expressing any opinion about the Torah's commandments is stressed by many past YU Pride Alliance organizers. Former YUPA co-president Bina Davidson explained, “[T]he LGBTQ+ community is not asking for halakhic approval... They simply want a club, a safe space, where they can express themselves and have a support system.” Former YUPA board member Fruma Landa described that “A club is necessary to foster a community, offer support and resources to marginalized individuals and help reduce harmful shame around an identi-

ty... The claim that a club goes against Torah nuances is offensive to the many Queer students on campus who are committed to a Torah lifestyle.” Current YUPA co-president Avery Allen told the New York Times, “Our goals are not in any sort of misalignment with Torah values... We want a safe space for our students, and I don't think any part of that is in conflict with Torah or with Halacha, Jewish law.”

As such, I was surprised by Rabbi Rodney Weiss's article where he writes “Why demand that we violate our precious Torah and validate this group's agenda in our community? If someone wants to go to YU, they should be welcomed, but the Ribbono Shel Olam has already spoken about the acceptance of this lifestyle in the Torah, and we cannot change what has already been divinely mandated.” Ignoring the insulting language about “lifestyle,” I found myself wondering, “what violation; what change”? When I was reading Rabbi Efreim Goldberg's article, in which he claims that the

YU Pride Alliance “...at its core enables the celebration or pride in an activity and a recognition of relationships that the Torah unequivocally prohibits,” I found myself wondering how recognizing and supporting LGBTQ students' identities “celebrates activities” or “recognizes relationships” the Torah forbids. Similarly, on what basis is the club's core identified as such, defined in opposition to the stated intent of many past organizers? As expressed in a past YU Commentator letter to the editor, “LGBTQ activism is about acceptance and equality of a persecuted individual so that they don't have to live thinking that they are alone, secretly in suffering. But it seems to those critical of the YU Pride Alliance that LGBTQ identity is just about a single action.”

Another common aspect of these responses is to implicitly reduce being LGBTQ from a formative aspect of one's identity to a mere desire, a view criticized in Doniel Weinreich's “Walking the Walk of Empathy.” Weinreich writes, “[A]s Justin Spiro put it on Sunday [at the “We, Too, Are YU” protest], that ‘Being LGBTQ is not primarily about a taivah — it's not about wanting sex. It's an experiential process of growing up feeling different, other than, less than, questioning everything about yourself’... as gay people struggle to explain the torturous process of coming to terms with who they

SEE THE PRIDE ALLIANCE,  
PAGE 5

### INSIDE THIS EDITION



EDITORIAL: WINTER IS  
COMING  
PAGE 3



OPINIONS: A JEWISH GALLERY  
HELPED ME MOURN MY  
BOYFRIEND  
PAGE 5



OPINIONS: WHY DO GAY STU-  
DENTS GO TO YU ANYWAY?  
PAGE 4



SCI & TECH: PSYCHOLOGICAL  
DETRIMENTS POST-PANDEMIC  
PAGE 15

# NEWS RECAP: SEPTEMBER 2022 EDITION



## NEWS

BY YU OBSERVER  
EDITORIAL BOARD

- Yeshiva University has announced the creation of an LGBTQ club, Kol Yisrael Areivim. YU believes that this club is an “orthodox alternative” to the pride alliance and is intended by YU to support LGBTQ students “within the frameworks of Halacha.”
- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro accepts election loss, despite previous claims that the only way he could lose is if the election was stolen. President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is set to take over.
- 151 dead in Seoul crowd surge. South Korean officials claim the tragedy was avoidable; only 137 police officers were assigned to the area, despite a nearby BTS concert drawing over 50,000 fans.
- Republican Congressman Adam Kinzinger and Liz Cheney have endorsed Democrats and Independents who are challenging Trump-touting Republicans in the upcoming midterms, demonstrating the splintering effect on the G.O.P. the former President continues to have.
- Elon Musk’s \$44 billion acquisition of Twitter was finalized. The outspoken Tesla executive is set to take the reigns of the social media company as Democrats worry that he will loosen the platform’s anti-hate speech/misinformation regulations.
- 42-year-old David DePape was arrested in the home of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi after violently assaulting her husband, Paul, in a home invasion. DePape, an avowed conspiracy theorist, was reportedly looking for the Congresswoman, who was out of state at the time.
- Two police officers were shot by a gunman on a Newark roof. As of Tuesday afternoon, the suspect remains at large, and a motive is unknown.
- At the time of this publishing, Benjamin Netanyahu is the expected winner of Israel’s fifth election of four years. Exit polls indicate that he will be able to form a narrow majority-government.
- A school shooting in St. Louis leaves 2 dead: one teacher and one student. Their names are Jean Kuczka and Alexzandria Bell. The shooter was a previous student. Many are praising the urgent response of the police in this incident, in contrast to the school shooting in Uvalde in May 2022.
- Rapper Kanye West, known as Ye, has lost his business partnership with Adidas following his tweeting and stating many antisemitic comments. He has accordingly lost his billionaire status, according to Forbes.



## EDITORIAL TEAM

2022-2023

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Benjamin Gottesman

### MANAGING EDITOR

Aaron Shaykevich

### OPINIONS EDITORS

Atara Bachrach

Daniel Ganopolsky

Rivka Shavelson

### FEATURES EDITORS

Ru Benhamou

Rachel Gilinski

Raquel Leifer

### SCI-TECH EDITOR

Nicole Abittan

Yosef Scher

David Yagudayev

### BUSINESS EDITORS

Shua Feigen

Eli Levi

Amalya Teitelbaum

### ARTS & CULTURE EDITORS

Elisheva Hirsch

Shayna Kahane

Rina Shamilov

### LAYOUT EDITORS

Emily Rose Goldberg

Belina Milhem Jena

Racheli Jian

### BUSINESS MANAGERS

Amalya Teitelbaum

### WEBSITE MANAGERS

Atara Bachrach

Max Friedman

### SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGERS

Emily Rose Goldberg

Allison Warren

Founded by the women of Yeshiva University’s Stern College in 1958, The *YU Observer* is the independent newspaper of Stern College for Women, Sy Syms School of Business, and Yeshiva University.

The *YU Observer* is an independent student publication, self-funded and published on a monthly basis throughout the academic year. Views expressed in The *YU Observer* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the student body, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University. All The *YU Observer* content is copyrighted and may not be reprinted without permission.

Please visit us at [www.yuobserver.org](http://www.yuobserver.org).

# WINTER IS COMING

## EDITORIAL

BY BENJAMIN GOTTESMAN,  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

I have never watched Game of Thrones but I know the meme. A man, wrapped in furs, grasping a sword, stares blankly ahead, hair flowing in the wind. “Winter is coming,” the caption reads. It is not hard to feel like the man in the meme. Although it is only November, winter is, indeed, coming. The wind chill is picking up, sweaters are abundant, and *maariv* times are getting earlier. “Brace yourself”, the man enjoins. By the time you leave your 4:30 class, it will feel like a plague of darkness has descended over Manhattan. Midterms are imminent, and there is no scheduled break in class for weeks on end. “Brace yourself. Winter is coming.”

In the early 1980s, South-African psychiatrist Norman Rosenthal noticed that his mood and mental wellness sharply deteriorated during the winter. He, and his team at the National Institute of Mental Health in Maryland, began to earnestly study the phenomenon. After extensive testing, they coined the term Seasonal Affective Disorder, commonly referred to as Seasonal Depression. They observed that the early sunset and lack of natural light contributed to a holistic unease in a significant part of the population. Winter, they found, naturally brings with it increased levels of mental unwell-

ness, regardless of one’s mental status during the summer months.

Our people have associated the onset of the winter with calamity for generations. *Marcheshvan*, the eighth month of the Jewish calendar, is a month devoid of festivity. According to our tradition, it is the month in which the flood of Noah ravaged the world. Historically, it is the month in which we lost our matriarch, Rachel, and, in recent years, is the month of Kristallnacht and the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin. Winter has not been kind to the Jewish people; *Marcheshvan*, as evidenced by its name (*mar* is the Hebrew word for bitter), lacks the sweetness of *Tishrei*’s now-forgotten honey. It is empty of the upcoming light of *Kislev* and *Channukah*. It is no surprise that Seasonal Depression rears its head in such a depressing season.

This past week, I stopped in at the Wilf club fair and was delighted to see so many wonderful options. There is an incalculable value in attending an institution in which there are so many opportunities to get involved in meaningful extracurricular activities. Every great university is centered around an active and impassioned student body, that understands that their collegiate obligations begin outside the classroom and are not simply relegated to the library and study hall. Additionally, it seems that almost every day there is a different academic event sponsored by the faculty, opening up windows into the global intellectual world. On the *kodesh* side, bulle-

tins on both campus are stuffed with flyers for various *shiurim* and *chaburos*. The *Beis Medrash* has been a vibrant bastion of *lomdei Torah* these first few weeks of *zman*.

How long does this last? Hundreds of people signed up for various clubs this week but it seems that so many club events struggle to find enough people to eat OSL’s pizza come November and December. Will the same amount of people show up to their favorite *shiur* when midterms descend in full force? It is hard to stay a fully motivated student during the winter slog— it feels nearly impossible to stay active in our extracurriculars smack in the middle of the long stretch of the semester.

All I would like to say is “keep showing up.” I know school sometimes feels like an all-time job. I know that when it’s barely 30 degrees out and the sky is the color of a bad bruise the *beis medrash* may feel like it’s miles away, as opposed to down the block. What makes YU great is all of us, plugged into each other and our school, striving to create a community with robust opportunities for everyone. When an honors event only gets twelve guys, the community suffers. When there are more empty than full seats at a *shiur* on Beren, we all lose. We are here for more than tests and homework. We are here for each other. We are here for YU.



In the old country there was a longstanding tradition that on the Sabbath before *Rosh Chodesh*, the cantor would chant the blessing of the new month to the tune of a song associated with the upcoming holidays. Thus, on the Sabbath before the first day of *Adar*, the cantor would recite the blessing to the tune of *mishenichnas adar*, the most well-known of the *Purim* songs. Before *Nissan*, he would sing the blessing to the tune of *v’hi sh’amda*, or one of the other Passover melodies. However, when *Marcheshvan* rolled around the community was flummoxed: what do you sing for such an empty month? There are no holidays, no cheerful songs associated with this time! The community decided that *Marcheshvan* should be welcomed in the classic sing-song of *chavrusos* learning a *blat Gemara*. When the world feels cold, it is our people’s tradition to huddle together and engage in something meaningful. When the world is dark, we leave our homes and light it up as one. Winter is coming. That doesn’t have to be a bad thing.

# YU’S MESSAGE TO YOUNG LGBTQ JEWS ACROSS THE WORLD

## OPINIONS

MANNY EHRLICH, YU  
PRIDE ALLIANCE WRITING  
COMMITTEE

There is no denying the fact that Yeshiva University is one of the most prominent Orthodox institutions in the world and in many ways serves as a representative of Orthodox Jews, both in the United States and around the globe. More than a university, or even a *yeshiva*, Yeshiva University is a symbol. On the university’s website, YU describes itself as “the world’s premier Jewish institution for higher education.” As Rabbi

Lord Jonathan Sacks *zt”l* famously said, “YU is the most important Jewish educational institution in the Diaspora.” Consequently, YU’s actions have an impact that extends far beyond the confines of its Manhattan campuses. The ongoing legal battle between Yeshiva University and the YU Pride Alliance has only amplified the scope of YU’s influence on Orthodox Jews worldwide. Many are now looking to YU for guidance on how to address the complex issues surrounding queerness and Judaism. As a result, YU has, at this moment, the potential to do both tremendous good or irrevocable harm.

Setting aside the question of whether YU should permit a Pride Alliance club, let’s consider the impact of what they have done so far. I reached out to Jewish LGBTQ undergraduate students at other universities and asked them to share their thoughts on the lawsuit. Their responses were heartfelt and personal.

**R.G. (she/her, Rutgers University ‘23)** describes herself as an “observant Jewish queer student.” She noted that the way YU is fighting against the Pride Alliance makes her “even less comfortable with my observant and queer identity that I’ve been fighting so hard to merge my whole life. If only they could accept us for who we are and show

us the support that so many of us lack in our homes. This could be a huge step in the right direction.” The struggle of reconciling their Jewish identity with their queerness is one that is familiar to many LGBTQ people from religious backgrounds. “YU’s handling of this has made me doubt that I have a future being queer and religious,” said S.C.S. **(they/them, University of Maryland ‘23)**.

Some respondents expressed feelings of disappointment. **B.R.R.**

SEE **YU’S MESSAGE**,  
PAGE 4

## YU'S MESSAGE FROM PAGE 3

(she/her, Binghamton University '26) previously believed the Modern Orthodox world was moving towards further acceptance of LGBTQ members of the community. "This situation," she said, "makes me lose a lot of hope that I can ever comfortably be in Modern Orthodox environments without feeling like I need to hide who I am." Even students outside of the States had what to say. A Jewish and queer Australian student, T.C. (she/her, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology '23), said she is "appalled" by what is happening. T.C. went on to express her desire to support those made to feel unwanted by their institution. Even though these students do not attend Yeshiva University, the school's actions affect them simply because they are queer members of the Jewish community.

Some of YU's actions suggest that they are not taking this responsibility seriously. President Berman may have claimed that YU welcomes, loves, and supports its queer students. However, sending out emails suggesting that YU's LGBTQ students wish to destroy the university and its Torah values, or deciding to suspend all student activities just to prevent queer students from having a club

on campus even temporarily, are callous moves that ignore their impact on students, both at YU and beyond, who care about, and are affected by, these issues. When Yeshiva University claims time and again to support "nuanced Torah values," the LGBTQ members of our community, closeted or not, heard the real message loud and clear: *you are not part of nuanced Torah values, and you will not be accepted in the Orthodox community unless you pretend to be something you're not.*

As a current YU student and member of the LGBTQ community, I know firsthand how painful and powerful this message is. For me, one of the scariest parts of coming out has been attempting to find my place in the Orthodox community while living a lifestyle that will not be detrimental to my well-being. It may be hard to imagine what this feels like if you are someone who has never gone through it, but I assure you, the feeling that the community you've grown up in and love is not willing to accept you—the *real* you—is devastating.

Being queer, especially in religious environments, comes with many challenges, some that last a lifetime. For those going through it, it becomes crucial to have support and to be accepted for who they are in order to carry on living. This is not an exaggeration. Lack of such support can manifest itself in many terrible ways and profoundly

damage a person's psychological well-being. Queer people need to be accepted as they are. They should not be told that their life is a struggle they must constantly fight to overcome, because such an existence is one of loneliness, depression, and self-loathing.

When Yeshiva University shows a complete unwillingness to properly support its queer members, many are forced to seek that support elsewhere, even if that means leaving Orthodoxy. Do not erroneously assume that these Jews do not care about the Torah. The truth is that they need the support of being accepted for who they are, and it is that need for support and acceptance that is motivating their decisions. I cannot describe the pain and turmoil of needing to choose between being religious and being accepted. This is only made worse by the fact that these decisions would not need to be made if only proper support to queer Jews was offered from within the Orthodox community. Such support could be given without compromising any Torah values, and would save many from being forced by the Orthodox community to live lives devoid of Torah.

If the administration does not wish to send this disheartening message to queer Jews both on campus and off (and I do not believe they do), they need to think seriously about their communication strategy. Queer Jewish students everywhere

are waiting to hear what the world's premier Orthodox educational institution, an institution that stands on Torah, Chesed, Emet, and infinite human worth, has to say to us. We want to hear them say that they welcome, love, and support us and **to actually back up those words with their actions.** We want to be treated with the respect we deserve as fellow Jews, not to be painted as enemies of Jewish ideals and beliefs. We want to be able to be part of the Orthodox community without being forced to live lies that compromise our identities. We want the YU community to recognize that they have a responsibility as a yeshiva to help those of us who identify as queer and wish to still be committed to Torah succeed in doing so. By no means, should they attempt to convince us that being Orthodox Jews is not an option available to us. It is my hope that the administration will soon realize the spiritual and emotional harm they are doing to young Jews everywhere, and change the way they are handling this complex situation. It is my hope that they can instead use the unique position they are currently in to reassure the next generation of Jews that they, too, can conduct lives of meaning and Torah observance.

*Want to show your support for Yeshiva University's LGBTQ students? Follow the Pride Alliance on Instagram and check out our official website!*

## WHY DO GAY STUDENTS GO TO YU ANYWAY?

BY ANONYMOUS,  
YU PRIDE ALLIANCE  
WRITING COMMITTEE

There is a pervasive assumption amongst my fellow Modern Orthodox Jews that YU as an institution is incompatible with an LGBT identity, an assumption only heightened by the school's ongoing response to the Pride Alliance club on campus. As a gay student who chose to come to YU, I have often been asked with varying levels of incredulity why I chose to enroll at Yeshiva University at all. This assumption is so pervasive that even when meeting fellow gay YU students, often one of the first questions we ask each other is "so why did you come to YU?" For a long time, I found it hard to answer this

question; I never saw any reason not to go to YU. Through a considerable amount of hearing other perspectives and much introspection, I have begun to comprehend exactly what this question is aimed at.

While YU is an Orthodox institution, it is home to a great many Jews from all walks of life with all sorts of perspectives. I know students in YU who are Reform, Conservative, Open Orthodox, left-wing Orthodox, and other identities that can't be confined to a single denomination, many of whom do not agree with the university's stance on LGBT Jewish practice. Yeshiva University is a unique modern Jewish institution in that it allows for students to learn from the greatest minds

in Jewish thought, take classes in cutting-edge Jewish scholarship, and still get a top-notch secular education. Why should I, or anyone else, reject the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop my Judaism just because the way I love and live a Jewish life is frowned upon by a vocal contingent who don't even necessarily make up the majority at this school?

The reasons I chose – and continue to choose – YU, are quite similar to that of my straight peers; I, like most other queer students, have the same values and goals as other YU students. The ability to have regular and easy access to constant minyanim, a peer network of fellow Jews both in and out of college, a bustling Beit Midrash

and a vibrant learning environment; along with the fact that YU is one of the only institutions where I can fill my mornings with world-class Gemara and Tanakh classes and my afternoons with world-class Math and English classes – are all reasons why students – gay or straight – find YU an attractive option.

All of this is in addition to the luxuries many who are currently enrolled at YU may even take for granted: the ease with which I can keep kosher on campus, the fact that I do not have to explain to any faculty member that I won't be able to complete an assign-

SEE **GAY STUDENTS AT  
YU,**  
PAGE 9

## THE PRIDE ALLIANCE FROM PAGE 1

are, they almost always point to the same dominant issues. The silence. The loneliness. The shame. The fear. The feeling of being fundamentally broken and having nowhere to turn. All reinforced by the passive marginalization, as their existence and presence as part of the community goes unacknowledged. This is why they need a space. This is why they need a forum.”

Often, I get the sense that there is an assumption that the students who support the Pride Alliance, as well as LGBTQ students in YU in general, are some sort of foreign element, othered from the ‘normal’ students who actually ‘belong’ in YU’s sphere. Instead of these suppositions, shouldn’t the effort be put in to understand who they are and their experiences? In Bina Davidson’s 2020 profile of YUPA, she writes, “The Pride Alliance board members and those who attend their events come from all different backgrounds. They represent the entire religious spectrum and levels of frumkeit, are in-towners and out-of-towners, are freshmen all the way up to seniors. There are people who are out to everyone about their identity, and people who are closeted to almost everyone.” Far from the simplistic

tale often spun to present YU’s LGBTQ students as a single entity, a sense of the diversity, complexity, and normality of YU’s LGBTQ student’s can be seen in the profiles of their religious lives written by Sruli Fruchter and Hadassah Penn.

Other articles, as well as several students I’ve spoken to about the case, have, explicitly or implicitly, treated YUPA’s decision to take YU to court as a sign of some sort of extremism. Generally, there is an assumption that in the meetings leading up to the original court filing YU was engaging in genuine dialogue, negotiating in hopes of finding a workable compromise. I feel the publicly available descriptions and reports of those meetings question that. In an article about student LGBTQ advocacy efforts, past student leaders describe feeling stonewalled by the administration. In the affidavits for the case, the plaintiffs describe missed emails, unprecedented interference, and general administrative misdirection. To give one specific example, former Yeshiva College Student Association president and current plaintiff Amitai Miller describes being led on what was essentially a scavenger hunt to create “student dialogue”, only to be told that his arrangement was

unsatisfactory. He says, “I was repeatedly told by YU administrators that there needed to be student ‘dialogue’ about the request... We successfully recruited 14 students of diverse backgrounds... However, President Berman informed us that our plan failed to meet his vision for a dialogue event, and declined to agree to send a representative from his office to the event.”

In a video (on YUPA’s Facebook page) relaying the background of the Sept. 2019 “We, Too, Are YU” march, YUPA founder and current plaintiff Molly Meisels describes the administration as preferring to deal with LGBTQ advocates by simply stalling until they graduate. Doniel Weinreich in his “The Sixth Option” sums it up simply “Eventually, dejected students have been forced to conclude that the administration is not acting in good faith, and that the only way change will come about is through compulsion. The advocates have always been amenable to p’shara [compromise]; it is the administration who has forced us to turn to din [justice].” I can’t say whether or not the Pride Alliance made the “right” decision – I avoid judging decisions of such magnitude and complexity – but I do feel that before weighing in to judge YU-

PA’s “escalation,” one should make a genuine attempt to understand what motivated them to take YU to court.

To summarize, the approach of opposition to the club likes to offer a strange new “love”. Unlike typical love, which we would imagine motivates one to understand their beloved and find a way to address their concerns, the love and empathy often expressed toward LGBTQ students in YU, and those involved with YUPA in particular, seem to exhibit none of these traits. It is generally expressed toward a conception of what YU’s LGBTQ community wants that feels entirely invented, is seemingly invoked only to set up some sort of denial, and appears unable or unwilling to look into the background that could lead to understanding YUPA’s statements and actions. While I stop just short of demanding support for a student-led club, I strongly feel that when discussing this issue, those who claim to love LGBTQ students in YU while opposing a student-led club could express the emotion, the pain that should result from such conflict, and could show an attempt to truly understand YUPA’s position. Without that, I can only interpret these expressions of love as products of cold and shallow hearts.

*(Help for this article was provided by a member of the YU Pride Alliance.)*

# A JEWISH GALLERY EVENT HELPED ME MOURN MY BOYFRIEND

BY RINA SHAMILOV, ARTS  
AND CULTURE EDITOR

When I heard that one of my close friends was getting engaged, I sobbed for an hour. It was late summer, just a few months after my boyfriend of 11 months died suddenly. YU has an unflinchingly pervasive marriage culture which hits me like a slap in the face. Coping with his death makes me feel like an outsider in my college community. It also makes me remember all that I’ve ever had and lost.

Everyone around me constantly buzzes with engagement and marriage announcements while I sit silently on the sidelines. Aside from grieving, I am learning to deal with the isolation that grief imposes on me while searching for silence from all of the outside noise.

Art has been immeasurably helpful in the grieving process. Art is what one makes of it and it doesn’t require language

to be understood. My grief made me feel misunderstood, but being able to express a heavy emotion without having to talk about it has been incredibly refreshing.

On October 13, right at the peak of Chol Hamoed, I attended an art gallery in Brooklyn organized by an organization called Havurah, which provides a space for Jewish artists. The gallery was beautifully decorated and illuminated, and the night’s theme centered around understanding Jewish life through the lens of photography.

Many artists featured at the gallery had unique pop-up displays that illuminated the lives of all kinds of Jews, focusing the lens on often ignored and marginalized Jewish communities. One artist, Emily Chaya Weinstein, showcased the Jewish community in Uganda, while another photographer captured the everyday lives of the Satmar Hasidim. However, it was the art of David Guttmacher, an NYC-based photographer and organizer of the event, that really stood out to me.

He expressed his Jewish identity through the evolution of life in the face of death. Most of his pictures were personal and heartwarming, though two of my favorite photographs were of his grandfather’s burial site in Israel. Asher, my boyfriend, is laid to rest in Israel, and I immediately felt a spark of connection that left me both trembling and awe-struck.

In one of his photographs, Guttmacher captured rows of Israeli graves surrounding a single empty burial plot. I stood there, unmoving, for several minutes. I instantly thought of Asher and our separation from each other. His parents hope to unveil his grave in January and knowing that he’s bur-



ied in a place that resembles the cemetery in the photograph made my pain much more poignant. This is probably what his forever looks like, I thought to myself. But I was supposed to be his forever.

I felt that the single empty plot was taunting me, almost saying, you must witness death everywhere while you alone are impervious to it. The photo illuminated that I am not as alone in my grief as I had initially thought. As much as it pains me to say this, it soothes me when others share my experience because it makes me less of an anomaly.

SEE ART GALLERY,  
PAGE 6

## ART GALLERY

FROM PAGE 5

Later that night when I spoke to David Gutenmacher, I told him about my loss and how his photograph validated my pain. He didn't say anything — he didn't have to. He just looked at me, and I knew that he understood. This was the silence I craved all along: the silence of understanding and acknowledgment.

Death is everywhere, and that terrifies me. This photo helped me understand that death doesn't have to be an isolating experience. It can be a point of connection.

Art is universal because it is laced with a meaning that is universally sought out. I know that pain is universal too. While not all people experience the same

kind of pain, it is felt by everyone and when expressed through art it can be understood according to the particularities of each individual.

In the months following Asher's death, I began painting because it allowed me to connect to Asher even in his death. The separation between us blurs, and it is a way I can preserve his presence in my life. Sometimes I paint the two of us together, growing

into the ground to symbolize our togetherness.

Shared silence makes my pain less inescapable, because I know that my aloneness does not have to inhibit me. That night at the gallery showed me that my status as a mourner is not as terrifyingly isolating as I initially thought; I am not alone in my mourning process.

## HEBREW IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

BY JOSHUA FEIGEN,  
SCIENCE AND  
TECHNOLOGY EDITOR

As Jews, we all have some exposure to the Hebrew language, whether through prayer, learning Torah, traveling to Israel, slang, or the like. One would, therefore, assume that young adults who have spent most of their lives immersed in this "Hebrew culture" would have a strong command of the language. This is often not the case.

In the traditional American Orthodox system, preschool children start off singing the alef-bet and as they mature through later grades, they progress to more textual study, such as learning how to pray in Hebrew, understand Chumash, and, eventually, Navi, and Mishnah. Within the typical dual curriculum framework, approximately half of school hours are devoted to Judaic studies. Despite this focus on Judaic studies, many students lack textual and spoken Hebrew language proficiency. This is a great loss as there are clear benefits to Hebrew language proficiency that must be recognized.

Although Biblical Hebrew is different from the modern Hebrew language, the two are analogous. Consider the works of Shakespeare. While some of the grammar and vocabulary may seem archaic or unfamiliar, a solid command of modern day English enables one to tap into the meaning of these works. However, it is

obvious that attempting to study Shakespeare by translating and explaining its meaning into another tongue, such as French, would significantly burden that process. Similarly, Modern Hebrew acts as a bridge to Biblical Hebrew. While being fluent in Modern Hebrew does not guarantee that one can instantly read any Jewish text, the jump between the two is much smaller than that of a translation. Many educated Jews struggle with even basic textual understanding and reading without vowels. This could be mitigated with proper knowledge of even Modern Hebrew.

Additionally, many aspects of practicing Judaism, such as prayer, involve the Hebrew language. Shouldn't people be able to understand what they recite up to three times a day? Furthermore, throughout Jewish history, the great thought, halachic, and literary works have primarily been produced in Hebrew. Enabling students to read the aforementioned works, which constitute the bulk of our tradition, and maybe even write their own *sfarim* should be seen as an important educational value.

Finally, as a Zionist community, we seek to support Israel and the development of the Jewish state. We do so politically, financially, and, often, by sending our youth to study there for a gap year. Why not take it one step further? If we believe in the return to Israel, we should practically be taking steps to facilitate that. When making ali-

yah, one of the great barriers immigrants face is linguistic. There must be some way to combat that preemptively within our school system.

Despite the benefits of learning Hebrew, many of us unfondly recall the ubiquitous Hebrew class experience - a minimally trained Israeli barking in Hebrew about some random story. The teacher and the students do not understand each other and everyone is frustrated. It is clear that Hebrew language curriculums need to be carefully cultivated and its educators specifically prepared, with continuity and progression between grades assured. However, we are doing too little too late. Compelling high schoolers to memorize giant word lists or pour over alien grammar tables does not result in successful retention or long term mastery. And the demotion of the YU Hebrew department to what is essentially an online portal certainly does not help either. Rather, foreign language instruction needs to start at a young age and be continuously immersive for the highest rates of success. With all those hours dedicated to Judaic studies and perhaps even a gap year spent in Israel, teaching just a few subjects in Hebrew would make a big difference.

For some reason, Americans, in general, have not yet managed to successfully develop foreign language pedagogy. Students can study languages for years and walk out not being able to do much more than utter a few

words and maybe write a sentence. However, Europe provides a stark contrast in that multilingualism is the norm, not the exception. To provide an extreme case, the school system in Luxembourg is designed such that pupils matriculate after having studied compulsory subjects that are taught in various levels in all three languages of Luxembourgish, German, and French. Similarly in Israel, children of olim often speak two languages fluently. The concept of multilingual education, as well as the status of multilingualism, is very attainable. Hebrew and Judaism are so intertwined. We need to take steps towards realizing the benefits of implementing such a system by developing educational tools for facilitating it.

Given the fact that our education system will likely not see massive reforms any time soon, we must, on our own, realize the centrality of Hebrew language to our Jewish identities; just think about how we use Hebrew in our lives as Jewish people. Additionally, we can take opportunities to learn more and support others (and future children) in doing the same. Taking initiative to develop my Hebrew skills has been a transformative personal experience and has enabled me to connect with Jewish religion and thought on a much deeper level. Growing up and hearing a rabbi translate texts verse by verse did not imbue me with the skills to pick up a *sefer* and learn on my own. Yet, learning Hebrew completely opened up a new world of possibilities for me. It can do the same for you.

## FINDING CERTAINTY

BY DANIEL GANOPOLSKY,  
OPINIONS EDITOR

The realization that you can never really know anything for certain is often mentioned in philosophical discussions and usually elicits two types of reactions. People either

see the notion as pointless because it doesn't change our human experience or they see it as negating the possibility of a discussion at its onset.

However, there are people who view this statement as undeniably

true and necessary for any level of nuanced thinking. Unfortunately, it is possible that someone could misconstrue the concept and give up on life when faced with the guarantee of uncertainty. This attitude will evolve and develop to a point where the person has no

motivation or desire to improve himself or the world around him. He loses his grounding and sense of purpose.

SEE CERTAINTY,  
PAGE 7

## CERTAINTY

FROM PAGE 6

The search for meaning is a way to change this mindset of self-doubt and lack of purpose. It is an attempt to clarify an amateur notion while still always remaining open to new ideas. In his famous essay, "Self-reliance", American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson found the individual to be the foundational leverage point. From here, one can navigate the universe with at least some conception of truth connected to his actions.

Historically, society and its great thinkers have not trusted the individual. We try our hardest to appeal to externalities (turning to philosophers, religion, artists, or thought leaders) in seeking truth and meaning. Emerson expressed that the way to discover truth is by turning inward as the external

things we tack on to our individual perspectives are really a source of corruption. The deepest connection available between people and the transcendent, immaterial aspects of the universe, is the most primary thing we have access to: our own individual human experience.

To clarify, Emerson was not telling people to shirk education. On the contrary, it is good to expose ourselves to the information in the world around us. However, he would say the second the source changes from telling you the facts of the matter to telling you how you should be feeling about those facts it shifts from education to indoctrination.

Emerson only makes sense because he is a deist. He believes there is good and ultimate truth, but that God does not intervene in our world. Therefore, we need the individual to discern the good

from the not-so-good.

Naturally, Jewish ideology takes a different approach. In his book, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveichik describes two competing drives within human beings. One aspect of man seeks a "dignified existence". This is what Emerson would consider the only true purpose. We use our reason and logic to conquer nature, create the inconceivable, evolve mankind, and ultimately create a better existence. This task belongs solely to the individual. However, the Rav explains that this man is missing the direction and purpose of that great endeavor. The second aspect of man, the man of faith, seeks an ultimate purpose, and that can only be provided through a relationship with God.

We believe that God not only gave us the Torah - the only source of good and ultimate truth - but also



intervened, and continues to do so in our world today. This idea is the driving force behind our day-to-day actions, and how we choose to live our lives on a broader scale. Because we believe that God intervenes, we don't fall into the trap of self-doubt and we don't lose our sense of purpose. What Emerson didn't understand is that instead of fighting society, man must embrace society in order to find meaning, and then look to God to find certainty.

## HOW WE CAN STRENGTHEN STUDENT GOVERNMENT

BY YITZHAK GRAFF

During the recent cancellation of student-run activities at Yeshiva University, I was intrigued by the amount of apathy the general student populace had towards the situation. The student body's disregard and lack of interest in supporting the activities of student government is not new. The first president of the Yeshiva College Student Council (YCSC), Hyman Muss, commented about it in 1931: "It must be borne in mind... the Students' Council can never reap any fair degree of success unless the students awake to the realization of the importance of the potentialities of the organization."

The purpose of student government, as understood by Muss, was to serve as "the official voice of the students" to the administration and the "central organization for the promotion of extracurricular activities." The various student councils are by no means slacking in this regard, but in my experience, it is difficult to get reliable information about the internal politics of student government. This current culture of secrecy is in stark contrast to the detailed summaries of internal politics that the student governments published in the student newspapers for the majority of the 20th century.

Consequently, the student body is generally uninformed of the student government's activities in its role as the voice of the students to the administration and are kept in the dark about the politics behind the extracurricular activities that they sponsor. There are several steps that the student government can do to improve the student body's awareness and involvement in their activities.

### 1) Freedom of Information:

The student government should release its internal documents from past years. This will enable the student body to understand how student government performs its duties, and also empower student politicians to point to specific accomplishments or challenges that need remedy as they seek election. Such internal documents could include financial records, promotional material, or even the by-laws of the clubs sponsored by the student government. This proposed freedom of information program will need an active archival program to ensure that all relevant records are accounted for, released and safeguarded.

In addition to the release of internal records, opening all student government meetings to the general student populace will allow students to engage with current issues before the records are able to be released. The student government should publicly promote these meetings and provide food at the meetings to encourage students

to attend. Both campus constitutions stipulate such public meetings, though from my experience, such meetings are never publicized on the Wilf campus.

### 2) Active Public Relations Department:

Although some student government organizations already have PR departments, such as the Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) and the Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY), a centralized department designed to promote all student government activities will be invaluable in effectively communicating with the student body. In the pre-internet days, the student government published budgets and activity schedules in the student newspapers in addition to posting flyers on designated bulletin boards. Nowadays, an increased level of public engagement can be achieved through active social media pages. A PR department that actively promotes student government activities on WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok will be able to catch the attention of many more students.

### 3) Expansion of Student Government:

There are currently too few seats in the Yeshiva Student Union (YSU). In 1956, at the student government's peak membership to student population ratio, there were 15 members of YCSC compared to about 450 registered students in Yeshiva College. The YCSC, which filled a role similar to YSU

today, consisted of three members from each class and three members at large. Not counting the members at large, that's a ratio of 38 students per class representative. Today, we have six class representatives, one for each class group, with over 1,000 students enrolled in the undergraduate schools. Based on the 2021 enrollment statistics, students of Yeshiva College and Sy Syms School of Business, totaling 1,036 full and part-time students, had only 4 representatives in the Yeshiva Student Union. That's a ratio of 259 students per representative. Undergraduate students at YU are greatly underrepresented in student government, and the student government organizations should at the very least have two class representatives for the undergraduate classes of Yeshiva College and Sy Syms School of Business.

An expanded and more aggressive public-facing student government at Yeshiva will be able to more effectively empower students to become strong and assertive leaders. This larger and more representative student government will find more success in building a deeper sense of community among the students of YU, and be more capable of resisting the administration's attempts to meddle with student activities.

## POETRY HAS A PLACE

BY AARON SHAYKEVICH,  
MANAGING EDITOR

While poetry commonly has a bad reputation as being boring or convoluted, this unfair stereotype precludes many from trying something potentially impactful. When thinking about poetry, many, even I, usually think of Shakespearean sonnets with old English and complicated sentence structure. However, poetry comes in many unique forms. It can be abstract or very literal, allowing each writer to find what works for them. The best part of the diversity in poetry is that if one doesn't like one style of poetry, they don't need to read or write it. Everyone has their own preferences, and no one should feel a need to copy what they don't like from others when writing: accentuate your own unique voice.

While writing poetry may come easy to some, reading and digesting poetry is, in my opinion, much more difficult. Emotions expressed through someone else's voice can be difficult to process and internalize; visualizations that

are not clear to the reader may hide meaning, when the author intended to convey so much. Yet if one continues reading many poems, there will certainly be some poems, or even poets, that speak directly to the reader. Ideas or emotions which were not fully fleshed out can now find representation in someone else's work. One may even find meaning where an author didn't intend it, but that is the beauty of poetry.

This semester I am taking the extremely impactful course Reading/Writing Poetry with Dr. Brian Trimboli. In the first week of class, we read poems by Israeli poets who lived through the Holocaust. Just by reading their poems, I was able to get a sense of how survivors processed the traumatic events they went through, better than I might have by just watching a video or reading a book on the subject.

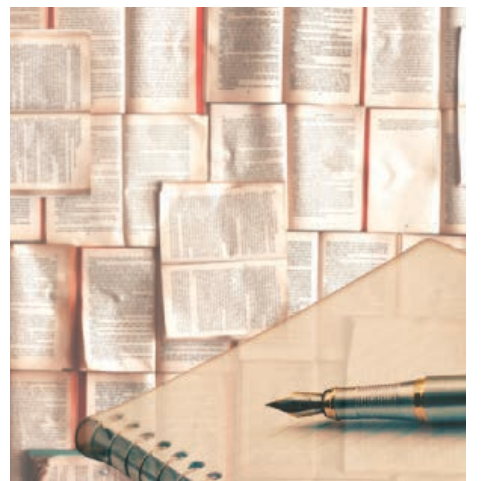
For Reading/Writing Poetry, the evaluation criteria are mostly based on the completion of assigned readings and writings.

While this may seem as though one can easily slack off, the class environment is quite the opposite. Many students, myself included, take the opportunity to grow in their understanding of poetry. By removing forms of evaluation that focus on performing to the instructor's wishes, we can share our real selves (think back to if you ever wrote something because you thought the professor wanted to hear it, just to get an A).

As a pre-med student, poetry will not be part of my life's work. I do not plan to ever share my poetry in a book or blog. And yet, thanks to this class, I have developed a new hobby, or maybe even a lifestyle. Poetry allows me to turn moments of silence into moments of insightfulness. Even if I don't need to be creative to get by in life, it can certainly feel cathartic and fulfilling to be so. On every subway ride to and from school, I've started to jot down different ideas for future poems. Poetry has begun to penetrate my

thought process so much so that every time I listen to a song now, I can't help but dissect each line as if it was a poem.

Even though we are only about two months into the semester, Reading/Writing Poetry has had a huge impression on me. Dr. Trimboli always leaves students confident in their work, leaving them with the tools to improve and bring out their own unique voice. The next time you have a free moment and have something on your mind, write it down, expound on your idea, and make it real.



## WE ARE NOT ANGELS

BY DANIEL GANOPOLSKY,  
OPINIONS EDITOR

The United States government generally responds slowly to change and is resistant to modernizing its systems. Terry Moe and William Howell, the authors of *Relic: How Our Constitution Undermines Effective Government*, and *Why We Need a More Powerful Presidency*, see this as a bad thing and view the Constitution as a "relic of the past." This is not the case. The Constitution continues to provide an effective form of governance and we should, therefore, adhere to its tradition. The slow-moving, resistant aspect of our government is intentional, and that purpose has withstood the test of time.

In their book, Moe and Howell argue for a fast-track system, similar to how the realm of foreign trade works. By granting more legislative power to the executive, bills will have an easier time passing Congress and Americans will be able to see the effects of their elected officials in a realistic time frame. This would generate two issues, both which the Founders foresaw.

In the Federalist Papers, our Founders repeatedly pointed to

Congress as the strongest branch of government because it represented the will of the people. Transferring the initial step of legislation from Congress to the Presidency will minimize the people's ability to represent their opinions in the government. On the other hand, the President specifically represents the majority that elected them. There is no incentive for the President to pass legislation that favors the minority, or even compromise with them. The President's most weighty incentive to pass legislation is his reelection campaign. If the executive has primacy, the legislature will be disincentivized to compromise with their counterparts or even optimize the legislation. The easy way out would be for them to simply vote according to party lines on what the President produces. This act would effectively strip the American populace from having a direct voice in their own government and would give the executive power the ability to create radical change.

The challenge of finding a balance between thoughtful, long-lasting legislation, and responding to the needs of the people in a timely manner is not new. Hamilton and Jefferson had this same argument when fighting over the creation of the national bank. In his interpretation of the Constitution, Hamilton justified the bank because it was "necessary" for the

development of the country. Jefferson responded by saying that Hamilton's interpretation of "necessary" was too liberal and would lead to constant "necessary" change. Under the guise of necessity, constant change would cause a never-ending state of political and legislative emergency. The President would be virtually unstoppable, passing any form of legislation, good or bad, he deems "necessary". Our system was created so that the President does not have this ability. Legislation takes longer to be produced, but it also has more time to develop and be fine-tuned.

The more cautious approach that can help fix holdouts in our political system is to amend the amendment process. The amendment process and its underlying requirements have largely been pragmatic, not philosophical, in nature. The Constitutional restrictions the Founders set for this process were solely based on the geographical and political conditions of their time. Today we have fifty states, not thirteen. We have national parties that stretch from sea to sea, and we have a polarized populace that refuses to work together. The Founders gave us an amendment process, yet today, it seems al-

most impossible to pass one. The reason for amendments has not changed; what has changed is the size of our country's population and nationally organized political movements.

The value of stability, checks on power, and gradual change are essential to perpetuating a strong and healthy republic. Different components may have evolved, but the facts have stayed the same. As Madison expressed, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." Therefore, the dictum of Justice Scalia holds true: "Gridlock is what our system is designed for." Angels we are not and a rigid system is therefore what we need.





## GAY STUDENTS AT YU

FROM PAGE 4

ment due on Shabbos, or worry about having class or midterms during Yom Tov. These are just some examples of the amenities that YU offers to someone living an Orthodox life in college. None of them become less enticing because I am gay. LGBT Jews are part of the Washington Heights community; we have our friends and family, our Shuls and Rabbis in the community and around campus. Anyone who believes in YU as an institution should not find it strange that the very same things they appreciate and admire about YU also attract people who love differently from them.

Additionally, like all undergraduate programs, Yeshiva University accepts developing young adults, people who are just starting to explore their personal identities as they grow into adulthood. Is it preferable that they go to a college where their Jewish identity is less respected, where Jewish

life is less vibrant and Jewish studies are an afterthought? If a student realizes their queer identity after fostering relationships with fellow students and teachers, after making a life at YU, should they uproot their life because this identity is disapproved of? Synthesizing several identities into a unified whole is a core part of the Modern Orthodox worldview, and students will find their own peace with being both Jewish and queer and their own way to reconcile their faith with their LGBT identity. Would we prefer to keep such students away from Modern Orthodox institutions at such a foundational stage in their development?

Most fundamentally, that question – “so why did you come to YU?” – bothers me because it assumes that Yeshiva University does not, and should not, want queer students. This is a massive overgeneralization: YU is a large institution made up of many individuals. In my own experience, it is clear that many of the teachers, rebbeim, and staff at YU are

accepting of their LGBT students, a feeling recently corroborated by an open letter signed by over 1600 faculty, alumni, and students in support of YU’s LGBT students and the YU Pride Alliance (YUPA). At the same time, it has become clear in recent weeks that there is a vocal and powerful subset of the YU administration that views its queer students as, at best, a confusing embarrassment. The university is unwilling to say publicly that they do not tolerate queer students, but their treatment of the Pride Alliance suggests that they are unwilling to accept queer students as a valid part of the Jewish community. In light of YU’s stance regarding YUPA, it is clear that “why did you go to YU?” is a gesture towards the question that dare not be spoken: “why did you go to YU, when it’s not for people like you?”

It does not need to be this way. We can have Orthodox institutions, where gay students aren’t treated as an embarrassing stain, where we are not given subtle (and not so subtle) hints that we are not welcome. Orthodox communities are

often hostile towards queer people, especially queer young adults. We fear rejection and bullying from our peers, demonization from our teachers, and abandonment from our families. Many gay Yeshiva University students are not publicly queer Jews, but instead, have a gay identity so far hidden from the outside world it is known only to a half-dozen prized and trusted confidants. It is a terrifying and awful way to exist; having to constantly hide this part of yourself to evade bullying, homelessness, and hate. Yeshiva University can do better for us. It can lead the way towards a brighter future for Judaism, one where gay Jews such as myself do not have to exist in doubt and fear or face discrimination. I hope that one day this will happen, and I will feel safe enough to sign this article with my own name.

Want to show your support for Yeshiva University’s LGBT students? Follow the Pride Alliance on Instagram and check out our official website!

## NEW BEGINNINGS

BY DANIELLA WEISS

As we return rejuvenated from the holiday break and *Shabbos Bereishis*, we need to focus on the meaning of a new beginning and how can we ensure that this year will be one of personal growth. We must become more committed to our life goal: closeness to *Hashem*. We come closer to *Hashem* through working on our *mid-dos* and through performing the mitzvos with the proper actions, thoughts, and feelings.

I heard a powerful idea from Rabbi Daniel Glatstein, Rav of *Ke-hilas Tiferes Mordechai* in Cedarhurst. At one point in the travels of *Yaakov Avinu*, *Rashi (Bereishis 32:2)* explains that the guiding angels of *Eretz Yisrael* replaced those from outside *Eretz Yisrael*. The *Ramban* questions this, as, at that point in the narrative, *Yaakov* hadn’t yet reached the land and should, therefore, be solely associated with the angels outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. The *Maharal* explains that *Hashem* doesn’t judge a person by where they are currently but rather considers their destination. The question is where you are headed, not where you are presently standing. *Yaakov* was going to *Eretz Yisrael* so those angels joined him on the journey. We see this idea in *Halacha*, as well. *Shkiya* (sunset) is considered



night in many *halachic* situations. For example, a person should not *daven mincha* after that time, even though it still looks like daytime outside. The Alter of Slabodka explains that *Hashem* judges things based on where they are headed. At sunset, the night is coming so, even though it remains light out, it is considered night.

We are headed towards coming closer to *Hashem* and in *Hashem’s* eyes, we are already there. We show *Hashem* that we want to come closer to Him through the small steps we take in each of the three pillars that the word stands upon (*Pirkei Avos 1:2*). The first of the three pillars is *Torah*. The *Torah* is the guide to live a meaningful life according to the Creator Himself. The more we learn the *Torah*, the better we understand how to live our lives and the closer we become

to *Hashem*. The *Mishna Berura (1:12)* says that a person must establish a time to learn *Mussar*, regardless of the amount. Just like every day a person eats and exercises, learning each day needs to be part of our routine.

The second of the triad that the world stands upon is *avoda*. *Davening* is a major part of each day. Besides the set *tefillos*, a person has the opportunity to speak with, praise, and thank *Hashem* at any time. Since everything is in *Hashem’s* hands, we should ask *Hashem* for anything, all of the time. *Hashem* loves each of His children and longs to hear from us. The *Gemara* in *Berachos 6b* says that *tefilla* stands at the height of the world and yet people treat

it lightly. We cannot fathom the power of *tefilla* and that we cannot fully achieve what we aspire to do unless we *daven* for it.

Finally, the third pillar is *chesed* and kind acts. In college, where students are busy studying and learning, it’s especially important to have time to do *chesed* and give to others. Rav Yisrael Salanter says in *Netivos Ohr* that a “person was not created for themselves, rather to benefit another.” If there are opportunities to visit the sick or elderly or even clubs around school that offer volunteer opportunities, that’s something to take advantage of. Even in our personal lives, there are opportunities to do *chesed* with roommates or friends. Holding the door for someone, smiling at another, or complimenting someone else can go a long way. Little actions like those make a big difference.

*Hashem* doesn’t expect us to be completely different people after the *Yomim Noraim* (the Days of Awe). *Hashem* simply expects us to start heading in the right direction. It starts with the small steps we begin to take today.

# STUDENT LEADER SPOTLIGHT: SHAYEL CHOCRON

A GIRL ON A MISSION - BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER ONE PROJECT AT A TIME

BY MARCELA HOMSANY

While some complain that the world is filled with injustice and misrepresentation, others spend their lives seeking solutions. Shayel Chocron (Stern '26) belongs to the latter group. Born and raised in Venezuela, Shayel was exposed to the ravages of poverty, inequality, and discrimination at a young age. She decided it was time for change and embarked on a journey to better the world. Shayel wanted to create something that was easy to carry, light, and impactful and decided to write a book. "In May of 2019," she explains, "I wrote my first book called, *I Believe in You, Do You?*" The book is from the perspective of a teenager, written in order to help motivate and inspire human beings to reach their highest potential. With the profits, I was able to donate to various orphanages, public schools, and hospitals for women, children, and debilitated adults in both Venezuela and Panama. Books of this nature are important because they provide valuable guidance for all those who read it. The book helps to guide and support those in need." Her book, written in English, was published and sold in two local libraries, and copies were donated to the Ministry of Culture of Panama, specifically the Academia of English department. Shayel first registered how truly impactful the book was when a young girl with Collins Syndrome expressed how *I Believe in You, Do You?* helped build her confidence and feel less alone. Currently, Shayel is working on translating the book to Spanish and donating copies to the city's public children's hospital.

After her book was initially published, Shayel realized how big of change she can make and launched her organization, *Helping You by Sha*, which she described as a "generic movement." After further inspection, it becomes clear that it is anything but ordinary. She explained, "*Helping You by Sha*, is an organization that helps, support, motivate, and inspire those in need through recreational activities, speakers, conferences, and creative activities that help to



create a foundation for individual growth. I work with psychologists and specialists since they are the greatest help when it comes to providing valuable feedback towards bettering the organization's goals. This organization was made by young people for young people." Today, the organization has about thirty-five volunteers and conducts over 70 projects spanning from a fundraising zumba class to a play featuring a young girl as part of her Make-A-Wish.

Bettering the world is not her only passion, Shayel has a deep love for the performing arts, which she incorporates into her mission. "Recently, two of my projects have been a mix of theater and performing arts, which are also passions of mine and it's something I feel is a great tool to help others as well. I produced and directed a play called, *What is Not Forgotten Never Dies.*" It's about the Holocaust and was showcased in Panama in January in honor of the anniversary of the liberation of Aushwitz." Interestingly enough, Shayel made it a point to feature a cast including generational survivors, Jews, and non-Jews. By cultivating a diverse cast, she was able to educate and spread more awareness of the realities of the Holocaust. The public response to the play was that of shock. Shayel explains that just a glimpse into the realities of the Holocaust was enough to bring people to tears. The public was

so touched by this play that some advocated for this play to be shown in schools across the country, as many schools, Shayel explains, no longer educate their students about the Holocaust.

The second project was a talent show for the mental and physically disabled. "It was great; we went through an auditioning process, and the volunteer judges and I really committed to making this an authentic experience for the contestants. The day of the show was very inspirational because we really saw the participants' capabilities- Yes, they have their disabilities, but they have something special inside that the naked eye usually looks over. We are able to take notice of each person and their talent." Shayel further explained, "Each performer had an opportunity to act, sing, dance, paint, essentially to express themselves artistically. So, I wanted to do this project as I believe the ability to express yourself is an important and beautiful skill. We provided the participants with the opportunity to not only express themselves artistically, but also to feel important as they stood on stage demonstrating their talents." Shayel continues to run her organization and various projects despite moving to Panama, and studying in the United States.

Shayel found motivation for

change through the struggles of her home country, Venezuela. The negligence of her country's government left it in ruins. Armed robberies and kidnappings are common, which, in addition to the poverty-ridden streets, prevent civilians from leaving their homes after nightfall or walking down the sidewalk with their phone out. Shayel explains, "Venezuela is very dangerous and poor. It needs lots of help due to its food, water, electricity, and job insecurity. The world also inspired me, because at the time I started this organization, I felt as though the world was powered off and sad. So, when I was fifteen, I set out to change the world, converting those ideas, expectations, and goals into projects." Her dedication, love, and innovation is the cause of positive change for a variety of people in need and will continue to be so in the future.

# BUILD US A HOUSE IN THE AIR OF THE WORLD: HOW BUILDING 245 LEXINGTON CHALLENGED YU'S RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

BY YITZHAK GRAFF

It was 7:00PM on a pleasant spring evening and hundreds of women had gathered in an empty lot on the east side of Lexington Avenue, between 35th and 34th Streets. They congregated to mark the joyous occasion of the groundbreaking of Stern College's newest classroom building. More than half the student body had shown up that evening, May 9, 1967, to hear speeches, sing, and dance in celebration. Even CBS news had their cameras rolling to cover the event, but the administration was nowhere to be seen.

The story of the classroom building began in 1961, when Dr. Belkin's administration announced a plan to expand the universities' facilities called the *'Blueprint for the 60s.'* In the first half of the decade, construction was relegated to the Washington Heights campus. Furst Hall, finished in 1962, and Morgenstern Hall, completed in 1964, were part of the first phase of the plan. In March 1965, the second phase of the *Blueprint for the 60s* was announced. The updated plans included the Gottesman Library building in the Washington Heights campus and a new dorm and classroom building for Stern College in Midtown.

These proposed buildings for Stern were sorely needed as the college had far outgrown the size of its original building on 253 Lexington which was only able to accommodate around 100 students, in addition to administrative offices, the cafeteria, and the library. Despite this, the College continued to admit more and more students despite the limitations of the facility. By 1966, the undergraduate student body had swelled to over 500 students, making the need for more classroom space very urgent.

In November 1966, YU announced that the funding for a classroom building was secured, and construction would begin in mid-December of that year. One-third of the funding was to come by means of a grant, worth \$795,509, from Title I of the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 (HEFA). The purpose of this act was to encourage American universities to expand their physical facilities to accommodate a growing student population. HEFA offered grants and loans to both undergraduate

and graduate schools. In addition to the grant for the 245 Lexington classroom building, YU received \$3,568,717 in grants and \$4,117,000 in loans to aid in constructing the Gottesman Library and Belfer Hall.

The student body of Stern College was optimistic that they would soon see construction on the new building begin, but after the lot was cleared no construction commenced. The administration gave no explanation for the delays in construction, despite their public confidence in the project in November.

After five months of waiting, the outgoing student government staged a mock groundbreaking, or 'dig-in,' as they called it, as a demonstration of the student body's frustration with the delays in the construction. Rochel Sperling, the President of the Stern College Student Council, spoke at the dig-in encapsulating the student body's frustrations: "The physical conditions under which we are expected to acquire an education are a disgrace... "The higher echelon [sic] merely regards SC as a step-child in the YU family." The Observer reported that, "Her words stimulated the crowd to cheers and dance."

Sam Hartstein, director of public relations, sent a memo to Dr. Belkin on May 10, 1967, the morning after the dig-in. Hartstein briefly described the students' demonstration and characterized it as being "without any hostility and in very complimentary form to the university." Hartstein was advising Dr. Belkin to ignore the demonstration by characterizing the students' frustration as benign and 'complementary.' Although the administration did not directly respond to the students' demonstration, they renovated an old police station on East 35th Street over the summer to be used as classroom and office space and were able to alleviate some of the overcrowding for the Fall 1967 semester.

The student population of Stern College continued to steadily grow each year, making the overcrowding of the Stern's instructional facilities more acutely felt. The combined population of Stern College and the Teachers Institute for Women (TIW), both

of which held their classes in the Midtown campus, was estimated to have been around 1,000 students at the start of the Fall 1968 semester. Over the course of the 1968-69 academic year, the editor of the Observer, Fayge Butler, along with Beverly Koval, the President of the Stern College Student Council (SCSC), and other student leaders threatened to turn the empty lot into a park twice before ultimately organizing the students to go on strike in February 1969.

Faced with the potential embarrassment of media coverage of the picketing, the administration began to open up to the students about the causes of the delay. Sidney Schutz, the administration's general counsel, met with the student leaders to discuss the cause of the construction delays. Schutz explained that YU decided to change the original 1966 plans and had to resubmit the new plans in 1967 to remain eligible for the federal grant, but YU ran into a problem securing the money because of a freeze of Federal government funds due to the Vietnam War. It was only after the funds were thawed in the spring of 1968, Schutz noted, that YU was able to secure the grant money and begin taking bids from contractors in December 1968.

Schutz's claim of a freeze of education funds is suspect, since it contradicts evidence from an official New York State government publication. Under section 105 of HEFA, the Board of Regents was responsible for distributing the HEFA grant money in the state of New York. The Board of Regents published a report in 1969 detailing how they executed the HEFA grant program during the previous five years. The report contains no mention of a freeze of funds for the program, rather it reports that \$21,311,997 of title I HEFA grant money was given out to New York State schools in Federal Fiscal Year 1968, July 1, 1967 - June 30, 1968; the exact time when Schutz's freeze of federal funds was supposed to have happened.

Although no other explanations for the delay exist in YU's archive, evidence from published reports on HEFA suggests that the delay had something to do with YU's status as a religious school before 1967. In 1965, congress

passed the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), which included several amendments for Title I of HEFA. Most of these amendments expanded the grant program, but there was one key limitation added. Section 111 of HEA prohibited the funds from Title I of HEFA to be used for a facility that would house 'sectarian instruction'. One of the listed examples of sectarian instruction was the "education of students . . . to prepare them to teach theological subjects."

The classroom building on 245 Lexington was supposed to host the Teachers Institute for Women (TIW) in addition to the regular Stern College classes. The TIW was a program that educated teachers to work in Jewish Parochial schools and gave its graduates Bachelor and Master of Religious Education degrees. YU had been conferring BREs and MREs to the graduates of its Teachers Institute since the school's first graduating class in 1925. These graduates went on to teach *Limudei Kodesh* in Talmud Torahs and Parochial Schools. The degrees of Religious Education fell firmly in the definition of 'sectarian instruction,' because they were explicitly catered towards schools that taught "theological subjects."

As long as YU intended to use its new facility to confer degrees of Religious Education, it was not eligible for the grant. This exact issue was likely a significant factor in YU's decision to apply for a non-sectarian charter in December 1967. Once YU obtained its non-sectarian status, it began a process of phasing out all degree programs that were considered sectarian instruction.

By the time construction commenced in March of 1969, YU was probably making plans to completely revamp its teachers' schools and offer standard degrees of education. Already in October 1969, YU was able to petition the Board of Regents to amend its charter by erasing the clause that granted YU the ability to confer degrees of Religious Education and replacing it with the non-sectarian Bachelor and

# FACULTY PROFILE: DR. PETER NANDORI

BY RAQUEL LEIFER,  
FEATURES EDITOR

*Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight a YU faculty member. For the September 2022 edition, the YU Observer is highlighting Dr. Peter Nandori, PhD.*

**RL:** Please introduce yourself.

**PN:** Hi! I was born and raised in Hungary. I got my PhD in mathematics from the Technical University of Budapest. I moved to the U.S. right after graduation, which was nine years ago. I worked as a Courant Instructor at NYU for two years and another four years at the University of Maryland as a Brin Fellow before coming to YU.

**RL:** How long have you worked at YU?

**PN:** A little more than three years.

**RL:** What do you like most about working at YU?

**PN:** I like being in the classroom because my students are curious, hardworking and take their studies seriously. It is a real honor to be part of some of their most important years. I also like the fact that the classroom sizes are relatively small, and I get to know my students better. I used to teach classes of 200+ students at other universities, which was very far from optimal for both students and professors.

**RL:** What made you passionate about your field?

**PN:** As a young student, I liked mathematics, physics, and computer science. Perhaps I was also inspired by the fact that my parents taught similar topics, namely physics and geometry at an engineering school. I chose to pursue mathematics because it seemed the purest of all. You do not need a lab or even a computer to pursue mathematics.

The only thing you need is your imagination.

**RL:** Is there anything interesting you are currently working on?

**PN:** A general area of mathematics that I work on is dynamical systems. One specific system that I study a lot is mathematical billiards. These billiards are similar to the usual billiard game, except that the shape of the billiard table can be very different; perhaps even infinite. They can be studied just for fun but are also of interest in statistical mechanics, where people try to derive macroscopic laws of physics, such as the heat equations, from microscopic models of heat conductions; a simple one being billiards. In a joint work with Xingyu Liu, a math PhD student at the Katz school, we are studying the long flight in high dimensional billiards. For example, consider a space of at least three dimensions and cut out periodically situated identical non-overlapping spheres. What is left is our billiard table. A frictionless particle may fly for a very long time if its velocity vector happens to point in the direction of an infinite chamber inside the table. We are trying to prove that if a very long flight takes time  $T$ , then typically the next flight is of length  $T$  to the power  $1/\text{the dimension of the billiard table}$ .

**RL:** Do you have any advice for students interested in a career in your field?

**PN:** Most students know about the engineering face of mathematics. What I mean by this, is that both in high school and in introductory college math classes, students mostly see formulas that are useful for a particular set of problems, often engineering applications. It is important to realize that mathematics is much more than that. For example, mathematics can be viewed as an

art- many mathematical objects have truly spectacular beauty. It is also a philosophical field, most notably mathematical logic. I truly believe that nearly anyone could benefit from taking mathematical classes beyond the required ones as if you have not seen art and philosophy in math yet, you are missing real beauty. Another comment is that mastering the strict logical arguments in mathematics is invaluable in many professions way beyond math, such as law, politics, sciences and even music. For students who have already decided to study mathematics, my first message is that they chose well. Then, please stay curious and patient. Sometimes it takes hours to read one page of a graduate level book but it is well worth it. Hard work always pays off.

**RL:** What makes your field special?

**PN:** Mathematics has its roots in axioms: statements that we all accept. These are usually very simple, one example being the existence of the empty set. Anything beyond axioms has to be derived from the axioms only using strict formal rules of logic. The fact that everything is very objective distinguishes mathematics from many other scientific disciplines. If we prove something new, that will remain valid forever and cannot be overwritten by fancier results in the future. Another specialty of mathematics is the diversity of its applications. For example, I teach probability theory and statistics. It is hard to overestimate the importance of these subjects in our modern world in computer science, machine learning, economics, physics, biology, etc.

**RL:** If you could bring in any guest lecturer, alive or deceased, who would it be, and what would they speak about?

**PN:** Hillel Furstenberg, a prominent mathematician who is a YU alumnus. He was awarded the Abel



Prize, which is informally known as the Nobel Prize of mathematics (note that there is no actual Nobel Prize in mathematics). YU students should be proud of his achievements, and I believe that he can serve as a role model for everyone. He already produced genuine mathematical proofs as an undergraduate student at YU (for example, a topological proof of the fact that there are infinitely many prime numbers). He gave a lecture at YU about five years ago, but this was before my time and so I was not there.

**RL:** What is one thing you want students to know about you?

**PN:** I am happy to chat with anyone at any time about the beauty of mathematics. You can just stop by my office if you want to talk. I hope that my students know this, so this is a message mostly for those students that I have not met yet.

**RL:** Is there a particular book you would recommend that everyone read?

**PN:** I personally find studying the life of famous mathematicians fascinating. I used to read about them a lot when I was a student but nowadays I have less time for that. I encourage everyone to look up the stories of, for example, Srinivasa Ramanujan and John von Neumann. If you don't have time, just look them up on Wikipedia, but of course there are more in-depth books.

245 LEX  
FROM PAGE 11

Master of Education degrees. When the building was completed in September of 1970, YU no longer had a school offering degrees of religious education.

The reorganized Jewish education program was divided up between the existing schools within YU. Undergraduate Bachelor of Edu-

cation degrees were conferred by the undergraduate schools, and Master and Doctor of Education were initially placed in the domain of Ferkauf. In 1983, a donation from David J. Azrieli created an independent Graduate School for Jewish Education under his name.

Though not the only cause for secularization in YU, the need to remain eligible for the grant money to build 245 Lexington was certainly a significant factor. Positive or negative, the consequences of

the secularization process continue to manifest not only in the University's corporate structure but even in the physical built environment of the campus.

*I would like to thank Deena Schwimmer, Hindeshe Lee, and Emily Apterbach for their assistance helping me research this topic in YU's Library and Archives, as well as the hardworking librarians at the Library of Congress who fearlessly tracked down my most elusive source. For further reading on the*

*events of the 1969 Strike, see Benjamin Koslowe's Honors Thesis.*



# A POSSIBLE SOLUTION FOR THE MYSTERY OF SATURN'S RINGS

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

BY RONI LEIDER

Nearly half the planets in our solar system have axial tilt and rings, an object that orbits around a planet in a flat-disc-shaped region, but none are as well known as Saturn's. Saturn's rings are brighter, more numerous, and more prominent than any of its neighbors, and the planet's tilt is more pronounced. There has been extensive research regarding Saturn's bizarre tilt and rings, but there is no definitive answer about the enigmatic nature of these aspects of the planet.

Throughout history, many theories have been proposed that explored the material of Saturn's rings, as well as how they came to be. Originally, the rings were thought to be made up of asteroids, comets, or even shattered moons. Recently, a publication was released in the journal *Science* that many consider groundbreaking. The study proposes a further-researched theory regarding the origins of Saturn's rings.

Previously, researchers believed

that Saturn's rings have existed for billions of years, dating back to the planet's formation. Saturn's gravitational field was thought to lure surrounding asteroids and comets toward the planet, which were then compressed into rings. However, the journal *Science* argues that Saturn has not had its rings since its formation but acquired them much later. The study suggests that the rings formed somewhere between 100 million to 200 million years ago.

If the rings were formed in this time frame and not during the formation of Saturn, then it is possible to conclude that they are an outcome of an external breaking, such as a comet or a moon—as the initial hypothesis proposed. Nonetheless, investigating what exactly broke, as well as how it broke to form the rings, has been an arduous task.

The study suggests that Chrysalis, a hypothetical moon that would have been torn apart due to Saturn's forces, advanced toward the planet's gravitational pull. Chrysalis was too close in proximity to Saturn and was therefore destroyed. The destroyed fragments of the moon are hypothesized to

have dwelled in Saturn's orbit, essentially forming the planet's rings.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes a finding of NASA, which explains how an extinct moon is responsible for Saturn's significant tilt. Prior to the study, scientists had theorized that Saturn's tilt was due to Neptune's gravitational pull. However, NASA proved this theory wrong when their Cassini mission revealed that Saturn was no longer in the range of Neptune's grasp. Instead, it is believed that a small moon interrupted the pull between Saturn and Neptune, which occurred when another moon, Titus, exercised gravitational forces, which ultimately sent it speeding toward Saturn.

Dr. Frances Nimmo, a professor at the University of California,



writes in the *Science* article that this finding “ties together two puzzles that had previously been treated as separate.” Jack Wisdom, a professor at MIT, stated, “[w]e like it because it’s a scenario that explains two or three different things that were previously not thought to be related. The rings are related to the tilt, who would ever have guessed that?”

Despite the evidence, many are still skeptical, including Dr. Jack J. Lissauer, a scientist at NASA who wrote a thesis entitled “Dynamics of Saturn's Rings.” Although he agrees that the theory seems valid to some extent, he believes that it is difficult to prove the occurrence of these celestial events and that it must remain a theory until solid evidence can be provided.

## SCIENTISTS DISCOVER POTENTIAL CURE FOR ALS

BY BELLA RUDOY

My beloved great-uncle, who lived healthily for almost fifty years, suddenly found himself bedridden, unable to speak or use his body the way he used to. Within months, he lost all functionality and passed away soon after from ALS. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. It affects as many as 30,000 people in the United States, representing five out of every 1,000,000 deaths in people twenty or older. ALS is characterized by progressive degeneration of motor nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, causing muscular atrophy and cutting the patient's life to only three years after being diagnosed. While there is little proof that ALS is genetic, there is hardly any evidence that lifestyle and diet have any effect on causing ALS either. Since

it was identified in 1869 by Jean-Martin Charcot, scientists have been hard at work searching for a cure but have had few breakthroughs—until now.

As of May 2022, the FDA has approved Edaravone for ALS treatment. It reduces oxidative stress, which is thought to be one of the causes of ALS. Unfortunately, while Edaravone slows the progression of ALS, it doesn't completely stop the disease from progressing. Still, scientists are hopeful that this new drug is a step toward a cure.

Because of the aging population, there is a projected increase in ALS development, causing a desperate scramble for alternative methods, such as stem cell therapy, to slow down and possibly cure ALS. Through stem cells' ability to differentiate into different types of supportive cells in the central nervous system (CNS), such as microglia and astrocytes, they can slow down the degeneration of motor

neurons within the CNS. Additionally, stem cell therapy can extract mesenchymal stem cells from an ALS patient's bone marrow. These particular types of stem cells are then grown in cultures to become cells that secrete Neurotrophic Factor, a growth factor that allows nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord to remain healthy and alive.

A newly FDA-approved medicine called Relyvrio has shown promising results in slowing down the rate of decline in people suffering from ALS. In addition, Relyvrio has proven to help patients perform daily tasks and may help people with ALS live longer. Although not a complete cure, Relyvrio has been a significant help to patients unable to use their hands for simple tasks like picking up a cup. That being said, more studies and developments are needed to maximize this drug's effects.

Although these drugs have helped improve the quality of life for some ALS patients, many people are still suffering and losing the quality of their lives at a very young age. ALS research has come a long way over the years, but we are still far from an ultimate cure. Many people continue to work hard to help raise money to find a cure. For example, fundraisers, such as the ALS ice bucket challenge, a trend in which people were dumping ice water on their heads, posting a video to social media, and donating money to the ALS Foundation, raised over \$100 million. The research funding created by these movements is needed more than ever to help patients with ALS—something I wish there had been more of before my great-uncle passed away.

## ROBOCAP: DRUG DELIVERY MADE EASY

BY YOSEF SCHER,  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
EDITOR

Earlier this month, a team of scientists led by Shriya Srinivasan, a research affiliate at MIT's Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research and a junior fellow at the Society of Fellows at Harvard University, developed, RoboCap, a novel way to transfer medicine directly into a person's intestines.

Approximately the size of your daily multivitamin, RoboCap is a drug capsule that enables large proteins, as well as small-molecule drugs, to be effectively absorbed into a person's digestive tract. According to Srinivasan, the small capsule comprises a "cargo hold," the area that stores the drug, and a "gelatinous coating that protects tissue from damage and discomfort after swallowing." This is a revolutionary breakthrough in the pharmaceutical industry since drug manufacturers typically struggle to find ways to overcome the obstacles of "surviving acidic regions in the stomach, digestive enzymes, and above all, the mucus barrier that lines the digestive tract" to deliver drugs effectively. However, using a combination

of technology and medicine, RoboCap has demonstrated that these potential roadblocks can be circumvented.

The way RoboCap works is genuinely remarkable. Upon reaching the stomach, the gelatinous coating of the capsule is degraded by the highly acidic gastric juices in the stomach, dissolving RoboCap's surface. After the pH sensitive-membrane is completely removed, RoboCap is activated by closing one of many electrical circuits found in the capsule, triggered by the change in pH. In order to deliver the drug effectively, RoboCap spins and buries its way through the tough mucus layer of the digestive tract, allowing the drug to be gradually released directly onto the intestinal surface.

After months of development, Srinivasan and her team conducted experiments on pigs that demonstrated the effectiveness and usefulness that this capsule could provide for humanity. Insulin and Vancomycin. "Large protein drugs ... that consist of proteins or nucleic acids and are at the moment only injectable," were placed into RoboCap and administered orally to a group of



pigs. Compared to the placebos that acted as controls, "the RoboCap increased the permeability of vancomycin into the tissue by over 20 times compared to the control" and "significantly increased insulin levels in the blood and sharply decreased glucose levels compared to controls." The researchers also found that the capsule was active in the pig's intestine for nearly thirty-five minutes, and the capsule passed through all ten of the different pig's digestive systems without there being "signs of inflammation, infection or damage to the intestinal epithelium."

Srinivasan and her team want to continue developing RoboCap, increasing its sensitivity to various pH environments so that the capsule can work in multiple areas of the digestive tract. Srinivasan hopes her brilliant innovation will "minimize the number of drugs that don't make it to market due to poor bioavailability and improve the pharmaceutical industry's ability to provide viable therapies." With the prevalence of Type 1 and 2 diabetes increasing by 54% for Americans by 2030, Srinivasan's breakthrough will definitely aid in providing a feasible and effective option for many people in desperate need of insulin.

## ELIMINATING FUNGAL CONTAMINATION FROM OUR FOOD

BY ROCHEL LEAH ITZKOWITZ

A common challenge people face while manufacturing goods or buying groceries is the appearance of mold. The contamination typically leads to financial and health loss, as mold contains a plethora of toxic chemicals. Fortunately, a recent study has genetically engineered a fungus that can restrain specific proteins from generating their harmful chemicals.

Mycotoxins are toxic chemicals that fungi generate; they can ruin crops and make us ill. According to the WHO, these molds typically contaminate foods such as nuts, dried fruits, spices, cereals, and more. A Japanese study recorded that the most common fungal contamination complaints were in cakes, snacks, and bakery products, while processed food had the biggest fungal concerns.

A threatening type of mycotoxins is called aflatoxins, and con-

suming them can lead to health issues such as liver cancer. Aflatoxins can appear in our food even when there has been proper manufacturing.

When fungi contaminate the food we put into our bodies, it can be uncomfortable and even lethal. Fortunately, recent research has discovered that removing a single protein can eliminate these fungal toxins.

In the September 23 issue of *Nucleic Acids Research*, the leading scientist, Bayram, and his colleagues were determined to uncover the details behind these fungal toxins. They classified a number of proteins controlling the increase in the production of mycotoxins. If they were to genetically engineer the fungus *Aspergillus Nidulans*, it could remove the proteins and stop the toxins from being produced.

Bayram asserted that these recognized proteins behave like a key starting a car. The goal of

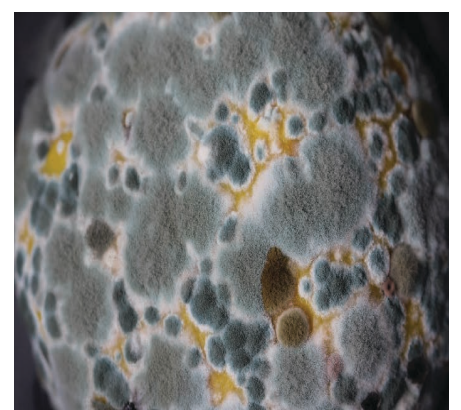
his research team was to learn how to "remove the key and prevent the starting signal from going through, meaning that no toxins would be made in the first place."

The team discerned the proteins in *Aspergillus Nidulans* and found that precisely four proteins unite to make the key. They created the fungus needed to delete the protein. Bayram added that a related research study discovered that "deactivating the same group of proteins in the closely-related fungus *Aspergillus Flavus*, which can make aflatoxins, prevents the production of those toxins." He says that it's evident that the protein complex completes the same function in at least these two fungi.

Unfortunately, a third of crops around the world are ruined by water molds. These contaminants include fungi and fungi-like organisms. This new

research, building upon past experiments, can aid in removing the fungal contamination from our food. If this objective is reached, Bayram claimed, "the saved food would be enough to feed 800 million people in 2022."

Although this area needs further exploration, this research will jumpstart the challenge of protecting our agriculture and overall wellness. Removing fungi from what we feed ourselves will, in turn, strengthen our bodies and lead us to long, healthy lives.



## PSYCHOLOGICAL DETRIMENTS POST-PANDEMIC

BY MIRA POSTELNEK

According to behaviorists such as Pavlov, Skinner, and Thorndike, stimuli, and our responses to them, change human behavior in a sustainable and lasting way. This theory has clearly been proven by the Covid-19 pandemic that defined the last two years of our lives. While the worst of the pandemic has passed, we are unmasked in almost all public areas, the residual effects of Covid-19 are still felt in multiple aspects of society. The pandemic has impacted our health, psychology, and social interactions/relationships. Most significantly impacted from this nearly three year pandemic are children, young adults, and geriatrics.

Research conducted four years after the SARS pandemic in 2003 showed 44% of survivors developed PTSD, the vast majority of which was long-term. Similarly, recent studies suggest society has developed a COVID Stress Syndrome, “characterized by fear of infection, fear of touching surfaces or objects that might be contaminated with the novel coronavirus, xenophobia, Covid-related checking and reassurance seeking, and COVID-related traumatic stress symptoms.” The research shows that while most individuals who have developed Covid Stress Syndrome have pre-existing psychological concerns, primarily anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder, this syndrome is not exclusive to such individuals. There is uncertainty whether this is just an adjustment disorder which will recede with the pandemic’s absence or whether it will become a chronic issue.

Another health development post-pandemic is the rise in hikikomori, a syndrome that resembles agoraphobia, a condition describing people who are reluctant to leave their living quarters. The past two years of mandatory quarantine periods have likely increased the prevalence of hikikomori, since, even currently, health-anxious families and singles maintain their distance from the outside world.



Even those who have escaped the serious diagnosis of COVID Stress Syndrome or hikikomori have not come out unscathed. Countless individuals still avoid any type of casual physical contact. As we continue to readjust to the workplace, key relational mechanisms that used to symbolize trust and respect, such as a handshakes, are widely avoided.

Unfortunately, these habits created by Covid-19 have detriments that extend far beyond the surface. Reclusion and hesitation to socialize incur a number of academic and health deficiencies. As the term “social distancing” quickly became part of our vernacular, crucial impediments were thrown in the path of maintaining relationships important for our health and well-being. Social relationships ranging from spouses, to coworkers, friends, and acquaintances were affected in terms of frequency of contact and emotional intimacy. Acquaintances are part of the ‘weak’ social ties but nevertheless create more diverse social networks, all of which was lost during the pandemic. This created social circles with only similar views, both in-person and on social media, creating homogeneous ‘echo chambers’ which reinforces narrow minded thinking. Newly established relationships, specifically amongst university students who struggled to transfer to online classes, resulted in a decline of relationships and heightened isolation.

Another population that suffered

from this online migration was the geriatric community, who experienced extreme loneliness due to the lack of family visitations and their struggle to receive social substitutions via an online presence. This battle against lack of connection, restricted freedoms, and decreased physical movement led to an alarmingly quick rise in depression and anxiety rates among geriatric groups. They were not the only ones. Children who experienced school closures have demonstrated significant increases in levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation that persists post-pandemic. While online interactions served as a perceived social support during the past two years, it’s clear that the degree of social interactions still severely lacked the type of ‘social support’ face-to-face interactions carry. While the overall net gain in the quality of steady relationships increased, single individuals and, specifically single-person households displayed a giant leap in lower mental well-being that still holds true today. Even in the future, once physical expressions of affection resume, new levels of anxiety over germs may introduce hesitancy into previously fluent blending of physical and verbal intimate social connections. While online learning helped build a routine and continued education, this, in turn, enforced sedentary behavior as a norm, resulting in a compulsively less active nation. The result

of these impacts on grade school and university students has had long term detriments and may continue to affect the future generations due to the long-term psychological damage created. Specifically, a variety of age ranges have missed out on key developmental opportunities during the pandemic, our social skills are still out of practice, and residual impediments remain from the Covid mentality.

Although these severe hangovers from the pandemic years remain, there are ways we as a school and as individuals can begin to influence change by identifying which of these categories are specifically affecting us. An example of positive change could be seeking counseling for various mental health struggles that have developed or were exacerbated by the pandemic. Another reform could be recognizing inappropriate/exclusive social habits that may have formed, or consciously expanding your homogenous social interactions beyond the inner circle that survived the pandemic. Everyone can take steps to repair the effects of the two year Covid-19 pandemic within their own relationships, homes, and social groups.

# The ECONOMIC REVOLUTION OF TAYLOR SWIFT

BY ELI LEVI,  
BUSINESS EDITOR

One of my favorite podcasts, and the source for many of my company deep dives, is *Acquired*. Their most recent podcast was about Taylor Swift and her disruption of the music industry. Swift happens to be one of my favorite artists, so when I saw the episode, I was very excited.

Swift was born into an affluent home that afforded her rare opportunities. However, it was her unique drive and ambition that fueled her career more than anything else.

Swift's first record deal was with Big Machine Records, which Scott Borchetta founded. Borchetta, who, at the time, was leaving Universal to start his own label company, heard Swift sing and convinced her to sign with him as his first deal. In fact, Swift's parents invested and owned around 3% of the company, a sign of both their wealth and their support for her daughter.

Swift enjoyed massive successes early on in her career. When her third album, *Speak Now*, debuted, all of its

songs were on the Billboard Hot 100, representing the only time in history that seventeen songs from the same artist were listed there simultaneously. Incidentally, she named the album *Speak Now* so that there was no ambiguity about authorship - her success was because of the work she put in. It was 100% her.

In her next album, *Red*, Taylor was originally going to follow the tried and true method of giving her fans more of what they were asking for by releasing another album similar to her last. Ultimately, she decided to reinvent herself like the greatest artists of the past. Instead of continuing with country music, like her fans assumed she would, she drifted in the direction of pop.

One of the themes of Taylor's career was always pushing boundaries. For example, Taylor placed such a high value on her connection with her fans that when writing and producing her *1989* album, she invited some of her fans to her house. After they signed NDAs and she baked them

cookies, she played her music for them to receive feedback. Her *1989* album completed her transition to pop and shattered some of her previous records.

Taylor has been vocal throughout her career about artists receiving payment for their work, and her influence has been palpable. One illustrative statistic that demonstrates how terrible the economics of streaming is for artists is that for every 1 million streams, artists earn an average of about \$400. A noteworthy example of how much influence Taylor has in the music industry can be seen when Apple Music bought Beats. To jumpstart user growth, Apple Music was to be free for the first three months and meant artists would not be paid for streaming during that time. Taylor publicly stated that there are very few artists that can create value, and those that can should be compensated for it. According to her, no one should work for no pay. Apple reversed its decision overnight and Swift was a major factor in compelling the largest com-

pany in the world to do so. The deal Taylor had signed with Big Machine was for her first six albums. When she was ready to release her sixth album, *Reputation*, 80% of Big Machine's revenue was generated from her works.

Without getting bogged down in the details, Taylor managed to negotiate the best deal of any artist with a record label, keeping the rights to her masters (the original recordings) and licensing them to the record label for ten years. At that point, an artist keeping the rights to their masters was unheard of. The label company she worked with also secured a deal with Spotify, which purchased a large share percentage of the label company, which is worth around \$1.5 billion today. This incentivizes the label to work with Spotify. I think the most important piece of what Swift negotiated was not her good deal, but also all of the other artists signed to the label who accordingly benefited. Clearly, Taylor Swift's successful career has changed the music industry and left an indelible mark on it. It continues to do so.

## A PRIMER ON CRYPTO

BY ELI LEVI,  
BUSINESS EDITOR

### Bitcoin

There is a not-so-new fad taking the markets by storm called cryptocurrency, which enabled innovations in finance that were not possible prior. Most significantly, crypto allows for direct online payments without the use of a third party. Previously, when it came to digital transactions, there was no way to tell that someone was not double-spending money unless there was a third party to verify that this was not the case. This is why third parties, like banks and companies such as Venmo, PayPal, Zelle, etc., exist- they ensure that no one promises to send out the same funds to multiple external accounts i.e. double spend the money. More than 90% of dollars are digital, existing only on a database as lines of code. Therefore, digital money can be infinitely replicated and needs some form of third-party verification. Bitcoin acts similarly to hand-held bills, in the sense

that it is individualized. So too, Bitcoin, the most famous form of cryptocurrency, utilizes blockchain technology that allows each bitcoin to be spent only once.

Another problem inherent in the conventional economy was the level of expected fraud in digital transactions. Bitcoin solved this issue through the use of a distributed ledger. In the most simple sense, this means that whenever any transaction takes place, every single other bitcoin confirms that transaction. A side effect of the distributed ledger is that the more bitcoin mined, the more secure all of bitcoin is.

Mining means "finding" the cryptocurrency using compute power. In order to mine bitcoin one has to solve an extremely complex math problem and, once solved, miners are rewarded with a bitcoin. The proof that a bitcoin is owned by a particular miner is that they can point to all of the compute power that was used to solve this com-

plex math problem. As of today, over 19 million of the 21 million bitcoin have been mined.

Finally, one of the most unique features of Bitcoin is that the code is public and the rules have already been written. Once Bitcoin was launched, there is no way to change it unless over half of all Bitcoin owners would agree to change the way it functions. It is even impossible for the founders to do so without a consensus. If a company is created nothing stops the CEO from changing their mind the next day and changing the rules they put in place for the company. With Bitcoin, there is no going back.

### Ethereum

Ethereum is the second-largest and second-oldest cryptocurrency. Ethereum is interesting because it is a platform that allows almost anything to be built on it. The limit is one's imagination, as opposed to Bitcoin, which has only specific functions and

abilities such as a money supply network. Vitalik Buterin, the creator of Ethereum, intended the Ethereum network to be the infrastructure for anything (a company, art, logos, NFTs, other cryptocurrencies, other blockchains, different protocols, software, etc.) to be built on top of and secured by the network through blockchain technology. Vitalik also included 'Eth' which is the currency used to transact within the Ethereum network. Ethereum created pieces of infrastructure that are secured by the blockchain and, therefore, do not require a trusted third party eliminating potential foul play. Ethereum is a computer to Bitcoin's calculator; it is much more efficient than Bitcoin in the way that it secures its network and its capabilities.

SEE A PRIMER ON CRYPTO  
PAGE 18



# MEET A BOARD CERTIFIED BEHAVIOR ANALYST

BY JOSHUA FEIGIN

*This article contains a transcript of a conversation between Joshua Feigin, the interviewer, and Daniela Guttman, a BCBA in New Jersey. The goal of this interview is to expose readers to aspects of a career that otherwise may have not been known to them. Content has been shortened for clarity and concision.*

Joshua: Hi, can you introduce yourself and explain your job title?

Daniela: Sure, my name is Daniela Guttman. I live in Teaneck, NJ and I am a BCBA - A Board Certified Behavior Analyst. I work with children with special needs, mainly autism, that receive ABA therapy in their homes.

Joshua: And what is ABA therapy?

Daniela: ABA is Applied Behavior Analysis. It studies the principles of behaviors and it allows us to change behaviors and to teach specific skills.

Joshua: Got it. Do you think you could give an example to illustrate a behavior typically found in children with autism and how you have used ABA to modify it for a child's benefit?

Daniela: So for example, let's say a child screams every time they want something, we teach them a better way to communicate. Some children may need an iPad or a picture, or some people literally need to be taught language. We give a lot of reinforcements and praise and we make sure that when the child screams, we redirect and we don't give in to that behavior. And we do this in a very gradual way.

Joshua: What do you mean by reinforcements?

Daniela: It could be verbal praise, "Yay you did wonderful." It could be food, it could be iPad time, anything that the child likes.

Joshua: Let's move on to your day to day routine. What does your schedule look like and in what settings do you work?

Daniela: I work for an agency that works for insurances, so this is not school based. I have about ten clients, ranging in age from about 3-13 years old. I go mostly after school hours and see them in their homes. These children get somewhere between 15-30 hours a week of services. I supervise the therapists, meaning I don't

actually give the sessions. I go in probably about once a week [to each client] and I ensure that there is a treatment plan for ABA services for each child. When I go in, I supervise the therapist, speak to the parents, and then I work on the programming, which I can do at my home through the computer.

Joshua: Let's shift to education.



How does one become a BCBA?

Daniela: Sure. There are a few different paths. One very popular way nowadays is just to get a Masters in ABA. You definitely do need a Masters degree in a related field. Once you complete the course sequence, you then are required to do some field work. I believe it's about 2,000 hours, where you actually work as a therapist, and then you can take the board exams. I actually had a Masters in teaching, and then I added on a few courses [in ABA] and did the field work at the same time, before sitting for the exam. For more information about the degree requirements, one can look at the BACB website.

Joshua: You mentioned that you personally have a Masters in teaching. I am wondering how you then entered the field of ABA. How did you gain exposure to what is not such a mainstream field and how did you know that you wanted to pursue it?

Daniela: While I was going for my Masters in teaching, I was working as a Spanish translator for early intervention services, which dealt with children with disabilities and special needs, and that is really where I was first

exposed to ABA therapy. From there I decided to continue with the ABA course sequence. I loved what I saw as I was observing it, and it was something that I really wanted to do. I started working under the guidance of a BCBA, and then I became a BCBA myself.

Joshua: What are some skills or

not something that can be changed overnight.

Joshua: Does your career path offer flexibility, time off, time for the holidays, and personalization?  
Daniela: I am flexible in the sense that I can decide on how many cases I am taking. In general though, I am being told what the parameters and the hours are [of each case]. There is a huge demand and it really depends on how much I want to work. In general, it's not so easy to fill the entire day. Most of my cases are during after school hours. Sometimes a private school student may receive services during the day, but that is pretty rare. You are dealing with a lot of people's schedules: The parents', the therapist's, etc. Sometimes I need to drive from place to place.

Joshua: What are some reasonable salary expectations?

Daniela: A therapist probably makes somewhere between \$20-\$35 an hour. A BCBA makes somewhere between \$80-\$100 per hour. There are some agencies that hire BCBAs on a salary basis, in which case that would on average be in the range of \$80,000 - \$110,000 per year.

Joshua: Are there any more resources you can recommend for anyone looking to learn more about the options within this field or research this career path further?

Daniela: Sure. BACB.com is a great website. I would also recommend for anyone considering the field just to start working in it. Anyone with experience in teaching can start. And to be truthful, there is such a need in the field, so even for someone with no experience, agencies are willing to hire. So get a job as a therapist and see if you like it.

qualities that an ideal candidate for someone who wants to become a BCBA should possess?

Daniela: I think it is really important to love what you do, which, in this context, means that you need to be curious and interested in wanting to help others. You also need to like kids - not necessarily in a playful way, but you definitely need to be motivated to help improve their wellbeing. You also need to be able to think logically, as there is a lot of science involved in understanding behaviors. Although intuition and great personality are good, you really have to understand how to treat certain behaviors and analyze graphs and data.

Joshua: Can you share your favorite and least favorite parts of your work?

Daniela: I get very excited when I see a breakthrough. I see that I taught a child how to communicate, how to improve his/her behaviors. When I see a big smile on a parent's face, that is really a highlight. My least favorite part would have to be the pressure to become a miracle worker and solve all of a child's challenges. Autism is not necessarily easy; it is a work in progress and it is

## A PRIMER ON CRYPTO

FROM PAGE 16

### Solana

Solana was born out of the fire of the first crypto-crash (2015). Anatoly Yakovenko created the Solana blockchain in about two and a half years, inspired by his time working at Qualcomm. It is helpful at this point to recap and expand on Bitcoin to better understand what problem Anatoly was trying to fix within the existing crypto ecosystem. Bitcoin's security is based on its proof of work, a form of objectively measurable security, that creates a store of value. In the same way that gold can be tested to show that it is, in fact, gold and then be accordingly measured, Bitcoin can be "tested" and measured objectively, with no trust necessary; the expended energy is the proof of ownership. This, however, makes Bitcoin extremely slow for transacting across the network. If the amount of energy needed to prove ownership would be lowered, the security of the blockchain would also

decrease. Therefore, while Bitcoin is extremely secure, it is limited to about seven transactions a second. With this understanding in mind, Anatoly came

the key faster has their transaction take place first, Solana implements a turn-based game where each user has a scheduled time. Within their allotted time slot, they can do whatever they want to do on the



up with the core idea upon which Solana would be built: Instead of the blockchain being a real-time game where whoever hits

network. Whereas with Bitcoin all users' coins have to confirm that a transaction was executed before moving on to the next pay-

ment, Solana's pre-secured one-minute slots significantly expand capacity. As everything is scheduled in advance, nothing needs to be confirmed in real-time. This makes Solana a much faster network to transact on with a theoretical limit of 700,000 transactions per second at this stage. When it comes to more complex and distinct types of transactions Solana slows down, but even so, in comparison to Ethereum or Bitcoin, there is a huge increase. In the future, when they integrate new pieces into the Solana blockchain, there could be a theoretical limit of 10 million transactions per second.

## TAYLOR SWIFT'S *MIDNIGHTS*

### ARTS & CULTURE

BY MIRI GRANIK

The night before October 21, 2022, with anticipation that mirrored New Year's Eve, Taylor Swift fans all around the world counted down the seconds until the songwriter would release her new album as the clock struck midnight. *Midnights* is Swift's tenth studio album and fifth record in just two years, yet the excitement surrounding this release was unmatched by any of her previous works.

Swift is an awe-inspiring musician and writer, but she is first and foremost a powerful community builder. Over her eighteen-year career, the 32-year old songwriter has built a loyal fanbase that is rapidly growing. *Midnights* opened with the phrase "meet me at midnight", and that is exactly what her fans did. Together, Swift fans counted down the seconds late into the night of the release, listened to the thirteen songs, and then posted their initial reactions to the

lyrics on social media. Spotify even crashed that night because so many listeners were trying to stream *Midnights* at the same time. It was a midnight that would give Cinderella a run for her money. In a post on her Instagram, Swift described the album as "the stories of 13 sleepless nights scattered throughout my life." It is a look into her most introspective moments, which are both extreme-

ly personal and astonishingly universal. Her songs have brought people together like never before.

The night that *Midnights* was released became even more eventful when, three hours later, Swift surprised listeners with a "3 am" version of the album: a late night release of seven bonus tracks. "Surprise!", Swift captioned her Instagram post, "I think of *Midnights* as a complete concept album, with

those 13 songs forming a full picture of the intensities of that mystifying, mad hour. However! There were other songs we wrote on our journey to find that magic 13. I'm calling them 3am tracks. Lately I've been loving

SEE **TAYLOR SWIFT'S  
MIDNIGHT**  
PAGE 20



## A FLOOD OF WELLSPRINGS



BY JONAH JAMES,  
STAFF WRITER

In the Zohar, we learn that *Shabbos* blesses all the days of the coming week. While *Shabbos Bereishis* is the first Shabbos of the year, representing the first blessing offered onto mundanity, *Shabbos Parshas Noach* manifests this blessing by imbuing that work with rest. In a 1992 talk given by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, he explains how Noah and his family saw a new world after emerging from the ark, and how we, in turn, can become conscious of the *geula* (redemption) today. By delving into Torah – especially *Chassidus* and concepts about *Moshiach* – we hasten *Moshiach's* full revelation, the era when every day is like *Shabbos*, and when knowledge of G-d fills the earth like water covers the sea (Isaiah, 11:9).

In *Parshas Noach*, Hashem promises that the rainbow will remain an everlasting sign of G-d's covenant with man, indicating the world's continued existence. *Bereishis*, on the other hand, expresses the world's creation, not its sustenance. *Bereishis* is the universe from Hashem's perspective, while *Noach* is the universe from our perspective – one that exists after man's descent into sin and his subsequent *teshuvah* (return). Our job, says the Rebbe, is to refine our surroundings into a home for Hashem (*Midrash Tanchuma Naso*), to the point that we “see a new world”, (*Bereishis Rabbah*, 30:8) like Noah and his family saw after leaving the ark, even though we are still in exile.

The Rebbe explains that the divine name *Havaya* (Yud-Kay-Vav-Kay) refers to G-d above the world, while *Elokim* refers to Hashem hidden within the world. This is like the sun, which emanates light, and the sun's photosphere, which filters sunlight so that we can receive it. If the sun's energy directly expressed itself on earth, we could not tolerate it, and hence sunlight must be filtered, as the verse says, “The sun and a shield [are] *Havaya* [and] *Elokim*” (*Tehillim* 84:11). *Elokim* allows the world to feel like an independent existence, without being totally subsumed in *Havaya's* infinite light. At first, Hashem made the world only from the name *Elokim*, “*Bereishis Bara Elokim*,” (In the beginning, *Elokim* created the world); but a few verses later the Torah says *Havaya Elokim* made the world (*Bereishis*, 2:4). So which is it? The answer can be found by delving into *Parshas Noach*.

Noah, who “found favor with *Havaya*,” revealed G-dliness above nature, in nature (*Bereishis* 6:8). Noah brought down *Havaya*, G-d as He transcended the world, even as the world still functioned according to nature. In the words of the Mittlerer Rebbe, the creation (*yesh hagashmi*) realizes its existence is the ultimate existence (*yesh hamiti*), namely, that G-d's concealment is, in fact, revelation. We see this in G-d's maintenance of the natural order, which is unchanging, and reflects how “I, G-d, have not changed” (*Malachi* 3:6), a reference to His infinitude. From this recognition we draw down a

higher level within *Havaya* itself, specifically because finite creations make this recognition. The Rebbe is giving us the ability to see through galus (exile), which is now only a veil, and into the *geula* (redemption).

These ideas find practical expression in *Parshas Lech Lecha*, which we read during *Mincha* of *Shabbos Parshas Noach*. Just as Avraham leaves behind what he previously knew, so too we can radically “walk” through levels of G-dliness until we arrive at “*Havaya is Elokim*.” As we see in the words “*Lech lecha*” (Go out), there is a command and empowerment for everyone to leave exile and enter redemption. G-d instructs Avraham to go to “the land which I will show you,” or *Arecka*. But *Arecka* also has another meaning: “I will reveal you,” – by entering mundanity, we reveal our deepest G-dly identity (*Torah Or, Parshas Lech Lecha*).

While in our individual lives, we may occasionally falter, this in no way detracts from our collective Divine service throughout all the generations, which the Rebbe says is complete. If there is one minor sickness in a healthy body, the healthy body will heal the ailment, and so our combined *teshuvah* has rectified any specific flaw within the Jewish people. Today, all of the work needed to bring *Moshiach* has finished, as the Rebbe teaches that “all the buttons have been polished,” and all that is left to do is stand ready and accept *Moshiach*.

As the Davidic dynasty returns,

“moonlight will become like sunlight” (the *Kiddush Levanah* liturgy) in a state of total unity, and *Havaya* will shine openly in *Elokim* (*Likkutei Levi Yitzchak on Zohar Chelek Gimmel*, page 333). We are like the moon, and Hashem is like the sun, and although in exile we reflect His light, in the future we will illuminate on our own and crown Hashem (*Kuntres Rosh Chodesh Kislev* 5752). Through our spiritual work in exile we make a home for Hashem, and we have the ability to realize this completion. Just as Noah saw a new world, so too the Rebbe gives us the *Chassidus* to perceive the integration of *Havaya* and *Elokim*. All we must do is “open our eyes.”

## TAYLOR SWIFT'S MIDNIGHTS

FROM PAGE 18

the feeling of sharing more of our creative process with you, like we do with From The Vault Tracks. So it's 3am and I'm giving them to you now." From The Vault Tracks are songs that Swift wrote for previous albums that didn't make the final cut. Listeners now had seven more songs to laugh to, cry to, and sing together. Needless to say, Swift didn't sleep that night and neither did her fans. The release of *Midnights* was like one big slumber party with all of your best friends.

From the beginning of pro-

motions for *Midnights*, Swift made it clear that this album was a gift of appreciation for her fans. Swift announced her new album in her acceptance speech at the MTV Video Music Awards in August. Her short film, *All Too Well*, had won video of the year, best long-form video and best direction. *All Too Well (10 Minute Version) (Taylor's Version)* is a longer version of Swift's fan-favorite song, which was originally released in 2012. It is part of the songwriter's undertaking to re-record her old music to take back ownership of her records. In her acceptance speech, Swift thanked her fans. "I wouldn't be able to re-record my albums if it wasn't for you. You emboldened me to do that." As a token of her gratitude, she

announced that her new album would be coming out on October 21st.

*Midnights* is Swift's first "directly autobiographical" album in three years, as she explained in her *Tonight Show* interview. The songs on her previous two studio albums, *Folklore* and *Evermore*, were fictional stories. Swift recently released re-recorded versions of her earlier personal albums *Fearless* and *Red*, but *Midnights* is the first new music about her own life that she's released in years. The lyrics are relatable, fun, and current, making the album Taylor Swift's most approachable work for the modern generation. *Midnights* is already the top selling album of the

year with a five star review from Rolling Stones, which accurately named the record an "instant classic."

# SPORTSWASHING AND SOFT POWER AT THE WORLD CUP



BY ELIYAHU SOLOMON

Within the international system, one prevailing theory suggests countries act in ways that would increase their own power. The most apparent and well-known method of power-building is the development and display of tangible might. This includes advanced weaponry, a large standing army and reserve force, and, in extreme cases, invading weaker countries.

There is, however, another way

for a country to build its strength. While the aforementioned is described in terms of "hard power," there is also "soft power." This consists of a country's economic standing, as well as its cultural and historic influence, including its cultural exports, tourism, and economic attractions.

This 'soft power' can help shape a country's international standing in terms of both global respect and diplomatic ties and is seen as generally attainable by all countries. This gives it an advantage

over hard power, a traditionally more difficult route to take because it requires significantly more resources and political will.

The downside of soft power is that it relies on societal whims. Essentially, a country can only become popular if it encourages tourism and provides its citizens with enjoyable and meaningful experiences.

Regardless, countries throughout the world have exploited

consumerist trends and developed soft power, by using sports and international competitions to distract attention away from human rights abuses, supporting terrorist causes, and many other non-democratic values.

The process of cleaning up a country's image using sports,

SEE **WORLD CUP**  
PAGE 21

## WORLD CUP

FROM PAGE 21

or “sportswashing,” is hardly new. In Berlin’s 1936 Summer Olympics, now known as the “Nazi Olympics,” Hitler successfully pushed Aryan Germans into the global spotlight by having them win sporting events.

Similarly, Russia hosted the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, one year after passing anti-gay legislation, and China, which is responsible for its enslavement of Uyghur Muslims, hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. Both countries have attempted to use sporting events to advance their global standing in the face of human rights abuse.

Quasi-governmental entities also participate in sportswashing. When state-owned businesses sponsor shirts of football teams, such as Fly Emirates which sponsors many different teams around the world from across different sporting leagues, the players and fans who wear the uniforms become walking advertisements

for the foreign state. Ownership groups such as City Sports Group, who own football powerhouse Manchester City FC, are run by Abu Dhabi United Group. In addition, the recent sale of Newcastle United, of which 80% of the funds were provided by the Saudi Public Investment Fund, is further proof of repressionist governments seeing the value of owning sports franchises. In this case, the backlash was so severe that several UK Parliament members threatened to axe the deal. In turn, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman, threatened former PM Boris Johnson to revert the UK-Saudi relations should the deal fall through, emphasizing the importance these countries place on the value of sports influence.

Sportswashing is actually happening right now in Qatar and the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Back in 2009, FIFA began the process for the selection of the host site for the 2022 World

Cup. Typically, countries involved in the selection process have large fanbases, or at the very least, a history of football success and ample resources. Yet most often, smaller countries wind up hosting the games. In this case, the winner of the 2009 bid was Qatar, a small but oil-wealthy Arab nation, that outlasted the United States, Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

Almost instantly red flags were waved. Qatar easily became the smallest nation to host the World Cup, and they lacked the crucial infrastructure not only to host games but also the thousands of fans from across the globe who come to support their country.

Qatar is also governed by Sharia, Islamic religious law, which limits alcohol consumption and avidly rejects homosexuality, creating a dangerous environment for fans who may not be so familiar with the proper rules, but might be punished for violating them nonetheless. Qatari weather is also too hot, with summer temperatures reaching well over 100 degrees, which creates a hazard for both fans and players. This was avoided by moving the tournament to the winter, despite the fact that this would cause delays to many domestic football leagues around the world.

In addition, there are ongoing accusations that Qatar’s bid for the World Cup was rife with corruption, with a number of different articles and investigations alleging that Qatari officials paid FIFA members large sums of money in exchange for hosting the tournament. While both FIFA and Qatar insist that these allegations are untrue, investigations are still ongoing, and in 2015, a number of different FIFA officials were arrested in Switzerland and the United States under accusations of corruption and bribery.

The biggest controversy surrounding this tournament, however, is the Qatari treatment of migrant workers. According to an Amnesty International inquiry, migrant workers — typically from India — have had their identity papers taken away and were forced into suboptimal working and living conditions. Despite all this, starting No-

vember 18th and continuing through December 20th, billions of fans around the world will be watching the World Cup, with thousands more in person in Qatar. Sponsorship deals worth billions of dollars will be spent and funneled into Qatar and its economy.

Still, there has been minimal pushback from the World Cup competitors. Qualifying teams have issued no boycotts, no active players will be sitting out, and not a single high-level sponsor pulled their sponsorship from advertising at the World Cup.

While there will most likely be small gestures of protest on the field (in fact, Denmark released “protest uniforms”), at the end of the day most people will remember the games, and most fans and tourists will remember their experiences in Qatar, and the history books will look back at this moment as just another World Cup. The storylines will be based on the events of the tournament, not the build-up to it.

Will the hosting of the World Cup lead to any positive changes within the Qatari regime, or will the government use its newfound fame to further its own idealistic goals? Only time

will tell, but should they be successful, you can certainly expect a few more countries to follow in the footsteps of using sports and star power to strengthen their position in the global power sphere.



# Talia Tutoring

LSAT, GMAT, and GRE  
Tutoring Services

[www.taliatutoring.com](http://www.taliatutoring.com)

# HOUSE OF THE DRAGON SEASON 1 REVIEW



BY YITZY WARREN,  
STAFF WRITER

*House of The Dragon* started with one of the biggest disadvantages I've ever seen a show carry; It is the prequel to one of the most popular shows of all time with a historically unpopular ending. To make matters even more difficult, *HOTD* is not based on a standard novel, but rather a fictional history book of sorts, with a story that frequently jumped ahead in time. I was not looking forward to the show, but I figured that since the showrunners of the original show were gone and George R.R. Martin was heavily involved (the author of the book the show is based on), I would check out the first season.

The show centers on the Targaryen dynasty, a family that has ruled the fictional land of Westeros for generations. King Viserys boldly breaks tradition and names his daughter and only child Rhaenyra heir. Later, Viserys has a son with his second wife, Allicent Hightower, and certain allegiances conspire to put their son on the throne. Tensions between Rhaenyra and Allicent rise as each feel threatened by the other's presence, until the kingdom is plunged into a civil war. The story is rounded out by several intriguing figures. Daemon,

Viserys's brother, is a cunning rogue whose unpredictable behavior makes him one of the most entertaining characters. Otto, Allicent's father, is a classic *Game of Thrones* schemer, who uses his daughter as a tool to achieve his ends. Corlys and Rhaenys Valerion, relatives of the Targaryens, are an older couple who face multiple tragedies as Corlys strives to get his family closer to the Iron Throne. There are at least seven other interesting people who I don't have the page space to list.

The casting in *HOTD*, like its predecessor *GOT*, is its biggest strength. Nearly every actor does an amazing job at bringing these characters to life. Six major people go through actor changes due to time jumps, and five of them were seamless. Emily Carey and Olivia Cooke look nearly identical as they play Allicent. Emily does a great job at portraying Allicent's shift from naive to total awareness of her situation. When Cooke steps into the role, she doesn't miss a beat as Allicent's anger grows when she sees Rhaenyra flout tradition. Leo Ashton and Ewan Mitchell's performances as Aemond, Allicent's second child, were probably my favorites in the show. Ashton has a tragic viciousness that Mitchell really builds on as he adds an imposing physicality to the role. His body appears constantly tense

and ready to snap at a moment's notice.

There were, however, a few acting blights in the show. Sonoya Mizuno, who plays Mysaria the prostitute, is genuinely terrible; she chooses to speak in an outrageous accent that stiffens her delivery. The other qualm I had was the portrayal of Prince Aegon. I thought the two actors who played him had very different takes on the characters, resulting in a choppy transition between the two.

The sets, wardrobe, CGI, and makeup are all top notch. Many of the behind the scenes workers from the original show continued on to this one and the show really benefits from it. It still looks and feels like *Game of Thrones*. There's one major reason why I don't love the show: the structure of the story. Each episode contains extra scenes that are light on plot and heavy on character. In *Game of Thrones*, those moments were some of the best. Think of the "chaos is a ladder" scene, the conversation between Robert and Cersei in season one, or the entirety of *Knight of the Seven Kingdoms*, the second episode of season eight. However in *House of the Dragon*, the frequent time jumps rob the audience of the context needed for those scenes to be effective. For example, a woman dies in childbirth in the final scene of the sixth episode. Even while watching her

husband and children crying, I felt nothing, because up until this episode she had just been a child with a mere ten minutes of screen time. I hardly knew her and the show acted as if her death was the most heartbreaking moment.

Every couple of episodes the show softly reset. It needed to tell the audience what had changed over the years and what everyone is up to now. It does not always do a great job of it. Frequently throughout the show I had to ask myself, "Did I miss something or is this just badly written?"

Luckily for the audience, future seasons should not suffer from this problem. The showrunners have said publicly that there will be no more extended time jumps. Season 1 had a very strong ending and as the civil war is finally upon us, I'm confident that Season 2 will be very entertaining.

I'd recommend *HOTD* if you: are a patient *Game of Thrones* fan, enjoy period dramas, or like being a part of watercooler TV show conversations

5/10

***WANT TO WRITE FOR THE  
OBSERVER?***

***HAVE AN IDEA YOU WANT  
TO SHOW, OR A PASSION YOU  
WANT TO SHARE?***

***JOIN THE YU OBSERVER  
WRITERS WHATSAPP CHAT  
FOR UPDATES ON HOW YOU  
CAN WRITE FOR OUR NEXT  
EDITION:***



# JQY

## IS HERE FOR YOU

JQY supports and empowers LGBTQ Jewish youth with a special focus on teens and young adults from Orthodox, Chassidic, and Sephardi/Mizrahi communities.

*Ways to join the JQY family:*

Download the **JQY community app**

Join us at our **virtual drop-in center**

*Tuesdays from 7pm-8:30pm EST*

Join us at our NYC **in-person drop-in center**

*Thursdays from 6:30pm-9:30pm EST*

Find us **online** at  
[jqy.org](http://jqy.org) or [@jewishqueeryouth](https://www.instagram.com/jewishqueeryouth)

**NEED SUPPORT?**

*Call or text the JQY hope-line anytime at  
551-JQY-HOPE • 551-579-4673*