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Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice Opens at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

By JONATHAN FELMAN

This article was originally published online on Nov. 30

The Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice at Cardozo Law, created with a \$15 million donation from Isaac and Laura Perlmutter and the Perlmutter Foundation, opened at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law on Oct. 27.

The center, announced on Oct. 31, will be comprised of two divisions, The Perlmutter Freedom Clinic at Cardozo Law and The Perlmutter Forensic Science Education Program. Both units will, in different ways, teach law students and current practitioners how to approach forensic materials in court cases and will aim to address the misuse of scientific evidence in court.

The donation came during YU's Rise Up campaign, which began in 2018 and seeks to raise \$613 million.

According to John DeNatale, associate dean of communications and public affairs at Cardozo, some of the reasons Cardozo was chosen were due to its past criminal defense work and its location in New York. Additionally, DeNatale added, Cardozo's hosting of the Forensic Science College, an

annual conference held at the law school that addresses contemporary uses of forensic sciences in the courtroom, positioned Cardozo as one of the top law schools in the field of forensic sciences, and may have impacted the Perlmutter Foundation's choice to donate.

"The Forensic Science College positions Cardozo as one of the best-known legal institutions working in the field of forensic science," said DeNatale.

"Students [will] gain hands-on experience with the challenges of integrating scientific evidence into legal decision-making, and an understanding of how courts employ this form of proof."

John DeNatale, Associate Dean of Communications and Public Affairs at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

The Perlmutter Freedom Clinic, which opened on October 27, will train students in the use of forensic science in court cases and the role scientific evidence plays in legal decisions as well as how to use this evidence.

"Students [will] gain hands-on experience with the challenges of integrating scientific evidence into legal decision-making, and an understanding of how courts employ this form of proof," said DeNatale.

Students involved in the clinic will also work to secure clemency for felons whose sentences were disproportionate to the nature of the crime committed.

The Perlmutter Forensic Science Education Program will be designed to help practicing attorneys and judges, and will aim to further education in scientific evidence in the courtroom. It is expected to open in early 2023.

There is a huge amount of work to be done in this field beyond DNA evidence."

The executive director of the Freedom Clinic will be Josh Dubin, president of Dubin Research and Consulting. Dubin has previously worked with Cardozo and was the first innocence ambassador advisor at Cardozo's Innocence Project. Derrick Hamilton will be deputy director. Hamilton himself was wrongfully convicted and taught himself law in prison, eventually exonerating himself in court.

The Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Foundation was created by Isaac and Laura Perlmutter with the simply stated goal of helping others, with an eye toward health care and social justice. It has recently helped the New York City area with numerous donations to NYU Langone Health's Cancer Center, now named the Laura and Isaac Perlmutter Cancer Center.

The Perlmutter Foundation did not respond to The Commentator's requests for comment.

Deans Run 'Open Forums' to Receive Student Feedback

By ROCHEL LEAH ITZKOWITZ

This article was originally published online on Nov. 22

Three administration members involved in student life met with students on the Beren and Wilf Campuses earlier this month in "open forums" meant to increase student dialogue with the administration and provide student feedback.

Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh, Interim Dean of Undergraduate

at Rubin Shul on Wilf Campus on Nov 3.

"The Deans Forums," Schwab told The Commentator, "are a chance for us to get feedback and have discussions with students in addition to the many interactions we have through our typical work. Attendees submitted questions and shared their perspectives at the forums."

At the Beren Campus forum, students posed questions about various issues, including the yet-to-exist Kol Yisrael Areivim Club, the Yeshiva Success Network, academic advising and major representation.

"The Deans Forums are a chance for us to get feedback and have discussions with students in addition to the many interactions we have through our typical work. Attendees submitted questions and shared their perspectives at the forums."

Jonathan Schwab, director of the Office of Student Life

Students Sara Asher and Office of Student Life (OSL) Director Jonathan Schwab met a group of about a dozen students at Yagoda Commons on Beren Campus on Nov. 2 and

At Wilf Campus, students posed questions about cafeteria prices as well as Kol

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Israeli Colonel Visits YU for Shabbat

By GAVRIEL FACTOR

This article was originally published online on Nov. 30

Golan Vach, a reserve Colonel in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) who commands a humanitarian search and rescue unit, joined Yeshiva University as a guest for Shabbat Parshat Noach as a guest on October 28th-29th.

Vach was brought to YU by The United States Chaplain Corps (USCC) and by Rabbi Herschel Hartz, program administrator for Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS). On campus, he spoke with students and led prayers, a *tisch* and a *melava malka*.

Vach, a commander in the IDF's Search and Rescue Brigade, led a unit in conducting search and rescue operations during the collapse of the Champlain Tower South in in Surfside, Florida in the summer of 2021. Vach also works with the people trying to make Aliyah to Israel from other countries.

Over Shabbat, Vach led Friday night prayers as well as a *tisch* with Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Josh Blass, who also stayed for Shabbat. Vach also led a *melava malka* after Shabbat, while playing the guitar, with about 75 students, alumni and chaplains

from the USCC over the course of the evening.

Vach also spoke about Israel and the IDF.

"I also tried to bring the songs of Israel 'Mizimrat Haaretz' to YU," Vach told The Commentator, "and spoke about the beauty of the Land of Israel and the unique values of the IDF working all over the world to help countries in need."

"When I entered YU's shul on Kabbalat Shabbat and heard the singing of Yedid Nefesh, I realized that I had found what I had been looking for a long time abroad."

Colonel Golan Vach

Chaplin Max Coen and Rabbi Chaplain Mendy Coen from the USCC, who worked together with Vach in Surfside, Florida during the rescue operation contacted Hartz

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It Is Our Time To Act On Behalf Of Adults With Special Needs

By **ARIEL KAHAN**

The room is filled with a combination of laughter and bickering as food is passed or occasionally thrown across the table. He just sits as his face gleams with a smile. After a long day, he can enjoy his siblings, who came home from their day at school. Although he does not have many other friends or people to talk to throughout the day, he is completely content. For him, there is nothing more meaningful than just being with his siblings, the people who know him and love him the most. He imagines that they will be there forever.

They grin and watch as their children interact with each other. While they know they will have a tough night ahead, filled with homework assistance and looking after a child with special needs, they also know they will be given support. Volunteers from a community organization come one evening a week and occasionally on a Shabbat afternoon to spend time with their child. The week ahead offers a school program for six–seven hours daily, structured with speech, occupational and physical therapy, learning and trips. Life is certainly not easy, but it is manageable and somewhat predictable because of the community infrastructure. Although life is stressful, the parents are grateful that there are resources and support for children with special needs in the community.

Fast-forward ten years.

The room is filled with a combination of silence and uncertainty as the bowl of soup is gently placed by his mother on his plate. After a long day, he gazes at the empty chairs his siblings used to occupy every night. Their absence is certainly justified — one is in college and about to get married, the other is spending a gap year in Israel and the third is at a basketball practice — but it is lonelier than before. For him, the most meaningful thing would be if the clock was turned back to the good old days — when his day was capped off by hugs and warmth from the people in the world that meant the most to him. He imagined they would be there forever.

They watch with a meager smile as their child eats his soup alone. While they no longer have nights filled with homework and bedtimes, they know they will not have any support for the rest of the night. The now adult child with special needs will spend the evening alone with his parents, with one often busy with meetings, professional obligations, weddings

and other events. While many programs were helpful when he was younger, their child, now 21, has aged out of the district program and will have difficulty finding a similar one going forward.

Community support and infrastructure are suddenly part of the past, leaving the child with very few options. Many day programs exist, but some are better and offer more than others. The stronger programs have long waiting lists, some months or even years long. The families are forced to rely on individuals from agencies, some of whom are not consistently reliable and cancel sessions several times a week. While other kids go off to Israel and college, their son is left without any plan or program. They watch as their peers are liberated from the responsibilities of child-rearing, while they are still physically exhausted and worried about the future of their child.

We should strive to seek out those in our communities who may be invisible and make sure they are not being overlooked.

Starting to plan several years in advance, it is still most difficult to line up both day programming and living arrangements for the young adult with special needs. While people recommend group homes in the county (some of which are attached to a day program), they cannot imagine their child not wearing tefillin every day. They cannot envision the empty seat in shul on Shabbat morning. Who knows what food their child will be served? Will it even be kosher?

Parents of adults with special needs are aging and exhausted from being not only fathers and mothers but teachers, therapists, medical caregivers and advocates as well. They need a break and want their son to grow but are afraid to lose control and upend everything the child has ever known — his Jewish family values, observance, customs and traditions.

The Jewish community needs observant group homes for adults with special needs. As a lifelong sibling of someone with special needs, I have an insider perspective of how this situation can affect a family. However, I think that the establishment of Jewish group homes for adults with special needs is the long-term solution. While there are some options, such as programs

like Makor and HASC homes, these options aren't suitable for everyone. While I witnessed, benefited from and appreciated the outside help when my sibling was younger, that support no longer exists.

Many of us volunteered in high school and now in college in Friendship Circle or Yachad volunteers, but most of us "outgrow" the opportunity as our lives progress. We should strive to seek out those in our communities who may be invisible and make sure they are not being overlooked.

We may just need to start small. For example, we can begin by discussing this important topic with friends or relatives that may be less aware. Another idea would be to simply offer to take out an adult with special needs for a few hours over the weekend. While one may view it is an insignificant part of the day, it would do wonders for the family. At this point, the raising of awareness can help facilitate something bigger. Ultimately, everyone taking small actions now can lead to bigger and better solutions later.

The room is filled with a combination of laughter and bickering as food is passed or occasionally thrown across the table. He just sits as his face gleams with a smile. After a long day, he is just able to enjoy the people he got to spend his day with. Although he no longer sees his parents or siblings every second, he still gets to see them often. For him, there is nothing more meaningful than the visits from his siblings and parents, the people who know him and love him the most. He thinks of them when he wraps his tefillin every morning. He smiles when he hears he will be sitting with his father in shul on shabbos. He knows they will love him forever. But he also forms new relationships within his community, with adults who take time to visit on Shabbat and who notice him in shul.

They watch with a grin as they get ready for their first Shabbat nap they have taken in over thirty years. While they know they have a visit to look forward to later in the week, they are reaping the benefits of being empty nesters after being given the support they needed. Life is certainly different, but it is more manageable because the community infrastructure is there. They worry just a bit less about what will happen when they are no longer there to take care of their child. *Baruch Hashem*, they realize that there is a lot of support for children and adults with special needs of all ages in the community.

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

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Award-Winning Author Jai Chakrabarti Speaks to Dozens of Students about 'A Play for the End of the World'

By DOV PFEIFFER

This article was originally published online on Nov. 22

Jai Chakrabarti, an award-winning Indian-American author, addressed over seventy students and professors about his

"It was 'The Post Office' that Janusz Korczak chose to stage in 1942, weeks before he and all his children were rounded up to Treblinka. And learning that — I was absolutely transfixed."

Jai Chakrabarti

award-winning book, "A Play for the End of the World," which relates a fictional account of a Warsaw Ghetto survivor and his later life, on Nov. 7.

The event, originally intended as a virtual session for a graduate class, was held at the Sky Cafe in Belfer Hall on Wilf Campus and was attended by undergraduate and Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies students, as well as 10 professors from YU's English Department. Attendees were served a kosher Indian meal prepared by YU's cafeteria.

"A Play for the End of the World" won the 2021 National Jewish Book Award winner for Debut Fiction, and is a fictional account of a member of Janusz Korczak's orphanage, who

was a Polish Jewish doctor and educator and was murdered with the youths in his care in Treblinka during the Holocaust.

Unlike in reality, where no members of the orphanage survived, "A Play for the End of the World" portrays a fictionalized account of the life of an imagined survivor of that orphanage, and starts off with a true-

to-life performance of Bengali playwright Rabindranath Tagore's "Dak Ghar," or "The Post Office," which Korczak ran in his orphanage shortly before the orphans were deported to Treblinka in August 1942.

Chakrabarti discussed various facets of his book, including its historical background, his writing style, his life story and his connection to the book's story.

Born in Kolkata, India to parents who were refugees from Bangladesh, Chakrabarti went to a school that was in the Guinness book of world records for being the most populous school in the world. At that school, he performed in a production of Tagore's "Dak Ghar". Many years later, when he was living in Jerusalem, he discovered the story

of Korczak's production of that play at a visit to Yad Vashem, and described being blown away by the story, eventually inspiring him to write "A Play for the End of the World."

"Because if I take you back again to that populous school in India," Chakrabarti told the audience, explaining his interest in Korczak's production, "one of the plays that I was performing ... was, in fact, 'The Post Office.' And it was 'The Post Office' that Janusz Korczak chose to stage in 1942, weeks before he and all his children were rounded up to Treblinka. And learning that — I was absolutely transfixed."

He also read excerpts from the book,

elaborating on their background, styles and influences and took questions from the audience.

The event was co-sponsored by the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Center for International Affairs, the Emil A. and Jennie Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University, the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, the Yeshiva College Department of English and the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program.



Over seventy people attended the event

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ISRAELI COLONEL VISITS

Continued from Front Page

when they heard that Vach was visiting the United States, leading to Hartz's visit. Shabbat coordinator Rabbi Jed Zaslow and UTS Dean Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky also helped plan Vach's visit.

Hatz told The Commentator that he felt that Vach was the right person to visit YU given his accomplishments, and that inviting him was a "no-brainer."

"Besides providing powerful Shabbat programming on campus," Hartz told The Commentator, "we have a responsibility as an institution that believes in core Torah values to show students how to live those

values in real life. Colonel Vach represents the best of the Jewish people — someone who is devoted to sacrificing his own comfort to live by example.

"It was a no-brainer — when offered the opportunity, Colonel Vach was a perfect fit."

Students enjoyed Vach's visit and found it inspiring.

"Hearing Colonel Vach on Shabbat was truly an honor," said Yosef Scher (YC '25). "The stories he shared about going to places where people needed his help and then saving them from nearly collapsing buildings were extremely inspiring.

"I hope that the Colonel returns to YU in the future," Scher added.

Similarly, Vach also enjoyed his visit.

"When I entered YU's shul on Kabbalat Shabbat," Vach told The Commentator, "and heard the singing of Yedid Nefesh, I realized that I had found what I had been looking for a long time abroad, and in general ... Jewish students who know how to sing and have the right depth and intention.

"I am looking forward to visiting YU again," Vach added.



Chaplain Max Coen, Colonel Golan Vach, Rabbi Herschel Hartz, and Rabbi Chaplain Mendy Coen at Shenk Shul

MOISHE RECHESTER / YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Ryan Turell, All-Time Scorer for the YU Maccabees, Debuts in G League

By RINA SHAMILOV

This article was originally published online on Nov. 21

Ryan Turell (SSSB '22) made his debut for the NBA's G League affiliate the Motor City Cruise at Wayne State Fieldhouse on Nov. 7. The team played against the Windy City Bulls, losing 125–109.

Turell was drafted number 27 overall following a strong record playing for Yeshiva University's men's basketball team, the Maccabees. Turell has previously expressed hopes to join the NBA as its first Orthodox Jewish player.

The relationship between the G League and the NBA is set up so that players can transfer from one league to the other. 47% of this season's NBA players have had G League experience. Turell, through his drafting for the G League, is now close to achieving his dream of joining the NBA.

"The @YUNews legend," tweeted the NBA G League, referencing Yeshiva University's Twitter name, "is looking to become the first Orthodox Jew in NBA History." The tweet was posted a day after Turell played his first game.

Turell only played for three minutes in

"[Ryan Turell] is looking to become the first Orthodox Jew in NBA History."

NBA G League

that game and his only shot did not score. He has since scored ten points.

Turell possesses the record for most points in YU history with 2,158 points. In his final season at YU, Turell led the NCAA across all divisions in scoring, averaging 27.1 points per game. He also helped his team

secure a 50-game winning streak, leading the Macs to rank number one in Division III for a time.

As an Orthodox Jew in the sporting arena, joining the minor league NBA team has caused religious concerns for Turell — his Shabbat observance makes it difficult for him to participate in practices. The Motor City Cruise, affiliated with the Detroit Pistons, has reportedly been immensely supportive of Turell's religious practices.

Turell, who is Shabbat observant, has no objections to playing the sport on Shabbat, but avoids other activities, such as traveling, on the Jewish day of rest. The Cruise stayed at a hotel within walking distance of the site of their Friday night opener. But because Turell would be staying back an extra night — so as to avoid traveling on Shabbat — they provided him with kosher meals and a hot plate, along with a separate ride home. Turell did not play in that game.

His father, Brad Turell, shared with

the Forward that "The Pistons/Cruise organization has been amazing in every aspect of not only respecting Ryan's religious followings, but helping enable it in the most accommodating way."



Ryan Turell has begun to play for the Motor City Cruise

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Yeshiva University to Run 'In the Heights' Shabbaton this Week

By EZRA BARON

This article was originally published online on Nov. 29

Yeshiva University will host its first-ever "In the Heights" Shabbaton on Dec. 2-3. The Shabbaton will provide students with a unique opportunity to learn about the history of the Jewish community in



K'hal Adath Jeshurun

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Washington Heights by allowing students to interact with the larger Washington Heights Jewish community.

Rabbi Herschel Hartz, program administrator of Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS), and Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, dean of UTS, began planning this Shabbaton in late October to ensure the availability of all the parties involved.

The Shabbaton will begin with students attending different local homes for Friday night dinner, followed by a *tisch* with the Dombrover Rebbe, who will speak about his father, Rabbi Naftoli Tzvi Rubin, who used to run a Shtiebel in Washington Heights. For Shabbat lunch, students will head to K'hal Adath Jeshurun (KAJ), popularly known as Breuer's, where they will be met by Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer, a KAJ member and graduate of Rabbi Issac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS); Mr. Samson Bechofer, a grandson of Rabbi Joseph Breuer and a trustee at KAJ; and YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Hershel Schachter.

At KAJ, students will hear about the history and religious philosophy of Breuer's.

The Shabbaton will conclude with *seudah shlishit* at the Mount Sinai Jewish Center and a *melave malka* in YU.

The chance to do something local was very important to Hartz and Kalinsky. While sometimes going off campus or bringing in a special guest can be more exciting, Hartz

Hartz told The Commentator, "and be proud of our traditions but also be open to other ways of legitimate expression in Jewish life that expand our own religious lives.

"We want to think outside the box about what we can offer students," Hartz explained, "we cannot settle for the same

"We live and work and study in Washington Heights, a community that has a rich Jewish history."

Rabbi Herschel Hartz, program administrator of Undergraduate Torah Studies

realized that there is potential for unique opportunities in the Heights itself.

"We live and work and study in Washington Heights, a community that has a rich Jewish history," said Hartz.

Furthermore, Hartz believes that students can gain from exposure to other types of Jews living around campus.

"We should be proud of our Yeshiva,"

old, same old."

This Shabbaton is just the latest development in YU and UTS' efforts to create new Shabbat opportunities for students. Earlier this year, YU had a Shabbaton in Camp Romimu, the first school-wide Shabbaton in decades.

Efraim Zuroff, Director of the Simon Weisenthal Center, Speaks to Students about Holocaust Distortion in Commemoration of Kristallnacht

By RIKI GREENBERG

This article was originally published online on Dec. 1

Efraim Zuroff (YC '70), director of the Simon Weisenthal Center, spoke with undergraduate students at Belfer Hall at Wilf Campus about Holocaust Distortion in Eastern Europe on Nov. 10.

Dozens of students attended the lecture, which was organized by the Emil A. and Jenny Fisch Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies in commemoration of the eighty-fourth anniversary of Kristallnacht.

The Simon Weisenthal Center conducts Holocaust research and fights anti-Semitism as well as Holocaust denial. Dr. Efraim Zuroff has been the director at the center for 44 years, an active leader in prosecuting Nazi war criminals and combatting Holocaust distortion around the world.

Dr. Zuroff began the lecture by explaining the key distinction between Holocaust denial and distortion, specifically in Eastern Europe.

According to Zuroff, Holocaust denial occurs when people claim the entire genocide never happened. Holocaust distortion, Zuroff added, does not deny the Holocaust but instead pushes a fake narrative of the Shoah, leaving out critical details in order to paint a picture of

innocence.

At the event, Zuroff also highlighted a specific issue related to Holocaust distortion that is ongoing in Lithuania, where some Lithuanians claim that they had no part in

equate it to other events to gain sympathy.

"Everyone wants to latch their own problem onto the Shoah," said Zuroff, "and compare them, because it helps them gain support."

"While studying at YU in the late sixties, I never imagined that I would return more than 50 years later, to speak to the students of YU and Stern about Holocaust distortion. Nor did I ever think of becoming a 'Nazi-hunter.'"

Efraim Zuroff (YC '70), director of the Simon Weisenthal Center

the murder of Jewish people during the Second World War. In reality, Zuroff noted, Lithuanians were major contributors to Nazi efforts, both in ideological support as well as by murdering Jews.

Holocaust distortion is not unique to Lithuania, Zuroff added, and efforts to hide the contributions of national leaders toward the murder of Jews are currently taking place across Eastern Europe.

Zuroff warned of the dangers of these false narratives and urged students to remain well-informed and educated on the topic of Holocaust distortion. He also highlighted that because our generation has done such a good job showing the world the true horrors of the Holocaust, people try to

Zuroff condemned such behavior, and reminded the audience to never forget that the Holocaust "was the worst case of genocide in the annals of human history."

Zuroff also met with students, Fisch Center Director Shay Pilnik and assisted a Fisch student with their dissertation on Holocaust distortion.

Zuroff told The Commentator that he was happy to speak to YU students about Holocaust distortion, and mentioned that the subject was not widely discussed when he was a student at YU.

"While studying at YU in the late sixties (Class of 1970)," Zuroff told The Commentator, "I never imagined that I would return more than 50 years later,

to speak to the students of YU and Stern about Holocaust distortion. Nor did I ever think of becoming a 'Nazi hunter.' In those days, we weren't aware of these issues, nor was the subject of the Shoa anywhere near as important and 'popular,' ... I took Yitz Greenberg's [a now-retired professor at Yeshiva College] one-semester course as a senior, but that was the only one offered.

"As someone whose grandfather and both parents worked all their lives for YU," Zuroff added, "for me this was not simply another lecture. My only regret is that there was no Zoom option in *Gan Eden*."

Some students, like Avraham Walkenfeld (YC '23), enjoyed the event and found it informative.

"[It was] fascinating to discuss the difference between Holocaust denial and distortion as it applies to Lithuania," Walkenfeld told The Commentator, "especially from a notable Nazi hunter, and in a time of rising anti-Semitism."

The event, held in room 430 in Belfer Hall, was cosponsored by the Rabbi Arthur Schneier for International Affairs, Names Not Numbers, the Student Holocaust Educational Movement and the Norman E. Alexander Center for Jewish Life.

OPEN FORUMS

Continued from Front Page

Yisrael Areivim.

Future open forums may be narrower in scope, Schwab told The Commentator.

"For future sessions," Schwab said, "we may invite representatives from other departments and narrow the conversation more to specific areas.

Schwab also told The Commentator

that he felt the smaller number of students allowed for a more intimate conversation, and that he expects more students to attend future sessions.

"We are looking at the calendar for future dates," said Schwab, "and seeing if there is a better time that fits more students' schedules. And positive feedback from the

first event will, I think, get more attendance at the next one. But I was not disappointed in the turnout; having a smaller number of students there allowed us to have deeper conversations and engage more on their specific questions."

Schwab also felt that the forums were a success.

"I think it went very well," Schwab told The Commentator. "It was very valuable for us to have this time to talk through these topics with students, and I think the attendees felt that way as well."

Never is Now, Now: Takeaways from the ADL's Eye-Opening Conference on Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism

By JED SCHECHTER

As I entered the Javits Center on Nov. 10, picked up my name tag and walked down the steps into the conference hall. My curiosity was piqued. Never Is Now 2022, an annual conference run by the Anti Defamation League (ADL) on antisemitism and hate had already begun. The ADL is the leading organization whose mission is to battle against antisemitism, extremism, discrimination and hate of all kinds. In support of their valuable mission, YU requested that students, if able, attend this conference. I, along with several other students, decided to partake in this meaningful and interesting opportunity.

Yes, I know exactly what you're thinking: It must've been one of those high-end preachy conferences where there are more fancy suits and coffees being drunk than actual speaker content. While there was a lot of coffee being drunk and a lot of people in suits, it was also exceedingly eye-opening. There were a myriad of notable speakers and engaging topics of discussion. Listening to FBI Director Christopher Wray, famed "Friends" actor David Schwimmer, NYC Mayor Eric Adams and the CEO of Pfizer, Albert Bourla, amongst many, was captivating and insightful.

One of the speakers, Tanya Gersh, is a real estate agent from Montana who transformed into a leader in fighting antisemitism. After the mother of extremist neo-Nazi Richard Spencer reached out to Gersh, who is Jewish, regarding a real estate sale, Spencer was irate. Andrew Anglin, the editor of the Daily Stormer, an antisemitic website that took its name from Hitler Nazi propaganda, encouraged the online community to take action and orchestrated a horrific harassment campaign, relentlessly terrorizing Gersh and her family with antisemitic threats and messages, as well as releasing pictures of her personal information and pictures of her family to pin as targets. The hate mail included death threats, slurs, curses and holocaust images and memes. They depicted her as the enemy. After immense emotional, physical and social victimization, Gersh decided to fight back. She sued Anglin,

and in a federal court decision called "Gersh v. Anglin," she was victorious with a \$14 million judgment verdict.

Instead of playing the victim, Gersh took action and spread the message throughout the country that extremists and others who spread hate cannot and will not be tolerated and that there are severe consequences for those who abuse freedom of speech and swap it for hate speech. This deleterious extremism eats away at the very fabric of America, and the very fabric of humankind, and must be annihilated. This story shared by Gersh is paradigmatic to the suffering extremism and hate speech can result in, and illustrates the importance of being a hero, not giving in, and courageously snapping out of playing the role of the victim.

Another speaker, Pfizer CEO Albert

Everyone shuffled out of the same transparent doors to exit as we had entered the conference, yet everyone left with different conclusions, ideas and opinions.

Bourla, a Greek Jew, was instrumental in helping create the Covid mRNA vaccine, which was the turning point for illness, deaths and isolation stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. He spoke about the severe injurious nature of misinformation. The son of Sephardi Jews including a mother who was nearly second away from being killed in the Holocaust, Bourla spoke about the dangers of misinformation in regard to propaganda, antisemitism and in spurring the atrocities of the Nazi rise to power. He astutely remarked that "Hatred and ignorance prevent us from seeing each other as people and individuals, and false information leads to fear which in turn leads to tragic outcomes."

Additionally, Bourla was referring to the lies and disinformation spread regarding the vaccines, which heavily hindered individuals' adherence when given the opportunity to get immunized. Doing so would help oneself, one's family and the entire society, but due to the spreading of rumors and false information, there were, as Bourla said, "tragic outcomes," which

caused many unvaccinated individuals to die from COVID-19.

The worst, Bourla remarked, is when "people in power knowingly lie." Falsities become normalized when individuals with a lot of power repeat them or continue to spread lies. An individual who has a following and the power of persuasion, irrespective of party, political views or opinions, cannot abuse their influential power. Bourla called for the importance of "data-driven conversation and respectful debates, not personal attacks and the spreading of lies, because lives depend on it." He highlighted the severity of the matter and the importance of facts and data-driven conversation. "That doesn't mean we can't have disagreements; democracy is built on disagreement," he added. "But rather we need to respect those

[with] whom we disagree and rely on the facts."

The last speaker was well-known Republican Liz Cheney. Cheney, the previous chair of the House Republican Conference and House representative of Wyoming, shared a unique perspective. The lifelong Republican is more recently known for sabotaging her political career to fight against perceived hate speech, violence and extremism. She spoke about the political divide in the country, as opposed to the political issues which differ amongst each and every citizen and party. It is not a matter of political difference in which people differ in their opinions about the economy or taxes, as Cheney remarked, "I look forward to the days in which we can disagree." It is rather the vitriol and personal attacks which come with the arguments. It is the name-calling, animosity and vituperative attacks. This leads to political divide and animosity and thus breeds angry and hate-filled individuals. She emphasized that the role of a leader in a democracy is to understand that and to not tear apart an already divided nation.

As Abraham Lincoln famously remarked, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." This is true about any unit; a partnership, a marriage, a company and certainly a national democracy where the stakes are too great to crumble. The leader is one whose duty is to encourage dialogue, not silent opposition. To teach comradery, not incite violence. To motivate care, not instill hatred. To bolster Lincoln's proverbial house and not divide it further.

Everyone shuffled out of the same transparent doors to exit as we had entered the conference, yet everyone left with different conclusions, ideas and opinions. Through being open and listening to what others had to say, I gained a lot. Yes, I learned about standing up against hate, the dangers of misinformation and extremism, the importance of facts and data and the cruciality of not being filled with hatred or animosity. But on an even more fundamental level, a realization this event evoked is the idea that embracing an experience and being open to dialogue, listening and discussion, whether in line with one's own personal beliefs or not, can do wonders to one's seemingly close-minded way of thinking. Embracing others' opinions that are not our own broadens one's perspective and adds to the depth of one's character. So yes, there were a lot of people in suits and coffee being drunk, but the experience and ideas I left with were much more valuable than the cup of joe I drank there.



Never Is Now 2022 at the Javits Center

YEDIDYA SCHECHTER

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered: Does Your Major Have a Stereotype?

By FLORA SHEMTOB

Editor's Note: This issue's column is completely anonymous. Stay tuned for our next issue, when each student's major will be revealed.

When deciding on a major there are so many different things to keep in mind: Do you enjoy the major? What do you plan to do with your major after graduation? Is it easy? Is it hard? But most of all, what are some of the stereotypes that people associate with the major? Stereotypes are a widely accepted idea of a group of people that is usually oversimplified. Students in Yeshiva University with different fields of study were asked what stereotypes they think people associate with their major.

Student 1

"A lot of people say that it is so hard, or

that it's too much time in front of a computer. They also say it's too time-consuming but if it's something you enjoy, then it doesn't matter."

Students in Yeshiva University with different fields of study were asked what stereotypes they think people associate with their major.

Student 2

"A lot of people say that we are arrogant and short. There is a whole stereotype around how we dress (puffy vests and sneakers). A lot of people also say that there are a lot of Jews in our major."

Student 3

"People say that we are slackers. They think that we don't learn anything except manipulation. They think that we use psychology to manipulate people. They also say that it's a made-up major for finance bros who aren't smart enough to major in finance."

Student 4

"People say that this is the basic Stern major. They say it's for people who aren't smart enough to major in anything else. People also say it's just for people who are obsessed with criminal minds or want to be a therapist."

Student 5

"People say that we always correct people's grammar and that we want to be teachers."

Student 6

"It's a very small major here at Stern, but when I tell people they say things like, 'Don't you want to make money?' Most people see this job as something that is too much work and doesn't make a lot of money."

Student 7

"Often, when I tell people my major, they tell me, 'So, when will you run for president?'"

From The Bombs of Ukraine to Cardozo Law School: The Story of Professor Dmytro Vovk

By ZACHARY NOTKIN

Professor Dmytro Vovk, currently a visiting law professor at the Cardozo School of Law, is a Ukrainian refugee. I was privileged to speak with him over the holiday break and learn his story.

While in Ukraine, Vovk ran the Center for the Rule of Law and Religion Studies at Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University in Kharkiv and taught law at the Ukrainian Catholic University, in addition to other positions, including a fellowship at Brigham Young University (BYU).

When the invasion began in February, Vovk was living with his wife and children in Kharkiv, the second largest city in Ukraine as well as its academic center. Russian forces soon began indiscriminate bombings. While his youngest daughter had little idea of what was going on, his ten-year-old was traumatized when bombs began to fall on the city within a mile of their apartment. Additionally, he had to worry for the safety of his parents, who lived in central Ukraine. When a missile hit a shopping mall half a mile from his parents' apartment, "we all understood we were in danger after that."

On the third day of the invasion, the Russians began to assault Kharkiv directly, but were beaten back by the Ukrainian armed forces. Five days after the bombardment began, Vovk and his family fled westward, toward a safer part of the country. Looking back, he isn't sure why they waited those five horrible days, perhaps it was all just too surreal. Worried for their safety, due to the support of European colleagues, he managed to send his wife and children to Bratislava, where they stayed for a half of

a year. While it would have been easy to become hysterical under such circumstances, he said, "If you ask me my main feeling [from that time] it wouldn't be fear ... The main feeling was nonsense. How is it possible that there is a war in Europe in the 21st century? ... There is no rational reason for this war." Indeed, since the invasion, NATO has only been strengthened by the inclusion of new members while Russia has had significant losses of men and material.

While he was figuring out what to do next, Vovk received an offer from Yeshiva University to serve as a visiting professor at

well as Holocaust and Soviet repressions and atheistic campaigns, resulted in the near total disappearance of Orthodox Judaism in Ukraine, which started recovering and becoming more visible only after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

While Vovk and his immediate family are secular Jews, he praised Ukraine's recent moves towards a society tolerant towards all, including religious Jews. He contrasted this with Russia and Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, where Putin has created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation towards minority groups, including Jews. However,

way conservative universities in the US are more liberal than some liberal universities in eastern Europe. I mean academic freedom, first of all."

Personally, I was struck by Prof. Vovk's personable and unassuming exterior, along with his sharp, strong-willed and immensely knowledgeable interior.

At the end of the conversation, I wished him success in settling in New York. "They say if you can make it here [in New York] you can make it anywhere," he replied. "Well I am still in the process of making it here, but we can always hope." Prof. Vovk serves as an inspiration to myself and the human race as a whole, and it is an honor to welcome him to the YU community.

Professor Vovk serves as an inspiration to myself and the human race as a whole, and it is an honor to welcome him to the YU community.

Cardozo, which prompted his move to New York City. Despite the difficulties associated with moving into a new city with young children, the family managed to settle in well. Vovk particularly enjoys cultural centers like the Neue Galerie on the Upper East Side.

Vovk shared interesting perspectives about life in Ukraine and America.

The history of Jews in Eastern Ukraine, for whom Vovk's family serves as a microcosm, has been tumultuous since the turn of the nineteenth century. Many turned to secularism and celebrated the Russian Revolution as a form of emancipation from medieval persecution and discrimination they experienced in the Russian Empire, while many others fled to America. This, as

the Jewish community in Ukraine is still quite small, which Vovk noted makes it a remarkable "sign of diversity and pluralism of Ukrainian society, and also religious freedom" that Volodymyr Zelensky, a former comedian, obtained the presidency and has become a media sensation.

Steering the conversation toward his experience here at YU, Vovk expressed his gratitude to the university for welcoming him. When I asked him to evaluate the school's religious character and compare it with his stints at the Ukrainian Catholic University and BYU, he remarked, "In all communities you have more liberal and more conservative people ... It's impossible to say that the whole university thinks in one way, but I am always joking that in some



Prof. Dmytro Vovk

WILSON CENTER

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

(November 11, 1997; Volume 62, Issue 5) — Rabbis and Ayatollahs:

By AKIVA HERZFELD

Editor's Note: For the past two months, protests have raged across Iran following the arrest and eventual death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who was punished for incorrectly wearing her hijab. The government has responded forcefully and violently, killing and arresting hundreds of people.

Several thousand Jews still reside in Iran today. In light of the current situation in Iran, below is an article published in 1997 which highlights Iranian students at YU.

Iran: Demonized by the media, vilified by government officials, enthusiastically condemned by both the political pundit and the common citizen, it stands prominently among those nations that Americans most love to hate. Liable for bombings, assassinations, and other sinister schemes, Iran has assumed a diabolical role in American politics; the moniker of the "Great Satan" is reversed, and applied to the Islamic Republic itself.

With all the feuding between America and Iran, it sometimes becomes easy to forget that people actually inhabit Iran. However, as of the last census, 60 million people actually live there. 40% of these 60 million persons are under the age of 15. An estimated 10,000 persons, of these 60 million people, are Jews still populating Iran.

On the uptown campus of Yeshiva

University, there are about twenty students whose families emigrated from Iran. In separate interviews with The Commentator, some of these students spoke of the situation in their former home. One student, whose family left in 1979, told The Commentator how his family escaped. The other students, who have all left Iran in the past three months to three years, discussed politics in Iran, the cultural differences between the United States and Iran, and the life for Jews in present day Iran.

A Melamed Tells His Story

Today, for the follower of Mid-East politics, it sounds implausible that Jews and Iranians share anything in common. However, there is a pronounced link between the rich histories of these two peoples. Thousands of years ago, King Cyrus, after terminating Babylonian rule, permitted the Jews to return to Israel and rebuild the sacred Temple. Until the year 642 C.E., the Jews living under the Sassanids probably enjoyed considerable freedom in life, work, and business. Even after this, when Moslem rule was established, Jews, such as Rashid-ad-Din, were employed as court physicians or political advisors. While European governments either expelled or persecuted Jews, in Iran, Omar (636 - 646) had established a set of fairly moderate rules regulating the relationships between Jews and Moslems. In 1948, under Reza Shah Pahlevi, the state of Iran gave de facto

recognition to the state of Israel. Under his son's reign, the agents of SAVAK and those of Mossad worked together.

When confronted with this historical data, Ofer Melamed first pointed out that "It is Persia that has a long history, not Iran. It is Persia that treated the Jews well." Melamed then told The Commentator how deeply interconnected his own family's history is with that of Persian Jewry.

Ofer Melamed himself is the JSS president, a pre-med student, a Roth Scholar, a financial analyst, and a proud crusader for the cause of all Sephardim. The history of his family in Persia and the story of how they emigrated to the US are especially interesting.

For generations, dating back to the early 1400's, the Melamed family had been teachers, chachamim, and general community leaders of the Persian Jewish community in Teheran. Ofer's grandfather, the principal of Alliance University in Iran, following in the tradition of his ancestors, became a teacher as well. However, Massoud Melamed, Ofer's father, chose another occupation, deciding to become an engineer. Massoud was successful, and he ascended the ranks of Persian engineers, becoming one of the Shah's chief men.

In 1979, Massoud and his family's tranquil state of affairs ended abruptly. The status of those who had worked for the Shah deteriorated. February 1, 1979: The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, exiled in France, returns to Iran. October 14:

Khomeini is appointed faqih - the Supreme Jurisprudent. November 4: Fundamentalist students invade the American embassy in Teheran and take fifty-two hostages. Amid the chaos, Khomeini's followers compile hit lists of their enemies. Foremost among these enemies are men who worked for the Shah. Massoud Melamed is on one of these lists.

Yet, fortunately for the Melamed family, Massoud had decided to vacation in Israel for this time period. As hundreds of the Shah's men were butchered, Massoud was saved by G-d's will, Massoud set about rescuing his entire family from the calamity back home. Rescue them he did, but with only five thousand dollars left to their name, the Melamed family suddenly found themselves in the age-old unenviable Jewish predicament: they were refugees - and this, after 500 years of service to the Teheran community! But, similar to waves of Jewish immigrants in the past, the Melamed family came to the US and reestablished themselves on foreign soil. And, similar to past Jewish immigrants, a child of the Melamed family, Ofer, is studying to be a doctor.

Ofer's family escaped from Iran in 1979. Since then, Iran has been ruled by Ayatollahs for 18 years. The Commentator interviewed six other Iranian students at YU's uptown campus. They have all come to America within the past three years or three months. These interviews shed light on the politics of a nation where no YU student

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COMMIE ARCHIVES
Continued from Page 6

has vacationed, they describe Jewish life in a nation where the Jewish presence is dwindling, and they detail the predicament of a new immigrant to the United States.

David Balakhaneh and Shahin Agharahmanian

David Balakhaneh and Shahin Agharahmanian each left Iran over three years ago. Interviewed separately, they disagreed on certain issues.

Commentator: What is it like for a Jew to live in Iran?

David: "Most Jews in Iran are merchants, restricted from higher-level jobs ... they (the Iranian people) would not directly say, "You're a Jew, leave," but you felt it. Different places such as Teheran (there) wasn't so much anti-Semitism, but inside themselves, there were non-metropolitan cities, like Isfahan that were more anti-Semitic. Still they were throwing stones at the synagogue windows; and when the Jews were davening, they would come and distract. Even when they were outside, they were standing by to bother and using phrases to tease Jews. It was preferable to not be individualized and recognized as a Jew in the place you're living.

Shahin: Sometimes you are not treated the same as other citizens, sometimes. You are not protected by the law, sometimes. You would not feel comfortable to tell other people you are a Jew. You would not wear a yarmulke. You would not wear tzitzit.

C: Do you hate Iran?

D: It wasn't so bad, even though you were a little bit afraid; it is still one's country, and the place you were born, and because of this you like it. The reason why these Jews are leaving Iran is because they cannot have a higher education, or a higher level job in that country ...

S: Iran is good. Many of the things people say about Iran are lies. For instance, that movie "Not Without My Daughter," that had many exaggerations.

C: Has the government in Iran changed since you left?

D: No. The leaders of the government in Iran, they always keep the people hungry, so they have the people busy ...

C: Who are these leaders?

D: In Iran, if the guy has passed the sixth grade, the sixth grade! he could become the Ayatollah. This is the education needed for the religious leader. Everything goes under the religious thing, and they control people. And all the government is under the control of the Aghundes — uneducated, and not thinking of their own people ... Before now they were giving promises to people that they would sell oil and other goods to help people, but none of this is happening today. They have the price of oil in Iran up by ten times the amount when they started. And this is their product. This belongs to whoever lives there — to whoever lives in that country ... If someone says something against them, whatever they want to be, will be.

"Five years ago, the son of Khomeini, stood up and said: 'All of the problems are all the fault of the aghunde, that the prices keep rising, that there are no jobs. Don't blame America!' he said. 'It is none of their concerns. It is you that is not cooperating.' The next week, he had a heart attack. After

a month he died ... the day after he died, his doctor is hit by a van. This was Khomeini's son, who had the heart attack. This was an important guy. What they could do to others, you could see."

Together in Iran, Austria, and, now, YU: Roommates reflect on wondrous changes.

In 1996, Arash was studying computer engineering and Payam was studying in medical school at universities in Iran. Now, the two of them are both at YU majoring in Biology, with each one adapting to the different climate and the different culture.

In Iran, they had limited options. Although Payam was in medical and veterinary school in Iran, he could not work as an obstetrician, gynecologist, or as a doctor in any field dealing with women, nor could he serve in the dental profession. Jews in Iran are barred from entering other professions as well. Today, many of the Jews in Iran are self-employed as shopkeepers, factory owners, or other similar professions. The limited opportunities for advancement contributed to the decision of Arash and Payam to leave the country.

The decision was by no means an easy one. If they left Iran, it meant that they might not ever see their parents or grandparents again. It meant that they would be leaving their homeland for a foreign culture, which they were not guaranteed to understand.

Once having made their decision to leave, Arash and Payam had to find a way to get out. Payam told the authorities that he was going to a veterinarian conference abroad. He received permission to go abroad for three months, but had to pay a deposit of 1,000,000 tomans, equivalent to 2,000 dollars, which his family could retrieve when he returned from the conference. Arash said his family obtained a fake passport. Details beside that, he would not provide.

After separate departures, they reunited in Austria. After a period of six months in Austria, they were allowed into the USA — just in time for the first day of the semester at YU!

Payam left in the middle of the interview, so Arash spoke at greater length concerning the various differences between the two countries and the challenges he has faced. Both students asked that their last names be withheld, because they feared possible consequences for their parents in Iran.

Commentator: What is the situation for the Jews of Iran today?

Payam: The prospect that the community has for the Jews in Iran is very bad — they don't stay inside. So many people today are leaving.

Arash: In Iran, they don't care about Jews — in school, they don't like you. You have to attend school on Shabbat. You have to write on Shabbat.

P: A Jew in Iran is a person without Judaism. Yes, he is, because we do not have Rabbis, and we do not have many other things also; but in Iran everyone is religious.

C: Can you discuss some cultural differences between Iran and the USA?

A: The way the teachers behave in Iran is much different to us. In Iran, you have to get permission to leave class. In Iran, you cannot chew gum in class. Here, you can chew gum in class. Here, people bring restaurant to class.

P: It is very strange to us. The students act in whatever way they want to toward the teacher. And the teacher sometimes ignore the students ... Are they listening? Don't they listen? Here, you go to some class, and all the teacher does is teach. If there are students in the class, if there are no students in the class, there is no difference to the teacher. Then, there are students who sit in back of class and talk.

C: Is it true that music is illegal?

A: Everybody has music, but, just, it is not in public; it is not legal. Everybody has the songs- of EBI, or Googoosh, or Dariush. Everybody has these. It is very popular ... Googoosh is a woman: very beautiful. Everyone has her picture, her tapes, her records — everything! But no one knows what has happened with her since the Shah's time. She disappeared ..

C: Are there any clothing restrictions on men in Iran?

A: Yes. This is a good question. You cannot wear shorts. Once I was talking to one of my friends. I was standing outside the house by the door, and he was inside the house. Then, two policemen come by and they say "What is this? Why are you wearing shorts?" He was inside the house! They start making trouble for us. He (the friend) says, 'o.k. I'm going to change.'

"Another time, I am wearing a T-shirt written in English on the street, (Arash pulled out the T-shirt. It read, "Of Course Money Cant Buy Everything That's Why There Are Credit Cards.") and a policeman stopped me. He says, 'Don't wear it. Don't wear it anymore. This is not our culture.' I did not want trouble. I did not wear the T-shirt anymore."

Each day in America Arash and Payam learn something new about American society. For example, last week, Arash learned that males in America do not hold hands when they walk down the street, as is done in Iran. Arash is also beginning to overcome his problem of mixing up the pronouns "he" and "she." Farsi does not differentiate between the sexes in the third person singular pronoun. For Arash, being a student at YU means more than having to memorize monotonous, inconsequential facts, it means having to do so, while trying to understand a whole new culture and grasp an entirely different language.

Brothers Discuss Life For Jews In Iran

After Khomeini secured power, one of the first things that he did was reestablish ancient Islamic laws and practices. One law reinstated said Jews could no longer build any new synagogues. Two brothers, Armin and Pooya, in their second year at YU, discussed what life is like for Jews in present day Iran. To leave Iran, Armin and Pooya paid a deposit and never returned. They lived in Vienna for six months, and have been living in America for almost two years. They refused to give their last name to the newspaper out of fear that should an Iranian official see this issue of The Commentator, there might be possible repercussions.

Commentator: Do Moslems try to convert the Jews to Islam?

Pooya: They give many advantages to people who convert to Islam. In Iran, a female gets half a share of inheritance. But if she converts to Islam, she gets a full

heritage. But, on the other way around, if a Moslem converts to Judaism, he is going to be killed.

C: How do Jews fare in Iranian business?

P: Jews usually can't get very high in companies or anywhere. Wherever they are working they are trying to get rid of the Jews, so that indirectly they are trying to send them out — they don't want the Jews to have any power.

C: What is the structure of the Jewish community in Iran today?

P: Since, many Jews have moved out from Iran, the Jewish community is lacking in good leadership. For example, the beit din does not have any power, almost. We had a big rabbi, but he moved out also ... Kosher meat, ritual needs, are very difficult. Also, tefillin (phylacteries) are very expensive, because it is very hard (to find). But yet, many of the Jews are still religious. And on Shabbat they all close their stores.

A: A lulav and etrog are difficult to get. Each shul has only one or two, and everyone goes up and says a bracha (ritual blessing).

C: What differences have you noticed between the Ayatollahs of Iran and the rabbis at YU?

P: The first important and amazing thing that we saw was such a big Jewish community at YU, and the authority that they had. They are running a whole university here at YU, all the students are Jewish, and all the secular classes are based around the Jewish. There are no secular classes on chagim, you have off.

A: We really enjoy it. In Iran, if you want to get off Yom Tov, you have to explain to them what it is. It is not very easy.

P: Saturday is the beginning of the week, which means it is the busiest and most important day of the week. In Iran, I had to go to school on Saturday. I had teachers who expected the students to take notes and would get angry if one wouldn't.

With so much space devoted to the opinions of the Iranians at YU, the question remains as to what other students think of them. One thing is certain. On a campus that often appeals stale and homogenous to many, the Iranians, like other unique ethnic groups on campus, infuse an element of vitality into YU. The cackle of their foreign tongue enriched the sounds of the dormitories and library. Their features add color to an otherwise bland campus. They are an entity unto themselves: an entity a YU outsider might not notice, but one a YU student himself does.

Unpack With YUPAC: Coalition of the Willing: A Look at Bibi's Path Toward Forming a Government

By **MOSHE CORONEL**

For the past few weeks, Israel has been on the cusp of something that has eluded it for the better part of three years: a stable coalition government. True, Israel has had a government for the past year, but the coalition's makeup was ideologically incompatible and was primarily driven by opposition to former and now Prime Minister-elect Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu.

Generally, coalitions are built on some balanced mix of ideological similarity and pragmatic deal-making and at the very least some shared aspirations; the former government led by Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett, which comprised parties ranging from the far-left to the hard right, had none of that. Now, after a relatively brief stint as the opposition leader, Benjamin Netanyahu has cobbled together enough seats to form a coalition.

Israeli politics, in terms of governance, is different from American governance in many respects but two are particularly salient here. For one, Israel doesn't really have separation of powers; in other words, the party or coalition of parties that control the executive branch also maintains a majority in the legislature. Secondly, unlike in America where there are two major political parties, Israel has many political parties, and no one party has ever by itself assembled the requisite 61 seats for a government, thereby necessitating coalition governments.

One key feature to note is that this government will be the most Orthodox-oriented government in Israeli history. The only not explicitly religious party in the government will be Bibi's, the Likud party, which is the largest party in the Knesset and sees itself as the standard-bearer of the Israeli Right. Bibi, after the election, has two blocs of natural partners which allow him to get the requisite 61 seats. The first are the ultra-religious parties, namely Shas, which represents Sephardic religious interests, and United Torah Judaism, which

represents the Ashkenazic Haredi and Hasidic populations. These parties are generally nominally against the Israeli secular state but are willing to accede to the extent that they can support their religious infrastructure. The second bloc comprises the

can Jewish community. American Jewish leaders have decried the inclusion of these far-right politicians in the Israeli government, taking drastic steps like publicly criticizing Israel's government formation.

There is one major roadblock to the ac-

Bibi, after the election, has two blocs of natural partners which allow him to get the requisite 61 seats.

tual formation of the government. One of the most contentious issues in coalition politics is the issue of cabinet post allocation. Prime Minister-elect Netanyahu is having major difficulty negotiating with his partners on how their government will be technically formed. There was a lot of gridlock regarding post allocation, but some deals have been made recently that have advanced the process. Likud and Shas have reached a deal whereby Shas will receive a number of ministries including the health and interior ministries. Another recent development is Bibi's deal with Religious Zionist MK Itamar Ben-Gvir and his Otzma Yehudit party (this is not a contradiction, as Ben-Gvir's party is an independent subset of the wider Religious Zionist bloc).

This will also be one of the most right-wing governments Israel has ever seen. They have a number of shared policy items that will be high on the agenda if they form a government. They all have a shared antagonism toward the Israeli judiciary, seeing its influence as too far-reaching, and they will be introducing a series of bills to roll back its power. For another, Bibi's religious parties are extremely concerned about the reforms to the kashrut certification process and the general rolling-back of the authority of the Orthodox rabbinate that the Lapid-Bennett government legislated and they will try to swiftly roll them back.

The ultra-Orthodox parties will attempt to lobby to increase subsidies for Kollel families and yeshivas. The national-religious bloc, comprised of politicians like far-right Member of Knesset Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, will advocate for expanding the Israeli presence in the West Bank. All of these policies will further the growing divide between the mainstream Reform and Conservative streams of the American Jewish community, who already feel increasingly marginalized in an increasingly Orthodox-dominated political sphere, in addition to Israel's rightward shift which has contrasted sharply with the overall liberal bent of the Ameri-

can Jewish community. American Jewish leaders have decried the inclusion of these far-right politicians in the Israeli government, taking drastic steps like publicly criticizing Israel's government formation. There is one major roadblock to the ac-

Ben-Gvir will head the newly formed National Security Ministry, a reformation of the current Public Security Ministry with the new inclusion of additional security divisions related to the West Bank. Ben-Gvir will have a lot of power to shape the Netanyahu government's policy regarding Israel's administration of the contentious West Bank. Furthermore, Ben-Gvir's party will receive the Negev and Galilee Ministry and the heritage ministry. Bibi signed another deal with Avi Maoz, the leader of the far-right Noam party and fellow Religious Zionist bloc member. He, as his faction's lone Knesset member, will head a to-be-formed "Jewish Identity" authority. Coalition negotiations are far from over, as many other key partners like other Religious Zionist MK Bezalel Smotrich and UTJ are yet to receive their postings.

This wouldn't be the first time Bibi seemingly had a coalition in the bag and then failed to reach agreements with his partners. In fact, that was the reason Israel has gone through five different elections in the past three years. That said, this coalition seems very likely to happen, and as the Middle East is wont to do, it will be a showstopper to the finish.



Bibi Netanyahu will almost certainly take back his seat as Prime Minister of Israel

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Unpack With YUPAC: Security of Israel: A Priority on the Rise in the US

By **JOSHUA POMERANTZ**

On Nov. 19, former President Donald Trump addressed the Republican Jewish Coalition's annual conference in Las Vegas via satellite, just days after announcing his intent to run in 2024. At the conference, he stated that President Biden has "betrayed Israel and the Jewish community" by partaking in negotiations with Tehran to re-enter the Iran Nuclear Deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, (JCPOA). Trump then vowed that, if re-elected in 2024, he "would never allow the State of Israel to be threatened with nuclear destruction like is happening right now." Trump has in the past backed these words with action, having withdrawn the U.S. from the JCPOA in 2018.

However, President Biden still hasn't made this process easy for the Iranians either. It was reported that Iran seems to have given up on diplomacy with the West and decided that aligning with Russian President Vladimir Putin offers greater benefit than continuing down the path of talks with the U.S. and Europe. Based on these barriers for the Iranians, it appears

as if both Biden and Trump were reluctant to enter into an agreement with Iran in the first place, potentially a good sign for Israel, which opposes the deal. The security of the State of Israel has been discussed at

His support for Israel ... indicates that Democrats and Republicans can come together in strong support of Israel on most policies that relate to the Israeli-American relationship.

conferences, such as the Republican Jewish Coalition, and preventing Iran from attaining nuclear weapons has been an often-discussed and extremely relevant topic regarding the security that the people of Israel crucially need.

The Iran Nuclear Deal isn't even the only threat to the people of Israel. There have been recent concerns about the possibility of Iranian hypersonic drones. These drones are so powerful that they can even pass through all missile defense systems, according to General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IR-GCASF). Israel's Defense Minister Benny Gantz claimed "Israel has the ability to act

in Iran. We have the readiness, development capabilities, and long-term plans we are managing. We need to prepare for this possibility, and we will also need to consider this issue very carefully before carrying

it out." Such preparations are believed to cost over \$2 billion and may require some assistance from Israel's allies.

Given all of these potential threats to the people of Israel, where exactly do our representatives on the American side stand on this issue and many other issues impacting the Israeli and Jewish people? We've already looked at the views of the current and former presidents. In addition, at the Republican Jewish Coalition's 2022 leadership conference, Kevin McCarthy, House minority leader in the U.S. House of Representatives, vowed to remove Ilhan Omar, the representative for Minnesota's fifth congressional district, from the Foreign Affairs Committee when

he becomes Speaker of the House next year, as seems likely. He has accused her of making antisemitic comments in the past. Omar has long been critical of Israel and its "atrocities" in the occupied Palestinian territories. The fact that McCarthy has this issue on his mind shows his support of Israel and means that he's trying to keep them at the forefront of his mind. He said that "we watch antisemitism grow, not just on our campuses, but we watched it grow in the halls of Congress." His support for fighting this rising antisemitism is critical.

There are many elected Democratic officials who have a tremendous amount of pull in the federal government who are outspokenly in favor of Israel as well. For instance, Hakeem Jeffries, who was recently elected unanimously to become the House minority leader for the Democratic Party, has a reputation for being pro-Israel. David Greenfield, CEO of the Met Council and a former city councilman, said that Jeffries "understands the Jewish community, supports our issues and concerns and is absolutely pro-Israel." Representative Ritchie Torres, a pro-Israel progressive from New York, described Jeffries as a "fearless and

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Unpack With YUPAC: The Jewish Relationship with America

By Avi Polotsky

In 1978, a 40-year-old medical researcher in Leningrad, USSR, commuted to work with feelings of anticipation. Years of exertion were about to pay off, as he was promised the lead position in the pathology department at the prestigious Institute of Experimental Medicine. In the USSR, money was worthless; the premier currency was titles and status. Becoming a department chief at this top research center could dampen the persistent feelings of unease and insecurity the pathologist felt living under the Soviet thumb.

When the researcher arrived at work, he instead discovered all the work he had put into his career was for naught. Not only did the pathologist lose out on the promotion, but he was also fired from the institute. Why? The man was a Jew, and two Jewish coworkers had applied for an exit visa to move to Israel. Soviet authorities wanted to make a statement that such disloyalty would be met with retribution, so they ordered the Institute to fire all Jews in an act of collective punishment. That pathologist was my grandfather, and his only transgression was that he was born a Jew. Judaism in communist Russia was merely an ethnic label. Until my grandfather moved to America, it meant nothing beyond that.

Stories like this showcase the complex nature of Jewish identity. Growing up, I had initially assumed Judaism was a religion comparable in social structure to other faiths. Still, hearing of Jewish persecution in an atheistic society made me think it had to be more than a matter of religious doctrine.

What is Judaism? A religion? An ethnicity? A nation? I struggled to find an answer until I asked a rabbi in my high school. His response changed my outlook on the Jewish people for the rest of my life. He told me that Judaism was a relationship; or rather a series of relationships. Being a Jew meant having a relationship with God, a relationship

freely. America was the first nation in history where Jews did not undergo a period of disenfranchisement. Jews were theoretically full-fledged Americans from the beginning.

History has proven that legal rights do not always ensure freedom from persecution. Though legally just as American as any Christian, Jews were seen by many as lower-

bode for an uncertain future for the Jewish presence in America.

Considering these factors, how should Jewish Americans view their relationship with the nation? It is time to “jump ship” as Jews have done in many countries throughout our 2000-year diaspora? I don’t think so. America is still a country where Jews can thrive, even if some individual Americans wish us ill. American liberties mean Jewish Americans hold the reins to their own destiny; rather than being dependent on the whims of others. In other countries diaspora Jews have sought refuge, we were seen as a completely separate entity, seemingly a separate nation within a state. This separation left Jews vulnerable to alienation, which could easily regress into vilification.

In America, this is simply not the case. Jewish citizens are free to follow their traditions while fully participating in civic society. Historically, assimilated Jews were the primary representatives for Jewish communities in states like France and Germany. Jews in America, however, no longer have to choose between their religious enclaves and broader communities. The American system of democracy has seen religiously active Jews attain elected positions. In the New York Assembly 48th district, assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein, an Orthodox Jew, represents Brooklyn neighborhoods with sizable Orthodox populations. This is just one example of Jews taking advantage of the political opportunities available to us in America. Political representation does not ensure protection from antisemitic vitriol, but it is one of many commodities in the Jewish American toolbox.

Liberty is a two-sided coin. On one hand, American Jews are not slaves to the state and we have the freedom to live according to our values. But having liberty also entails responsibility, nothing is assured without hard work. The freedom to succeed does not mean an entitlement to success, it means that, ideally, nothing can stop you from achieving your goals as long as you apply yourself. Jewish citizens must recognize this fact and put effort into shaping American society, rather than letting society dictate Jewish life. We cannot prevent individuals from wishing Jews harm or fueling hatred, but we can do our part to push back positively. Jews in America must fight the spread of antisemitism by engaging in the American civic process and living as proud Jews and proud Americans.

It is easy to fall into a timid and scared view of Jewish identity in America, but we must remember that we are as American as anyone in this great country. Do not allow the evils of small-minded individuals to cloud our vision of our nation, and do not let those individuals make us feel alienated. Jews are part of the American nation as long as we act assertively to maintain that truth.

Jews in America must fight the spread of antisemitism by engaging in the American civic process and living as proud Jews and proud Americans.

with the gentile world, a relationship with other Jews and a relationship with ourselves. What does this mean? It means that God and humanity are integral to Judaism; Jews cannot exist in a vacuum. Halacha and societal norms are the foundation of the Jewish relationship with Hashem and other Jews. Moreover, the actions of Jews, individually and collectively, constantly affect and change these relationships. These relationships can be positive or they can be negative. Although my grandfather never thought of Judaism as a religious description, the label “Jew” still affected his relationship with Soviet society.

Viewing Judaism as a set of relationships is a choice framework for examining our American Jewish existence. What is the American Jew’s relationship with the broader United States society? To answer this, we must look at the history of Jews in the United States. Like our Ten Commandments, the American Constitution contains ten amendments serving as the nation’s guiding principles. The First Amendment outlines the rights of individuals to practice any religion

class citizens throughout the first 150 years of American history, were barred from social clubs and were accused of being grifters who sought financial gain above patriotism. Jews were not subjects of state-sanctioned hate, but Jewish life in America was not without discomfort.

But today’s America is far more diverse and pluralistic than in the past, and Jews have a comfortable societal position. Jewish citizens have found extraordinary success in America in fields ranging from politics to STEM. In a modern world where many governments still persecute Jews, America is a safe harbor.

Is that fact unchanging? Will Jews be able to rely on America’s warm embrace forever? According to a 2021 Pew Research Poll, 53% of Jewish Americans feel less safe than they did five years ago. 21st-century America has seen violent attacks on synagogues, and Jews have been scapegoated for many societal ills. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic spawned many conspiracy theories blaming Jews for the disease’s outbreak. Such events



Jews have to understand their identity and how it interacts with American society

DAVID HOLIFIELD ON UNSPLASH

SECURITY

Continued from Page 8

forceful” leader in his defense of the U.S.-Israel alliance and “living proof that bipartisan support for the U.S.-Israeli relationship is deep and durable.” This shows how much he also cares about these issues, with support amongst his peers. His support for Israel is very important for not only Israel, but for the United States as well, as his prominent position indicates that Democrats and Republicans can come together in strong support of Israel on most policies that relate to the Israeli-American relationship.

Another US politician who has voiced his support for Israel is Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. DeSantis stated at the same conference that “Judea and Samaria is not occupied, but disputed.” It is bold statements like these that will garner support amongst pro-Israel voters, and create the needed support for Israel. There are many reasons for Israel to feel isolated at times, due to its unfair treatment in the UN. Some examples of this unfair treatment include, but are not limited to, the resolution instructing Israel to destroy its nuclear weapons, as well as the constant attacks on Israeli settlements from the UN. However, statements from elected officials of the

United States countering these anti-Israel views will be encouraging and will assist

in the continued cultivation of the strong bond between the United States and Israel.



The Republican Jewish Coalition’s annual conference, where the topic of Israel’s security featured prominently

DAN SCAVINO

Unpack With YUPAC: Over 75 Students Attend Discussion with Dr. Clawson and Dr. Cristol on Middle East Policy

By YAIRA KATZ

Last Monday, Nov. 21, YUPAC held a moderated discussion between Dr. Jonathan Cristol and Dr. Patrick Clawson on the topics of the Iran Deal, the U.S.-Israel relationship, and general Middle East policy. Over 75 YU students and faculty members attended the event in the Sky Cafe in Belfer Hall.

Dr. Patrick Clawson is the Morningstar Senior Fellow and the Director of Research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, where he directs the Viterbi Program on Iran and U.S. Policy. He previously worked at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Clawson has authored more than 150 articles about the Middle East and international economics which have been published on the pages of major newspapers like The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and The Washington Post. He has also been a witness in many congressional committees, where he has testified more than twenty times and has served as an expert witness in more than thirty federal cases against Iran.

Dr. Jonathan Cristol is a subject matter expert for a Maryland-based defense contractor and a senior fellow at the Center for Civic Engagement at Bard College. He also teaches political science at Yeshiva University, and was the interim director of international studies at Adelphi University, where he is now a research fellow in the university's Levermore Global Scholars Program. Dr. Cristol was a fellow at the World Policy Institute from 2015 to 2018, where he led roundtables focused on a highly specific aspect of a U.S. defense alliance. Dr. Cristol is the author of the 2019 book "The

United States and the Taliban before and after 9/11" and has written more than fifty articles on international affairs for many major publications. He appears regularly in international television, radio and print media.

the main factor driving those countries to pursue relations with the Jewish state may be solely financial. On the topic of the war in Ukraine, Dr. Cristol was vocal about his belief that Israel is mistaken in deciding to withhold aid in order to avoid conflict with

contributor in one.

Allie Orgen (SCW '24), the co-president of both YUPAC and the Pre-Law Society, said of the event that "It was incredible to see the number of people who came to listen to this important discussion on a key topic for YU students. The way that Dr. Cristol and Dr. Clawson, despite their disagreements on a number of topics, were able to sit down and have a civil discussion with each other about these potentially heated topics is really inspiring in these times, when that kind of discussion is rare. My board did a fantastic job pulling this all together!"

Thank you to the clubs who sponsored the event, the speakers who came to speak and the many people who came out to hear a discussion of important ideas.

"It was incredible to see the number of people who came to listen to this important discussion on a key topic for YU students."

YUPAC Co-President Allie Orgen

The event was co-sponsored by the Yeshiva College Student Council, the Stern College for Women Student Council, the Jacob Hecht Pre-Law Society, the Dunner Political Science Society, the Israel Club and the Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development. The Center's CAPS Director of Career Strategy & Technology, Joshua Meredith, spoke briefly to the attendees before the event.

Elishama Marmon, a vice president of YUPAC and senior in Yeshiva College ('24), introduced the topic and speakers, as well as Hillel Golubtchik, a sophomore at Yeshiva College ('25) and YUPAC board member, who moderated the discussion.

The first issue discussed was Iran and its nuclear program. The conversation focused on how it affects Israel's security, US policy and the relationship between Israeli and American intelligence agencies. While discussing Israel's political station within the Middle East Dr. Clawson stated clearly that while the threat posed by Iran is an element of Israel's relationship with the Arab signatories of the Abraham Accords,

Russia. Finally, the two speakers reflected on working in think tanks. These organizations are the source of many U.S. policy decisions, and it takes a lot of work to be a



Over 75 YU students turned out to listen to a conversation on the topic of the Middle East, the Iran Deal and the U.S.-Israel Relationship

ELISHAMA MARMON

Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University

Class Schedule for Spring 2023

MONDAY

2:50 p.m.
Richard Hidary
Midrash in
Historical Context

4:50 p.m.
Ephraim Kanarfogel
The Interface
Between Sefarad
& Ashkenaz in the
High Middle Ages

6:50 p.m.
Ephraim Kanarfogel
History of Medieval
Ashkenazic Piyyut
(Liturgical Poetry)

TUESDAY

2:50 p.m.
Jonathan Dauber
Introduction to
Hasidic Thought

4:50 p.m.
Ari Mermelstein
Introduction to
Biblical Studies

Jeffrey Gurock
American Jewish
History: 1881-1967

6:50 p.m.
Mordechai Cohen
Human & Divine Love
in Song of Songs

WEDNESDAY

10:00 a.m.
Josh Zimmerman
(in partnership with
Vilnius University)
Phenomenon of East
European Jewish History:
Poland and Lithuania

2:50 p.m.
Jess Olson
Jews in Modern Europe,
Social & Intellectual
History: 1760-1900

Tamra Wright
Survey of Modern
& Contemporary Jewish
Philosophy

4:50 p.m.
David Berger
The Jewish-Christian
Debate in the
Middle Ages

6:50 p.m.
Naomi Grunhaus
Radak and his
Exegetical Methods

Josh Zimmerman
Varieties of Jewish
Nationalism

THURSDAY

2:50 p.m.
Jonathan Dauber
Messianism
in Kabbalah
& Hasidut

4:50 p.m.
Daniel Rynhold
Philosophy of
Maimonides

Steven Fine
Samaritans & Jews:
From the Bible
to Modern Israel

6:50 p.m.
Ronnie Perelis
Jewish Culture in
Medieval Spain

Please check our website for any updates at www.yu.edu/revel/courses.

For information please contact Rona Steiner, Revel Program Director, at steinern@yu.edu



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of Jewish Studies

RISE UP
The Campaign for 613

YU Macs Home Games as Opportunities for Kiddush Hashem

By EPHRAIM CRYSTAL

Throughout most of my life, I've never particularly enjoyed following sports, having never quite understood the desire to do so. However, upon seeing the YU Macs' impressively strong performance last year, that changed. I found that there was undoubtedly something very special and invigorating about getting to watch players wearing yarmulkes attain national recognition in our little gym.

YU Macs home games indeed present wonderful opportunities to support our friends and colleagues representing us on the basketball court. Unfortunately, however, these games can and sometimes do bring out the worst of people. As Jews, we have the responsibility to serve as an or goyim, "light for the nations." This means that there are high standards we must meet for how to

act in all scenarios, especially when in the public eye.

Last year, throughout the Macs' fantastic season, more than one game was ruined for

present or have become widely accepted and normalized behaviors, this shouldn't matter to us. We have an obligation to be role models by demonstrating proper conduct, which

the opposing team. I was once at a game at which a non-YU player fell and wasn't getting up, and Mrs. Turell, not realizing what had occurred, started up another round of "Let's go Macs!" Upon realizing what had happened and how insensitive she must have appeared to others, she apologized profusely to the player's father. She made sure to treat all players with dignity and respect.

We always, especially in public spaces, have the duty to avoid chillul Hashem, desecration of God's name, as much as we possibly can. It is one of the most severe sins. Additionally, with antisemitism on the rise, we certainly must not provide our haters with potential justifications for what they believe and do — not that anything could ever truly justify antisemitism to any degree. With the new basketball season just beginning, we must remember to inspire all with our love, respect and positivity toward others, and remember, of course, that it's just a game.

We always, especially in public spaces, have the duty to avoid chillul Hashem, desecration of God's name, as much as we possibly can.

me by how some fans acted. I was once next to a small group of people yelling insults at specific players on the opposing team, singling players out using the number on their respective jerseys. I witnessed much clapping, laughing and jeering at the mistakes of the other team. And I heard many derogatory chants that made me uncomfortable. Though many of these actions were either perpetrated by a small minority of the fans

includes having respect for all human beings.

One of the best examples of how to properly act as a fan is none other than Mrs. Turell, mother of YU's former superstar Ryan Turell. Throughout her son's time playing for the Macs, she built a name for herself as being the embodiment of positive energy. She would always be the first to start up the cheer of "Let's go Macs!" Importantly, she was always rooting for the Macs and never against

I Made My Own Nightmare Come True

By SHUIE BERGER

"I will never get an iPhone."

I told myself this constantly. I couldn't put myself in a box; I needed the freedom I had with Android. If I switched, I would limit my options and choices. "Why would I do that to myself?" I would ask. My wife always scoffed at my stubbornness, but I felt that getting an iPhone would be betraying my own views and participating in what the "masses" said was best. I needed to be my own person, and going against the flow felt good. Switching to Apple was always something I considered a forfeit and surrender to the "system."

That is, until a few months ago, when I tried an iPhone for the first time. I have officially made the switch to iPhone and Apple, and those that know me will probably say something along the lines of, "Seriously? He did that?" or "How could he do this?" I want to be clear: I still love Android and still think it is objectively better than Apple. Android is fantastic for a number of reasons. I will list as many as I can, but some I will not mention because I either don't have enough room, I don't understand them or I did not know they existed. If I leave something out that you love about Android, please don't hate me. (I am not the most tech-proficient person.)

My favorite aspect of the Android phone model is the ability to customize the entire interface of the phone's operating system (OS). I enjoy the many seemingly small things I can modify: the clock position on the status bar, the position of the WiFi button and others in the pulldown menu, the app grid on the home screen, as well as the wide array of widgets I can add to the home screen.

By activating the developer mode of Android devices, I have access to more seemingly insignificant changes that can actually have a major impact on my user experience, like USB debugging, animation scales and graphics driver settings. These examples are only a small percentage of the number of changes you can make, but the point is obvious: customization is king.

I know I might get some flack from some in the Android community for this, but I was actually very integrated into the Samsung ecosystem. (I know!) I had a Samsung phone, a watch, a tablet and earbuds. I know some may cringe at the "tablet," but I assure you that Samsung has finally given Android a

found in one pulldown menu, it can become sort of messy. I would be using the pulldown menu constantly as a central location to use my phone. On the iPhone, though, the notification menu is by itself, and while it can feel very inefficient, I like that it is its own entity. Now, I let some of my notifications build up,

customizations, but the feeling of freshness and my uncluttered mind make me excited about the switch.

I am not here to convince anyone to switch phones or justify one over the other. The lesson I learned from this experience is that my priorities were tied up with the minutiae and the tiny details. I dwelled too much in the small advantages and the sense of freedom, while unknowingly cluttering and muddling my phone usage. I realized that streamlining my interaction with technology was more important than my perceived technological independence. Perhaps we can learn something from this. Sometimes it takes a fresh perspective to see what is important. I spend more time off my phone, allowing me to get more done, and my mind is freer to do the things I enjoy.

I don't know if my feelings have anything to do with the FOMO from my wife's family and the many Apple users or with the fact that I love new technology, but I can say that after over two months of using the iPhone, I very much enjoy it, and I don't plan on switching back anytime soon. Cue the shuddering. I never thought I would turn my back on my own strong feelings and sense of freedom. I may have made my own nightmare come true, but I must say this is one nightmare that is less scary in real life.

I dwelled too much in the minuscule advantages and the sense of freedom, while unknowingly cluttering and muddling my phone usage.

rival to the iPad. It is not perfect, but it is close. I had just received the tablet a little over a year ago, so I had fully integrated into Samsung and was pretty content. Android's design for user customization provided me with a sense of freedom, not to mention the cheaper price tag in comparison to Apple products. So why did I switch? It is a tad complicated and not entirely logical.

My wife and her entire family are avid Apple users—iPhones, iPads, AirPods, Macs, Apple Watches, AirTags, you name it. I was literally the only one with Android. When the new iPhone came out this year, I had the chance to try out my father-in-law's old iPhone for a few weeks until he had to trade it in. While transferring WhatsApp was literally the worst process possible (Android backs up to Google Drive while Apple backs up to iCloud), the overall experience was actually pretty smooth. I use iMessage all the time, and while it definitely has some technologically underdeveloped features, it is nice and clean. I like FaceTime a lot, and it is a lot less choppy than WhatsApp video calls.

There is something ineffable about the experience of an iPhone. My brothers, who had switched years ago, warned me that I "wouldn't want to go back." They were right. My entire phone is less cluttered, my mind is less cluttered and compartmentalizing has never been so easy for me.

As someone who hates constant notifications and seeing a long list of alerts from various apps all in the same menu, using the iPhone has been refreshing. On Android, since all alerts and many quick settings are

which means I am checking my phone less often, and instead, I deal with them periodically. This has been better for me, as I am not constantly staring at my phone screen. Additionally, I have been very impressed with the ease with which I use the phone. The user interface is overall very clean and organized, and while it took some time to get used to, I feel like a new man.

I still maintain that the technological advantages of Android still outweigh the advantages of Apple, but personally, my integration within the Apple ecosystem and the cleanliness and organization that come along with it are more important to me than some minor advantages in customization. I must admit, I am still occasionally frustrated with a few of the limitations on



iPhone

UNSPASH

You've Never Heard of Webvan and Why Your Kids Won't Know the Name Instacart

By TANI LEWIS

Many industries in America have been adapting to the digital age where consumer expectation is high and patience low. Competition is fierce and the battle for the best customer experience is intense. Given major macroeconomic changes over the past few years, there are many opportunities for the creation and growth of companies as well as diminishing and destroying them. As of more recently, market conditions have grown harsher with increased inflation, higher interest rates and supply chain shortages. Through all this, the grocery delivery service Instacart plans to have Goldman Sachs lead its initial public offering at the start of the upcoming calendar year.

Instacart was founded in 2012 by the experienced entrepreneur Apoorva Mehta. Mehta majored in engineering at The University of Waterloo and was a supply chain engineer for BlackBerry, Qualcomm and Amazon. In an interview with the LA Times, Mehta estimates Instacart was the 20th startup he founded since going out on his own. After founding Instacart, Mehta was listed on the Forbes 30 Under 30 list.

Instacart allows customers to select items online from partnering stores after, which a personal shopper will pick out the items and deliver them to their homes. Since its inception, the service has been expanding its range from San Francisco, adding new cities and store partnerships. When the COVID-19 Pandemic hit, they were pushed by the public to expand further and faster than anyone could have imagined. Over the course of eight weeks, Instacart almost tripled the number of part-time shoppers they employed from 180,000 to 500,000. Around this time Instacart experienced around 220% increase in daily app downloads according to the app data analysis service Apptopia.

But as age-old wisdom teaches us, "what goes up, must come down." At the start of this current calendar year, the company laid

off around 2,000 employees due to lower demand (granted some of them also tried unionizing to increase benefits). In March, Instacart cut its own valuation to \$24 billion from \$39 billion, in July to \$15 billion and most recently in October to \$13 billion.

The 2022 year has been a dry year for IPOs and speculators are not confident in Instacart's move to go public. Tech stocks such as Netflix, Twitter, Meta (formerly Facebook), DoorDash and Zoom have been booming over the past few years and "busting" this past year. Ben Carlson, a portfolio manager at Ritholtz Wealth Management noted on Twitter that tech stocks are more prone to boom-bust cycles since fast-paced innovation increases the likelihood of bubbles forming.

A bubble is when the value of companies within a market sector rises rapidly to outgrow the rational value of the companies within the sector. Similar to soap bubbles, bubbles in the market "bust" which is when the value of everything in the bubble decreases — drastically. The growth and decline pattern of tech stocks valuations over the extended course of the pandemic illustrates a textbook example of what a bubble in the financial markets looks like.

Carlson points out that Microsoft took 16 years to recover from its high in '99. In the late 90's there was a bubble, commonly referred to as the "dotcom" bubble. Due to the new widespread use of the internet, many companies were able to expand their reach of customers, and new companies found inventive ways of utilizing the internet for business purposes. Over the course of five years, the Nasdaq Composite stock market index rose 400%, only to fall 78% in the years following, and most of the companies created during the boom of the "dotcom" bubble did not survive the burst. Carlson is implying that the bursting effect of bubbles is harsh and lasts, and a company like Instacart is not likely to recover from its recent hit for a long time.

Moreover, the downtrodden state of the

economy not only means consumers have less money to spend on groceries but the grocery store industry is one of the industries hit hardest by inflation. According to the Consumer Price Index from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the prices of canned vegetables have gone up 19%, flour and prepared flour mixes 24% and eggs have gone up 30% over the past year. After reading numbers like these it's difficult to imagine the grocery industry will rebound quickly to its former glory during the pandemic when everyone was home cooking and eating, and the government was giving money to 85.5% of American households (according to the U.S. Census Bureau Household Plus Survey).

Not to make things worse, but we have seen this behavior with a company identical to Instacart before. In 1996, Louis Borders founded a company by the name of Webvan. The idea was that consumers would order groceries online from their homes using Webvan's website and the items would be delivered in a timely manner. Webvan raised \$396 million in capital and had a valuation

of over \$4.8 billion. Unfortunately, Webvan did not survive the "dotcom" bubble and in 2001 filed for bankruptcy.

However, one key difference between Instacart and Webvan is Instacart's "sharing economy" model that Uber has popularized. Instead of building its own infrastructure and hiring full-time employees as Webvan did, Instacart utilizes part-time employees who fulfill the shopping roles and allows Instacart to maintain minimal infrastructure. Perhaps Instacart will not follow in the footsteps of Webvan, outlive the bubble and survive long-term.

Instacart management is aware of the economic factors at play, both micro and macro, and are moving hesitantly along with their schedule. Recently, they have decided to push off the IPO until further notice. They are navigating difficult current circumstances and are trying to position themselves for long-term survival and growth. Will Instacart be the future of online grocery shopping? Only time can tell.



Mini shopping cart with groceries

PIXABAY

To Consult and be Consulted: YU's Past and Future with the Consulting Industry

By MOSHE CORONEL

Yeshiva University has been in this situation before. It's the aftermath of the 2008 Great Recession, and the world has taken an economic beating following the collapse and near-collapse of many firms vital to the American economy, including Lehman Brothers and the American Insurance Group. YU was no exception to this cascade and the financial strain caused the university administration to rethink its entire organizational structure. YU didn't do it alone. They brought in consultants and accountants to manage the transition. Fast forward to today, when YU is seeing more and more students entering the industry, with some even gaining employment in top firms like McKinsey and LEK. To understand how YU can facilitate the continued growth of its consulting capabilities, we can look to the university's past for guidance on the industry at large.

Coming off the heels of President Rabbi Norman Lamm's successful overhaul of YU's finances, YU at the turn of the century was in a stronger position than ever before. This financial security was in part based on the conservative investing philosophy of Rabbi Lamm and Vice President

for Business Affairs, Sheldon Socol, which prioritized large investments in relatively safe financial instruments like government bonds from their increasing endowment. At the time, however, YU got a new president in Richard Joel, and with him came a new investing strategy. With the help of a more aggressive-minded investments committee, YU retrenched its investments by taking greater positions in more high-risk high-reward assets like hedge funds and private equity while at the same time selling off safe treasury bonds. This strategy worked in the short term but came crashing down with the Great Recession in 2008. The combination of YU's heavily leveraged position, now depleted portfolio and more expansive spending habits, battered YU's finances. Moody's downgraded YU's bonds from B1, or relatively risky, to B3, or high risk.

The concept of bringing in experts to solve difficult problems has been around for as long as the economy has allowed people to specialize. In this vein, the current form of what is known as the consulting industry as described by Harvard Business Review, can be summed up as providing expertise and solutions for a client's given problem in an effective and comprehensive manner. Consultants and consulting firms exist in virtually every industry under a myriad of titles;

the consulting industry fields professionals and firms that range from industry-specific specialists to bigger generalists who operate under the header of "management consulting." Consulting is also a pretty lucrative industry, with some estimating that its global value is at \$250 billion. Beyond its numeric value, the consulting industry has a lot of influence as its big players like McKinsey, Bain and Boston Consulting Group (commonly grouped together as MBB) frequently interact with Fortune 500 companies, major government agencies and large nonprofit organizations. In this light, it's understandable why an organization would bring in consultants, especially in a complex situation beyond its internal capabilities.

Still reeling financially, YU's situation fits into the aforementioned context. As a result, in 2014, it hired consulting firm Alvarez and Marsal, utilizing the services of Robert Hershan, who is currently the Managing Director of A&M's "Restructuring and Turnaround" practice. YU set out to restabilize its finances by targeting components of the university that were big draws on its finances. This put one of YU's crown jewels in the crosshairs: the Einstein College of Medicine. One of the fundamental issues with Einstein's financing is its lack of a hospital; most medical schools in the United States

operate a hospital as a method of income. Not only does Einstein not have a hospital, but it also engages in a lot of research which is a large and financially draining part of the school's activities. A deeper analysis of the financial precariousness of Einstein can be found in earlier reporting from the Commentator. After the hiring and involvement of A&M in YU's financial reforms, YU transferred operational and financial control of Einstein to Montefiore Medical Health System.

What goes around comes around. YU, a school that needed to hire consultants to help it out of its financial straits, is now seeing more of its student body entering the field. Just this past year YU has seen members of its graduating class matriculate to work for McKinsey, one of the most prestigious consulting firms in the world. YU also offers a number of on-campus opportunities to get experience in the consulting industry including the Consulting Force, TAMID, and assorted summer opportunities. Who knows? Someday YU can be not just a recipient of consultation but an institution that sends many of its students to tackle some of the world's greatest problems as well.