

# The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

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## Forgetting Decency at Yeshiva University

Mindy Schwartz  
*Managing Editor*

Ben Shapiro ended his widely attended speech at Yeshiva University on Monday night, December 5th, with a bold statement: “I preach decency... If you act like a *mentsch* you should be treated like a *mentsch*.”

Sitting in the audience, I felt utterly dumbfounded.

*Decency?*

Ben Shapiro preaches a lot of things, but my big takeaway from his sermon: hypocrisy, both in his philosophy and—more disturbingly—in my own community.

Ben Shapiro claims to preach *menschlichkeit* and decency; Yeshiva University is an Orthodox institution that also lays claim to the imperatives of upright, moral behavior. But Shapiro’s cruel jokes at the expense of transgender people on Monday night and the steady, enthusiastic laughter and claps that these jokes garnered from the audience of YU students run counter to both of these claims.

Forget for a moment—if you can—Shapiro’s view that “transgender people are unfortunately suffering from a significant mental illness...and when you lie to people by humoring their delusion you are actually exacerbating mental

illness,” a view that was met with robust applause and cheers from the audience.

Shapiro’s claim of “mental illness” directly contradicts the positions of the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Student Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, all of whom believe that at least some transgender people do possess a medical need for hormonal and or surgical treatment. But put the general consensus of medical professionals aside. While we can, and certainly should, discuss the science, I am simply addressing our behavior *bein adam lechavrio*, between man and his fellow. Ben Shapiro claims to champion decency between men; “If you act like a *mensch* you should be treated like a *mentsch*.” Our university similarly preaches the importance of behaving with decency, of showing kindness to our fellow man.

So where was this decency when Ben Shapiro mocked transgender women like Zoey Tur and Caitlyn Jenner? Where was this decency when he bragged that he called Zoey “Sir” to her face on national television? Where was this decency when he quipped that Tur’s voice was “at least an octave below” his own? Where was this decency when he joked that Tur’s

admittedly hostile actions towards him on CNN Headline news constituted “deeply unladylike behavior?” More troubling still, where was this decency when many of the students in Lamport laughed and clapped in response to his boast and his clever witticism?

Kira Paley rightly pointed out Shapiro’s hypocrisy during the ‘Q&A’ portion of the event. She asked, “At the end of the speech you talked about how you preach decency...but you were clearly making jokes at the expense of transgender people. So...where do you draw the line between being a *metsch* and clearly offending people?”

Unfortunately, Shapiro deftly dodged the question by clarifying that he only “made fun of one person, who grabbed me by the back of the neck and threatened me with violence,” and so “to be fair” he has “the right to make fun.” Perhaps this is true about Zoey Tur, although I am not sure that disregarding the principle of rising above really falls under his alleged banner of decency? Even so, Shapiro fails to hold up to his own standard for who he will or will not mock. This same rule cannot justify the numerous jokes made at the expense of Caitlyn Jenner throughout Shapiro’s talk. As far as I know, Jenner has never threatened Shapiro or grabbed him “by the back of the neck.” But that didn’t stop Shapiro from mocking the praise of Jenner

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## Commuters Distressed Over New Dorm Policy

Tzippy Baitch  
*Staff Writer*

Commuters at Stern are growing concerned over recently implemented security measures that prohibit them from entering the dorms without being signed in. The new policy, which was not officially announced, was brought to light when Stern student Ruchie Gross posted about it on the schoolwide Facebook group “Stern College: In the Know.” Gross, who is not a commuter herself, posted on behalf of her commuting friend, who wasn’t able to enter the dorm after being stopped by security.

The thread exploded with over forty comments and thirty-three angry-faced emojis from incensed commuters. Currently, Stern has a total of 166 students not living in the dorms, who make the daily commute to school. Due to the large number, the new policy has become a hot-button issue that has sparked discussions and debate as to whether commuters have a right to access the dorms.

Commuter Rebecca Labovitch remarked: “I always used to walk into the dorm and

use it at my leisure. Then, one day they put up the scanners and mine wasn’t working. Suddenly, I felt like an outsider in my own school. I think that the issue here is that the dorm life is just as much a part of the Stern experience as the school buildings. And therefore, as much as I don’t have a room in the dorm, I always felt like the dorms were there for me as well. When I saw that they were discussing it on Facebook I right away said ‘Hey, I have this issue: how can I advocate?’ because I do feel like it is something that needs to be advocated for.”

Many students, both commuters and those who dorm, have expressed similar sentiments. “I understand why they have a policy for some kind of safety issue,” said commuter Sarah Weisz, “but I think that people who commute feel excluded enough from the Stern community. I think they should have full access to the dorms so they could be a part of student life.”

Before scanners were installed in all of the dorms last year, security was unable

*cont’d p3*

## What Ben Shapiro Got Wrong About Abortion

Keren Neugroschl  
*Features Editor*

In many ways Ben Shapiro’s speech on Monday night was not surprising. It was not surprising that in a speech covering an array of controversial political topics, he chose to tackle the hot-button issue of abortion. It was not surprising that as a proud conservative, Shapiro identifies himself as pro-life. It was also not surprising that he devoted some time to convincing the student body in attendance that they too should be against the practice of abortion in this country. What was surprising though, was what Shapiro chose to say when advocating his position on this issue.

“Torah Judaism does not support abortion,” Shapiro stated, beginning the discussion on the topic with a dubious claim. While it is certainly true that Torah Judaism acknowledges the sanctity of life and therefore does not permit aborting a pregnancy for any given reason, there are circumstances where abortion is allowed. I am not a rabbi or *halakhic* authority equipped to delve into the complexities

involved with this *halakha*, but I am knowledgeable enough to know that this issue in Torah Judaism is certainly not as black and white as Shapiro claimed.

Shapiro’s overarching assertion was based on a quotation from Rav Soloveitchik, made just two years after Roe v. Wade was decided by the Supreme Court, making abortion legal in the United States. “If you kill a fetus, a time will come when even infants will be killed,” Shapiro quoted the Rav as saying. “The mother will get frightened after the baby will be born and the doctor will say that her life depends upon the murder of the baby.”

I cannot overemphasize the fact that I am not trying to contradict the Rav as I am nowhere near learned enough to do so, but it is worth noting that there are serious problems with basing one’s *halakhic* opposition of abortion on this statement alone. It is in the very nature of the *halakhic* process to have many conflicting opinions about any given topic—abortion

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# UN Resolution Against Israeli Settlements

Masha Shollar  
*Editor-in-Chief*

On December 23rd, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution condemning the construction of Israeli settlements, the first resolution to do so in thirty-six years. Resolutions against Israel sometimes seem to be a dime a dozen, but this one touched off furious debate. For the first time during his administration—and in a clear departure from the political status quo in regards to America’s relationship with Israel—President Obama chose to abstain from the vote, choosing not to veto the resolution. The other fourteen members of the Security Council voted in the affirmative, with Ambassador Samantha Power abstaining on behalf of the president. The move has drawn criticism from both Republicans and Democrats.

The settlements discussed are located in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, with some of them containing just a few families, and others large enough to support a university. Peace agreement talks have always been conducted with the understanding that Jewish areas of East Jerusalem, which fall under the category of disputed territories, would retain Israeli control, which makes this veto a departure from decades of political tradition.

The resolution pushes the hot button topic of Israeli settlements back into the limelight in the days leading up to President-Elect Trump’s inauguration. Political strategists say that the resolution has been considered since September, when both Hillary Clinton and Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu in New York City.

The U.S. is one of the few countries in the world to consider the settlements “disputed” instead of “illegal.” That may seem like mere semantics, but it is a key distinction to make, especially in the realm of politics, where doublespeak and carefully chosen wording is *de rigueur*. But that subtle distinction seems to have changed with this resolution: for the first time in decades, the U.S. has abstained instead of vetoing. Some have claimed that it’s a final show of power from Obama, who has been facing down his lame duck status since the election, others that it’s a parting shot at Netanyahu, with whom Obama has had an incredibly fractious relationship. That is what Netanyahu seems to believe; shortly after the resolution, he accused Obama of colluding with Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat and pushing the resolution to a vote.

The resolution demands that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.” This is a non-binding resolution, which means that it is not accompanied by any sanctions against Israel. However, that doesn’t mean Israel can simply ignore the resolution. Aeyal Gross, a law professor at Tel Aviv University, wrote in Haaretz that this resolution could easily lead the International Criminal Court (ICC) to be much harsher in their investigations of settlement construction now that they have what seems to be *carte blanche* from the UNSC. Palestinian leaders have already announced that they plan to use this resolution to leverage the ICC into criminal prosecution of Israeli leaders.

The settlements can be a conflicting topic, though for many, it’s black and white, either because they believe the settlements to be in clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which ensures protection for civilians living in a war zone, or because they feel that Israel possesses the land and should be able to construct settlements wherever they desire.

But whatever your feelings about the settlements, it’s tough to view this resolution favorably. As always, Israel is judged by an entirely different standard than the rest of the world, with more resolutions being passed against her than anyone else. In fact, even UN Secretary General Ban

Ki-moon agrees, and said earlier this month, “Decades of political maneuvering have created a disproportionate number of resolutions, reports, and committees against Israel. In many cases, instead of helping the Palestinian issue, this reality has foiled the ability of the UN to fulfill its role effectively.” For context, only twelve resolutions have been passed against North Korea during his tenure as Secretary General.

The UN Humans Rights Council has issued forty-five different resolutions condemning Israel. Meanwhile, in October of this year, the UNSC proposed two resolutions calling for humanitarian aid to Aleppo and condemning the human rights violations being committed by the Assad regime. The resolution also demanded an end to the money and weapons being sent to terror groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra. Members of all of these groups claim to be fighting with Syrian rebels for freedom when, in reality, they are taking advantage of the chaos and power vacuum to seize even more control. Though the Assad government massacres and tortures unknown numbers of civilians every day, the resolutions failed to pass, after being struck down by Russia and China.

Other countries who have been condemned by Human Rights Watch continue to rack up far less resolutions than Israel. Russia, who just voted to condemn Israeli settlements, has had only one resolution passed against them regarding their invasion of Ukraine and Crimea—and that was after seven failed attempts. Not only that, but Russia invaded Ukraine during the Sochi Olympics, with all of the world watching, and it still took seven attempts for a UN response. Putin’s government has also severely restricted freedom of expression and assassinated political opponents and journalists. Human Rights Watch has also condemned his treatment of the LGBT community: this year, the founder of an online support group for LGBT teens was charged with propaganda and taken to court. Additionally, palliative care in some regions of Russia is so terrible that almost thirty cancer patients committed suicide due to a lack of medical treatment. These are drops in the bucket, and Putin’s government is known to be one of the most corrupt and secretive currently operating.

China, another country who voted to condemn Israel and abstained from a resolution against Syria, has also been denounced by Human Rights Watch. They too, repress journalism and routinely violate freedom of information. Their track record regarding women’s rights is reprehensible too: this year, they jailed three women for distributing pamphlets that educated people about what constituted sexual assault. There was also a declaration in court that prosecution of cases of domestic violence against women should be tried while keeping in mind “mitigating factors” that might explain the husband’s behavior.

Part of the UN’s job is to pass resolutions, to enact sanctions and to condemn violations of international law. Other countries commit violations of human rights all too frequently: Assad tortures and murders defenseless children and the UNSC hems and haws over whether or not to condemn him. Putin’s government invades other countries and assassinates those who pose a significant threat and then calls foul on Israel. China implies that violence against women is acceptable as long as they were asking for it, and they are not denounced. So why does the UN only do their job when it’s Israel under the microscope? If they are going to condemn violence and penalize countries who violate the Geneva Convention, then they should actually do that, instead of using their commanding positions to decide who gets nailed to the wall and who is powerful enough to be allowed to walk away with bloodstained hands.



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# Commuters Distressed Over New Dorm Policy

Tzippy Baitch  
Staff Writer

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to distinguish between commuters and those who dorm. After the installations, commuter ID's have worked on and off. But as of two months ago, according to security in Brookdale, the scanners have stopped admitting all commuters' ID cards and they must be signed in by people who live in the dorm.

**I always used to walk into the dorm and use it at my leisure. Then, one day they put up the scanners and mine wasn't working. Suddenly, I felt like an outsider in my own school**

Though some students who dorm are annoyed to have to come downstairs to sign in their commuter friends, others find it reasonable. "Dormer" Jamie Baum explains that "entering the common rooms of the dorms should not require commuters to

sign in, as these are common areas of the campus. However, dorm rooms are a private space that add an additional cost for students living on campus. Therefore, I believe that if a commuter wants to go upstairs they should be signed in, as it would be unfair for a commuter to spend every night by their friend's dorm room for free while other students pay over \$5,000 for that opportunity. Signing in allows commuters to participate in late night campus activities and spend a night, while avoiding the problem of people taking advantage of the courtesy."

Members of security have expressed sympathy for commuters, but are upholding the new policies. One guard at Brookdale explained that, "every commuter that comes in is like: 'Really? But I left my bag upstairs!' and I'm like sorry, no." When this issue was brought up by Esther Simchi at a recent town hall meeting with President Joel, he agreed that this was something that should be fixed. Currently though, students are confused about why the policy has taken effect at all and if it will ever actually change.

Multiple attempts were made by The Observer to reach out to the representatives of the housing department, but they have not made themselves available for comment. The student life liaison did remark on "Stern College: in the Know" that when



she spoke with the head of housing once the issue emerged, its director committed to contacting the deans immediately, since "the decision about this policy that was made over a year ago was made not only by housing or specifically on the Beren campus, but was made for all Yeshiva University campuses by both the housing departments and higher ups at YU."

Only time will tell if the new system will remain in place.

# Sunday Night Learning: Empowered by GPATS

Shira Krinsky  
News Editor

On Sunday night, December 18, teenage girls from different high schools in the Teaneck area gathered together in the Bais Medrash of Bergenfield for a night of learning. This was the first meeting of a new initiative from the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS), called "SNL – Sunday Night Learning: Empowered by GPATS." Ultimately, the goal is to run this program every six to eight weeks for the high school girls of Teaneck, with a different type of speaker each time.

Nechama Price, the director of GPATS, explained that, "It was brought to my attention that the high level learning at Stern and GPATS [could] be used to inspire girls in high school." A request for a high school program was made from the Teaneck community, and so SNL was created.

The event began with dinner and *chaburas* between high school students and GPATS students, where they read and discussed a prepared source sheet. They talked about whether they agreed or disagreed with the sources and had lively debates. After that, all of the participants came together for a shiur by Nechama Price entitled "Favoritism in Tanach."

Five GPATS students attended this first event to help facilitate the sessions before the shiur. Talia Molotsky, one of those students, explained that her role was not just to learn with the high schoolers, but also to "expose the high schoolers to GPATS, to what it is and what it can offer students who are serious about learning." She added that this program was created in order to give high schoolers a chance to learn in a

fun environment outside of school.

Molotsky feels very fortunate to have helped with this event. "It was awesome to meet a lot of capable, smart young ladies," she said. "As a GPATS student, it is really nice to have an opportunity to give back. I spend all day working on myself and learning, and it is really nice to be able to teach and put that into practice. It was a cool place to learn, and I can't wait for the next session."

The subject of the first learning event was Tanach, but Price explained that that will not always be the case. "We are going to see how it will grow in the future, but the plan is to bring in different types of speakers each time," she said This time it was a Tanach speaker, but we also want to do Jewish History and Gemara speaker...We're going to bring in speakers who are the normal type of speakers we'd bring into Stern or GPATS."

One of Price's main goals in creating the program was for high school students to be able to meet and interact with GPATS students. "We want [high school girls] to know that they can

**We want [high school girls] to know that they can learn like this in the future. The goal is to get them excited at a young age for learning.**

learn like this in the future. The goal is to get them excited at a young age for learning. The more you are inspired by learning earlier in life, the more you will love learning as you get older," she explained.

Overall, Price was incredibly happy with the kick-off event. "It was incredible to see women in graduate program sitting with these high school girls," she said, and added, "There was something very beautiful about bringing girls from different high schools together. It was a unifying experience, which was nice."





# Ben Shapiro Brings Heated Dialogue to YU

Yardena Katz  
*News Editor*

In a ferociously unapologetic address at Yeshiva University on Monday, December 5th, Ben Shapiro dismissed white privilege as myth, proclaimed transgenderism to be “nonsense” and equated Democrats to Marxists. Organized by the YU College Republicans and the conservative activist group Young America’s Foundation, the event drew a crowd of over seven hundred to Lamport Auditorium and was viewed via live stream by another four thousand. Shapiro received a standing ovation on his way to the podium.

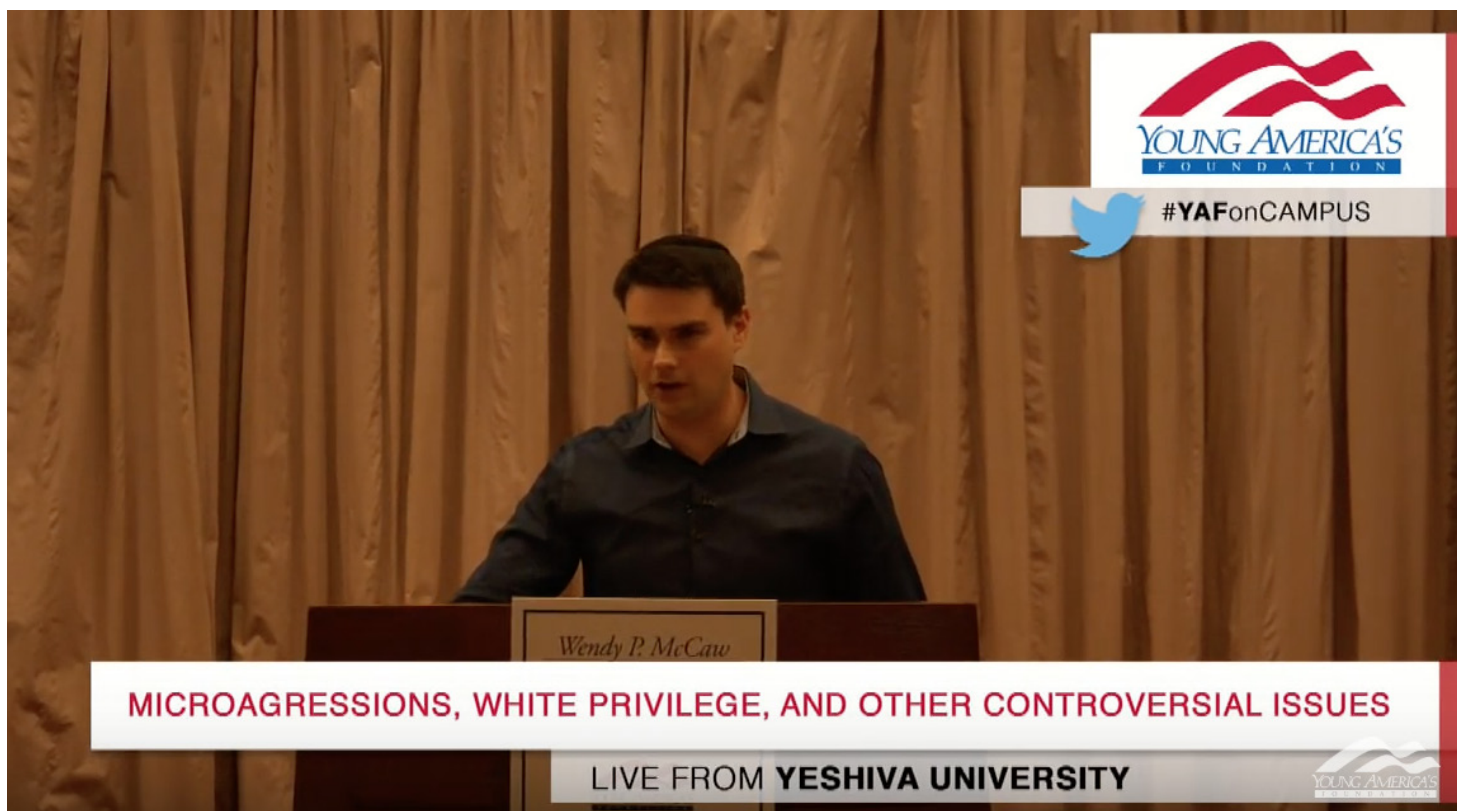
Though Shapiro is appreciated by many American Jews for his relentless defense of Israel on national television, the political commentator, bestselling author, and host of the radio show and news website The Daily Wire espouses conservative views, some of which are regarded by many as deeply controversial. In the hot-blooded political climate of post-election YU, Shapiro’s talk was highly anticipated by supporters and opponents alike. Attendees ran the gamut from impassioned Republicans to pro-Hillary Clinton t-shirt wearers. Since it was a “sensitive” event, said a source from YU security, patrol size was significantly increased to match the risk of “unwanted guests.” Shapiro’s nationwide campus visits have prompted riots at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, California State University and Penn State.

“Now’s a good time for me to answer a question that I probably get more than any other question,” began Shapiro. “Why do so many Jews vote left?” Himself a Modern Orthodox Jew, Shapiro emphasized the need to distinguish between mostly Democratic “ethnically Jewish voters,” and mostly Republican “religiously Jewish voters.” Shapiro attributed the Orthodox Republican vote to his own claim that “Torah Judaism does not support same sex marriage... does not support abortion... does not support social justice.”

Shapiro then shifted gears to discuss political philosophy, the centerpiece of his talk. Between the left and the right, he asserted that “we basically have nothing left in common. Our social fabric as a country, as a nation, is being destroyed.” Shapiro discussed at length the ideals and merits of conservatism and the “Mao[ist],” “collectivist” ideals and flaws of liberalism. In articulating his interpretations of political philosophies, his recurring use of contentious examples jarred many in the audience. While some felt that his lack of political correctness was “refreshing,” others, like Rachel Lelonek found many of his examples to be “bigoted, sexist and misogynistic.” In one such critique of collectivism, he condemned the left for claiming white supremacy to be the source of higher crime rates in minority communities, saying: “There’s a very easy way not to go to jail. You worry about the criminal justice system being biased against black people, there’s a very easy solution. Black people shouldn’t commit crimes.”

Addressing microaggression culture, Shapiro criticized “this notion that if you cross somebody’s individual sense of identity, that you’ve done something deeply wrong, even if what you’re saying is objectively true.” He then recalled his appearance on a CNN segment about transgenderism. “Was Caitlyn Jenner the gadol hador, or gedolah hador, [great man or great woman of our generation] was the big question,” he quipped. Much of the audience laughed and applauded. “Transgender people are unfortunately suffering from a significant mental illness that is deeply harmful... When you lie to people by humoring their delusions you’re actually exacerbating mental illness,” said Shapiro. The audience again applauded and whooped.

His speech was followed by a half-hour ‘Q&A’ session open to all audience members. Facilitator Zach Sterman, a member of YU College Republicans, encouraged “those particularly with a dissenting point of view to come up and ask away.” The club’s co-president, Yossi Hoffman, had also invited YU College Democrats to prepare questions beforehand. Students questioned Shapiro on the Dakota Access Pipeline, Confederate flag symbolism, criminal justice, abortion rights, and his perceived mockery of transgender individuals.



Kira Paley, who asked Shapiro where he draws the line “between being a metsch and clearly offending people” regarding his transgender “hate speech,” is one of several students who felt that Shapiro did not fairly address their questions. “Perhaps my opinion is skewed because I was the one asking the question,” said Paley, “but he sort of dodged it by using one specific anecdote. That said, I’m still happy I went up there to ask a question; perhaps my motivation wasn’t specifically to get a straight answer, but to point out his blatant hypocrisy and represent the students at the event who also were unsettled by some of the things Shapiro said.”

In an interview with The Observer, Shapiro shared that he was not surprised by the mixed reception he received from the audience. “I thought it was exactly what it should be, which is there are a lot of people who are fans and a lot of people who weren’t... My job is to say things that I think are true,” he contended.

In its aftermath, the event has sparked intense student dialogue on campus, and is cultivating an increased sense of both openness and tension within YU. “After he came, people were more able to speak up for what they think and what they really believe in, and bring light into very good conversations that I think we should be having,” asserted Benji Snow. “But what he said also stirred a lot of controversy on campus. It divided [the campus]... I had a debate today in class about it, and it was very heated.”

Many students identified with aspects of Shapiro’s perspective. “I think there were a lot of interesting, valid points made,” shared Meira Koslowe. “Even though these may be very different views from what many students at Stern believe, it was very good to hear, and he presented differing sides to many political issues very well. Even though his presentation comes off as very strong, I think that is just his style, which is totally valid.”

“I loved it,” shared Aryeh Walter. “I was really impressed by him and I liked his points. I think it’s the kinds of things a lot of us are thinking, but can’t exactly vocalize as well as he does... He doesn’t really care what a lot of people think, and I think he is entitled to that.” Walter felt that the event created a sense of unity on campus.

In the days prior to the speech, however, YU College Republicans’ posters on the Beren campus were anonymously removed without permission. Since the event, many students have expressed opposition to Shapiro’s statements, while others have highlighted their disappointment in the audience’s behavior.

“I was disappointed that somebody who thrives off of putting others down was received so warmly at YU,” said Gideon Turk. “Putting aside our Jewish values, it was disheartening to see such a large group of people agree with and cheer on a bully.

That one of the central tenets of our religion is treating others with respect makes it even worse.”

“I, as a liberal student, can respect Shapiro’s differences of opinion,” shared Rena Kleiner. “What I cannot respect is the student body’s reaction throughout the evening. Many let the articulate and entertaining man in front of them encourage them to disrespect their fellow students,” she said, in reference to the partially supportive audience’s laughter and cheers during the speech and ‘Q&A’ session. “The members of the student body were the ones creating the chilul Hashem that night, not Mr. Shapiro.”

“Shapiro’s speech, at its core, was about empowering people to speak their minds, barring outright racism or bigotry,” said Hoffman. “We [of the YU College Republicans] brought him

## Whether the student body ultimately channels its diversity of opinion into unifying mutual respect, or divisive contempt, remains to be seen.

in to illustrate the basic notion that people should be allowed to voice their opinions.”

Whether the student body ultimately channels its diversity of opinion into unifying mutual respect, or divisive contempt, remains to be seen. Shapiro himself said that “diversity doesn’t mean anything without social fabric,” and as students continue to engage in dialogue, they will indeed qualify the definition and durability of YU’s own social fabric.

# Mayor of Jerusalem Addresses Yeshiva University Students

Ruthie Klein  
*Staff Writer*

Over 200 students and faculty gathered in Weissberg Commons, anticipating the words of Jerusalem’s mayor Nir Barkat. President Joel welcomed him as “the man who is planting the new Jerusalem.”

Barkat, the mayor of Jerusalem since his election in 2008, has held many roles in serving the people of Israel: philanthropist, entrepreneur, and politician. At 57, he has also experienced Jerusalem as a true citizen. Barkat lived through the War of 1967 at the age of seven, and later served as a paratrooper. He then went to Hebrew University, became involved in the tech sector for 15 years, and, while working in philanthropy, discovered a drop in the communal morale of Jerusalem. “I believe in making a difference,” Barkat said. This work ethic, combined with his forty-plus years perceiving the pitfalls and advantages of the city in which he had grown up, was his impetus to run for mayor.

“Let me take you back three thousand years,” said Barkat. He described the 12 tribes’ designated territories, which each had specific cultures and flags—with the exception of Jerusalem. He went on to vividly depict the ancient pilgrimage to Jerusalem, when Jews from every tribe came together, belonging to one unified nation. Barkat interpreted the verse “For from Zion shall Torah come” as an outflow of people accepting Jerusalem as the de facto standard both spiritually and socially. “To create such excellence,” he declared, “we must remember where we come from and the uniqueness of our people. By design, there is room for all kinds of people [in Jerusalem]. It must stay a united city.”

It is this very diversity, said the mayor, that causes the conflicts so oft-discussed by a condemnatory media, but he emphasized that these conflicts “managed wisely, make Jerusalem better.” Barkat explained the key to managing the coexistence of Jerusalem is to believe there is room for everyone, and to exhibit determination in finding a solution that is a win-win for all involved parties. “If you gain the trust of difficult constituencies,” he informed the crowd, “you have a higher chance of succeeding.” Not just that, but conflict resolution is easier, Barkat said, when there is economic growth, because there is less fighting over resources. He joked that his time as a businessman had allowed him to understand the “consumer-centric approach,” to open up his eyes and ears and see what the people around him need, and to help them live their lives the way they want to.

When it came time for questions, Barkat said with a smile, “Leave the easy questions for other people.” A mixture of students and faculty raised their hands to ask questions regarding improving Jerusalem, media perception of Israel and the settlements.



“Jerusalem as a destination for tourists is under-utilized,” said Barkat, when asked how Jerusalem could be improved. He cited the two million tourists that visit each year, and said, “I want ten million each year.” He explained that Jerusalem is being marketed as a place where kings and prophets walked, expounding upon the Old City’s cultural and Biblical importance. Not just that, said Barkat, but “we have a lot of potential in high tech and the sciences.” Jerusalem was named the number one emerging tech hub in the world by Time Magazine, as it has seen an increase from 250 to 600 new startups each year. “These companies need skilled laborers who understand the American market. You students come with value, and you must seek out in Jerusalem those who need your skills.”

Barkat also had a chance to discuss the state of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jerusalem. The sixty thousand Palestinian refugees, he said, are “political prisoners” that no Arab

country wants to settle or assist. He explained the usage of the security fences as necessary because some of the refugees had exhibited violent tendencies. However, he added, “we give the best jobs, hospitals, and education to these refugees,” said Barkat, who also expressed his desire to take the fence down because it impacts their quality of life. “I wish it was better,” he said fervently, “but it’s unfair to blame Israel.”

When asked about settlements, Barkat firmly stated his support for Jews settling where they want to. “If a Jew wants to build anywhere else, in any other democratic country, he is able to. So Jews should be able to build wherever they want, especially in the Biblical places that their forefathers walked.”

Barkat was greeted by loud applause and thanked his audience, who expressed gratitude and interest for all he had to say. It was his attitude toward Jerusalem and its future that excited students, as he told them almost straight off the bat, “I’m a very optimistic guy.”

**Want to write for  
The Observer?  
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# English Course Options for Spring Explained

Geffie Kornhauser  
*Staff Writer*

During club hour on December 7th, associate professor of English Dr. Ann Peters and assistant professor Dr. Seamus O’Malley led a majors meeting where they introduced the English classes that will be offered at Stern College in the spring 2017 semester. After a brief presentation, Drs. Peters and O’Malley opened up the floor for questions and encouraged students to share their thoughts on existing classes and to provide suggestions for new courses. The students in attendance seemed enthusiastic about the classes and many stayed afterwards to chat with the professors about what promises to be a rigorous and rewarding semester.

In an interview with Professor O’Malley, he offered insight into the courses he will be teaching next semester and what he aims for students to take away from his classes. “Both of my courses are foundational, focusing on the building blocks of literary interpretation,” he said. “Ways of Reading will showcase how to interpret various genres of writing—poetry, fiction, and drama—and try on different critical lenses to produce as many quality interpretations as we can. Intro to Fiction will explore novels and short stories through the lens of narratology, which focuses on the forms and functions of literary narrative. I believe that such critical nitty-gritty is essential for any act of interpretation. I hope that students come away with both an ability to close read texts, and an enthusiasm for it. While it’s a difficult skill to master—it’s counter-intuitive, and goes against our more shallow social-media habits—it is a requisite tool for navigating the language-based world.”

Dr. Peters, who will be going on sabbatical next semester, spoke about the courses she is currently teaching, explaining how she became involved in her areas of study and what she hopes students will gain from taking her courses. “My field is American literature, and the American literature survey course is one I’ve taught many times since I began my career,” she remarked. “It offers a general survey of a range of works written after the 1860s. We usually start with Walt Whitman, one of my favorites. This semester we are ending with a William Faulkner short story. I like teaching the survey because I get to give students a taste for all kinds of literature. The Harlem Renaissance is a new course, one I’ve never taught before. I came up with the idea for this course after beginning a research project on one of the writers from the period, Jean Toomer. It’s an exciting course because it’s inter-disciplinary. We are reading novels and poems, but also watching clips of films about the musicians and visual artists from the period. Students are all working on a research project of their own choosing, and I’ve been so impressed by the students’ enthusiasm about their papers.

“I want students to practice thinking for themselves,” she further remarked. “I want them to understand the importance of curiosity and help them see how important it is to keep asking questions about everything they learn. I want them to learn how to critically evaluate ideas and present their own ideas logically and clearly. I want them to learn how to write a beautiful sentence and appreciate a beautiful sentence when they read one.”

Towards the end of the presentation, associate professor of English Matt Miller joined the meeting to say a few words about the writing minor and discuss the classes he will be teaching

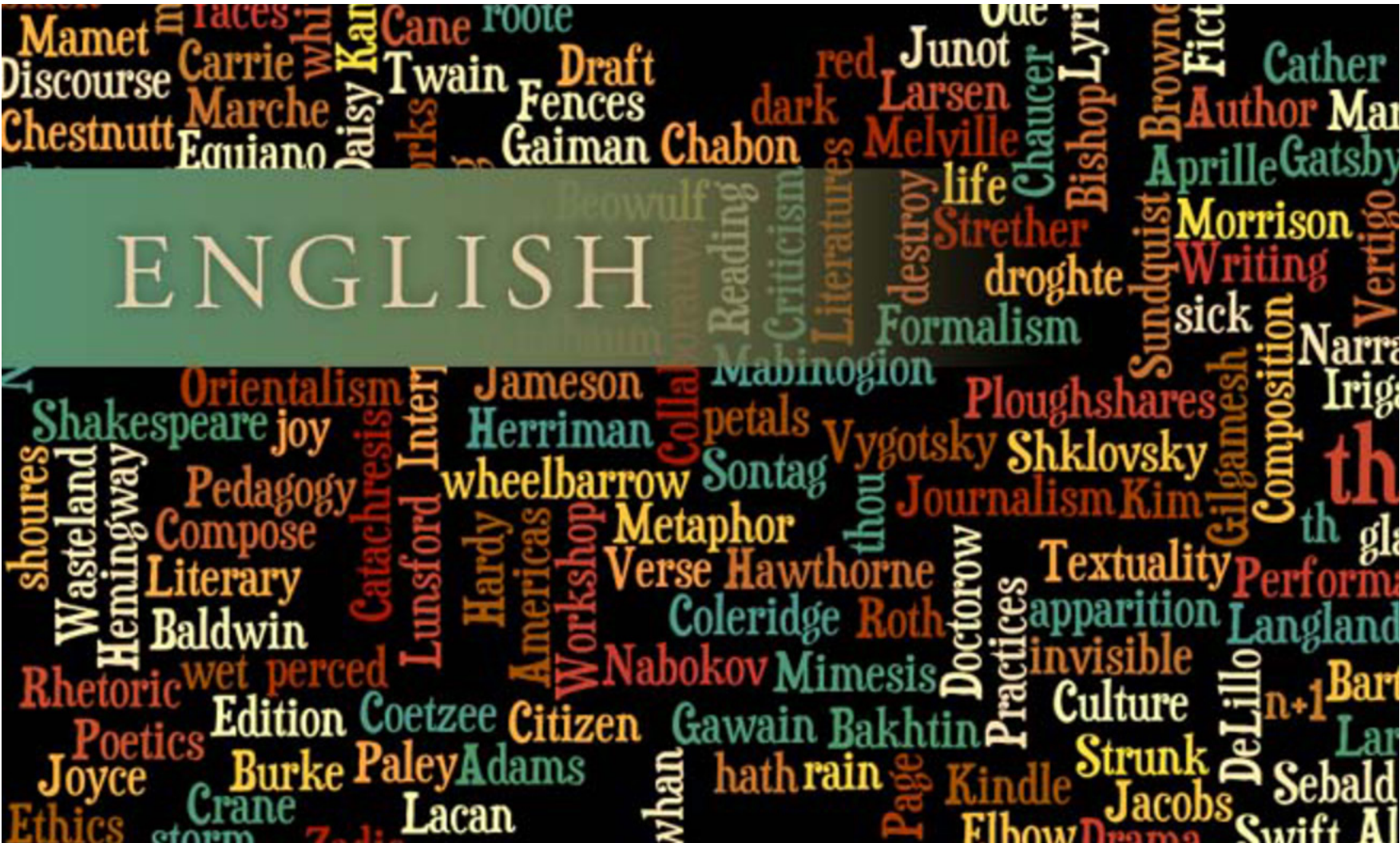
next semester.

In an interview with Professor Miller, he further described his course on Transcendentalism and discussed how the knowledge students gain from studying literature can be valuable to so many aspects of their future lives and careers. “Transcendentalism is a new course, focusing on one of the most exciting times in American history and culture: the creation of America’s first major counter-cultural movement and our first distinctly American forms of writing and thinking,” he said. “The course will allow us to explore many fascinating writers: America’s first major philosopher of note, Ralph Waldo Emerson; Henry David Thoreau, author of Walden and other classics, as well as Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and lesser known writers like Margaret Fuller. We’ll take a field trip to the Morgan Library, which is hosting a major exhibition of Dickinson’s manuscripts and handmade books. I’m excited for this class. My students often describe how my classes improve their abilities in surprising ways, allowing them to make connections that resonate with them for many years to come. They also become better writers, readers, and researchers. Plus, literature can provide much-needed intellectual companionship. It nurtures the heart and mind.”

A Stern student, who plans to double major in business and English literature, expressed how valuable she thinks writing is in any profession. “Knowing how to write well helps you in any career you would choose to go into, be it business, science, or something else. You always need to sound professional.” She further commented that she thinks, “it would be interesting to analyze Tanach using a literary perspective. I hope Stern will offer a class along these lines soon.”

As the fall semester comes to a close, students throughout Stern anxiously await vacation and the chance to start anew. As far as the English department is concerned, next semester looks to be the perfect opportunity for students to take advantage of the fresh and exciting courses that Stern has to offer.

Literature can provide much-needed intellectual companionship. It nurtures the heart and mind.





# Injured Genetics Professor Substituted, Enrollment Plummet

Yardena Katz  
*News Editor*

As Stern’s Biology Department Head, Professor Harvey Babich, continues to recover from a serious October car accident, his spring Genetics course will adopt a new professor for the first time in decades. The 4-credit advanced biology course has been led almost exclusively by the beloved professor since 1987. A mandatory component of the Biology major and a highly recommended preparatory class for pre-med students, the lecture will now be taught by Professor Ronit Lebor and the lab by longtime instructor Professor Mana Mirjany.

Many science majors and pre-meds who had originally planned on taking Genetics this spring have expressed reluctance to test their luck in the course as it experiences new leadership. Unpredictable testing formats and reformed syllabi are jarring for many to imagine. With the formal registration period over, Genetics has a mere 18 of its 40 available spots filled. In previous semesters, only students slated for earlier registration times have managed to secure coveted seats in the maximum capacity class.

“We are very confident that the students in Genetics are receiving a solid course, and are covering the required material,” assured Associate Dean Ethel Orlan. “The detailed syllabi of both lecture and lab were made available to the instructors, and are being followed to ensure the integrity of the course.” Both professors filled Babich’s vacancy immediately following his injury in October, and will continue in their respective roles this spring.

Other students feel that the change in teachers will have little impact on their ability to appreciate and succeed in the curriculum. “I don’t know Professor Babich, so I can’t really compare the different styles,” said Haley Kandelshein. “I don’t really have any expectations as to how the new teacher will be, but I don’t mind change. I need Genetics for the Biology major, so I was going to take it regardless of who the teacher was.”

Students who experienced the mid-semester switch seem mostly satisfied with Stern’s management of the situation. “It was an interesting transition, because all of us had this idea of how we were going to study for Babich by practicing with his old exams,” said a student. “The school did their best to make it the easiest transition for us. Professor Lebor made us slideshows and Professor Mirjany for lab was a sweetheart, and did her best

to stick to Professor Babich’s syllabus. The downside was not getting back our lab midterms, finals and work, so I have no idea what my final grade for lab might be. But all in all, it was a good transition given the circumstances.”

Given Lebor’s familiarity with the Genetics curriculum from her instruction of its fall 2014 lab and Mirjany’s experience teaching Biology Principles labs at Stern since fall 2012, both came highly recommended by veteran Biology faculty. Lebor has an MS in Human Genetics from Sarah Lawrence College and a BA in Biology from Stern, and Mirjany has a PhD in Neuroscience from Einstein, an MSc in Molecular Genetics, and a BSc in Genetics. “Ms. Lebor was most gracious, and despite the absence of any lead time, agreed to rearrange her schedule to cover the course. Dr. Mirjany, too, rose to the occasion, and was able to successfully step into the position,” said Orlan.

For many, Babich’s temporary absence is dismaying for reasons beyond the shifting course logistics. Known for his approachability and commitment to students, Babich is the faculty supervisor of the annually published student journal *Derech Hateva: A Journal of Torah and Science*, and has mentored countless students as they have navigated career choices, graduate school applications and Honors theses. Though he himself retired from a prolific research career in toxicology years ago, Babich has helped many students pursue coveted research and clinical opportunities.

“Last year, I was having a lot of angst with my major and career options,” said Chani Grossman. “He spent time with me going over what he knew and could help me with... I could tell that he really cared to make sure that everything worked out in the best possible way for me.” Added Elana Perlow, “Dr. Babich’s top priority is always his students... He consistently goes above and beyond to help Stern students get a step closer to their dreams.”

Alumna Chaya Dachoh had similar sentiments: “Dr. Babich is one of the most caring, understanding, fascinating teachers... He always has a smile on his face and remembers every student, even from previous years.” Adi Berman, who spearheaded an effort to purchase a gift and donate to charity in Babich’s honor, along with fellow alumna Melissa Rex, noted that the initiative



was true to Dr. Babich’s own generous character.

After delivering the gift to Babich on behalf of dozens of Stern students, Microbiology professor Dr. Alyssa Schuck shared, “I gave Dr. Babich the gifts and cards that you all sent. I think he was really touched. He got a kick out of the tie, and every time a new visitor came, he proudly showed him/her the scroll that said that you all donated money in his honor to the *tzedaka* fund. He texted me again tonight to please thank you all.”

As Prof. Babich’s absence continues to be felt academically and interpersonally, students are welcome to pray for him using the name Yosef ben Feygel Esther. Though the Genetics course will take an unprecedented form in the spring, for many there is hope that Babich’s decades-long development of the course has laid a strong foundation for his substitutes’ success.

# YU Introduces EMT Class on Campus

Ailin Elyasi  
*Staff Writer*

In an effort to create a safer campus, YU’s Emergency Medical Service (EMS) club, with the assistance of the club’s director, Dr. Levy Amar, a biology professor at Stern and certified EMT instructor, has established an EMT course at YU that will be offered this spring for the first time on the Beren Campus.

An EMT on campus could act during emergencies, which could potentially save lives. As the first medically knowledgeable people to arrive at the scene, an EMT holds the crucial task of stabilizing the patient and transporting him to a hospital equipped to treat him. When emergencies are time sensitive, such as during cardiac arrest, an EMT’s response time is critical. For instance, as the body undergoes cardiac arrest, blood stops flowing from the heart to the rest of the body until a trained EMT performs CPR. Only CPR and an AED shock machine can pump the heart back into artificial action and circulate blood to the rest of the body. Without CPR and a AED shock machine, however, the heart cannot work to provide the brain and other vital organs with the oxygen transported by blood. After just three minutes, the brain begins to deteriorate which causes irreversible damage, with the patient losing seven to ten percent brain mass each minute of delay. If more YU students obtain EMT licenses, emergency situations can be prevented by our own student population.

As Dr. Amar highlighted, EMT response times can prevent lifelong problems. Unfortunately, Midtown’s slower response time recently led to a close call on Beren campus. On one Friday afternoon, a Stern student called Hatzalah during a medical emergency. The only person close enough to respond to her call lived a few blocks away. By the time he descended from a high penthouse with an emergency medical bag and an

ambulance, ten minutes had passed. Although the EMT arrived in time to stabilize the patient, another situation—like a cardiac arrest—may have resulted differently. As Dr. Amar put it, “minutes are important, especially when there’s a time bomb on the brain.”

YC instituted its own EMT class last spring, producing more student EMTs on campus. During a fourteen week course, students divided their lessons between lab and lecture, learning everything from important bodily functions to professional standards. In particular, Dr. Amar highlighted the extra time students in the YC course spend on the EMT’s physical procedures, emphasizing the importance of muscle memory during emergency moments of high adrenalin and the benefit of the comprehensive class.

Both the four month spring 2016 YC course and the intensive 3-week summer 2016 YC course have been a huge success, with every student passing. Dr. Amar began the YC courses per student request, since many sought a course with low travel time, and students loved it. YU EMS co-president Tani Polanski said of the class that, “the teachers were fantastic and really friendly, helpful, and excited about the material...it is a solid amount of work but it’s a very fulfilling and rewarding class and experience.”

Though students from all different majors and all life paths completed the course, the hands-on experience particularly benefits students who might enter health careers. Rebecca Burack explained, “Being pre-med I have taken biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, and a few advanced biology courses which have taught me a lot. While all those classes are

great learning experiences and necessary for medical school, the skills and knowledge I gained from the EMT class have taught me so much more. They taught me the skills necessary to save a life in an emergency situation. Having these skills are so important.” Direct patient interaction and real emergency situations help pre-health students receive a sense of a future career.

Dr. Amar and the YU EMS club had planned to continue the courses this fall at YC, but could not find enough students interested to cover the high costs of instructors and equipment. Now, for the first time during the spring 2017 semester, YU plans to hold a class at Stern.

With enough EMT students on campus, YU could create an EMS network in conjunction with Hatzalah to ensure efficient medical care for all emergencies on campus. If another Stern student calls for medical attention, like on that Friday afternoon, Midtown’s slow response time will not jeopardize her chance to receive timely medical attention. Instead, student EMTs on campus will respond to any emergencies themselves as they wait for Hatzolah to arrive.

The student EMS program is currently pending approval. As Adira Koppel, a YU EMT, said, “This is Manhattan, and in Manhattan there is a large amount of traffic. While 9-1-1 and Hatzalah have very quick response times, there is still a significant gap from when EMS are called and when they arrive, and those few minutes can be critical. A student EMS unit on campus could provide interim care until the ambulance gets to the scene, and that care could be the difference between life and death.”



# Having the Menstruation Conversation, Period.

Miriam Renz  
*Features Editor*

Recently, New York removed what came to be known as the ‘tampon tax,’ a former luxury tax that was applied when someone would purchase menstrual pads or tampons. The controversy surrounding this tax was in regard to the idea that feminine hygiene products fall within the category of a ‘luxury’ item, in contrast to items such as male condoms which have been exempt from the same tax because they are considered ‘necessities.’ Though the ‘tampon tax’ has, since this conversation began, been revoked, it represents a standard of defining ‘necessity’ one way and ‘luxury’ in another. Considering that this conversation has so recently been (somewhat) resolved in the U.S., the process of discussing menstruation and related topics is surely slow-moving. To better understand this process and how it differs depending on country and available resources, it is important to look at the following examples of cultural approaches to menstruation.

In 2012, author and journalist Rose George wrote an opinion piece for the *New York Times* entitled, “The Taboo of Menstruation.” Rather than focusing on menstruation issues in the United States or the science of menstruation, George discusses the way periods are talked about, reacted to, and in what ways their treatment hinders young women in rural India. She discusses the overwhelming lack of sanitation in India, which, of course, creates problems for menstruating women. Having travelled to schools and numerous Indian towns, George writes that “23 percent of Indian school-age girls dropped out of school when they reached puberty,” a staggering, though not surprising, statistic. These places—and many like them—lack functional and safe sewage systems, creating an enormity of shame that revolves around feeling dirty. This especially affects young girls who are already processing what it means to have their periods. Unfortunately, George writes, many of these women are destined for experiences of infection and disease due to the unsanitary living conditions, perpetuating the stigma of menstruation and bodily functions in general.

Since then the *New York Times*—along with the *Huffington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune*, among others—has published dozens of articles covering menstruation. This topic, however, has been broken down into a variety of subcategories, from menstrual cramps and ways of managing severe menstrual pain, to feminine hygiene products and the marketing that powers its industry. It’s also been divided into the culture of “period-shaming,” which is a more recent “sub-genre” within journalists’ menstruation-related articles.

In the United States, in contrast to George’s study of Indian girls and women, females can choose between tampons, pads, and menstrual cups, among other developing options.

According to a recent *Chicago Tribune* article, the feminine hygiene product industry is a “\$19 billion feminine hygiene market,” yet this money has often been used to produce advertisements that firmly discourage women and girls from accepting their periods as natural and manageable. Rather, these advertisements motivate women to “outsmart Mother Nature” and offer colored tampons to “distract from the hell you’re going through,” playing on the assumption and insistence that menstruation is intrinsically and unavoidably unpleasant.

Looking at the history in this industry, the slow movement of production and legislation becomes much more understandable: it was only in 1896 that Johnson & Johnson marketed the first version of a menstrual pad, after which it took almost half a century for someone to create what would become the tampon. Now, one hundred years later, two companies run by women have grown to compete in this industry, both with very different attitudes about menstruation than those of earlier companies. Journalist Danielle Paquette wrote in her article that “Thinx,” one of the new brands, “and Schulte’s Flex” another developing company, both work towards “rejecting the ancient menstrual stigma—the old taboos [that] deemed [women] unclean during their monthly cycles.” This insight, though to some quite obvious, is necessary when observing the scope of this stigma. From medieval up until modern times, there have been endless claims that women who are menstruating cannot approach crops because the crops will die, or even in the Jewish community the idea of *niddah* holds the belief that a woman is impure during menstruation, causing her to be ‘untouchable.’

Though both Thinx and Flex’s menstrual products are innovative in materials used, marketing tactics, and overall tone, they have not outsold the traditional pads and tampons. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, respectively forty and sixty percent of all American women still use either pads or tampons, with the remaining option of “either or both” rounding off the poll with one hundred percent using one or the other. This may seem like an underwhelming statistic, however, when looking at the alternative products such as menstrual cups it becomes clear that, aside from being environmentally conscious choices, menstrual cups offer a more connected way of experiencing menstruation.

# The Alt-Right Fight

Kira Paley  
*Staff Writer*

College students like to one-up each other. They are constantly trying to outdo one another in the internships they apply for, the courses they take, and the large words and complex terms they throw around. To make themselves seem smarter, they employ the use of sesquipedalian terminology to embellish the less than ordinary points they are trying to get across.

This applies to many areas, but most of all, it applies to politics. With the political climate on campus changing due to the recent election and due to certain campus events, YU students are engaging in political discussion and debate both in person and online.

With tensions rising, people wanting to make their points stronger, or even perhaps simply due to the human tendency to call one another names, tend to put other students, and other people, into groups. On one end, there are the staunch liberals, on the other end, there are the staunch conservatives, and past that, there’s the alt-right.

Of course, this is not to say that YU students are going around calling other students members of the alt-right; as a college student, I am being a quintessence of myself by using extreme rhetoric to make a point. This is simply to say that it is important to know what a group is before you put someone into it.

The alt-right is an abbreviation for “alternative-right,” and loosely describes members to the far right of the political spectrum who reject mainstream American conservative ideology. It is important to note this distinction: if someone considers himself or herself politically conservative, he or she is not a member of the alt-right.

The conservative movement embodies positions like limited government and government economic involvement, the strict reading of the Constitution, and individual responsibility; the alt-right is categorized by these things, but also by white nationalism. Whereas conservatism is defined by its favor of tradition over radical social change, the alt-right’s defining factor is its racism. The alt-right is characterized by its white supremacy and is opposed to increased rights for women, non-whites, Jews, Muslims, gays, and immigrants. It opposes democracy’s idea that all people deserve equal rights.

Since it is largely an online movement, the alt-right is known for its use of memes. Earlier in 2016, the popular meme Pepe the Frog, a green anthropomorphic drawing of a frog, became associated with the alt-right and was officially declared a hate symbol by the Anti-Defamation League. Members of the alt-right also use triple parentheses online to identify Jewish names; for example, in an alt-right blog, Albert Einstein might be written as (((Albert Einstein))). Known as “echoing,” this practice is used to target Jews for harassment. Countless podcasts and news sites, like The Right Stuff, Red Ice Radio, and Counter Currents, exist as outlets for members of the alt-right to express their views.

The alt-right movement is unique in that though some members definitely believe in the ideologies that it represents, others are part of the movement because they see it as an alternative way to express extreme conservative beliefs. While many people in the alt-right are racists and white supremacists, others, like a number of Trump voters, associate with the movement because of its alternative nature.

Though labeling political groups is common, labeling the alt-right presents a problem: giving white supremacists their own title that is not inherently negative is almost normalizing their offensive ideologies. Alt-right sounds more like a rock band than a political group. By calling them the “alt-right” and not “racist anti-Semitic anti-Muslim extremists,” their staunchly discriminatory beliefs are not made immediately clear. When using the term alt-right, it is important to ensure that readers or listeners know what the term means.





# The Fight for the American Museum of Women’s History

Keren Neugroschl  
*Features Editor*

Out of the 2,400 National Historic Landmarks in the United States, 5% are dedicated to a woman’s achievement. There are 5,193 public statues in the country, but only 294 are statues of women. The National Parks Service maintains forty-four memorials, and not one is for a woman.

In New York City, one of the most populous and diverse cities in the country, there are only five public statues of historic women. In Central Park, there are twenty-two statues of men and none of women.

The nation’s capital, where women have served in public office, lobbied for important pieces of legislation, and improved the democratic system, is no different. The Capitol building holds 210 statues, and only nine of them are of women.

To be clear, the reason for the huge discrepancy in public recognition between men and women is not because women have contributed any less to American history. Since before the United States was founded, women have been equals in laying the foundations of this country and blazing a trail for future generations.

Anne Hutchinson, a 17th century colonist, refused to be silent and advocated for religious freedom, ultimately being banished from her home for doing so. Lucretia Mott was a prominent abolitionist and feminist who converted her home into a stop on the Underground Railroad and organized the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. Sojourner Truth was a human rights activist who campaigned throughout the country as a preacher and also raised money during the Civil War for African American soldiers. Dorothea Dix tirelessly advocated for asylum and prison reform in the 19th century, transforming these systems. Mary Harris Jones was a leader of the labor movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nellie Bly was an investigative journalist who chronicled the struggles of disenfranchised segments of the American population. Jeannette Rankin was the first women elected to Congress in 1916. Esther Ross spent half a century working to gain federal recognition for a Native American tribe. Toni Morrison is a Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize winner and known for her expert portrayals of the experience of being an African American.

These women are just a fraction of the thousands of women who contributed to American society and revolutionized our country, all while breaking through barriers that they faced because of their gender. And yet, these feats are largely

forgotten in the country’s institutions.

In recent years, steps have been taken to begin to rectify this vast inequality in recognition. In April of this year, President Obama designated the headquarters of the feminist organization the National Woman’s Party as the Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument, making it the first national monument dedicated to women.

New York City has promised to change the fact that there are only statues of men in Central Park by allowing the creation of statues of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and of Susan B. Anthony in the park. There is currently a fund in place that is collecting donations for these statues.

While these are important steps to create parity in recognition, no project has been as hard-fought or ambitious as the fight to create the American Museum of Women’s History. The project was first born in 1996 with the creation of the National Women’s History Museum, a group advocating for a museum solely dedicated to educating the public on the contributions women have made to this country.

In 1998, Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) introduced legislation that would start the first step of building the American Museum of Women’s History, the creation of a commission to research the logistics involved. All efforts to build the museum were ignored until 2014, when then-House Majority Leader Eric Cantor permitted a vote on the bipartisan legislation, introduced by Maloney and Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) to create this commission. The bill passed 383 to 33 in the House, and legislation to create the commission passed the Senate in an equally bipartisan way, with all 20 women Senators cosponsoring the bill.

The privately-funded commission comprising of a team of eight historians and museum experts, all of whom are women, were tasked with determining how much the museum will cost, where it should be located, and if it should join the Smithsonian Institution. After 18 months of conducting research, holding meetings, and engaging with the public, the commission released their findings on November 16th.

The commission presented a 10-year plan to build the American Museum of Women’s History, a Smithsonian Institution located on the National Mall. While the Smithsonian Institution will pay for maintenance of the museum once it is built, the \$150

to \$180 million needed to build will be privately funded. The commission requested that Congress donate land or an existing building on the National Mall for the museum. Since 2003, no construction has been allowed on the National Mall, however, advocates of the museum are hoping that an exception will be made, similar to the one made for the recently opened National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Despite the commission’s findings, the American Museum of Women’s History faces many hurdles before it becomes

**Since before the United States was founded, women have been equals in laying the foundations of this country and blazing a trail for future generations.**

a reality. Smithsonian Secretary, David Skorton, reportedly acknowledged the importance of increasing recognition of women in U.S. history, but told the commission that “building a new museum is not practical now” with too many other projects in the works.

In addition, similar efforts to the American Museum of Women’s History have been unsuccessful in ultimately building a museum. The National Museum of African American History and Culture was only built after over 100 years of commissions, legislation, and raising money. A commission was formed in the 1990s to create a museum to acknowledge the influence of Latino culture on the U.S., but no such museum has been created. Instead, the Smithsonian has chosen to hire more Latino curators and create individual exhibits to teach Latino history and culture in this country.

While the American Museum of Women’s History is still far from becoming a reality, the project has been pushed to the forefront of the public’s minds, and along with it, the legacies of thousands of forgotten women.





Tikva

Racheli Shafier  
Staff Writer

In Hebrew, “tikva” means hope. “Tikva” also means hope for hundreds of Jewish children in Odessa, Ukraine who are orphans, or suffering from extreme poverty, neglect or abuse. Tikva is the name of the orphanage that takes these children in—feeding, clothing, loving and helping them to heal.

In the early 1900’s, Odessa, the third largest city in Ukraine, had a thriving Jewish community, making up over thirty percent of the general population. After the population was decimated by the Nazis, the rising Communist government attempted to destroy what was left of Jewish life. As was in the case of most of the Soviet Union, they nearly succeeded, leaving behind a city with thousands of Jews who had no idea what it meant to be Jewish.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Rabbi Shlomo Baksht traveled to Odessa, not knowing what was needed but knowing that he needed to help revive the Jewish community there. While he originally started out by creating a small Jewish school as well as social and educational programming, he soon learned of the decrepit state of the local orphanages. In these orphanages, a child was lucky if she or he had a bed, let alone the love and care that she or he needed. Rav Baksht leapt into action, bought an apartment, and removed six Jewish children from a state orphanage.

This “children’s home” was just the start of what became Tikva. Today, Tikva includes an Infants’ Home, a Girls’ Home, a Boys’ Home, and a university, all of which combined house hundreds of Jewish children. They also serve meals to the homeless every day and even send employees to bring food to the elderly.

Unlike most orphanages that will accept children only when they are brought to them, Tikva actively researches and locates Jewish orphans throughout the region. According to their website, as of 2011 Tikva has thirty full-time employees whose collective job it is to “seek out, document and rescue destitute Jewish children from the southern regions of the former Soviet Union, specifically Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia.”

While Tikva is colloquially referred to as an “orphanage,” that is not an entirely accurate term, for two reasons. First, under Ukrainian law, an organization like this can only be registered as either a school or an orphanage. If Tikva were registered as an orphanage, they would have full control and responsibility of their children, but would not be able to have their own school, and would have to send the children to the extremely sub-par city schools. As such, when Tikva grew, Rabbi Baksht and his team made the decision to register Tikva as a boarding school. This way they have the opportunity to house, clothe, feed, love, and educate the children to the best of their abilities. The only downside is that since it is not an orphanage, Tikva is not legally able to allow people adopt their children.

This is not as big of a downside as it would seem, because of the second reason that Tikva isn’t actually an orphanage. While about ten percent of their children are technically orphans, the majority of the children have some family, or are “social orphans,” meaning that their parents are abusive, alcoholics, drug addicts, or cannot financially afford to take care of them. When Tikva locates a Jewish family in any of these situations, it sends employees to meet with the families, showing them the opportunities that it can offer their children. For many parents, although it is difficult, they understand that Tikva can offer their children what the children need. Together with a Tikva staff member, the children travel to Odessa, where they live in the dorms, and return home twice a year for holidays.

The children grow up there—receiving a sophisticated primary education before continuing on to university, if they so choose. They live with the warm sense of community, knowing that Tikva is available if and when they want its support.

While this sounds like a clear-cut system, the reality is far from simple. Every child that comes to Tikva comes with his or her own story and needs. Many are abused but still insist on going home for the holidays. Some children, coming from truly destitute backgrounds, go home to houses with no electricity or running water. Some parents sell their children’s belongings and send them back empty-handed. Still other children have families who live nearby, and often go home for a night. Parents

also come to visit their children. Whatever the situation, Tikva works individually with each child and family, deciding what will be best for the child.

One might wonder why Tikva will do so much for the children, and so little for their families. While Tikva would love to help every Jew that they can, they have extremely limited resources. Tikva has a bottom-up philosophy, meaning that it works with the children, hoping they will create a revitalized community, thereby producing a new generation that will eradicate homelessness and destitution in the Jewish community.

Tikva is, in fact, the foundational Jewish life organization in Odessa today. Around the corner from Tikva’s office is the true nucleus of community: the synagogue. In a city that, pre-Holocaust, was over thirty percent Jewish, the synagogue is a symbol of the hope and revival of the Jewish nation for many locals. The large, beautiful synagogue is the center of the community, hosting prayers, weekly Shabbat meals, weddings, graduations, youth groups, and the only local kosher store and restaurant, as well as community meetings and activities.

Tikva has a bottom-up philosophy, meaning that it works with the children, hoping they will create a revitalized community, thereby producing a new generation that will eradicate homelessness and destitution in the Jewish community.

In addition to the synagogue, Tikva also has a large school called Ohr Sameach, which educates both the children in the orphanage and Jewish children throughout Odessa. Parents of non-Tikva children send their kids there because it is free of charge, and students receive an excellent secular and Jewish education. Ohr Sameach won the award for being the top school in Ukraine, not once, but five years in a row.

A New York-based high school, Ateres Bais Yaakov, sends a group of Juniors for two weeks every winter to create a camp for the children of Tikva. The students prepare lessons and activities, and spend the time playing, dancing, and laughing with the kids, transcending the boundaries of language and background through laughter and love. The purpose of the

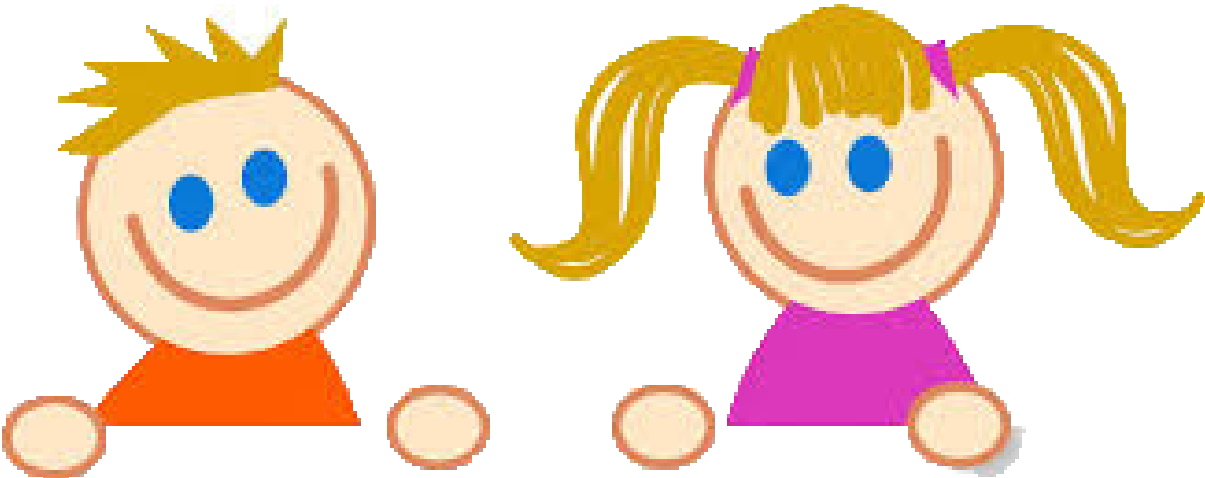
trip is two-fold. The first goal is to bring joy and light to the lives of the children of Tikva, showing them that they truly have a Jewish family around the world. The second goal is to give the students from this Monsey school an opportunity to work with other students while also exposing them to their own “extended” Jewish family.

Most students describe the trip as life-changing. Living in their New York setting, it’s very easy for Jews to lose sight of how fortunate they are. For them, if someone is “poor,” it means they can’t send their children to summer camp. It may mean that they can’t get new clothes. It doesn’t mean cooking on a gas range outside. It doesn’t mean that they lack electricity or running water. It certainly doesn’t mean taking a shower at the “rich” neighbor who has an indoor shower.

Every year, at some point on the trip, Tikva takes the Ateres girls to visit the home of one of their children so they can see how the children live when outside of Tikva. When they arrive, the child’s mother is usually drunk, and, though in the dead of winter, they shiver as they take a tour of the dark hovel. The next day, the girls are brought to visit the Infant Home (part of Tikva), and playing with the children, they meet the child whose home they just visited. Seeing this child—happy, healthy, learning and growing—while simultaneously knowing where he comes from and what his fate could have been, evokes immense empathy.

In the past few years, things have been more difficult than ever. With the current economic recession, donors have not been giving as much as they used to, and Tikva is dealing with an extreme deficit in their budget. On top of that, the war in Ukraine has added new difficulties, both financially and logistically. While the fighting is hours away from Odessa itself, there were points where Tikva received warnings about extreme anti-Semitic sentiments, and fearing riots, evacuated the entire community for a week. They have stockpiled food, water, and essentials, tightened security, and are doing all that they can to prepare for any eventuality.

While Tikva has done, and continues to do, incredible work for the Jewish community in and surrounding Odessa, there is still much work to be done. Tikva’s experts estimate that there are around 2500 Jewish children still living on the streets of Odessa. Tikva continues to work on rescuing these precious children, and through strengthening the general community, they will hopefully reach their goal soon, which as they say, is “to one day put themselves out of business.”





# The Fallacy of the MMR-Autism Link

Masha Shollar  
*Editor-in-Chief*

In 1998, British gastroenterologist and medical researcher Andrew Wakefield published a paper in a UK medical journal, *The Lancet*, alleging that the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine caused children to develop autism. He also claimed that it could lead to bowel disease, hence why a gastroenterologist was involved in the first place, but it’s the autism link that has stirred up such controversy.

Wakefield’s study led to widespread panic from concerned parents, causing MMR vaccination rates to dip dramatically in the UK, US, and Ireland. After the paper was published, Wakefield held a press conference where he called for a halt in MMR vaccinations in the UK until more research could be done on the adverse effects he believed the shots could cause.

It all sounded pretty damning, so it wasn’t surprising that those in the anti-vaccination camp embraced Wakefield’s study, with the founder of one anti-vaccination group calling Wakefield their “Nelson Mandela and Jesus Christ rolled into one.”

However, as soon as Wakefield’s study is looked into, it’s found to have not just one or two small problems, but serious issues relating to every single aspect of it.

To start with, Wakefield’s study had just twelve participants—hardly a sample size large enough to be considered scientifically rigorous. Additionally, for studies to pass muster, participants must be blindly selected: of course, if one is conducting a study based on a specific condition, the participants must have that condition, but they shouldn’t be selected based on criteria other than that. In Wakefield’s study however, his twelve participants were not random. In fact, many of them were litigants in a suit that was currently being prepared against vaccine manufacturers. The lawyers who were preparing the suit were from the Legal Aid Board, which provides legal assistance to UK citizens, and they paid Wakefield over fifty-five thousand pounds to conduct the study. Wakefield never disclosed this payment to editors at *The Lancet*, an act that should engender suspicion.

This wasn’t Wakefield’s first time accusing Big Pharma: in the early 1990s, he claimed that the measles vaccine could cause Crohn’s Disease, despite all of the research completed that failed to confirm his hypothesis. After this was struck down, Wakefield turned his attention to the supposed link between the MMR vaccine and autism, and he was put on the trail by a woman named Rosemary Kessick, the mother of a boy with autism and the founder of a group tellingly named Allergy Induced Autism. Just as with Wakefield’s study participants, Wakefield chose to take guidance only from those who supported his personal agenda.

After the wave of fear from Wakefield’s paper peaked, journalists and scientists started to express a hefty amount of suspicion, with one investigative journalist, Brian Deer, digging into the study to discover its many, glaring problems. It was Deer who found the pending litigation suit and the payoff from the lawyers. But that’s not all he found. Deer also discovered that Wakefield manipulated and changed conflicting data in his study. For instance, three of the children in the study who were reported as having regressive autism were later found to have not been diagnosable with autism *at all*. Additionally, though the study claimed that all children had been perfectly healthy prior to their MMR vaccination, five of the subjects were found to have had documented pre-existing conditions. Deer also found that Wakefield had, along with the father of one of the subjects, planned to release what he called a “diagnostic kit,” essentially a single-jab measles vaccination, and had even submitted a patent for the rival vaccine. Wakefield estimated that he could make about forty-three million pounds from the new test. Wakefield and his lawyers denied the charge.

Deer culled all of his research into a one-hour television program, all about the hoax that Wakefield had perpetrated. After the report went public, Wakefield sued Deer, the television station that aired Deer’s program, the production company which had helped produce the piece, and *The Sunday Times*. If he thought the ensuing case could help vindicate him, he was wrong. During two years of trial proceedings, he made no headway. In fact, it only served to further throw suspicion on him and his study. After the revelation that the fee Legal Aid lawyers had paid him was far more than first suspected—actually more than four hundred thousand pounds, rather than the original claim of fifty-five thousand—Wakefield bowed out

of the suit and was forced to pay all of the defendants’ legal fees.

After the court case, the British General Medical Council convened a hearing to decide whether Wakefield was fit to continue practicing medicine in the UK. The proceedings revealed more ethical issues and medical fabrications, with one of Wakefield’s graduate students testifying that conflicting data was ignored or buried. The GMC also found that Wakefield ordered expensive, invasive and unnecessary tests like colonoscopies and lumbar punctures without approval from the pediatric board and without indication from the patient’s medical histories that these procedures were necessary. Deer found that the tests were so painful for the children in the study that, on occasion, three nurses were recruited to hold patients down. The GMC also found that Wakefield had conducted the study on a basis not approved by the hospital’s ethics committee, and that he had paid children at his son’s birthday party for blood samples: five pounds each. After the proceedings came to a close, the GMC found Wakefield guilty of three dozen different charges, including four counts of dishonesty and twelve counts of abuse of developmentally challenged children. Wakefield was stripped of his license, and is barred from practicing medicine in the UK. Though he lives in the US currently, he is not licensed to practice here at all.

Though the paper first came out close to twenty years ago and has been disproved since, the controversies it created continue to exist in force. This past year, a “documentary” was produced called *Vaxxed: From Cover-up to Controversy*. Its trailer features a variety of home videos, testimonials from angry parents, and a former scientist for the CDC named William Thompson, who claims that Wakefield’s paper was right all along, but governments the world over have been engaged in a vast smear campaign/cover-up to make sure the truth never gets out. (Incidentally, we never see Thompson on camera: his role is relegated to several phone calls, which were recorded without his knowledge, and which many pointed out were clearly spliced together.) Rosemary Kessick, founder of Allergy Induced Autism also makes an appearance in *Vaxxed* and is one of many of Wakefield’s former colleagues to do so. Some began to feel concerned when the documentary appeared: science, by its very nature, is indefinite, and some wondered if they’d been inadvertently harming their children for years. However, documentary mimics Wakefield’s original study in that it too, has serious problems once it is examined. Wakefield himself is a key part of the film, which describes him as a gastroenterologist, though he’s been stripped of his license for some years. *Vaxxed* was produced by a company called Autism Media Channel, which seems understandable, given the content. However, Wakefield is the *director of the organization*. A look at the credit list for the film reveals that he also wrote and directed the film. Though the trailer declared it a Tribeca Film Festival pick, it was pulled from the festival

shortly after it was chosen, due to an avalanche of complaints.

So Wakefield, it seems, isn’t going anywhere. And unfortunately, though he’s been exposed as a fraud more times than are trackable, his claims are still being used by parents who choose not to vaccinate. Wakefield and his study are unshakeable: argue logic all you want, but truth doesn’t seem to matter to those who buy into his belief. The paper was partially redacted by *The Lancet* in 2004, and fully redacted in 2010, with the Editor-in-Chief calling it “utterly false.” Ten of his twelve coauthors published a retraction of the study, also in 2004, and one of them admitted, “I am certainly not aware of any convincing evidence for the hypothesis of a link between MMR and autism.” Finally, Wakefield’s study has never been able to be replicated, which is an absolute must in the scientific method.

Since Wakefield’s paper was published, measles rates have spiked in the UK: there were fifty-six total cases of measles in 1998, the year Wakefield’s paper was released. By 2006, there were four hundred and forty nine confirmed cases in the first five months of the year alone. Mumps outbreaks also rose dramatically, from almost zero cases in ‘98 to nearly five thousand in the first month of 2005. As more parents chose not to vaccinate because of falsified evidence, herd immunity was badly compromised. Several of these patients sustained serious and permanent damage due to the disease, with some so seriously infected that they died. There have been five major outbreaks since the paper was published, with the most serious one occurring in Italy, in which over five thousand people were hospitalized and the country spent an estimate of between seventeen and twenty two million euros to treat the epidemic. All this, from diseases we’ve known how to cure since the 1960s.

All of this is to say one thing: Wakefield’s study was not a scientifically rigorous one, yet parents continue not to vaccinate, based on specious science from a man who violated his Hippocratic Oath many times over and seems to have been living for the bottom line.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) website lists seven major diseases, once strong enough to ravage the populace and whose very name brought fear into the hearts of those who heard it, that have been nearly eradicated by the discovery and proliferation of proper vaccinations. Though if Wakefield and those who follow his credo, worshipping him as some Christ-Mandela like saviour, have anything to say about it, the list may shrink dramatically. After all, they’ve already targeted the last on UNICEF’s list of diseases once thought near extinction: number seven is measles.





# The Y-Studs: They Never Let Us Down

Jordyn Kaufman  
*Staff Writer*

During reading week at Yeshiva University, the beit midrash is packed with students preparing for their finals. At a table by the window, Dafna Meyers puts down her *seforim*, picks up her headphones and takes a much needed break to listen to “Don’t Let Me Down/Closer,” the Y-Studs’ newest song. She soon has another friend take one of the earphones so they can listen together, both of them raving about the immense talent the men in the group exhibit. Even though Meyers admittedly doesn’t know all that much about music, she still is able to recognize the “talented singers who do cool curling things with their voices,” one of many compliments the Y-Studs receive from students.

Meyers is not the only one who recognizes the talent in the Y-Studs’ newest song. The hallways of Stern and YC, dorm rooms, and Facebook groups are all filled with the hum of this cover, as well as praise for the college a cappella group. The popular Yeshiva University Facebook group, YU Marketplace even has a poll asking which Chanukah a cappella cover is the best. The Y-Studs’ “Don’t Let Me Down” currently holds an overwhelming majority of the votes, with comments on the poll saying the Y-Studs’ cover is “lit.”

The Y-Studs posted the video on Facebook and in a week the video had almost 100,000 views and almost 2,000 shares. One of the comments on the video (with 20 likes) highlights what everyone who saw it and shared it was thinking: “Great job choosing an unexpected song for [the] Chanukah season and arranging it into a masterpiece. You guys keep getting better!”

The Y-Studs’ unexpected song choice is part of the reason they have caught the attention of so many people. Gedalia Penner, who has been a Y-Stud member for two-and-a-half years, was instrumental in the song choice. “I thought ‘Don’t Let Me Down’ would be a tasteful song to use... looking at the lyrics themselves, they are so easily applicable to one’s relationship with God,” Penner said in an interview. “I knew,” he continued, “[that] it would be conducive to creating a piece that would... be very soulful and hopefully touch a lot of hearts.” Instead of making a parody song by changing the words like many a cappella groups do, Penner and the Y-Studs wanted to keep the integrity of the lyrics that already—in the words of Y-Studs former music director, Nathaniel Ribner— “[held] the message of *emunah*.” Making them more applicable to the lives of Jews by strengthening that message, the group altered the lyrics to “Closer.”

One of the things that makes the song particularly unusual is the arrangement. The Y-Studs reached out to professional a cappella arranger, Shams Ahmed, to do the arrangement of the piece. Ahmed is the lead arranger for North Eastern’s a cappella group, The Noreasters, and works primarily with the A Cappella Academy. Ribner, still a member of the Y-Studs, reached out to Ahmed for this song. “[Shams is] one of the current a cappella giants.” The group had discussed working with Ahmed on an arrangement in the past, but this is the first time they were able to work it out. While this is the first time they worked with him on a piece, the group *was* able to bring him in for a workshop over the summer. Ribner said, “[At the workshop] he got to know the voices in the group and have a better understanding of who exactly he was arranging for.”

Ahmed said that from the time the Y-Studs asked him to do the arrangement until the day the video was put out was approximately two weeks, which is very fast to put the arrangement, vocals

and video together. There was pressure to put something out before Chanukah, but also to not compromise on the quality. “From a not-really-unbiased perspective, I think their video is among the best of this year’s stuff,” Ahmed said. The goal behind the arrangement for both Ahmed and the Y-Studs was to make sure it was something that evoked emotion. But Ahmed also wanted to arrange the piece “with a wink, because it’s an all male a cappella group so you still want to not take it too seriously.”

Netanel Paley, music minor at YC, calls the song’s arrangement “masterful.” “The arrangement accentuate[s] individual voices, in passionate solos as well as richly layered harmonies. The sheer size and vocal diversity of the group as well creates an exquisite sound that unifies its singular voices even as it highlights their varied timbres.” The complexity of the arrangement accomplished what they originally set out to do.

## The Y-Studs’ unexpected song choice is part of the reason they have caught the attention of so many people.

Ahmed’s favorite part of working with the group was the quality of the members of the Y-Studs. Often, when an arranger works with a group, he or she gets feedback from the point person he/ she speaks to and that is it. In this case, Ahmed got feedback from many of the Y-Studs, all telling him how excited they were to be working together.

Ribner also cites this as one of his favorite parts of the group. “They’re not only extremely talented, they’re all huge mentches.” Ribner believes that each individual member’s drive and energy is what sets the group apart from other Jewish a cappella groups. “[Every member] is constantly stepping up [to] inspire others.” Ribner felt it important to mention that the Y-Studs “are part of a great Jewish and secular a cappella community... [that] root[s] for [each others’] success.” The end goal is to reach the largest audience and inspire people with music, something Ribner feels all the a cappella groups work hard to achieve.

Back in the beit midrash, Meyers has just hit “replay” on the YouTube video for the eighth time in a row, making it approximately the eightieth time this week she has listened to this song. “I think [the Y-Studs] represent some of the amazing talent [at] YU. They have truly made the best Chanukah mash-up this year. Incredible.”





# Forgetting Decency at Yeshiva University

Mindy Schwartz  
*Managing Editor*

*cont'd from front page*

in the media with a handful of jabs. “Was Caitlyn Jenner *gadol hador* or *gedolah hador* [great woman or great man of our generation] was the big question?” , “Should we actually create an Elijah-like chariot to guide Caitlyn Jenner into the sky?” Shapiro asked facetiously, drawing spirited laughter and applause from the crowd.

Shapiro’s tone deaf claim to “preach decency” is upsetting when I think of the number of fans he has, both on this campus and in the wider world. But honestly, I had hardly heard of Ben Shapiro before this event and I have no investment in him or his views (as, I am sure, he has none in mine). As an intellectual exercise I could step back, listen to his cogently argued points on conservative ideology, and evaluate them on their merits. Hearing his cruel jokes and blatant hypocrisy might trouble me, but I could listen to him speak and, at the end, I could just walk away, secure in the knowledge that Shapiro is not part of my community.

But when the cheers and laughter and applause have all died down, I cannot just walk away from Yeshiva University. I am personally invested in YU, not because I pay tuition but because on a deeper level, this school serves as my religious landing pad. YU is my community; YU is my home.

I ask my fellow students sitting in Lamport that night who laughed at those cruel jokes: Where is your kindness? Where is your much-lauded decency? Just think for a moment, even a moment, what a transgender person might have thought if he or she was sitting in that room. If he or she saw himself or herself treated as a joke, as some sideshow, some tool for cheap laughs. Whatever you think about transgenderism, a transgender person is still a person. Created in God’s image. Worthy of your respect.

We believe in the words of the prophet Micha, who proclaims: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micha:6:8). We believe in goodness, in kindness, in decency. So where was this belief in Lamport Auditorium?

Many students attended the Ben Shapiro event. Certainly, the

entire student body was not all in Lamport, but a large number, a clear representative sample size, sat in those wooden chairs that night. Of course many students in attendance expressed no approval throughout the entire speech. There were surely others who cheered Shapiro’s conservative ideological points, but chafed at his crude jokes at the expense of transgender people. It is impossible to know for sure the exact number of students who whooped and cheered and laughed and clapped specifically at those moments. But it was certainly a decent number. Enough that this sentiment cannot merely be shrugged off.

The reality: this thoughtless cruelty in laughing at the expense of another is indeed reflective, to some extent, of the student body at Yeshiva University.

Of course, YU students are good people who do a great deal of good things. There are clubs on campus exclusively devoted to *chesed* and to random acts of kindness. Students run blood drives and fundraisers, lead sessions teaching inclusion of those with disabilities and organize trips to soup kitchens. I am sure that the majority of the students who laughed at these jokes did so thoughtlessly; they are, and remain, good people who contribute to the goodness done on this campus and in the broader community.

But that does not excuse the reality: there was laughter and it was cruel. For me, and I assume for a number of my fellow students, this is a profoundly upsetting reality.

After the speech, News Editor Yarden Katz briefly interviewed Shapiro for The Observer. Her last question: “If a transgender student at Yeshiva University were to hear you speak, what would you hope that they would take away from your words?”

Shapiro gave a predictable response: “That we can have an honest conversation about all of these issues, and the fact that [one’s] identity does not trump the content of the issues.” He continued, “I don’t care if a transgender person wants to get a surgery or take a drug. What I do care about is when they demand that I start pretending that biological sex does not exist. That’s when I have a problem. That’s a demand made

**Ben Shapiro preaches a lot of things, but my big takeaway from his sermon: hypocrisy, both in his philosophy and—more disturbingly—in my own community.**

of me.” He conveniently ignored the imperative of decency; how he could make cheap and sometimes wholly uncalled for jokes at the expense of another, and how that other would feel hearing those jokes.

YU seems to have no out transgender students as of this moment and the number, if any, of students who identify as transgender, but have yet to come out, is impossible to know. Even if there are no such individuals, the premise of Katz’s question still deeply troubles me. It hurts to think what would have run through the mind of such a student if he or she were sitting in Lamport that night. It hurts to think that there must be people who identify themselves as transgender who saw this live stream and heard the laughter, the applause, the cheers—*our* laughter, *our* applause, *our* cheers.

A few days after the event, I am still left feeling unsettled and isolated from the community which I love and respect. It was isolating to sit in a room so devoid of decency and kindness, to feel like my home, once full of familiar faces, was suddenly crammed with strangers. It was unsettling to hear that laughter and wonder how much of our Torah education here at YU is truly being absorbed and incorporated into our daily actions.

I cannot walk away from YU. But I can demand better from its student body.

# Fighting Murder with Murder

Molly Meisels  
*Staff Writer*

White supremacy is dead—or at least that is what some people in America would like us to believe. They try convincing us that the hatred wrapped in starch white hoods and swastika laden flags no longer inhabit this great land. However, white supremacists and their vulgarity are alive and well, contaminating our nation with their racism and bigotry.

On June 17, 2015, 22-year-old Dylann Roof, a proud white supremacist and neo-Nazi, shot and killed 9 African-American churchgoers during a service at the historically prominent Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Roof committed acts of racism and neo-Nazism in his daily life, posting photos on the Internet of himself with a Confederate Flag and a gun. But those were just photos, or so everyone thought. On June 17th he decided to take his hatred once step further, killing nine innocents in cold blood. He has since said that he hoped to incite a race war through the killings, which he in turn hoped would lead to the reinstitution of segregation. Roof was arrested and put on trial for his heinous actions. After a long trial, Roof has been found guilty of all 33 counts he has been charged with, which is not only a victory for the families of his victims, but for African-Americans across the country, who have suffered long enough at the hands of hatred. On January 3rd, 2016 the trial will conclude with the jury deciding whether or not Roof gets to spend his life in prison, or receive the death penalty for his crimes.

But, should Dylann Roof receive the death penalty? Should we

kill him for his crimes?

There is no denying that the murders Dylann Roof committed were monstrous, heartless and malevolent. His actions exhibit the darkest side of humanity, a side that is riddled with death, destruction and cold-bloodedness. Because of Dylann Roof, nine people never got to watch another sunset, say another prayer, or kiss their loved ones goodnight. Roof snatched the breath right from their lungs, and his crimes are unforgivable. Roof and his white supremacist ideals are poisoning America’s freedom, hope, and future. His very existence is a stain on all of humanity’s existence, and he is worthy of punishment. But, is death the answer?

I’ve been an advocate of abolishing the death penalty for some time now. It is something I am quite passionate about, and I advocate for the belief every chance I get. The one question I always get is, “What if one’s crimes are so heinous, so deplorable, so unforgivable that they deserve nothing but death? What if someone murders innocents for no reason other than the color of their skin?” And I’ve always wondered what I’d do if that situation arose: would my opinion of the death penalty be clouded by absolute detestation and abhorrence towards the individual at hand?

Then, Roof went on his murder spree. I was livid, I was dismayed, and I wanted revenge. Nonetheless, after that anger and loathing passed, I was faced with the fact that Dylann Roof might actually be put to death. My ideals and my advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty snapped me back to reality. I

knew what I believed in.

Dylann Roof might be the worst of the worst, but we cannot kill him. We cannot kill one who kills others, because through our act of killing we become no better than them. By murdering murderers, we are placing ourselves on the same pedestal as those we are seeking to punish. By killing him, we will be engaging in the evil that lies within him, and that evil will be with us forever.

If we make the choice to give Dylann Roof the death penalty, we all need to live with that. We all need to live with the fact that we killed a man. Yes, that man is cruel, and a relentless murdering racist, but we must remember that we are good. Although Dylann Roof deserves death, we do not deserve to kill him. We do not deserve to have that blemish on our souls for the rest of time, because death is permanent, and death is forever.

The United States is the only Western nation that still retains the death penalty. While all the other developed nations of the world have long abolished this archaic practice, America has stuck with it. We still maintain this Code of Hammurabi from long ago, where an eye for an eye, and a life for a life is considered justifiable. But it isn’t justice—it is harsh, despicable and ancient. It is a practice that eats at the souls of the executioners—all of us— and teaches our children that murdering another human being is okay. Isn’t that what we are trying to punish Roof for? Why would we fight murder with more murder? It’s something we must contemplate.



## Critique vs. Negativity

Neta Chizhik  
*Opinions Editor*

A teacher once asked me my opinion on a three-hour lecture series and set of workshops on the subject of *tzniut*. I was taken aback, surprised that she solicited my thoughts and appeared open to hearing them. I responded carefully, making sure to describe both the strengths and what I thought could be improved in the future. The following day, my teacher pulled me aside and told me she sensed I had been projecting a lot of negativity.

“Hmm,” I wondered, and I grew concerned that I had become “that person.” The person who became embittered by the system, through a negative experience or multitude of events at a climactic point that left them broken, hurt or numb and then left the fold. It’s a valid stance to take but not one I had ever intended to fall into. I questioned my motives—why I had decided to share my critiques with this teacher, rather than give some quick, simple reply implying all that was fine and dandy. I chose to give an honest reply, as I wanted to have the issues at hand addressed directly by those who seemed to want to bring change and improvements. I was growing tired of huddling with friends in hallway corners, complaining about the issues and misguided focus in our school, about the obsession with modesty. We would speak about what we wished to be encouraged to pursue. We wanted to hear from professional women, from career oriented individuals, from people with passions and drives, those who wanted to make a difference and were actively seeking how they could contribute to the world. We were tired of getting marital tips and being told that our aspirations for higher degrees were coming from a place of egotism.

We spoke at great length about the changes we wanted to see implemented. We wanted things to be done differently. We wanted to shifts the focus in our school. The only way to achieve that would be to speak to administrators and teachers who could see to having our comments implemented. We could continue our daily sessions of commiseration, or we could confront the very cause of these matters.

I had responded to the teacher that I simply wished to improve such programming in the future, for the next set of students to be able to get the most of their experience, rather than have a less than positive experience or even a counterintuitive one. After this teacher’s unsolicited and inaccurate mussar, I began to consider the nuances that arise when we do critique methods of teaching or how we present practices of faith. When you critique a system, an ideology or a sociological norm, you are often assumed to be emitting this dark ray of negativity, of bitterness.

It is easier to claim someone is being negative when they speak up. By doing so we automatically invalidate their positions as we assume they are coming from a place burdened in baggage, that they are projecting or have entered with an agenda and therefore are less qualified to speak. By claiming an individual is presenting negative thoughts and feelings about a given topic, we are giving ourselves a free pass to ignore the individual’s words, choosing to take the simpler path of not deciphering and working through the meanings and potential power in their messages. It is the stronger, more rooted individual who can speak to those of differing views, who can accept critical thinking while maintaining their footing. If someone denounces a certain perspective, it should not threaten your views or toss your entire belief system under the bus. Nor should you take it that way. Their views are separate from yours and hearing them does not invalidate yours or threaten your legitimacy.

In the Orthodox community, there are many topics that were previously considered taboo, but that have transitioned into “hot topics” as members of the community insist on transparency. This has garnered a plethora of articles and a wide circulation of social media posts and links across all social media platforms. Sometimes these topics are completely ignored, sometimes they are ignored in one sect of Judaism but not in others. And sometimes, these topics remain in the top read links, gaining traction and much increased discussion. But the trending topics are

## Browsing for Books

Miriam Pearl Klahr  
*Opinions Editor*

One of my favorite childhood activities was going to the library with a big tote bag in hand. First, I would rush to the shelves to find specific books I had heard about from friends. And then, the real fun would begin. I would choose a random aisle and just browse. I would run my eyes through the rows of books until a title caught my eye. Next, I would take the book off the shelf, read the inside flap, inhale its scent and determine whether it belonged in my bag or back on the shelf. This ritual would last for close to an hour until my tote bag was filled.

Sometimes the random books I would pull off the shelf were terrible and I would put them down after reading only a chapter or two. But other times, they were incredible, introducing me to worlds and characters I could never have dreamed of. I read biographies of historical figures I had never heard of and fell in love with fantasy fiction I would never have known to seek out. But as much as I enjoyed reading the books I would take out, the process of finding the books was even more exciting. In the library, I felt like an explorer, searching through unknown territory, never quite sure of where the books I would stumble upon would transport me or how they would change the way I viewed the world. Nothing could compare to the feeling of standing in the library, surrounded by thousands of books, more knowledge than I could ever possibly amass, and anticipating the way these books would touch my life.

As I got older and busier with high school and extracurricular pursuits, I barely had enough time to read both the books for school and those recommended to me by family and friends. And so, I slowly let my library browsing ritual go, only to be rediscovered during my first semester of college.

not enough. When we hit “publish,” we hope essays and exposés will bring a needed discussion to the table, facilitating communication and an exchange of thoughts. Along with this, individuals must be speaking up and meeting with community leaders. When this happens, they have to be heard, not pushed aside for being *that journalist, that critical thinker, that philosophy major*. Being receptive to criticism earns us much needed credibility. We are a diverse nation, with traditions and values. Individuals within may choose to follow these practices and customs to whatever degree they choose. Sure, some laws can be interpreted differently, some are more rigid. Regardless of one’s personal take, we need to maintain an open discussion. Addressing problems does not invalidate our mission, our life paths, we should not feel threatened to confront these issues. Confrontation does not make the traditions less valuable. We are not less religious when we pronounce a problem or issue; rather we are showing we care enough to make some noise and have it worked out.

All parties involved in this can alter elements of their work. For those who seek to voice critique, are you able to speak about the positive qualities as well? Are you blinded by the excitement of getting the newest slanderous subject matter out there? Or are you trying to address a certain subject that has been overlooked or not addressed in the past? Perhaps it is a subject matter that you feel you have a different take on and would like to share. The tone of voice impacts how the message can be understood; those who choose the patronizing or condescending route just make it harder for those are trying to achieve this fine balancing act. And, even if you are grounded and respectful, you may still find your views rejected; a rejection which hurts all parties. When one party chooses to speak up despite the resistance they might meet, the sentiments imparted must be heard as they could highlight issues which have not been addressed or have been ignored for some time.

The strongest influencers of a system are those who can acknowledge the issues and work to change them. We don’t need any more inflammatory articles in the Jewish community. But those who address real problems are often shut down for finding a battle to fight, despite the fact that they could be writing on a critically important subject. We need critics within the system to speak up and be received well. When we deny these voices or the validity of their words, when we dismiss their words as simply negativity, we lose the opportunity to fix the issues they may have been attempting to highlight. Perhaps they don’t do it in the best of fashions, a little more tact, perhaps less bitterness. But shouldn’t we wonder why they may be so bitter? Their critique may be driven by emotional strains or traumatic experiences, and that means we should be asking why we are cultivating this norm, why so many have had such negative experiences that have encouraged them to seek other paths. It is not the fault of the individual, nor the system, per se. But it is something that should be openly discussed. Shutting such subjects out for being *taboo* or too risky for our children and the Mesorah is merely a manifestation of the fears, a clouded judgement call which validates perpetuating the contested status quo. We should be discussing everything: fearing one issue might open people’s eyes to a new field of study or introspection is not reason to ignore pressing matters. Our entire history is one of confrontation! We do much in the name of fear, swiftly calling matters, or even individuals, sacrilegious or heretical, rather than confronting them and speaking about them directly. Or worse, we give some apologetic response: that nothing can be done, “It’s simply the way it is.”

I was sitting in the library the night before my first biology exam. I was restless and had already taken multiple Facebook study breaks. Instead, I paced around the library, walking through the aisles of books. The excitement I had felt as a child in the library immediately returned. My eyes feasted on the many titles and I began to take books off the shelf. An hour later I walked up to the librarian’s desk with a tall pile of books. Since then browsing the Hedi Steinberg Library has become a ritual of mine. I still feel like an explorer, never sure what great book I may stumble upon. The Yeshiva University libraries are among the world’s best Judaica libraries. There are shelves devoted to Jewish history, Jewish law, American Jewish literature, Israeli literature, Jewish sociology, and Biblical Jewish Scholarship. Often just looking at the book titles and learning about the existence of Jewish communities in locations I have never heard of—like Azerbaijan—is an eye-opening experience.

Often I take out a book only to discover that no one has read it since the 1980s. Sometimes I am even the first person to ever take this book out of the library. And while it is thrilling to be the first person to actualize this book’s potential, it also makes me a little sad. My friends often lovingly make fun of me, teasing me that I am the only person who still uses the library for books. I laugh with them but also wish they would join me in using the library for its original purpose. I think many students have come to think of libraries as study spaces as opposed to homes for books. And while I don’t know if this is a positive development or not, I do know that there is a certain thrill that comes from going to the library and standing between rows of books, stumbling upon a book you didn’t even know you were interested in, and spending a weekend devouring it. So next time you need a study break, give browsing the library a chance; you never know what great book you may find.

# The Halachic Responsibility To Be An LGBT Ally

Jordyn Kaufman  
*Staff Writer*

If I were to stand on one foot and ask you to teach me all of Torah, what would you say?

One of the first things I learned when I was becoming religious was the Talmudic passage in which a man goes to Hillel and asks him to teach him all of Torah while he stands on one foot. Hillel replies, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary– now go and study it!” (Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 31a.)

As someone who knew very little about Judaism before this, I was surprised by Hillel’s response. I thought the answer would be some of the more tangible things, like keeping Shabbat, not eating pork, or having sidelocks. Instead, the answer was something I had already learned, not through a Jewish context, but in my public school in kindergarten.

I was coming to Orthodox Judaism from a family that is not religiously affiliated. I went to public school my entire life—not the most common path for a student of Yeshiva University and much of the Orthodox world. In tenth grade, someone approached me about attending an NCSY Shabbaton, and for some inexplicable reason, I agreed. After going once, I was hooked and I started becoming more and more involved in NCSY, and in turn, more and more involved in Judaism. Finally, upon graduation, I went to seminary for a year and a half in Israel. I am now in Stern College and am a dedicated, Torah observant Jew.

One of the Jewish concepts I learned when first becoming religious was *Hashgacha Pratis*, or Divine Providence, which states that everything happens for a reason. Sometimes we don’t know why something is happening in the moment, but often when we look back, it all makes sense. There are two big pieces of my life that didn’t make sense at the time, but looking back, it’s clear to me that they were supposed to happen.

In my freshman year of high school, I joined the Gay Straight Alliance, or Alliance for Equality. I identify as straight and cisgendered, so seemingly, this club didn’t affect me. Nevertheless, I became more and more involved in equality at my high school. I presented at faculty meetings where I spoke to all of the teachers at my school about sensitivity, and also to eighth grade classes and told them about what it truly means to be an LGBT ally.

By senior year, I had become the president of the Gay Straight Alliance. Initially, I felt like I was a fraud. How could a straight person be the president of this club? However, my faculty advisor explained to me that if I was the president, since I identified as straight, closeted people would feel comfortable coming to meetings, because showing up wouldn’t be outing them.

This club had become something that was very important to me. One day, my mom was driving me home from school and we pulled into the garage and she turned to me and said “JJ, I have

an important question for you. It is totally fine if you are, but are you gay?” I laughed. She then said, “No for real, I’m okay with it! Just tell me!” So I told her, “No, I am not gay.” And then she looked at me and asked, “Then why does it matter so much to you? Why do you fight so hard to be an ally?” And I told her the truth—that I didn’t really know. I was not quite sure when and how, but it had become something that mattered. And then, my mom broke down in tears. Through her tears, she just managed to say that there was something important she needed to tell me.

I was named after my uncle Jordan who died about a year before I was born, but I never heard his story until that moment. My uncle Jordan was gay, and he died of AIDS. Sitting in the car, my mother said to me, “If there had been more people like you, more allies fighting for the LGBT community, they might have cared enough to find a cure for AIDs, and my brother might still be with us.”

When people find out both of these parts of me—the Orthodox Jew and the LGBT ally—they often ask me how I reconcile everything I have learned about Torah with this community that I care so deeply about. People assume it is extremely difficult to rationalize being a continuous ally as I have become more and more religious, but I always tell those people that it’s actually really easy. The two fit together quite perfectly.

When I learned this source of Hillel summarizing the entire Torah as “what is hateful to you do not do unto your neighbor,” I realized that, by being an ally to the LGBT community, I was following this exact ideal. I was respecting people, and giving them the amount of respect I want for myself. It all began to make sense and fall perfectly into place.

If that wasn’t enough, I soon learned about the Omer. Between Pesach and Shavuot, we have forty-nine days that we spend mourning the loss of Rabbi Akiva’s students. Forty-nine days is a huge chunk of our year. I can’t think of anything else that we consistently set aside that much of our year for. If you were to ask anyone in the time of Rabbi Akiva what his students were like, they would tell you that his students were following all the tangible Halachot I mentioned before. They were amazing Torah scholars, learning more than I could ever dream of in my lifetime. So why did they die?

The Talmud Tractate Yevamot answers this troubling question: “It was said that Rabbi Akiva had 12,000 pairs of disciples... and all of them died at the same time because they did not treat each other with respect.” (Yevamot 62b)

Rabbi Akiva’s students were exemplary in every way, but they died because they weren’t treating each other with respect. Not only that, but we now set aside a huge chunk of our year to remind ourselves just how important it is to respect people. That’s a really big deal. For forty-nine days we change the way we live and the prayers we say as a reminder of how high we hold the value of respect.

Rabbi Moshe Benovitz of NCSY Kollel and Reshit gave a lecture in which he discussed that it’s not only our halachic responsibility to be kind to people, but that we also have a responsibility to go out of our way to make people feel comfortable. In his lecture, he asks why God created this universe where we all live together. Surely God has enough power that He could have created separate universes for each of us: that way we could have just focused on our own interactions and relationships with God.

Rabbi Benovitz said, “The reason why we are together is necessarily the ultimate test of our humanity. God is saying by the very fact that He creates the entire universe and world together that this is the ultimate testing ground of how human we are, how successful we are as people, and that this is a necessary aspect of our growth and our *avodah* in life.” Benovitz continues, “The way we treat people determines how successful we are going to be. That is not a reality that we are always comfortable with.”

Benovitz ends by saying, “That is not a reality that we are always comfortable with,” and this is important. I don’t want you to think I write this as a hypocrite. I didn’t care about Torah or Judaism when I was becoming an ally to the LGBT community, but that doesn’t mean it was easy for me. As a little ninth grader, I was bullied by students older than me, I got threatened on the bus and during extra-curriculars, and I even had teachers bullying me, which is hard to believe, but it happens. But I kept fighting for it because I knew how important it was. I knew that just because something gets difficult, it didn’t mean I should stop fighting for what was right or what I believed in. What Rabbi Benovitz is saying is that respecting people is the ultimate test of our humanity—and any ultimate test is not going to be easy. It’s difficult, and Rabbi Benovitz is acknowledging that, but it’s difficult because it is so crucial.

There are people who consider themselves Torah dedicated Jews who poke fun at, ridicule, bully, and excommunicate people in the LGBT community, Jewish or not. Some of these people even confidently align this behavior with being a *mensch* based on Torah values. But the message is simply and clearly illustrated in the verses of Torah; if you would not want these things done to you, do not do them to others.

We as Jews are supposed to be “a light unto the nations,” a responsibility many struggle with. Does that mean we are better than others, or that Jews are superior? Of course not. Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach said it most succinctly: “God chose the Jewish people to teach the whole world that we are all chosen.”

If we keep living our lives as Hillel tells us to, with as much respect for human life as we believe we deserve, then eventually everyone will appreciate how important they are and will rise to fill their potential, and the world will be filled with light.





## What Ben Shapiro Got Wrong About Abortion

Keren Neugroschl  
*Features Editor*

Providing one quotation, albeit from a leader as great as the Rav, is not representative of the multiplicity of opinions within the *halakhic* system. Therefore, the Rav’s statement alone is an insufficient base to support Shapiro’s enormous claim that “Torah Judaism does not support abortion.”

Obviously, abortion is not allowed in every circumstance but there are cases where *halakhic* authorities rule that abortion is permitted. For example, in a case where the mother’s life is in danger, there is a consensus that abortion is allowed up until birth (although the exact moment of birth is open to *halakhic* debate). Furthermore, there are rabbis who allow abortions in specific cases even where the life of the mother is not in danger. Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, commonly known as the Tzitz Eliezer, allowed a woman to have an abortion up until the seventh month in a case where the fetus has Tay-Sachs. While this may be a radical *halakhic* decision, most rabbis agree that abortion is a sensitive and complicated issue that requires each case to be decided individually. Again, I am not attempting to make any *halakhic* declaration, but rather I am pointing out that the issue of abortion in *halakha* is complicated and multifaceted.

During the ‘Q&A’ session of the event, one Stern student pointed out how mistaken Shapiro was by making his blanket statement about abortion and Torah Judaism, pointing out that there are prominent rabbis who do permit abortions in certain situations. Shapiro responded by making a stunning flip and saying, “Right there is a lot of *machloket* [disagreement] about when it’s allowed, but the idea that abortion is blanket allowed is for sure *assur* [prohibited].”

The claim that “Torah Judaism does not support abortion” is completely different than the claim that Torah Judaism does not support abortion in *all cases*. While Shapiro may have meant the latter from the beginning, his initial statement wrongfully leads people to believe that there are no cases in which abortion is permitted. Only after being called out on the falsehood of that statement by a student, did Shapiro amend his claim to be that there are some cases where abortion is not allowed according to *halakha*—which is frankly self-evident to any Torah observant Jew familiar with the *halakhic* process.

Moving away from his faulty *halakhic* argument against abortion, Shapiro instead resorted to attacking the Democratic Party for their pro-choice position. “The Democratic Party position... is that abortion should be legal under any circumstances up to the point of birth,” Shapiro stated. But in fact, this is a gross misrepresentation of the Democratic Party’s view on abortion.

The 2016 Democratic Party Platform, while not bringing many specifics, reaffirms the party’s stance as pro-choice. “Democrats are committed to protecting and advancing reproductive health, rights, and justice,” the text of the party platform states. “We believe unequivocally, like the majority of Americans, that every woman should have access to quality reproductive health care services, including safe and legal abortion.” Although it is clear in the platform that the Democratic Party believes that a woman has a right to an abortion, nowhere in the 55-page document is there support of abortions “under any circumstances up to the point of birth,” as Shapiro boldly claimed.

What Shapiro may be referring to is the fact that the Democratic Party has historically rejected bans on late-term abortion and specifically intact dilation and extraction, more commonly known as partial-birth abortion. President Bill Clinton vetoed two bills in 1995 and 1997 that would have banned the practice and when the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 was passed under President George W. Bush, many Democrats opposed it, including then-Senator Hillary Clinton. However, the reason that Democrats did not support this ban is not because they want a woman to have an abortion “under any circumstances up to the point of birth” as Shapiro would like you to believe.

President Clinton vetoed those bills and Hillary Clinton voted against the similar legislation in 2003 because there were no exceptions made on the ban of partial-birth abortions for the health of the mother. Under *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruled that abortion is legal and must be accessible in all 50 states. However, during the third trimester, when a fetus is viable, states are allowed to limit a woman’s access to abortion so long as there are exceptions in place for cases where the mother’s health or life is at risk. Since these bills banning partial-birth abortions did not provide exceptions for the health of the mother, like the Supreme Court ruled that it must in *Roe v. Wade*, many Democrats opposed the legislation. Hillary Clinton, among other Democrats, has repeatedly stated on the record that she would support a ban on all late-term abortion, as long as there are exceptions made for the life and health of the mother.

“I have said many times that I can support a ban on late-term abortions, including partial-birth abortions, so long as the health and life of the mother is protected,” Hillary Clinton said during a New York Senate debate in 2000. “I’ve met women who faced this heart-wrenching decision toward the end of a pregnancy. Of course it’s a horrible procedure. No one would argue with that. But if your life is at stake, if your health is at stake, if the potential for having any more children is at stake, this must be a woman’s choice.”

Just this year, Hillary Clinton repeated the same policy position during the third presidential debate. “I have met with women who, toward the end of their pregnancy, get the worst news one could get, that their health is in jeopardy if they continue to carry to term, or that something terrible has happened or just been discovered about the pregnancy,” she explained. “I do not think the United States government should be stepping in and making those most personal of decisions. So you can regulate, if you are doing so with the life and the health of the mother taken into account.”

Forget the fact that late-term abortions are incredibly rare, accounting for only 1.2% of all abortions. Forget that forty-three out of fifty states already have laws prohibiting abortions



## What I cannot respect and refuse to tolerate are the lies that he told in the guise of educating the audience on this issue.

either after viability of the fetus or after twenty to twenty-eight weeks. Shapiro’s claim that the Democratic Party supports abortion “under any circumstances up to the point of birth” is categorically false.

Ultimately, I do not care that Shapiro is pro-life. I can respect his opinion when he presents legitimate and factual reasons to support his position. Another student at the event asked him, “Do you believe that we should overturn *Roe v. Wade* now that we have a Republican House, a Republican Senate, and a future Republican President?” He responded emphatically and affirmatively, “Of course I think that *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned. *Roe v. Wade* is a garbage position.” Despite my obvious disagreements in this area and with his statement, I can respect his pro-life convictions. What I cannot respect and refuse to tolerate are the lies that he told in the guise of educating the audience on this issue.

For someone who brands himself as a defender of truth, dedicated to presenting the unadulterated facts, it is shocking that his explanation on abortion was so riddled with inaccuracies. This can only lead me to conclude one of two things: either Shapiro was intentionally lying and manipulating the facts in an effort to advance his point on abortion, which is both irresponsible and reprehensible. Or, he did not lie intentionally, but simply does not know the facts, in which case he loses all credibility as a knowledgeable pundit deserving of our attention.

Regardless, I sincerely hope that those who heard him speak, irrespective of their political views, do not form their opinions on abortion based on what Ben Shapiro had to say. Do the extra research, take the time to fact-check, and then make an informed decision.

# You and Your Agenda

Neta Chizhik  
*Opinions Editor*

A Facebook post involving a politically relevant article. Many comments. Discourse ensues, with patronizing comments masked to appear as a form of dialogue. Each party claims they’ve been deemed irrelevant and dismissed by the other.

“You’re a liberal,” they snicker.

And, “You are a racist,” is the retort back.

These terms are used so freely tossed around, used to make grandiose claims about others. Rather than hear one another out we have reduced ourselves to inaccurate name-calling, employing words which we rarely understand the meaning of.

Recently, someone suggested my views aligned with Socialist ones. This would have been understandable if I had actually espoused matters related to Socialism. But my comments were not at all related to those views. I was commenting on the transgender community and how mocking them is inconsiderate, just as mocking anyone would be. Apparently, this qualified to be echoing Marxist theories—as one mildly liberal notion somehow implied the more radical of liberal views. I’ve studied Marx’s works and, though I don’t have a dissertation written on the matter, I’ve done enough preliminary readings that “qualify” me to affirm that my comments had nothing to do with Socialist ideology.

If I had continued to speak to this individual, I could easily see the conversation turning into a back and forth of “who can quote Marx and others verbatim.” I have no interest in showing off which political theory 101 courses I have taken. I know—not mentioning any theorists might make it appear as though I have not studied the material. It’s a common misconception, despite this being the focus of my studies. But I also know that there is more to this field of study and that those who engage in such conversations generally attempt to outdo one another rather than seeking a more developed direction in conversation.

And these Marxist theories have real life applications for me, perhaps more radical than this individual cares to recognize. Growing up in a home with two parents who had both emigrated from the Soviet Union before its collapse, I was raised with stories of shortages of basic foods and life supplies, not being able to make normal purchases, lacking accessibility to cars and phones until your name is selected from the registry. My grandparents would come to our home for Shabbat meals, pulling me to the side to ask me how school was going and to remind me how many opportunities I now have because of my parents’ move.

The Russian-American community during election season is a case-study in and of itself, one which many journalists have attempted to explain through extensive exposes. For these immigrants, political affiliation generally leans right. Their tone is reactionary to the Left and what they are unhappy with, quick to outline their grievances to any and all who are interested in listening. They voted in droves for Trump, loving his “rough rhetoric” and willingness to speak with Putin. Even those who do not support the Russian president went along, seeing their vote as “anti-Hillary” rather than “pro-Trump.” To this sector, the alternative to Republicans and Tea Party goers are apologetic, politically correct, naive politicians who are crooked in their politics and naive with foreign issues. The college students are all the same; they go along with this liberal propaganda, obediently following along. For Russians, the college students are the most disappointing; the hope is that they will graduate from their institutions which have been suppressing the truth and subjecting them to a highly crafted perspective of the world. Once the students are thrown into the real world they are expected to make their own conclusions, which will either shift right and thereby correct, or left and remain brainwashed.

Sure, there are Russian-Americans who supported, and perhaps still support, the Bernie campaign. But why are we not taking time to consider the person behind the computer

screen? We are not confronting anything or anyone when we shoot off snarky comments. There is nothing accomplished by that other than further disappointment in what we assume is dialogue.

For me, the immigrant story, specifically from Ukraine, and the oppression and limitations put on Jews and other minorities, drives a further need to keep things more “open.” The thought of a government cracking down on who enters the country, based solely on religion, echoes the sentiments that led to the emergence of the types of regimes my parents fled from. It is not the naive that are against registering immigrants or citizens of certain backgrounds. It is the individual who recognizes when this echoes the past, the past of recent times. Not one of centuries ago, not even lifetimes ago.

A sudden wave of familiarity—not one that I had directly lived through, but one I had experienced vicariously through my grandparents’ stories and the history books I would pull from the shelves to better understand what my mother meant when she said she was kicked out of schools for being a “Zionist conspirator.” I did not know firsthand, but I still understood, as best as I could with my upbringing and background.

It is this strange mix of experiences and personal stories, the lives of those that came before me. It is this narrative that I have formed for myself, and others have too. So why is it that we assume others’ stories? We throw these labels around without knowing their definition, without measuring our words and understanding the weight they carry. It is not the overly sensitive and politically correct that are offended and demand censorship. It is all humans who should be given their moment to speak and be heard. If we have platforms which give voices to all, why don’t we utilize them? Pair them with some decent reading comprehension and a mild dose of respect, sans the patronizing attitude.

# Moon Girl, the Devil Dinosaur, and other Child Scientists

Amanda Huberfeld  
*Staff Writer*

While procrastinating from studying for midterms, I decided to read a Marvel comic called *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*, about a girl who is pseudo-alien and has a pet dinosaur: it was just as strange as you might imagine.

The aforementioned girl is a 4th grader and scientist whose name is, I kid you not, Lunella Lafayette. She has countless successful inventions that she uses to save the day. Lunella works on complex scientific theories and prefers science to people. She is also the self-proclaimed smartest person in the world, which is endearing coming from a nine-year-old, but loses that cuteness when it is said in awe by an adult in one of the later frames. Then, it is no longer adorable. In fact, none of the comic is. *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* (feel free to laugh at the name again) is built upon the faulty and dangerous myth of the child scientist. The problem worsens as it all but declares that only the smartest people in the world are allowed to work in tech.

There is a belief that anyone who goes into a STEM field is a child prodigy who has been engineering in a child sized lab since before they could talk. This is especially true of areas involving computer coding and engineering. If one believed this myth, they would think that everyone in Silicon Valley played solely with circuit boards and never bothered with trivial things like trains or dolls. This is ridiculous. I’m a computer science major, and I don’t know anyone like that. I personally loved my Thomas the Train engines, and never really liked the circuit board I got for Chanukah when I was 14. And that reality does not make me any less committed, or any less worthy, of going into STEM.

Stories like this comic, like the legends told of the giants of today’s tech industries, tell kids that only those who are born knowing how to code are allowed to work in tech. Questions like, “How old were you when you wrote your first computer code,” “How many years have you been interested in tech,” or

“What’s your IQ?” are gateway questions to a field that should be open to all. Tech is not only for those who are considered or consider themselves to be the smartest kid on the block. Science is not forbidden to the sixth grader who turned their back on biology and only discovered their love for physics as an eleventh grader. There should not be a cutoff age or intelligence level for pursuing a career in tech.

Yes, stories about children obsessed with science exist to validate kids who prefer science to books or toys or even other children. But they can’t come at the expense of any other kid by saying, “Only for them. Not for you.” These myths are what bar people, especially women, from tech. And even those who break through these walls and ceilings still have the shards biting them, the nagging thoughts that say, “But you don’t want it as much as they do.” That is an empty statement—it means absolutely nothing. The only measure of how good you are in your field is *how good your work is*. That’s all.

Perhaps the most poisonous aspect of all of this is that *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* is aimed at kids, kids who are constantly asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Rare is the child who answers, “Software Engineer.” But stories like this certainly don’t help. Children see characters as people, as possible friends. And when nine, ten, eleven years olds see that the people who go into STEM are geniuses who have underground labs that stretch the length of a city block, the narrative that is created in their mind is that engineers start early. If you’re thirteen, it’s too late. You should have cared about science when you were younger. If you didn’t, clearly you’re not passionate enough. Would you be interested in being a doctor instead?

That is not meant to put down doctors in any way (who probably are the real smartest people in the world). But no one expects the ten-year-old who wants to be a doctor to have already treated their first patient. Why should that same ten-year-old



have to already know HTML? Why do they have to prove their passion? There is enough of a double standard in the tech world already, between men and women. Another one should not have to be institutionalized in elementary school children.

My point is not to get the comic canceled (although maybe they should think about changing the name). If I wanted to do that, I would write a polite but strongly worded letter to Marvel, instead of a think piece in a Yeshiva University newspaper. Instead, I hope that, as you decide on your major, if you notice yourself saying, “I’m not smart enough for that,” or, “There are people much more passionate in that field than I am,” check yourself. Is that true? I hope not, since you should not be held back from pursuing something that is interesting to you simply because you missed the boat back when you had braces.

There is nothing wrong with taking Intro to Computer Science to fill your math requirement, falling in love, and switching your major. You are not less committed if you decided to join an engineering program when you were a high school senior because it’s a well-paying field. You don’t have to pass a passion test to enter. You won’t be a lesser engineer and you certainly are no less worthy. The time in which you realize your dreams—whenever that is—is the perfect time to pursue them.



# Santa At Selfridges

Natasha Bassalian  
*Arts & Culture Editor*

While walking down Oxford street in the cold of Mid-November, I suddenly found myself staring up in awe at a vast array of lights and greenery. As I approached the mass, I realized I was bearing witness to the legendary Selfridges Christmas window display. I began to look at each window with a mixture of fascination and disbelief. The Santas were far more unconventional than the typical sledge riding Father Christmas I was used to observing.

As the first department store to unveil their Christmas window display in 2016, precisely 65 days before Christmas, Selfridges has dubbed the theme of its festive display “Shine on!” The creative director of Selfridges, Linda Hewton said, “We are very excited about our Christmas displays this year. We’ve been thinking of creatively expressing the idea of party and togetherness at the heart of the well-known phrase ‘celebrating Christmas’ for a while now.”

The red sequined Santas are each surrounded by an alpine themed backdrop. Each Santa consists of a mind-blowing 72,000 sequins made by six different people, and each individual Santa took 12 days to complete.

Father Christmas is surrounded by a wide collection of various scenes, from a disco club to a lavish dinner party. In one particular window, Santa is seen sitting in a wooden hot tub full of colorful balls and glistening champagne bottles. There are female and male mannequins dressed in fancy clothing surrounding the hot tub, each holding a bottle or two of champagne while staring out in different directions. There are dozens of champagne bottle lying on the floor too, which really emphasize the humorous and festive wild side to the hot tubbed Santa.

Santa can be spotted as a DJ in another window display. He stands in a dazzling booth with headphones on and even a hand to one carpiece, letting us know that he’s attentive to the beat he’s playing, and in the groove. There are two party ladies in the booth with him, four dancing



guests in flashy clothing, and an array of gleaming disco balls along the floor, all emanating colorful lights.

Chief window designer Morag Hickmott said, “It’s been so much fun thinking up all the different scenarios for Santa to be partying in. We’re constantly adding details to make sure everyone who sees them chuckles—there’s a lot of humor this year.”

# Clue: Behind the Scenes of A Staged Reading

Shoshy Ciment  
*Staff Writer*

On a dark and stormy evening, six wealthy guests walked into the mansion of an unknown host, never to be the same again.

This very story unraveled before the students of Yeshiva University on Thursday night at 9 pm in Furst 501. It was here that the men and women of YCDS performed the staged reading of *Clue*, a murder mystery infused with comedy. As an actress in the reading (I was Yvette, the French maid), I was able to observe and take part in the process of putting the show together, from auditions to the final bow.

For those who don’t know what it is, a staged reading is very similar to a full-fledged play, minus the sets, costumes, props, and memorized lines. The purpose of a staged reading is to focus chiefly on the acting and interpretation of the lines. Staged readings are generally more relaxed than usual plays, and they do not require much rehearsal time. Although the rehearsal process was short, the result was far from unimpressive.

Based on the popular board game, *Clue* came out in 1985 and starred Tim Curry in the lead role of the butler, Wadsworth. The plot surrounds six guests who arrive at the mansion of their unknown host. All addressed by pseudonyms, the guests quickly realize that their host, a Mr. Body, has been blackmailing them all for months. Chaos ensues when Mr. Body is found dead and the guests frantically search for a murderer in the house. The staged reading was based on this original script, and included all three of the alternate endings that were originally featured separately in different theaters when the movie was released.

The YCDS staged reading took this script and adapted it to make a new and unique version. Director Ariela Greengart had a clear vision for *Clue*. She saw the script as a framework to build off of. Improvisation was encouraged, which contributed to an unpredictable and comfortable environment among the actors and the audience. Additionally, Greengart encouraged

audience participation in the story. Index cards were handed out to audience members during intermission for them to decide “who dunnit?” The suggestions were read at the start of the second act, and made the audience feel like they were a part of the action.

But behind the scenes was where *Clue* truly shone. YCDS’ *Clue* was unique because it gave the actors and actresses of Yeshiva University a rare chance to work and perform together. The rehearsal process, though short, brought together a group of people who would probably never have met under regular circumstances. The rehearsals were a chance for everyone in the cast to experience performance trial and error in a safe and supportive environment. Perhaps staged readings like this are the start of a movement to finally fill the void of co-ed dramatic events.

Overall, the evening was a success. The room was filled to capacity, and though I can’t speak for myself, the other actors did a phenomenal job, as measured by the laughs and participation of the audience. Hopefully this marriage of talent is not just a one-time occurrence and we see many more events like *Clue* from YCDS in the future.

**YCDS’ *Clue* was unique because it gave the actors and actresses of Yeshiva University a rare chance to work and perform together**





# In Transit: The Show with the Rhythm of New York City

Chaviva Freedman  
*Staff Writer*

“I heard that this musical is about the subways of New York,” the lady standing in front of me said to her husband. “What makes this musical different than the other ones?” With *In Transit*, the newest Broadway musical, it’s not just about the “subways of New York.” It’s about the people that take the subway and the lessons learned while living in New York.

The musical, from the writers of *Frozen* (Kristin Anderson-Lopez) and *Pitch Perfect*, depicts a group of people with intertwining stories. The thing that binds them together? They all use the subway to get from one place to another. The stories differ from each other: the aspiring actress falls in love with the broke salesman; the gay couple with one struggling to reveal his orientation to his mother; the woman who just keeps running after a bad breakup. With the Boxman, the narrator, keeping all the stories tied together, the show makes a point of showing the struggles that all New Yorkers go through in everyday life. From the turnstiles eating the money off of your MetroCard to the beggars living in the subway stations, every

person who has traveled the subway can relate to this story in some shape or form.

The interesting element that the show brings to Broadway is the fact that *everything is acapella*. Every sound you hear is provided by the human voice; there is no soundboard to make each sound necessary. When you hear the sounds of the subway pulling into the platform, that’s a sound provided by an actor somewhere off-stage. At some points in the show, it’s made evident that someone is beatboxing right in the middle of a scene. The show even makes a point in the beginning to tell the audience that “everything is provided by voice” and to make a note of it. It’s impressive, and something that no one would expect from the Great White Way, which makes everyone fall in love with it.

Something worth noting is the different styles of music the musical showcases. The show runs by the rhythm of New York, so no song sounds the same. Each scene has a related song

connected to it, and each song is a different genre. When Nate, played by James Snyder from the Broadway show *If/Then*, laments about having no money, the song accompanying the scene resembles a 70’s blues song. The subway runs on the genre of hip-hop, a stroke of genius that seems so natural. As Jane, actress Margo Seibert brings a style of music that could only be classified as all her own. Without the music, the show wouldn’t have the uniqueness that it brings to Broadway. The show brings a sense of hope that no matter what happens, all your problems will get better and that there’s always another day.

If you’re looking for a contemporary show about how it really is to live in New York, take a subway to the Circle in the Square Theatre. You are in for a treat, and who knows? Maybe you’ll start listening to the rhythms “deep beneath the city” when you leave.



# Why By CHLOE is worth obsessing over

Rebecca Kerzner  
*Staff Writer*

If you are a basic white girl and into eating food, then you’ve definitely heard of By Chloe. But if you’re not, let me introduce you to arguably the best kosher breakfast, brunch, lunch, dinner, and restaurant of all time.

When one walks through the glass doors, they can immediately feel the freshness of their surroundings. The interior of this Instagram hub is a carbon copy of that Urban Outfitters feel. The chairs are brightly colored in shades of blue and yellow and the walls are covered with stained glass mirrors. Additionally, there are at least a dozen plants looming around, which always complete the look with a clean cut ambiance. In some locations, by the front of the restaurant, there are even swings and egg chairs hanging from the ceiling for people to rock in gleefully.

The menu at By Chloe is well rounded, with an array of salads, burgers, and desserts. During earlier hours, they boast a “Brekkie and Brunch” menu with interesting menu items like quinoa hash browns, tofu, and morning oats. My personal favorite thing on the menu is the Spicy Thai Salad with apricot sriracha glazed tempeh, almonds, quinoa, edamame, scallions, crispy wontons, and peanut dressing. It’s so much better than your standard Chinese Salad because its flavor is complex, with notes of just enough sweetness. I have tried the other salads but this one takes the cake. I personally also recommend the Kale Artichoke Dip, which is always served warm with tortilla chips. Obviously, we can’t forget the tasty dips offered with fries that double as unique options to the usual standard ketchup and spicy mayo: beet ketchup and chipotle aioli.

Yes, a lot of the kosher brunch places in New York City are great. We’ve all had Noi Due and My Most Favorite on the Upper West Side. These restaurants serve pizza, pasta and yummy cheesecake desserts. But the food industry is advancing past the classic food choices. Now, food has become not only about the menu, but the design and experience of the restaurant as well. Kosher brunch is far behind the rest of the foodie world with these advancements, but with By Chloe, we are finally taking a step in the right direction. Our dreams of great kosher brunch are finally coming true!

But perhaps the best part of By Chloe, is that it gets its “health nut” reputation with its spread of fancy seeds, juices, and vegan options, but tastes just as great to the rest of the peasants as well. There seems to be a rising opinion that By Chloe only has a place in the hearts of those girly, wannabe artsy New Yorkers but, as a girly wannabe artsy New Yorker, I can attest that



that stereotype is simply not true! But in all seriousness: I have dined countless times with various types of people and I have never heard of a negative review. One can now enjoy great food without feeling sickly full from the empty calories, and get bonus points for being healthy.



# A Girl Who Loves Her Island and a Girl Who Loves the Sea: Identity and Belonging in Moana

Yitzchak Fried  
*Staff Writer*

We can thank Disney for a long line of movies that deal with identity and coming of age. In fact, I'd say that all the best Disney movies do: *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas*, *Hercules*, *Mulan*, *Frozen*. But *Moana* is special, because it focuses on an aspect of growing up that hasn't gotten the attention it deserves: the tension between the future and the past. Age fears youth. It fears the change that youth will bring to practices that seem to stem from time immemorial. Youth's energy and optimism threatens to shake the foundations of the status quo, and so evokes suspicion and resentment. And yet, for all that age antagonizes it, youth needs age; it needs the rootedness of history, the continuity of a narrative that is larger than itself. In *Moana*, more than in any past Disney film, these contradictions feature front and center.

Moana lives on a beautiful island: lush coconut trees and a ready supply of fish keep Moana's people well-fed, and the simple joys of life—weaving baskets, telling jokes—give them a steady, quiet satisfaction. It is understandable that the village folk and Moana's father insist that she must find happiness "where you are." Village life is cozy and familiar, a regular rhythm that stretches back into time. Everyone is content, "and no one leaves."

Moana does grow up happy. If she is sad about anything, it's her need to suppress her urge for exploration. But her desire is tempered by her sense that her people need her, and, more importantly, by her desire to belong. If she leaves to explore the sea, Moana knows that she will lose those whom she leaves behind, and will deal her loved ones a crippling blow. What alternative does she have then, other than to accept her destiny as chief's daughter, and to "be satisfied if she plays along?"

As she grows older, however, Moana's desire to break from tradition becomes irresistible. Moana doesn't want to rebel. She wishes that she could be happy where she is, and sings: "I wish I could be a perfect daughter. But I come back to the water, no matter how hard I try." Here, she invites comparison with Mulan, another Disney heroine who struggles with a father's expectations. Moana suffers a different sort of pressure than Mulan; no one is forcing her to marry for honor or to be a "perfect porcelain doll." Nowhere does she ask, "when will my reflection show who I am inside" with Mulan's jarring intensity. But there is something refreshing about how Moana asks her question nonetheless. Moana senses that her true identity can't be expressed by simple conformance to tradition, as pleasant as it is. She resists the past, not because it is overly oppressive, but because she senses her own possibility—and the absurdity of favoring an island when no one knows how far the ocean goes. Moana thinks of the sea

as the line of the possible, the acceptable, the taboo, and she cannot help but wonder: what would happen if I cross it?

The great wisdom of *Moana* is that sometimes, the past, which so often seems the enemy of youth, can hold the secret of youth's renewal. The present has a way of deifying the past: in the film, the origins of life on the island are projected back to time immemorial, and the taboo against going out beyond the reef is accepted as self-evident dogma. But the past knows better; it lives closer to life's source, and so remembers how its decisions were once human and contingent, how the present reality could have gone differently, and that innumerable possibilities for individual happiness still remain untried. It takes a guardian of the past, Moana's grandmother, to reveal the false stability of the present. She tells a dumbfounded Moana, "Do you really think our ancestors never sailed beyond the reef?" It's no wonder that Moana's grandmother is thought crazy by the village; with her love of the sea, she reminds them of the arbitrariness of their own lifestyle, that their practices are not from "time immemorial," but are changeable decisions made by ancestors who were more complicated than the villagers ever knew.

Under the guidance of her grandmother, Moana finds that her future is rooted in her past, that even as she breaks with traditions, she stays true to the people who composed them precisely by rediscovering the dreams that the people of the present have cast aside. Deep in a forgotten cave, Moana finds the long buried canoes with which her people reached their island. Her ancestors' song reveals that they didn't revel in an immobile past; on the contrary, they were travelers and adventurers. And, even as they traversed the ocean, they could confidently say, "we know where we are" and, more importantly, "we know *who* we are." Happiness, the ancestors reveal, is not about being reconciled to the present's fossilization of the past. It is about going where your identity takes you, and knowing that, though you stray far from home, you are right on course.

But even as they validate Moana's dream of sailing beyond the reef, the ancestors speak of a new role for tradition. They may be "explorers reading every sign," but they also "tell the stories of [their] elders in a never ending chain." Their vision

is of a life that is not constrained by the past, but buoyed by it—that finds rootedness in tradition while embracing the ever changing fluctuations of the sea. It is a vision that Moana hungrily absorbs.

Although Moana is "chosen" by the sea, the movie is not a story of destiny. It is rather a story about how difficult it is to live in a world without destiny. The sea may have "chosen" Moana to find Maui and restore the heart of Te Fiti, but it does precious little to help her along the way. Eventually, Moana finds herself abandoned by the demi-god, with her mission to restore Te Fiti's heart by all appearances failed. She must ultimately decide for herself whether to press on with her mission or not. This is the movie's darkest moment. Moana is shaken; no longer the cloistered island girl that she was, she isn't the triumphant hero that she imagined she would be either. It is here that the supportive voice of the past is most direly needed. Moana's grandmother appears to her as a spirit and reminds her of the travails that come with human becoming: "the journey may leave a scar, but scars can heal and reveal just where you are." It is in failure, pressed by the question, "Moana, do you know who you are?" that Moana finally realizes that she hasn't been "chosen" at all. The voice that she's been following "isn't out there at all, it's inside me." Her life is not set by supernatural destiny, nor by the past; it comes from her own embracing of her identity. It is in her acceptance of herself that Moana achieves her certainty—"Come what may, I know the way; I am Moana."

With its bold approach to reconciling the potential of youth with the seeming immutability of the past, *Moana* is a movie for our generation. It speaks to the tension between our two most profound needs—our need to belong and our need to be true to ourselves. Our generation has broken with the past in more drastic ways than perhaps ever before. It's reassuring to know that, beneath ostensible breaks from traditional life, there are continuities that bind us to the ever evolving narrative of our people and of the human spirit. By those lights, we can always know where we are.

**Moana thinks of the sea as the line of the possible, the acceptable, the taboo, and she cannot help but wonder: what would happen if I cross it?**





# No Need To Say Hi to ‘Oh Hello’

Ariela Greengart  
*Staff Writer*

John Mulaney, in my humble opinion, is a genius comedian. His stand-up leaves me on the floor. I have watched his ‘What’s New Pussycat’ routine so many times that I’m pretty sure I can recite it by heart (if you’ve never heard this bit, your life is not complete). He was a writer for Saturday Night Live for six years, and is the co-creator of one of their most memorable recurring characters, the flamboyantly weird Stefon, played by the hilarious Bill Hader. One of the best moments on Weekend Update was Mulaney addressing the demand for delicious Girl Scout Cookies. His comedic personality is a brilliant blend between personably relatable and oddly unique.

Nick Kroll, however, can be very hit-and-miss. I was a big fan of his obnoxiously crude guest-starring character The Douche on Parks And Recreation, as well as other mind-melding projects with the legendary Amy Poehler. I found Nick Kroll’s performance in Adult Beginners to be full of depth, allowing his acting chops to shine with still allowing his comedic talents to appear, albeit subdued within the dramatic genre. However, his role in the came-and-went television show Caveman, based off the (in)famous Geico commercial characters, was a failure. I had zero interest in even giving it a shot. His recurring stand-up character, ‘Billy Bottleservice,’ which regularly appeared on The Kroll Show, was so stereotypical that it was boring and The Kroll Show at large was eccentrically annoying.

I had hoped that John Mulaney would shine as I always have seen him do and I would be blessed with the hit Nick Kroll rather than the miss. As I was walking towards the theater, I promised to my friend that I would enter the show with an open mind. We would approach the show as a comedy show rather than a piece of theater—that was what the play was meant to be, and we should respect what we’re stepping into.

Even as a comedy show, it failed.

In “Oh Hello,” Kroll and Mulaney bring their popular ‘alter-egos’ to the stage. Mulaney steps into the orthopedic sneakers of George St. Geegland and Kroll slips on the socks and sandals of Gil Faizon. Mulaney describes his character as “neither Jewish nor a woman, but like many older men over 70, I have reached the age where I am somehow both,” while Kroll describes his character as “the kind of guy who brings beverages to the bathroom.” Kroll and Mulaney told Jimmy Fallon in an interview that they gained inspiration for these characters after seeing two old men at The Strand bookstore

in New York, bickering back and forth with each other. In their trailer for the Broadway show, they even tipped their hat to this inspiration, with their trailer featuring their true selves seeing their alter-egos on a park bench. After Nick brings attention to his friend John about the two old men nearby, Mulaney smiles and says, “Oh, that’s sweet. I bet they’ve been friends for, like, forty years...I hope you and me are like that when we’re older.” We then turn to see the two old geezers bickering about Chicken Charmaine.

These two geezers were first featured on The Kroll Show in their ‘talk-show’ “Too Much Tuna,” in which they prank and utterly humiliate their guests by providing them with sandwiches piled high with tuna, in which the contestants declare, “That’s too much tuna!” Mulaney and Kroll decided to bring their ‘beloved’ characters to Broadway and the rest is history.

The show began with a stand-up bit between Geegland and Faizon. While the audience was going crazy with laughter, I was sitting there wondering if there was laughing-gas emitted through the crowd that just didn’t affect me. Am I just a far too critical like Geegland and Faizon, or is it just simply not funny? Perhaps Mulaney is better at writing jokes under a week deadline like he did at Saturday Night Live—too much time and the jokes grow sour and lame. I once heard that if you laugh once during a stand-up set, then that means the comedian is good. So perhaps I’m being too harsh on “Oh, Hello.” It wasn’t as if there was nothing funny about the show: I didn’t sit there stony-faced the entire hour and a half.

The show constantly made fun of habits within theater. “Theater is the hottest new thing now,” Gil stated at the top of the show. “There’s Hamilton...and no other examples.” Gil showed the audience how to have a dramatic “one-sided phone call,” George made fun of the spotlight, and at the near-end of the show the two performed an interpretive dance even though these old men have trouble opening a bottle of Muscle Milk.

Their set is a collection of random pieces, leaving the audience to imagine Gil and George as cheap fogies, picking up this free junk off the curb. They claim that the stoop and door was a prop from The Cosby Show set and they were literally begged to take it due to bad-juju that corrupted The Cosby Show. There was also a mezuzah on the door, noticeably on the wrong side.

Geegland pointed to it and said, “If you noticed the mezuzah on the wrong side of the door, you’ve come to the right show.”

## Even as a comedy show, it failed.

The strongest part of the play was a running gag between Geegland and the poor lighting operator, who happens to be an intern doing the show for free and without even a credit, as the cheap geezers inform him halfway through his already completed work on the show. The lighting operator continuously messes up his cue and Geegland throws a fit, practically screaming at the poor kid like a mix between a soccer coach and a Sharpay Evans-like diva.

At the end of the day, was “Oh, Hello” enjoyable? Yes. Would I rather have saved my money and stayed at home watching John Mulaney’s stand-up? Yes, and it probably would have made me laugh far more. “It was funny, but it was basically stand-up in costume, in character and with a thin plot,” said Binyamin Bixon, after seeing the show with me Sunday night.

“Oh, Hello” made us both laugh, it did. It was funny—well, half of it was. And if the rule stands that if you laugh at least once during a comedy show then the show was a success, then fine, it was a success...if the standards are that low.

But I have seen a John Mulaney stand-up routine and laughed so hard my ribs hurt the entire way through. Furthermore, I watched George St Geegland and Gil Faizon being interviewed by Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers and others for promotion of the Broadway play, and those interviews were even funnier than the show itself. I shouldn’t have to lower my standards for hilarity when I’m dealing with Nick Kroll and especially John Mulaney.

So ultimately, no, this was not a good show, and no, I do not suggest spending money to see it. Mulaney and Kroll may shine in other areas, but they can keep their orthopedic feet out of theater.





# Vexing Vibrations: Fingernails Scraping on a Chalkboard

Tova Goldstein  
*Staff Writer*

You probably just shuddered after reading the title of this article, and for that I apologize. What is it about the sound of fingernails scraping on a chalkboard that makes your blood curdle?

This question has been the basis of several studies done in the field of psychoacoustics, the branch of psychology which deals with the perception of sound and its physiologic effects. There are two main hypotheses for the sound’s visceral reaction: the primate heritage hypothesis and the physical hypothesis.

Research supporting the primate heritage hypothesis has shown that the frequencies of a screaming or crying mammal are similar to the frequency of the sound of fingernails scratching a chalkboard. This suggests that the response to this sound may be tied to survival. A 1986 study by Randolph Blake tested this theory using a tape recording of a three-pronged garden tool being scraped across a chalkboard. The recordings were manipulated to remove the median, extreme low and extreme high pitches. The new recordings were then played to volunteers who rated how much they disliked each sound. Contrary to what had been previously theorized, Blake determined that the median pitches were the cause of the irritation and “flinching response,” rather than the high frequency sounds. Since both humans and primates responded to the median frequencies and not the extreme frequencies, Blake believed that they perceived the scratching sound as a warning cry and thus the “flinching response” was an unconscious and automatic reflex. Blake then studied the warning cries of primates and found that the cry of the chimpanzee, a closely related primate ancestor to humans, sounds very similar to the sound of fingernails on a chalkboard. The pitch of the chimpanzee’s cry is also equal to

that of the chalkboard sound. Though Blake hypothesized that the “flinching response” can be attributed to predation during early human evolution, recent research seems to contradict his theory.

The second theory, the physical hypothesis, was proposed by musicologists Michael Oehler and Christoph Reuter. They claimed that the unpleasant response to the sound is due to acoustic resonance caused by the shape of the ear canal. Resonance is the physical phenomenon in which a vibrating system or external force causes another system to oscillate with a greater amplitude at a specific frequency. The median frequencies mentioned above, those ranging from 2000 to 4000 Hz, are amplified in the ear canal to a level where the sound actually causes pain in the human ear, thereby causing the “flinching response.”

Other studies have helped elucidate what actually happens in our brains when we hear the sound of fingernails scratching against a chalkboard. Research suggests that this sound initiates a communication between the brain region involved with hearing and another region involved with emotion. In a 2012 study published in the Journal of Neuroscience, thirteen participants listened to several sounds including nails on a chalkboard while functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) examined how their brains responded to the sounds. Results indicated that there was an interaction between the auditory cortex, the region where sound is processed, and the amygdala, the region where negative emotions are processed. This study also found that for a more irritating or painful the sound, a stronger connection was formed between the two brain regions.



More research still needs to be done—it is not entirely clear what causes the strong reaction to the sound of fingernails against a chalkboard. But no more research is needed to show that this sound is universally detested.

# The Dangers of Pesticides

Hannah Baum  
*Staff Writer*

Growing up, I was always instructed to eat fruits and vegetables because they are healthy. I was also told by my parents to carefully wash those fruits and vegetables. Eating healthy is not so simple because of all of the chemicals that are sprayed on the foods that we eat. These chemicals are pesticides, which are used to destroy insects that are harmful to plants. Traces of pesticides are also found in household products, in the air we breathe and even in health care facilities. It has been estimated that only one percent of the four million tons of pesticides used annually actually reaches the target pests. Three million severe poisoning cases and 220,000 deaths are attributed annually to pesticide poisoning. The presence of pesticides can have a wide range of repercussions and detrimental effects on the human genome.

Pesticides are so dangerous because they commonly contain organophosphates, which are highly soluble in lipids. Because of this, they are easily absorbed into the skin and accumulate in adipose tissue, remaining in our bodies for a long time. The presence of organophosphates inhibits acetylcholinesterase, the enzyme involved in the transmission of nerve impulses.



Thus the presence of pesticides can prevent proper neural transmission.

The Environmental Protection Agency has found that almost all the pesticides utilized in the United States are not directly genotoxic. However, environmental exposure to several classes of pesticides is associated with a variety of symptoms, including, skin and eye irritation, mental disorders, neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson’s disease, neurodevelopmental effects, reproductive dysfunctions such as birth defects or infertility and certain cancers. It has been

**The presence of pesticides can have a wide range of repercussions and detrimental effects on the human genome.**

suggested that pesticides act on the human body through epigenetic mechanisms, meaning they can be non-genetic influences on gene expression.

Agricultural workers are most at risk to the effects of pesticides because they are exposed to these chemicals on a daily basis. A study of Mexican soybean workers found DNA damage caused by pesticide exposure. Researchers found that the organophosphates, pyrethroids, organochlorines and carbamates found in pesticides are genotoxic. They react with the cell membrane and initiate lipid peroxidation, the break-down of lipids crucial to membrane integrity. They also interfere with cell regulation and induce oxidative

stress, which can cause oxidative DNA damage, trigger the stimulation of cell growth, inhibit DNA repair systems and deregulate cell proliferation.

Pesticide exposure is also a known factor in the development of neurodegenerative diseases, most of which are multifactorial and caused by an interaction between environmental factors and genetic predisposition. An experiment with adult rats found that low-level exposure to organophosphates triggered the neuronal apoptosis and axonal transport deficits associated with the development of ALS and Alzheimer’s. Furthermore, a study of the brains of Parkinson’s patients found significant levels of a particular pesticide called Dieldrin which is banned in developed countries. There is a clear correlation between pesticide exposure and genetic damage. This damage can manifest as minor health issues such as skin irritation, or major ones, such as cancer, neurodegenerative diseases and diabetes. Although the EPA has banned many of these toxic chemicals, traces remain in the soil and the air we breathe. Studies suggest that vitamin C has a protective effect against pesticides, encouraging their degradation. So make sure to eat your fruits and vegetables, but wash them well first.



# The Next Time You Reach for That Diet Soda...

Michelle Shakib  
*Staff Writer*

The popular low-calorie sweetener aspartame is found almost everywhere. One can find it in every grocery store and most coffee shops and cafes. It is a popular sugar substitute for those looking to keep their daily caloric intake at a minimum. While the taste of sugar combined with zero calories seems like the best of both worlds, there are significant genotoxic risks associated with this dipeptide derivative.

Aspartame itself is not particularly dangerous; the major risks result from the products of the metabolic breakdown of aspartame. The derivatives which pose the most significant risk to consumers are methanol, diketopiperazine, phenylalanine and aspartic acid. The toxicity of these products begins when they enter the bloodstream. Aspartame is first hydrolyzed in the liver, releasing methanol, which is then converted to formaldehyde. The formaldehyde then further oxidizes to form formic acid and carbon dioxide. Formaldehyde itself has several toxic effects on the human body. One such effect includes the disorder metabolic acidosis (elevated acid concentration) which disrupts normal gastrointestinal function. Vision disorders are also caused by formaldehyde, as well as by its oxidized form, formic acid. These toxins destroy the ocular nerves and can induce blindness. Another aspartame byproduct, the amino acid phenylalanine, is a neurotoxin. Elevated phenylalanine levels blocks the transport of critical amino acids to the brain. High levels of phenylalanine can cause seizures and potentially mental retardation as well. Lastly, aspartic acid is also considered a toxin and can destroy astrocytes (neuronal support cells) and neurons at high concentrations.

Aspartame has also been associated with an increased risk of cancer. Various hypotheses state that aspartame consumption leads to a higher risk of mammary cancer, leukemia and lymphoma. In one study, a carcinogenicity bioassay on aspartame was performed on mice. The study included 6 groups of 62 male and female mice who were fed either 32,000, 16,000, 8,000, 2,000 or 0 ppm doses of aspartame from the prenatal stage until death. After the mice died, various examinations were done of their tissues, organs and pathologic lesions. The findings showed that the mice that consumed aspartame had higher incidences of malignant tumor formation. The higher the dose consumed, the more likely both male and female mice were to develop lymphomas. One theory suggests that the higher incidences of cancer can be attributed to the formaldehyde released by aspartame metabolism because formaldehyde is a known carcinogen. Others believe that aspartic acid may also contribute to aspartame’s carcinogenicity since it is often linked to the development of cancerous neoplastic lesions, which are lesions related to abnormal cell growth.

The available research demonstrates that there are many carcinogenic and genotoxic risks associated with the consumption of aspartame. Despite all these risks, aspartame



is still ubiquitous in the lives of most Americans. Thankfully, many consumers and food producers are becoming more aware of the dangers, leading to the development of healthier substitutes for low-calorie sweeteners for your coffee and diet soda.

**The findings showed that the mice that consumed aspartame had higher incidences of malignant tumor formation**

# The Naming of the Four Newly Discovered Elements

Oriel Schmulevich  
*Staff Writer*

Let us officially welcome in the four newly added elements to the Periodic Table of Elements! The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) approved the names of these four new elements in late November. The discoveries of these elements over the last decade are a major achievement in the basic sciences, confirming the prediction of the previously unknown elements with the atomic numbers 113, 115, 117 and 118. Their placement in the Table was met with much enthusiasm from the scientific community and general population alike, sealing the previously lacking seventh row.

Early chemists knew that there were missing elements in the Periodic Table of Elements based on the Table’s principles. The Table is arranged on the basis of increasing atomic number (Z), or number of protons. They therefore set aside designated place holders for the elements to be discovered. Until now, the new elements had the temporary working names of 113 ununtrium, Uut, 115 ununpentium, Uup, 117 ununseptium, Uus, and 118 ununoctium, Uuo. Now that their discoveries have been confirmed, the seventh period of the Periodic Table of Elements is complete.

The elements were discovered by researchers from Japan, Russia, and the United States. Element 113 was discovered by scientists at RIKEN Nishina Center for Accelerator-Based Science in Japan. It was named Nihonium and was given the symbol Nh. The name stems from Nihon which is one of the two ways to say “Japan” in Japanese, and literally means “the Land of Rising Sun.”

Element 115 and Element 117 were discovered at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, Dubna in Russia, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Vanderbilt University, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, all three in the United States. Element 115 was named Moscovium with the symbol Mc, in recognition of the Moscow region. It honors the land that is the home of the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, where the discovery experiments were conducted. Moscovium was discovered using the Dubna Gas-Filled Recoil Separator in combination with the heavy ion accelerator capabilities of the Flerov Laboratory of Nuclear Reactions. Element 117 was given the name Tennessine along with the symbol Ts. It is in recognition of the contribution the state of Tennessee has had to the field of super-heavy element research, and includes Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Vanderbilt University, and the

	Group→1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
	↓Period																			
1		1 H																2 He		
2		3 Li	4 Be										5 B	6 C	7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne		
3		11 Na	12 Mg										13 Al	14 Si	15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar		
4		19 K	20 Ca	21 Sc	22 Ti	23 V	24 Cr	25 Mn	26 Fe	27 Co	28 Ni	29 Cu	30 Zn	31 Ga	32 Ge	33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr	
5		37 Rb	38 Sr	39 Y	40 Zr	41 Nb	42 Mo	43 Tc	44 Ru	45 Rh	46 Pd	47 Ag	48 Cd	49 In	50 Sn	51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe	
6		55 Cs	56 Ba	*	71 Lu	72 Hf	73 Ta	74 W	75 Re	76 Os	77 Ir	78 Pt	79 Au	80 Hg	81 Tl	82 Pb	83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn
7		87 Fr	88 Ra	*	103 Lr	104 Rf	105 Db	106 Sg	107 Bh	108 Hs	109 Mt	110 Ds	111 Rg	112 Cn	113 Nh	114 Fl	115 Mc	116 Lv	117 Ts	118 Og
				*	57 La	58 Ce	59 Pr	60 Nd	61 Pm	62 Sm	63 Eu	64 Gd	65 Tb	66 Dy	67 Ho	68 Er	69 Tm	70 Yb		
				*	89 Ac	90 Th	91 Pa	92 U	93 Np	94 Pu	95 Am	96 Cm	97 Bk	98 Cf	99 Es	100 Fm	101 Md	102 No		
				*																

**After learning of the names of these elements, one might be wondering whether there is a systematic way of naming newly discovered elements.**

University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Element 118 was discovered by the collaborating teams of researchers at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, Dubna and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. In line with the tradition of honoring a scientist, the name Oganesson and symbol Og for element 118 was proposed by the collaborating teams of discoverers at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research. The name recognizes Professor Yuri Oganessian (born 1933) for his pioneering contributions to transactinide elements research. His many achievements include the discovery of super-heavy elements and significant advances in the nuclear physics of super-heavy nuclei including experimental evidence for the “island of stability.”

After learning of the names of these elements, one might be wondering whether there is a systematic way of naming newly discovered elements. If so, who decides on the name? It turns out that according to the IUPAC website, “new elements can be named after a mythological concept, a mineral, a place or country, a property or a scientist.” Furthermore, the names of all new elements should have an ending that reflects and maintains historical and chemical consistency. Meaning, elements in groups 1-16 are named with the suffix “-ium,” elements in group 17 have the suffix “-ine” and elements in group 18 have the suffix “-on.” Finally, the names for new chemical elements in English should allow proper translation into other major languages. After Divisional acceptance, the names and two-letter symbols are presented for public review for five months, before the



# ReWalk: One Step at a Time

Malka Katz  
*Staff Writer*

ReWalk Robotics is a high-tech Israeli company whose motto is “More Than Walking”—and for a good reason. ReWalk is a groundbreaking company, creating the first wearable exoskeleton which paraplegics (people paralyzed from the waist down) can wear in order to walk again. Anyone who has seen videos of users wearing the ReWalk device can attest to its unbelievable, futuristic-like technology. While it seems like a fairly simple idea, to engineer such a device takes time, and this company has spent over 15 years updating their technology to ensure the best-quality product for their users around the globe.

The founder and brainchild of this company is Dr. Amit Goffer, who served as CEO of the company for over a decade and Chief Technology Officer and President of the company until 2015. The idea emerged after a tragic ATV accident Goffer experienced in 2001, leaving him permanently handicapped as a quadriplegic. At the time, he was already a successful inventor and entrepreneur of another company which he founded, Odin Medical Technologies. After such a life-changing accident, Goffer made it his mission to create an appliance through which he and others suffering from paralysis from the waist down, mainly from spinal cord injuries (SCIs), could actualize their dreams of walking again. Having prior expertise in the field of technology, Goffer capitalized on the idea and pioneered an entire new industry of robotics which had not been thoroughly explored until that point.

Until ReWalk, the main method for those suffering from SCIs was to rely on wheelchairs or motorized scooters to regain mobility and independence. The sophistication of ReWalk is that it is a wearable robotic exoskeleton that provides powered hip and knee motion in order to help facilitate natural motion. The different motions it enables include standing upright, walking, turning, and ascending and descending stairs. While this still makes the user dependent on the ReWalk appliance, it provides the user with as close of a sense of walking as possible, by using his or her own two legs to mimic walking. Rewalk has two designs: ReWalk Personal, for everyday and personal use, and ReWalk Rehabilitation, for use in hospitals or rehabilitation centers for therapy.



While ReWalk has made unbelievable strides forward, there are still some obstacles. There is a hefty price tag attached, varying from \$69,000 to \$85,000. Additionally, ReWalk’s exoskeleton is no light weight: weighing in at 51 pounds, it may not be wearable for some who cannot carry that extra weight. That is why part of the process of using ReWalk involves training, for which there are many locations throughout the world.

Rewalk was the first exoskeleton in the US to receive FDA clearance. In 2011 the FDA approved ReWalk for hospital use, and in 2014, it received approval for home and public use as well. This speaks volumes as to how advanced the technology of Rewalk is, as this is a feat other companies have yet attempted to achieve.

There are currently over 1,000 ReWalkers around the world today who are benefiting from Rewalk Robotics. Anyone can check out the ReWalk website and watch the many testimonials of individuals whose lives have been transformed due to their newfound ability to walk. ReWalk gives their users an opportunity to forget their disability. Every one of these stories is inspiring, and reminds the viewer how truly transformative ReWalk is for the lives of their users. And it’s all because one man chose to use his encounter with personal tragedy as an opportunity to help others.

**After such a life-changing accident, Goffer made it his mission to create an appliance through which he and others suffering from paralysis from the waist down, mainly from spinal cord injuries (SCIs), could actualize their dreams of walking again.**

# 5 Innovations to Look Forward to in 2017

Netah Osona  
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Technology is never static; it is constantly transforming, adapting, and progressing to satisfy changing consumer preferences and behaviors. Every year, new innovations and trends that were seemingly impossible and even unimaginable in previous years, enter the market. This constant introduction of novel materials is a clear attempt at improvement in a perpetually shifting market system. In our society, which craves speed and efficiency, technology must meet exceptionally high standards of functionality. These five innovations, among countless other trends to look forward to this upcoming year, will not only reshape society, but will even rewire the way human beings think.

**1) SuperMeat:** The Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN says that by 2050, the world will be home to nine billion people, and the current food production will need to almost double to meet the growing population. However, a scarce amount of land, climate change and related water shortages could have a profound impact on food production. SuperMeat is an Israeli startup company that is working to develop chicken cultured meat products created through the use of cell culture and genetic modification. Tissues are drawn painlessly from live animals, which will be engineered to create synthetic, lab-grown food. This, and other endeavors of laboratory-grown meat and meat products, are meant to completely transform the production of food, being marketed as more ethical, safe, environmentally friendly, and healthy.

**2) Smarter self-driving cars:** Tesla and Uber have been trying to break into the driverless car industry, with Tesla coming out with an updated version of the Autopilot feature. This past summer, the first fatal accident happened as a result of the Autopilot feature in the Tesla Model S, which failed to detect oncoming traffic. Because of this controversy, both Tesla and Uber are hoping to engineer smarter automated vehicles to significantly diminish these risks. Through the use of artificial intelligence, they are hoping to make cars able to “talk” to each other in order to reduce the chance of crashes. If cars are able to “communicate” with their surrounding vehicles, the number of accidents can decrease significantly. This intelligence could propel the ride-hailing service into a world where human beings are inessential to driving.

**3) Virtual reality as a form of treatment:** Virtual reality will become so immersive this upcoming year that it will essentially have the ability to rewire people’s brains. Research shows that virtual reality can help users overcome anxiety, fear and PTSD. Meditation promotes mental health by reducing stress and anxiety, and the Oculus Rift, the Google Cardboard, and other virtual reality headsets have now introduced guided meditation. Other endeavors include creating virtual reality for stroke patients that can inherently rewire their brains, along with virtual 3D models that can be constructed from MRI’s, CAT scans, and ultrasounds, that will allow a surgeon to explore the site of surgery before the operation itself.

**4) 3D printed food:** German company Biozoon has begun to 3D print ‘SmoothFood’ that is meant to help feed the elderly. Developed for those who are unable to chew food properly, this process involves mixing food with a texturing agent before 3D printing it into a desired shape and soft texture. SmoothFood will include a range of 3D printable powder mixtures that solidify when printed but melt very quickly when eaten. Their main target is elderly people who suffer from dysphagia, the inability or difficulty to swallow food properly.

**5) “The Uber of \_\_\_”:** The power one has to be able to retrieve almost any information using a device that fits in one’s pocket is revolutionary. Having apps on one’s phone that can accomplish countless tasks and satisfy most consumer needs is groundbreaking. Being “the Uber” of something is a phrase coined to refer to companies that use mobile devices to offer on-demand delivery of a product or service. Some applications that already exist include the Uber of laundry and the Uber of flowers. Dryv and Washio are just two such examples of services that pick up dirty clothes and return them freshly laundered and/or dry cleaned. BloomThat is an app that allows you to choose flowers from their wide selection, and have them delivered to a specific location in under 90 minutes.

