

# The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

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## The First Ladies of Yeshiva University

Leah Klahr

Features Editor

Dr. Samuel Belkin, Yeshiva University's first president wrote, "My heart and soul are in the holy Yeshiva which I helped to build. The Yeshiva is the most valuable fortune possessed by American Jewry, and it gives life to orthodoxy in this country." The unique vision and role of Yeshiva University was built by the people who dedicated their lives to the ideas and reality of the institution. Among these people are the five presidents of YU; these five men are renowned within the University and beyond for their devotion and vision for YU. However, less renowned are the women who also played a role in building the institution that YU is today. These women include the First Ladies of YU; though they assume an unofficial title and role at YU, the First Ladies of YU are an integral part of the YU story.

YU's first First Lady, Sarah (nee' Travis) Revel, was raised in Marietta, Ohio. Her family immigrated to the U.S. at the turn of the century from a suburb of Riga. Upon immigrating, their last name was changed from Rabinowitz to Travis. At first, they worked as farmers in Ohio. Later, Sarah's brother bought land in Oklahoma which proved to be rich with oil, and the family became involved with the petroleum and gasoline industries.

Sarah and Bernard Revel met through the part-time Rabbi of the Marietta, Ohio community, and the couple was married on Thanksgiving of 1908. Though little is known about Sarah Revel, in Aaron Rothkoff's biography about Bernard Revel, her presence in the Yeshiva University enterprise is conveyed. Rothkoff describes

last words to his wife were "It was my privilege to serve God, the Torah, and the Children of Israel." While Sarah Revel's work and interests remain unknown, undoubtedly, she played a significant role in this endeavor, establishing the role of a YU First Lady.

Much more is know about Abby (nee'

in supporting more education for women, and in her career as a journalist, she always resisted being pigeon-holed as 'the woman writer writing about recipes'" Becker added that for over two decades, "[Abby] held salons in her apartment to which only women were invited for an evening of intellectual discussion and sharing."

Later in her career, she worked as a speechwriter for New York state governor Hugh Carey. Blu Greenberg, a highly influential Orthodox Feminist thinker and writer since the 1970s, shared her impressions and memories of Abby Belkin with The Observer. She described, "Abby was one of the most down to earth and kind First Ladies. For all her high station, Abby was one of the most modest, genuine persons one could ever know. She had a sparkle in her eye and an easy laugh about life in general. Abby truly had a great heart and loved people and

took them at face value. No intrigue, no politicking, no airs about her. But she was not at all light-minded. She could analyze a situation or an encounter with great perceptivity—and still treat everyone with kindness and generosity."

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how the couple hosted the YU rabbinical students at their home on Purim. In a Commentator article, an anonymous student described his surprise at seeing Sarah Revel attending Bernard Revel's rabbinical lectures—the only woman among dozens of Rabbis and rabbinical students. Rothkoff records that Bernard Revel's

Frosburg) Belkin, YU's second First Lady, who was an influential journalist, writer, and feminist. As an established journalist, Abby worked as the editor of the Women's Section of the Long Island Daily Press, and was a member of the Women's Newspaper Associations. Her niece, Myra Becker explained, "Abby was always interested

## The Adderall Crisis: Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game

Kira Paley

Opinions Editor

In early December, The Observer published an article reporting on the use of unprescribed Adderall among Stern pre-health students. So days later, when a drug deal (read: Adderall sale) went down in the uptown Gottesman Library, I wasn't as surprised as I might have been a week earlier. Nonetheless, I shook my head at the boldness (read: stupidity) of doing something so ethically murky in public. Though floor 2A was relatively empty, it being a Thursday night, I gawked as the one student pulled a plastic bag from his knapsack and handed some pills to his study partner. "Be careful, though," the dealer warned. "You won't sleep for at least four hours." His friend shrugged, downing the pills and returning to his textbook.

stated before, was judgment; I judged these two students not only for not even attempting to be discreet about exchanging pills for money in a public campus space, but also for being so cavalier about the use of an unprescribed medication. Regarding myself as "holier-than-thou" in regards to these two students, I felt morally superior for being a pre-med student who does

not rely on drugs to do well on exams. Now, though, I realize that a judgemental attitude towards students who take Adderall for studying is unfair. True, taking unprescribed prescription drugs is medically unethical and can be regarded as cheating if taken in preparation for an exam. But the Adderall Crisis, as I will refer to it, is a symptom of the greater issue at hand, which is the high-pressure environment of students and faculty at YU.

At orientation, I naturally attended the pre-health session during the "Meet Your Major" activity. As I sat in the classroom with other potential biology majors, hearing about what being a pre-health student at Stern was like, I was unrelentingly hit with numbers and big names. How many students got into this medical school, what percentage of dental school applicants research at which big hospital, and who won how many awards at a poster competition. As I had not even been on campus for two days, this was overwhelming; I did not care about these names and numbers. I simply wanted to hear about classes, clubs and professors,

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## Spring 2018 Finals Schedule Has Three Exams in One Day

Mindy Schwartz

Editor in Chief

Although it feels like we only just got through Fall finals season, some students are already growing anxious over Spring finals. This early anxiety is due at least in part to the the fact that this Spring semester's finals schedule is set up very differently than most students at Stern are used too, with three finals scheduled for on one day on three of the six days of finals.

In previous semesters the most finals a student could take on any given day was two, but with the new Spring schedule it is possible for students to be scheduled for three finals in a single day. Students who take classes in the J, M, and F spots for example, will be scheduled to take all three final exams for those classes on the first day of finals, May 10th.

Many students who have noticed this new schedule have already begun to express their concern. One anonymous student told The Observer "I think it's ridiculous and unproductive. It will negatively affect grades and will ensure that students don't actually retain the information they're studying."

Two main factors account for the new finals set up—Shavuot, which this year is a

three day Yom Tov, and Commencement. Dean Orlian, Associate Dean of Stern College, told The Observer that "Although we typically allow 7 days for final exams, the Spring '18 calendar presented unique and difficult challenges. In order to conclude final exams before the three consecutive days of Shabbat and [then] Shavuot, and to thus enable students to go home for the holiday without the need to return to school for exams or Commencement, there was no choice but to allot only six days for final exams [which] required scheduling three exams on each of two days."

The exam schedule was then further complicated by the date of Commencement this year. Dr. Jill Katz, Exam Director, explained that "Commencement was originally scheduled for Thursday [May 17th], but the Events Department changed it at the (relatively) last minute to Wednesday [May 16th]," causing a whole day of finals to be lost. Dr. Katz noted that "we have control over that decision [to move the Commencement date]," but once it was made the exam schedule needed to

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## Giving Up the Plan: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Law School, and the Pursuit of Torah

Mindy Schwartz  
*Editor in Chief*

It had to do with Ruth Bader Ginsburg, I think. Why I was sitting—for the second time—in an office waiting for the pre-law advisor on a Tuesday this past November. The advisor asked me some basic questions about my (academic) self, and seemed pleased enough with my GPA and the extracurriculars I rattled off for her. We discussed my chances of getting into good law schools and she assured me that taking the LSAT after I graduate would not harm my chances at admission.

On the face of it, the meeting was perfectly clarifying; yet inside I was only left more confused. Because even though I had requested this second meeting with the pre-law advisor, I didn't actually want to go to law school, or be a lawyer at all. I had hardly even considered it until the second semester of my junior year, as the steady stream of "So what are going to do after graduation?" inquiries began to stream in from all sides like a dam had broke.

Since grade school, I have always been someone with a plan. I planned because I arrogantly and naively believed (and sometimes still do) that if I just stuck to a plan, I could do anything. Success seemed to have a clear recipe: plan, and carry out the plan. Since fourth grade I had a plan for how to do well on tests and since ninth grade I had plan for how I was going to get a good enough SAT score to get a scholarship to Stern.

My plans were always practical and thoroughly laid out, and my career plan was going to be no exception. During my year in Israel I discovered a deep passion for Torah learning, and for a moment I was sure I was

meant to learn and teach Torah forever. But there were too many questions: where would I gain true mastery of Jewish texts and if I ever did gain that mastery, where would someone pay me to teach it? I was drawn to college and post-college education, but the opportunities for female Torah educators in these fields are hopelessly scant. Clearly this was not a career where a woman could "plan, and carry out the plan."

There are of course exceptional women who are able to gain the skills needed to serve as Torah scholars to college and post-college communities, but there is no guarantee of such a position. Even if a woman is able to be adequately taught, the reality is that being a female Torah scholar is a risk—a risk that no institution of community will respect her, accept her, and, more critically, hire her. Simply put: you can't plan for a job that might not exist.

So with some heartache, I determined that the path of a female "Torah educator" was too uncertain for me to really consider. I stored away the thought, and landed on something I could plan for: I would major in Art History and become a museum curator.

When I got to Stern I carefully followed the path I had planned for myself, but the longer I stayed on this route the more it felt like I was ignoring some blaring call in my ears. While I loved my Art History courses, it was my Judaic Studies courses, particularly Advanced Talmud, that really left me hungry for more. The summer after my sophomore year I interned at a Jewish museum where I got to teach guests about some of the most exquisite art and architecture the city has to offer, and yet my favorite part of the job was discussing religious philosophy and practice with my non-Jewish and non-Orthodox co-workers.

Once the sum of these small facts became too difficult for me to ignore, I realized I had a problem. I knew my heart was made for learning and teaching Torah, but suddenly I was without a

plan. Even as I decided to charge forward, despite being plan-less, into the world of Torah, I was still terrified of the shallow, murky waters that lay ahead of me. I was petrified that I could no longer plan, and then just carry out my plan.

When friends and relatives would ask me the fateful, "So what do you want to do after graduation?" I began to feel panicky. I knew I wanted to learn in GPATS after Stern, but if anyone asked me what I wanted to do in the long term, or what I wanted to be, I would just mumble and evade the question.

Clearly I was charting new territory for myself by committing to an unplanned, almost un-planable career. At times this filled me with pride, with a sense of purpose and mission, but often it left

me sad, frustrated, and frightened. Still, I had decided.

A few months later I listened to a podcast about Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the longest serving woman on the US Supreme Court. Ginsburg's hard-earned and well-deserved success made me envious—not because I could ever possibly be worthy of such unfathomable success, but because here was a woman who planned and was able, despite many obstacles, to carry out her plan, and succeed. Already weary from the fear that came with the uncertainty of my new career path, I began to question my choice. Perhaps there was something I could do as a woman where I would not be limited. Where if I planned and carried out my plan well enough I could actually succeed, completely and unrestrictedly. Where I could be, at least in

some small way, like Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

So I made a meeting with the pre-law advisor. But law just wasn't my dream, and as much as I tired, it just didn't stick. As I entered my last year at Stern and even more questions about my future streamed in, I panicked again and made a second meeting with the pre-law advisor. But law still wasn't my dream, and it still didn't stick.

Wiser than I was in grade school, I now know that success isn't as simple as "plan, and carry out your plan." I know that sometimes you can be given the chance to carry out your plan and still fail. And I also know that sadly, sometimes, you are not even given the opportunity to try and carry out your plan at all.

It is because of this latter truth that I am still tempted to make a third appointment with the pre-law advisor. I am tempted try and make law my new dream, to ignore all the glaring signs and pick this as my new "true" calling.

Still, I don't. I worry that if too many women leave the pursuit Torah scholarship to be lawyers and doctors, and perhaps even Supreme Court judges, the opportunities for Torah I long for will never exist. I understand the choices of these women on deeply personal level, and I view their choices without the slightest bit of judgement. I understand the desire to pursue a career where you can carry out your plan, where you know that you will be judged based on your skills, and be given equal opportunity to succeed.

But I also know that we cannot all leave. Because we will never move forward on this path if everyone walks away. Some of us must to stay, find something in this world of Torah, build something here, however small, if things are ever going to change—if any young girl in the future is ever going to be able to say "I want to be a Torah Scholar", and carry out her plan.



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## To Be Named

Anonymous

He hadn't always been like this. I remember a point when he used to lovingly threatened anyone who ever upset me. He was Happy go lucky. Charismatic. Passionate.

Always best friends, we would go on hikes with each other. As we climbed for hours, attempting to reach the highest point of the mountain and finally catch a glimpse of the view, I had believed that I finally understood the definition of closeness to another human.

Just the morning of the incident, we had been comparing lists of our favorite people. "I guess I could fit you in at number 17," I teased.

"That's it, you're off my list," he joked back.

But he had been taking pills for a while. I should not say "pills." He had been taking amphetamine for a while now. Amphetamine is a study drug, the drug that multiple Stern girls admitted to using in a recent Observer article about Adderall, the drug I had been offered before my last organic chemistry test, the drug that I almost took while studying for my last organic chemistry test.

I think he took too many. When looking at the side effects of overdose after the incident, the list I found wrote "anxiousness and anger, illusions" among a

number of other things.

I promise that the morning of the incident, he seemed fine. Happy-go-lucky. Charismatic. Passionate. I know his family well—his mother cooks breakfast for him every morning, his father is the example of a modern angel, his brother has the most caring heart I have ever seen, and I could go on lauding his family as I would have lauded him just a few hours ago, before the incident.

But he took too many. It was out of his control. The amphetamine kicked in with the depression until he lost sense of reality. We were just having a nice meal together, in a relatively public place, when he picked a fight with me.

Flash forward an hour later and I was dodging the eggs thrown at my head, dodging the vase thrown at my head, yelling obscenities back at him for every "bitch" and "slut" he called me.

After threatening me several times, he wrapped his fingers around my throat. Mr. Happy-go-lucky. Mr. Charismatic. Mr. Passionate. He was always the best friend.

If the door had not cut his hand, I do not know what would have happened. I do not want to.

He had begun taking the amphetamine for the

same reason that Stern girls and YC guys take it now—wanting the edge. He had not believed that his pill taking would follow him past his school days. It was just study drug, after all, and a commonly used drug at that.

But he has been out of school for years now, and he still takes the pill. Perhaps he took more than one; I can accept that. I cannot accept anyone telling me it was anything other than the pill. I have known him too well for too long. I cannot accept anyone telling me that it is a relatively harmless pill; maybe for now, but what about tomorrow?

I cannot accept these students who take it for their grades. Are grades more important than your life? What about the life of your best friend? Are they worth wrapping your fingers around her neck and squeezing until she fears for the lack of a tomorrow?

I cannot accept that students at Stern take non-prescribed Adderall, the common name for amphetamine, for something as transient as a grade. Look at the bruises around my neck next time you worry about that grade, and consider that there might be more important matters to worry about.

## When Too Much Information Oversteps Halacha?

Sophia Gordon

Yeshiva University promotes the ideal of Torah U'Madda, which is the platform and aim of the university. As a Modern Orthodox institution it is often difficult to find the balance between the modern secular world and halacha; often it even seems like a paradox. We question whether possible to achieve such an intense feat, however despite this difficulty, we aim to fulfill this as our mission.

Recently I was scrolling through my university email, when I stumbled upon the most recent issue of The Observer. I was immediately taken aback upon seeing the following article title: "Stern College Mashgiach Fired after Investigation into Multiple Allegations."

I was shocked by the seemingly coarse and insensitive title. It particularly took me by surprise because it disclosed such intimate information.

By publishing an article that discloses the position

of the university worker, The Observer made it fairly easy to identify the individual involved. As both a Jewish and small university, it is crucial to be as subtle and discreet as possible. This information should only be shared with individuals who are necessary (administrative bodies, etc.) to deal with the issue. It is important to differentiate between public knowledge and private knowledge; that which can potentially defame an individual unnecessarily should be withheld from the public eye.

That being said, journalists employ great power over the general public. Exercising freedom of the press must be dealt with in the utmost care and discretion. We as individuals sometimes do not realize the potential one possesses to influence others.

In no way do I defend the actions of this individual, however I think the point can still be just as effective

even if specifics about the individuals are absent from the article. From what I gather, the girls who faced this situation handled it well and were right to speak directly to the administration. However I do not believe that details of the individual should be disclosed (such as the position he held at the university). As a small school, it is fairly easy to discover the identity of the individual. In the future, I request the specifics of the staff member be kept to a bare minimum or within the realm of what is necessary to be told to the entire student body.

Additionally, we must take pride in the fact we attend a Jewish university and understand that we must adhere to an even higher standard when disclosing the truth.

## Response to SCW Mashgiach Fired

Dear Editor,

As a graduate of SCW and TIW [YU's Teachers Institute for Women], I was deeply saddened to hear of YU's termination of Rabbi [redacted]. Exercising my inherent right to free speech as an individual, I would like to state my own opinions on this unfortunate incident. I was not there—true—but from my own experiences with Rabbi Hirschhorn, he has always shown himself to be a perfect gentleman, the perfect fit of Torah U'Madda—halachic and secular knowledge. He has always lent SCW a gregarious, friendly ambience, while still reflecting Torah values. Whenever I asked him a question regarding halacha, his answers always conformed with the more stringent side of Jewish law. Thus, I find it difficult to believe the Rabbi guilty of "sexual harassment".

Now, suddenly, students are saying he came too close to them, another girl saying he "made her feel uncomfortable"—what does that mean? Leering? Flirting? Why not be specific? We have all these nice, vague accusations—all of a sudden. Then, "complained that the Rabbi has made comments about their physical appearance"—what does this mean? Did he remark that a skirt was too short or jeans were too tight? Did he say it to be lascivious or because a student at YESHIVA University was not dressed in a manner that reflects an Orthodox institution? He is (was) a mashgiach from the OU at YU. I assume SCW students have heard the word tznius?

Yes, I am a modern, Orthodox woman with three university degrees, who still studies and in my opinion dressing in tight jeans or mini-skirts is just not proper at Yeshiva University. That is my opinion—which I have

the right to state. Or has freedom of speech been limited now only to "feminists"? I could go into an entire thesis on feminism and my opinion of what it has done to society—but this is neither the place nor time to embark on that road, here, in this letter. Maybe the Rabbi was just doing his job of mashgiach and being a Rabbi?

"I had never spoken to him before this incident, but had heard things from friends about his unprofessional conduct." "Unprofessional conduct"—in what way? Now we are in the realm of lashon hara—I assume that a student at SCW knows what that is?

"I felt nervous after, because every time I entered the cafe he would begin speaking about and pointing at me, telling students and even other staff how we were being ridiculous and sensitive." Does that mean staff at YU are not allowed to have conversations with other staff members about students, because maybe a student might overhear and her feelings might be hurt?

As to the remarks about "shomer negiah"—let's not play games. What would you expect you an Orthodox Rabbi to say—that it's perfectly acceptable? Ask a Chassidic rabbi and he will be much more descriptive in his criticisms.

I would like to hear Rabbi [redacted]'s side of the incident, but apparently he has been silenced. "We need to have a voice"—what about his voice? The quotes attributed to him—were his words twisted? Taken out of context? There's that famous children's game of "telephone", where entire stories are warped by the time the third person hears it.

I don't see why his opinions on affirmative action and homosexuality deserve to have him fired either. The latter is prohibited in the Torah as an abomination. As

to affirmative action, there are African Americans who themselves do not agree with it, believing it a crutch that does not advance the Black community. But apparently, conservatives have no right to state their opinions, only liberals and leftists.

All I have read are vague accusations and words that reflect only one side of the incident. Where is the justice for this article to condemn him? And cleverly, deemphasizing complimentary remarks about the rabbi from other students.

Do these "hurt" students realize what they have done? This Orthodox Rabbi—with a wife and children—will forever have his record marred, as if he had physically molested women. Is that why these girls feel guilty? If he was such a menace why would they feel guilty?

Now, do you feel better?

College is not real life. Life is tough and cruel and lives can be ruined just because someone did not talk to you so nicely.

In my opinion, the worst reaction from YU should have been a severe reprimand not to get emotional in a discussion with undergraduates.

In my opinion, the whole definition of "sexual harassment" has become completely unglued and gone overboard. This is, again, my opinion.

Hindishe Lee  
SCW '79 TIW '82

## Spring 2018 Finals Schedule Has Three Exams in One Day

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be further adjusted. They decided to add a third day with three exams to the finals schedule to make up for the lost day.

Aliza Berenholz Peled, Senior Director of Events, explained that “the University’s commencement dates are coordinated by the calendar committee a year or two out,” but these dates are “always tentative and not finalized until final arrangements can be made with the venue.” While the May 17th was the tentative date, “the calendar committee took several factors into account when deciding on a final date—including accommodations for families who were traveling (providing them ample time to return home for Shavuot), finals scheduling and venue availability.” Once these factors were considered, it was determined that “May 16th was preferable [and this] date was confirmed in the Fall of 2017.”

Dr. Katz explained that the choice to set up the finals schedule with three exams each on three days was carefully made after considering all other possible options. While they considered taking a day or two away from Winter Break so that finals could be longer and consequently more spread out, ultimately “intercession is already so short [that] we did not feel we could start the semester [any] earlier than we [are].” Extending finals was also obviously considered, but Dr. Katz emphasized that ensuring students—especially international students—could go home for Shavuot, which many would be unable to do if they had to return afterwards for additional exams, was a top priority in making the schedule.

The administration believes that students will prefer this three-exam-a-day schedule to shortening Winter Break or having exams after Shavuot. One student echoed this sentiment, telling The Observer that “I think the situation is a little crazy but I understand

that this [is] helpful for out-of-town students because now they can finish finals, graduate, and move back home in time for Shavuot.”

However, not all students The Observer spoke to seemed satisfied with the decision. One anonymous student said that “I would rather have finals go for longer and have graduation after Shavuot than [have] three finals per day. I would even rather have Winter

**“We acknowledge that this is not an optimal situation, but [we] reassure students that no student will be required to take more than two exams on a given day.”**

Break be a little shorter so that finals could be more spread out.”

Although the decision over the exam schedule was clearly a thoughtful one, many students are still left stressing over having to study for and take three exams in a single day. Speaking to this concern, Dean Orlian noted that the “third [exam] slots, which were carefully chosen for each of those [three exam] days, are [for

classes] which are minimally enrolled,” so that as few students as possible would be affected. Dr. Katz also pointed out that, “as we do every semester, we suggest that students check their final exam schedule now, and if it looks unmanageable to consider choosing other courses.”

Despite both of these considerations meant to minimize the stress of taking three exams in one day, Dean Orlian also told The Observer that no student will be forced to take three exams in one day. “[The administration] acknowledge[s] that this is not an optimal situation,” she said, “but [we] reassure students that no student will be required to take more than two exams on a given day.”

Dean Orlian explained that “Dr. Katz is working on a plan to accommodate students who have three exams scheduled on one day,” that will enable students to request that “one [of their three] exams be rescheduled.” However Dean Orlian noted that students “who may prefer to take three exams on one day as opposed to having one exam rescheduled,” will certainly be allowed to do so.

Besides the issue of three exams in one day, the Spring Finals Schedule has posed an additional concern for some seniors. Hebrew Language finals are scheduled for Wednesday May 16th, the same day as Commencement. A number of students expressed concern about this overlap and potentially having to miss Commencement for their Hebrew final. When The Observer pointed out the issue to Dean Orlian, so responded that “we do believe this will impact very few, if any, graduating seniors as most students complete their Hebrew distribution requirement before their last semester on campus.” However she did note that if there are any students who do find themselves in this situation, “Dr. Katz will be working on this issue as well.”

## YU Students’ Newest Facebook Obsession: YU Memes for on the Derech Teens

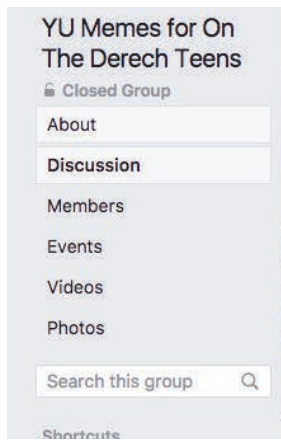
Miriam Pearl Klahr  
Managing Editor

In May of 2016, a Berkeley student created the UC Berkeley Memes for Edgy Teens Facebook group. Its purpose was to share relatable memes with like minded students. The group quickly grew and today boasts over 100,000 members. It also inspired students at Ivy League colleges, and other elite institutions, to create similar meme sharing Facebook groups geared towards their own respective universities. Yale Memes for Special Snowflake Teens and Princeton Memes for Preppy AF Teens are just two such examples. In December this trend reached Yeshiva University with the creation of YU Memes for on the Derech Teens.

Yeshiva College student Tony Arriaza first came up with the idea of having a YU meme group after being “inspired by the Ivy League meme groups which are very popular.” He thought it would be a fun and creative outlet for YU students and asked Stern College student Shifra Lindenberg, the creator of “Jewish Shifposting” and other Jewish satire, to co-run the group with him. Arriaza originally intended to name the group YU Memes for Self-Hating Teens but Lindenberg changed the name to YU Memes for on the Derech Teens thinking “it would be more relevant since we’re Jewish and ‘YU keeps you on the derech’.”

The first meme was posted on December 12, 2017 but since then the group, which today consist of over one thousand members and is still growing, “has developed a life of its own” according to Lindenberg. She explained that “she doesn’t ask anyone to post, but a lot of people know how to makes memes or videos and this group gives them the opportunity to share their own content.”

The memes make fun a variety of topics. Some touch on issues relevant to anyone in the orthodox world, exploring topics such as shmirat negyiah. Others focus on matters that are relevant to any college student, including the stress of finals or getting locked out of classes during registration. However much of the material is timely and exclusively relates to the Yeshiva



University college experience referring to issues such as finals proctors, OSL cancelling certain events, heights parties, the intercampus shuttle, or the different morning Torah programs for male students. Lindenberg explained that this group fills a unique niche because before it, while there were other pages devoted to modern orthodox memes that contained some YU related memes, one couldn’t find a variety of YU content on these pages. “This group filled a ‘need’ for YU themed content.”

One Stern College alumna who wishes to remain anonymous expressed that “while the group does occasionally produce quality memes”, she generally finds the group “to be a frustrating platform that shares immature jokes about basic aspects of orthodox life.” Arriaza and Lindenberg both explained that they knew there would be some crude and controversial memes, but they try to censor memes as little as possible, since this sort of content is a part of any successful meme group. Arriaza also added that he thinks “it’s important to distinguish between the humor in memes and more serious topics” and that he wishes “people would stop taking everything so seriously.”

Yeshiva College alumni Zev Behar shared how he thinks the group is “a great place for people to express whatever feelings they have about YU and a fun way to bring to light things that really are bothering

the students.” Similarly, Lindenberg believes that “the group provides a sense of unity for those in the school.” Though this wasn’t the main motivations for creating the group, she thinks it fosters a sense of pride amongst students of YU because they are able to understand a joke about their school that most people wouldn’t understand. She added that “the group gives a bit of legitimacy to YU by establishing its culture. People can see that YU has culture which makes YU feel desirable and adds to student life.”

When asked about how they envision the group’s future, Lindenberg responded by saying, “I don’t see YU Memes for on the Derech Teens dying any time soon. There are a lot of members who post regularly so there’s always new content.” Arriaza shared a slightly different sentiment saying, “I hope it lasts a while, but if it doesn’t it’s not the end of the world. I just hope people enjoy it for as long as they can.” They both encourage anyone with an idea for a meme to share it on the page and to reach out to them for help if anyone doesn’t know how to make one.

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## First Year Syms Student Kayla Garb Wins Prestigious Fashion Scholarship

Mindy Schwartz  
Editor in Chief

Kayla Garb, a first year student in Sy Syms School of Business, recently won a scholarship from the prestigious YMA Fashion Scholarship Fund (FSF). As part of her prize she will receive \$5,000 towards her education and is eligible to be considered for the National Merit Scholarship, a prize worth \$30,000. In addition, Garb's scholarship comes with valuable internship opportunities and her own fashion industry mentor.

Garb, a member of the Sys Syms Honors Program, is a Marketing major and an Art minor who hopes to pursue a career in business and fashion. "I have always been interested in fashion, partly because I love art and saw it as wearable art," she noted. "As I have gotten older, I have become more interested in the science and business of fashion, such as marketing, retail and trend forecasting."

"I was inspired to enter [the competition] because I knew that I wanted to have a career that incorporated business and creativity," Garb told *The Observer*. "I thought doing the case study was good practice for the future, because I have always strongly considered a career in the business of fashion."

The scholarship required competitors to submit a case study which explored how digital technology can be combined with a traditional retail model in order to improve the performance of a specific retailer. Garb chose to create a model for J-Crew. In her proposal only samples

of the store's clothes would be stocked on the sales floor to minimize clutter and potential damage to clothing. Shoppers would use an app to scan the QR of each piece of clothing, which would then be delivered in the desired size to the shopper's dressing room.



Her model also proposed moving the point of sale to the dressing room by using special technology that could remove the need for shoppers to have to wait on long lines to make their purchases at a register.

Dr Gabriela Coiculescu, assistant professor of Finance at Sy Syms, served as Garb's faculty adviser for her submission. "Kayla came to me with a very well developed and articulate proposal," Coiculescu said of

her role as Garb's advisor, "and I have to say that I learned a lot about the fashion and retail industry from reading her case study. I hope that the FSF scholarship will open many opportunities for her."

While Garb did the heavy lifting for her submission on her own, she was quick to praise Stern as a "great [place] for pursuing [her] goals." "The fact that it is a small school really helps," she pointed out, "because there is a lot of one on one attention and many people who try and help you."

When questioned about her experience entering and winning the scholarship, Garb admitted that while she had a "great experience," it was "a bit stressful because I heard about it a bit late and had to work on it over vacation." Garb has received a decent amount of press from local Jewish newspapers, like coverage in *The Jewish Link*, a newspaper which serves her hometown of Teaneck. She called the coverage "a little overwhelming honestly," but was quick to note that she is "glad that people get to see a Lubavitch girl who is in college and winning an award from a secular competition."

Reflecting on her win, Garb told *The Observer*, "I hope I have more successes to inspire more girls like me to pursue a career that is out of the box."

For fellow artists looking to grow in their work, Garb advises them "to just go for it! I did not think I would win [this scholarship] at all, but I fought through the pressure, and I got it done."

## YU Student Athletes Shine On Skyline Academic Honor Roll; Talk To The Observer About Sports-Study Balance

Chana Weinberg

Yeshiva University's student athletes continue to show their academic excellence with 54 students being named to the Skyline Conference academic honor roll for the 2017 Winter and Spring season. A total of 554 Skyline Conference student athletes met the required 3.30 or better grade point average for the 2017 Winter and Spring semesters to receive this award with the basketball team calculations combining fall and spring grades.

With 54 athletes, YU has the fourth most awardees of the seventeen schools in the conference and its affiliates. The YU athletic department participates in just half the sports eligible for this award so it has much fewer athletes eligible, making finishing near the top all the more impressive.

"The balance our student athletes continue to exhibit in the classroom and in competition speaks volumes to their character," Skyline Conference Commissioner Linda Bruno said in the announcement.

In a survey conducted by *The Observer* of over 50 YU student athletes, both male and female, 75 percent responded that they spend over thirteen

hours a week at either games or practices. This number does not include time spent working out on their own or meeting with the trainer for strength training.

Some student athletes believe that the time taken away from their studying is actually an academic advantage. Responses to the survey referred to how less study time makes for more

productivity when actually sitting down to do work.

Said one respondent, "When I'm in season, I know that I have a very set amount of time to do work so I work harder to get things done in the time that I have. When not busy with sports I have enough free time to procrastinate."



Elisa Alweis, a senior at SCW on the softball team, acknowledges that balancing school and sports is tough but the payoff is well worth the time and effort. "Finding the balance between school work and sports is definitely tough, but having to do so has not only made me a more conscientious student, but also more organized and driven all around," she tells *The Observer*. "Sports are

a necessary outlet that lets me focus better in school."

Another student athlete who responded to the survey echoes Alweis feelings. "While being a student athlete appears to be a tremendous time commitment, it's benefits greatly outnumber the negatives. Being a student athlete

has introduced me to the YU athletics community, enabled me to take part in the unique opportunity to play the sport I love on a collegiate level and has taught me various crucial life skills including time management and creating a positive team dynamic."

All this being said, 48 percent of student athletes surveyed admitted that there are times when they entered a practice or a game with some level of stress because of an upcoming exam or assignment. Additionally, 55 percent of surveyed student athletes have missed a practice or a game because of school work.

YU athletics has a long history of academic awards. The names of all 54 athletes, as well as past awardees, can be found at YUmacs.com.

Athletics Director

Joe Bednarsh expressed his pride in the athletes for this accomplishment. "I am so proud of our amazing student-athletes who prove once again that excellence on the field of play doesn't take away from their excellence in the classroom."

## OSL Pulls the Plug on Kol Hamevaser Talk By Rabbi Aryeh Klapper

Mindy Schwartz  
Editor in Chief

Wednesday December 20th Kol Hamevaser (KHM), Yeshiva University's Journal of Jewish Thought, was set to host guest speaker Rabbi Aryeh Klapper. Rabbi Klapper was supposed to speak about "Retzon Hashem, Human Experience, and Lomdus: A Philosophical Agenda for the Beis Medrash."

The event was approved on December 4th, however Monday, December 18th, the Office of Student Life informed KHM event planners that they were pulling the plug. Rabbi Weisberg, head of OSL, told the event planners that their event was only initially approved due to a bureaucratic "glitch" and because of that confusion he was not made aware of it until a week before the event. Because of the late notice, OSL claimed that the proper preparations, which require a great deal of "sensitivity and thought," for Rabbi Klapper coming to campus could not be put into place in such a short period of time.

The preparations were necessary, according to OSL, because of the controversy around a speech Rabbi Klapper gave in Rubin Shul on the Wilf campus last year. Rabbi Klapper is the Dean of the Center for Modern Torah Leadership and Rosh Beit Midrash of The Summer Beit Midrash Program in Sharon, Massachusetts.

Revel Graduate School hosted Rabbi Klapper less than two weeks before the scheduled event, on December 6th, where he spoke about "The Nature of the Halakhah in Halakhic Man." Rabbi Klapper is also set to be a guest on the Beren campus Shabbat of December 29th, an arrangement which was approved in November. The theme of the Shabbat will be "Ethical Challenges in Modern Orthodoxy."

While OSL told KHM that the December 20th event has to be cancelled, they also encouraged the event planners to host an event with Rabbi Klapper next semester.

One of the event planners, Doniel Weinreich, told The Observer that he tried to send out sstuds and ystuds to

publicize the event the previous week on Wednesday the 12th and Thursday the 13th but none of his emails were going through. When he went to print flyers for

the event on Thursday afternoon he was told that they could not be printed because of a possible problem with the speaker form they had filled out before their

December 4th approval. Weinreich was told that OSL would contact him shortly to update him on the status of the event, and he was asked on Sunday night if he could discuss the situation with OSL on Monday, December 17th.

Weinreich said that "anticipating what was likely to happen [in the meeting], I decided to share the flyer [for the event] in YU Marketplace so it would be public before anything was pulled." Alongside his post he wrote, "OSL won't let us print out this flyer or send any ystuds/sstuds, but this is still a real event and you can come on Wednesday." The comment garnered a number of comments of students expressing frustration at the event's cancellation.

One commented, "Sincerely upset this event was cancelled. Whoever was responsible has some 'splainin to do.'" While one commenter suggested that Rabbi Klapper still come, just not as an "official event," others noted that this would "probably not be the best idea."

Another commenter questioned the ability of OSL to override an event that has been sponsored by SOY and TAC and that "the relevant parties should fight back if [an] approved event is censored." However due to the "glitch" in the system it is possible that TAC and SOY never actually approved the event.

Weinreich told The Observer that while "we haven't determined our exact recourse, KHM is not going to flout OSL." After meeting with OSL, he updated his original post on YU Marketplace, writing "Update: this event has been cancelled."

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## The First Ladies of Yeshiva University

*continued from page 1:*

In 2016, the seventh annual Stern College Senior Art Show at the Yeshiva University Museum was dedicated to Abby Belkin. The art exhibition, called Gray Matter, was produced by ten Stern College students, and dedicated “in recognition of [Abby’s] profound and lasting impact on Yeshiva University, and her abiding enthusiasm for educational, cultural, and artistic advancement.” Dr. Karen Bacon, the Mordecai D. and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Arts and Sciences at Stern College described, “Abby had a distinctive voice—and the way she supported Stern College for Women made sure that all the women there found their distinct voices.” When Samuel Belkin passed away at 64 years old, Abby Belkin continued to live and work with the same passion and positivity. Blu Greenberg described, “After Abby was widowed at a young age, she accepted her fate without self-pity and carried on her life with the same cheer and goodness as before. She had no expectations of deferential treatment, neither as wife of the president nor as a widow. She sought out friends and took initiative to build a positive life.”

Mindella (nee’ Mehler) Lamm, YU’s third First Lady and a grandmother to two current Stern College students, shared both her childhood and first lady experiences with *The Observer*. Mindella Lamm was born in Midwood, New York. Her father passed away when she was very young, and she shared with *The Observer*, “I was raised in an environment of very strong women who overcame tragedy and raised a wonderful family.” After completing her Beis Yakov education, she attended Hunter College, where she majored in Education and minored in Drama. Mrs. Lamm explained, “I have always loved the theater and arts. When I was younger I loved to sing and act in local plays. When I got older I was drawn to the extraordinary arts of New York City and became a devoted fan of opera, ballet and theater, and attended these events very regularly.”

Upon graduating college, Mrs. Lamm worked in the New York public school system. However, she explained that once she met her husband, Dr. Norman Lamm, she transferred her energies to YU. “Being involved with YU on so many levels was the experience of a lifetime,” Mrs. Lamm wrote. “Before Dr. Lamm became president of YU, I was very involved in all of the chesed work of the Yeshiva University’s Women’s Organization. They do marvelous work and don’t get enough credit for the enormous chesed they do for students. Once Dr. Lamm became president, I assisted in every way I could. Those were both very tough times, but also times of great building and hope.”

Mrs. Lamm explained that once her children were older, she accompanied Dr. Norman Lamm to meet with dignitaries across the world. Mrs. Lamm recounted that they traveled to Egypt, London, Paris, Australia, and Beijing during her husband’s presidency. She added, “We entertained in our home or at YU on behalf of Yeshiva and the entire Jewish world and were privileged to get to meet or know many extraordinary people—whether it was Abba Eban or Natan Sharansky, Yehuda Avner, Menachem Begin, Yitzchak Rabin, and many others. It was a tremendous privilege. But with all of the extraordinary people we met, including undergraduate faculty, Roshei Yeshiva and graduate school faculties and administrators, [the] students were always the highlight.” She explained, “I loved meeting Stern college students when I audited classes, which I did often.” Additionally, Mrs. Lamm explained that she greatly enjoyed when students used to visit their small summer home in Sackett Lake, New York.

YU’s fourth First Lady, Mrs. Esther (nee’ Ribner) Joel, shared with *The Observer*, “I’ve known Mindy Lamm and her family for many years and I am always impressed by her. She was and is the ultimate First Lady, and I’ve always looked to her as a role model.”

Mrs. Joel received a Yeshiva Day School education, attended Barnard College, and then earned a Ph.D. in psychology from YU’s Ferkauf Graduate School. She then pursued a career in Education, teaching math, science, and psychology. She has also worked as both a college and high school guidance counselor. Mrs. Joel said, “My interests range from puzzles of all kinds to reading, needlepoint, folk dancing, swimming, and most important, spending time with our children and grandchildren.”

She shared with *The Observer* that “since high school, I have been involved, in some way, with Yeshiva University. I worked in Camp Morasha, many of my friends were students at YU and my brother and father graduated from YU, so I was very familiar with what YU was and what it stood for.” She added, “During my college and graduate school years Richard and I were very involved in a program run by YU at that time, called Torah Leadership Seminar—a five-day experiential Jewish education program for high school students.”

However, despite their involvement with YU, Mrs. Joel explained that her husband’s decision to accept the presidency was made with careful consideration of how the role would affect the entire family. She explained, “When Richard finally accepted the offer to become president of YU, the decision was made as a

family, fully understanding that both he and I, and our children, would be invested in the position.” Renowned for their generosity in hosting YU students for Shabbat, Mrs. Joel stated, “From the beginning we decided to entertain often, inviting faculty, Rabbeim, board members and donors to our home. [But] best of all was having students for Shabbos. We had student groups and groups of random students throughout Richard’s tenure. Each time a group left after Shabbos, Richard and I would remark about how wonderful our students are.” Mrs. Joel also commented on the opportunity of spending Shabbat in diverse Jewish communities both within the United States and internationally as representatives of Yeshiva University, giving them “the chance to learn more about the communities, connect with people, and be a spokesperson for YU.”

Another aspect that Mrs. Joel singled out as part of her experience as a First Lady of YU was the annual Rebbetzins’ Yarchei Kallah, which enabled her to “meet amazing women who, together with their husbands, serve their communities across the country.”

Like Mrs. Joel, YU’s fifth and current First Lady, Anita (nee’ Ash) Berman, has had a connection to YU since her high school years. Mrs. Berman attended Yeshiva University’s Central High School. “During those years, I met YU’s future president,” she explained; President Ari Berman was a student at Yeshiva University’s MTA High School and the two met on the ‘Central-MTA blind date.’ Mrs. Berman then majored in Nutrition at Queens College, and continued studying nutrition in graduate school, where she became a Registered Dietician. The Bermans have been living in Neve Daniel, Israel, and have moved back to America for President Berman’s YU presidency. In Israel, Mrs. Berman had a private Nutrition practice. “At the moment, I am helping my family acclimate to all of the major changes in our lives, and I look forward in the future to returning to my clinical work,” she told *The Observer*. Ms. Berman added, “I believe deeply in the value of Yeshiva University and its ability to educate the next generation of religious, communal, and professional leaders. Although I do not formally work for the school, I hope to assist in spreading the new vision for its future.”

Though the role and title of The First Ladies of YU remain unofficial, and were embraced differently by each first Lady, the lives of these five women touched, and were touched by, the YU institution. And perhaps these women are paving the way for the next YU President—this time, a woman.

## The Greatest Showman: A Musical Success

Adina Cohen

A few weeks ago I went to see *The Greatest Showman* with some friends. From the second the first song began, we could not stop tapping our feet to the beat of the music. In fact, after the movie ended, the theater quickly cleared out, but we stayed dancing up and down the aisle of the theater to the songs that played as the credits rolled. We were enthralled; completely swept up in a movie that felt larger than life and destined for the Broadway stage. Since then it seems as though the music from *The Greatest Showman* are the only songs

I hear. Everyone has the playlist on repeat, re-living the movie experience through the music.

*The Greatest Showman*, directed by Michael Gracey, tells the story of P.T. Barnum, a tailor’s son, and his journey in creating “The Greatest Show on Earth”—The Barnum and Bailey Circus. The movie was released on the heels of the Barnum and Bailey Circus closing its doors to the public, and so for circus lovers, it was a bittersweet trip down memory lane. More than just a musical, *The Greatest Showman* is a tribute to Barnum and his creation.

Upon reflection, the movie is really trying to accomplish two things at once: one is to create a phenomenal musical, and the other is to tell a story. The musical front of the film was a smashing success. From the vivid colors of the scenery, to the dance numbers and the powerful vocal chords of the actors,



the musical was a sight to behold. It is easy to become swept up in *The Greatest Showman*, the musical.

The story, however, does not deliver in the same way that the musical half of the film does. While the actors play their parts well, the story line was underdeveloped. There is very little character development in the film, nor is there character exploration in general. It seems that in order to keep up with the pace of the music numbers, the director decided to sacrifice the depth of the plot. It is easy to ignore this shortcoming since the musical is beyond amazing, but it is there, albeit lurking under the surface.

A second critique of the story is not specific to *The Greatest Showman* per se, but is a failure of many dramatizations of true stories. In reality, the saga with Jenny Lind depicted in the movie took place years before the circus began. In fact, although the film showed Barnum as a young man when he

made the circus, it was not until he was sixty that he began his show. The decision to mold together two unrelated pieces of Barnum’s life raises a question of the purpose of dramatizing reality. The true story of the Barnum and Bailey Circus is enthralling enough, why change it in order to make it more fantastical?

If you are looking for a movie with emotional depth, or one that will give you an accurate depiction of Barnum’s conception of the circus, this movie is likely not for you. However, if you want to be swept up in a world of color, dance to a fantastic beat and come out of your movie watching experience with an enormous smile on your face, *The Greatest Showman* is definitely a movie that should be at the top of your hit list. And as for me, I am counting down the days until it becomes a Broadway musical and I can dance down the aisles of the theater as it plays live.



## Bald and Bold: The Science Behind Hair Loss

Lior Levy

Ashkenazi Jews are known to have certain unique genetic traits. While genetic balding is likely a universal trait, Ashkenazi Jews may have a greater tendency towards this trait than other groups.

In general, Genetic Male Pattern Balding affects roughly 50% of the male population. If you are a male in your 20s and you are experiencing an initial loss of hair, then you are experiencing a phenomenon known scientifically as Androgenetic Alopecia. This process starts with a retreating hairline and then gradually extends across the crown of the head. According to the American Hair Loss Association, about 70% of men globally will become bald before turning 60.

Current studies show that hormonal, environmental and genetic factors play a dominant role in baldness. The androgen receptor, a key gene for baldness, is located on the x chromosomes, which is inherited from one's mother. However, this is not the only gene involved, or even the most dominant gene. Men with bald fathers manifest increased odds for balding, in comparison to men whose fathers have full hair. Therefore, the assumption that your mom is to blame for your tendency to lose hair is a myth.

The growing understanding and research-based knowledge provides some hopeful vision, although a clear cure is not yet in the horizon. At present, studies show that the ability to keep your hair is related to your genetic sensitivity to an androgenic hormone known as Dihydrotestosterone (DHT). DHT is a modified, highly potent form of the

sex hormone, Testosterone. This sex hormone was found in higher levels than normal in hair from balding men; when DHT levels have been shown to decrease, or its activity had been blocked by a medication named Propecia, hair loss slows down or a reverse in hair loss is evident. Director of Cosmetic and Clinical Research in Dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in NYC, Joshua

on hair follicles, the drug helps maintain or enhance regrowth of hair on the scalp."

Hair transplantation is a surgical alternative which requires harvesting healthy follicles from the back of the head. These follicles are resistant to the harmful impact of DHT and therefore maintain healthy hair growth. Very small plugs of skin which contain healthy follicles, will be removed from the back of the head to the bald areas. The post-procedural hair distribution will be even around the scalp. At present, existing medicines for baldness have limited effectiveness and require ongoing use.

Recent discoveries in hair loss research have shed light on a newly identified protein called KROX20, which stimulates the specialization of skin cells to hair producing cells. Scientists from the University of Texas (UT) Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas were successful in blocking the production of KROX20 in mice, causing baldness. Creating a topical medication that will stimulate the production of KROX20 and the following healthy hair growth, serves as a viable solution. Another promising solution is the effective use of stem cells which will differentiate into hair producing cells.

Although significant steps to cure baldness are being taken in research facilities all over the world, the first step for anyone who is bald should perhaps be to embrace your baldness. Bruce Willis, Vin Diesel, Michael Jordan, Patrick Stewart, Jason Statham, Larry David and many more have not allowed it to hold them back. Neither should you!



Zeichner reveals, "Medications such as finasteride target the enzyme that converts testosterone into DHT. By lowering the levels of DHT or by blocking its impact

## Letter From A Resident Advisor's Desk

Liorah Rubinstein

That impossibly long elevator ride to avoid the climb up the Brookdale stairwell to heaven. Both of us avoid eye contact, busying ourselves with the unchanged home screen on our phones. The doors open to my floor and as I walk out, I notice with wide eyes that she walks out too and slips into a room down the hall. I could have sworn I'd never seen her before in my life—and it's April.

*We've all been there.*

With about 1,000 students, we may be a relatively small college, but somehow we manage to get caught up in our lives and zone out anything or anyone that is not directly relevant. That other student and I lived on the same floor, a whopping five steps away from each other, but since we didn't share an Alma Mater or social group or class, we had no reason to notice each other. Right?

I thought, wrong. I came into Yeshiva University determined to make this my home and this was a wake-up call. To me, home means a sense of belonging, a place where people care about and support each other. Although I was already involved in the Dramatics Society and the soccer team, I felt driven to build up our community in a more foundational sense. I felt driven to help build up the basic sense of friendliness and caring between students that was clearly lacking from my trip in the elevator, the mortar and bricks of our community. 50 E 34th St was already set as the "home" location on my google maps; now it was time to make that a more tangible truth for myself and for my peers.

Being a resident advisor (RA) on campus for the past two years has given me those mortar and bricks. No longer a passive recipient of what the YU community had to offer, I was now an active player. The more I gave, the more I took ownership over my college experience, and the more dedicated I became to enhancing that of other students as well. As a member of the housing team I was given the tools to facilitate interactions between the residents on my floors, whether through organizing floor parties or by creating a shared floor culture.

You might know us as the Shabbat "candy women" or as the go-to for questions about registration and the PA's hours. I used to think these little things were insignificant. They may, in fact, be the easier kinds of

issues we deal with, but I've learned that when added up, the little things go a long way. I started to notice the "little things" that other student leaders had put the effort in, like providing us with new Shabbat benches or extending library hours over finals weekend. I appreciate these initiatives not only because it's comforting to see how we have each other's backs, but also because I feel empowered to do more.

Honestly, the Jolly Ranchers we give out on Friday night are just a simpler illustration of what we essentially do. In two words, it is active caring. This manifests itself both on an individual and global level, with personal conversations with students and wider discussions with university administrators. Administrators have referred to the housing staff as "first responders"—indeed, we try to make ourselves approachable and are trained to notice if students are struggling (and of course, we quite literally respond to medical emergencies as well). And in the broader sense, because we are ourselves students, collectively we have a sense of the pulse of the student body and our reports—of the good and the bad—are taken very seriously. Being "taken seriously" is not a euphemism; it means taking action. This translates into fashioning snow day programming, offering breakfast in the dorm lounges during finals week or supplying feminine hygiene products in the school buildings' restrooms. By showing us the impact we can have, our tirelessly dedicated housing directors are always

encouraging us to find ways to improve the student experience on campus. I've learned that when it comes to growth—and dessert—there is always room for more.

Now, my story has changed. In those elevator rides, I make the effort to meet the other person's eyes—even if just to smile. I am far from infallible, but I certainly feel that being an RA gave me the extra push (or excuse) I needed to reach out to people I would have otherwise never met. I've let that influence me as a person outside of the enclosures of our campus, as well. Honestly, as RAs we are like the "designated drivers," but you can and should put your hand on the steering wheel as well. Let's lift our heads and look around us. You don't need a lanyard and special T-shirt to reach out to someone who looks upset or to address a genuine campus concern. As part of this extended family, we are all responsible for each other and for the betterment of our university.





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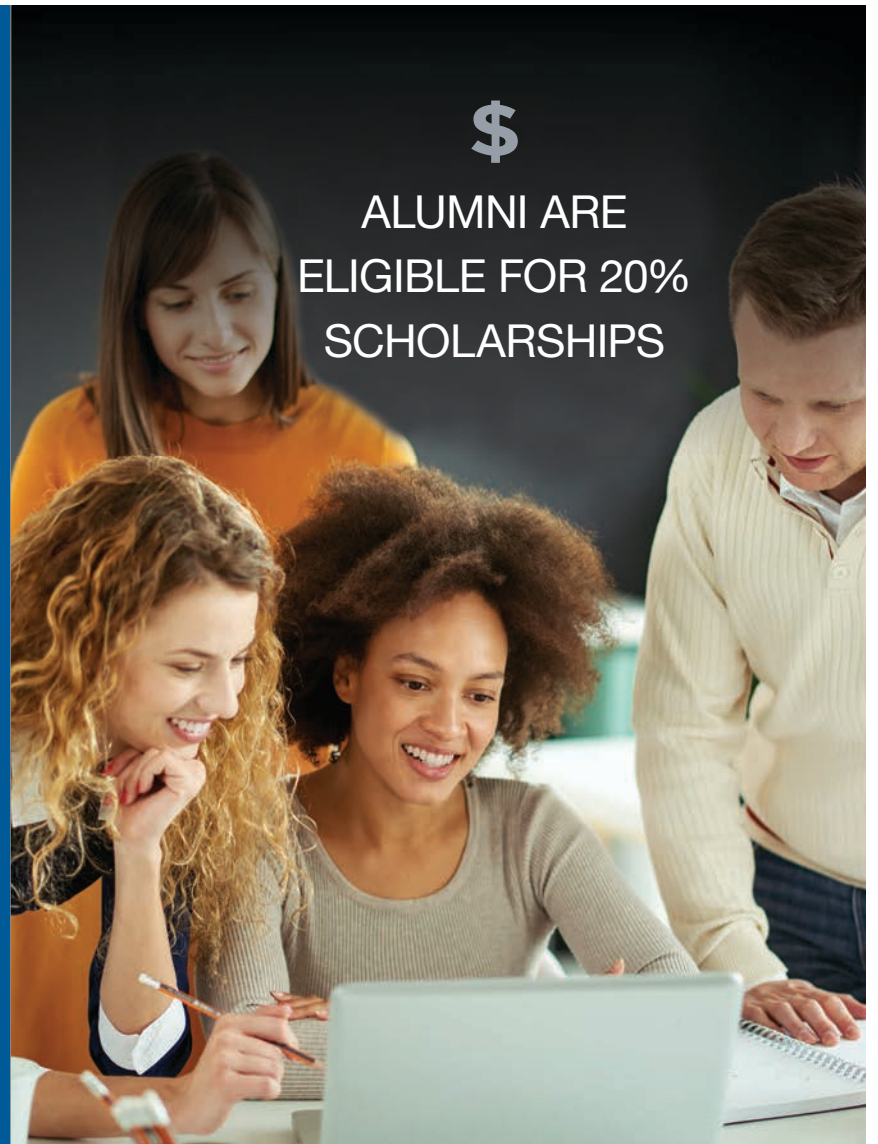


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## Stern Expectations vs. Reality: One Year, Two Perspectives

Talya Hyman  
Staff Writer



For many Modern Orthodox high school graduates, the expected and sometimes obvious next step is to spend a year learning in a seminary or yeshiva in Israel. Stern College for Women encourages the seminary year by accepting and transferring seminary credits into Stern academic credits via the YU S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program. Participation in this program enables the seminary year to be counted as the freshman year for Yeshiva University students. Post-seminary students benefit from this arrangement because they return to campus as sophomores. Those who matriculate to college directly from high school, on the other hand, are labeled as “true freshmen”. These students jump straight into the Stern College experience. Though post-seminary sophomores and true freshmen become first-semester on campus students at the same time, their Stern College for Women experiences and perspectives can be surprisingly different.

Rivki Levy, SCW '20, who spent a year learning in Israel last year, said that she decided to learn in a seminary to create a “foundation for my Torah learning that I could build on for the rest of my life.” While still in Israel, seminary students are guided through the Yeshiva University registration process by representatives of the S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program. Though supported and helped prior to arriving on campus, adjusting to the demands of college can be challenging. Levy said, “I expected the workload to be a little less. I heard people saying that [college is] easier than high school because you have more free time. But there is a lot of work to be done, and a lot of commitments to fulfill.” During the times when she has felt overwhelmed, Levy found support from her TAs and RA. She stated, “They have been so sweet and helpful in getting me acclimated into life at Stern. They offer me advice and suggest things, and have even come into my room at three a.m. to help

me figure out my schedule.”

The social element is a common concern of many college students while acclimating to a new environment. Of her expectations, Levy said, “I was hoping that the environment would be a really friendly place where you’re surrounded by all your friends and everyone is supporting each other. I thought I would stay with the people I knew from seminary, so I didn’t expect to make any long-lasting friendships at the beginning.” She was pleased to find that her expectation was mistaken. Levy revealed, “Surprisingly enough, I did meet a lot of people. Even though orientation was really not a fun experience, I met a lot of really great people.”

Students who spend a year learning at a seminary in Israel commonly feel as if they are in a spiritual and religious bubble. Leaving the confines of that bubble can be intimidating. Yeshiva University is unique in its approach of combining an academic education with Torah and religious studies. However, Levy admits that one of her biggest first semester challenges has been learning how to adapt to post-seminary life. She expressed, “It’s been difficult learning not to be in Israel, and being in a much more secular environment. It was like being in a little cloud there. It’s been extremely hard trying not to forget how that experience felt in Israel, and trying to continue that here.”

Attending Stern College directly out of high school is often the road less traveled. True freshmen, Arielle Sarraf, SCW '21, is one such student who decided not to spend a year in Israel following her high school graduation. She asserted, “Even after I looked more into it, I didn’t think Israel was for me.” Before arriving on campus, Sarraf was looking forward to “living in the City, walking to classes, being with different kinds of Jews from all over the world, and having different experiences with shabbatons.”

True freshmen arrive on campus without the advantage of having received assistance from Stern College representatives like the post-seminary students had in Israel. Sarraf is of the opinion that the administration “doesn’t really care so much about true freshmen. I wish they were friendlier.” True freshman Sigal Melnik, SCW '21, said, “I find the administration confusing because I don’t know who to go to for what. Sometimes I just end up not asking my questions because I don’t know where to go.”

While in Israel, many seminary students form close friendships with other participants from their respective programs. This leaves true freshmen at somewhat of a disadvantage. As Melnik shares from her perspective, “Everyone sort of has their group already.” Similarly, Sarraf has experienced that those who first spend a year in a seminary are commonly less open to making new friends because “they already have their crew from Israel.” Much of Melnik’s first semester at Stern has been overshadowed by her expectations regarding the friendships she believed she would have formed by now. She said, “I expected to make so many new friends, to meet my best friends for life here. So far, I have not.” Stern students who graduated from a small high school, and who did not attend summer camp or a seminary in Israel, have to work harder to meet new people and put themselves out there. Melnik believes that the numerous Stern club events have been beneficial in helping her meet people. She also appreciates that there are events reserved specially for true freshmen to meet one another. However, Melnik commented, “Not a lot of true freshmen show up to these events, so it’s hard to make friends when no one’s there.”

Levy, now a sophomore, empathized with the true freshmen who have found meeting new people and forging close friendships to be difficult. She shared, “I think it’s harder to come in as a true freshman because you’re surrounded by all these people who know each other, so it must be really overwhelming.” Sarraf and Melnik agreed that if they had gone to Israel prior to their first semester at Stern, their experiences would be different, especially in regards to knowing more people and finding their place on the Stern campus.

Having recently completed their Fall 2017 semester final exams, the students interviewed now continue their Stern College for Women experience as upper freshmen and upper sophomores. To new students who may be arriving on campus for the Spring 2018 semester, Levy suggests, “Always have an open mind to meeting new people. Don’t get hung up over all the little details and troubles that may come up because everything will sort itself out, even if it doesn’t seem so at the moment.” Though Melnik’s first semester as a true freshman was filled with challenges, she shares, “My RA told me that her first year was not the greatest, but she’s happy now. That gives me a spark of hope.”

That gives me a spark of hope.”

## I Live in Manhattan While I Go to Stern?

Elka Wiesenberg  
Staff Writer

“I’m really sorry, but I can’t go out tonight. I have class until eight, two tests tomorrow, and four papers to write,” I apologize to my friend, overwhelmed by a sense of *deja vu*. “Tomorrow?” she asks. More of the same. When can we go out? Not while class is in session. “Okay... your Reading Week?” I am incredulous, indignant, horrified at the suggestion. I have to study! Finals week? Is she kidding now? After finals? I’m going straight home, of course. And then the cycle starts over.

Why don’t my non-YU friends get it? I’m busy! Classes, tests, reports, and presentations...and on top of that, play rehearsal, writing, sending out emails for internships, and dealing with my too-imminent future. How could I possibly “take a night off” to “go see the City?!” I try my best to make time for for nightly phone calls with my friends so that I’m not entirely neglecting them, to remind them that I do care and they

are important. But to give up an entire night to go out? Though my roommate has been persistently reminding me that I owe her a Broadway night, the best I have been able to manage to give her was a study “date night” at Tiberius. Pathetic, I know. But school is my priority, and that’s an acceptable excuse...Right?

A friend recently reminded me that it was time to refocus. But I don’t have time, I told her, defending why I hadn’t so much as stepped into a poetry cafe in my six months living in the heart of New York City. I don’t have time. “Don’t say that all the way through graduation, Liorah Rubenstein (yes, you deserve a shoutout) warned me sagely. “This place has so much to offer, and we’re only here for so long.”

I spent my night reflecting on those words. When I came to New York City from Chicago for my Stern Honors Day in twelfth grade, I was here for three days, and I saw three Broadway shows. I envisioned a glamorous life in Manhattan:

shopping on Fifth on Friday mornings, improv shows on Saturday nights, art museums and shows every Sunday. Strolls through the parks, Starbucks dates, and discovering adorable hidden cafes during each break. How accurate was my imagination? I think that the introduction to this article can attest to my shameful lack of cultural explorations in college so far. To be fair, I made a friend drag me to the Met one Sunday morning—on my birthday.

The New Year is a time to make resolutions that will optimize life. Though January First is not a particularly Jewish date, I think the beginning of the Gregorian calendar year is as good a time as any to decide to change.

Some of you may be wondering, What does New York City have to offer? Once you make time in your crazy Yeshiva University schedule, how should you spend it? My answer: What doesn’t New York City have to offer?

*continued on page 13*

## I Live in Manhattan While I Go to Stern?

*continued from page 12:*

If you don't want to bother with a few easy clicks of research, I don't blame you. So here are just a few personal suggestions:

### If you like performing arts...

1. Madison Square Garden has concerts all the time! Just a few coming up are Billy Joel, Shakira, and The Killers. There are also sports games there, so I hear, if that's more up your alley. Located on 34th and 8th, just past Penn Station, it's a quick walk or Uber from the Beren Campus.

2. Lincoln Center is renowned for its tasteful, beautiful array of performances. From ballet to opera, film to theatre, there is no lack of options at this Upper West Side venue. Though some events are on the pricier side, there are plenty of free shows if you look online!

3. The P.I.T., People's Improv Theater, is an amazing choice for anyone on a college budget who just wants a night of fun. Shows usually range from five to ten dollars, for an hour and a half of hilarious improvisation. (Side note: If you want to get in on the improv action, The P.I.T. actually offers low-fare classes!)

4. Of course, the best for last...Broadway! The best actors and shows in the world of musical theatre are only a twenty-minute walk from Brookdale. How lucky are we—amirite?! If you have the time or patience to wait in a line by TKTS before the show, you can get really lucky with discounts. Either way, this is a cultural experience that you just cannot miss out on, no matter the cost!

### If you're more into studio art...

1. The Met (Metropolitan Museum of Art) has more art than it is possible to peruse properly in a month without sleeping. From modern American History paintings to remade old-time French bedrooms, The Met has an insane variety of pieces and collections—and there are new exhibits constantly. Though there is a suggested donation fee, it's essentially "pay as much as you want to." Even though Art History classes may turn The Met into an annoying assignment obligation, don't forget that its beauty is found when you go voluntarily.

2. The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) is another extraordinary studio art museum located in Midtown itself. It boasts of Van Gogh's possibly most famous work, "Starry Night," and Rousseau's "The Sleeping Gypsy." Admission to the first floor is free, but there is a \$25 fee for the second and third levels. It's definitely worth the money if you want the full experience, but if you don't have so much time, the free section has a lot to see.

3. The American Folk Art Museum is still on my personal bucket list. Another Upper West Side find, it is specifically dedicated to folk art and self-taught artists. Though you won't find too many big names in art there, you may find some unique

inspiration... I certainly hope to, when I finally get there!

### For the bookworm intellectuals...

1. The New York Public Library is the fourth largest public library in the world! Between the lions, a whole world of information is ready at your knowledge-greedy fingertips. I suggest going in with a specific agenda of something you want to learn about, since you'll definitely be overwhelmed by potential otherwise. The library is blissfully organized with a system that will make the OCD inside you shudder with happiness. Beginning your search on the computers or with one of the librarians, you will quickly have any book you want shuttled to you on a conveyor belt. Besides being a fantastic school resource, you can stimulate your academic extracurricular drives with a New York Public Library trip.

2. The Morgan Library and Museum is basically on the Beren Campus. Located on Madison and 36th, this library is a venue for all kinds of events, including historical and literary lectures and discussions. Many of these are connected to the time of year, like the Ides of March discussion that only occurs in—you guessed it, I hope—April. No, joking, it was March. There are lectures on books, poems, art, and ideas. The kicker: Every event is \$15, most are \$10 for members, but all are free for students! Yay for free knowledge!

### If you just want a really good photo op...

1. Central Park, or any big NYC park, really, is a beautiful walk to take, with plenty of stunning backdrops for your new Insta post. Go with a date, or a really good friend who will take as many shots as necessary to get that perfect pose. Bonus: It's free! When the weather is nice, it's the ideal picnic spot, too.

2. Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum is a great opportunity to meet every celebrity you've ever dreamed of. Want a picture with Ed Sheeran? Katy Perry? The British royal family? They got you covered. Your idol—Einstein, Fitzgerald, Earhart—is no longer alive? No problem. Want to be on the Jimmy Fallon show? You betchya. If

any of these are worth \$35 to you, Madame Tussaud's is the place to go. Oh, and for the VIP fee, you can clap President Donald Trump on the back. Or spit in his face. (Hey, this article is open-politic.)

3. Ripley's Believe It Or Not, right next door to Madame Tussaud's, uses the opportunities for unique pictures as one of its principal selling points. Besides the virtual reality that you experience, you can also feign alternate realities in creative picture poses. Ripley's offers a chance to show yourself off safely hanging from the Empire State Building, or with your head in a jar. Don't want to be covered in live cockroaches? Me, neither. But see if your friends believe your wild pictures or not!

4. The Red Stairs, located by Times Square, offers a view of NYC like no other. Though there are only so many angles to take your mini photoshoot from, you can also grab a bag of chocolate from M&M World across the street, sit on The Red Stairs, and watch the bustling night life of the City with a friend—and a warm jacket!

5. Any store during Christmas season! Enough said! No? Besides the famous Macy's display, so many stores go all out with decorations! This year, Saks Fifth Avenue had an enthralling Snow White and the Seven Dwarves moving window display, stretching the entire block of Saks. And right across from it is, of course, the renowned Rockefeller Center tree. Of course we don't believe in Christmas, but lights are magical and make a spectacular background.

### For people more mathematically or scientifically inclined...

Okay, I don't actually know anything that can help you there. But get up and find what there is to do! What I can guarantee is that there is no lack of options!

These are your years. You're in school, in Washington Heights with a free shuttle downtown, or in freaking Midtown! Don't let any more time pass you by. Make a bucket list. Use some of these suggestions, ask others, look online... How many years too late is it to say? YOLO!



Share your observations, write for The Observer

To join our team contact us at [mindy.schwartz@mail.yu.edu](mailto:mindy.schwartz@mail.yu.edu)

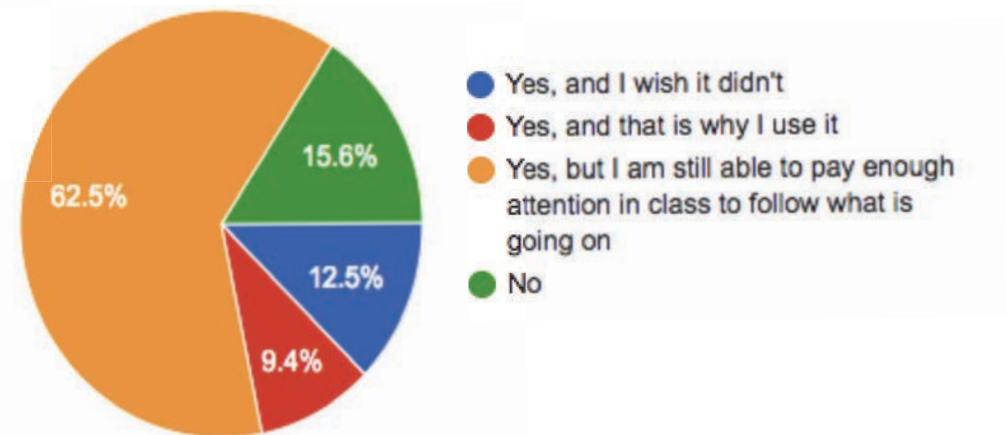
## Banning Laptops in the Classroom: What Do Students Think?

The Observer will be including a poll in our paper each month so readers can see what their fellow students think about what's new at Stern.

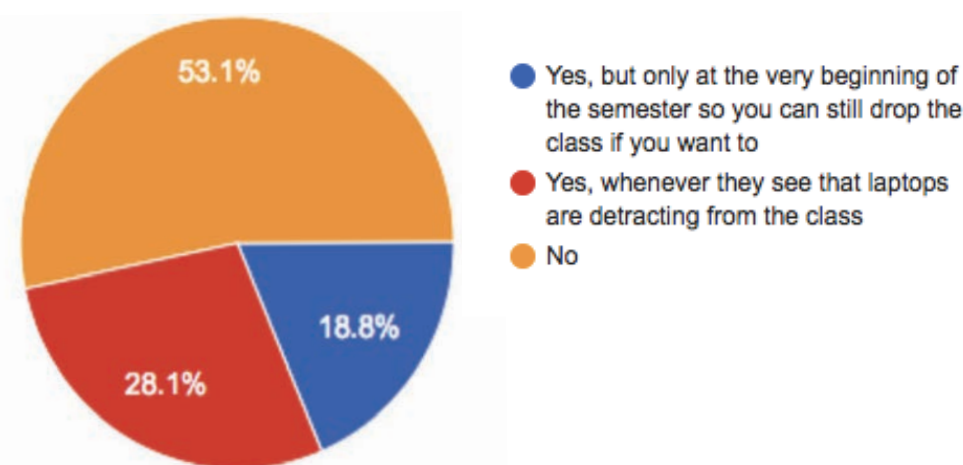
**Do you use a laptop in any of your classes?**



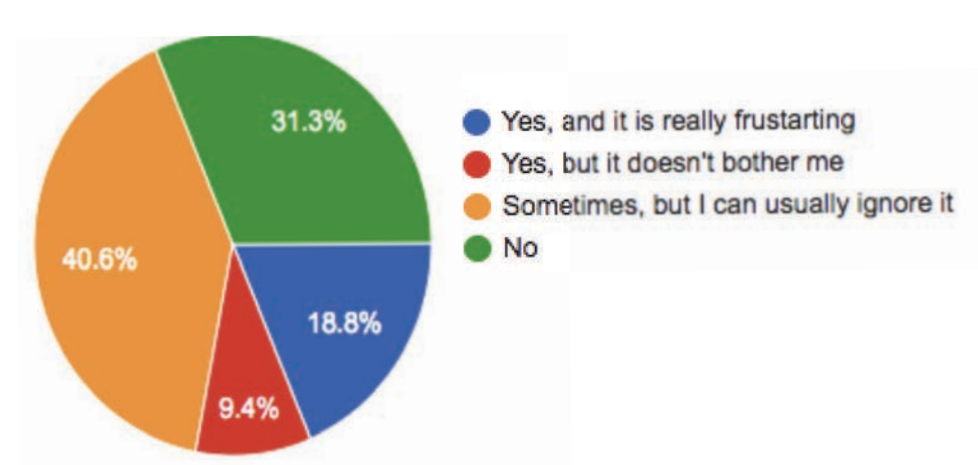
**Does using your laptop/tablet distract you from class?**



**Should teachers be able to ban laptops/tablets from their classes?**



**Do other students' laptop/tablet screens distract you from class?**



**Do you think policies banning laptops/tablets from the classroom are a good or bad idea?**

**A Good Idea:**

Laptops are often times abused in the classrooms. Students use them to go on social media, shop online and play games and it detracts from both the seriousness of the class and the attention of fellow students.

I think every teacher has the right to decide the classroom environment that they want so if that means no laptops then that means no laptops.

It is a good idea, but it needs to be enforced. What bothers me the most about laptop use is when people type with all the force in their bodies.

**A Bad Idea:**

Every student takes notes and uses their time differently. You should not need to have a disability paper to use a computer in class.

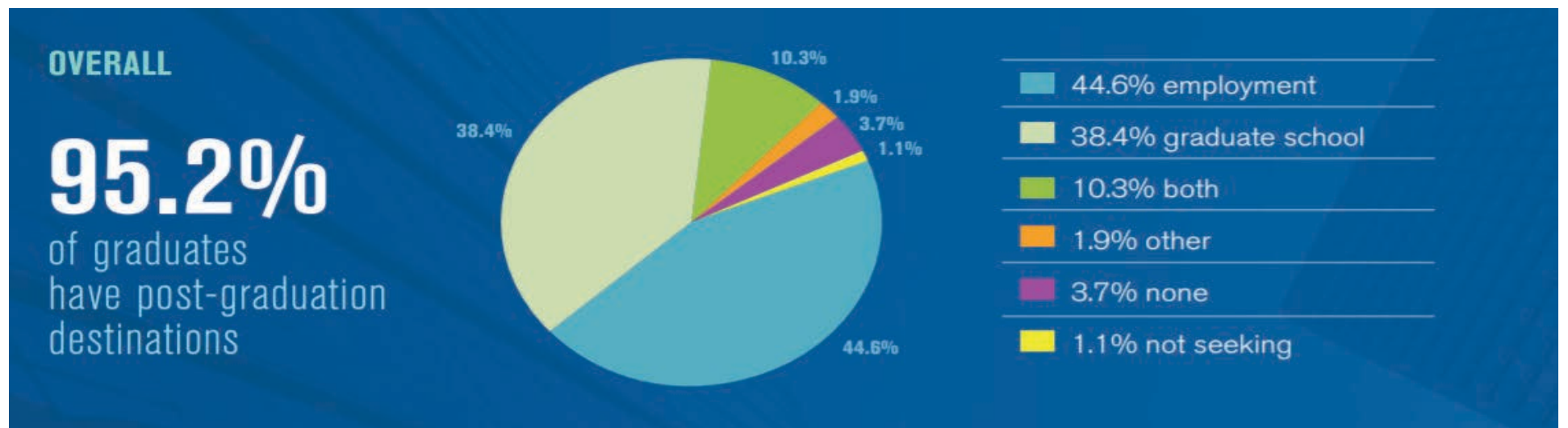
Laptops help those who are visual learners who need a clear way to articulate their thoughts.

We are in college and should be treated like adults. If we do poorly on a test because we were distracted by our laptop, then that is a decision we decided to make and should take full responsibility for it.

If a teacher doesn't like that students are being distracted by their laptops, then it is up to him/her to make their class more engaging.

**The Observer wants to know what you think! Look out for our email or facebook page to be a part of the February poll.**

## The Adderall Crisis: Don't Hate the Player, Hate the Game



*continued from page 1:*

and from students about their personal experiences at Stern.

It was that day that I became aware of YU's propensity toward numbers and names (of places, that is, not names of students), not even specifically for pre-health. There is an extreme emphasis on graduates going on to work in big accounting firms and big banks, to study in Ivy League graduate schools in all disciplines, and to simply be a part of the percentage of students achieving professional success after YU. Perhaps to prospective students and parents, this is appealing; after all, it is remarkable how much a YU graduate can achieve. But to students, it is disheartening and disappointing to feel that we are simply data, that we are points on a graph that will appear on future brochures, if we're lucky.

As a result of this focus on post-graduation, students are implicitly taught that career success is what's most important. If we do what we are supposed to at Stern, YC, and Syms, we will end up successful enough to keep YU's statistics looking impressive. So students are discouraged from doing what they want to do in both directions. A student passionate about becoming a physician will be told that his grades are not good enough for medical school, so he should just quit now, so that YU's medical school acceptance rate will be 99%, and not 95%. Conversely, if that same student

had better grades, but wanted to spend his summer in a manner outside of the traditional pre-med route, he might be met with disapproval, for the school's fear that it would lower his med school acceptance chances, and lower the school's acceptance rate. Of course, graduate schools and professions are looking for resumes that check off specific boxes and demonstrate an interest in the field as well as a high GPA. But what if instead of immediate discouragement or disapproval, students were met with understanding and with personalized paths that were tailored to those students' specific goals, and not to the goals of the University?

Another result of this career-focused environment is the need to succeed academically. If students want to snag the few spots at big companies or at good graduate schools, they need to have high GPAs. And because this emphasis on good grades is the attitude of the majority of students, the student body becomes highly competitive, especially in areas like pre-med. To outdo other students, and just to ensure that their grades are excellent, students disregard ethical norms, as evident in the ongoing cheating epidemic at YU. Because there is so much pressure to do well from both the faculty and from fellow students, students will cheat on exams and use Adderall to study so they can keep up and keep their post-college chances high.

YU is not unique in that its students are subject

to intense academic pressure from peers and faculty; naturally, university students anywhere are constantly stressed and in a pressurized environment. If YU wants to market itself as a small university though, it should try to actually take advantage of its small student body size and create a student experience in which students feel that their individual goals and passions are recognized and valued by the school.

As YU champions itself as being the Modern Orthodox university, its goal should be educating future leaders of the Jewish world and providing students with opportunities for personal, academic, and religious growth, and not just professional growth. Instead, it unfortunately seems as though YU's goal is to keep its numbers looking good, in order to attract more students, impress investors, and prove that it is just as legitimate a school as, say NYU or Columbia.

So now, as I remember my fellow students taking Adderall in the library, I no longer feel morally superior and judgemental; I remember that we are all part of a system which ultimately cares more about its numbers than it does about us. I feel sorry for these students, and am inclined to treat them with compassion and understanding because though we react to the pressure differently, we are all dealing with the same pressure.

## Movies: A New Lens

Shaina Bakhshi

It's common knowledge that movies bring people together, helping everyone take a small break from reality. In the span of two hours, movies allow us to step foot in a new world, experience a rollercoaster of emotions, and learn a moral from the experience too. Yet, compared to books, movies have always seemed too short, and at times frivolous. Usually, an hour after having watched a movie, I have forgotten all about it and moved on to whatever else would capture my attention. Furthermore, I barely ever have time to watch movies. Anyone who tried to talk to me about movies quickly became shocked at how few I've seen. The Godfather? Nope. Forrest Gump? Never watched it. Casablanca? Fight Club? Schindler's List? Or more recently Girls Trip? The Big Sick? Star Wars: The Last Jedi? No, no, and no. Haven't watched any of them, but at least I recognized that I had a problem—I needed to open up to movies.

Looking through the classes offered for the Fall 2017 semester, I found the perfect class—a Writing on Film Honors course taught by Dr. Linda Shires. This would force me to watch movies and think about them for longer than the few minutes before something else captures my attention. I was also excited to be introduced to variety of genres through the course. Among the twelve movies on the syllabus were Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Fruitvale

Station, and Rear Window. With each movie, I began to understand movie fanatics more and more. Through riveting class discussions and thought-provoking writing assignments, Dr. Shires introduced me to a new lens through which I could look at films. It may sound silly, but I never realized just how much thought (besides just the script and location) goes into making a movie and

in conveying the director's message. Furthermore, many times the director's message transcends a moral to take home and imparts a commentary on the human condition; For example, the superficial moral of a film may be the importance of staying true to oneself, but the director more deeply conveys his belief on what individuality may mean in a conventional society. Prior to this course, I had always viewed film elements as highlighters of the emotions we should feel, whether adding comedic effect or instilling fear into the viewer. I never thought about what scene symmetry or a color choice may mean beyond the movie experience, and how it can impact the world as a whole.

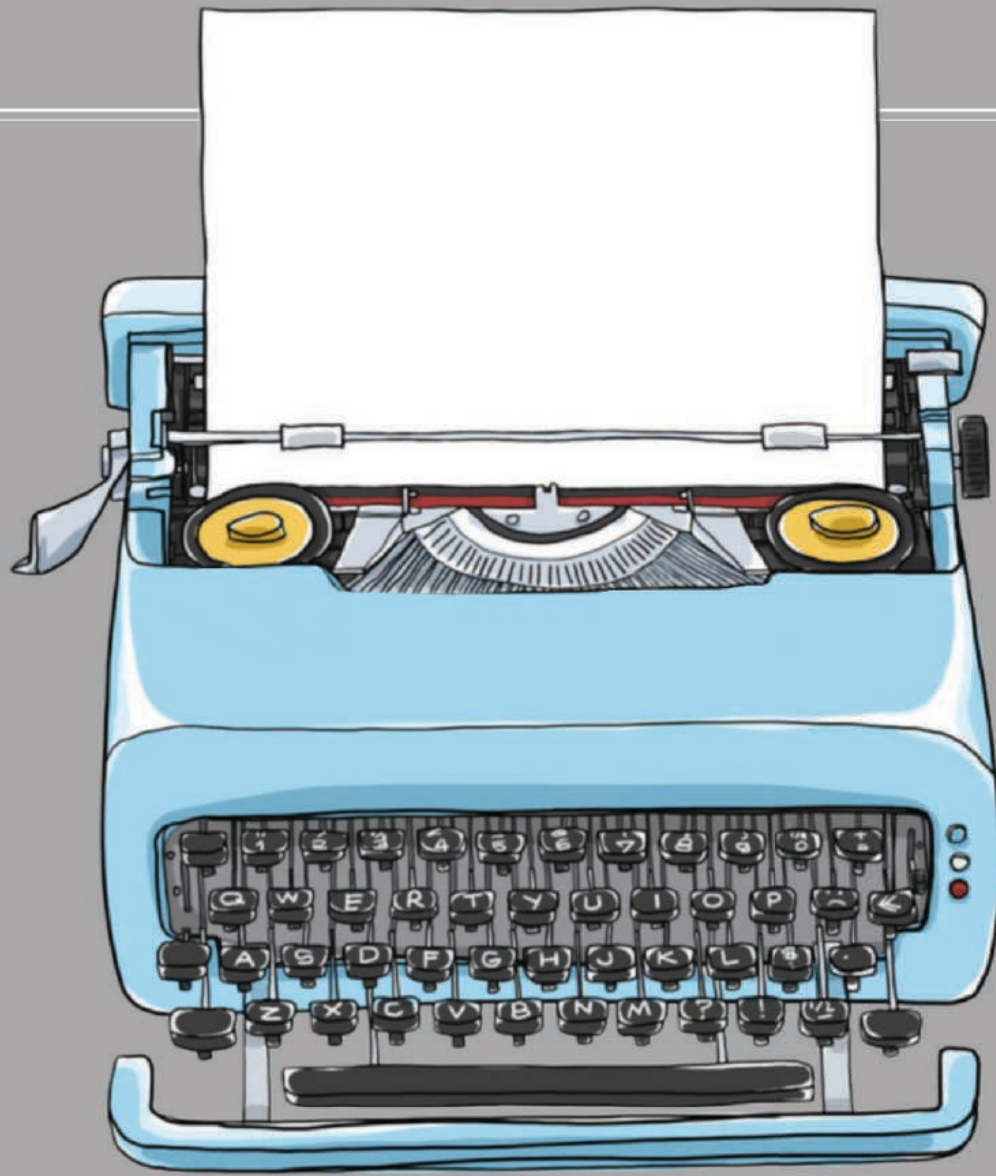
This course also showed me that there are multiple ways to critically analyze a movie other than the standard movie review. While movie reviews allow viewers to quickly decide if a movie is worth seeing, critical and theoretical essays take a deeper approach to the film, delving into what the film means through many different lenses. One can view a film through the culture or nation it's affecting and representing, or one can view a film in terms of where it stands in the director's repertoire. Through writing assignments that explored these ideas, I uncovered layers and

layers of depth in films that I had always taken for granted. Deserving five out of five stars, this class is a must for everyone from movie buffs to novices, like me.



developing the director's message. For example, each cut or the positioning of objects on the screen (which I now learned is eloquently called *mise en scène*) aids

layers of depth in films that I had always taken for granted. Deserving five out of five stars, this class is a must for everyone from movie buffs to novices, like me.



# Write Your First Newspaper Article

Join The Observer team. Write your first newspaper article and see it published online and in print!

THE OBSERVER



# The Feminism of America's Next Top Model's "Selective Exploitation"

Kira Paley  
Opinions Editor

In today's "Second Golden Age of Television," a title referring to our current era of an abundance of high-quality, culturally and artistically valuable television shows, I am baffled by my own choice to watch the long-running reality TV show "America's Next Top Model." Instead of watching acclaimed shows like "Stranger Things," "The Handmaid's Tale," or "Black Mirror," I find myself shamelessly tuning in to the live premiere of season twenty-four of Top Model. The series, created and hosted by Tyra Banks, features aspiring models competing to win the title of Next Top Model, participating in photo shoots and challenges, with, of course, healthy doses of probably scripted drama in every episode.

To others, I refer to my watching of Top Model as a guilty pleasure; as someone who values and enjoys the literary nature of film and television, I am ashamed to admit that I find the stupidity and triteness of the show stimulating. But after watching the season premiere, I am no longer ashamed about how I devoutly follow the show, as there are several points one can make about its cultural significance, specifically, how it manages to be somewhat feminist even though at surface level, it places ultimate value on women's bodies.

If you watched or read "The Handmaid's Tale" or simply have been tuning into the news lately regarding the outpouring of reports of sexual harassment and abuse in Hollywood, you'll know that women are, both in reality and in fiction, sexually exploited for the pleasure of men or for the utility of their reproductive organs. Salma Hayek, in a recent New York Times op-ed, wrote about how Harvey Weinstein forced her to add and act in a sex scene in a movie she was producing to make it a more sexually appealing film, or else he would not distribute it. Across the globe, women are trafficked as sex workers, raped by their family members, and forced to carry children they do not want to. The tragedies of female sexual exploitation are infinite, and due to the

patriarchal power structures which exist everywhere, including America, the future looks bleak.

Fashion over function. Beauty as a value. This remOn reality television, especially on Top Model, but also on shows like The Bachelor, women are also exploited; their situations however, are not even

their audition videos to the show, they are signing up for exploitation. June/Offred in "The Handmaid's Tale" lies silently as she is raped because she wants to avoid being hanged in public, and victims of workplace sexual assault who endure abuse so as to keep their jobs and avoid public shame, are the objects of exploitation.

They are not choosing to be exploited and are victims of a system which allows for exploitation. In contrast, Liz, a competitor on Top Model, is willingly exploited; she is perpetuating her own exploitation by competing on television. There is something feminist about this, about women taking control of their own exploitation. As has happened in the past, models are allowed to, at any time, leave the show because the pressure is too much. But the majority of the women endure the physical and psychological "abuse" of the show in order to pursue their professional and personal goals of achieving fame as a model. This, in a twisted way, is inspiring to me as a feminist; it reminds me that women are strong and can handle pressure, manipulation and obstacles to achieve their goals.

Of course, I can easily look elsewhere for this inspiration, as I have, by reading Malala Yousafzai's "I Am Malala" or simply watching Oprah's Golden Globes speech about how women cannot and will not be discouraged from speaking their truth. But there's something valuable in uncovering the subtle feminism of Top Model competitors, in that it reminds me that you don't need to be fighting for women's human rights to be a feminist. It might be a stretch to call Top Model a social commentary on the critique of modeling as a feminist pursuit. Nonetheless, for the remainder of Season twenty-four, I'll continue to relish in the cliché drama of Top Model competitors' petty screaming matches about who gets to use the bathroom sink. Even if it's egged on by producers, who doesn't love a good catfight?



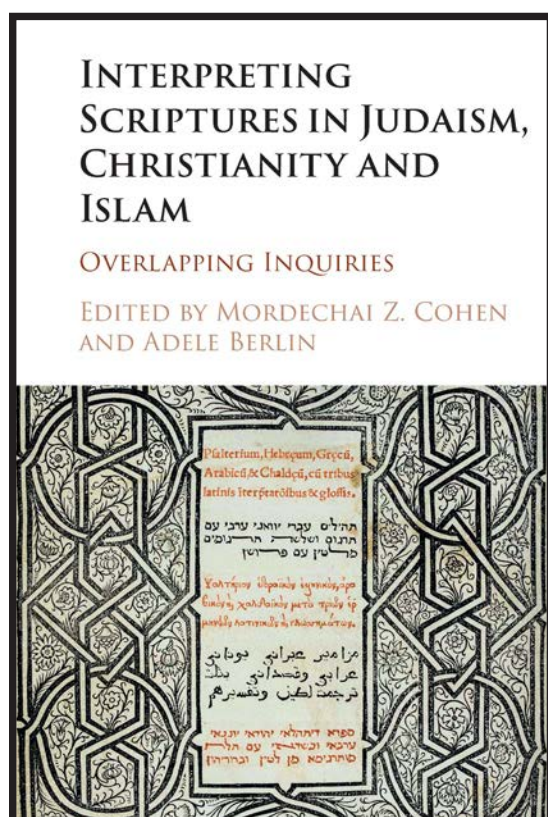
comparable to victims of abuse and assault though, because these women who compete on reality television have signed contracts agreeing to be emotionally exploited. The recent drama television show "Unreal," though fictional, uncovered (and exaggerated) the reality that reality television is largely scripted and manipulated by its writers and producers to ensure that viewers are entertained and that the show stays interesting. So to some extent, as women parade around the Top Model house half naked, being bullied by other competitors, and likely being bossed around by producers, it is fair to say that these women are being emotionally exploited. They are being manipulated by staff in order to make for entertaining television.

This exploitation, though, is selective; as aforementioned, the models choose to be on these high-pressure, stressful sets and are therefore opting to be exploited. The competitors know full well the high demands of reality television, and when they submit

The Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and the Yeshiva University Libraries invite you to a YU Library Book Talk by Professor Mordechai Cohen on

## Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Overlapping Inquiries

Edited by Mordechai Z. Cohen and Adele Berlin (Cambridge University Press, 2016)



*Interpreting Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* is the work product of a 14-member research group of distinguished scholars from America, Europe, and Israel that convened in 2010-11 at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem. Concentrating on points of overlap and intersection, this study brings to light aspects of interpretive approaches to sacred scriptures in the three faith traditions that remain hidden until set in relation to one another. For table of contents, illustrations, and further information about this volume and the project underlying it, see [www.yu.edu/revel/cohen-berlin-interpreting-scriptures](http://www.yu.edu/revel/cohen-berlin-interpreting-scriptures)

In his Library Book Talk, Cohen will draw upon this richly diverse volume to show how the Jewish tradition of Bible interpretation (*parshanut ha-miqra*) is best understood when we consider how our great commentators, such as Saadia Gaon, Rashi, and Maimonides, met the cultural challenges posed by Muslim and Christian interpretation of scripture.

Mordechai Cohen is Associate Dean and Professor of Bible at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. His publications include *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to David Kimhi* (2003) and *Opening the Gates of Interpretation: Maimonides' Biblical Hermeneutics in Light of His Geonic-Andalusian Heritage and Muslim Milieu* (2011). Cohen is currently involved with an international project comparing Jewish and Chinese cultural, textual, and interpretive traditions. He has taught twice at the Center for Judaic and Comparative Religious Studies at the University of Shandong in China.

Sunday, February 11, 2018  
4 p.m.

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## Open on Christmas

Ailin Elyasi  
Staff Writer

Outside, the rare hush of the night stands as an uncharacteristic contrast to the usual rush of reading week. Lights cover the entire city and are draped over trees and buildings. And perhaps most notably, the Empire State building is lit in red and green. Still, it makes no difference to most of those at Beren. In fact, the only people who probably notice the rare hush are the guards behind the security desk, the cashiers and servers in the caf, the financial aid advisors in 215. To them, December 25th is one of the two biggest days of the year. To us, it is just another day to push through on the way to finals. They sit at their desks, tending to Stern and Syms students, instead of at their tables, tending to and enjoying the company of their families.

Yeshiva University has always been an institution built on ideals. YU's very motto, Torah U'mada attests to the ambitious ideal of simultaneously attaining religious and secular prominence, and of maintaining religion even when working in the workforce, both with minimum compromise. In doing so, all YU institutions are closed on Jewish holidays, and YU's very essence promotes strong Jewish identity in coexistence with prominence in the secular workplace. Perhaps it may be harsh, but major hypocrisy exists between YU's very motto, and the requirement for employees who celebrate Christmas to work on Christmas. If YU truly believes in maintaining religion in all places, then it should allow freedom of religion to all people, including Christians, by allowing them to celebrate their most important day of the year.

In a parallel but more extreme case, a Jewish high school senior in Great Neck North Public School complained about his neighbor putting up a highly embellished Christmas tree right in front of the house window. He exclaimed, "Great Neck is a Jewish town; I don't like that he makes his Christianity so apparent."

This is not to say that YU tries to suppress other religions as this high school senior did, but failing to accommodate other religious people is just a few steps from that. By failing to provide equal treatment to all religions, YU is saying that not all religions have equal weight, which can only lead to

discrimination and hatred.

Some may argue that Christmas for Christians parallels Chanukah for Jews, which means that Christians can work on Christmas just like Jews can work on Chanukah. To that I answer that Christians have two main holidays in the entire year--Christmas and Easter--as opposed to the countless holidays that Jews observe. Even though Christians technically have the ability to work on Christmas, it is an unfair request to ask of them on their holiday.

Compared to other institutions, YU has very average policies regarding religious off-days for religions other than Judaism. Employees have the right to ask other employees to cover their shift for them, and receive one and a half times their compensation for work done on that day if they work full time. It is standard procedure and YU is not doing anything wrong by following it.

But contrast YU's policies to the policies of Montefiore Medical center, which has Christmas day

not convenient.

In practical reality, would it be possible for YU to close on December 25th? It depends on the department. The majority of the financial aid department is not Jewish. As December 25th is usually near the end of the semester, YU could certainly give off one day and reopen on December 26th. I believe that students could hold off on their financial aid requests for a single day without the financial system of YU turning into shambles.

Or, take for example, the caf, which hires student employees for work-study on any normal day. For December 25th, the caf can hire two such students instead of ruining someone's holiday.

The security guards pose a more complicated issue, as safety is concerned. So I pose a solution: on January 4th, YU had a snow day and closed all facilities except for the undergraduate schools due to finals. In the instructions, all non-necessary personnel were not required to attend work. Security guards came, professors necessary for exams came, but people for whom it was unnecessary to come to work, were allowed to stay home.

If YU can do that on a random day in January, it can do that on December 25th, the most important day in the Christian, and arguably American as well, calendar.

Although YU has done nothing technically wrong, following a standard set by most businesses open on December 25th, it has the responsibility to do more in terms of religious and secular policy because of its responsibility of setting values for coexistence

of religion and the workplace. A concept set by YU's very motto, the institution cannot be complacent in following how other institutions act, but must instead set an example to be followed as a top tier of value-based corporate functioning.

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# The Observer

## My Dream for Our Daughters

Miriam Pearl Klahr  
Managing Editor

I recently read a heartbreaking article in The Lehrhaus by Ayelet Wenger titled “Hokmat Nashim.” It is hard to summarize the love, pain and frustration that the author’s words express, but they describe a Modern Orthodoxy that has failed women. The article articulates how today, though there are many programs that teach Talmud to women, opportunities for true Torah mastery and careers in Torah are still but dreams for half the population. The author concludes the article by challenging our community to realize that if this status quo continues, one day when our daughters will ask us what happened to the talmidot hakhamim of our generation, we will be forced to tell them that “they fled to medicine and law and basic education and academia and anywhere that would believe in them.”

This beautifully written but distressing article resonated as true and stuck with me for days. As a student of Stern College, it also made me want to scream in frustration. Yeshiva University is not the focus of the article. It is mentioned as just one of the many institutions that fails to teach women the way they



I wondered how close I would ever come to learning all the books that surrounded me, I imagined that I would learn for the rest of my life, coming up with new hiddushim, and teaching the sweet words of Torah to others. I came to Stern inspired and excited to enroll in Advanced Talmud, a course that I quickly discovered was the only serious Talmud class in a school of almost one thousand women. The class was important to me; it pushed me to improve my Talmud skills and provided me with a community of women who believed in the same visions of Judaism that I held dear. But the class also had an undercurrent of anger and resentment towards the limited opportunities for learning that YU provides. Often, sitting in it somehow felt like we were fighting for something. And learning somehow felt like an act of feminism, though all we wanted was to simply learn.

I took Advanced Talmud for three semesters. I took it because I love learning and wanted Torah to be an integral part of my day. But also because I wanted the class to be full and to make the statement that women should learn Talmud and seize this crucially vital moment in Jewish history. But the price for this was that I could never really just learn. It was too tainted by the desire to make this statement, until it was a statement that I no longer wanted to make. With time, I just wanted to be a college student who takes literature, music theory, and science courses, finding God in a myriad of places. I fled to Jewish studies courses free of associations with feminism, so I could just explore ideas without fighting. Of course, this is not to say that this is the only, or even main reason, for the transformation of my interests and goals, but to completely ignore it would be naïve and irresponsible.

So I don’t resent those who didn’t come to Stern. After all, I came, and in many ways, gave up. But as a Stern College student I also can’t help but wish more women would come. I have spoken to many peers who claim that they would come to Stern if it would only grant them the same opportunities available to the men at Yeshiva College. But how can we create change if not enough people are fighting for it? When I started

Stern, GPATS seemed like it might die. The two years masters program was comprised of only one class that was to graduate in the Spring. Today, it is comprised of two classes. My friends who are in this program are my role models who did not give up. Some are going to law school or medical school, and are devoting two years of their life to learning Talmud, even though it is unrelated to their career; a decision that was once only respected for men. Others are braving the unknown and hope to create new Torah leadership careers for women. Similarly, after much persistence and work by students, for the first time, there are two Advanced Talmud courses being offered at Stern. And though this was before my time, I’ve heard the stories of women who came to town hall meetings and demanded a beautiful beit midrash until one was built.

These examples give me a glimmer of hope. Of course, they are far from enough, and it is painful that each of them is not a given but has to be fought for. Yet, they remind me that institutions are made of people, and that people can bring change. They make me dream of what it would be like if all those who shared the vision of a new generation of talmidot hakhamim would come to Stern and further change the status quo.

My words feel too naïve. After all, how can I tell people to come when, in some ways, Stern has failed me. But I don’t want to believe that there is nothing left to do, or that the heroic work Jewish women are devoted to is futile. So I dream of what we can accomplish if more women who are committed to studying Talmud and creating a future where all sexes can achieve true Torah mastery would come to Stern. I know realistically that the answer is not much, and that the challenge “Hokmat Nashim” puts forward might still become reality. Yet, in my dream there is an alternative ending. Instead of asking what happened to the talmidot hakhamim of our generation, our daughters will ask why there were so few talmidot hakhamim. And we will tell them that most women fled to medicine and law, but a few brave souls didn’t, and that thanks to their patience and belief in slow progress, you can learn the same way as your brothers do today.

**“What really stung was admitting that I am one of the women she describes, flocking from Torah to medicine, where I can just be accepted as me.”**

teach men. The author also explains why she did not attend Stern; she illustrates how after a conversation with the Dean of Admissions she understood how the Torah learning options it offers were not what she sought. Yet, I couldn’t help but feel, “you didn’t even come; you didn’t even try.”

Eventually, I realized this wasn’t the true root of my frustration. What really stung was admitting that I am one of the women she describes, flocking from Torah to medicine, where I can just be accepted as me.

The author recalls how she once dreamed of going into hinukh. In midrasha I shared a similar dream. As

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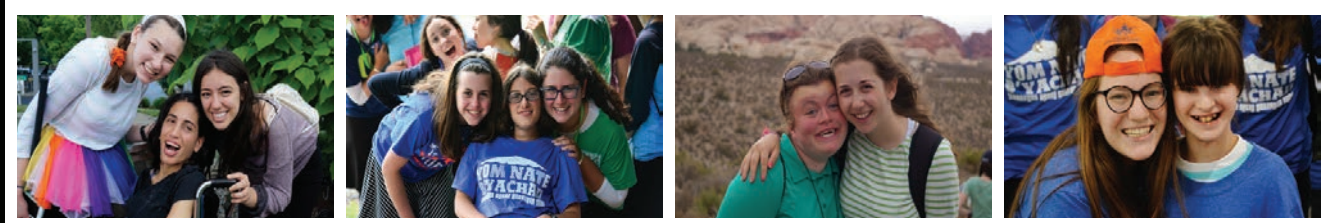
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