

# The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

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## Raising Our Voice: Shloush Leads Delegation to Anti-Semitism Conference in Rome

Geffie Kornhauser

On January 29-30th, Rabbi Gideon Shloush led a delegation from the New York Board of Rabbis (NYBR), of which he is the president, to the international conference on anti-Semitism held in Rome. The conference was hosted by the Italian ministry and attended by foreign dignitaries from almost all of the 57 countries in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—the world's largest regional security organization. The Italian government, which controls the OSCE, decided to host the conference amidst the growing anti-Semitic sentiments in Europe.

The conference began in the Vatican and featured opening remarks from Pope Francis, who spoke out against anti-Semitism. "The enemy against which we fight is not only hatred in all of its forms, but even more fundamentally, indifference," the Pontiff said, as Shloush noted in an article in *The Philadelphia Jewish Voice*. Pope Francis continued, "The Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews

at any time and by anyone," quoting a text from the *Nostra Aetate* (Our Day), a declaration passed by Pope Paul VI that discusses the relationship between the



Catholic Church and other religions. When they met, Rabbi Shloush thanked the Pope for his support of the Jewish People and the State of Israel.

The next day, the foreign ministers each gave a series of presentations denouncing anti-Semitism. Ministers from countries such as Belarus, the Netherlands, France,

PJF. In an interview with *The Observer*, Shloush remarked that the presenters were not only diplomats, but also representatives from major corporations like Facebook, who spoke about what constitutes anti-Semitism in the realm of social media.

The conference was a bit of an ironic experience, Shloush remarked to the PJF. "The Romans ransacked Israel, the Catholics were responsible for endless persecutions of our people, and here we were in Rome talking about anti-Semitism," he said. Still, Shloush, who teaches Judaic Studies at Stern College, viewed the experience as an invaluable opportunity to combat anti-Semitism. "I was invited to represent the North American rabbinate," he said in an interview. "Anti-Semitism is a major concern in the world, and if it's being addressed in a public forum, then as a leader of the community, I wanted to be there."

When asked if he thinks the conference will influence change in European policy, Shloush was cautiously optimistic. "There are words, and then there are actions," he said to *The*

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## YU To No Longer Grant Einstein's Medical Degrees By End of 2018

Ailin Elyasi

Junior News Editor

In Fall 2015, Albert Einstein College of Medicine made a historic change to transfer the financial and operational rights from Yeshiva University to Montefiore, after 60 years of YU control. According to Dr. Allen Spiegel, The Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean of Einstein, as per the agreement between the two schools, YU was set to maintain its academic role as the degree granting institution for Einstein until Einstein gained authority to grant its own degrees, which will occur by the end of 2018.

YU will always have a special place in Einstein's history, as YU President, Dr. Samuel Belkin, worked with influential public figures like NYC's then mayor Vincent Impellitteri to create the first medical school in NYC. Then, historically under the leadership of YU, Albert Einstein granted the use of his name to the new medical school. Even as YU splits in tangible ways from Einstein, former YU president Richard Joel asserted in an article about the split that the change would not disrupt YU's strong ties to the medical school. "This is part of a journey that began when Yeshiva University founded Einstein

60 years ago," he wrote. "Albert Einstein lent his name to this fledgling institution at a time when Jewish students were turned away from other schools. The new imperative in today's complex health care environment is to formally link this now world-class medical school and research institution to a world-class health system. Yeshiva University continues its historic commitment to medical education while we further our unique mission to prepare students through a contemporary academic education enlightened by Jewish values."

YU's role having changed to an institution with "academic oversight," as Einstein called it in this press formally announcing the agreement with Montefiore, has zero effect on YU's admissions numbers to the school. Einstein's class of 2018 which was accepted before the split in 2014, admitted fifteen YU students. Only the University of California, with a total population of 41,910 in 2017, had the same number of students admitted to Einstein as Yeshiva University, which had a much smaller population of 6,348 in 2015. The class of 2021, which was accepted after the

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## Connect Two: Exploring the Ups and Downs of YUConnects

Talya Hyman

Junior Features Editor

The YUConnects online matchmaking site has been a successful relationship builder for over 600 individuals, with the platform having recently celebrated 300 engagements. According to its website, YUConnects offers social events, learning programming, and one-on-one meetings with the platform's matchmaking connectors to "foster healthy relationships toward marriage." While available for the entire Jewish community at large to utilize, YUConnects is also heavily geared towards the Yeshiva University student demographic. For students' convenience, many of the organized social events take place at the uptown and midtown campuses, and connectors are also available at these locations for in-person meetings. Regarding her decision to join YUConnects, one Stern College for Women (SCW) undergraduate said, "I know many people who met their spouses on dating websites, and when I started dating and saw that this one is targeted to YU students, I was interested."

To receive the benefits of being a YUConnects member, one must initially pay a yearly membership fee of \$100.

Once registered, the process of building a profile can begin. The SCW student explained, "It walks you through different questions about yourself, your family, education, etc. You answer questions about your hobbies, interests, music preferences. You write a description about yourself and what you're looking for." One SCW graduate and current GPATS student added, "Some [questions] are a little uncomfortable, like putting in physical descriptions about yourself. But that is typical of any dating site." Tzipora Roffe, SCW '18, described the questionnaire as an easy process with "a lot of drop down arrows." The GPATS student explained that in order for the connectors to know more information about you and your personal preferences, "There is a section that only the matchmaker sees where you can write very candidly about what kind of person you're looking for."

Creating a pleasing and eye-catching profile is more tedious than one might initially expect. The SCW student explained that it is part of the matchmaker's job to help the YUConnects members

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## Silence That Was Met with Silence

Miriam Pearl Klahr  
*Managing Editor*

Last month I was pained to read Lily Gelman’s account of being silenced after giving the dvar Torah at a Wilf campus minyan. She had been the first woman to give a dvar torah at that minyan, and in the aftermath of her words, a decision prohibiting women from giving divrei torah at Wilf campus minyanim was made. In the days following her article’s release, conversations about this reality buzzed throughout both campuses. Some students were outraged, and many expressed their shock; there were those who questioned the creation of this policy, which stands in opposition to the Orthodox Union’s official statement, which encourages women’s participation in the community through “giving shiurim and divrei torah,” while others posited that perhaps this was an appropriate rule for a men’s campus. As I partook in these conversations, I was also waiting. I was waiting for some sort of response from the administration that would protest, or at least clarify, this policy and affirm the importance of women’s voices at Yeshiva University. But my waiting was met with silence.

This second silence was even more upsetting than reading about the silencing of women. I had believed in my university; I had trusted, and expected, YU to make a statement both protesting this policy and validating the importance of women sharing words of Torah with both sexes. But instead I, and all the women of YU, were met with the stinging silence of apathy, conveying to us that our pain and voices are insignificant, not even worthy of a response.

In the past, when I have been frustrated by the inequality, especially regarding women’s Torah learning, that can be found at our University, I took comfort in my belief that YU is trying to accommodate the different needs of its diverse range of orthodox students, and that this desire sometimes requires sacrifice on everyone’s part. I also took pride in the strides YU has made and believed the administration when they spoke about the importance of programs like GPATS to the YU community. But now I’m not so sure. What am I to make of the administration’s words in praise of the way GPATS empowers women to be educators in synagogues and college campuses across the US, when I now know that these very women can not give a dvar torah on the Wilf campus. How can I still trust that they really believe in us, the women of YU, and our Torah?

This decision to prohibit women from giving a dvar torah after davening has no parallel. In a school with a separate men’s and

women’s campuses we expect YU to preserve certain spaces for only one gender, and respect that this is empowering and desirable to many students. For example, many Beren campus shabbatot have multiple activities that men who come to make a minyan are not invited to, in order to preserve the women’s-only atmosphere that many students appreciate. However, in the spaces where these men are invited, such as minyan, their voices are heard, and they not only daven, but often give the dvar torah at co-ed shabbatot; silencing them would be unthinkable. Similarly, if women are encouraged to attend a community minyan, as they are at Klein @9,

and it is halakhically permissible for them to speak, how can the university sit back as they are silenced? While it is important to ensure that every male at YU is comfortable, there are so many minyanim on the Wilf campus, making it impossible to imagine that there is no way to negotiate for at least one where women’s voices can be heard.

President Berman began his presidency with a written response to the anti-Semitism that took place in Charlottesville. Though his words could not change what had happened, they were empowering nonetheless. They reminded us that our University has values it stands for. The response signaled that in the face of injustice, silence is

not an appropriate response.

President Berman, it is not enough to protest events that happen off campus. Here too, when women on our campus are being silenced, silence is an inappropriate response. Especially when your words can do more than provide hope and inspiration; they can make a real and operative difference.

I know that conversations about this policy have died down, and people have accepted that the silencing of women’s divrei torah is now the status quo. But I’m writing this article because I’m still awaiting a response and don’t want the conversations about this policy to end until the silence is broken. So students, please keep speaking, debating, protesting, and working to transform our university into a respectful environment where all students feel that they have a place and voice. And administration, your silence tells us you don’t care. Prove to us that we are wrong; end the silence and make YU a place where the words of Torah from both men and women are valued, respected, and heard.



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## Raising Our Voice: Shloush Leads Delegation to Anti-Semitism Conference in Rome

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*Observer.* “I hope that the countries in Europe will implement policies to fight anti-Semitism, but I worry that their goodwill will be slow to action. It’s one thing to have a discussion and show you care, but it’s another thing to move governments and institute laws and practices that combat anti-Semitism.” Shloush also commented that the experience was an “incredible

opportunity to interact with foreign ambassadors and to reshape their perception of Israel and world Jewry.”

Shloush noted that leading this delegation had an immense impact on him, strengthening his pride in the Jewish people and in the State of Israel. “As a Jew, going to Rome is an unpleasant experience. Deep down you know that the early inhabitants of this city destroyed our holy Temple, razed Jerusalem and exiled

our ancestors. Yet, there is an incredible feeling of Jewish pride knowing that in 2018 the State of Israel is a beacon of light while the Roman Empire is a distant memory.” Shloush concluded, “Like so many others, the Romans could not destroy the Jewish spirit. Especially today, with the gift of the State of Israel, the Jewish People are standing tall and proud.”

## YU To No Longer Grant Einstein’s Medical Degrees By End of 2018

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split in 2016, still admitted fifteen Yeshiva University students.

However nice it sounds that “YU continues its historic commitment to medical education,” as President Joel put it, once the year ends, there will not be the same tangible ties connecting Yeshiva University to Albert Einstein Medical School, except for what Einstein calls “academic oversight.” Most universities use the term “academic oversight” to describe students given additional attention due to a sub-par academic record, but neither Einstein nor YU defines YU’s role as an academic overseer. Therefore, it is unclear if YU will have a large role in Einstein or any role at all. Either way, by the time the year ends, and Einstein gains the authority to grant its own degrees, Yeshiva University’s connection to Einstein will become less tangible and subject to change.

Most students seem unaware of the true nature of Yeshiva University’s ties with Einstein after the split. This student misperception is bolstered by the fact that YU acts in many ways as if the split never happened and their relationship has remained the same. YU still

lists Einstein as the first of its graduate institutions (in alphabetical order) on its website. In addition, near the bottom of its news website, YU has an entire widget, a web application that provides easy access to another site, devoted to reposting articles from Einstein’s own site describing their most recent successes like grant acquisitions and recent scientific discoveries. When reviewing the 2017 year, YU includes Einstein’s successes and calls the school “YU affiliated”, sharing in the credit for Einstein’s outstanding achievements even while YU’s ties to Einstein are vague. Meanwhile, on Einstein’s website, the only mention of Yeshiva University is in the sentence mentioning the split, although it maintains a yu.edu address.

Shaina Bakhshi, biology major at SCW ‘19 states, “I feel cheated by the school to know that they advertised such close ties to the medical school, while the school

will no longer even grant Einstein’s degrees. Part of the reason I accepted a place at YU was due to its ties to Einstein, as I am pre-med. Thus, I feel supremely disappointed that the ties are disappearing and I did not know about it.”



Albert Einstein College of Medicine  
OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Montefiore  
THE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

## Einstein Receives \$174 Million in NIH Funding in 2017

Sara Marcus

Over the course of the 2017 fiscal year, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine secured \$174 million from the National Institutes of Health. This, along with other grants, makes this past year the school’s most highly funded since 2009.

Einstein, which was Yeshiva University’s medical school, could boast many academic and scholarly achievements, but was also allegedly responsible for nearly two-thirds of YU’s deficit woes. As of 2014, the university ceded operational and financial direction of Einstein to Montefiore Medical Center. Montefiore is a network provider of healthcare and medical research, spanning five research centers and five affiliated hospitals. Einstein itself is still affiliated with YU, with YU being responsible for educational oversight, including granting degrees.

The various projects to which the grant money will be allotted include several studies on fighting age-related cognitive impairment. Nutrition scientist Dr. Yasmin Mossavar-Rahmani, associate professor in the Epidemiology & Population Health department, received a \$4 million grant over five years to study if a diet filled with anti-inflammatory foods, such as nuts, leafy greens and coffee, can ease cognitive diseases, particularly Alzheimer’s.

Drs. Nir Barzilai and Zhengdong Zhang received \$6.3 million to further studies on genes that preserve and protect cognitive functions as people age, and to use that information to help develop drugs. Dr. Barzilai, the associate professor of genetics at Einstein, previously

headed the school’s Longevity Genes Project, a genetic study of 500 healthy adults over 95 to determine genes that help some elderly people escape the worst of the aging-related diseases. “Aging is the number one risk factor for Alzheimer’s. But there are individuals with extraordinary longevity—95 years or older—who have a

immunodeficiency virus, and substance abuse. Dr. Chinazo Cunningham, the associate chief of general internal medicine at Einstein’s Department of Medicine, received \$3.8 million to research substance abuse. Dr. Cunningham, who is a member of the NYC Mayor’s Heroin and Prescription Opioid Public Awareness Task

Force, will study if the use of medicinal marijuana would reduce reliance on opioids for those with chronic pain. Amidst a national health epidemic of opioid abuse, there is urgent need for safer alternative pain relievers, and this will be the first study to consider if medicinal marijuana would be a possible way to treat chronic pain.

“At a time of intense competition for federal research dollars, this high-water mark is a convincing demonstration of the strength of our research faculty—and all the more remarkable given its relatively small size,” said Allen M. Spiegel, M.D., the Stanley and Marilyn M. Katz Dean for Einstein, of the school’s hefty collection of research grants this year. Spiegel also emphasized the role Montefiore has played in the institution’s research success “In addition to our longstanding strength in basic science research, our new relationship with

Montefiore has opened up exciting new avenues for more meaningful collaborations that will advance our joint translational and clinical research enterprise.”

natural resistance to dementia,” said Dr. Barzilai of his study. “We hope to unlock the secrets in their genomes to reveal promising targets for drug development.”

The \$174 million worth of study grants also cover medical issues such as breast cancer screening, human



## Maccabees Win Championship

Chana Weinberg



PURCHASE, NY—Dominant shooting and a tight second half defense led the way as YU Basketball won its first ever Skyline Conference Championship, defeating SUNY Purchase 87-81 on Sunday, February 25th. The win earned the Mac's a bracket in the NCAA Division Three tournament for the first time in the program's history. Coach Elliot Steinmetz and his staff, the Mac's bench and the men on the court couldn't contain their excitement as the clock slowly ticked to zero. Pandemonium permeated the gym as the #6thman crowd roared its new theme song: "mishenichnas adar marbim b'simcha".

"There was such a tremendous feeling of pride and unity" said Malky Perlberger, a sophomore at SCW, of the emotions in the building during the game. Malky was one of the hundreds of YU students and alumni who attended this jaw-dropping and anxiety-ridden sporting event.

A lead of 8 with one minute to play did not feel safe against a Purchase team who had defeated the Macs on a buzzer beater during the regular season.

In a game where three pointers rained down, a lead never felt big enough until the scoreboard read

After falling behind early from a 15-2 attack from the resilient and aggressive Purchase offense, no one in the room was getting down on the Macs; coming from behind to win is familiar territory for this team this season.

Speaking of familiar territory, the 2017-2018 Maccabees reached a record breaking 17 wins with the help of a terrific defense, creative coaching and adjustments after injuries, and by shooting a lot and

shooting well. We were graced with YU's own version of the Splash Brothers as 8 players attempted 40+ three pointers this season. They stayed true to themselves in the championships as six players scored threes, shooting a combined 53.3% from the outside.

About halfway into the first half Justin Hod, hero of the quarterfinal game against Mount St. Mary, drained a corner three, his first of 6, to give the Macs a 24-23 lead. Hod's laser shifted the game's momentum in favor of the Macs, who would go on to lead for 62% of the game. Hod finished with a career high 18 points, going Curry-like 6 for 6 from behind the arc. Simcha Halpert stood out as well, scoring 25 points and finishing with five assists. Halpert went 8 for 8 on his free throws, which proved to be the difference in the game. Gabriel Leifer got in on the action by grabbing 11 rebounds and using his superb court vision to dish out 7 assists. Senior and captain Eli Mamann hit a three pointer and later, after the clock ran to zero and the championship shirts were distributed, lead the net cutting ceremony that traditionally follows a championship win.

"These kids have so much heart. They're amazing to be around," Coach Elliot Steinmetz told YUmacs.com after the semi-final win against Farmingdale State. As Coach Steinmetz cut down the remainder of the net, his statement rang true; the athletes stood arm and arm, beaming and cheering for their head coach. The Macslive.com broadcasters repeatedly mentioned that a new era for Mac's basketball began with the hiring of Coach

Steinmetz four years ago. Though it is impossible to perfectly predict outcomes in sports (unless you are Biff from Back to the Future), how could you deny that this team, brimming with talent, has endless potential?

On Sunday Morning, before the heading to the game, President Berman spoke at Yeshiva University HS for Girls about his Five Torot and had the pleasure of promoting the basketball team's playoff run. Our president, clearly proud of the team's accomplishment, impressed the crowd with the tidbit and joked about the surprising height of the team, considering the expected height of Jewish men. His tone, though, turned serious when speaking about the character of the team.

"You see their strength and their power of will" praised President Berman. Berman also commended the athletes commitment to helping their opponents up when they fall, describing these actions as a "kiddush hashem".

For some time the now the YU Maccabees have been known for their sportsmanship and menchlichkeit. "People enjoy playing them" said President Berman.

"This positivity and attitude will always be a cornerstone of YU athletics, but now that this team is a Champion, we will be known for much more than our sportsmanship. Opposing coaches will be less excited to play us: not because we will change the way we play, but because we now developed the tenacity and drive the comes with knowing how it feels to win... and wanting to experience that joy again."

## YU Receives Recognition From New York State For Efforts in Reducing Its Carbon Footprint Across Campuses

Shira Krinsky  
Staff Writer

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) recently granted Yeshiva University with "Achiever" status in the Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) Campus Challenge. The REV Campus Challenge launched in Fall 2015 as part of Governor Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's larger REV initiative, "a strategy to build a clean, resilient, and affordable energy system for all New Yorkers," according to NYSEDA's website.

The REV Campus Challenge gives recognition and support to New York State colleges and universities that execute clean energy projects and project these principles in the classroom as well as in surrounding communities.

YU has been granted "Achiever" status as a result of its extensive' oil-to-gas conversion project for Zysman Hall, the Rubin and Morgenstern dormitories, and Furst Hall. It has also been awarded this recognition for successfully converting most YU buildings to LED lighting over the past two years. These buildings include including Zysman Hall, Rubin Hall, the Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, and the Samuel H. Wang YU High School for Girls (YUHSG).

David Piako, the energy manager at YU's Office of Energy & Sustainability, has taken the lead on YU's involvement with the REV Campus Challenge. "The goal of these projects is always to make sure that we know

that how we are spending our utility money can have a substantial effect not only on our bottom line but also on

that, "this recognition is a welcome acknowledgement of all that YU has been doing to both 'do good and do well'—fulfilling our moral obligation to reduce the environmental effects of outdated technologies while also fulfilling our fiscal obligation to our supporters to reduce costs while improving efficiency whenever and wherever we can."

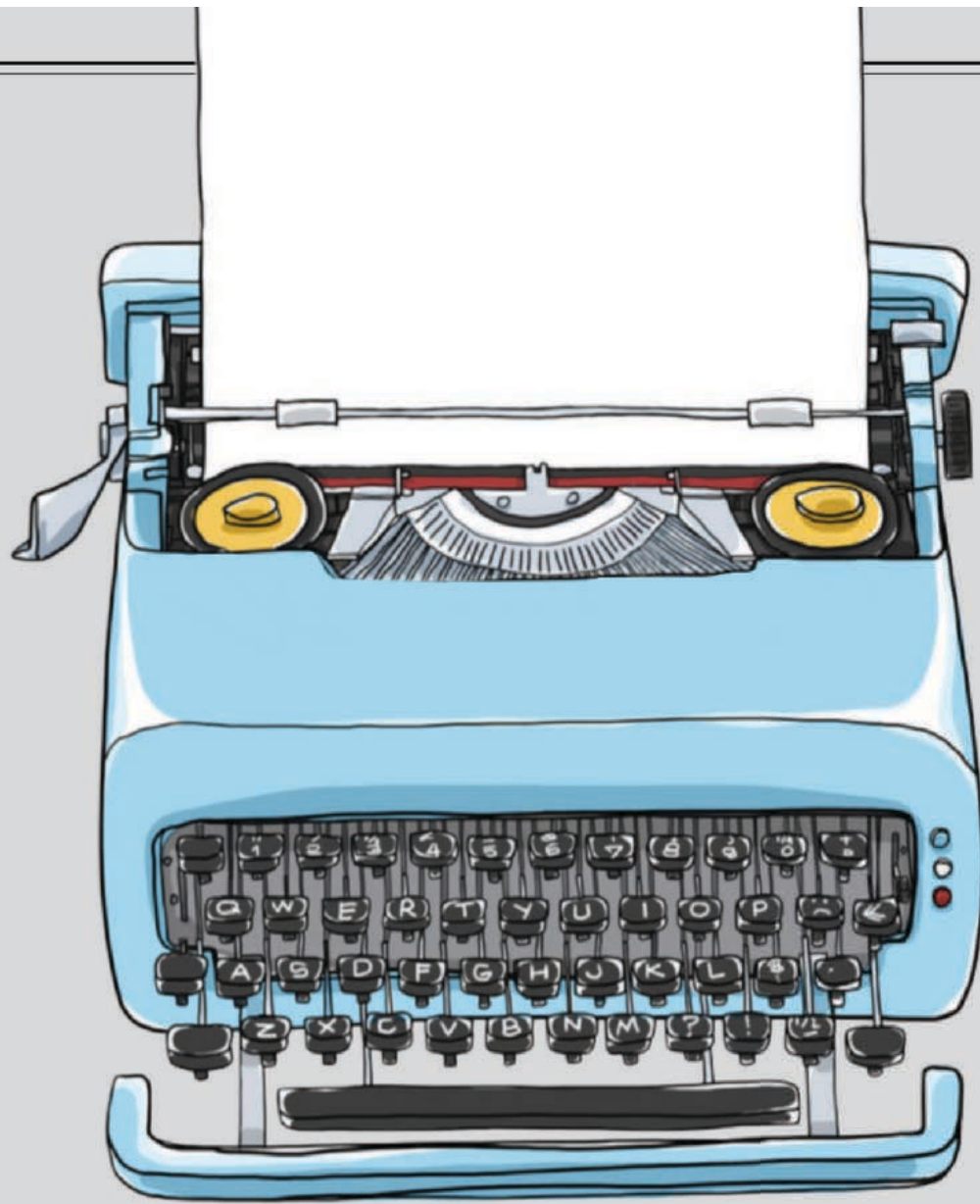
Most students are not aware of just how much effort the university has been putting in recently towards energy conservation. "I had no idea that YU was involved in this energy-saving initiative. Not only is it amazing that they have a hand in this project, but also that they have been recognized by the NYSEDA," Talya Hyman SCW '20 told The Observer.

NYSERDA is not the only agency that had recognized YU for its efforts in energy conservation. The rating organization ENERGY STAR, which is a part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, awarded the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy/Yeshiva University High School for Boys (YUHSB) a grade of 96. This was achieved partly by heating, ventilation, and air conditioning as well as lighting upgrades. YU is still looking for ways to improve, and is currently currently in discussions with the city and the state about the possibility of installing a green roof at YUHSB.



society," he said.

Josh Joseph, senior Vice President of YU, said as well



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THE OBSERVER

## Yeshiva College Pre-Law Advisor Resigns

Mindy Schwartz  
Editor in Chief

Ms. Dina Chelst announced via an email to pre-law students that she will resigning from her post as pre-law advisor on the Yeshiva College Campus. She told students that her last day will be this Friday, March 2nd.

Chelst served as Pre-law advisor to both male and female students since September 2014 until this year when a new academic advisor, Illana Milch, was hired on the Beren Campus who would, in addition to serving as a regular academic advisor, also cater exclusively to female Pre-law students. This year Ms. Chelst worked as an advisor to male Pre-law students as well as the handful of Pre-law students on Beren who had already begun working with her in previous years.

YU has a robust number of Pre-law students. As the Pre-Law advising department reports on its page, over 70 students have applied to last school in the past two years, with an 100% acceptance rate to at least one law school. Associate Dean at Yeshiva College Fredic Sugarman told The Observer that “we are sorry to lose [Ms. Chelst] who has done a wonderful job in seeing that our students place in law school and, more often than no, tier 1 law schools!”

In her email Chelst informed students that in her absence Dean Karen Bacon and Dean Sugarman will be “the point people for pre-law,” presumably until a new advisor is hired. When asked whether the Deans will have time to adequately support Pre-law students until a new advisor is brought on board, Chelst seemed unconcerned, insisting simply that “the Deans are always committed to helping the students.”

Sugarman confirmed with The Observer that “Dean Bacon and I have begun to start the process to hire a new advisor.” He explained that “this takes some time,” but that he remains “optimistic that we will have a first-rate in place towards term’s end.”

According to Dean Bacon, the administration was

unable to hire an advisor to replace Chelst immediately because she “informed us last week that she is going to return to the practice of law.” Bacon explained that, “clearly with so little notice, we have not yet had a chance to search for someone to take over.” Despite the short notice, she did emphasize, like Sugarman, that “we will start to work immediately on a permanent

**“According to Dean Bacon, the administration was unable to hire an advisor to replace Chelst immediately because she “informed us last week that she is going to return to the practice of law.”**

replacement.”

When asked about his new role, along with Dean Bacon, as interim Pre-law advisors, Sugarman assured that “while neither Dean Bacon nor I have been Pre-law advisors, we have about 50 years of academic leadership between us so trust me...we will make sure

no student is left without guidance.”

Sugarman also pointed out that only a “small” number of students will be directly affected by Chelst’s resignation. “Thankfully, the bulk of our Pre-law students are now waiting to hear on their acceptances,” he said. “There is a very small group who are [currently] in the application process and [Dean Bacon and I] will fully support them.” Bacon echoed this assessment that only a small number of students will actually need their help in the interim until a new advisor is found. “Fortunately Ms. Chelst has already worked with all this year’s students who have applied in a timely fashion,” Bacon noted. “There may be a couple who have decided to submit late applications [so t]hey might need help with their personal statements.”

Sugarman also seemed to imply that the “Yeshiva College Academic Advising team”, Sara Schwartz and Lolita Wood-Hill, will play a role in assisting Pre-law students in need of help with their applications. Sugarman told The Observer that the advising team at YC is “extraordinary and will no doubt join in providing students the service they expect and deserve.” Bacon confirmed this and added another resource that will be tapped for the job, telling The Observer that if any Pre-law students require assistance “we will provide help through the Writing Center, the Career Office and the Dean’s office.”

Chelst will be returning to the practice of law, joining a Trusts and Estates law firm on Long Island. She wrote to students that “it has truly been a privilege and honor to get to know and work with each and every one of you. I wish you all success in your pursuit of law and all your future endeavors.” She also students to “please keep me apprised of all your successes,” saying that “I schep nachas each time one of you gains admission to a law school.”

## Student Political Debate Characterized by Diplomatic Discourse

Ailin Elyasi  
Junior News Editor

On February 13th, over a hundred students attended the advertised “Political Debate of the Year” hosted by the YU J. Dunner Political Science Society. Four debates took place, each with one student from the College Republicans club and one from the College Democrats club. In the debates, each student discussed his or her party’s position on topics ranging from climate change to nationalism. Each student had five minutes to present an argument followed by two rebuttals, all moderated by adjunct political science professor on the Wilf campus, Dr. Maria Zaitseva.

The debate follows several students critiquing YU for its “lackluster” political conversation as Elliot Fuchs, YC ‘19, described it to The Commentator in November. Fuchs is the president of the YU chapter of the Young America’s Foundation, which has hosted Dennis Prager and Ben Shapiro on the YU campus. “[The lack of debate] was especially problematic for a campus like ours that holds itself to high intellectual standards,” he said.

Beren students agree on the need for more political discussion. “Not debating important topics implies complacency. Any topics that come up should be discussed since that is the only way that change comes about. I would really encourage [more political discussions] for YU students and people in general,” commented Nechama Lowy, Syms ‘20.

The goal of the debate was to educate the crowd by showcasing passionate students invested in their respective party’s view on a topic. For instance, during the healthcare debate, Moshe

Gelberman, YC ‘18, the democratic representative, spoke about healthcare under a psychological, moral, and constitutional lens. His opponent Elliot Fuchs followed his lead to enlighten the crowd on important points of this nuanced political topic. In another well researched and illuminating debate, Republican representative Phillip Dolitsky, YC ‘20, brought down political theory from George Orwell’s 1984, supreme court cases about political expression, and religious appeals in order to debate religious rights. His opponent Doniel Weinreich, YC ‘20, argued back that denying freedoms to one can eventually lead to denying freedoms to others. Both engaged the audience with subtleties on this charged topic.

Perhaps most inspiring for the audience was the way debaters actually engaged with their topics, instead of taking shots at their opponents’ character and personal lives. Molly Meisels, SCW ‘20, participated in the program as a proud democratic debater, speaking on nationalism. “The debate was on a heated topic and it could have taken a turn for the disrespectful,” she said. “Instead, I believe that [my opponent] Nolan Edmonson and I handled it gracefully.” In this politically heated climate, even the highest ranked politicians seem to throw insults instead of facts during debates. The last presidential debates between US candidates has been characterized by entertainment in the form of throwing insults instead of debate in the form of factual discourse. This debate, however, was characterized by diplomatic discourse. Fuchs agreed with



Meisels, saying “I thought—for the most part—everyone was respectful. I know that my opponent and I had a long friendly chat on a myriad of issues afterward.”

Other than a few jabs about the Young America’s Federation loving to “quote [their] pocket constitutions]” by Gelberman or a joust from two republican candidates about democratic “emotional appeals,” the debate focused on substantive and nuanced discourse. Attendants left the event better educated and proud of the diplomatic exchange of ideas they had witnessed.

## Connect Two: Exploring the Ups and Downs of YUConnects

# YUConnects

*continued from page 1:*

enhance his or her profile for the most and best possible matches. “They will give you tips and advice on what to change, if you wrote too much information, or too little, or if you need to change your pictures. Anything that will make you stand out,” she added. When looking at a potential match’s profile, Roffe cites “schooling” as a standout factor. Both the GPATS student and SCW student agreed that the most vital component to take into account when looking at someone’s profile is “a good description.” As the profile description ultimately serves as the first impression, the SCW student suggests to “let your personality come through, even a little bit.” The GPATS student noted that it is very important to notice “how they describe themselves and how they describe what they’re looking for, because it is very easy to get sticky with describing yourself. You may want to seem like someone who has a connection to G-d, and that you’re religious, but the way you formulate it really gives off a lot of who you are.”

Once one completes his or her online profile, a matchmaker is supposed to call the member for a phone discussion about the newly created profile and “to get to know you better,” said the GPATS student. “It’s also really nice when you have a matchmaker that you trust because you can go to them for advice with your profile or dating in general. I also like having a middle person; it’s extremely helpful,” stated the SCW student. It is possible, however, that some connectors may not be as actively working on profiles as anticipated. Roffe added, “Personally, I don’t really talk to my matchmaker. It is very slow moving.” Similarly, the SCW student said that “sometimes you can have a matchmaker that is really not on top of your profile and you have to continuously nudge them which can be frustrating.” The dating scene may be a daunting and intimidating new world for users, so it is ultimately the connectors’ primary responsibility and job, as the GPATS student puts it, “To be there for you.”

The interviewed YUConnects members have all similarly experienced a slow-moving and rather uneventful experience with the platform. Roffe says that she “went on one date, and it was bad.” Of her time spent using YUConnects, the SCW student commented, “It’s frustrating because sometimes you will go months without any matches. It can also be very discouraging to see how many times your profile has been sent out

and rejected.” Echoing this sentiment, the GPATS student, who has been utilizing YUConnects for a year, said that she has only gone out on two dates with one person from the platform. She herself has turned down potential dates from the site, and is aware that people are also saying no to her profile. She expressed, “It is dejecting because you’re paying money and you want things to happen, but I know that the connectors really are trying to set me up.” Though at times frustrated with the lack of progress and activity that has come out of her time using the relationship-building resource, she remains positive and hopeful. “It’s not anyone’s fault.

**“The interviewed YUConnects members have all similarly experienced a slow-moving and rather uneventful experience with the platform.”**

I know people who have met on [YUConnects], so it really just takes one person,” she added.

In comparing YUConnects to other Jewish matchmaking initiatives, the GPATS student says that YUConnects is “the most legit. It’s a whole operation—people are working day in and day out to get this done.” Furthermore, it is unique in the fact that there are “people

of all different hashkafas on the platform.” This enables people coming from varying Jewish backgrounds to meet one another. The SCW student admits that she has tried other online dating profiles, but found that they were primarily based on appearances. She appreciates that YUConnects is a serious, relationship-building platform.

Nevertheless, a stigma surrounds the concept of relying on a matchmaking site to find one’s besheret. Roffe believes that this existing stigma is not uniquely true about using YUConnects, but other “dating initiatives” as well. She explained, “While many people get set up by matchmakers, using resumes, and/or an online profile, it is still not ‘natural’ enough for today’s society—we need to casually meet or be introduced by friends.” Roffe stated that she is unsure as to why this is the norm mentality, but admitted that “I also can’t pretend that I am not immune to this way of thinking.” The GPATS student shares a similar view. She asserted, “I think [the stigma] has to do with using a dating site in general. A lot of people just want to meet someone naturally and may feel looked down upon, or they feel people might pity them because they weren’t able to meet someone on their own. When in reality, [using YUConnects] is no different than going to a shadchan.”

The YUConnects mission is to support and help Jewish singles create meaningful and healthy relationships in their search for the one. When asked if she would recommend YUConnects to her friends, the SCW student said, “I have in the past, and will continue to recommend it. Yes, it costs money and it could get frustrating when you go a while without a date, but so far it’s the best option for serious daters.” In reflection of her YUConnects experience, the GPATS student stated, “Is it dejecting to be on it for so long and not get set up? Yeah, but it’s more dejecting when you’re not on it and you get nothing.” At the end of the day, she believes that the very act of continuously trying to find a match should be a source of comfort for individuals, not a deterrent. In conclusion, she said, “I think that it’s our role to do our hishtadlus. Is it sad that we don’t get set up often? Yes. But it’s not for our lack of trying.”

Share your Observations

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## A YU Alum Producing His Own Show: An Interview with Etai Shuchatowitz

Miriam Pearl Klahr  
Managing Editor

Etai Shuchatowitz is a Yeshiva University graduate who works in computers and is passionate about movies, TV, and theater. This month he released the first episode of Untold Genius, a web series he is co-producing. The Observer sat down with Etai to learn about the show and the process its production entailed.

**Miriam Pearl Klahr: Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

**Etai Shuchatowitz:** I grew up in Boston Massachusetts (and actually Boston—none of this “I’m from Boston but actually I’m from Newton or Sharon or Brookline or somewhere else that isn’t really Boston”) and went to Maimonides School for elementary through high school. From there I made my way to YU and studied math and philosophy before graduating last May. And now I work in the exciting and sexy field of software engineering where I work for a subsidiary of Disney on their forthcoming video streaming platform. I really cannot emphasize how exciting and sexy sitting at a computer and programming for eight and a half hours a day is.

**MPK: When did you become interested in writing and producing a TV show?**

**ES:** While looking at my educational background might not reveal that I’ve always wanted to be a screenwriter and/or comedy writer, that’s really my secret-not-so-secret passion. I’ve been writing movies and TV since I was ten, making sketch comedy for a really long time and back in high school I also made a pilot for a show that was terrible and nobody will ever see. So, I guess Untold Genius is just the natural extension for somebody who’s wanted to do this for his entire life finally getting out of school and having an income and a little bit of time.

**MPK: What is Untold Genius about?**

**ES:** Untold Genius is a ten episode mockumentary wherein each week documentarian Art Fisher tells stories of fallen stars; people really prolific in their field who fell from grace for some reason. However, throughout the course of the ten episodes things devolve and we slowly pull the curtain back to learn more about Art and the people behind the “dockumentary,” revealing more nefarious and disturbing goings on than might appear from the outset. But, I swear it’s a really silly comedy.

**MPK: What led to the idea for this show?**

**ES:** The idea for Untold Genius came from a few places. Firstly, I had just watched a show called Review (which everybody should watch) which did something similar, playing in the sandbox of sketch comedy before revealing its more pathos driven narrative, a comedic technique I had never seen before. Secondly, doing documentary felt feasible. Unlike a lot of other ambitious projects I have written, this one actually felt like something I—somebody with limited experience—could pull off. Finally, I like playing in the world of genre or sensationalism. I like poking fun at the various tropes and themes of very self-serious work. I thought it might be really funny and/or interesting to have a documentarian who is always on the wrong side of every issue, but uses the very modern weapon of editing to make it seem like he’s in the right. These are very modern tactics and the line between sincerity and irony is an incredibly thin one (and in fact, while we are poking at Ken Burns style, I personally love Ken Burns), but that was kind of the world I wanted to explore.

For some reason, I think arrogant stupid people—people who couldn’t be more assured and convinced in their ways while saying inane and silly things—are really funny. So, to build a show off of that was exciting.

**MPK: Did your YU experience and/or career influence your writing at all?**

**ES:** I had three incredible experiences at YU that I will forever be grateful for. The first was that in my sophomore year a play I had written called I’ll Be Right Here was produced by YCDS. That was the first time ever that a full thing I had written was taken, produced and received by an audience, which is insane. To have people take your work seriously when you’re a silly twenty-one year old kid convinced he knows more than he does, is gratifying and really helps the old self-confidence. I wrote that play when I was sixteen and to



watch it come to life five years later was one of those oh, this is worth it kind of moments. Also through that I met my current creative partner, Moshe Lobel, who has been just a force of nature on that project and this one.

The second was that in my sophomore year, I was also the Editor-in-Chief of The Quipster, a satirical paper for the YU student body. Now, we were not well received. People didn’t read what we put out, and those who read it hated it (which was an interesting experience on its own, but that’s for a different conversation). But, we were just given total freedom. We could do whatever we wanted. We published recaps of the TV show Lost written ten years after the show had aired, written from the perspective of a guy going through a really bitter divorce. Our investigative journalist was an 80 year old woman named Bertha showing signs of early dementia. We devoted an entire week to President Joel’s retirement, claiming that he was retiring because “President Joel might be a bird.” It was bizarre and alienating and I loved doing it because of the total creative freedom we had.

The third was that my senior thesis was a play about math and philosophy. It was tremendous to be mentored by the awesome Professor Will Lee, who read every draft, commented on every line, and gave me invaluable feedback and literature to explore. I wish I had more to say about this other than that it was awesome and anybody even slightly thinking about writing a thesis should do it. Really, I cannot stress this enough.

**MPK: Your YCDS play was a drama. Untold Genius is a comedy. Along with all of your creative projects, you studied Math and Philosophy as an undergraduate. Do you think that your different projects draw from all of these influences? Or is there a separation in your interests?**

**ES:** People ask this and I wish I had a cool answer about patterns and meaning and stories or some other nonsense, but truthfully they really do feel like different interests and modes of thinking. I think everybody has different interests and likes and dislikes—somebody studying physics can love Proust, or he or she could hate Proust. A dancer could make a killer lasagna. And maybe I’m being too superficial and there really is some underlying link to my childhood or something like that, and I secretly just want my dad who loves comedy and math to love me—but I don’t think so. I think it’s just different things that I like doing.

**MPK: What other writing influences do you have?**

**ES:** In terms of storycraft I draw heavily from Joseph Campbell’s monomyth which lays out the architecture of myth and how stories work. I am a pretty staunch believer in three act structure (beginning, middle and end) and those classic ideas. I draw heavily from 20th century drama like Arthur Miller or Clifford Odets, with attention given to real psychoanalytic character stuff. Finally, I love Edgar Wright movies, The Simpsons and Arrested Development.

**MPK: Turning back to Untold Genius, how did you find and recruit actors for the show?**

**ES:** We first drew from the well of people we knew. So, my partner in this, Moshe, plays a role, and the director of the YCDS play, Lin Snider, plays a role. It was really fun also to cast Jon Schapiro who is not an actor and is an actual jazz musician and teacher at YU as the “Jazz

Scholar”. Then, for the rest of the roles we went online to a website called Backstage where we posted the casting announcement and sifted through hundreds of headshots and reels, which is an experience I don’t wish upon my worst enemy. It’s super weird.

**MPK: What were some challenges you encountered when planning and shooting the show?**

**ES:** Um...everything was a challenge. Nothing was easy with this because nobody involved had never filmed something like this. We didn’t know how to light a shot and we were just flying by the seat of our pants every single day of shooting. In fact, I bought lights just for this and started watching YouTube videos about how to light a documentary shot. Our main character in this episode is a trumpet player, but our trumpet prop didn’t arrive in time and so we had to quickly rewrite the script day-of as our actor just waited in my living room. And then editing was a nightmare because we had to learn Premiere and Photoshop because we didn’t have money to pay anybody to do this stuff. We shot everything back in August, had our first cut by mid-September and it was terrible. We had to just rewrite like 70% of the episode in the edit room, and it took us until now to actually release the darn thing. I don’t know why I’m saying all of this. It’s not reflecting very well on the show...It’s great. I swear.

**MPK: Your first episode is launching on Monday, February 26. Any plans for the next episode?**

**ES:** That really depends on viewers like you. We have ten episodes written and ready to go. And it’s a full story that has a beginning, middle and end. But, episode one cost me personally a bunch of money and I can’t afford to do the rest of the show like that, so we’re turning to Kickstarter and our friends and family (and Observer readers) who like the show to help us make it come to life. So, please do watch the first episode, and if you like what you see and can afford it, please do toss us a couple of shekels and I’ll be eternally grateful (and there are some rewards through Kickstarter in there for you if you do).

**MPK: What is your ultimate goal for the show?**

**ES:** If you ask me when I’m feeling really good about myself and optimistic, I would say, “Yeah, the show takes off and people like it and then we get hired to go make more cool stuff and life is awesome and just gives me whatever I want!!” But, realistically (and a much healthier attitude) is that I just want to tell this story. This was a story I was excited to write when nobody was asking for it. It’s a story I was excited to tell people about when they didn’t want to listen. And it’s a story I’m excited to bring to the screen, regardless of whether anybody sees it or not. I truly do believe that doing things that matter to you, even if they matter to nobody else, are worthwhile. And while that’s a nice sentiment to close out my proverbial YA novel about finding yourself—it’s really hard to actually believe, especially when something that took a tremendous amount of work and excitement just falls upon deaf ears, but I find being so goal oriented distracting and I’m trying to get better at just appreciating this for whatever this is. God, I sound like such a pretentious snob. It’s a silly comedy! I swear!



## Keeping Track of Cryptocurrency: An Interview With Start-Up Entrepreneur and YU Alum Michael Peres

Mindy Schwartz  
*Editor in Chief*

Recent YU alum Michael Peres is a serial tech entrepreneur, software engineer, mathematician, and radio host. Michael is currently the CEO and founder of four successful tech startups, two media organizations, and a technical science podcast called the “Michael Peres” Podcast. Michael spoke to The Observer about his latest project—CoinHype.org, which gathers valuable information on cryptocurrencies to help investors make informed decisions in this developing market, and to explain why cryptocurrencies are changing the world.

**Mindy Schwartz: A lot of people (including myself) find Bitcoin, and cryptocurrency in general, confusing. Can you explain it simply?**

**Michael Peres:** Bitcoin is the first decentralized digital currency. That means you can send money over the internet from one person to another (i.e. peer to peer) without going through a bank, or a central point of authority (hence, decentralized). The pursuit for a digital, decentralized currency had been a dream for far too long, yet there were simply too many technical barriers to bring such an idea to life. For example, the “Double Spending” problem, where anyone can copy a digital coin and make multiple simultaneous purchases, could not be solved without presenting a central point of authority.

However this problem was solved in October 3, 2008 when Satoshi Nakamoto published his paper “Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System” where he presented an elegant, secure and genius framework for the first cryptocurrency, Bitcoin. A new foundation for technological innovation had been discovered, and the train of cryptocurrencies had already left the station.

**MS: How do you expect cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin to impact the world?**

**MP:** Cryptocurrencies will revolutionize the finance industry, as the internet revolutionized the tech industry by removing the power from a few and delegating to the many and creating unconstrained opportunity for growth and innovation. Some advantages that cryptocurrencies offer include: much lower fees, boundless borders (universal currency), that they can’t be withheld or regulated by governments, and there are no prerequisites or arbitrary limits to its use.

There are many economic opportunities that surround the cryptocurrency realm, all of which encompass a vast range of skills and industries. For example, you can create new digital coins, run business

using cryptocurrencies, build technology using the blockchain, and trade digital coins on the market.

**MS: What are some common misconceptions about cryptocurrencies?**

**MP:** When explaining cryptocurrency, there are some important distinctions to be made: There are hundreds of cryptocurrencies, each with various applications, and Bitcoin is simply the first cryptocurrency. Also Bitcoin uses the blockchain as a public ledger to document transactions, but Bitcoin is not blockchain, and blockchain is not bitcoin.

**MS: Okay so what is a blockchain?**

**MP:** Let me illustrate with an example. When Alice sends Bob money through conventional systems, like a bank, Alice is sending money to the bank with instructions for who it should go to. Alice trusts the bank will act honestly and honor her request. Should all go correctly, the bank records this transaction and updates both Alice’s and Bob’s account balances in their centralized ledger.

The objective of a blockchain is to do exactly that, but to remove the bank, or any central authority, from the equation. The blockchain is a chain of blocks, where each block contains a list of recorded transactions, and acts as a decentralized, distributed ledger accessible to anyone, although personal data can still be password protected. The blockchain is stored on every computer that partakes in the bitcoin network. For Bitcoin, each block contains about ten minutes worth of transactions. Information stored on the ledger can’t be tampered with or backdated—not as the result of a security system, but rather as a result of an inherent and intrinsic property of its design. Furthermore the blockchain’s design makes it a lot harder to attack or take offline as there is no single point where one could attack it.

Mining is a validation of transactions. For this effort, successful miners obtain new cryptocurrency as a reward. Anyone with access to the internet and suitable hardware can participate in mining. The mining process involves compiling recent transactions into blocks and trying to solve a computationally difficult puzzle. The participant who first solves the puzzle gets to place the next block on the blockchain and claim the rewards. The rewards, which incentivize mining, are both the transaction fees associated with the transactions compiled in the block as well as newly released bitcoin. The reason why miners need to use complex and energy consuming methods to create blocks is because this

makes it “expensive” for hackers to abuse the system and submit fake blocks and fake transactions.

**MS: So how do you think blockchains will change the world?**

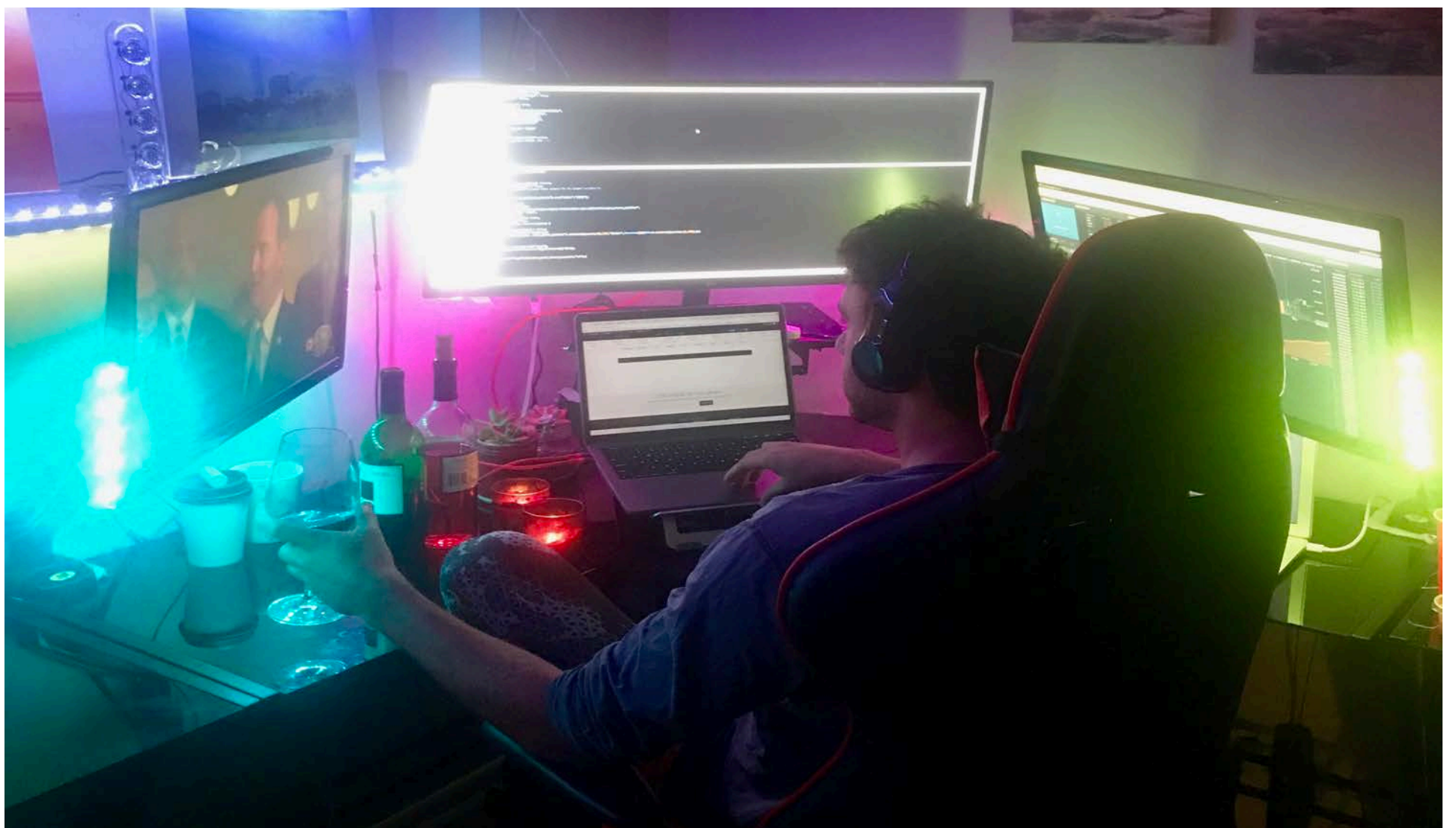
**MP:** Blockchain will revolutionize many fields, making various industries obsolete. These industries include banks, Cybersecurity, Supply-chain management (less need for middle-man tasks), Insurance (a stronger form of integrity used to ensure trust), transportation services and ridesharing, cloud storage, charity (inefficiency and corruption prevention), voting (registration and identity verification), government (reduce bureaucracy, increase efficiency, security and transparency), health care, energy management, online music (via smart contracts, solving license issues, cutting out middleman contracts), real estate, and crowdfunding.

The blockchain is here to stay, and it will replace many current existing infrastructures and technologies, and play a fundamental role for many future technologies as well. Cryptocurrencies are not going anywhere, either.

**MS: Your website coinhype.org is a platform for cryptocurrency traders. Can you explain that a little bit more?**

**MP:** Cryptocurrencies are in their infancy, aggressively disrupting many well established systems which are backed by powerful individuals and institutions. Cryptocurrencies are a serious threat to many industries and the pushback can be incredible, unexpected and at times unforgiving. Such events can violently affect the human psychology of those investing in cryptocurrencies, creating a volatile change in the value of a coin. Human psychology plays such a vital role in this realm, and with that in mind a few terms have been coined (no pun intended) in reference to investment in cryptocurrency. “FOMO” (Fear Of Missing Out) is that feeling you get that drives you to buy into a coin, not take profits on a coin, or not to take profit on coins that have already gone up considerably. This fear of missing out is what causes people to buy at the top or hold during a dip after making profits. Another term is “FUD” (Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt) FUD can cause the price of a coin to drop, not based on fundamentals or charts, but based on bad news that spreads around social media or mass media. Many times the bad news isn’t substantiated or grounded in reality, and instead ends up being something silly like a popular talking head’s

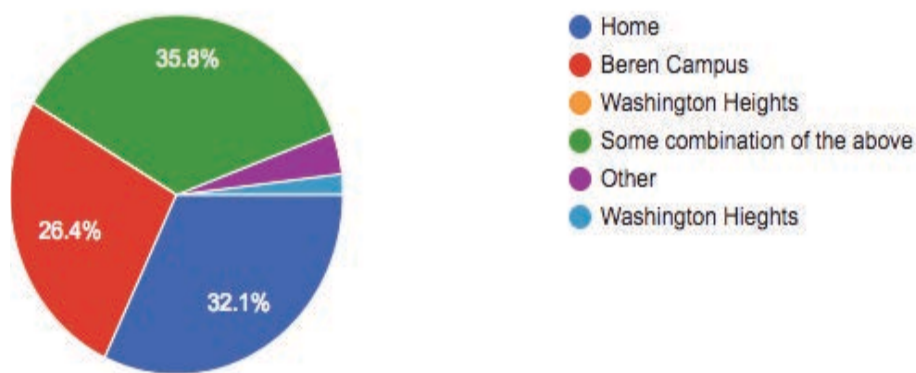
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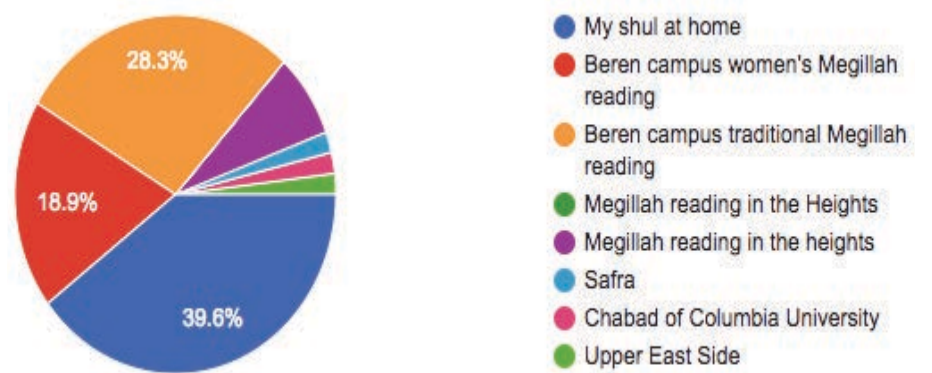
## STERN PURIM PREFERENCES:

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

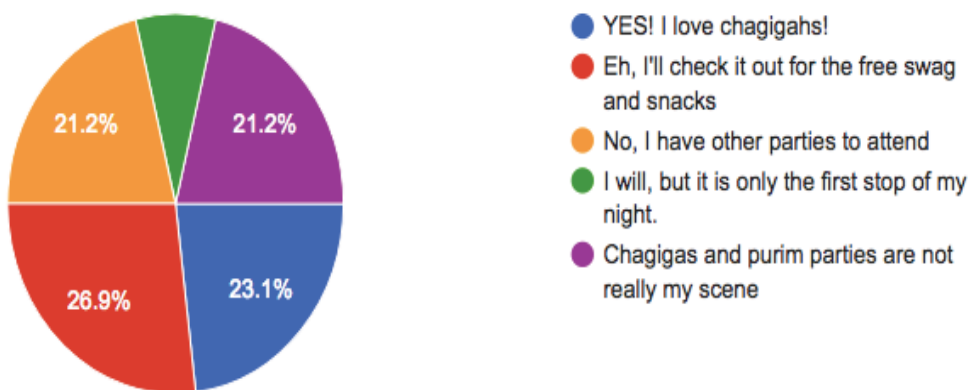
Where will you be spending Purim Night?



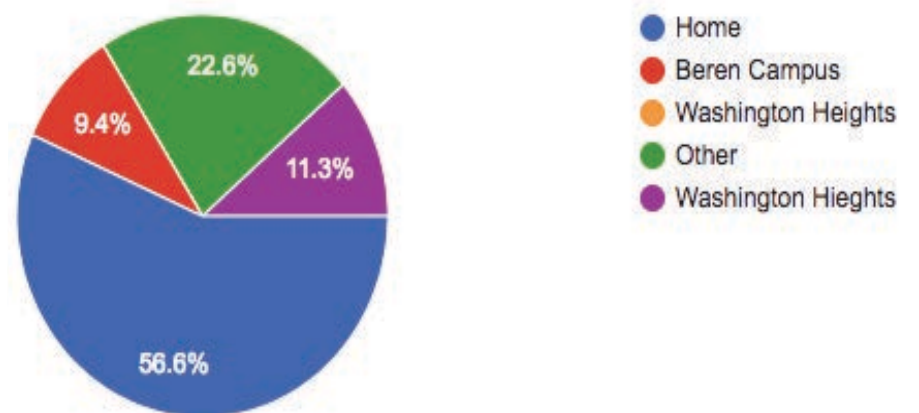
Where will you hear the Megillah at night?



Will you participate in the Stern Purim Chagigah?



Where will you be eating your Seduah?



What can be done to improve Purim on campus?

“More people should come to the chagiga!”

“Purim shpiel!”

“Safe driving opportunities for students coming to and from Wilf and beren”

“Do a co-Ed event!”

“Make it more fun!!!”

“I think they do a great job, my family just always wants me to be home”

**The Observer wants to know what you think! Look out on our facebook page to be a part of the April poll.**

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## Keeping Track of Cryptocurrency: An Interview With Start-Up Entrepreneur and YU Alum Michael Peres

*continued from page 9:*

It's imperative that those trading in this market have the necessary information to act fast and capitalize on the market's volatility, rather than getting eaten alive by it by succumbing to things like "FOMO" or "FUD". My system responds to this need by acting as a central store of real-time vital information needed to create successful trades. To that end, my website condenses a number of points of information in one convenient location to give investors the information they need to succeed in this market. These include:

**Live Cryptocurrency Trading Streams/Chats:** These streams act as hiveminds, where brilliant folks work collectively to perform technical analysis on hundreds of different cryptocurrency markets, notify everyone on important news updates and volatile price changes on coin, provide mental support and much more.

**Live Twitter Alerts:** Tweets from influential folks in the cryptosphere have a huge and direct impact on the market. In fact, figures like John McAfee are so influential that people program bots to carefully monitor everything he tweets. The moment he tweets about a coin, bots instantly purchase large shares of the coin in anticipation of an immediate rise in value for that coin, and they do immediately rise in value, a self-fulfilling prophecy perhaps. This is the most requested feature.

**Respected Chart Feed:** A feed that collects live technical analysis charts (forecasting the direction of prices through the study of past market data, primarily price and volume) from respected twitter accounts.

**Live News Stream:** A live stream from news updates from hundreds of websites and news channel. Specific sites are filtered through with a special algorithm to filter out news articles and videos that don't pertain to cryptocurrencies.

**World Clocks:** A section with the times from locations which have a large demographic of crypto investors. Knowing when such folks wake up, sleep, and to lunch break can help identify vital trends.

**Market Ticker:** A horizontal ticker showing real-time cryptocurrency values of popular coins.

Various other technical trading and charting tools: Trader view charts, market overview stats, screeners, cryptowatch charts, forex heat maps.

**MS: What inspired you to make this website?**

**MP:** Like with most startups I pursue, I'm inspired to solve a problem that I'm personally experiencing. As a trader, having vital data spread out across multiple platforms as it is in the case of cryptocurrency often resulted in me discovering pertinent data once the opportunity had already passed. My website responds to this need by gathering all the relevant information so you can be informed before you make a trade.

**MS: How do you see this website growing in the future?**

**MP:** Simplicity has its merit, so adding more features might just act as noise and distract from what is important. A big part of this system's value is derived from the content, not only the tools. A good comparison would be Facebook. If you remove the content the users put in Facebook, it becomes nothing more than a skeleton. It's less about the tools, and more the content. I don't think I will be adding many new features, but rather refining the algorithms and tools to collect more relevant data.

This platform was launched a month ago and is getting an impressive amount of traffic, growing daily. The more contributors this system has, and the better the system is at detecting relevant data, the better it will become.

**MS: What is your advice to students looking to get involved in the cryptocurrency world? Do you think Bitcoin is a good investment?**

**MP:** The market is a zero sum game, so every penny you earn is from someone else's pocket. The reason why this market is currently so lucrative is precisely because of the human emotion ("FUD" and "FOMO") which has impacted it. Many folks are making substantial

profits by simply capitalizing on the inexperience and lack of education of others, which leads them to make emotional, but not always wise investment decisions.

Emotion will tell you to buy when a coin's value is rising and sell when a coin's value is sinking. But a good trader would do the exact opposite: buy when everyone is panic selling and appreciate profit without getting greedy. That being said, many believe Bitcoin will have a tremendous value in the future, especially given its limited supply. So be patient, educate yourself, and invest wisely.

The most important tip I can give is to always focus on capital preservation, meaning preserve what you have. As obvious as it may seem, forgetting this is the downfall of many. Stick with low risk-high gain trades, be patient, and educate yourself on technical analysis because math works! There are millions of opportunities each day, never get "FOMO" and chase the market by buying into a coin that has already jumped in value, risking a buy at the very top and being at a deficit when the coin's value comes back down and corrects, or catch a falling knife by buying impatiently when you see a coin's value dip, risking the coin's value to dip even more. Simply put, do not succumb to "FUD," "FOMO" and greed.

For those looking to educate themselves on technical analysis, read up on these indicators, tools and theories: Fibonacci retracement lines, Bollinger bands, Keltner channels, Trend/Regression/Support/Resistance lines, Elliott wave theory, Relative Strength Index (RSI), Moving average convergence divergence (MACD), Exponential Moving Average (EMA), Value Weighted Average Price (VWAP), Head and shoulder formation, Cup and handle formation, Bear/Bull traps, and Bear/Bull flags. Understanding these will get you on the path to becoming a successful trader!

## Faculty Spotlight: An Interview with Professor Hidary

Racheli Moskowitz

Rabbi Dr. Richard Hidary is an associate professor of Judaic Studies at Stern College for Women and Revel Graduate School, where he teaches courses in Bible, Second Temple Jewish History, Dead Sea Scrolls, Talmud, Midrash, and Jewish ethics. He received his PhD from NYU, and his rabbinic ordination from the Israeli Chief Rabbinate.

**Racheli Moskowitz: Can you tell us a little bit about your background, and what led you to Yeshiva University?**

**Richard Hidary:** I grew up in Brooklyn, in the Sephardic community. I went to Yeshiva of Flatbush for elementary school and high school, I studied in Yeshivat Har Etzion after high school, and then I came to Yeshiva University as an undergrad for a Computer Science major. I really enjoyed my time here. Afterwards, I studied for Semikha, and then did a PhD in NYU. And when I finished, my adviser, Professor Shiffman, recommended that I send my CV to YU. I got in contact with Professor Kanarfogel who treated me with great kindness since the first time we met. I got very lucky to be able to land the job right away.

**RM: What was the impact of Professor Shiffman and others as mentors for you, and your current role as a mentor and teacher?**

**RH:** Professor Schiffman's definitely been a mentor for me, both academically in the courses I've taken with him and on a personal level. He showed us, for example, how to appreciate older 20th century scholarship, because they're always asking fundamental questions. He is a mentor in terms of intellectual approaches, but also in terms of personal decisions and matters. Until today, I call him or meet him whenever I am working on a new project or making a life decision and he's always been an important guide for me.

I appreciate all that my teachers have done for me—inside the classroom and outside. I hope that I can help my students in the same way.

**RM: You have previously taught at Brooklyn College and NYU; what was it like for you to transition between teaching at secular institutions to a religious one?**

**RH:** At Brooklyn College, I actually taught an Intro to Judaism course; I had prepared this whole academic syllabus, but it turned out that most of the people in the course were either Jews with little background who wanted to learn more about Judaism for personal reasons, or, sometimes non-Jews who were dating Jews, or thinking about converting. In that sense, it was almost a conversion class! I actually had to adjust the syllabus in the middle because they didn't necessarily want to know about some ancient artifact—they wanted to know about Judaism today. Even though it was in secular college, it still had religious overtones. No matter what the institution, people are interested in the subject for various reasons; as a teacher, I want to tap into those interests.

The great thing about teaching at YU is that students have so much background. They can read Hebrew, they know tons of concepts; you can really hit the ground running and get into deep textual analysis and intellectual discussions that you wouldn't be able to do anywhere else at the undergraduate level.

Often, the way to appreciate an academic point is to look at things the students have previously learned, and help them trace where different ideas came from. I think a lot of students appreciate being able to bring more structure and clarity to the "vegetable soup" of information they've studied along the way.

**RM: Do you personally ever find a disparity between your religion and your academic Judaic study?**

**RH:** Sure, but I see my model as the Rambam; his goal was to understand truth, but always to ensure it made sense in a spiritually uplifting context. So for someone like Rambam, if there's a contradiction between science and Torah—well, God created the world and also gave the Torah! If there's a conflict, it means we're missing something. He'd use that disparity as an opportunity to delve deeper into the matter and gain a better appreciation for it. Once you do that, everybody is better off; each source of truth can help us make sure we're interpreting the other in the right way.

Contradiction is a productive source for appreciating greater knowledge. The Rambam never chose between

between science and Torah; he always chose to interpret them to make sure everything fits together. I believe there's always a way to find an explanation.

**RM: You have your BA in Computer Science from YU. Did you intend for that to be your primary focus at first? Have you used those skills in your studies today?**

**RH:** I love computer science—I always loved math and science so the subject really spoke to me. When I took it, Computer Science wasn't really helpful in getting a programming job because it was all theoretical. I studied other programming and did a couple of small jobs and summer work—I liked it a lot. But for a career, I knew there were millions of other programmers out there, and I'd just be another programmer there.

My other love and passion was studying Gemara, which has a similar logical progression to Computer Science. Once, we were in Rav Rosensweig's shiur uptown, and a lot of the same people were also Computer Science majors. And we thought of how to make a computer model of his lectures, because they were always so structured. I think Computer Science also helped me become a better writer; in Computer Science, you have to introduce a variable before you use it, and ensure that variable is used consistently and clearly. It's the same thing in writing; you have to introduce the concept before you can use it, lead the reader step by step in your argument, and clearly delineate the beginning, middle, and end.

For my plan of study, I was always in the Judaic studies track, including my Semikha. But there was one time, in the middle of my dissertation research; I'd had most of the outline done, and I guess I needed a break. I took about a month and I started a website—after the month, I got it out of my system and went back to complete my dissertation.

**RM: You've accomplished so much in the academic world; how did you find time and motivation to balance Rabbinic ordination, teaching, fellowships, doctorate and personal life?**

**RH:** I love what I do; I love teaching, thinking about new ideas, and sharing them in the classroom and in writing. I never felt like it was work or drudgery; it's what I like to do, and I think that makes a big difference.

And they compliment each other. Often, I'll teach the same thing in synagogue or in the college; insights I get from one group of students, I'll go and share with the next. For me, they all work together well.

**RM: What goes into planning your curriculum?**

**RH:** When I was first hired, Professor Kanarfogel needed someone to teach Jewish history of the second Beit HaMikdash period and the Dead Sea Scrolls. I was assigned those, but I was happy to teach them. Being a student of Professor Shiffman, this was something that I already liked very much. These are the standard courses.

Sometimes I'll teach a topic I'm researching; preparing for class and getting students' feedback helps in that research. And students will sometimes ask for a certain course; if I feel competent enough, I'll teach it.

**RM: Do you have a particular course you enjoy teaching the most?**

**RH:** I think my favorite course each semester is more dependent on the group of students than the content of the class. Sometimes there's a core group in a class that is very motivated and is asking challenging questions, keeping the discussion interesting and helping me think of new things. I enjoy those classes the most.

**RM: From your extensive list of publications, are there any individuals works you've found particularly impactful, or meaningful to you?**

**RH:** Probably the thing I've written that's gotten the most readers was an article on Sephardic approaches to conversion. It's a contemporary topic and there are so many different opinions. One Rabbi reached out to me and said it changed the approach he took to performing conversions in his own community.

My favorites though, are works in appreciating the



Talmud—how it approaches controversy and dialogue, and what that means about truth and interpretations. Those works may be less practical but I think they're more interesting.

**RM: Were there people who particularly inspired you to pursue academic Judaism?**

**RH:** I studied at Gush Etzion, which shares a building with the Herzog college. Taking a number of courses at Herzog, where they introduce a lot of elements of academic study was probably my first introduction to the field. For example, studying with Rabbi Avi Walfish there, who showed the literary structures in the Mishnah, or how to appreciate an aggadah. Whereas most of the time, yeshivas skip aggadah, he showed how rich they were. I developed a relationship with him, and with Dr. Mordechai Sabato who taught there. Also, Rabbi Moshe Shamah, my Rabbi, encouraged me to pursue a degree.

**RM: Do you think there should there be more academic Judaic studies in the religious world?**

**RH:** There's definitely a disconnect between the whole academic world studying the very same texts as in the yeshivot and day schools. It makes sense, because they're working with a different set of goals, ones which aren't necessarily compatible. But one of the things I've always wanted to do is to try and bridge that gap to some degree.

On the website I developed, teachtorah.org, colleagues and I developed some curriculum to try and take the best insights from academic Tanakh study which are appropriate for a classroom, and translate them for students and teachers. We want them to be able to understand and implement it, and enhance their appreciation for Tanakh.

I don't think that gap should be fully bridged; academic study is trying to uncover what that ancient period or person is about—that's an important goal for a historian. But for someone in a school or synagogue context, there's a different set of goals. You're molding a child, and want them to leave with a set of values and worldviews. They're not the same; it's a balance—but there's still a lot that can be gained from making the connection between the two worlds of study.

**RM: Do you have any advice for students who are looking to pursue the world of academic Judaism, and to find that balance between the two worlds?**

**RH:** Read! There's a lot of fantastic authors out there—find your interest. The more you read, the more you'll gain an appreciation for the methods these authors use, and know what to look out for as a good argument or a bad argument; you'll see where different authors are coming from. These are skills you need, no matter what area you study. Get recommendations for what to read in your field of interest. Don't accept blindly, from any field.

## Why Lady Bird is an Important Movie

Leah Klahr  
Senior Features Editor

In many ways, the award-winning movie “Lady Bird” is not so different from the classic Hollywood coming-of-age story: “Lady Bird,” the movie’s protagonist, is a high school senior who attends a Catholic school in Sacramento and struggles with family, friendship, college admissions, and, as expressed in a poignant scene set in a thrift-shop dressing room, being the “best version of herself” and figuring out what that even means. But at the same time, “Lady Bird” also drastically departs from the classic Hollywood coming-of-age story. Partly, this is because of the movie’s artful and precise filming, plot, and dialogue, but also, because for once, it is the coming-of-age story of a woman.

According to a “Lady Bird” review in Times Magazine, “Lady Bird” is “one of the few Best Picture nominees to take a teenage girl’s interior life seriously.” While there have been countless movies dedicated to the angst and discovery of adolescence, few movies have explored these themes through the life of a girl. In a CNN interview, Greta Gerwig, “Lady Bird’s” writer and producer explained, “I wanted the central story to be a love story between a mother and a daughter. I wanted this story of a mother letting go, and a daughter coming of age—I wanted to give it as much weight as we give to male stories, as much weight as we give to a man’s coming of age, and a man’s conflict with his father. And I think we give those [stories] a lot of seriousness and space, and I thought, ‘Well, we should do the same for a woman’s story.’”

And that’s just the sort of story that “Lady Bird” is. With humor and empathy, it captures the messy, gray, still love-filled parts of a mother-daughter relationship, and also of family, friendship, and self-discovery. In 2005, the film critic Nathan Rabin coined the term “Manic Pixie Dream Girl” to describe the quirky, free-spirited female character that “exists solely in the fevered imaginations of the sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures.” “Lady Bird” turns this image on its head; with nuance and precision, it explores the ups and downs and inner world of its female protagonist, who is both quirky and free-spirited, and very much a character who exists in and of herself.

Commenting on the significance of the movie, Racheli Moskowitz, SCW ‘19, shared with The Observer, “It’s so refreshing to see a narrative of a girl just exploring herself. There’s no grand adventure or romance—it’s herself she’s exploring throughout the picture. There’s something so honest and truthful about it; no bells or whistles—it’s struggles and journeys we can all relate to.” Golda Aharon, SCW ‘18, explained that what impressed her about “Lady Bird” is the way that it captures the “holistic truth” that “a young person’s life is not defined by one factor alone, be it his or her college acceptances, relationship with parents, religious devotion, or romantic status. Instead, audiences watched a girl navigate multiple parts of her life that define her identity in different shades.”

“Lady Bird’s” cinematic success—it was nominated for five Academy Awards, received the Golden Globes “Best Motion Picture” Award, and was rated one of

**“While there have been countless movies dedicated to the angst and discovery of adolescence, few movies have explored these themes through the life of a girl.”**

the top ten films of the year by the National Board of Review—conveys its achievement of seriously

exploring the coming-of-age story of a teenage girl on screen. However, “Lady Bird’s” success also marks an important moment for female movie directors. Gerwig, who received a nomination for “Best Director” at this year’s Academy Awards ceremony, is only the fifth woman to be nominated in the Academy Awards’ 90 year history. According to Times Magazine, “Gerwig has at once become her own success story and a symbol of the future of storytelling—of the not-so-radical notion that we may, perhaps even soon, get to stop qualifying director with female.” “You just look forward to the day when it doesn’t mean anything,” stated Gerwig on the significance of her nomination.



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## Letter From The Editor In Chief of Perspective's Desk

Rebecca Kerzner



Last summer, after my junior year at Stern, I spent a month in Israel on YU's Counterpoint program. One of my goals that summer was to draw more because I wanted to develop my skill and find my artistic voice. I would wake up early every morning to draw for an hour before breakfast. Later, I would show my peers on the program and they would smile. "You have such a style! It's so distinct," they'd say. It was amazing to see how my simple curves and bright colors could bring others the genuine emotion of happiness. I felt the power in my fingertips and the fulfillment, that my art could reach people much further than just a pretty picture.

Drawing every day that summer taught me a lesson that I've taken with me since on the power of human connection. Each and every one of us holds a special power to uplift one another. Whether it be through subduing a friend in need with a calm voice, or pumping up each other with words of support, or dropping everything to grab some fro-yo down the street, or brightening someone's day with a colorful picture, we all possess specific capabilities to bring light into other people's lives. This lesson changed the way I viewed Stern College and after the trip, I came back for my last year of Stern College with a renewed fire.

There is a sweeping culture of shame that accompanies attending YU. From the outsider who didn't choose YU, we are the lame Jewish school, and how unfortunate it is that we will never go to "real

college" or have a real "college experience". Oh \*insert name\* goes to Stern? \*scoffs\* Why would someone ever want to go right back to high school? We are all familiar with this voice. Every time someone outside asked us how it was going and we answered "Oh, it's okay, you know it's Stern" we gave even more power to that voice and perpetuated our negative stereotype. I personally was an interesting case because Stern had been my dream school and I genuinely wanted to be here, but I learned about that negative voice shortly after arriving and engaging in small talk at parties during my freshman year. This negative stereotype left me surprised and disenchanted because that was not at all how I saw this place.

My naivety was shot, and I kept having similar conversations throughout the next three years. I would watch peers suffer and complain but would still yearn to show them the beauty that I saw in this school. I joined the fencing team and YAS and devoted myself entirely, even at the cost of being seen as the overly enthusiastic extra-curricular obsessed Stern-loving (I know, how could I possibly) girl.

Now, I am nearing the end of my Stern career with only two months until graduation and I can safely say that during my four years, I've surrounded myself with great people and enjoyed my time here. Yet, there are still times where I have found myself obsessing over trying to be the "perfect Stern girl". I preached being

different by really liking Stern while at the same time feeling the same judgement and pushing myself to be more like everyone else. I changed my habits in how I dressed and the activities I did to what I thought would make me more likable and accepted by everyone. I preached hard to be a certain way but fell harder to the judgmental voice on myself. This is a feeling and pressure that I've worked hard to come to terms with over the time I have spent in Stern College.

I am aware that we can't ever fully eradicate the voice of judgement and negativity that exists on this campus. But I do think we can bring a new voice that combats the old one. Luckily, I have seen how Perspective has taken the invisible ideas we all felt but never dared to speak about and gave a voice for all those voices that we needed to hear out loud, but didn't know where to start. For a campus that can feel so isolating like this one, we needed such a platform for girls to see how truly alike we are to each other and that we can all connect and laugh together. We bettered this campus and gave a new, real, and truly raw voice by speaking out and by being there for each other and discussing taboo topics openly. Although there will always be times where I fall for the judgemental voice, this new strong voice exists right by its enemy. Through our power of uplifting one another by sharing in such discussions, we popped the Stern bubble and freed ourselves from it.



## Burnout, TMJ, and How I Learned To Listen to My Body

Mindy Schwartz  
Editor in Chief

During finals last semester my ears starting buzzing, a sensation which I steadfastly ignored. Soon the aching began, and only got worse, until I soon felt like someone was twisting a knife deep into my right ear canal. The pain moved to my temples and the back of my skull. I continued to ignore the pain, buried as I was in a mountain of research papers, finals, and newspaper deadlines. I figured at worst I had an ear infection caused by my general lack of healthy sleep habits. I didn't have time to go to the doctor, or the Beren PA, when there were tests looming ahead.

Finally, a few days into vacation, because the ear pain had not subsided, I went to an urgent care center near my house. The doctor spent roughly ten seconds looking at each ear before announcing that my left ear had an infection, while my right ear looked fine. This didn't make sense to me, as the right ear hurt exponentially more, but I just wanted my diagnosis so I could move on with my life. I had newspaper articles to write, books to read for my job as a research assistant, and—by that point—a wedding to plan; I just didn't have time for this. So I filled my prescription and ignored the pain in my ears.

I waited until the prescription was done—two whole weeks—before I was forced to acknowledge that there was something else going on with my body. My ears

**“The pain in my ears was my body’s desperate plea to admit that I had a problem and that I needed to give myself a break.”**

and head continued to ache, but still I resisted further attempts to solve my problem. I was frustrated; I already spent time at one doctor's office and I just didn't have time to go to another. After much hand wringing my mother and finance finally convinced me that I needed



to see an ENT (ear, nose, and throat doctor). I made an appointment, and on a Tuesday—over a month after the pain had begun—I ran from Stern to the Upper West Side to make it in time for my appointment.

The doctor looked in my ears—for longer this time—and said there was no infection. She asked me what I do, I replied college. She asked what I do in college, I described briefly. She saw my engagement ring and asked if I was planning a wedding, I said yes. She asked me if I was stressed. Obviously, I said while holding back an eye roll, who isn't stressed. We continued talking for a while and finally she gave me a diagnosis—TMJ (Temporomandibular Joint Disorders) caused by stress. Or more, specifically, caused by my body's reaction to stress—clenching my jaw and grinding my teeth, which causes pressure buildup in the jaw, leading to ear aches, head aches, and more.

I left the doctor's office outraged, texting my fiance that the doctor was a quack. Sure, I was stressed, but that could not possibly cause me to have pain in the back of my skull and deep into my ears. I had come wanting a prescription drug that would just make my pain go away without any more time or effort, but now I was prescribed a softer food diet, jaw exercises, and bite plate so that I wouldn't grind my teeth in my sleep. I was furious that I had wasted so much of my time.

Only at the behest of others did I actually make an appointment with a dentist and TMJ specialist who could make me a bite plate. When he asked me what felt like 200 questions about my teeth grinding habits I again restrained the urge to roll my eyes and answered without much thought. After he took a mold of my teeth I ran back to Stern to make my next class.

It wasn't until after a few days of using the bite plate, that I admitted how stubbornly I had ignored my body's cries for help. Suddenly my ears weren't aching every morning. I became aware of the way I constantly went to sleep with a clenched jaw. I even became aware of my clenching during the day—my ears would start to hurt while I was writing, researching, or looking at sample arrangements from the florist, and I would suddenly realize that I had been clenching my jaw and grinding my teeth out of stress.

Looking back, it is clear to me that I was completely

out of touch with myself. I was too stubborn to admit just how stressed and overwhelmed I was, and I couldn't acknowledge that my body was trying to tell me something.

I had always viewed my body as nothing more than a vehicle. It was my brain that told me things, enlightened me, and helped me understand things about myself. My body just took me where my brain told me I needed to go—to classes, meetings, the library, the dressmaker, and did the things my brain told it to do—work, study, write, eat, and (sometimes) sleep. My body didn't tell me things about myself.

However, my experience with TMJ has completely changed the way I view my body. After over two and half years of schooling, pushing myself to be my very best at everything and taking on far more than I could manage semester after semester, my body was telling me that I had finally burnt out. But my brain was too stubborn and prideful to admit that I was spent. It came up with excuses for why I was moodier, why I was so much quicker to snap at people, why I was procrastinating with my schoolwork. The pain in my ears was my body's desperate plea to admit that I had a problem and that I needed to give myself a break.

And I did. I admitted that I was doing too much and I cut back as much as I could. I told my boss I needed more time to do the work he had assigned me and I postponed writing my honors thesis until the summer. I studied a little less, and tried to give myself a few more healthy breaks. Dealing with burnout is obviously a continuous challenge, but I can say it is a million times easier if you actually admit that you have it.

It is easy to ignore our bodies while we find ourselves in college—an institution that largely focuses on the development of our brains. But it is possible for our bodies to tell us things our brains can't, or won't, see. And I for one, plan to listen better next time.

Share your Observations

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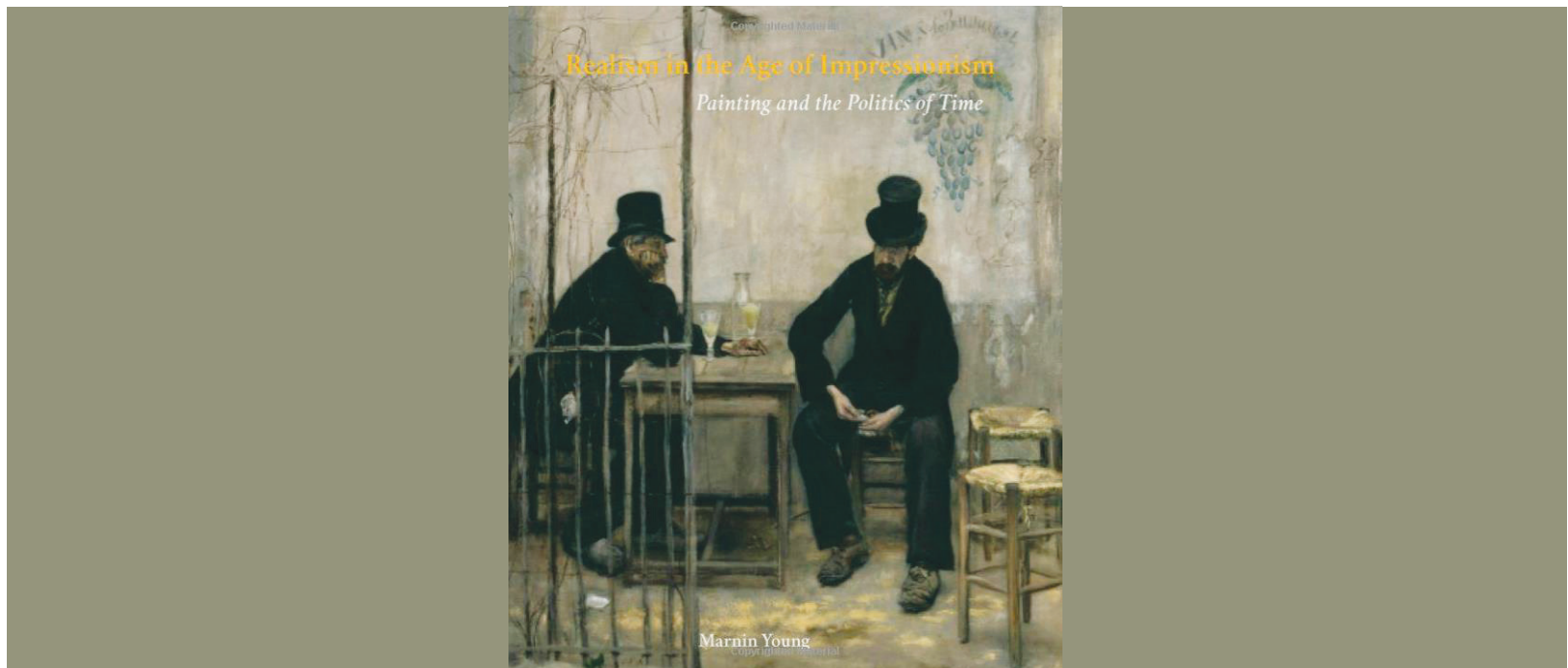
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## New Rules

Ailin Elyasi  
Junior News Editor

As I open up yet another #metoo article, it seems that I have no choice but to confront the movement, as its stories occupy full pages in the newspaper and its victims—some my friends—make their voices heard on Facebook. I cannot believe the number of women coming out about their stories, and the number of men who had given them these stories to begin with. But I am proud that women are no longer suffering in silence.

Their voices ring brave; their volume almost deafening in the void that existed before. They remind me of the rules of that void and the young age at which, I learned them.

My mother, who grew up in a small rural town in Iran, sat me down at seven years old to share with me the rules of womanhood. When she was twelve years old, a man decades her senior, had groped her genitals underneath the table and began fondling them, all while surrounded by a table of adults. She kept quiet and told her mother afterwards. My grandmother told her to cross her legs from then on.

1. Cross your legs. Always. Better not to risk it.

She explained that while men could have high moral standards, it only takes one to ruin a little girl's life. Do not put yourself in harm's way.

2. No sleepovers. Your friends have brothers...and fathers.

She then told me the story of her friend, a flirtatious blue-eyed Persian goddess who was always being chased by men. She would befriend men and usually break their hearts, until one of these heartbroken "friends" said she had lost the right to lead him on, held her down, and proceeded to rape the sixteen-year-old. My mother's friend barely left her house after that incident and remains unmarried thirty-six years later.

3. If you must hang out with a boy, do it with a group of friends or in public.

I did not grow up religious, with the halachot of shmirat negiah and yichud governing all my interactions

with people of the opposite sex, yet it is almost as if I had. Scared by the rules of a three thousand-year-old patriarchal culture, where a woman who is raped is labeled an "adulteress" for life, the rules my mother taught me ruled my behavior. Now I am nineteen, and I reject her rules of womanhood. Women are no longer suffering in silence. That

was Iran. This is the United States, the land of the free, the home of the brave. I call for new rules.

I refuse to follow the same rules as my mother, who grew up in a place where a man found guilty of rape would usually walk free since judges looked for signs in a women's behavior or clothing to justify the rape. I refuse to follow the same rules as a place where a supreme court decision put a woman to death for practicing self defense during a rape, and where a movement failed to free Reyhaneh Jabbari for trying to protect herself. Technically, penal law, the Iranian law derived from the Muslim law book, allows for women to practice self defense during rape, but self defense is hard to prove. In Iran, one must also prove that the self



defense is equal to the danger she experienced, which usually can be decided through "he said, she said" arguments, in which case the man's testimony will always have more weight.

Here is my new rule:

1. Create a culture where women do not have to suffer silently, where people are held responsible for their actions, where abuse is taken seriously. When someone tells you their story of sexual abuse, listen and ensure that the perpetrator is held responsible.

I have heard so many #metoo stories in the past couple of months. Here, in America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, women are finally bravely able to change the rules of the game, and I am proud.

## Common Courtesy on the Intercampus Shuttle

Kira Paley  
Senior Opinions Editor

Though I am a proud Stern student, for some reason, I am a member of the "Overheard at Barnard" Facebook group and on a daily basis enjoy reading quotes from Barnard students that are quintessentially Barnard. In my three-plus semesters at Stern, I have often been inspired by the "Overheard at Barnard" group to create a page or group to share the ridiculous quotes I and my peers accidentally hear from Stern students. For multiple reasons, including the fact that the Stern student body is too small to retain anonymity in the group, I have refrained from creating an "Overheard at Stern" group.

The place where most of the "Overheard at Stern"-worthy quotes are heard is quite possibly the intercampus shuttle. Especially on rides where the vans are mostly full, it is almost impossible to not listen in on others' conversations and hear phrases that are quintessentially Stern. This lack of quiet, though, is not something I am happy about. The fact that eavesdropping is inevitable due to the close proximity of students to each other and the propensity of these students to speak quite loudly, is unfortunate. Many a time, despite that I attempt to drown out the conversations with music, I have heard conversations that I wish I had not.

Firstly, there are the students who use the shuttle as a place to brag about their personal, academic, and professional accomplishments. Perhaps these students

do not know of the concept of sensitivity, and therefore deem it acceptable to tell the students two rows in front of them of their incredible job or internship offers, high GPA's, and great dates. Of course, everyone reserves the right to speak highly of themselves to their friends; the

issues in the "real world." As students of a Modern Orthodox institution, we are responsible for upholding our values of sensitivity and can therefore profess our accomplishments in places other than the intercampus shuttle.



shuttle, though, is not the place for this. Students who perhaps have been unsuccessful in the job hunt, are less academically inclined than their peers, or are sensitive to issues relating to dating, are forced to hear their peers brag about themselves and spend an entire shuttle ride feeling down because other students couldn't stay quiet for a forty-five minute shuttle ride. Inevitably, students, and people in general, will have to deal with their own

Second, there are the students who share personal details with their seatmates or on the phone. As I attempt to gaze out the window at the beautiful East River and enjoy the sultry voice of Hozier, my daydreams are periodically interrupted by the student next to me speaking with the student across the aisle about her menstrual cycle. I think I speak for everyone who's ever ridden an intercampus shuttle when I say that personal details should be disclosed in places where there are not fourteen people, many of whom are at most acquaintances, all within one foot of each other.

And then there's the music; I personally refrain from taking Thursday night shuttles when I can in order to avoid inebriated Stern students insisting that the shuttle driver turn on the radio and make it louder. Shuttle drivers should of course be able to listen to music to entertain themselves during their shifts, just not at a volume that is disturbing to most of the passengers.

Realistically, as long as there are shuttle rides, there will be shuttle-talkers and shuttle-sharers. But can't the shuttle just be a place of quiet where students can get from point A to point B in peace?

## Supply and Demand: Do You Get What You Pay For?

Elka Wiesenberg

Junior Opinions Editor

Prada. Chanel. Gucci. Yves Saint Laurent Valentino. The list could go on for pages. Brand names. We all—excluding those people with incredible self-control and practicality—want them. Many of us spend exorbitant sums, often more than we can really afford, to get the newest Burberry watch, or at least last season’s Kate Spade purse.

Why do we do this?

Since I was little, I was taught that name brands mean better quality. In some cases, this makes sense; you simply aren’t getting high quality fabric at Forever 21 like you are at Diane Von Furstenberg. Sometimes, though, the vast difference in pricing just doesn’t “add up.” I thought about this last week when I was doing my usual (NOT in class, of course) online shopping. Nordstrom.com, Google’s top website suggestion on my laptop, was open, and I was mindlessly browsing through ties.

After finding a beautiful Ferragamo tie for \$300 and adding it to my cart—with little intention of actually buying it, but wishful—Nordstrom recommended that I look at a “similar choice.” A \$19 tie from TieBar popped up on my screen, and I realized that it was indeed very similar to the previous tie I had been looking at. The design, the size, and even the material were all very much the same.

I rolled my eyes. Knockoffs. Why would I buy this second-class version of a Ferragamo? I may as well buy a tie at Target (not to knock Target shoppers; they have some amazing dresses nowadays).

Then I stopped.

Why was this \$19 tie a “knockoff?” What made it any less worthy than the \$300 one? The only major difference, which led to the price gap that influenced my contempt for the TieBar version, was the name stitched into the tag. A name that no one would even see. I had valued the ties based on the name and the price that went along with each.

In his book *Predictably Irrational*, Israeli author and sociologist Dan Ariely discusses many human behavioral patterns that don’t fall into the category of pure logic. One of the chapters, entitled “The Fallacy of Supply and Demand,” discusses a concept called arbitrary coherence. When we—human beings, I mean—see a price fixed to something, we assume that the item is worth that much. If that number is stuck to that bracelet, it must be valuable enough that someone is willing to



pay that price for it. Therefore, that price must be what it’s worth. We wouldn’t know how arbitrarily a number was assigned to an item; all we know is what we see and are told. We follow the crowd and presume that others’ choices have merit on which to base ours.

A famous example of this phenomenon is the value of the black pearl. There was a clever businessman who realized that people were clamoring for gleaming white pearls, while there was a practically infinite number of black pearls in supply, and no market for them at all. This man brought these cheap, disregarded pearls to his friend Harry Winston. The jeweler made a piece featuring the black pearl, surrounded by diamonds and an expensive setting. Soon enough, black pearls were being worn on the necks of Winston’s clients down Fifth Avenue, in their penthouses on Park Avenue, and to every high-class event on the Upper East Side. The trend trickled down to the masses, and soon black pearls occupied a position of status in the jewelry world. What had once been in ready supply was now in high demand,

thanks to the deceptive principle of arbitrary coherence.

How much better is “better quality” in clothing, or anything else, we regularly shop for? How much is that difference worth to us? Are we really evaluating items based on material and durability, or based on what we’re told to get? One little label stitched into a tag can change our whole perspective on an item. At a certain point, we have to draw the line and see where we’re getting the best deal, and where we’re falling into a consumer trap. I know it’s something that I certainly have to work on.

This doesn’t mean that there’s nothing to name brands. It’s reassuring to know that you are getting the best quality possible, even if it’s expensive. Designer clothing also keeps you in on the current trends; when you shop designer, you stay ahead of the fashion game. At a certain point though, we have to stop and think. Are we really getting what we’re paying for?

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MARCH  
ISSUE

## Why I Love Being a Part of the YUNMUN Staff

Yael Blau

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to be a chair for Yeshiva University's National Model United Nations, fondly known as YUNMUN. It is a three-day conference in Stamford, Connecticut, in which students from Jewish Day Schools all over the country come to participate in mock United Nations committees. Over the course of the three days, they try to pass resolutions to solve world problems that they research in advance, as well as deal with crises that they have not prepared for. As a chair, I created the topics that my committee would be discussing, and with the help of my amazing co-chairs, I moderated the discussion and decided which delegates stood out the most.

People ask me, "Why do you want to be staff?" They think that once you are no longer a delegate, it is boring to take part in the conference. You no longer get to argue a country's position, and have no chance of winning an award, so why take part in it? I would like to argue that the conference experience is just as amazing for a staff member, as it is for a delegate.

Why is it so incredible? Firstly, you meet other passionate YC and Stern students whom you may not have met otherwise. You bond with them over procedure, swap stories about crazy kids in your committee, and compare being a staff member to being a delegate. As a chair, I grew close to my awesome assistant chair and administrative assistant. Over the course of a few days, we went from not really knowing each other to constantly talking to one another for hours on end. I also was able to take part in the Chair Shabbaton before the



conference, in which we as chairs were able to review procedure, run last minute errands Motzei Shabbat, and create inside jokes with one another. The media center staff, who are randomly grouped and work together to break out crazy crises, also create bonds that last long after the conference ends.

In addition, being a chair means that you facilitate the growth of the delegates. It was inspiring to see how a delegate, who at first was shy and barely spoke, slowly emerged as a leader who others rallied around. Though I may only know them by the country they are representing and not their real names, I felt so proud each time a quiet delegate spoke up or a leader stood back and let those with less of a presence take charge. Some of the delegates come from smaller schools that do not have Model Congress, Mock Trial, or College Bowl, making Model UN their only chance to demonstrate their intellectual prowess. The delegates learn to cooperate with one another and may

form friendships that last years beyond high school. By leading committees, we give these high school students the opportunity to flourish as public speakers, as leaders, and as individuals striving to make the world a better place.

Though it is fun to be a delegate, and I do miss being a part of the debate, the joy of the YUNMUN experience does not have to end when you finish high school. Though the experience is of a different nature, it is still incredibly meaningful, and I am already looking forward to next year's conference.

## In Search of Stud Message Standards

Kira Paley

Senior Opinions Editor

As do most YU undergraduates, I delete almost every single S-Stud email I receive without reading it. Call me cynical or closed-minded, but at this point in my college career I know which events I will/will not attend and will rarely attend an event, or participate in something, because I read about it in an S-Stud. Whether it's because I'm a terrible person, or simply because I'm always overwhelmed by a barrage of thirty emails at once, all of which contain too many exclamation points in the subject lines, I don't really read S-Studs.

Ironically though, and perhaps this makes me a hypocrite, I send S-Studs and Y-Studs, to recruit writers for The Observer or perhaps to publicize a new YU Scope development. Or, I try to send S-Studs and Y-Studs; unfortunately, my S-Studs and Y-Studs do not usually make it to the inboxes of my fellow students because they are not approved by the Office of Student Life.

It is therefore logical that I become annoyed when I saw that a Y-Stud containing a photo of me made it through the OSL's vetting system and was sent to the entire undergraduate student body. Regardless of the questionable ethics of projecting a photo of someone and publicizing information about them in a public email without warning or consent, the email made me question the school's policy about what is appropriate to be sent in a Y-Stud/S-Stud, and what is not.

A quick browsing of the YU website reveals that while there is information about how to subscribe to receive Y-Stud/S-Studs, there is no official written

policy available online about the purpose of these emails and/or what the criteria for sendable Y-Studs/S-Studs are. When Observer Editor-In-Chief Mindy Schwartz asked OSL Director Rabbi Josh Weisberg why her S-Stud containing a link to The Observer's monthly poll was rejected, Rabbi Weisberg responded that "Typically, YU's stud message system is a vehicle for which to either publicize approved events, University announcements and sharing important information."

This answers one question and establishes that stud emails that don't publicize approved events or share University announcements and important information will probably not get sent. But The Observer, which is a newspaper technically independent of YU, has gotten stud messages approved in the past, qualifying Observer-related emails as "University announcements." Therefore, in the failure of the sending of my email attempting to recruit writers, the issue was probably content-related and not purpose-related.

As aforementioned, there are no written criteria

for what makes a stud message appropriate. Obviously, profanity, explicit sexual content, and offensive material would prevent an S-Stud/Y-Stud from getting posted. The OSL has not established a public set of rules for students to consult to ensure that their stud messages will be posted. It is therefore frustrating when a stud email featuring a picture of a student without his or her permission gets posted, but my innocuous recruitment stud message gets rejected on unknown grounds.



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