



# The COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva College, Sy Syms School of Business, and Yeshiva University • www.yucommentator.org

Volume LXXIX

Issue 9

## Dr. Joanne Jacobson Named New Associate Dean, Other Updates From Future “Super-Dean” Dr. Karen Bacon

By Elie Lipnik

Over the past couple of months, there has been great confusion and upheaval among Yeshiva University students due to YU's financial predicament, and more specifically, the announcement of proposed major academic cuts. Although there have been many statements issued and meetings with the administration to discuss the implications of these changes, exactly what is it to be cut and how it will affect YU students is still unclear. The only unambiguous piece of information is that Stern and Yeshiva College's Deans' Offices and faculty will be merging into one unified staff.



for Women (SCW) dean, Dr. Karen Bacon. Dean Bacon's official title will be Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Arts and Sciences, under which she will be in charge of overseeing the entire faculty on both campuses.

Dean Bacon is a Stern College alumna and received her PhD in microbiology from University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). She is very focused on seeing students grow, while at the same time encouraging them to take on more rigorous courses. As she stated, “The most enjoyable aspect of my job is working with students and watching them thrive.” She wants students to know that she has an “open-door policy,” in which all students are invited to stop by her office with questions and concerns, at all times.



see **Dean's Office**, cont p. 4

## Economics in Crisis: Two Tenure-Track Faculty Members Terminated

By Adir Feifel and Ben Kohane

To most Yeshiva University students, the week before Passover is seen as an opportunity to plan for the upcoming holiday break while winding down from stressful midterms and essays. However, the vacation-minded student body was unaware of a crisis developing within the Economics Department. As a result of the severe budget cuts being implemented at YU, Professors William Hawkins and Michael Richter, two popular tenure-track faculty members, had their contracts terminated, sending shockwaves throughout all of Yeshiva College.

The decision to part ways with Hawkins and Richter is noteworthy for two reasons. Until now, the presumption among faculty and students alike was that the austerity measures adopted by the institution's administration would affect only the jobs of contract faculty; Hawkins and Richter, on the other hand, were both tenure-track. In addition, while the Economics Department at Yeshiva has been radically improved in recent years by new leadership, this turn of events signals that the improvements that transformed its academic reputation are now at risk.

In 2009, James Kahn, the former Vice President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, was hired as the Henry and Bertha Kressel Professor of Economics and the

department's chair. The Provost at the time, Dr. Morton Lowengrub, tasked Kahn with the responsibility of putting a much larger emphasis within the Economics Department on research; until that point, the department had been concentrated almost exclusively on teaching. The first step taken with this goal in mind was hiring - with tenure on arrival - Alessandro Citanna, a prominent economist who had been teaching for over ten years at HEC Paris, one of the top business schools in the world.

It did not take long for Kahn and Citanna to make their mark on Yeshiva's Economics Department. Under their leadership, Economics has become the third largest major in Yeshiva College, with a more rigorous mathematical track to the major recently made available to students. In 2012, the department also launched a new graduate program offering a Masters in Quantitative Economics (MQE). In order to build up the department, a new faculty was needed, and seven new tenure-track professors were brought in, joining the one tenured professor (Prof. Elias Grivoyannis) from before Kahn's time.

Revamping the faculty with experienced, research-focused professors naturally came at a significant cost; the hired Economics professors were indeed receiving higher

see **Economics in Crisis**, cont p. 5

## NEWS BRIEFS

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

### SARACHEK TOURNAMENT DRAWS OVER A THOUSAND FANS

This year's Sarachek tournament once again proved that the Yeshiva League basketball establishment is a force to be reckoned with in the world of Jewish sports. For the players and their fans, the YU-run and internationally broadcasted event is no game - many consider the 'tourney' to be the annual pinnacle of Yeshiva League hoops. So while most pairs of undergraduate eyes were glued to ESPN's coverage of the second and third rounds of March Madness, Yeshiva League fans worldwide tuned in to MacsLive to follow the festivities in the Max Stern Athletic Center. This year's tournament provided non-stop entertainment, with twenty teams playing a total of thirty-six games over a span of five days.

Yeshiva University's own high

school MTA disappointed the local crowd, finishing third to last in the tournament. However, other New York area teams demonstrated the dominance of the metropolitan area; three out of the four tier-one-semifinals teams hailed from within twenty miles of the Big Apple. The first semifinal game was a nail-biter, as Frisch edged out DRS 34-32, while the second was a blowout, with Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway (HAFTR) overwhelming YULA 51-37. The final match between the number-one-seeded HAFTR and the number-three-seeded Frisch proved to be a classic contest; in one of the highest scoring games of the tournament, Frisch emerged victorious after a triple-overtime nail biter. Point guard Tyler Hod, who recorded eighteen points and six assists in the championship game and designed the play

that led to the winning basket, was named tournament MVP. A MacsLive season record 1,350 people followed the live video broadcast of the championship game, capping off a successful weekend for “the country's most prestigious tournament for Jewish high school basketball.”

### ORTHODOX FORUM ON HASIDUT AT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

The Orthodox Forum took place at Yeshiva University on March 15th and March 16th. This annual two-day conference, sponsored by the Joseph J. and Bertha K. Green Memorial Fund at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, brings scholars from around the world together to discuss pressing issues in the Orthodox world. At the conference, individuals' papers are presented and then discussed by members of the forum. This year's

Orthodox Forum topic was on “Contemporary Uses and Forms of Hasidut.” Titles of some of the sessions over the course of the two days included “Sociological and Theological Perspectives on Hasidut,” “Neo-Hasidic Perspectives on Contemporary Topics in Religious Life,” and the “Use of Hasidic thought in contemporary thinkers and topics.” This year, select students from the Graduate Program for Women in Advanced Talmudic Study, RIETS, and the YU student body attended as well. As in every Orthodox Forum, the papers presented at this conference will be compiled and eventually published as a book.

### “YOM'S” LINEUP EXCITING

Yeshiva University's annual Yom HaZikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations have always been marked with special attention as the hall-

mark events of the spring semester. This year is set to be no different. This Wednesday and Thursday, YU will host a tekes for Israel's fallen soldiers, saluting their service and bravery, before running a variety of events to celebrate Israel's 67th birthday. From a ceremony highlighted by keynote speaker Avi Mayer, spokesperson for the Jewish Agency, to a late-night kumsitz and the traditional barbecue in Tenzer Gardens, this year's program “will reflect how integral the State of Israel is to our identity,” says Josh Nagel, Secretary/Treasurer of Yeshiva College Student Association and one of the student leaders organizing the “YOM's,” as the two days are referred to. “Daniella [Eisenman, of Stern College's Torah Activities Council,] and I have worked hard these last few months and we're very excited.”

see **News Briefs**, cont p. 4

# The EDITORIAL

## Now What?

So, we've managed to get rid of Einstein, and with it two-thirds of our debt. Of an estimated \$150M annual deficit, we're now down to \$50M – Einstein supposedly accounted for \$100M. Which begs the question: how do we fill a \$50M hole? More specifically, how do we fill it with sustainable and increasing cash flows?

**Arieh Levi**  
*Editor-in-Chief*

As always, it comes back to increasing revenues and decreasing costs. Let's start with the former.

In my conversations with President Joel, the President pointed to two specific revenue-raising initiatives: increased donations, and YU Global.

Obviously, fundraising is not a long-term plan. No university can survive on acts of generosity alone – no matter how generous. In 2006, YU received a \$100M gift from businessman Ronald Stanton. Of that \$100M, one must wonder how much is left, considering that \$250M of our valuable New York City real estate is currently collateralized against debt.

Nor is YU Global a real remedy. The grant-funded program hopes to cut costs by offering virtual “blended courses” across YU's campuses and raise revenues by granting online degrees to the East Asian market, a part of the globe that has long held a unique fascination with Judaism and its Jews (think Koreans studying Talmud). Whatever YU Global is – and I don't think the program's leadership has quite defined it yet – I cannot imagine that it is a sustainable solution. For one, it competes against much larger rivals, with deeper pockets, bigger faculties, and more robust online education platforms. Why get a degree from YU when you can get a degree from Harvard, MIT, or Princeton? Why use YU's fledgling platform when you can use Harvard's well-developed classroom forums? Further, what does it say about our brick-and-mortar education if YU's savior is an unproven online startup? Ultimately, such an initiative tarnishes YU's reputation in the murky waters of global e-commerce.

More realistically, short-term revenue will have to be raised by involving YU's real estate holdings. As mentioned, approximately \$250M of it is currently collateralized against debt, out of a total of approximately \$1B if we include Einstein's \$500M Resnick campus. This means that we can't sell a large portion of our real estate. However, we could raise revenue in other ways, perhaps via leasing. Still, though, artfully managing our real estate is not a long-term plan.

Then there's the other side of the equation: cutting costs. Alvarez and Marsal (A&M), the consulting firm hired by YU to turn around the institution (for an estimated \$9M – \$12M over the course of 14 months), believes the solution lies in cuts. While A&M stresses its focus to maintain the continued excellence of the undergraduate and graduate programs, there is no doubt that the YU of the future will be heavily stripped down.

For students, cuts mean a number of major changes. Class sizes will be larger, and the small student-to-faculty ratio that traditionally served as one of YU's major draws will increase, detracting from an intimate educational experience. Departments will be cut and merged, with smaller morning and afternoon offerings. Student leaders can expect less money to plan events, of which there will be fewer in total.

For faculty, the situation looks worse. Teaching loads

will increase, allowing less time for research. While tenured and tenure-tracked faculty will stay on, large numbers of contract faculty will be replaced by adjuncts that cost a fraction of the price and can only add a fraction of the value. To illustrate, adjuncts typically make between \$3,500 and \$6,500 per course. The average adjunct, then, must teach 12 courses to receive an income of \$60,000. The average New York City-based adjunct will therefore be teaching hundreds of students spread across 12 courses at – for example – Fordham, City College, Manhattan College, Columbia, and YU. Cutting contract faculty for adjuncts, then, can only mean a lower quality “fast food” education.

Further, using adjuncts might not prove as cost-efficient as hoped. A recent article in the Wall Street Journal highlighted the unionization of adjuncts at universities across the country, where adjuncts have increased from 43% of total US college instructors in 1975, to 70% in 2011. According to the article, the National Labor Relations Board – the same board famously overruled by a 1980 Supreme Court ruling in *NLRB vs. Yeshiva* that allowed YU to deny its tenured faculty unionization – has pushed for more union action at private religious schools, among others. This means higher pay for potentially unionized adjuncts, reducing ultimate cost savings.

Granted, there seems to be no alternative at this late stage. We do have to cut costs, and personnel do make up a large percentage of our overall cost structure. However, shouldn't our teaching staff be the last to go? Instead, shouldn't we be taking a harder look at our top-heavy administrative body?

In writing this article, I found myself returning to one question raised often in my conversations with faculty, administration, and students: what exactly is Yeshiva University? More precisely, are we a small liberal arts college, a vocational school with Sy Syms at the fore, or a Yeshiva with some secular courses thrown into the mix? YU used to be the only real option for Modern Orthodox college students. It no longer is. Orthodox students looking for quality liberal arts or business educations can join strong Hillel communities at Columbia, Penn, and NYU. Less expensive yeshiva options exist at Landers and Queens College.

President Joel would say that our mission is to “ennoble and enable”, and President Emeritus Rabbi Norman Lamm might point to “Torah u'Madda”. However, neither gives an ironclad reason to attend or support YU, given its high price tag and the number of viable alternatives.

A recent article in the Observer quoted one unnamed faculty member at a recent meeting suggesting that YU “stop trying to be all things to all people [and choosing] between the Harvard and the Touro.” I would agree. Before YU Global, before sweeping cuts to our undergraduate education, let's figure out exactly who we are. Defining ourselves concretely will provide us a more accurate barometer by which to measure the difficult choices that lie ahead.

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# The COMMENTATOR

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*The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.*

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### 1 Spring TV is coming

Veep, Silicon Valley, Mad Men, and Game of Thrones. Probably the two best comedies and the two best dramas currently on TV, three of which premiered on the same night! No better way to start your post-break TV watching.

### 2 Lip-Sync Battle

The infrequent but ingenious Jimmy Fallon sketch is now a full-blown show. While LL Cool J and Chrissy Teigen are absurdly unnecessary, the performances themselves usually deliver quality Youtube clips. Especially The Rock's performance of Tay-Tay's "Shake it Off" (now that The Rock uses that nickname for Taylor, we should all be using it) and Anne Hathaway's incredible "Wrecking Ball."

### 3 Bloodline

A new binge-drama from Netflix that I can't hype enough. A rare gem, combining an intriguing and suspenseful plot with deep and thought-provoking drama. Netflix has proven itself again in producing quality original programming, as if we needed more reason to love the amazing site.

### 4 Y-Studs Album

The production of art from our classmates is enough to warrant an UP, but this new EP also brings the quality. Landing itself on the billboard top 100, among other accolades, the songs prove extremely enjoyable. "Hashem Melech" and "Hariyu" are particularly excellent.

### 5 Town Hall Meetings

It's been a while since Town Hall Meetings have been this exciting and interesting. While the news these days may not be positive, it's great to have something to talk and gossip about endlessly.

### 6 That black plastic bag that always floats around the corner of 185th and Amsterdam

In a campus that is always in flux, with library renovations, snow falling and melting, and Dominican neighbors taking a hookah break every once in a while on the benches, it's nice to have a piece of scenery with reassuring permanence.

### 7 Warm Weather

Time to hide away the coats, scarves, and sweaters and break out those spring shorts and shades. Take a stroll around the Heights and start building up that summer tan—especially since finals hibernation-in-the-library is coming.



## 7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN

### 1 Announcing Candidacy

Why does every candidate need to publish a video or make a speech about this decision? We've all known for months exactly who is going to run (surprise! Hillary Clinton is running!). What we should institute instead is a literal hat-throwing ceremony, in which everyone who wants to run for President gathers in Iowa with their favorite hat and throws it into a boxing ring. Then they can all grab some dirt and start some literal mud-slinging too.

### 2 Separation between Glueck and Nagel

In addition to the not-so-subtle message about separating Torah and Mada from each other, the temporary wall is a bit of an eyesore. And it makes walking between the two buildings beyond annoying.

### 3 Eating Lunch Outside

Now that the weather is (finally) nice, you sort of have to eat outside at least once. But be warned, you will either have to avoid eye contact or awkwardly wave at everyone you know who passes by—which is everyone.

### 4 Post-Pesach Program

Hold on just one moment. You mean to say that while we had about eight and a half months of winter, there have been people living in sunny Israel this entire time? These sun-kissed angels of the Holy Land have never made us feel more pale.

### 5 Sefrah Beards

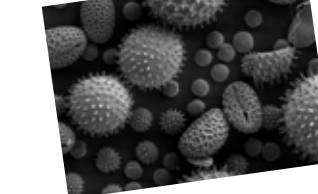
Despite numerous Buzzfeeds about how great beards make people look, yours just doesn't seem to be doing the job. And beyond the distracting image in the mirror, the scratchiness and gruffness couldn't be more annoying.

### 6 That black plastic bag that always floats around the corner of 185th and Amsterdam

You know how when you litter, you say, "I'll never see this piece of trash again?" Well, this determined little bag is out to prove you wrong. Some say it has been drifting back and forth between Furst and Glueck since the beginning of the year, while others claim it was there last year—but they aren't sure if that was just a different black plastic bag.

### 7 Allergies

Just in time for finals, you now have a constant headache and a box of tissues in your knapsack. Yay!



## Yom HaShoa Event Marks Anti-Semitism, Past and Present

By David Mehl

Seventy years to the day after the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, students and other members of the Yeshiva University community gathered together in Lamport Auditorium to mark Yom Hashoah.

The theme of this year's event was I am Never Again, a reference to the slogans Je Suis Charlie (I am Charlie) and Je Suis Juif (I am a Jew) which were popularized following the terrorist attacks which occurred in France this past January. Each speaker emphasized the connection between violent anti-Semitism of the past and its modern-day incarnations, and the imperative of resisting each.

The ceremony began with a moment of silence for those killed during the Holocaust, followed by a spoken word presentation by Stern senior Michal Kupchik, which focused on identifying with the victims of anti-Semitism past and present.

After the American and Israeli national anthems were sung a capella by The Y-Studs, Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter continued with the theme of connecting past and present, including practical recommendations for how students could fight hatred. He repeatedly invoked what he described as the weighty obligation to "zachor - gedekn - remember."

The assembled crowd next heard from Holocaust survivor Sally Frishberg, who was interviewed by Yedidyah Weiss. She described fleeing German soldiers by night and taking shelter in haystacks by day and the long time her family spent sheltered in the attic of one Stanislaw Grocholski, today recognized by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. She also talked about her optimistic view of the Jewish future around the world, even in countries where they are beset by anti-Semitism. Today, Ms. Frishberg works to preserve the memory of victims of the Holocaust in the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust and in schools throughout the New York City area.

Other speakers that night - among them Hadassa Holzapfel, Amanda Esraelian, and Becky Shachter - described recent initiatives like the Adopt-a-Survivor Program, which connects college students to Holocaust survivors, and the Jewish solidarity mission to France. Six candles were lit in memory of the six million slain, and President Richard Joel intoned the El Malei Rachamim prayer. The Y-Studs also performed twice more throughout the night.

The event, which filled YU's Lamport Auditorium, was organized by the Student Holocaust Education Movement.





## News Briefs, cont. from p.1

### YU GLOBAL PLANS TO PARTNER WITH COURSERA

In his email to the student body sent over the Pesach break, President Richard Joel mentioned that “YU Global has gained membership in Coursera, the largest online learning platform in the world” and “will create a ‘Coursera specialization’ in a high demand field.” YU Global, of course, is YU’s recent initiative to provide education to a variety of audiences using technologically-advanced platforms, as “the ‘continuing education’ arm of Yeshiva University,” according to their website. This new partnership will provide YU Global with access to Coursera’s 12 million users and learners, boosting its registration numbers as the program picks up steam.

According to Dr. Akiva Covitz, the Executive Director for Strategy of YU Global, “having short, free, open versions of modified YU courses on Coursera will drive people to the YU Global website for tuition-based certificates and degrees programs.” As YU Global attempts to

enter a crowded market of online educational institutions, joining Coursera is only “one element of a broader strategy to break into the world of online learning,” Goldberg continued. “We are excited to use the...membership in Coursera...as a way to market our unique brand.”

### YU PROFESSORS EARN UNUSUALLY HIGH SALARIES

A survey released on April 13 by the American Association of University Professors ranked New York colleges and universities in order of average faculty salaries and put YU at the number four spot. On average, the survey said, YU full professors earn \$164,600 and tenure track faculty members earn \$112,100. In comparison, half of the one hundred New York-based universities that participated in the survey pay full professors an average of less than \$100,000. In 2014-2015, the average full professor at YU earned more than the average full professor at Fordham University, Barnard, Cooper Union, Stony Brook, and Colgate. Seven out of the ten universities with the highest faculty salaries

are based in New York City. Columbia University pays the most, with its average full professors raking in \$223,900 and tenure-track faculty earning on average \$169,200.

After Columbia came NYU and Cornell, with Cornell closely followed by YU.

Salaries of university faculty members are generally on the rise, jumping 1.4 percent in 2014-2015. Along with this slight increase in salaries came a 16.6 percent drop in state aid for public colleges and universities nationwide since 2008-2009, with the State Universities of New York suffering a 29 percent drop in state aid. Certain educational fields are more lucrative; professors of science, medicine, law, and business earn higher salaries than professors of humanities. The survey might be somewhat misleading, though, as today’s university faculties are largely composed of part time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate students. Nevertheless, YU’s unusually high faculty compensation provides food for thought in the midst of this budgetary crisis.

### RAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN PASSES AWAY AT 81

This past Monday, Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein, the Senior Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion, RIETS Rosh Yeshiva, and inaugural Rosh Kollel of the Gruss Institute, passed away at the age of 81. Rabbi Lichtenstein held a doctorate in English literature from Harvard University and was considered a leader in the modern Orthodox world. Starting in 1971, Rabbi Lichtenstein, son-in-law of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, led the yeshiva in Alon Shvut and was awarded Israel’s highest civilian honor, the Israel Prize., The son-in-law of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, Rabbi Lichtenstein led the yeshiva in Alon Shvut for over forty years and was awarded Israel’s highest civilian honor, the Israel Prize, in 2014. He is survived by his wife, Dr. Tovah, his children Yitzchak, Moshe, Meir, Shai, Esti and Tonya and by two sisters, Hadassah Kleiman and Shoshana Lichtenstein. Featured coverage will follow in The Commentator’s next issue.

### NEW LAWSUIT BROUGHT IN MTA SCANDAL

This week, *The New York Post* reported that Israel and Chaya Gutman, parents of one of the alleged molestation victims who attended YU’s Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy in the early 1980’s, are filing a new lawsuit against the school, after one searching for \$680 million in compensation was dismissed from court last year. In that federal case, the judge ruled that the statute of limitations had expired for the allegations of over thirty boys. This new lawsuit, which claims the school was “guilty of deceptive advertising by touting the high school as a safe place to send youths,” while originating from this single couple, will seek to gain the support of other parents of allegedly molested ex-students, according to the couple’s lawyer, Kevin Mulhearn. Mulhearn represented the alleged victims in the initial lawsuit and specializes in sexual abuse cases. It is yet to be seen whether the statute of limitations will apply in this case.

## Dean’s Office, cont. from p.1

Many students are concerned with exactly what the structure of the Dean’s Office will look like and precisely how it will operate. At this point in time, not everything is solved and not all of the pieces in the puzzle are put together; in the words of Dean Bacon, “it is a work in progress.” However, Dean Bacon has great insight to remedy many of the students’ worries. Dean Bacon will be at the head of all SCW and YC curricula, with two associate deans, one on each campus, directly under her. On Stern’s campus, the current associate dean, Ethel Orlian, will remain in her position. With the recent news of Dean Eichler stepping down from his position as Dean of Yeshiva College, the upcoming Associate Dean of Yeshiva College will be the current chair of the English Department, Dr. Joanne Jacobson.

Just before Passover break, the agreement was finally reached between Provost Botman, Dean Bacon and Dr. Jacobson for Dr. Jacobson to officially take over the position of Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Dr. Jacobson has held various positions at Yeshiva University, according to her faculty webpage: “[she] has served as associate dean for academic affairs; as director of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program; as director of the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Jewish Studies; and as chair of the Department of English.” She made the decision to return to the Dean’s Office, where she has previously served as Associate Dean, because “the chance to have an impact on broad institutional policies, beyond my department, was—and remains—compelling to me. I feel as though another period of institutional transition makes this the right time for me to return to those opportunities in administration.”

Dr. Jacobson has taken a large role in the upcoming structural transformation. She has taken part in discussions with the Provost and the consulting team from the Alvarez & Marsal consulting firm. In addition, she has met with the chair of the Stern Department of English to “set up initial dialogue with members of the

Stern and the Yeshiva College English Departments, which took place in January and was a very cordial discussion of the teaching and research interests of each member of the English faculty, as well as an exchange of ideas for how we might potentially align the two English majors.”

It is Dr. Jacobson’s belief that merging could “turn out to offer some real opportunities for enlarging the intellectual range of the YU community.” In fact, she believes that many faculty members are eager to create a broader cross-campus sense of community. At the same time, however, Dr. Jacobson thinks that “going forward we have to move very carefully. After so many years of autonomy, each campus and each faculty has, inevitably,

having professors teach on both campuses, it is possible for them to offer a greater variety of courses and more robust majors. Moreover, she believes that by having certain professors teaching at both campuses it allows for the courses to be more comprehensive. For example, the professors of First Year Writing can work together to create a writing course that encompasses the most proficient aspects of the two current courses. Although certain professors will be teaching on both campuses, the majority of professors will remain teaching on their current campus.

Obviously, the biggest advantage to this integrated faculty is the cost-saving benefit, but with it come many other efficiencies. This efficiency will allow for individuals like lab technicians and teaching assistants (TAs) to be easily transferred to either of the campuses upon request. It also means there will be more unified policies with a unified faculty. For example, SCW currently accepts both 4’s and 5’s on high school Advanced Placement exams, whereas Yeshiva College accepts only 5’s. Dean Bacon has evaluated the policy and determined that many other prestigious universities accepts 4’s on the exam. Therefore, she wants to pressure Yeshiva College to adapt SCW’s practice and give credit to students who receive 4’s on Advanced Placement exams.

The largest obstacle that will come along with this change is the traveling that Dean Bacon and other faculty will have to undergo on a daily basis. Considering that Dean Bacon will be the “super-dean” of both SCW and YC, she will split her time between the midtown and uptown campuses. President Joel suggested that she spends two days at Stern and two days uptown, whereas Dean Bacon prefers to devote the mornings to Stern and the afternoons to YC. She feels that by spending her time at Stern in the mornings, she will not be missing much at YC considering the secular courses take place in the afternoon. President Joel, however, feels that driving through New York in the middle of the day wastes too much time to make the trip worth it. However, these arrangements are

**IT IS DR. JACOBSON’S BELIEF THAT MERGING COULD “TURN OUT TO OFFER SOME REAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENLARGING THE INTELLECTUAL RANGE OF THE YU COMMUNITY.” IN FACT, SHE BELIEVES THAT MANY FACULTY MEMBERS ARE EAGER TO CREATE A BROADER CROSS-CAMPUS SENSE OF COMMUNITY.**

developed its own traditions and its own cultures—on matters ranging from faculty governance to educational priorities. I do not expect ‘merging’ to mean obliterating those differences, but instead — hopefully — to mean looking closely and fairly at how each campus does its work, being open-minded about the potential advantages for change ... and learning how to listen to one another.”

Dean Bacon strongly believes that this merger will not negatively impact students in the slightest —in fact, she believes that it will benefit them. Although the university has cut programs like First Year Seminar, and is in talks about decreasing the requirement for Judaic Studies, Dean Bacon claims that by

still open for evaluations, and no details have been completely worked out yet. Regardless of her traveling schedule, she expects to spend a great deal of time on each campus, making her presence known.

When President Joel announced Dean Bacon’s new position, he also stated that this transformation will fully transpire in three years. To many, like Dean Bacon, who is an avid advocate of the ideology, “study a problem, solve it, and move forward,” the sooner the merge takes place, the better. Other academics have a different, much more elongated method of dealing with issues, which may cause a delay in the structural transformation. Therefore, and unfortunately, only time will tell. Until then, it will just have to remain another one of YU’s lengthy, unraveling puzzles.





## Mourning a Tragedy and Lending a Helping Hand

By Arel Levkovich

On Saturday, March 21st, tragedy struck in Midwood, Brooklyn, as a terrible fire - erupted overnight in the home of the Sassoon family. The fire took the lives of seven Sassoon children, while their mother, Mrs. Gayle Sassoon, and second-oldest sister, Sipporah Sassoon, were both able to escape through the glass of second-floor windows. They both remain in critical condition. The father, Mr. Gabriel Sassoon, was away from his family on a trip that Shabbat and eulogized his seven children the next day. Thousands attended the funeral at Shomrei Hadas Chapels to pay their respects.

Within 24 hours of the tragedy, by March 22nd, the New York City Fire Department,

along with the NY Red Cross, took action in order to prevent the danger of future home fires. Both organizations provided fire safety literature and signed up many for free installations of up to three smoke detectors. Ultimately, the Red Cross was able to secure 120 appointments. The FDNY and Red Cross volunteers then returned to the Midwood community on March 31st for the actual installations; a total of 227 alarms were installed.

Because of the positive outreach in Midwood in those 24 hours after the fire, the FDNY and NY Red Cross came together at five additional sites with large Jewish Orthodox populations, and on March 29th, signed up another 500 community members for free installations that will take place later this year. It should be noted that the NY Red Cross kicked off its own Fire Preparedness Cam-

campaign in January in order to reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries by 25 percent over the next five years.

Here on the Wilf Campus, the YU Red Cross Club was contacted by Ms. Amanda Crabbe, the Regional Manager of Youth Services from the NY Red Cross, to ask if the club could send over students to assist in the initial March 22nd tabling. While the drive was unable to coordinate with YU due to short notice, the YU Red Cross continues to work hard in hosting several events for members of the university. One of popular events that YU Red Cross Club hosts each semester is a dodgeball tournament to raise money for a specific project - in 2013, for example, the money went towards relief in the Philippines following an earthquake.

Every fall, there is also a letter writing

campaign for students to send thank you cards to soldiers serving overseas. Additionally, Elias Atri, who runs the club along with Adam Kurnick, mentioned that in the spring, training and certification were even offered to its members in CPR, First Aid, and AED. Due to its success, the club received an Outstanding Campus Club Award from the NY Red Cross.

As students prepare for the summer, let us remember the seven Sassoon children who are no longer with us, and let us pray for the full recovery of Mrs. Gayle Sassoon and her surviving daughter. Let us also give Mr. Gabriel Sassoon the strength he needs to move forward, and let us appreciate the efforts that have been made, and continue to be made, for those in need.

### Economics in Crisis, cont. from p.1

faculty members. Prof. Citanna justified this economic terms: "The marginal revenue is larger than the marginal cost. To speak more precisely, when you look at the revenues we generate [through undergraduate and graduate students] and divide it by the cost of faculty, you realize the cost of faculty has gone up, but so have our revenues. We are profitable and the university has never disputed that we make money for them."

As Citanna explained, the department set up a business model which increased its number of students, generated revenue through a graduate program, improved academic quality across the department, developed long-lasting online courses, and integrated the faculty on the Wilf and Beren campuses (one of only two departments to do so - the other being History). These actions allowed the Economics Department to remain profitable, even while hiring more expensive professors that undertook serious research and taught fewer courses throughout the year.

The fact that rising economics stars like Hawkins and Richter are even teaching at a smaller school like Yeshiva University is a testament to the department's transformation over the last few years. Hawkins did his research with famed economist Daron Acemoglu (author of *Why Nations Fail*) at MIT, the top-ranked graduate school for economics. Similarly, Richter's recent paper on competitive equilibriums that he co-authored with Israeli economist Ariel Rubinstein will soon be published by the *American Economic Review*, arguably the most prestigious economics journal in the field.

One of the main causes for this sudden move was alluded to in a recent email from Provost Selma Botman to all faculty at Yeshiva. She wrote, "As you know, we have made a very difficult decision to eliminate two tenure-track lines in the Department of Economics. Unique circumstances drove this decision. The Economics Department was built up with the expectation of funding support that is no longer forthcoming, thus contributing to the financial strain on the University." Botman's email went on to reassure the faculty that the "department remains robust" and that "decisions that we have made allow us to maintain a healthy number of...offerings for our students."

When asked by *The Commentator* to elaborate about the financial motivations for the decisions, Botman said, "These positions were originally funded through partial gift income, which is no longer forthcoming." Thus, the loss of donor money has played a central role in the contract termination of Hawkins and Richter, forcing the Economics Department to make these painful cuts despite still being profitable overall. Dr. Kahn, the department chair, commented, "Of course more external funding is always better than less, but net revenues from our Masters program are considerably larger than the external funding the department had received."

Hawkins and Richter are extremely popular teachers among students of the major, and news of their termination has not been well received. Economics major Racheli Ramras (SCW

salaries than many other YC

'15), took one class with Hawkins and two with Richter, who is also mentoring her Honors thesis on game theory and big data. Responding to the recent news, Ramras said, "It upsets me that a major which is so interesting, challenging, and important is being put [at] such a disadvantaged position with the removal of its best teachers. Making matters worse, economics was growing and becoming more popular among students, but now what will happen?"

Shai Berman (YC '16), a history/economics double major and current president of the Yeshiva College Student Association, is similarly worried about the future of the department. "Professors Hawkins and Richter are two of the best profes-

issue to be addressed is whether the MQE can continue to exist with a smaller faculty, and if so determining what changes are necessary for the program. Looming far larger though, is the challenge of replacing these professors. Citanna explained, "We are not going to be able to hire faculty in economics for the years to come, at least the next ten years. It was already difficult three years ago, even last year, to convince freshly minted PhD students to come here because we weren't offering incredibly generous working conditions or salaries compared to top places, and the school had no reputation to start with. [Now,] it's going to be impossible because those people will be very much afraid of coming here when they see what consideration tenure and tenure-track receive. This is going to be a big, big problem."

Another factor that would dissuade potential future faculty members from coming to YU, and even the ones still here from staying, is that budget cuts will also potentially force professors to teach a much larger number of courses. Therefore, while most economics professors would typically only teach three courses each year between the undergraduate and graduate level in the past, the administration is now pressuring them to increase that number to five or six. This is a level unheard of even at top liberal arts colleges according to Citanna, and it is a demand that essentially changes the nature of the profession because it makes research all the more challenging. "If I have to teach six classes," Citanna said, "I can write papers at nights and over the weekend, but I am not going to have as much time no matter how hard I try - there is no magical formula for that." Economics is a field of academia where the expression "publish or perish" holds a fair amount of weight, so it makes sense that the faculty are quite concerned about this change in course expectations going forward.

However, if there is one message that both Kahn and Citanna emphasized in light of the recent news, it is that the Economics Department will do its best to build on past successes and continue to supply a first-rate economics education to all its students, even while being stretched somewhat thin for the time being. Kahn stressed that "we will do our best to carry on with fewer resources," and therefore students of the major should not be worried about neglect in the classroom. Citanna added, "We were committed to teaching and serving students before and we are still committed the same. That's not going to change, but it will be more difficult to make ends meet."

Economics is infamously known as "the dismal science," but the latest events have made its status at YU seem even more dismal than the adage suggests. The firing of Hawkins and Richter raises many questions with few comforting answers. Most introductory economics classes teach that in the boom-bust cycle of an economy, a period of recession is always followed eventually by period of recovery. One can only hope that the crisis facing the Economics Department will be short in nature, and a swift recovery is in turn right around the corner. Otherwise, an even worse situation could befall all the students and faculty of economics at Yeshiva.

### THERE ARE A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF CONCERNS FACING THE DEPARTMENT AS A RESULT OF LOSING HAWKINS AND RICHTER. ONE ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED IS WHETHER THE MQE CAN CONTINUE TO EXIST WITH A SMALLER FACULTY, AND IF SO, DETERMINING WHAT CHANGES ARE NECESSARY FOR THE PROGRAM. LOOMING FAR LARGER THOUGH, IS THE CHALLENGE OF REPLACING THESE PROFESSORS.



Professors Michael Richter (left) and William Hawkins

sors in the department [who] excel not only in their research and teaching, but also in spurring student interest in their discipline and their investment in student success." Berman took Intermediate Macroeconomics with Hawkins last semester and personally attested to his extraordinary dedication: "He must have spent hours upon hours, often in the early morning, responding to the every question, no matter how small or simple, that students posted on our online forum." This devotion to students of the major is something that Berman thinks will be sorely missed.

Both professors will sorely miss Yeshiva. "I'm disappointed to be leaving YU. I'll miss interacting with YU students, and I've enjoyed my time here," said Hawkins. Richter echoed similar sentiments.

In fact, there are a significant number of concerns facing the department as a result of losing Hawkins and Richter. One



## Barclays CEO and Think Tank Founder Highlight YU Event

By Ben Kohane

Last weekend, a trio of Yeshiva University student organizations teamed up to host two top Israeli business leaders in an event entitled “Israel: Beyond the Apps,” which featured a pair of presentations followed by an interactive forum for questions. The evening featured both Leonard Rosen, currently the CEO of Barclays Israel – a division of one of the largest banks in the world – as well as Gidi Grinstein, the founder and president of the Reut Institute, one of Israel’s most prominent think tanks on economics and public policy. Organized by the YU Israel Club, the YU Investment Club, and YU’s TAMID chapter, the event drew a varied audience, from finance and economics majors to those interested in making Aliyah, and was well-received by all who attended.

The event began with opening remarks and introductions from TAMID co-presidents and Syms juniors Ezra Kapetansky and Ariel Mintz. TAMID, the campus group which provides its members with an integrated financial education curriculum, opportunities for pro-bono consulting for Israeli startups, market investment research, and more, took lead on the event, including finding the speakers. “Tonight you will have the opportunity to hear insights that you will not hear anywhere else,” Mintz declared.

Rosen was the first to step up, and he began his presentation by going through his personal career path – he began his journey to CEO of Barclays Israel as a lawyer for Cravath in New York – as well as detailing the development of investment banking in Israel. Investment banking, as Rosen explained to the non-finance majors in the room, focuses on helping corporations raise money through arranging IPOs which allow companies to “go public” and issue stock, organizing mergers and acquisitions (M&A), and more. The investment banking market in Israel, with the proliferation of technology companies and others in recent years, has expanded tremendously; Rosen listed dozens of big-ticket deals which both wowed and impressed students.

Rosen went on to describe Israel as “a foreign trade-driven, knowledge-based, tech-oriented economy.” By favorably marketing Israel to investors, by explaining that political unrest does not translate into financial volatility, simplifying transactions, and more, his bank helps cultivate the companies that are transforming Israel every day.

The think tank founder Grinstein similarly detailed his per-

sonal experiences before detailing his organization’s objectives and current policy projects. He first confirmed a Wikipedia-sourced anecdote mentioned by Mintz in his introduction of the Reut Institute’s president: Grinstein was indeed a member of then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s team and saved Barak using the Heimlich maneuver during the 2000 Camp David Summit in Maryland. During his sponsored fellowship at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government after serving in the Israeli Navy, Grinstein first began to “realize how weak current forms of government were and their inability to deal with real challenges of society.”

After returning to Israel, Grinstein began to focus his ef-

deals.

Another student asked for advice for “students who want to live and work in Israel but are hesitant because of [the] housing market, [the] unstable job market, and [the] current political situation.” Both speakers were encouraging, urging students considering Aliyah to “focus on niche markets” and see their initial job as simply a “launching pad.”

Grinstein especially appreciated “the deep interest and great questions by the students. Such conversations are what these events should be all about. YU students are the exactly the kind of people I should be meeting,” he continued. “[They are] passionate about Israel and all things Jewish, smart, educated, and nice.”

Billed as “The Premier Israel Business Event of the Year” by its flyers, the event was especially important and interesting to other members of YU’s TAMID chapter, who are currently working in projects of consulting and investment fund management. Sarah Varon, a senior and marketing major, acknowledged that “the event was extremely successful. [All] were able to glean a unique insight on the Israeli economic landscape.”

Jessica Rogelberg (Syms ’17), who joined TAMID to explore the fascinating business world in Israel, agreed that “the speakers really complemented each other. [The speakers provided] a very complete picture of what’s going on in Israel, from the booming tech scene to critical social problems.”

The TAMID co-presidents were extremely pleased with how the event turned out. Mintz highlighted the “interesting conversation between the two sides of Israel” and the role of its growing technology sector. Kapetansky recognized

that YU was “privileged to get these two prominent leaders in Israeli business and economics... [to] share complementing [sic] perspectives on Israeli innovation.”

Israel Club board member Shlomo Anapolle (YC ’16) summed up by sharing a lesson from the event: “If you put your mind to something in Israel, the stars are the limit.”

For an event titled “Israel: Beyond the Apps,” the interactive event truly provided a deeper look into the high-tech nature of Israel’s growing economy and provided a pair of enlightening perspectives on where this economic landscape is developing.



From left: Israel Club president Michael Osborne, TAMID co-presidents Ariel Mintz and Ezra Kapetansky, Barclays CEO Leonard Rosen, Reut founder Gidi Grinstein, and YUIC director Avi Hershberg

orts on emphasizing the economy on a local level. Instead of “trickle-down effects,” Israeli society needed to focus on developing a network of prosperous and resilient communities by incorporating dedicated local institutions and civic leadership. From revamping the economy of Tzfat to training Haredi men and women in technological skills, his group has effected massive change in a number of important public policy projects.

In the ensuing question and answer session, the two speakers fielded questions that ranged from investor reluctance to philanthropy. Rosen cited the business lifecycle and the fact that “companies get sold or grow, depending on what is best for investors,” in response to a question inquiring why tech companies were seemingly encouraged to leave Israel in M&A

## YU Faculty Members Perform Innovative Research in Various Fields

By Doron Levine

Several Yeshiva College professors have recently made significant contributions to their areas of academic expertise. One professor published a book. Professor Lauren Fitzgerald, along with Professor Melissa Ianetta of the University of Delaware, recently co-authored *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors*. Published by Oxford University Press this April, the 616-page volume discusses recent cutting edge scholarship in the field of writing tutoring and, in the section titled “A Tutor’s Handbook,” provides a detailed description of the tutoring process and guidebook for writing tutors.

Another professor received a federal research grant. In mid-March, Dr. Rachel Mesch, Professor of French and Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures, received a letter from the House of Representatives congratulating her on being selected for a highly competitive summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities. A specialist in late nineteenth-century French literature and culture, Professor Mesch will

use the money from the grant to travel to Paris this summer to conduct archival research for her third book, tentatively titled *Conjugal Fictions: Experiments in Marriage in the Belle Epoque*.

Moving down to the molecular level, Professor of Chemistry Jianfeng Jiang, assisted by five students, recently pub-

lished a research paper in the UK-based peer-reviewed journal *Chemical Communications* provocatively titled “Oxidation of Carbon Monoxide in Basic Solution Catalyzed by Nickel Cyano Carbonyls at Ambient Condition and the Prototype of a CO-powered Alkaline Fuel Cell.” The paper, part of a larger project funded by the National Science Foundation, identifies a room-temperature chemical reaction of carbon monoxide and

demonstrates the possibility of a monoxide-powered fuel cell. The research, according to Professor Jiang, “provides the first step to the clean application of coal.”

Zooming in even further to the sub-molecular realm, Professor Gabriel Cwilich recently served as an organizing member of a conference titled *Discussions on Nano and Mesoscopic Optics*. The prestigious conference, which took place in El Chalten, Argentina from April 8-12, focused on “the structuring and manipulation of optical fields and interactions at sub-wavelength level,” a “highly active and interdisciplinary area of research.” Professor Cwilich’s presentation was titled “Determining Subwavelength Distances Between Point Light Emitters in a Turbid Environment from Noise and Correlations Measurements: Speckle Contrast Microscopy.” These recent contributions of YU professors to their various fields demonstrates the university’s continued engagement in the global scholarly conversation.



From left: Dr. Lauren Fitzgerald, Dr. Rachel Mesch, Dr. Jianfeng Jiang, and Dr. Gabriel Cwilich



## New CIO for Yeshiva University

By Yaakov Sebrov

James (Jim) Vasquez, a former CIO at Ellucian's Leadership Services, has been appointed as the Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Yeshiva University. Ellucian's Leadership Services is a company that helps educational institutions thrive in a changing environment and provides guidance for them to be more transparent and efficient. With the administration taking heavy heat on those exact fronts, Vasquez seems to be the perfect man for the job.

As CIO, Vasquez will serve as University's head technology leader, providing guidance and leadership to Information Technology Services (ITS) with a primary objective of continuous improvement of strategic planning, service



Mr. James Vasquez

delivery, and collaboration between the different departments of ITS and the schools of Yeshiva University.

The ITS department is not so well known but it plays a crucial role in the operations of the university. It provides technological assistance to Yeshiva University faculty, staff, and students in support of teaching, research, and administration. It has many sub-departments including,

the Academic Computing Department, which assists students and faculty with Academic Computing equipment and facilities at Yeshiva University,

Central and Administrative Systems, which maintains the basic servers that store critical administrative data for the University, and

Information Technology Services, which operates the ITS Help Desk to assist administrative staff on all campuses.

Vasquez brings with him a total of more than 25 years of experience in the information technology field. He has experience in public, private, research and religiously affiliated institutions of higher education. He holds a BS in Computer and Information Science from Trinity University and studied Management Information Systems at Colorado State University's Graduate School of Business.

Vasquez will continue the efforts of John Fcasni, the interim CIO for the past year and the Director of Central and Administrative Systems and Operations before he ended his tenure in March. During his time at Yeshiva University, Fcasni played a pivotal role in advancing the institution with many technological improvements, including the system transition of the College of Medicine's technology and infrastructure to Montefiore Hospital Systems and the restructuring of the IT organization from a cost center to a value-adding partner which is crucial to university growth.

## Active Minds Stomps Out the Stigma in Most Successful Year Yet

By Abraham Gross

On April 16th, YU Active Minds held its annual "Stomp Out the Stigma" event, aimed to destigmatize mental illness in the Yeshiva University community. The event showcased four students' stories and their struggles with and triumphs over mental illness. Each speaker concluded with his or her lessons for the student body.

Active Minds, a not-for-profit national organization with chapters throughout America's universities, models itself on strong student-run leadership. Sarah Robinson and Yosef Schick, the co-Presidents of the YU chapter of Active Minds, planned this pivotal event for many months. In addition to her work in Active Minds and Stomp Out the Stigma, Robinson, a Stern senior majoring in Psychology and Jewish studies, also runs a similar event at the Mount Sinai Jewish Center, volunteers in SOVRI to address sexual violence in the Jewish community, and is a board member of Elijah's Journey, a Jewish organization for suicide prevention. In an interview with Sarah after the event, she shared that an important lesson she has learned is that people "have to take their emotions seriously." Active Minds specifically, she says, has "exposed me to a world of students who have gone through enormous hurdles in maintaining their mental health." Robinson herself has also overcome hurdles, though of a different sort, in leading YU's chapter and planning for this event in particular, listing off the dozens of hours spent on details ranging from appointing board members to specific layouts on posters. Still, Robinson takes pride in her work: "As a club head, my goal is to create a community to feel we belong, to feel we matter. I felt I had an opportunity to create a board as passionate about mental illness as I am."

The passion of the board is integral to the success of YU Active Minds. Members helped create their own initiatives beyond Stomp Out the Stigma, including a Beren Campus event earlier this year, co-run by Sara Rozner of the Active Minds board and the Writing Center, focusing on writing anxiety. One of the most popular Active Minds programs this year, with hundreds in attendance, involved bringing therapy dogs into Stern to relieve stress and anxiety. "It helps make coping with mental illness more accessible," Robinson said of this event and others run throughout the year.

Several Active Minds board members, including Arel Levkovich, Jannah Eichenbaum, Rivka Pahmer, and myself,

served as Speaker Liaisons, who interview, select, and prepare the speakers for the daunting task of sharing their personal stories with the student body. It is often an emotionally trying job. "Speaker Liaisons have taken many roles in this event," Robinson remarked, "going well beyond anything I expected... they worked together as a team, creating a vision."

with the side-effects of medications. Robinson explained that "you might wonder why someone in their right mind would do this [share their experiences]. I think the reason...is to show themselves and others that they're strong: that mental illness, while sometimes debilitating, does not run their lives. They provide an enormous amount of chizuk (support) to other students suffering in silence."

The chizuk was in the courage they displayed in speaking and in the lessons they shared with the student body. "If you have someone close to you with a mental illness...reach out, say 'Hi, how are you doing?'," one shared, while other advice included "it's important to make sure that after something traumatic happens, you talk to people and you don't just keep it all bottled up inside," and "don't let other people's vision of normal dictate who you should be." Yosef Schick, himself a speaker, finished by making a request of the student body: "I need you to make sure that for those with mental illness there is no silence."

The event could not have been a success without the supportive student body. Over 200 RSVP'd to the event via Facebook, the audience more than doubling those of previous years despite the event's position at night before the weekend.

The auditorium was filled to the brim, with students spilling over into the back and sides once the seats were filled. The deafening applause after every speech certainly gave me hope that, from these students, there would be no silence.



Students and faculty filled Belfer 430 for the event

Most the credit goes, however, to the speakers who muster up the courage to share their deeply personal and difficult stories with the student body. Speakers are selected for their stories and their speaking abilities. Two men and two women are chosen, as gender stereotypes, in addition to stigma, often characterize perceptions of mental illness. "Mental illness is often associated with females," Robinson remarked when asked about the distinction between her work in Beren and Wilf. "Women are often viewed as more emotional. Male culture is embodied in a macho unemotional gender stereotype. We made it our business to have two males and two females to speak. Men especially need to know that mental illness does not distinguish between male and female; mental illness just happens."

The mental illnesses the speakers have lived with could indeed be experienced by anyone: depression, anxiety, ADHD, compulsive disorder, and PTSD. Given this, the role of the speakers was summed up succinctly by one: "we can move on from labels and discuss what this actually means for me, because that's just a bunch of alphabet soup and jargon."

What these illnesses often meant for speakers was isolation from loved ones, difficulty in school, self-harm, and coping





## YU Presents the Humanities at Student Research Day

By David Tribuch

At two in the afternoon, on Sunday, March 29, Belfer Hall served as the home for YU's Student Research Day for the college's humanities and social science majors. Students studying the liberal arts presented their research from a large variety of fields, from literature to art history, from political science to anthropology. Meirah Shedlo, who works in the Stern College for Women's Dean's Office, was really excited while organizing the event because "along with all the amazing science research done, providing an opportunity for humanities majors to present their research really paints a full picture as to what is being accomplished at this university." When approached by Shedlo, many students jumped at the opportunity to present their work, while others joined after a little encouragement from their professors.

The first hour of the event presented a friendly, fair-type atmosphere, with students staying close to posters that displayed their research. The participants eagerly discussed their research with attendees, who made their rounds to view the displays.

When the first hour ended, all were asked to find seats, as a small number of the student researchers gave fifteen minute lectures on their research topics. First to present was Elianne Neuman, a senior at Stern majoring in History. Her presentation discussed the historiography of the Harvard student protest of 1969. She opened by saying that she started her research for a class paper during the previous spring, but felt

that there was more to be covered, and continued to do further research. Her topic focused on the account of an academic named Steven Kelman who was a student during the protest of '69. Neuman mentioned that most scholars agree with his take on the protests, but that

a truly reliable account, due to the biases of the participants.

The second presenter was Daniel Atwood, a YC senior presenting his honors thesis. His presentation was on the "psychology of power." He started by saying that power allows

three hundred people, Atwood determined if someone felt that his or her position was unstable, he or she would be less inclined to take risks and exercise his or her power.

The final presentation of the day was delivered by Sima Fried, a first year anthropology major at Stern. Fried discussed her experience this past summer excavating the Philistine city of Gat. She explained how it is a very significant dig site and described the rigorous schedule of members of the dig. Wakeup every morning was at five fifteen to arrive to the dig site a half hour later. From there it was straight digging, in the heat of the Israeli summer, all the way to noon. After a brief lunch break, everyone went back to work cleaning the samples that were found, and sending them to be dated. Fried then went into detail about a tedious part of the cleaning process, called heavy fractioning. Heavy fractioning is where archeologists put dirt samples into a centrifuge, and look for bits of flint and pottery one grain at a time. She concluded that despite the hard work, it was one of the best experiences of her life, and is something that everyone should do.

With this, the event concluded, and people got their final glimpses of the displays. Atwood said afterwards, "I think it was a really exciting event, giving students the opportunity to present their research to fellow students and faculty members...It's a shame that more students and professors didn't come to hear about and support the work their friends and students are doing."



many other students who attended Harvard at the time had a much different perspective on the event. Neuman went on to argue that when studying history, you would think to use eyewitness accounts to recreate the events of the day. However, this process would not produce

people to look at the big picture and to take risks to achieve their goals. However, people with limited power will be more conservative and use limited solutions to fix their problems. The focus of Atwood's study was to determine how stability affects power. After surveying

## Jazz Ensemble Performs Before Packed Crowd at Spring Concert

By Darren May

There are many programs at YU that are lauded for their outstanding caliber of excellence. Our Jewish learning programs are undeniably world class, our academics are among the finest in the country; one could go on and on. There are, however, some exceptional programs that are often overlooked by the general school and faculty, yet continue to uphold a high level of excellence. The YU Jazz Program is one of these programs and recently held their annual spring concert just before Pesach break.

There has been a jazz ensemble at YU for over 25 years. The band is currently headed by Dr. John Shapiro, who played piano in the concert. Other band members include Dr. Noyes Bartholomew on trumpet, Darren May on trumpet, Benji Richter on guitar, Daniel Benaderet on guitar, Hillel Field on guitar, Jonathan Sidlow on guitar, Corey Hamel on violin, Aryeh Tiefenbrunn on bass, and finally Isaac Kleinman on drums. Together, they played a concert on March 26 in Schottenstein Hall's Recital Room, to a packed audience.

The concert consisted of seven songs. Among these were some jazz standards such as "So What" by Miles Daives, "Bye Bye Blackbird" by Ray Henderson, and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise" by Sigmund Romberg. However, there were

also some original compositions by members of the band. Bass player Aryeh Tiefenbrunn composed a piece called "So Sue Me," and drummer Isaac Kleinman composed a piece "Star Wars Jazz." Another highlight of the night was the one vocal

into a new world of musical possibility. For others, this was another concert in a long history of jazz experiences. Even these seasoned jazz-goers found the concert very enjoyable and thought that the music was very high quality.

Most importantly, many of the audience members enjoyed hearing and supporting their friends. Daniel Shlian, a YU junior, said, "It's always great to support my friends, a number of whom were on stage, but it's even better when they're producing a really enjoyable experience. The music was wonderful on so many levels, but above all I had a really good time."

The YU Jazz Ensemble's concert was not just a great musical experience, but a testament to the talent and creativity that is abundant among the YU student body. The students in the concert only met once a week to rehearse. With just this small amount of preparation, they were able to performed complicated classic jazz tunes that are often played by professional jazz bands around the world. Yeshiva University enriches the lives of their students through a number of different learning avenues. The music program is one of the many

ways that the student body is able to express their creative abilities and will surely remain a mainstay of student ingenuity for years to come.



number sang by guest singer George Rubin. He sang another jazz standard entitled "Mack the Knife," which instantly became a crowd favorite.

The general attitude towards the concert amongst the audience members was one of great positivity. For many, this was their first jazz concert, and it served as a nice entrance



## Beloved English Professor Leaves YU After 15 Years

By Doron Levine

At this pivotal juncture in YU's history, the students are sadly bidding farewell to one of their most beloved professors. Dr. Gillian Steinberg, Yeshiva College professor of English, Director of First Year Writing, and Coordinator of First Year Seminars, has announced that Spring 2015 will be her final semester at YU.

Dr. Steinberg studied English literature at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received her PhD in English literature from University of Delaware in August 2000. Soon after, she joined YU's faculty as a full-time lecturer in English and has been a popular English professor ever since, being named YC's 2011-2012 Lillian and William Silber Professor of the Year. In the past few years, she has published two books: the first discusses Philip Larkin and the supposedly misanthropic themes in his poetry, while the second, published in 2013, is an introduction to the poetry of Thomas Hardy.

In Fall 2015, Dr. Steinberg will begin teaching English at SAR High School in Riverdale, teaching 12th grade AP English among other courses. Though high school English courses are different than college courses—they are generally yearlong and they aim to integrate literature and writing as opposed to college courses which tend to be theme-based or topical—Dr. Steinberg intends to utilize the techniques and activities that she has honed over her fifteen years at YU and channel them in her new position.

Dr. Steinberg currently serves as YU's Director of Undergraduate Summer School and her impending departure will not decrease her commitment to that program. She expects this summer to be one of YU's most successful ever, and she will not step down from her post until summer school winds down. Dr. Steinberg's current classes are also continuing as planned, with her steadfast commitment to her teaching as evident to her students as it ever was.

Knowing that the current semester is her last, Dr. Steinberg been taking strides to ensure that the academic programs she runs will continue to flourish in her absence. Professor Liesl Schwabe will succeed Dr. Steinberg as the Writing Program Director and the two have been speaking regularly to ensure that Professor Schwabe's job description is clear and that she transitions smoothly into the position with all the requisite information and guidance. Dr. Steinberg expressed unrestrained confidence in Professor Schwabe's capabilities: "This is a really great move for the program; it couldn't possibly be in better hands."

When asked about her motivations for leaving YU after so many years, Dr. Steinberg was reticent. She has been relatively outspoken about YU's recent financial decisions, and at this point, she said, "it's probably best...to focus on the future and have a positive attitude about the changes YU is making to try to become more sustainable."

But she did note that morale is low among faculty and she explained that decisions to cut core classes and other aspects of the curriculum were made without the full inclusion of the faculty. She granted that "we're all realists and understand that sometimes programs must change and should be dictated, at least in part, by budgetary considerations." But while some administrators claim that faculty was appropriately included in academic decisions, Dr. Steinberg begs to differ. "As a faculty member," she said, "I dispute that narrative: the decisions of the faculty to cut programs were made under duress." Despite her frustrations, though, Dr. Steinberg remains optimistic. "I'm hopeful," she said, "for my colleagues' and students' sake that things will improve significantly in the coming years." Budgetary adjustments are necessary to ensure a brighter

future, but one proposed change is particularly concerning to Dr. Steinberg. President Joel announced at the semester's Town Hall Meeting that the university plans to let go of a number of full-time faculty members and to replace them with adjunct instructors. These adjuncts are paid based on the number of classes they teach; an adjunct who teaches six classes per year makes approximately \$21,600 with no benefits, almost qualifying him or her for food stamps.



Dr. Gillian Steinberg

**SOME HAVE CONSTRUED DR. STEINBERG'S RECENT CRITICISM OF YU AS CYNICAL DISPARAGEMENT OF AN INSTITUTION SHE HAS NO QUALMS ABOUT ABANDONING. BUT, AS SHE INSISTS, "NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH." HER RECENT REMARKS WERE MOTIVATED BY HER "LOVE FOR THIS INSTITUTION" AND BY "A PROFOUND DESIRE TO SEE [IT] SET ON A HEALTHIER PATH."**

Though many universities rely on cheap adjunct faculty, Dr. Steinberg feels that YU "has a special ethical responsibility as a Jewish institution" to compensate employees appropriately. Teachers are on the academic front lines, interacting with students daily and directly determining the quality of their education; however, many administrators collect substantial

six-figure salaries while adjuncts hover upon the poverty line. So strong is Dr. Steinberg's disapproval of this wage disparity that she avoided hiring adjunct faculty for the writing program. She explained that this was one of the primary reasons that the program was cut. Administrators might be comfortable with the university thriving off of cheap labor, she said, but Dr. Steinberg refused to condone such exploitation. "I personally don't want to be part of a system that perpetuates those levels of inequity and unethical labor practices."

Some have construed Dr. Steinberg's recent criticism of YU as cynical disparagement of an institution she has no qualms about abandoning. But, she insisted, "nothing could be further from the truth." In fact, she feels a deep connection and sense of gratitude towards YU.

When she joined the YU faculty fifteen years ago, Dr. Steinberg was not religiously observant. She was "knowledgeable about and committed to Judaism," but she "didn't keep Shabbos" and "followed a sort-of half-hearted version of kashruth."

But the YU community inspired her. She said, "Seeing my students—so committed, knowledgeable, ethical, thoughtful—prompted me to learn more." Rabbi Blau paired her with her first chavruta, and she and her husband's "whole lives changed for the better." She has since moved to an Orthodox community, her kids are now in a Jewish day school, and her family has been keeping Shabbat for thirteen years. "Whatever I have managed to give to this institution over the years," said Dr. Steinberg, "it has undoubtedly given me much more."

Thus her recent criticism, far from vitriolic or derisive, is motivated by "a profound desire to see the institution set on a healthier path." She is driven by her "love for this institution" and her "belief in its centrality to the future of Modern Orthodoxy."

Professor Steinberg's colleagues will surely miss her. Professor Joanne Jacobson, Co-Chair of the YC English Department, called Dr. Steinberg "a wonderful colleague: talented and generous, and in every way a contributor to the life of the English Department and the College. It's still difficult," she said, "for me to imagine the YC English Department without her, but I wish her every happiness at her new job."

When asked what she will miss most about YU, Dr. Steinberg expressed deep appreciation for her students and colleagues. Her words are powerful: "I will miss my students so, so much. They have inspired and motivated me every day, and I am so grateful to have been part of their lives and had them as part of mine. And, of course, I will miss so many of my amazing colleagues: Dean Barry Eichler, who is a paragon of virtue and a role model for me in myriad ways; Dr. Aaron Koller, who models academic rigor and ethical sensibility in equal measure; Dr. Joanne Jacobson, who has taught me so much about grace under pressure; the rest of the English department, all wise and devoted and caring; Drs. Chaviva Levin and Rachel Mesch and Silke Aisenbrey and Moshe Bernstein and Ari Mermelstein, who have been friends and sounding boards and inspirations; Syms Deans Moses Pava and Michael Strauss, who have been wonderful partners in student education; and the hundreds of other people I have worked with across the university in so many different capacities." She also expressed heartfelt gratitude towards "the many writing lecturers who have sustained the program over the years and worked very, very hard for little recognition and less money."

After her departure from YU, Dr. Steinberg hopes to keep in touch with her colleagues and students, and to stay "updated on their many successes and their post-YU journeys." As the YU community bids Dr. Steinberg farewell, we similarly wish her continued success, both professional and personal, in her post-YU journey.





## First Ever #YUHack a Resounding Success

By Etai Shuchatowitz

If you walked into the Heights Lounge at some point on March 28th and 29th and were greeted with a room full of tired, frustrated and excited people, you were witnessing YU's first ever Hackathon. The event, known as #YUHack, was promoted to be an event for "students from all over the Tri-State area to come together in Yeshiva University's Heights Lounge to create a cool hack, app or website, all within 24 hours," according to its marketing campaign. In the end, #YUHack hosted over seventy participants from many universities like NYU, Columbia, and Cooper Union.

"Despite my lack of coding experience, the Hackathon provided a great opportunity to work on my skills along with friends," said Joshua Blau (YC '17). "Even if we hadn't been able to shell out a working project, it would still have been very rewarding, as well as buckets of fun."

The event worked as follows: Beginning at 9:00 PM on March 28th, students gathered in the Heights Lounge and began breaking off into teams. They had 24 hours to complete, from scratch, a project of their choosing. After 24 hours, each team presented its project to a panel of accomplished programmers who judged based on originality, presentation, and usability. The top teams received prizes such as expensive watches and drones.

Things didn't get into full swing until a little bit later than the official start time. "The biggest challenge was just getting started. We had no

idea where to begin," said Yossi Hoffman (YC '17). Some people pulled through and stayed up the whole night, while others went home relatively early at one or two in the morning. Either way, the Heights Lounge closed at 2:00 AM and the event moved into the Morgenstern Lounge for the subsequent four hours before the Heights Lounge reopened.



The road to #YUHack was not necessarily an easy one. As student organizer Marcos Sasson (YC '15) said, "The biggest challenge putting this event together was dealing with YU's administration. The reason was the uniqueness of this kind of event. We had many meetings with the Office of Student Life... and even after all the meetings, things were

still popping up that needed to be discussed." Despite any difficulties he faced, he said he "couldn't be happier with the results."

Throughout the day people came and went as teams had their ups and downs. Mentors roamed the Heights Lounge always ready to help when a team inevitably struggled. No matter what happened, each team had to be

event, Hoffman said, "After spending at least 10 hours coding, it was the best feeling to finally see our program running close to how we had envisioned."

Teams got up one by one and showed off what they had done in 24 hours. Projects spanned from a 3-D body scanning website to a competitor for YUConnects to a birthday robot, which actually spit confetti and played Happy Birthday. Even though no project was entirely complete, every presentation showed the promise of an interesting idea, and illustrated the impressive feats that a few motivated individuals can produce in such a short period of time.

The winning team presented Favr, a website for trading and cashing in favors, like picking up laundry or printing out a paper. The website, built by a team of five YC and Stern students, looked and ran smoothly during its presentation, and showed tremendous potential of what it could become.

Spending 24 hours doing any single task can be exhausting. It's even harder to work for 24 hours straight on creating something that requires technical and creative ingenuity. Factor in the team element and potential for the projects to hit major hurdles, it's a miracle things went so well. Hoffman concluded his comments on the event by saying, "I loved working with my team. We all worked so well together and each one of us brought a different skill to the table to make something cool." He echoed the prevailing sentiment when he said, "I'm already starting to think of ideas for what I want to do at next year's Hackathon."

ready to present something to the judges by the 7:00 PM deadline. As the final hours quickly approached, teams struggled to get a working project ready as Murphy's law plagued some teams in the closing moments. However, in the end, most teams opted to present at least a prototype of their project.

When asked for his favorite part of the

## FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM FROM EXILE TO NATIONHOOD

וְהִבַּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל הָאָרֶץ...  
(Shemot 6:8)



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## Silver is the New Green

By Eliyahu Raskin

MyActions, the nationwide environmental think tank dedicated to improved sustainability in colleges behind programs like "RecycleMania" has awarded Yeshiva University the "Silver Student Actions Award," a promotion from the "Green" standing that Yeshiva previously held. According to the website, this award indicates that the school "has student leaders committed to student and group activation across campus through focused challenges and delivering on impact targets."

YU's student representative is Yeshiva College senior Jonah Keyak. Along with his peers from colleges across America,



Keyak has worked to create a social media website where students can post "green" actions they do in their college life, from turning off the lights and recycling to carpooling instead



of driving. For every action, the school the student is affiliated with receives points; enough points and the school gets a higher MyActions status. With enough people participating, we can, in Jonah's words "create a collective consciousness for sustainability."

When *The Commentator* reached out to Jonah, he expressed thanks to his fellow Yeshiva students. "We [at MyActions] can sit there all day and discuss things, but it would all be for naught if there was no cooperation from my fellow students... This would not be possible without students signing up." It is only through students signing up and posting their sustainable actions that the organization can cause change at the university.

What is important now, according to Jonah, is continuing the momentum. "In order to achieve a higher status, more students need to sign up and participate...I hope that YU will continue to be recognized for its student's sustainable actions." A sustainable campus starts with small actions, so, ask yourself: what are going to do with this paper when you're finished reading it?

## Dedicated Professor Yair Shahak Chooses to Leave YU

By Binyamin Goldman

Professor Yair Shahak, a remarkable and renowned professor in the Hebrew Department, will be leaving YU at the end of this year.

As a student at YU, Professor Shahak triple majored in Jewish Studies (with a concentration in Bible), Hebrew Language and Literature, and Music. Shahak started working toward an M.A. in Bible from the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies while still an undergraduate at YU and completed both his B.A. and M.A. simultaneously. Shahak is currently completing his final examinations at the Belz School of Jewish Music for a Cantorial Diploma. Additionally, Shahak won the US National Bible Contest for Adults this past November and represented the United States at the International Chidon HaTanach (Bible Contest) for Adults in Jerusalem.

Professor Shahak was not only a stunning role model as a YU student; he has become a beloved professor as well. Shahak won the Professor of the Year Award in 2013, an award that provides enough proof from any student body of their love for a professor. In an interview with *The Commentator's* Yadin Teitz, Shahak is said winning the award "meant a great deal to me and made me strive to become an even better educator."

However, Professor Shahak says that despite being offered another one year contract by YU he has decided to leave.

Shahak, who has been teaching here since 2010, says that he came to this decision due to several factors, the primary reason being the current educational state that YU is in. The "proposed reductions to the Jewish Studies requirements and desire of the administration to reduce Hebrew to an online model or framework would severely undermine the dual curriculum," says Shahak. Over the past five years, Shahak says he has had "dozens upon dozens" of students tell him that they've understood Tanach or Davening for the first time in their lives here at YU, thanks to their Hebrew courses - despite having attended Jewish day schools their whole lives. "For [many] students coming to YU, this really represents the last time, the

last opportunity for them to learn about the language and be immersed in Jewish studies...and it is being proposed to water that down."

Shahak cites the proposed watering down of the dual curriculum coupled with the disheartening approach of the administration to the faculty and to the handling of the financial crisis. There seems to be a complete and total lack of accountability by the administration, he says. Stern's *The*

Observer recently quoted President Joel as saying, "This mess has nothing to do with the past." Shahak maintains that while "many universities are in a difficult position and there was a substantial loss because of Bernard Madoff, that was a drop in the bucket. To say such a statement, especially in light of all the financial mistakes that the board of trustees has made is, frankly, incredulous."

Additionally, according to Shahak, faculty and staff members enrolled in YU's health plan were recently sent an email informing them of changes to the university-sponsored health plan that will lead to greater out-of-pocket expenses for many. The letter linked in the email which broke the news about the changes stated that the university considered "not offering medical benefits at all" or "eliminating spousal benefits" but ultimately decided against it. While one could argue that the actual changes are inevitable due to the current financial state, Shahak continues, the fact that the letter could be phrased that way at all demonstrated a great lack of respect and concern towards employees.

Shahak stresses that some of his best, most fondly-remembered years have been at YU and that he is grateful for the strong relationships he has forged with colleagues and students. He is pained to leave the "wonderful institution" he has called home for a decade. However, he points out that the lowering of morale amongst faculty members, evidenced by news of tenured professors such as Dr. Gillian Steinberg leaving YU, have made him doubt the viability of a professional future for him at YU, at least in the short term. "When President Joel tells newly tenured professors that their hiring was a costly mistake; when you see the university being run by A&M, a business company, not an educational company; when all the stars line up, you know it may be time to go and seek your fortune elsewhere."





## Can We Stop?

By Harel Kopelman

There are three questions every American must ask today. Without stopping to reflect carefully on what is going on in our country which is slowly shifting away from enshrining personal liberty towards Orwellian dystopia, we are faced with the extinction of our most cherished values.

The questions are, *can we stop?*

First, can we stop pretending that Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), a law which simply restates a federal mandate signed into law by then-president Bill Clinton with the overwhelming backing of a Democratically-controlled Senate in 1993, is bigotry?

For those unfamiliar with the bill, whose renown in the media following Indiana governor Michael Pence's signing it into law last month is outdone only by its presence in 19 state legislatures and 11 state courts, RFRA is not a religion-sanctified license to discriminate.

It is simply a balancing test, which says, "The state cannot substantially burden a person's exercise of religion unless it is furthering a compelling government interest and acting in the least restrictive way possible."

That does not mean that if, as detractors claim, a small business owner refused to service a same-sex marriage ceremony because of religiously-held convictions that they could not be sued for alleged discrimination.

Lest the left repeat its groupthink mantra that this law is simply a way to strip gays of their rights, let us harken back to where this sort of legislation has been applied before: to allow a Muslim man being held in an Ar-

kansas prison to protest the policy forbidding growing facial hair for security reasons. This appeal reached the Supreme Court, which agreed that the prison must allow him to grow a beard as per his religious convictions.

Another time an RFRA was used to protect individual liberty was when a Native American student in Texas protested his school's

tian small business owners who prefer not to cater same-sex marriages are doing so not out of hatred or ill-will, but out of honest religious convictions pertaining to traditional marriage, especially as they proudly serve LGBTQ persons as they would any other customer?

Take the case of Barronelle Stutzman, a Washington florist who happily served her

marriage is between a man and a woman, I couldn't do his flowers and create something that was special for him, because it would dishonor Christ."

Stutzman recommended Rob Ingersoll three other florists that he could contact to service his wedding, and hugged him. Rob and his partner found another florist who agreed to service their wedding.

Unfortunately for Stutzman, Bob Ferguson, Washington state's Attorney General, filed a lawsuit against her after hearing about the story, saying he wants to "bring about an end to the Defendant's unlawful conduct, and to make it clear that I will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

Does Stutzman hate gays? Probably not. Did her religious convictions, which include opposition to same-sex marriage, relationships, and intercourse stigmatize these two men over the dozens of times they probably came into her flower shop of the years she'd known them? Again, probably not, as they kept coming to her for nearly a decade.

So why are we unable to admit that this debate is not about discrimination against people, but rather preferring to not materially support a ceremony which violates certain religious convictions?

Could anyone claim that a pro-choice baker who is asked to bake a cake for an anti-abortion rally being held outside a Planned Parenthood clinic is discriminating unfairly when she refuses to supply the cake? Should the ACLU get on her case and force her to service a rally whose message and intents deeply violate her beliefs about female reproductive

see **Can We Stop?**, cont. on p.13

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policy that all boys must keep their hair short, citing his religious belief that his hair must be allowed to grow freely. He won.

In conclusion, the law simply states that courts must apply RFRA's high standard for upholding religious liberty instead of furthering government interests. The religious plaintiff in whatever case may win or lose; but the law does not give the right to discriminate.

But can we stop even throwing around the d-word? Stop pretending that religious Chris-

gay customers for nine years, and indeed had a special relationship with them. Stutzman had also hired gay employees to work in her shop.

When the gay couple she had known for nearly a decade asked her to make them an arrangement for their wedding, Stutzman explained she could not.

"It was very difficult for me to tell Rob I couldn't do his wedding," she says. "I love Rob; he's very special to me. But because my relationship with Jesus Christ teaches me that





**Can We Stop?, cont. from p.12**

rights?

Let us also look towards the Azucar Bakery, a Colorado business placed in Stutzman's opposite position when asked to bake a cake bearing biblical injunctions against homosexuality and sin. Bill Jack asked for two bible-shaped cakes, one with a picture of two grooms holding hands and a large X over it, and one with text stating "Homosexuality is a detestable sin. Leviticus 18:22."

Marjorie Silva, the bakery owner, refused to make the cake; Jack sued her for discrimination based on his creed. What was the Colorado Civil Rights Division's verdict?

"The Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region welcomes the determination of the Colorado Civil Rights Division (CCRD) that there is no probable cause to support a finding that Azucar Bakery treated unequally or denied goods or services to a customer based on the customer's creed, when the bakery declined to include derogatory language and an image of a same-sex couple on a cake. ADL supports our state's anti-discrimination laws that promote an inclusive and respectful Colorado," said Scott L. Levin, the ADL's regional director.

It goes without saying that gay marriage is a contentious issue; some people fiercely support its legalization on the grounds of granting Americans the same civil rights their heterosexual counterparts enjoy, whereas others oppose it based on historical and social reasons. The debate about its legalization is ongoing; a 2014 Pew study indicates that a full 40% of American still oppose it, with 52% supporting it.

But it is here that we come to the third and most important question, the one which will define what kind of American society we engender for ourselves and leave behind for posterity.

Can we stop thought-policing?

Can we stop demonizing religion? Can we stop trying to censor and punish, what is to

liberties? Can they be the truly tolerant liberals they claim to be and understand that for some people, marriage is between a man and a woman, and that materially servicing a gay marriage violates that belief? Can we stop equating opposition to gay marriage with racism and homophobia?

The frightening hypocrisy of the Colorado



some, offensive creed?

In short, will we adhere to the injunction of that foundational document, the Bill of Rights, which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech"?

Can same-sex marriage proponents support gay marriage and still respect others'

case juxtaposed with the Washington one implies that no, we currently cannot. Some forms of speech, belief and creed are simply being called better than others, and American law is slowly coming to encapsulate and act upon that view.

But the First Amendment is wonderfully content-neutral. Its ingenuity lies not in its ability to legitimize hateful or controversial

creed, but in its protection of the individual's right to express it. In the eyes of the Bill of Rights, one form of speech is no better or more deserving of protection than another.

So when the Ku Klux Klan refused to hand over its list of members to the government in 1993, Grand Dragon Michael Lowe was thrilled that the ACLU would defend him.

He was not, however, expecting his lawyer to be black.

"The Klan says some vile and vicious and nasty and ugly things," Anthony P. Griffin said at the time. "But the Klan has a right to say them. If you ask whether they have a right to organize, to assemble, to free speech, those people we hate have such a right, and we just can't get around that. Because if you take away their rights, you take away my rights also."

What Mr. Griffin so keenly perceived, and what we increasingly miscomprehend, is that when one form of individual expression is protected over another, liberty is not upheld; it is destroyed.

We must do away with the doublespeak of identity politics, which demands we accept the notion that stripping certain individuals of their religious liberties will ensure the rights of other groups. It does not.

Put two and two together: if a black lawyer could uphold the KKK's personal liberties, can we do the same for Ms. Stutzman's? Unless you came up with "five," the answer ought to be clear.

# LETTER to the EDITOR

To the Editor:

Regarding the recent article "Proposed Changes At YU Lack Focus On Education, Professors," the author makes the claim that Provost Botman was voted out of her previous position due to that faculty's lack of faith in her leadership. This I can't contest - it's a fact. What surprises me though, is the tone implied that this is somehow revelatory to Yeshiva students. I recall feeling outraged last year when Dr. Botman was appointed to her current position, as a simple Google search of her name told me all that I needed to know. Much to my shame, I didn't make quite enough fuss, and here we are today, chastising ourselves.

However, it's possible that this philosophy of inaction is indicative of the general character of the student population. Where was your shock when Dr. Botman was hired? Where were you when the school implemented a hiring freeze? Need I even mention when the school sold \$150 million worth of real estate in the heights?

The various student unions seem to think that drafting a letter of academic integrity will somehow solve our school's various financial

and academic woes with the stroke of well justified pen. I'm sorry to tell you though, that the ship has sailed. It's too late. Let's hope it doesn't bring us down when it sinks.

Yitzchak Schultz

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*Because of an error, the following letter appeared in the previous issue in a seriously fragmented form: only the first three paragraphs were published. This time, the letter appears in its entirety.*

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To the Editor:

I read with interest Yitzchak Schultz's well intentioned January 28 "Tenure and Adjuncts at YU." I found it thoughtful, stimulating, and—with regard to the system of tenure for college and university faculty—seriously misguided.

The author believes that tenured professors are likely to become lazy and ineffective teachers: "It's incredulous that almost every other career is based on merit: if you perform your duties, then you keep your job. If you don't, then you run the risk of being fired. Since professors who have tenure can only be fired in extenuating circumstances, then what motivates them to get up in the morning and teach? The potential to be moved to a less roomy office? Their own academic integrity?"

Despite the seeming logic of Yitzchak Schultz's rhetorical questions, it is overwhelmingly the case that tenured professors do not become lazy about their teaching. Because of my desire to be circumspect about referring to my

colleagues, I will offer as evidence in support of my conclusion not professors at Yeshiva University but the professors at Columbia University who were my teachers when I was studying for M. A. and Ph. D. degrees.

During my years as a graduate student, I took 29 courses taught by 12 different professors. Ten of them were tenured, one was a junior member of the faculty who became tenured several years later, one was a visiting professor who was retired from the faculty of another university. Partly to honor the memory of my teachers (only two of whom are still alive), partly to demonstrate the clarity of my own memory (I'm now using that word in another sense), I will record the names of my teachers here: I was taught by Professors Eric Bentley, James L. Clifford, Elliot V. K. Dobbie, F. W. Dupee, Allan H. Gilbert, Moses Hadas, S. F. Johnson, Joseph A. Mazzeo, William Nelson, Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Edward W. Tayler, and William York Tindall.

The point that I want to emphasize is that, although they were not all great teachers (some of them were), every single one of them was a highly responsible teacher. To the best of my memory, not one of those twelve teachers was ever absent or even late to class. I am 100% certain that not one of my teachers ever arrived in class less than fully prepared to teach. It is true that their professional advancement—especially in those days and at that particular university—depended far more on their published scholarship than on their teaching. Nevertheless, every single one of them found the inner motivation "to get up in the morning and teach."

In my long experience in the academic world, I have found that tenured professors continue to take their work as teachers very seriously. I leave it to the Yeshiva College students who are my readers to judge whether their

professors who have tenure are "indolent," as Yitzchak Schultz expects them to be, or highly motivated and generally highly effective as I believe they truly are.

I wish to draw attention to one other false assumption in the article. Yitzchak Schultz makes the following assertion: "Unfortunately, universities don't place an emphasis on good teaching as a prerequisite for getting tenure, as much as they do on research and peer reviewed articles." The implication here is that universities are willing to grant tenure to professors with significant research accomplishments who are not effective teachers.

That statement may have some validity in certain universities. In my considered judgment, based on long term experience, it is not at all accurate in describing the system followed in decisions about tenure at Yeshiva University. It is absolutely the case that the various people involved in judging the work of a candidate for tenure on the faculty of Yeshiva University are intent upon granting tenure only to professors who are highly effective teachers. And there is definitely an expectation that those professors will continue to be highly effective after they become tenured. Tenure decisions at Yeshiva University are definitely based on judgment of merit—in teaching as well as in scholarship—and I see no reason to doubt that my colleagues on the faculty continue to take their jobs as teachers seriously once they have achieved tenure, just as my own professors did.

Richard L. Nochimson  
Professor of English  
Yeshiva College



## How Many Victims Died in the Plane Crash?

By Doron Levine

Was Andreas Lubitz a mass murderer? The co-pilot of Germanwings flight 9525 was the direct cause of the death of 150 people (including himself). The innocent passengers and flight crew members expected a routine flight from Barcelona, Spain to Dusseldorf, Germany, but instead met their untimely deaths in the Alps of

southeastern France. Should the pilot who locked the door of the cockpit and calmly guided the plane on its deadly descent be labeled a cruel villain? Should the man who kept the plane on its collision course, even as his passengers screamed and his co-pilot frantically knocked and yelled "Open the damn door!", enter the history books as a cold-blooded butcher?

Not so fast. Many have hesitated to assign Lubitz this degree of moral responsibility due to his stormy psychological history. Though the Chief Executive of Lufthansa, Germanwings's parent company, said that Lubitz passed the company's health checks and "was 100 percent flight worthy, without any limitations," recent reports challenge the airline's assessment. According to Der Spiegel, Lubitz was seeing at least five doctors, among them a neurologist and a psychiatric specialist. He had been treated for suicidal tendencies and antidepressants were found in his apartment in Dusseldorf along with a medical note that deemed him unfit to fly. Pilots are required to alert the airline of any mental illnesses that they suffer from, but Lubitz seems to have hidden his condition from his superiors.

Because of Lubitz's depression, the media has been reluctant to saddle him with full moral responsibility. The media response has largely avoided calling Lubitz a mass murderer. Instead, the flashy headlines have emphasized Lubitz's mental condition and demanded to know why a depressed man was allowed to pilot a commercial jet. Some have even made the case explicitly. In an opinion piece for CNN, Les Abend, an experienced commercial pilot, explained that pilots are subject to high levels of stress, especially during their training period. Suffering from depression, Lubitz was a "sick man" who found himself in "a perfect storm of stress." Thus, Abend says, this tragic incident was "an accident waiting to happen."

Robert Sapolsky, a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford University, was even more forthright. In an op-ed for the LA Times, Sapolsky admitted that "it is

immensely rare for depression to result in violence to others." Nevertheless, Sapolsky wrote, Lubitz's depression caused him to crash the plane. Depression is a "neurochemical disorder rooted in genetic vulnerability and stressful environmental triggers" which causes the affected person's "essence" to be "made unrecognizable by biology gone wrong." A person cannot choose to not be depressed any more than he can choose to not have diabetes. Because of this diagnosis, Sapolsky delivered an unequivocal verdict: "It was not Lubitz who did this; it was his disease. Or to state this as explicitly as possible, the Germanwings crash had 150, not 149, victims."

Many have strongly objected to shifting the blame from Lubitz to his depression. Some have pointed out that depression usually does not lead to homicide. Others, like Dan Diamond writing for Forbes, have admitted that "there is a possible link between depression and violence," but nevertheless "blaming a person's depression for his evil acts is ridiculous."

Some have suggested that, as opposed to or in addition to being depressed, Lubitz may have been a psychopath or a sociopath, and was therefore responsible for his violent act. But this does not solve the problem; many psychologists believe that psychopathy, like depression, is a neurological

condition with a large genetic component and can be observed already in young children.

In 2009, Professor Declan Murphy of the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London studied the brains of psychopaths who had been convicted of crimes including murder and rape and he found that the brain structure of psychopaths differs from the normal brain structure. The uncinate fasciculus (UF) is a tract made of white matter that connects the area in the brain associated with emotions, fear, and aggression to the area associated with decision making. The study found in brains

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OF THE MIND.  
THE MORE NEUROSCIENCE  
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of psychopaths "a significant reduction in the integrity of the small particles that make up the structure of the UF."

The researchers suggested that this biological difference might "help to explain [the psychopaths'] offending behaviors." So according to this study, homicidal psychopathy is a biological condition just like depression. Instead of blaming the psychopathic murderer himself, we should blame his brain structure.

But even though biological states are correlated with mental disorders, depression and psychopathy are still diagnosed based on their behavioral and emotional symptoms. As Dr. Richard Friedman, professor of clinical psychiatry at Weill

to his depression and others respond by diagnosing him as a psychopath, neither side is addressing the real question. Let's grant the modern neuroscientific assumption that depression, psychopathy, and other similar mental diseases have neurobiological brain states associated with them. In order to determine where the moral responsibility lies, we have to consider how these distinctive brain states relate to Lubitz's "essence." Who was in control here? If Lubitz was psychopathic, did he himself make decisions which caused his brain states to be a certain way, or was he under the influence of a disease, an outside force that he had no control over? In which direction was the causation?

More generally, we can ask, do we make choices that affect our brain structure, or does our brain structure affect how we act? A psychopath has a distinctive brain structure, but modern neuroscience tells us that a regular person also has a unique brain structure that correlates to all of his thoughts and activities. Maybe people who are particularly kind tend to have an unusually well developed UF. Why, then, are we more likely to say that an abnormal person's brain states cause his actions? Why not say the same thing about the actions of regular people?

This is the tension of the materialist conception of the mind. The more neuroscience tells us that our minds are entirely physical and all of our decisions are determined by chemical processes in our brains, the harder it is to blame people for their actions. If a person's mind is composed of physical matter and if the activity of physical matter is entirely determined by the laws of physics, then a person's thoughts and actions must be completely determined by these unalterable natural laws. And if our mental activity is entirely controlled by physics, then we have no freedom.

So while it might be comforting to blame Lubitz's actions on the depressed state of his brain, absolving him of moral responsibility invites us to take the reasoning employed in cases of mental illness and apply it to all cases of mental activity. And this might lead to surprising results. We cannot blame someone for a crime that he could not have avoided performing, and we also cannot praise someone for a good deed that he was determined to do.

Granted, outside forces can affect a person's thought processes—for example, if I knock someone out with a shovel, he will temporarily become unconscious. But if we wish to

point to a depressed person's brain states as an excuse for his actions, then we must be able to offer a method of identifying which brain states leave a person with no free will and which brain states are caused by a person's choices. If we cannot, then we may be in serious trouble.



Cornell Medical College, explains, though we can study and measure activity in different areas of the brain and then "correlate them with various behaviors and mental states," there is still "no singular neural signature yet identified for any psychiatric disorder." Doctors diagnose depression by observing feelings of sadness and hopelessness in patients, and they diagnose psychopathy by noting lack of emotional response, pathological lying, and remorseless indifference. The diagnosis does not require identification of a biological abnormality.

When some remove the blame from Lubitz by pointing



## The Rocky Road to Sustainable Excellence: Details of a Student Campaign and Reflections on a Turbulent Semester

By Shai Berman

Perhaps it is best to start this story at the same place where it began for many students in Yeshiva College: Yadin Teitz's March 3rd Commentator article "Administration Proposes Damaging Cuts to Our College Education." While the topics discussed in this article were not necessarily news to me or the other members of my council, the fact that these proposals were considered publishable to those who spoke with Teitz signaled to us that they had substantially progressed from the drawing board stage. Additionally, the level of faculty dissatisfaction the article portrayed, as well as the indiscriminate nature of the cuts reported, surprised us.

Given this, I, along with my council and other student leaders, began to dig deeper into these proposed changes. What is the logic behind them? Who suggested them? How will they save money? Is there really going to be a mass exodus of faculty as described by the article? We uncovered the following:

- 1) First Year Seminar: By Purim, the fate of First Year Seminar had basically been sealed. The move from a two semester writing program to a one semester writing program was suggested by A&M (the restructuring firm YU hired last summer) and the Provost, and was said to save \$400,000 a year. Professor Gillian Steinberg, YC's outgoing Director of Writing, had begun working on a plan to revise the First Year Writing curriculum and to develop guidelines for writing, in an effort to salvage the writing program she had built.

- 2) Academic Jewish Studies: The faculty was being asked to vote on an administration-driven proposal, which would cut the AJS requirements from 14 to 9 credits (excluding Hebrew) and officially turn Hebrew into a competency based program that would have a significant online portion. The curious thing about this was that almost every AJS professor (outside the Hebrew department) is tenured or tenure-track, meaning filling their classes with fewer students would not save the university money, since those professors were going to be retained no matter what. So where was this coming from? There were those who believed that this was motivated by an admissions concern. Reduce the AJS requirements; remove the barrier to "unlimited" enrollment.

- 3) Contract Faculty: Contract faculty are full time professors who are neither tenured nor on tenure track; they do not have, and are not on their way to, a lifetime appointment. They are working with a contract, usually ranging 1-3 years, which is subject to termination or extension. When seeking to reduce faculty and save money, contract faculty are easy and lucrative targets. They receive full salaries, and letting them go does not violate any taboos of higher education. At YC, there were over 20 contract faculty members, and on March 10, faculty concern centered on trying to secure the positions of key contract faculty, necessary to sustain the viability of their departments. A cut to all contract faculty would mean that YC would lose its writing specialists (hence the change to the writing program), almost the entirety of the Hebrew department, and ten professors spread across other departments, many of whom are absolutely integral to their respective departments. For example, Professor Daniel Kimmel is a contract professor; aside from being a student favorite, he also constitutes half of the full time faculty in the Sociology department.

Having uncovered this, our concern for the student body was twofold. First, if there was, in fact, going to be a total exodus of contract faculty, this would mean the decimation of many departments, students losing some of their favorite professors, and a significant reduction in the quality of faculty in the university (as the contract faculty would be replaced by adjuncts, who are paid on a per class basis and often need to teach multiple classes at multiple universities to make a living, greatly diminishing their time available for research and attention to students).

Second, while the curricular changes on the table may not have, on their own, led to student backlash, the way in which they were being carried out made us believe that students needed to speak out. On the whole, we believed that Yeshiva College students appreciate their faculty and Dean and trust them with their education. Of course, this does not mean that students

do not disagree with aspects of the academic experience and expect (rightly so, I believe) the faculty to give weight to their concerns. In the end, however, if changes are going to be made to our education, students, we believed, would like it to be a result of calculated deliberation amongst that faculty--those who are charged with delivering that education. The fact that both the faculty and student leaders with a close view of the situation felt that these changes were being forced on the faculty by financial consultants in an effort to achieve a certain version of "sustainable excellence" was worrisome.

Once this picture started to form, we, the Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA), decided that we needed to act. To be bystanders in all of this would be to neglect our duty

While this was all happening, President Joel decided to schedule two open meetings with students (perhaps in response to a letter writing campaign initiated by a different group of students). This gave our student meeting another purpose, to help prepare students for these meetings with President Joel, and make sure they have all available information so they could carefully form their opinions and prepare questions for the President.

On Tuesday, March 10th at 5:45, we held our open meeting. Over 80 students chose to take an hour out of their busy day to hear about the future of their education, and many more told me that they felt badly that they could not attend. This confirmed that a significant portion of the YC student body is serious about their education. At the meeting, we reported what we heard (which I delineated above) and took comments from the attendees. At the end of the meeting, we presented the Declaration we prepared and listened to students' reactions. Then I had to make a judgment call. Were the people in the room supportive of the Declaration, or not? Did we do an adequate job of highlighting the concerns most important to the student body (or at least to those in the room)? I had the sense that we did, and, therefore, decided to circulate the declaration, asking each person there to sign it (if they agreed with it). Around 50 of the 70 remaining students in the room signed the Declaration.

The next day, Wednesday, we continued collecting signatures for the Declaration, which was partially amended based on the feedback at the meeting, and sent copies of it to the faculty, Provost, and President. In the end, we collected over 125 signatures for the Declaration and presented them to the President. We also used the Declaration as the basis for developing talking points for students to use, if they wished, at the President's two open meetings on Thursday, March 12.

So what happened? By Monday, March 16th, we learned of the following developments

- 1) First Year Seminar: Professor Gillian Steinberg had been able to secure what she needed to implement the new writing program, which involved only one semester of writing, supplemented by writing intensive courses. 81% of the faculty voted in favor of the program, and thus it was accepted, which meant the FYSM would no longer be a required course for all students.

- 2) Academic Jewish Studies: The administration decided to give the AJS faculty some time to deliberate changes to the AJS curriculum, and thus there was no immediate vote regarding this issue. The AJS faculty is currently engaged in these internal discussions regarding the requirements.

- 3) Contract Faculty: At the open meetings on Thursday, March 12, President Joel announced that six contract faculty members would not be retained. This number, while very unfortunate, was lower than some were expecting.

Given what we were hearing at the beginning of the week of March 9, what we beheld at the beginning of the week of March 16th was far from our worst nightmare. The hammer did not come down on AJS. FYSM was replaced with a curriculum that, in our view, will still deliver good writing instruction and will not be significantly more/less to the liking of the student body than the old one. Yes, losing even one full time faculty member is painful, but those departments that would have been devastated by a cut to all contract faculty seemed to receive a reprieve. Finally, the President's open meetings certainly fostered an air of increased transparency on campus. Though the relationship between the administration and faculty was in a state of disrepair (that weekend brought us the faculty's publication of their 80% no confidence vote in President Joel, as well as the YU Board's public statement in support of the President), as of March 16th, the immediate changes to the college did not seem so grave, and thus, feeling cautiously optimistic, we decided to not take any further actions in relation to the campaign we had been spearheading. While we most certainly had opinions regarding the faculty-administration debacle and their competing narratives, we felt that it would

see **Reflections on a Turbulent Semester**,  
cont. on p. 16

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**MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT BODY RANGE IN AGE FROM APPROXIMATELY 18-23 YEARS; TREAT US AND ADDRESS US LIKE THE ADULTS WE ARE. WE ALL UNDERSTAND THAT THE UNIVERSITY NEEDS TO CUT 50 MILLION DOLLARS, AND I THINK WE CAN EVEN ACCEPT THAT A PORTION OF THAT HAS TO COME OUT OF ACADEMICS, BUT DO NOT EXPECT US TO BELIEVE THAT THIS PROCESS WILL NOT TAKE A RECOGNIZABLE TOLL, SMALL AS IT MAY BE, ON THE NATURE OF OUR EDUCATION.**

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as the elected representatives of the Yeshiva College student body and their academic interests. We decided to call an open meeting where we would present the current goings on, as we saw them, to any interested member of the YC student body. In preparation for this meeting, we, and a handful of other students, drafted a Declaration of Principles, which we believed effectively encapsulated what we saw as the fundamental issues at play. We highlighted the importance of academic standards, of communicating to students as much information as possible, and of ensuring the faculty have, and feel like they have, the central role in shaping the YC education.

We avoided attempting to propose our own plan for "sustainability," as we did not have the gall to claim that we knew enough about the University's finances to make such suggestions, and because we felt that our duty as students was first and foremost to stand up for our education. Thus, the Declaration did not oppose any specific changes, but rather focused on the process in which changes were being carried out and on more general expectations regarding matters that are essential to a YC education. Getting as many students behind this declaration, which would be subject to emendation based on the reactions we would receive at the meeting, would send a loud, clear, and unified message to the administration as to what students demanded and felt they deserved in this process.





## Reflections on a Turbulent Semester, cont. from p. 15

In the time since the student campaign came to a close, many people have asked me: "Did the student campaign accomplish anything? Did it have any impact?" I cannot genuinely answer these questions, as it is impossible for me to ascertain what thoughts were going through the minds of the administration both before and during the campaign. What I can assert, however, is that changes occurred during the week of March 9th. Some examples: On March 9th, the plan was for the faculty to be told to vote by the end of the week on an administration-driven change to the academic Jewish studies requirements. That vote never happened. On March 9th, the future of Yeshiva College's writing program was uncertain. By the end of the week, Dr. Steinberg was able to secure what she needed from the administration to enable her to put forth her plan to the faculty for a vote. On March 9th, those most immediately involved with Yeshiva College were trying to secure the positions of key contract professors; on March 12th, the President announced that only a handful were being let go.

be inappropriate for us to publicly step foot further into that arena.

While I do not know if these changes had anything to do with the student campaign or were purely a result of other factors and ongoing conversations, what I do know is that the state of affairs at Yeshiva College on March 16th was most certainly different than the plan was on March 9th.

Before moving to more general thoughts on the events of this semester, I would be remiss not to address a major development that occurred since the end of the student campaign. On March 18, the University announced that, starting July 1, it will begin merging the faculties of Stern College and Yeshiva College into a single faculty, with Dr. Karen Bacon serving as its Dean. What the exact implications of this merger will be remain to be seen (though it will almost definitely mean an increase in online and blended learning), but there is definitely much good that could come from it. However, in order to avoid the pitfalls similar to those that have occurred in the past few months, it is essential that the process through which the merger is carried out be one that both gives significant weight, and clearly demonstrates that significant weight is being given, to the faculty's opinions when making important decisions. Only time will tell what will come of this unification, though Dean Bacon's decades of decanal experience and the support

she enjoys among the Stern faculty suggests that we are in good hands. Still, at the same time, I am very saddened to see Dr. Barry Eichler conclude his service as Dean. In working closely with him over the course of the year, I have been continually and increasingly impressed by his efforts and absolute dedication to maintaining and improving the Yeshiva College academic experience.

In general, my greatest frustration in the past few months has been my (and I believe many other students') growing disillusionment with the nature of certain statements made by the administration. I do not mean to suggest that the administration has some kind of subversive agenda that is inimical to students and academic achievement. I wholeheartedly believe the Provost when she says that students are her top priority. What I am frustrated with, rather, is the administration's tendency, which comes across as condescending, to attempt to sugar coat the changes that will be coming to academics at this university. "Sustainable excellence," it seems, has become synonymous with "excellence." Words like "right-sizing" seem to be intended to be contrasted with "down-sizing." Staff and faculty are no longer let go but are rather "separated" (a word that does not even make it into Google's eight-word-long list of synonyms for "fired"). According to the President and Rabbi Josh Joseph, around six million dollars will be cut directly from undergraduate academics in the next three years, with an equal amount being cut from academic services. This amount represents a significant percentage of the undergraduate academic budget. This being the case, I cannot comprehend how the administration can constantly insist that there will be no significant recognizable change to our education. To use the metaphor that has been conveyed to the faculty: if you thought you had enough money for a Porsche and then found out that you really have 20% less, you cannot buy a Porsche. You will have to put your resources towards something like a Toyota, a good car, but certainly not what you were expecting or hoping for before.

Members of the student body range in age from approximately 18-23 years; treat us and address us like the adults we are. We all understand that the University needs to cut 50 million dollars, and I think we can even accept that a portion of that has to come out of academics, but do not expect us to believe that this process will not take a recognizable toll, small as it may be, on the nature of our education. Perhaps students would be more receptive to a press release that acknowledged that the coming changes will make YC academic experience less robust, but in a way that ensures it remains strong.

So what does the future hold for Yeshiva College? Though these are turbulent times at the University, I am fairly confident that, even after we have finished trudging down the path to "sustainable excellence," Yeshiva College will continue to deliver a quality education, albeit not as robust as once hoped and planned for. To put things in some perspective, under the tutelage of former Provost Lowengrub, and with the support and investment of President Joel, Yeshiva College has seen vast improvements since the turn of the century. Considering the high caliber of our tenured faculty, students in YC will continue to learn a lot and learn it well as they prepare themselves for a fulfilling life and productive career. Moreover, not only will a strong faculty ensure a strong education, but a strong and dedicated student body will only serve to strengthen the academic experience at YU.

When reflecting above on the student campaign, there was one question that I did not address: "was it all worth it?" My answer to this question is a resounding yes. Even if the campaign was not responsible for any of the changes that occurred between March 9th and March 16th, the fact that students came out in high numbers to express their opinions about the future of the YC academic experience demonstrated to me, and many others, that students in this university feel passionately about and are truly invested in their education. With these ingredients, a strong faculty and a strong student body, the product Yeshiva College offers will continue to be a strong education.

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*Shai Berman is the President of the  
Yeshiva College Student Association*

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## The Value of Expression

By Ariel Kirshenbaum and Dani Weiss

Living in a country that promotes the importance of individuality encourages people to form and prioritize their values as they see fit. Individuality however does not only permeate each person's beliefs, it can also be seen amongst shared values within a group or setting. Common values can be shared by different people while being expressed in many different ways within that population. For example, there is a tremendous amount of people who value the importance of family. Nevertheless, no two families are the same because the population who shares that value are all expressing themselves differently. In one case, a working mother might make an effort to be home in time for when their kids get home from school. A different family might have an annual get together or vacation. The two cases show the idea of a shared value expressed in different ways.

American Patriotism similarly illustrates that one value can have multiple methods of expression within a common value. Many would describe patriotism as the love of one's country. However, there is no exact definition as a result of many different ideas of the true meaning of the word. The reason that it is so hard to define this value is the fact that there are so many different ways of expressing patriotism. In 2014, Fox News ran a poll to figure out what the most patriotic things a person could do to support America. The results of the poll showed nine activities that received 50% or higher of that activity being a show of patriotism. These activities were: flying an American flag, voting in elections, joining the military, serving on a jury, staying informed on domestic news, paying taxes, volunteering on a political campaigns, participating in a political protest, and owning a gun. Some Americans participate in all nine of these activities, while some citizens maybe only will participate in one or two. The fact is, by conducting any of these acts Americans are highlighting their inherent value of patriotism, while expressing their support in different manners.

Analogous to the value of patriotism in the US is that of Zionism for the State of Israel. In the previous issue of *The Commentator*, Michael Osborne, President of the Israel Club, lamented the constant poor turnout at his club events. As someone who has tried to organize event myself in the past, I can relate the frustration of a poor turnout at a club event. I believe the Israel Club does great work and I wholeheartedly support the author's call for higher student turnout at its events. Where I disagree with the author, though, is his stance that the explanation for this phenomenon is that apathetic Zionism, the fact that people don't care about the State of Israel, is the reason for his poor turnout. In a particularly contentious statement, Osborne claims that the YU student body "does not care about Zionism. Osborne writes that upon taking the Presidency of the Israel Club, he expected more participation in his events, given that, in his estimation, YU has more than 2,100 Zionists on campus. I'm not sure if the author thought there are 2,100 students on campus and assumed all of them had Zionistic feelings, or if he took the actual 2,800 undergraduate students currently enrolled in Yeshiva University and assumed 75% of them were Zionists -- but both assumptions are unjustifiable. One cannot just assume that a certain percentage of people have a certain belief just because the university they study in happens to subscribe to that belief. In fact, a few students who I discussed this issue with were upset that the author spoke for them and labeled them "Zionists."

In addition to the author's fictional statistics regarding Zionism on campus, he neglected to mention the difficulties involved in attending events when half of the student body resides 150 city blocks from every event. To come to an event for whichever one of the campuses the event was not being held on would require the student to commit to 1-2 hours of extra travel time. Even for students residing on the campus in which the event is taking place, other considerations might prevent them from attending events including conflicting classes and events, juggling an arduous dual curriculum, and dedicating time to learning in the beit midrash.

In light of these considerations, YU students, in contrast to Jewish students on other college campuses, cannot be expected to show up to pro-Israel events in the same numbers. At one point in the article, Osborne lamented the fact that only 50 YU students came to hear from an Israeli diplomat, who spoke in Brandeis the night before to a crowd of 200. While this discrepancy seems to be rather large, when considered in context it is not as large as it looks on the surface. To start,

Brandeis has a larger undergraduate enrollment than YU. This is also combined with the facts that their campus layout is much more compact, and they don't have a dual curriculum, which affords students more time to attend events.

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### GOING TO AN ISRAEL CLUB EVENT IS NOT A PREREQUISITE FOR BEING A ZIONIST LIKE A PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING COURSE IS FOR MARKETING CAPSTONE.

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Ignoring these factors, Osborne's assumption that Zionist apathy on campus accounts for low turnout at Israel Club events is a baseless and dangerous accusation. Besides for all the other possible reasons a YU student may not be able to make an event, students might be expressing their Zionism in different ways altogether. Just like patriotism, Zionism is a value that can be expressed in many different ways. Going to


an Israel Club event is not a prerequisite for being a Zionist like a Principles of Marketing course is for Marketing Capstone. I personally know students who give their weekends to lobby at the AIPAC conference, or lobby at other conventions on behalf of the State of Israel; some may donate to Israeli charities, or even say a paragraph of Tehillim on behalf of the safety of our soldiers. While these students all engage in different activities, they have in common that they show their support of Israel independent of Israel Club events.

I am not naive enough to say that everyone on this campus expresses Zionistic feelings. I am sure there are some who don't believe in it and some that do but don't act upon it. But to say that the majority of a student body doesn't share or adhere to a certain value just because they don't conform to how you express that value is a reckless thing to do. Without knowing the extent of other students' pro-Israel activities outside of the Israel Club, I will refrain from passing judgement. Mr. Osborne, I implore you to do the same.

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## Why You Should Vote Torah

By Avi Strauss

As generally happens with elections, people have trouble deciding whom to vote for, and the World Zionist Congressional elections appear to be no different. But, I am here to make it easy for you—you should Vote Torah.

First, some background. The World Zionist Congress (WZC) is the main organ and legislative arm of the World Zionist Organization, Jewish National Fund (JNF) and the Jewish Agency. Founded by Theodor Herzl in 1897, its main mission was to establish a national homeland for the Jewish people. With that accomplished in 1948, its priorities shifted and its main power is in setting the policies and goals for the Zionist organizations it oversees, as well as directing over one billion dollars in funds to accomplish those goals. It has met 36 times since its inception. Its 37th meeting will be happening this year, after the results of the election are determined.

The WZC itself is composed of 500 delegates, 145 of which come from the United States. The distribution of those delegates is determined by an election conducted by the American Zionist Movement, with delegation sizes corresponding to the percentage of the vote a ticket receives. While 38% of the delegates are determined by the proportions of votes in the general Israeli parliamentary election, the remaining 33% are allocated by Diaspora Jewry outside the United States.

This election has 11 tickets, representing a wide spectrum of visions for Zionism. Amongst the other parties running are groups representing Reform and Conservative Jewish attitudes towards Zionism, groups with more nationalistic bent, as well as one representing J Street and organizations with similar ideological views. Vote Torah is the only one dedicated to representing the views of Religious Zionists collectively, advocating a vision anchored by Torah values. Whereas other groups have tried to compromise on issues of Israel's security and redirect funds to organizations uninterested in any of Israel's religious character, religious Zionist delegates in the past have fought for those values and will continue to—but they need your vote in order to have a sizeable influence in the upcoming Congress.

The Vote Torah slate represents many of the most important organizations and institutions in the Modern Orthodox world today, including Yeshiva University, the Orthodox Union, the Rabbinical Council of America, Bnei Akiva, Amit, the Religious Zionists of America, Torah Mitzion and the National Council of Young Israel. These organizations partnered up to run under the a banner championing Zionist and Torah education worldwide, promoting aliyah to Israel, developing religious Zionist outreach and ensuring Jerusalem remains unified.

Not surprisingly, many of us on campus are proud to say we are currently, or have been, a part of many of the organizations that comprise the Vote Torah ticket. Their names have become almost synonymous with Modern Orthodoxy and religious Zionism and they continue to be the bastions of energy and vigor that uphold our communities and will chart our path forward.

The slate has managed to pull together a lineup diverse in age, yet united in vision. Rav Herschel Schachter, a YU Rosh Yeshiva tops the Vote Torah list, and is followed by other high profile leaders of the other organizations affiliated with the

ticket, including Deborah Isaac (No. 2, President of Amit), Martin Oliner (No. 3, Chairman of the Religious Zionists of America), Harvey Blitz (No. 4, former President of the OU) and Sondra Sokal (No. 5 Member of the Board of Governors for the Jewish Agency). Additionally, many YU students are on the slate, including President of YCSA Shai Berman, Jeremy Shaechter, Arienne Pinchot, Leo Korman, Jen Van Amerongen, and Romy Koenig, among others. (The full slate can be seen on [votetorah.org/the-slate](http://votetorah.org/the-slate).)

With such a tremendous amount of money at stake, as well as the potential to shape the guiding philosophies of the biggest

of their direct purview. However, since Masa is under the greater umbrella of the Jewish Agency, when religious Zionist delegates argued the funds should be open to students spending a year learning and studying in Israel, American Jews became entitled to receive the tuition relief that so many of us benefited from. It is successes like this one that can only be preserved and advocated for with strong representation on behalf of our communities by the Vote Torah slate.

The importance of voting should not be discounted. Each vote counts and can help to ensure a strong delegation prepared to fight for religious Zionist values. The same views many of us hold dear based on our various affiliations with these organizations (of which we are all a part, as students at YU) as well as our aspirations to fulfill them in the future, are represented by this slate. And there is no easier, substantial way to contribute to these organizations, than voting.

Full disclosure: There is a \$5 fee for those under age 30 to vote in the elections, regardless of the ticket you vote for. Unfortunately, this has discouraged some from exercising their rights as Jews to vote their consciences for what they believe to be the best and brightest future for the Jewish people. Many rebbeim consider the fee tzedaka that can be taken off masser (10% tithe of your money for charity) since the money services the same umbrella organizations that dispense billion dollars in funds mentioned above. Furthermore, given the weight of directing world Jewry in a direction infused with Torah, and informed religious Zionism, if there is any cause to dedicate the small sum of money to and maximize its impact, it is certainly this one.

At this precarious moment in Israel's history, with its ties to America straining, its neighbors in turmoil and assimilation on the rise, we have a moral imperative to vote in the election and, to vote for the ticket that will advocate policies that will strengthen the Jewish nation as well as the

Jewish people. The two are inextricably linked, and only under the torch of Torah can they press forward, intensifying our resolve as religious Jews dedicated to preserving the character of Israel as a Jewish state and securing Jerusalem as her capital. The time is now to seize the opportunity to actively participate in one of the most important institutions world Jewry has. Make sure to vote. And make sure to vote for the slate prepared to fight for the vision devoted to the Jewish present and Jewish future. Vote Torah for the Soul of Israel.

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*Avi Strauss is a campaign worker for Vote Torah.*

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**AS GENERALLY HAPPENS WITH ELECTIONS, PEOPLE HAVE TROUBLE DECIDING WHOM TO VOTE FOR, AND THE WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS APPEAR TO BE NO DIFFERENT. BUT, I AM HERE TO MAKE IT EASY FOR YOU—YOU SHOULD VOTE TORAH.**

organizations that form the foundation and basis for our lives as religious Jews interested in preserving the Jewish identity to an Israeli future.

For an example where the delegates representing these views have practically impacted your life in the past, think no further than the \$1,000 dollar Masa stipend given to students who attend a gap year in Israel, including many YU students. In the past, Masa did not award scholarships or grants to American students attending yeshiva or seminary programs outside



## Public Accounting of Communal Funds

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The following is an edited transcript of a *si-chah* delivered at the end of shiur on Thursday, March 12th by Rav Wieder. An attempt has been made to make an oral presentation more suitable in written form, while retaining fealty to the original style. The original audio can be found online at [http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/832028/Rabbi\\_Jeremy\\_Wieder/Transparency\\_and\\_Accountability\\_in\\_Communal\\_Institutions#](http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/832028/Rabbi_Jeremy_Wieder/Transparency_and_Accountability_in_Communal_Institutions#)

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The Torah in the beginning of the second of the two parshiyot we shall be reading this week begins with *אלה פקודי המשכן* משכן העדת. אשר פקד עלי פי משה עבדת ה' ליום כי ביד איתמר בן אהרן. "These are the enumerations of the tabernacle that were done at the command of Moshe; the work of the Levites was supervised by Itamar the son of Aharon HaKohen." (Exodus 38:21)

It mentions that Betzalel and Oholiav were appointed to actually supervise the work. They reported to Moshe Rabbenu. The Torah then proceeds to describe how the materials that were collected for the tabernacle—the donations—were used. That is to say, an accounting of the finances is given. The gold, the Torah tells us, collected *x*; it doesn't tell us actually what specific things it was used for: "All the gold that was used for the whole holy enterprise" (Exodus 38:24). The amount of silver and copper that was collected is then enumerated. We are told the things that they made out of them: the sockets for the entrance of the tabernacle, the bronze altar and its bronze grid-work, the vessels used at the altar, the sockets for the courtyard, and so on and so forth.

In the case of the silver, however, something unusual happens—there, the Torah tells us the exact amount of silver, exactly where the silver was spent, exactly how much was spent on each socket of the boards for the inner tabernacle (which was most of it), how many sockets, how much per socket, and then, what was leftover. Once you took care of 600,000 half shekels, there were another 1,750 or so shekels leftover. And there the Torah tells us exactly what they were used for. They were used for the sockets of the pillars, and the hooks, and they [were decoratively] circled around it the *amudei he-hatzer* (pillars of the courtyard). That's what they used the rest of the silver for. A highly, highly precise accounting.

What exactly is it that Chazal learn and teach us from this enumeration? Why all of this detail? Why is it necessary, after we have listed all of the vessels, to give a precise accounting? The truth is that when one deals with the *mamon hatzibbur*, communal funds, there are a number of very important things to be kept in mind. I think they fundamentally break down into three observations: number one, the importance of proper procedures; number two, the importance of a proper attitude towards *mamon hatzibbur*, and understanding what the *mamon* of the *tzibbur* is; and number three, understanding the importance of giving a precise accounting.

The Mishnah in Masechet Shekalim (5:2)

states *אין פוחתין משלשה גזברין ומשבעה אמרכלין ואין עושין שררה על הציבור בממון פחות משנים*. "We do not appoint people with authority, the power of collection, unless there are two of them." There were a couple of exceptions, people whom the community accepted even though they were single individuals.

The Gemara in Bava Batra states that when they would collect for the *kuppah*, (charity funds) which was not distributed immediately, they would have two people collecting, because you can't have *srara* (exercising of authority) over people with less than two individuals, and dividing it (the money) up requires three people. The Gemara observes that the issue of two people is not an issue of trustworthiness but an issue of *srara*, and

would normally not be permitted to act together, may be appointed to be treasurers. But it is not divided up by fewer than three, because it is like *dinei mamonot*, with the need to investigate each and every pauper to see how much it is appropriate to give him.

Everything that you give to one pauper is something that you are not going to give to another. It is technically *dinei mamonot*, but on a certain level it is *dinei nefashot*, matters of life and death (5:24). That is the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch.

In the collection and distribution of public funds there need to be proper procedures; it needs to be done with the *koved rosh* (serious mindedness) of *dinei mamonot* when you spend money of the community.



only because of that you cannot have only one person. But in the interim, between the collection and distribution of the money, you only require one person to be involved. If that person was deemed trustworthy, only one person is needed to watch the money.

However, when it comes to distribution of the money, three people are required because it is *dinei mamonot* (matter of civil justice). Because taking the communal funds and deciding which poor people are to receive it, or which needs are to be met with it, is a form of *dinei mamonot* and requires three—because it's *din* (justice). It is not for the *gabbai tzedaka*, the official charity collector, to do what he wants or whatever he sees fit. He has an obligation of *din* (sitting in judgment): a proper understanding of the calculation of the needs of the community, of what is not important, and of what needs take precedence over others. It is *din Torah*, strict Torah law.

The Shulchan Aruch writes

*יורה דעה הלכות צדקה סימן רנו סעיף ג*  
הקופה אינה נגבית בפחות משנים, שאין עושין שררה על הציבור בממון בפחות משנים. אבל לאחר שנגבית, אחד נאמן עליה להיות גזבר, וכן יכולים למנות שני אחים להיות גזברים. ואינה מתחלקת אלא בשלשה, לפי שהוא כדיני ממונות לעין על כל עני ועני כמה ראוי ליתן לו.

The *kuppah* is not collected by fewer than two people, since we do not allow the exercise of authority over the public in monetary matters to fewer than two people. But after it has been collected, one person is trusted to be the treasurer. Thus two brothers, who

In terms of an attitude of understanding what the funds of the community are, you must realize that *mamon hatzibbur*, communal funds, are not the funds of an aggregate of individuals. The *tzibbur* is its own entity. This was a misunderstanding of the priests during the Second Temple era, and Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai had to correct them.

The priests had this idea that every person gives a half shekel, and it is the giver's portion. So when a sacrifice was brought, paid for with these communal funds, each giver had a portion of that sacrifice. It was not the sacrifice of a collective entity, the *tzibbur*, but of individual members of the *tzibbur*. Hence the *kohanim hakhamim*, the clever priests, said: A priest is not allowed to donate the half shekel. as Rav Yochanan ben Zakkai said—and I think mocking them—*כהנים דורשים מקרא*— "The priests interpret Scripture for their own benefit." Why?

According to the Mishnah in Shekalim (1:4), the priests said that the Torah tells us in Parshas Tzav *וְכָל-מִנְחַת כֹּהֵן כְּלִיל תְּהִיָּה לֹא תֵאָכֵל*, "every meal offering of a priest must be completely offered; it may not be eaten" (Leviticus 6:16).

A priest's *mincha*-offering (flour offering) is burned completely. In the case of a *mincha* offered by a non-priest, a handful is taken out and burned on the altar, while the rest is eaten by the priests. The priests said that if the *omer*-offering and the two loaves offered on Shavuot, and the *lehem hapanim*, the show-

bread on the table in the Temple, which are forms of *mincha*-offerings, are all to be eaten by the priests as the Torah prescribes, how can they do so if they all have a portion of priestly donation in them? Obviously a priest who donates a half shekel is a sinner! He would be sinning and creating a problem by eating these *mincha*-offerings that the Torah commanded the priests to eat, since any offering by a priest is burnt, not eaten.

Rav Yochanan ben Zakkai said this is wrong because the funds of the community are not the money of an aggregate of individuals. Rather, this *mamon hatzibbur* is a new entity. It's the *mamon* of the entire body politic of Israel, *klal Yisrael*. Therefore it doesn't matter if the priest eats it. He can eat it because it is not his portion of the *mincha*. It belongs to the *tzibbur*.

When money is donated, it doesn't belong to the individual donors anymore, although they have the right to attach conditions to donations. It belongs to the community. But *mamon shel tzibbur* (public funds) is an interesting entity—I'm required to give *terumah* to the priest; what happens if after I separate it, I choose to eat it myself or destroy it? Can the priests bring me to a *din Torah*, to a court case?

The answer is no, because this money is *mamon she'ein lo tove'im*, a sort of ownerless money which does not have a technical claimant. Therefore if a *kohen* says to me that you burned or ate my *terumah*, the original owner could say he was going to give it to some other *kohen* and therefore no particular priest has the standing to bring him to *din*. It belongs to this unusual category of "ownerless funds."

*Mamon shel tzibbur*, communal funds, are of a different nature. The Mishnah at the beginning of the second chapter of Shekalim (2:1) discusses the question of liability in a case where the inhabitants of a city sent their shekels to Jerusalem and they were stolen along the way, or they got lost. Who is liable, whose loss is it?

One thing is very clear: if the messengers were careless, then they are responsible for the money. We don't say oh well, it's the *tzibbur's* money, easy come, easy go. There's a technical consideration in the context of the public sacrifices: if, in fact, the *terumat halishka* (the ritual removal of funds from the entire pool to purchase the public sacrifices) was done while the money was still extant in the messengers' possession, the donors have fulfilled their obligation and the *sheluchim* (messengers) swear to the *gizbarim* (treasurers) [that they were not negligent in their duties] and they're off the hook and *hekdesh* (the Temple treasury) loses the money. If the money was stolen before the *terumat halishka*, then the people (i.e. donors) have to pay again (so that they will be considered as having a share in the communal sacrifices).

But if the messengers are unwilling to swear, or if they were negligent, the Mishnah doesn't say it, but obviously they are responsible for [repaying] the money. They are responsible for the money because they were irresponsible with it. In other words, *mamon shel tzibbur*, communal funds, have claim-

see **Public Accounting of Communal Funds**, cont. on p. 20



## Public Accounting of Communal Funds, cont. from p. 19

ants. There is a responsibility when people are negligent with the money of the tziibbur.

There is sometimes an attitude—it is a common problem—you look at the salaries of the top officers of Jewish communal organizations and they are exorbitant (this may be a problem in non-Jewish organizations as well). Now the truth is that Jewish communal organizations want to get good people to run them. But at the same time there has to be a sense that this is mamon shel tziibbur. It is not like Monopoly money, or free-spending money. It's not! We take the issue of mamon shel tziibbur, of communal funds, very seriously. We take it very seriously in terms of tzedaka, charity, and we take it very seriously in the context of halakhah, Jewish law. In a discussion (Bekhorot 40a) of a case in hilkhhot tereifot, the laws pertaining to defects in an animal which makes it inedible according to Jewish law, Rabbi Akiva shouts at R. Yohanan b. Nuri that you're being too machmir, too stringent, and you're wasting the money of the Jewish people with your stringencies. And there R. Yohanan was being carefully strict because it was a concern of issur v'heter, of that which is permitted and that which is forbidden, because he thought it was a tereifa, and had to be prohibited. How much more so, when people work for the tziibbur, for the community, there needs to be a sensitivity that this is communal money, and is not something to be spent carelessly. It's not free money.

Finally, the story of this week's parsha. Accounting.

Moshe Rabbeinu comes and gives an accounting. There are two reasons for giving an accounting. One is stated by the Midrash in Exodus Rabbah. Why did Moshe give the accounting? Because people were grumbling that he was enriching himself on the side. Probably Korach was grumbling that he was enriching his other family members. Moshe Rabbeinu heard them grumbling and he said that we are going to solve that problem by giving an accounting. He does this for the same reason offered by the Mishnah in Shekalim (3:2).

When the kohen was going to take the teruma, the donation money, from the chamber where it was kept, he could not enter wearing a garment with pockets or hems. He had to wear a straightforward robe with no place to put money. Do you know why? Because if he became wealthy, people would say because he stole from the donation chamber, and if he became poor, people would say he became impoverished (as a sign of Divine displeasure) because he stole from the donation chamber. And the Mishnah says:

לפי שאדם צריך לצאת ידי הבריות כדרך שצריך לצאת ידי המקום שנאמר (במדבר ל"ב) והייתם נקיים מה' ומישראל ואומר (משלי ג') ומצא חן ושכל טוב בעיני אלהים ואדם

One is obligated to be reputable in the eyes of man just as they are before God, as Scripture states, "Then you shall be clear before the Lord, and before Israel" (Num. 32:22) and it states, "So you shall find grace and good favor in the sight of God and man" (Prov. 3:4). You have to do things in a way that everything is above suspicion. If you run a shul, as a president or as a treasurer, everything has to be above suspicion; a proper accounting must always be given.

Then the Midrash tells us something that should truly be bone chilling. Moshe Rabbeinu came to give an accounting of the silver. But first, the following comment is in order here: Why is the silver singled out in such complete detail, while the gold, copper, and

wool fabrics are presented in a much more perfunctory fashion?

The answer is that there was a difference between the silver and everything else. All the other contributions were voluntary, and an accounting had to be given for them. But the half-shekel (from which all of the silver came) was a [mandatory head-]tax. And when a community taxes people for something, a much more precise accounting must be given, because people don't have a choice about whether they want to give the money or not. Not that, God forbid, one can be lax with donations of a non-tax nature, but even greater oversight is required when it's a mandatory tax. In most communities we don't have taxation, but it does exist in some forms. In my community, there is a tax assessed and

added on to every synagogue membership to pay for two communal structures, the eruv and the mikveh. As a result, those organizations need to be even more precise in their accountings and their delineation of everything done with that money, because it is a mandatory contribution, not a voluntary one.

But that is not what is frightening. What's frightening is that when Moshe Rabbeinu started to give an accounting:

אמר להם בואו ואני עושה לפניכם חשבון אמר להם משה אלה פקודי המשכן, כך וכך יצא על המשכן עד שהוא יושב ומחשב שכה באלף ושבעה מאות וה' וע' שקל מה שעשה ויום לעמודים

He said, "Come and I'll give you an accounting. Moshe said to them "These are the accounts of the tabernacle—so much and so much was expended on the tabernacle." Yet as he was counting, Moshe couldn't figure out where 1,775 shekalim had gone.

התחיל יושב ומתמיה אמר עכשיו ישראל מוציאן ידיהם לאמר משה נסלן, מה עשה האיר הקדוש ברוך הוא עיניו וראה אותם עשויים ויום לעמודים

He began to sit there and wonder, saying, "Now Israel will find grounds to say, 'Moshe stole them.'"

Moshe was terrified that the people would accuse him of stealing a little bit, of having a little slush fund. He spent 300,000 full shekels, but the 1,775 he kept. The people would think he thought to himself "I can do something with this money. Just a little bit, I can hire one of my friends and give him a job, or take someone out to dinner." Moshe Rabbeinu was terrified. He couldn't remember what happened.

What happened? God enlightened Moshe's eyes and he looked at the pillars. It reminded him where the rest of the silver had gone, into the hooks and decorations for the pillars.

אותה עשה נתפייסו כל ישראל על מלאכת המשכן. מי גרם לו ע"י שישב ופייסו' הו' אלה פקודי המשכן

At that moment the Jews were satisfied with their building, their communal tabernacle. And who caused that? Moshe Rabbeinu, who understood that if you want to have people satisfied in the communal partnership you have to give a cheshbon, an accounting. הו' אלה פקודי המשכן

The Holy One Blessed Be He trusted Moshe Rabbeinu. There was no human being in history who was a greater fearer of heaven, who

lived every moment in the presence of God, who was more trustworthy than the person regarding whom God said "He is the most trusted in My entire household" (Numbers 12:7). And even Moshe Rabbeinu had to give an accounting to satisfy people's concerns. They all had to know that this is how it was spent. Nobody is beyond having to give an accounting. It doesn't matter how great a talmid chacham you are; it doesn't matter how wealthy you are; it doesn't matter how great a scholar; אלה פקודי המשכן—these are the accounts of the tabernacle.

I stated before the reason that Moshe Rabbeinu had to give an accounting was to assuage the fears of the community. But the truth is, I think there's another reason that applies to us. That is: אל תאמן בעצמך עד יום מותך.

Do not trust yourself until the day you die (Pirkei Avot 2:4).

The importance of giving a public accounting is that when you know you have to give one you are less

likely to act irresponsibly. If I know no one is looking, I do whatever I want. But if I know that at the end of the month I have to go to the shul board and say that this is what I spent every dollar on, then I think twice before I spend money on frivolous things. I think twice, I think three times, and then maybe I don't (spend it).

I will close by saying al derech hadrush, in a homiletic vein:

הלל אומר אל תפרוש מן הצבור ואל תאמן בעצמך עד יום מותך ואל תדין את הברך עד שתגיע למקומו ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמוע שסופו להשמע ואל תאמר לכשאפנה (אשנה שמה לא תפנה: אבות, ב"ד

Hillel said, "Do not separate yourself from the community, and do not trust yourself until your dying day, and do not judge your fellow until you have been in his place, and do not say something which is impossible to be heard, because it will in the end be heard, and do not say, 'When I have time I will learn,' for perhaps you will not have time."

הלל אומר אל תפרוש מן הצבור. You can't be separate from the community. You can't think that if you're running a communal institution that you are above the community, and therefore you don't have to give any kind of accounting.

2) And lest you tell yourself "but I'm a

straight guy, and I would do everything properly," ואל תאמן בעצמך עד יום מותך. Don't have such trust in yourself until you're dead. When you die, you're not going to commit any more sins. But while you're alive, you and all of us are susceptible to making mistakes; we're all susceptible to doing the wrong thing.

3) Then a caution for all of us: אל תדין את הברך עד שתגיע למקומו

In judging communal institutions, until you know what you're talking about, don't rush to judgment. You have this in countless contexts, in which institutions are reluctant to reveal how money is spent, and one of the reasons they are reluctant to do so is that people will start questioning this, or questioning that, or questioning the other thing. And they're not wrong in one sense, because, if you don't understand how an institution has to run fiscally, you start asking "Well, why are they spending this? Why are they spending that?" First you have to be educated as to what are the necessities for an institution and what are not. Then you can start asking the questions, after you know how an institution has to be run, and ask why they spent on this, why they spent on that.

4) But then again, a warning to the people who spend the tziibbur's money.

ואל תאמר דבר שאי אפשר לשמוע שסופו להשמע. Don't say something or do things in a way that nobody is possibly going to be able to understand. Don't engage in complex transactions and complex accountings that don't make sense to people that you think in the end are going to be understood. You have to do things in such a way that people can understand why choices are being made.

5) Finally, לא תפנה, שמה לא תפנה. Don't say, I'll do my things; I know how to do things right, and I'll settle the account later. You may never get the chance to settle the accounts. What people do with their own funds is to a great extent their right. God has given them wealth and in some ways, it is theirs to spend as they see fit. But the mamon of the tziibbur, communal funds, is not in that category. The handling of communal funds has to be held to proper standards and procedures; the funds have to be treated with the appropriate respect and the appropriate attitude that they deserve because they don't belong to the people spending them. They belong to Klal Yisrael, to the entity of "the Jewish people," and a proper accounting must always be given. And that's what the Torah teaches us in this week's parsha. Even the greatest human being who ever lived, Moshe Rabbeinu, came to the entire Jewish people and said אלה פקודי המשכן מלשכון משכון העדת אשר פקד על פי משה, "these are the enumerations of the tabernacle that were done at Moshe's command."

Good Shabbos.





## Torah U-Madda: Give YU Some Credit

By Chayim Rosensweig

Yeshiva University's motto, Torah U-Madda, attracts a wide range of students within the Modern Orthodox (MO) spectrum. Loosely defined, Torah U-Madda means combining Judaic and secular studies. It requires strict adherence to halacha and encourages the integration of secular studies. How secular studies are to be incorporated remains a great debate discussed by many.

Historically, the ambiguity of this concept existed since its inception. Dr. Bernard Revel, YU's first president, initiated the concept (he originally referred to it as Torah and Chochma) and was quite vague about its specific meaning. Dr. Norman Lamm, in his book *Torah Umadda*, writes that Dr. Revel "had spoken of 'synthesis' and Torah Umadda, but never explicated its inner meaning and its theoretical structure". Further, Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schachter, in his article "Torah u-Madda Revisited", notes that, at different moments, Dr. Revel tweaked his phraseology and explanation. In 1946, when Dr. Revel's successor, Dr. Samuel Belkin, instituted Torah U-Madda as the official motto of YU, the lack of a precise definition persisted. Rabbi Dr. Schachter documents the varying formulations presented over time by YU's presidents, originating with "harmonious blending, union", but expanding to synonymous expressions, such as "combination", "interaction", "synthesis", etc. YU's current undergraduate mission statement discusses "combining the finest contemporary academic education with the timeless teachings of Torah," but remains vague about how to accomplish this synthesis. What is clear, though, is that the vagueness and ambiguity of the definition and application of Torah U-Madda persist in Yeshiva University to this day.

There are three basic perspectives that translate Torah U-Madda into practical methods for students to approach their YU education. Although they are independent ideas, they do not necessarily preclude each other. In fact, often a combination of these perspectives is pursued.

The first approach originates from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. It maintains that secular education is a means toward an end. It is imperative to support oneself and one's family. Thus, if a college degree fulfills this goal, a person should obtain one.

The second approach understands secular studies as useful secondary tools and aids to Judaic studies and practice. For example, the knowledge of animal anatomy and physiology is extremely useful for a schochet; mathematics can aid a person in constructing a halachically appropriate eiruv.

The third and most expansive approach of the three grants a fundamental value to learning secular studies. One variation of this is that secular studies can be used to enhance our appreciation of God, and of His world. Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein, in his lecture "To Cultivate and to Guard: The Universal Duties of Mankind", argues further that as a continuation of God's mandate to Adam HaRishon of "Le-ovdah", "to work" or develop the land, we have an obligation to improve upon the world and, thus, be involved in worldly matters. Clearly, while these viewpoints have varying applications and do differ on issues, they agree that the college secular education system contains value. The greatness of YU's ambiguous motto is that it incorporates all of these views.

One significant application of the ambiguous Torah U-Madda motto is the student course-load. Since students come from multiple backgrounds and many of them have varied Torah U-Madda perspectives, it is essential for them to have flexibility in how their daily schedule is constructed. While the fusion of a morning Judaic program and afternoon (or nighttime) secular curriculum is a requirement, YU provides ample flexibility in this configuration. To cater to these multiple types of students, there are four morning Judaic learning programs: the Isaac Breuer College of Hebrew Studies (IBC), the James Striar School/Mechinah Program (JSS), Yeshiva Program/Mazer School of Talmudic Studies (MYP), and Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP). Each differs in content, intensity, and length of Judaic study, catering to the large varying corpus of students. The afternoon studies consist of both secular and Judaic subjects, such as Jewish history or Jewish philosophy. Some are rigorous, while others require less work. Further, students are given the option to take anywhere from 12 to 17.5 credits, and can even count their morning program's

study toward the tally of those credits. There is a lot of flexibility in the dual curriculum that YU provides, which allows students to construct a system that snugly fits their Torah U-Madda viewpoint.

Some note and lament this ambiguity of Torah U-Madda. They contend that by ensuring the opportunity for excellence, both in the Yeshiva and the University portions, YU sacrifices quality. They reason, in reality, YU consists of an elite few who aspire to study both fields rigorously, while the remaining majority focus on one of the two. Despite the overall strength of both Judaic and secular curriculums, which appeal to these diverse Torah U-Madda perspectives, YU could spend its budget better by focusing its funds toward a specific genre of students. They argue that instead of trying to gain more students, YU should limit its scope of acceptance. YU should attract a specific prototype student with specific goals of how to educate that student, limiting the institution to a specific definition of Torah U-Madda. Narrowing its focus would permit YU to take an already impressive program and create a more excellent one.

Certainly, this argument finds its place in Rabbinic literature. Chazal developed a concept of "tafasta, meruba lo tafasta," commonly referred to as "don't bite off more than you can

**I BELIEVE THAT THE AMBIGUITY OF TORAH U-MADDA AND ITS APPLICATION IN FORMING A BROAD STUDENT BODY IS AN EXTREMELY POSITIVE AND BENEFICIAL ASPECT OF YU. NOT ONLY DOES THIS AMBIGUITY MOLD YU INTO AN INSTITUTION WHERE DIVERSE MO STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT STRIPES AND FLAVORS CAN THRIVE, BUT THE ENSUING ENVIRONMENT PROVIDES UNIQUE AND SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES TO THOSE STUDENTS WHICH SIMPLY DO NOT EXIST ELSEWHERE.**

chew". At the outset, it would seem that attempting to reach a broader student body by providing a significant range of Judaic and secular curriculums would be too ambitious.

However, I believe that the ambiguity of Torah U-Madda and its application in forming a broad student body is an extremely positive and beneficial aspect of YU. Not only does this ambiguity mold YU into an institution where diverse MO students can thrive, but the ensuing environment provides unique and significant opportunities to those students, which are nonexistent elsewhere. Further, it allows YU to contribute considerably to the broader MO community.

In addition to the unique curriculum, a distinctive feature of YU is its social community. The interaction between different types of students provides the opportunity for dialogue between them. How they relate to each other and the ideas they discuss during college can become the basis to form bonds that will stay with them forever. They could provide the means of friendly interaction, association, and cooperation between their various communities in years to come. Of course, this type of interaction is quite idealistic and does not necessarily occur every day or even for every student. Certainly, the opposite could be true as well. Students from different backgrounds could have negative interactions with others and create negative connotations about a different group. Nonetheless, the forum for dialogue between different groups within Modern Orthodoxy is made possible because of their coexistence in Yeshiva University.

Although diversity does exist in other institutions, the dynamic at YU is unique. While a secular college may consist of Jewish students from all walks of life, it may lack a significant presence of students that represent each type, or at least the different MO philosophies. Similarly, in the more Yeshivish colleges and Yeshivas, there is, of course, variation, but that variation is minute in comparison to the variation existent in YU. In YU, not only is there diversity, but the number of students who fit into each of the multiple perspectives of Torah U-Madda is significant. This dense diversity of Modern Orthodoxy fosters discussion that can help the future synthesis of MO divisions.

This form of dialogue and interaction has additional ben-

efits. Dr. Lamm, toward the end of his *Torah Umadda*, writes that there is "no model of Torah Umadda that is exclusively valid for all people at all times. There is a plurality of versions or paradigms to choose from." The opportunity to be exposed to the other perspectives of Torah U-Madda is healthy, since it forces students to think about and take ownership of their own version. Further, whenever there is any diversity, there is the opportunity to learn from others as well.

Aside from catering to a wide variety of students, YU's ambiguous and far-reaching motto ensures YU's position as a center for Modern Orthodoxy. The MO society is vast and consists of communities that represent the differing interpretations of Torah U-Madda. YU is filled with and produces a significant portion of future MO leaders, scholars, and laymen for those communities.

In the Modern Jewish History course I took last semester, my professor, Rabbi Dr. Bernard Rosensweig explained how the Chassidic movement grew to be so widespread. He explained that the Baal Shem Tov's successor, Rav Dov Ber, ingeniously transformed Chassidism into a global movement by decentralizing it. He created a skeleton of how the Chassidic communal structure should appear and then sent out disciples to create branches of their own with more personally-developed structures. In this way, he stabilized and unified the Chasidic movement by allowing for variation.

Similarly, YU uses this technique through its motto to stabilize and maintain the MO community. YU does not create the already existing differing groups and philosophies of Modern Orthodoxy, but does place them under one "roof". YU incorporates them into one unified group with a common idea, that of strict observance of halacha and the inclusion of both secular and Judaic studies. To be clear, this inclusion has its limits. Despite being flexible, YU does not open its doors to those who do not fulfill this criteria, such as those in the Reform and Conservative Jewish movements. Rather, it requires a certain set of accepted principles, such as the acceptance of Torah Mishamayim, of the Written and Oral Torah, and the binding character of halacha.

Perhaps, YU's umbrella inclusion of the differing groups of Modern Orthodoxy strengthened the movement and helped protect it from detrimental social currents. There were concerns some years back about the future of Modern Orthodoxy as a movement. I propose that YU's position as a center of Modern Orthodoxy helped strengthen and stabilize the movement and prevented it from fizzling out.

The rationale for different groups to coexist is not a new one to Judaism. Expounding on the story of the splitting of the Red Sea, Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer, one of the Midrashei Aggadah, informs us that that there was not, in fact, one path through the sea; rather, there were twelve — one for each tribe. The Midrash further notes that the walls dividing these paths consisted of water, and that, while traveling, the Jews glanced at those in neighboring paths. Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Weinberg, in his *Sichat Mussar* lecture entitled "Uniting a Divided Nation", pointed to Rabbi Greenwald (the Puppa Rav) who elucidated the significance of and lesson from this Midrash. Rabbi Greenwald explained that while it is significant for us to stay in our "lane", it is also crucial to glance at those beside us and gain from their valuable approach to life. Similarly, Yeshiva University utilizes its Torah U-Madda motto to create a unique community; one that consists of a complex and varying student body that can provide, appreciate, and learn from differing perspectives on campus. The significant breadth of its student body has a tremendous impact on the greater Modern Orthodox community at large.





## Featured Faculty: *Dean Karen Bacon*

By Yechiel Schwab

Dean Karen Bacon reflects fondly upon her undergraduate days at Stern College for Women. Growing up in the Los Angeles area, she was part of a very small Jewish community, attended a public high school, and often felt like an outsider. Arriving at Stern, she found a welcoming and warm community that finally made her feel like an insider. The kosher Caf was a particularly pleasant change; there were no kosher restaurants in LA when she grew up. Dean Bacon speaks highly of the academic community and the faculty she encountered during her undergraduate days, whom she found heavily invested in her and her success. From a broader values perspective, Yeshiva University's philosophy of Torah u'Madda resonated deeply with Dean Bacon, and continues to do so. All these factors influenced Dean Bacon in her recent decision to accept the role of Dean of Undergraduate Arts and Sciences.



their powers of critical thinking and analysis were not as strong as the students she taught in YC.

Looking back on her accomplishments as Dean, Dean Bacon proudly points to Stern's strong Jewish Studies program. When she started her deanship, Stern's Jewish Studies program and its requirements were very weak, something which she found troubling for a university founded on the principles of Torah u'Madda. She strove to enhance and strengthen this program, even though a small group of students were loudly opposed to these changes. Dean Bacon organized all the students together ("this was back when all the students could fit together in one room") to discuss these changes openly with them. Though Dean Bacon prepared for contingencies involving large percentages of students leaving Stern due to these changes, in the end "the students didn't abandon the University." Dean Bacon explains this based on a distinction of two types of happiness: experienced, and remembered. Experi-

enced happiness is something you enjoy in the moment, while remembered happiness is something you look back upon and recall pleurably. While sometimes they overlap, they don't have to, and Dean Bacon believes that a large part of college is remembered happiness. She remembers the stress and anxiety she had over each test in college, but she nonetheless thinks of the time happily, and she believes most students feel the same way because of the sense of accomplishment engendered, often specifically through tougher courses.

When asked to offer advice to undergraduates, Dean Bacon mentions this approach to education, telling students to not shy away "from taking intellectual risks." Looking back on life, she explains, "you are proud not of what you didn't accomplish, but what you did accomplish." She urges students to invest more in their education, even taking courses that don't fulfill requirements, since these courses can help fill the broader picture students develop of the world around them. Unlike every other resource, she explains, education is something that never gets thrown out, and can never be taken away from you. It stays in your head forever, and you should take advantage to fill your "arsenals" with education. Dean Bacon also urges students to seek advice, not only from peers, but from experts, whether on or off campus.

For interests outside of her job, Dean Bacon immediately points to her family. She knows that many applaud men who say their main interest is family, but frown when women say it is their main interest. Nonetheless, she maintains that "there is nothing more important to me than my family." After her family, she mentions that she enjoys reading, mainly for escapist purposes. She singles-out *Quiet* by Susan Cain, which she recently read and found particularly enlightening toward understanding introverts and the individual differences among people.

Looking towards her new role, Dean Bacon wants to inform Yeshiva College students about her approach to deanship. She keeps an "open-door policy," and though currently she is not sure where that door will be, she hopes it will be open. She wants to speak with students, and no problem or concern is too trivial. Working with students, motivating them, and problem-solving with them are her favorite parts of being dean. She particularly enjoys watching people grow and seeing them feel empowered, and is looking forward to doing that here on the Wilf Campus.

Though the exact details of her new job remain up in the air, Dean Bacon is hoping to move forward swiftly. Her preferred method in this, she explained, which might not be favored by all academics, is to analyze a problem or concern, solve it, and move on to the next one. She doesn't shy away from telling people her view, but she won't impose her plans upon anyone. Though Dean Bacon maintains that the faculties and cultures of the two colleges will remain largely intact and separate, she does foresee some changes from this unified faculty. For specific examples, she mentions the possibility of sharing information between the writing programs, now that they are both

one semester, and cross-listing courses within the YC Core. But like many aspects of this new job, these changes are still in the preliminary planning stage.

Even Dean Bacon's daily schedule remains undecided. President Joel envisions Dean Bacon working two days a week at the Beren Campus, and two days at the Wilf Campus. Dean Bacon herself has considered

traveling every day between campuses, starting each day at Beren and traveling uptown in the early-afternoon (when traffic is usually light), since the Yeshiva College schedule only begins in the afternoon. Commenting on the title often granted her by President Joel of "Super-Dean," Dean Bacon said that if she could have one superpower, it would be flight, in order to be able to hover above everything, look down, and see how it all fits together. And this would also make her commute simpler.

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**SHE KEEPS AN "OPEN DOOR POLICY," AND THOUGH CURRENTLY SHE IS NOT SURE WHERE THAT DOOR WILL BE, SHE HOPES IT WILL BE OPEN.**

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## In Praise of Folly and YCDS

By Avi Mendelson

Yeshiva College Dramatics Society's selected play for second semester may have raised some eyebrows. No, *The Boys Next Door* is not an adaptation of *The Girls Next Door* for an all-male school production—you can lower your eyebrows a bit. But it is a comedy about four grown men with mental disabilities living together in a group home.

You read that correctly—a comedy about special needs. When I first saw the promotional poster for this play, complete with (intentionally) misspelled days of the week on which the play would be performed, I felt a combination of skepticism and worry. How exactly was this supposed to work? Was the comedy simply meant to be sourced in the convoluted and endearing interactions between grown men with mental disabilities? Was the audience to laugh at their ridiculous statements and ambitious fantasies? How was this humor not going to be cheap, distasteful, or offensive? And even if this humor was actually rather sophisticated, nuanced, and insightful, could a bunch of amateur college students—some first time performers—really convey the depth and wisdom of such a comedy? (I'll answer this last one right now—YES!).

Before the play began, President of YCDS and producer Michael Fridman stepped out into the spotlight along with one of the actors to formally address these questions to an audience that was surely just as skeptical as I was. "This play is not a mockery of our friends" (that doesn't even sound like the sort of thing you should need to say). "It is first and foremost a way for us to sympathize with their struggles. Please enjoy the play as it was intended... a comedy! Don't hold back your laughter and applause!"

I wasn't entirely convinced, partially because I still had no idea how this mixture of comedy and special needs was to be concocted. But at least it was reassuring to know that someone was sensitive to the riskiness of this production.

The truth is that once I was actually seated and watching, I wasn't questioning the potential offensiveness of the premise of the play—I was really just annoyed. The opening scenes occur exclusively in the home and portray the idiosyncrasies and shenanigans of these men which often border on chaos. I hardly found this enjoyable. The humor was shallow and

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**HUMOR TURNS OUT TO BE THE STRONGEST FORCE OF EDIFICATION BECAUSE IT TEASES OUT THE COMMON EXPERIENCES THAT THOSE IN THE MAINSTREAM ALL SHARE WHICH CLEARLY DON'T HAVE TO BE THE WAY THEY ARE. THE MORE WE LAUGH, THE MORE WE COLLECTIVELY AGREE. THIS PLAY HELPS US REALIZE THAT WE ALL HAVE STRUGGLES; SOME ARE UNIVERSAL, AND SOME ARE INDIVIDUALIZED. LAUGHTER MELTS AWAY THE EXTERNALITIES THAT CATEGORIZE US AS DIFFERENT.**

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stupid. Real life interactions like these are endearing and sweet, but what I seemed to be watching was a bunch of college students (some, friends) acting the part to get easy laughs. I simply did not understand what direction the play could go in and I was not looking forward to sitting through incomprehensibly meaningless interactions for another two hours.

In retrospect it was probably naïve of me to assume that the



chaotic and vapid humor of the opening scene was all the play had in store. For as soon as we left the home and followed the individual characters through their own daily routines, real lives with real struggles and complexity emerged.

Examples of these real life story lines would be the abuse that Arnold Wiggins (Eliyahu Raskin) experiences as a janitor in a movie theatre where his coworkers bully him. Or the personality of Norman Bulansky (Judah Gavant) whose love of donuts may only be matched by his love for his brother who does not feel the same way. Norman works really hard at winning his brother back (which is actually a YCDS adaptation of the storyline in the original play in which Norman is trying to win over his crush).

For someone whose only real interaction with people with disabilities is the occasional Yachad shabbaton, *The Boys Next Door* is a critically important play in that it portrays the linear sequence of the life, emotions, and thoughts of grown men with disabilities, as opposed to a cross section of existence in the timeline of life. The play provides a complete picture of the individuals: their emotional development, the consequences of an event on their disposition, and the changes in personality that their environment effects.

Much of the insight of the play is subtle, and can be lost on a crowd that does not consider the inherent message it teaches. I felt two scenes in particular were very powerful in their subtlety and their use of humor, both of which involved Arnold at a social dancing event that the home goes to every month.

One scene at first looks to be just another comical happening, but really reveals a thought-provoking truth. Norman runs on to the scene to tell caretaker Jack (Jack Turell) that Arnold is in the bathroom and won't leave until the drops of pee that he got on his pants dry, for fear of embarrassment. But sure enough, Arnold emerges from the bathroom with his entire pants soaking wet. When Jack half amusedly inquires as to what happened, Arnold responds that a pipe burst, causing water to spray everywhere. As Jack quickly turns to fix up the situation in the bathroom, concerned about the damage that he is now responsible for, Arnold stops him. "Don't you get it?" asks Arnold. He then explains to Jack that he was so embarrassed about the pee on his pants that he soaked the rest of his pants with water to disguise the mess and then told everyone that a pipe exploded. "I've had great results," says

Arnold proudly. As Jack chuckles and the scene ends, the rest of the audience is left laughing. But in the lull between scenes, we realize that the laughter is less about Arnold's elaborate plan, and more about the fact that he successfully tricked us, too. Cliché as it sounds, the audience is not laughing at Arnold, but rather with Arnold as we share his delight in the brilliance and effectiveness of his solution. Or perhaps the laughter is directed at ourselves for having doubted Arnold, and herein lies the point of this short but sweet scene. We often wave off the perceived irrational actions of people with special needs, or smile about them endearingly. But maybe there is a lot more coherence from the perspective of those we assume to be acting irrationally. As with Arnold and his burst pipe, perhaps we are the ones that are missing out on something.

At the same party, Arnold is contemplating out loud with Norman whether or not he should cut in to dance with a girl he likes. While he and Norman scoff privately at the girl and make fun of her "tick" (one of her dance moves), it is obvious that Arnold really does want to cut in, but that he lacks either the social skills or confidence to do so. Eventually he does, only to be rejected by the girl. When he returns, he tries to laugh it off with Norman and continues to make fun of her tick. The audience laughs along, as Arnold's imitation is rather humorous. "That's maybe better," Norman says to him reassuringly. "Sure, it's better," responds Arnold confidently. They go back and forth repeating these two lines, but gradually Arnold's voice raises until he finally shouts "Sure, it's better!" and the scene ends. Here, the subtlety of

Arnold's tone, which can only be recognized once his shout is left lingering in the ears of the audience as the scene cuts to black, drives home the message of this scene. Arnold's tone is no longer complacent—in fact, it never was. His voice reveals that he is angry and deeply upset. The visceral emotions that he holds inside which are suppressed by an inability to properly deal with or express them eventually do come out. Because he cannot deal with those emotions in a proactive, constructive manner through, say, a conversation with a friend, Arnold is left to feel bitter and frustrated at his failure and slim prospects for feeling happy. People—particularly those with special needs—sometimes seem emotionally simple and complacent, but have real, complicated emotions just like the rest of us. And if they can't express regular emotions with ease, imagine how painful it must be to have those difficult emotions lodged inside with no way out. The troubling reality that the audience was laughing with Arnold and Norman about the girl's tick just moments before, but now realizes that Arnold is actually deeply hurt, shows us how vital the ability to express emotion is in order to receive support—and how lonely it can feel for someone who cannot communicate that effectively.

I was really, truly impressed by Raskin's performance in this particular instance because all of this was conveyed in his tone of voice. *The Boys Next Door* is not a play whose message is verbalized by the characters; rather, it is understood through the expression of their emotions. In this way, the role of the actors is that much more crucial, as they are tasked with expressing the thoughts and feelings of their character through tone, facial expression, hand gestures, body language, and movement. The actors all did a phenomenal job with this.

However, I do have one critique reserved for YCDS's production, and it rides on this last thought. The main point of this play is to show that people with mental disabilities experience life in much the same way as those who do not. Their emotions are as complex, their struggles as real, their joys as life-fulfilling. One of the story lines that would have encompassed all these truths would have been Norman trying to win back his girlfriend. For those who did not watch the play with the foreknowledge that this was the original plot line, the adaptation of Norman winning his brother back would have gone unnoticed.

But as someone who

see YCDS, cont. on p. 24



## Consider Art

By Yadin Teitz

My grandmother recently got an iPad. This was a relatively big milestone in her life, because she barely knows how to use her cell phone (and certainly never hears it ring). She still refers to her computer (which she's never touched) as "The Machine." One could say that technology and certain parts of the 21st century have been tough on her. But no longer. After reading many, many articles in *The New York Times* and other publications (in print, obviously), Grandma decided that the time had come for an iPad. The iPad would be easy for her to use, and would allow her to access the mysterious world of "The Internet." When it finally arrived, I told my grandmother about another mysterious world that existed within her tablet: iTunes. iTunes, I explained, would let her choose and store her favorite music on her iPad. Her reaction was, to borrow a cliché, priceless. "Why would I want music?" she wondered.

Needless to say, Grandma's response is pretty uncommon amongst consumers. Thanks to such devices as portable CD players, mp3 players, iPods, iPhones, iPads, and other smartphones and tablets, music has become a ubiquitous feature of our society. It is rare to take a bus ride or travel on the subway without being surrounded by people in headphones. It is rare to walk down the street without seeing people bopping along to the music in their heads. People increasingly listen to music everywhere they go, whether driving in their cars, studying in libraries, or shopping in the supermarket. Any period which requires patience (like waiting in the doctor's office or in line) is incomplete without music. And, as a result, music is virtually everywhere. It's become universally popular to listen to music, and everyone seems to have a favorite song or artist. Everyone, regardless of culture, race, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, gender, and social class has a type of music that appeals to them. And chances are that they're listening to it all the time.

Music used to be far more sacred than it is today. Until 18th century England, musicians depended on court patronage. They performed for royalty, and were sustained by rulers. German-British composer George Frideric Handel pioneered 'popular' music. Thanks to his influence, public concerts and opera performances became frequent in the 1700's in England and later spread throughout Europe. Along with this came music clubs and a growth of public support and appreciation for music, which allowed composers to be liberated from court patronage. Different cultures brought different types of music, and music evolved and grew and changed to eventually become the diverse, popular medium that it is today.

Photography, too, has reached a renaissance in the 21st

century, with every smartphone owner fashioning himself an amateur photographer and popular apps and social media outlets like Instagram transforming such photos into veritable works of art. Yet the same popularity cannot be said of painting and drawing apps. Granted, they may honestly be inferior. But I don't know anyone who takes out his or her phone to make a quick sketch instead of robotically playing Candy Crush. I don't know anyone who instinctively whips out his



or her device to draw pretty scenery or recreate something inspirational the same way he or she would automatically take a photo. I don't know anyone who would rather occupy him or herself with looking at pictures of famous paintings rather than listening to Beyoncé.

In my mind, the void of visual arts in the technology sector reflects a larger decline of public appreciation of this medium. While music and photography have managed to pervade and infiltrate every realm of our lives, visual arts, like painting and sculpture, have not left their lofty homes in museums. In

two trips to well-known art museums in the past week, I can report that they were visibly less full than they might be. Of those visiting, teenagers and twenty-somethings were by far the exception, overshadowed drastically by elderly couples and families with young, unhappy children. Museum guards stood at attention in every gallery, casting furtive glances at visitors and pouncing upon those who dared cross the invisible threshold in front of each work. For many, paintings and sculpture become both emotionally and physically inaccessible. And as a result, visual arts are becoming extinct. And understandably so.

Research on characteristics of millennials found that our generation is "obsessed with technology, social media, and design," and that we have an "insatiable techie hunger." It's also been suggested that we "seek immediate gratification." All of these attributes can be directly linked to the advance of the internet and the development of smartphones. While music has managed to keep up and remain constant, painting and sculpture have not been able to adapt to the new needs and desires of our generation. Going to look at art is a process. It's not instantaneous, and it cannot be considered high-tech. Painting and sculpture are old-fashioned, traditional forms of expression that reflects a more genteel, leisurely time. And thus, the thought of going to a museum to look at art (or even drawing or having artwork on one's phone) is totally foreign to most of us.

What's to be done? Ideally, an iArt to go along with iTunes should be introduced. Just as with music one can hear live concerts or listen to high quality music on their personal devices, one should be able to look at art in museums or download high-quality images of artwork to keep on their phones. Art can encompass a wide variety of styles and appeal to personal tastes, just as music does. People could share art pieces with friends and have favorite artists and favorite works, and create their own art to sell on iArt. Yet I know that this is unrealistic. For any advance in the popularization of artwork, we must first come to appreciate art. We must force ourselves to put some effort into this occupation by going to museums, to art galleries, to studios. We

must support artists and attempt to produce our very own art, no matter the hardship and struggle. Not everything needs to be instantaneous and easy. Not everything needs to be high-tech and modern. We are at risk of losing something far more precious than we realize. Museums cannot sustain themselves, and neither can artists. The medium may eventually disappear entirely. In a way, perhaps we all are better off being a little bit more like my grandmother, going back to the old-fashioned ways of a bygone era. On our iPads.

YCDS, cont. from p. 23

was cognizant of this substitution, I really felt something valuable was missing. The look of sheer happiness and bliss on Norman's face as he gleefully jumps for joy after his meeting with his brother really captured an emotion, but an emotion reserved for a relationship that was just not as relatable. I think more people would have connected to Norman and the bliss he felt after his date, the only noticeable difference being that his emotions are more uninhibited and pure. While I understand the religious observance issues with maintaining the original plotline of a guy in love with a girl, I do feel it was a shame this storyline had to be adapted, because it took away from the power of this scene.

By the second act, you could tell that the actors had really gained the trust of the audience. Our cool timidity that made for some awkward silent moments in the first half when we should have been laughing reflected an unease with the comedy component of the play, but now we were laughing at every one of Norman's adorable one liners. It eventually dawned on me that the presence of comedy in this play was very well intended and expertly used. The entertainment that these men provided us through their ridiculous comments and convoluted conceptions of reality was not merely for entertainment's sake—that would have been distasteful and boring—it was also morally edifying. Fridman (or rather the playwright, Tom Griffin) wanted the audience to laugh because it is an integral part of experiencing the message of the play, since at a certain point we realize that we are really laughing at ourselves. After all, who is the audience laughing at when Norman describes a pornographic magazine that he found in a bathroom as he holds his arms wide in front of his chest to tell his friends about

one model's "big... giant... shoes"? Certainly not Norman; he didn't really say anything funny. What is funny (or rather sad) to us is the immediate association the audience has with Norman's hand motions and the magazine, to the point where we fill in the blank before Norman slowly reaches the end of his sentence. The laughter is a form of endearing appreciation for Norman's innocence as well as a commentary on our own free-associating minds. To take another example, when Norman is dancing with his brother Sheldon (Binyamin Goldman) at the dancing event, they get into an argument and stop dancing with each other. However, moments later a new song comes on that they both like and they are happily dancing once again, as if nothing had come between them but a minute ago. The audience's laughter at this quick turnaround is, again, endearing, but it is also partly wishful that our lives should be so simple, our arguments that easy to forget. Perhaps we laugh because it's just plain silly that our lives aren't that way. Humor turns out to be the strongest force of edification because it teases out the common experiences that those in the mainstream all share which clearly don't have to be the way they are. The more we laugh, the more we collectively agree. Maybe that's why the audience only began laughing freely after the second half. There's nothing funny about plain ridiculousness for ridiculousness' sake, but once the comedy is understood to be commentary, it becomes meaningful and insightful and we are glad to reciprocate with the coveted reaction of laughter.

It is really in this way that the play is "first and foremost a way for us to sympathize with their struggles." When we look at their lives, we laugh at our own. This play helps us realize that we all have struggles; some are universal, and some

are individualized. Laughter melts away the externalities that categorize us as different.

The Boys Next Door is truly a special play. It is a daunting one to perform because of the level of difficulty in conveying all it has to offer, so you really have to hand it to the actors of YCDS. The depth of their performance was felt both by audience members who could not relate to the struggles they were portraying and by those who could, a number of whom expressed this to the actors after the show. The actors were able to have this effect in part because of an awareness of the importance of this play that lent itself to the investment of time, energy, and emotion necessary to fully connect to their respective characters. YCDS raised funds for Libenu, an organization for Jewish men much like the ones in the play, and developed a relationship with the organization through the play as well. The cast went to meet with them as they were still learning about their roles, and this allowed them to internalize the struggles and feelings of their characters in a way that really spoke to the audience (which included the members of Libenu on opening night). After two incredibly successful plays this year, by now it should be expected that YCDS will exceed expectations... and then some. I want to applaud YCDS for not only delivering a great performance, but for putting on a performance that truly mattered.



## Yeshiva University Literacy Program

By Akiva Marder

It's 10:30 am on a Friday morning when John's hand shoots up from his desk. John is one of twenty-five students in Ms. Weber's eighth grade math class and he is having difficulty graphing during independent work time. In a class so big, it is rare for Ms. Weber's students to get the individual attention they require, but Fridays are different. Ari Tepler spots John's hand and makes his way over. Together they go over slopes, patiently reviewing the formulas and steps.

Tepler is a sophomore at Yeshiva College and has spent almost every Friday of the past two semesters assisting and tutoring in Ms. Weber's eighth grade class. He is one of sixty Yeshiva University students volunteering in the Yeshiva University Literacy Program, a non-profit club dedicated to helping local public school students in Washington Heights to succeed and excel academically in the subjects of English, Science, History, and Math. For fifty minutes each week, Yeshiva students tutor and mentor primary and secondary school students, many of whom have disadvantaged backgrounds and cannot otherwise afford tutoring sessions and individualized help.

Josh Levy, current Yeshiva College co-President of the program, explained that the Literacy Program started off as a grassroots program "spearheaded by a handful of students who wanted to help the Washington Heights community." Since its establishment over a decade ago, however, it has grown into a full-fledged program, with its size and influence increasing tremendously. Today, the Literacy Program works alongside three Washington Heights public schools: WHEELS, IS 143, and, most recently, PS 132. Through the program, teachers in these schools can request either classroom tutors or tutors for specific individuals. Their requests are uploaded to the YU Literacy Program online server, through which Yeshiva students can volunteer for specific time slots.

Partially responsible for the Literacy Program's more recent growth is its active presence at Stern College. This year, the program officially became funded on the Beren Campus and has recruited Miriam Mond and Shoshana Mond as co-Presidents, Jeni Rossberg as Vice President, and Tamar Levy

as Marketing Director. They work alongside Levy and his Wilf Campus co-President, Yosef van Bemmelen, meeting with teachers and principals, creating events, and controlling the program's website and social media. In addition to the new team members on the Beren Campus, the program has also acquired a stipend to reimburse transit fees of Stern volunteers who come on a weekly basis, resulting in a large increase of female volunteers.

**THE TEACHER OF THE CLASS LATER TOLD HIM THAT THAT STUDENT WROTE A STORY ABOUT HOW HIS FAVORITE PART OF THE WEEK WAS WHEN JOSH CAME TO TUTOR. "BECOMING A ROLE MODEL BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN YOU, AND IS A GREAT EXPERIENCE THAT ENABLES YOU TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON THE YOUNGER GENERATION," LEVY COMMENTED.**

On the most basic level, the mission of the Literacy Program is an educational one. WHEELS Program Coordinator, Kerry MacNeil, explained that "our goals with the Literacy Program are to offer additional support to our students in their content classes, to meet students' needs." Some of the schools involved in the program have received poor ratings from the New York Board of Education in the past, with many of their students coming from underprivileged backgrounds. Through the program, the schools' teachers get extra hands to teach their lessons, either in small groups or on an individual basis, providing a stronger and more personalized education.

Perhaps even more significant than the volunteers' roles as educators, however, is their unique opportunities to be role models. Levy recalled a specific student who was frequently

absent from school, yet always came to class on the particular day he and the other Yeshiva tutors came. The teacher of the class later told him that that student wrote a story about how his favorite part of the week was when Josh came to tutor. "Becoming a role model brings out the best in you and is a great experience that enables you to have a meaningful impact on the younger generation," Levy commented.

From a wider lens, the program is special in the partnership it creates between the Yeshiva community and larger Washington Heights community. This was certainly the case for Yeshiva College Sophomore Avi Mendelson, who joined the program this past Fall. "Volunteering in the public school has given me exposure to another community and culture that I would otherwise have never gotten to know," said Mendelson. "Recently I was walking through the Heights and recognized a student from my class. It made me feel like a real member of the neighborhood, that I'm not at YU just to take some classes and earn a degree but to really live and learn from all the people around me while I'm here."

Looking ahead, the Literacy Program hopes to continue its great success and have even more Yeshiva students involved in its meaningful initiative. In addition to its fantastic kick-off event with Teach for America this year, it plans on having additional events for all tutors in the future.

Asked what makes the Literacy Program so special, the program's leadership agreed, "The Literacy Program not only benefits the students that we tutor, but it also helps volunteers become more comfortable teaching and interacting with a diverse range of students." Noted Levy, "As much as I find that these students gain from me, I, in fact, gain from them. Every time I leave the school after tutoring I feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment."

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*For more information on the Yeshiva University Literacy Program, like their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Yeshiva-University-Literacy-Program/1038320129517821> or sign up for a tutoring time slot at <http://www.jooners.com/guest?l=ebb32ba6-9779-4843-a956-37e27638495d>*

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## Just in Time for Sefira: The Return of the Y-Studs

By Nathaniel Ribner

It's that time of year again, the Omer (between Pesach and Shavuot), when we take a hiatus from our usual playlists and break out the ol' A Cappella music. From the groups who started it all, such as The Chevra and A.K.A. Pella, to the more recent artists, such as Six13 and Shir Soul, our iPhones and computers have been playing the same material into our thirsty eardrums for years. Sure, there's the occasional holiday parody that we'll send as a holiday card to our cousins in the Midwest, or share on our friend's Facebook wall, but our community needs a spark. We need something new... something that's been missing in recent years. We need some premium Y-Studs A Cappella music.

After a long, long wait, the Y-Studs are back to answer that call. To catch you up, the Y-Studs were established in 2010 and quickly emerged onto the A Cappella scene with chips on their shoulders, having been perceived as "that other guys' group at YU." With their powerful soloists and diverse song choices, the 'Studs proved many haters wrong. After two years of hard work, the Y-Studs released their first album, *Take Me Home*, in 2012. The compilation received critical acclaim, and even featured two songs that were selected to the BOJAC (Best of Jewish A Cappella) CD. "Ahavat Yisrael," better known as "Baneshama," was played at numerous summer camps, and gave a silky-smooth taste to lovers of Israeli music. Their controversial reggae-inspired rendition of "Bilvavi," a beloved 'slow-shira song,' was ranked number two overall of BOJAC submissions, and showed that A Cappella groups can pursue different feels for songs rather than simply adapting the sounds of each original piece.

After inspiring many, however, the Y-Studs ran into a problem

that so many college groups face today. Many of the group members graduated and subsequently left the group, making a rebuilding year or two imminent. Although the group found a



lot of talent at YU, it was difficult to maintain popularity and work their way back up to high musical performance levels without their motivated founders. But the boys finally regained the attention of the public eye at last year's Yom HaShoah

and Yom HaZikaron/Yom HaAtzmaut ceremonies at Lamport Auditorium at YU. Displaying a completely new cast of 'studs' led by Musical Director Nathaniel Ribner and President Jason Katz, the Y-Studs put forth performances that raised eyebrows. They were also featured at a Northern Ontario Pesach program. Those performances signified the filled-with-potential second generation of the talented bunch. Which leads us to the Y-Studs today, a time when the group is gaining international recognition and performing from coast to coast—a new era that the group is calling the "Days of New."

On Chol HaMoed Pesach, the Y-Studs gave us a heavily anticipated gift of new, quality all-male college A Cappella music in the form of an EP (extended play). The EP features hits like Avicii's "The Days" as well as Gad Elbaz's ever-popular "Hashem Melech." The Y-Studs have more surprises on this gem of an album, but you'll have to pick it up on iTunes, Amazon, Spotify, etc. to hear what we mean.

They sang beautifully at this year's Yom HaShoah "I Am Never Again" program, and are sure to rock out at this week's Yom HaZikaron/Yom HaAtzmaut.

Stay tuned for news about a concert promoting the new EP by liking them on Facebook and following their YouTube channel. You won't want to miss it. The new age of the Y-Studs has begun. Get ready for a wild ride.

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*Nathaniel Ribner is the Musical Director of the Y-Studs.*

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## Another Profitable year at the Seforim Sale

By Shaul Yaakov Morrison

The annual YU Seforim Sale is one of the largest events on campus each year. This year, the sale lasted from February 1st to March 1st, which was a week longer than the 2014 sale. According to Seforim Sale CFO Nathaniel Kukurudz, this year's sale generated \$722,000 in revenue, down about \$10,000 from the 2014 sale. However, Kukurudz projects a similar net income to the 2014 sale, which was \$46,000, but it is too soon after the sale to determine the exact net income. Coming off a profitable 2014 sale, the management of the sale hoped that the sale would grow in 2015 due to some of the changes made, but the revenue and income remained stagnant. Nonetheless, it was a positive sign that the sale was profitable in consecutive years, which was not always the case.

After losing \$57,000 in 2013, the Sy Syms faculty began to advise the student leadership on how to best manage the sales' finances. Last year, Professor Leonard Fuld advised the sale as part of a Sy Syms course, and this year, Sy Syms Associate Dean and Entrepreneur-in-Residence Michael Strauss was the faculty liaison to the sale. "Dean Strauss was presented the budget and major expenses, which he approved and contributed great inputs to. I speak for the team when I express our thanks to him for all his help," said Kukurudz. Having the Syms faculty as part of the team has helped the Seforim Sale become profitable once again.

Planning the sale requires months of preparation and a committed management team to ensure that the sale runs profitably and efficiently. The Seforim Sale management team started planning for this year's sale at the beginning of the academic year. They coordinated with various YU departments, determined what titles to stock, coordinated with over 200 vendors to receive merchandise, set pricing, and worked on the budget for the year's sale.

The management team allocated money from the previous year's sale in order to ensure that the sale would have enough cash to pay the various upfront costs incurred during the planning stages. This year, the sale faced an expense they did not face in years past; the furniture used in the sale had been made available at a lower price due to the generosity of donors, but this year the sale had to pay about \$7,000 upfront to pay for the rental. This type of expense is covered from money saved from last year's sale and allows the sale to operate without going into debt. Another key method that management used to remain debt-free was by exclusively selling merchandise on consignment. This arrangement minimizes upfront costs for stocking books. As part of their agreement, the books remained property of the author, publisher, or distributor until they are sold. Once sold, the Seforim sale remits a pre-negotiated sum to the publisher. Additionally, at the end of the sale, and extra

books are shipped back to their owners, ensuring that the sale is never left with inventory.

The Seforim Sale's prices remained cheaper than even some of the largest booksellers, including Amazon.com. For example, a copy of Shlomo Brody's newly released book, *Guide to the Complex*, which retails for \$29.99 on the publisher's website and about \$25.00 on Amazon, was priced at \$20.59 at the Seforim Sale. According to Kukurudz, "The

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**"OUR GOAL IS NOT TO MAXIMIZE PROFIT, BUT TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY WITH THE BEST PRICES ON JEWISH BOOKS, SERVE YU WITH PUBLICITY AND BRAGGING RIGHTS, AND ALSO SERVE THE STUDENT BODY BY GIVING THE PROFIT BACK TO THEM."**

**- NATHANIEL KUKURUDZ,  
SEFORIM SALE CFO**

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main reason our prices are so competitive is because of the incredible relationships we have fostered over the years with our many suppliers, who understand our mission, and thus make every effort to provide us with their most competitive prices." Another reason the sale is able to maintain low prices is because of the low staffing and overhead costs. Though the sale employs over 100 people, most of the people working at the sale, including the Section Managers and cashiers, work as volunteers and are given a \$300 gift certificate to the sale as a gift. This allows the sale to remain profitable while offering low prices and enables the sale to hire a large staff, contributing to its effective customer service. When talking about the volunteers, Kukurudz said, "What we give them in no way does justice to all they contribute to the store."

Each year, the sale attempts to identify new opportunities to grow and increase sales. One of the ways the sale hoped to grow this year was through the expansion of online ordering. Under the direction of sale CTO Ari Hagler, the sale introduced a new point-of-sale system that integrated the sale's in-store inventory with online orders. This new system decreased the sale's technology and credit card processing fees, while allowing for growth in online orders. This year, the sale generated \$47,000 of sales online, which represented

6.5% of total sales. Though this did not represent such a high proportion of sales it year, it was a significant increase from previous years' orders. Kukurudz added, "We are projecting online sales to make up an increasing amount of the total sales in the coming years. Our current model necessitates an expansion and we see it as coming from our tapping fresh markets in states beyond New York and New Jersey." Because of the online ordering, the sale was able to deliver merchandise to California, Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and the United Kingdom. In a year plagued with as many snowstorms as this one, the online shopping option was also beneficial to local customers, providing them with an alternative way to shop. Additionally, having a strong online presence helped the sale's overall visibility, and provided additional publicity.

The sale also hoped to increase sales through new marketing strategies and product offerings. Altaras began working on a gift card campaign around Chanukah to sell Seforim Sale gift cards. Additionally, the sale reintroduced a music section and began selling more non-Seforim items as a way to diversify its product offerings to attract more customers. "Every year, we face the challenge of re-introducing ourselves to the scene and making people aware that we are back, and the music and Judaica offerings, which we had stopped a couple years ago, were used in our marketing efforts in that regard," said Kukurudz. Though neither of these departments contributed a significant amount to this year's sales, there is hope that the foundation established at this year's sale will grow these departments in future years.

Summing up the sale's accomplishments, Kukurudz said, "We are proud to have again produced a significant profit, cementing our positive turnaround. This is even though the nature of this Sale is not to maximize profit, but to serve the community with the best prices on Jewish books, serve YU with publicity and bragging rights, and also serve the student body by giving the profit back to them." The sale once again proved that it is operating with a sustainable model that will allow it to be profitable and grow in future years.

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## Prong Entrepreneurs

By Eldar Ben Zikry

Changing the world with a product is not an easy task. While not many people can envision a product with earth-shattering potential, thinking of an idea is only the beginning. Nothing comes of good ideas if individuals don't expend the time and effort to develop them. Many of the innovative products and services that are seen today are the results of countless hours of stress, hard work, and lost sleep.

Prong is an innovative startup founded and run by two YU graduates, Lloyd Gladstone (SY '08 and Cordozo 2011) and Jesse Pliner (SY '05'). The two are no strangers of working hard and overcoming challenges in order to succeed. From bouncing ideas back and forth at a BBQ at Lloyd's place, they came up with the idea of a pocket plug case for your mobile phone. On the case are prongs that go into the wall, and by flipping the prongs this case will give you the peace of mind that your phone will always be chargeable. Hearing Prong's journey one is able to learn from the difficulties they encountered and even after having raised around \$3.5 million still encounter on a day to day basis.

In an effort to raise money to make their idea a reality, Prong launched a campaign on Kickstarter raising over \$130,000 in the process. After taking a lot of money from family and people they didn't know, they went out and decided failure was not an option. Lloyd explained that taking money from others and being afraid of public failure, is what gave them the push to make it a reality.

While working to develop the product, Lloyd found himself in China looking for a manufacturer to a prototype they had created. Their impression of China and manufacturing, before they actually had any experience, was that China is like a vending machine-- essentially just telling them what you want and they

will deliver. Slowly both Lloyd and Jesse understood things were not that easy when the original manufacturer was unable to deliver on their agreement, months after the deadline they agreed upon. This left Jesse to fly out to China for what ended up being a sixth month stay, to try and push the original manufacturer and eventually find a new one. Six months in

everyday at Prong, from running out of money and having to go to investors, to eating Raman noodles because you don't have a steady income. One of the biggest challenges that has occurred for Prong is having to deal with lawsuits both threatened and filed against the company. From a startups perspective, it is money and time that is better spent on

will change the world.

Beginning their venture prompted the Prong founders to spend hours doing research to understand many of the detailed areas of any business that they needed to begin their venture. Lloyd explained spending numerous hours in the library working to learn how to write an executive summary, business plans, how to approach venture capital firms etc. Lloyd explained further that many of these things he picked up from three of the most beneficial classes he took at YU, the entrepreneurial lecture series, Business Communications, and Business Law. From working to learn about marketing to the legal aspect of a business, individuals need to be well versed in nearly all disciplines.

Being mindful as well as being willing to listen to customers is important in running a long lasting business, as products must evolve to stay competitive. In putting out the product to consumers and to their Kickstarter backers,

Prong received very positive feedback although many felt that the product would be enhanced with a backup battery in addition to the wall plug case. Prong went immediately to the drawing board taking their consumers' advice, and worked to evolve their product to only enhance further success.

Many in beginning a venture often overlook these obstacles, and once they encounter even the smallest bump in the road they give up. Lloyd explains that starting a venture is like a tall mountain. If you look at the mountain and focus on the top you will never make it there, but if you focus on getting past the first few steps you will eventually catch momentum and reach the top. Yes, there are many challenges in starting a business, along with many

great ideas, but unfortunately without putting work into an idea it'll never be anything more than a good idea.

**PRONG IS AN INNOVATIVE STARTUP  
FOUNDED AND RUN BY TWO YU  
GRADUATES, LLOYD GLADSTONE (SY '08  
AND CORDOZO '11; BELOW, RIGHT) AND  
JESSE PLINER (SY '05'; BELOW, LEFT).  
THE TWO ARE NO STRANGERS TO  
WORKING HARD AND OVERCOMING  
CHALLENGES IN ORDER TO SUCCEED.**



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a foreign country may sound absurd to many, on the other hand to those looking to create an innovative product it may be the norm.

Lloyd explained that challenges exist

developing the brand and the product, but unfortunately it is a challenge you sometimes must deal with. Something individuals rarely think of when working to create a product that



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## Israeli Tech: New Takes on Classic Interactions

By Adam Kramer

*About Israeli Tech: The 'Israeli Tech' column is a forum for both in-depth explorations of specific start-ups, as well as broader, industry-based analyses. It not only enables readers to learn about and appreciate the tech wonders that have emerged from Israel in the past, but also provides a glimpse of the technology being developed today that may change our lives in the future.*

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Phone calling and customer service are two forms of interaction that haven't undergone any innovation or updating in many years, and can even be frustrating at times for users. Two Israeli start-up companies, Yallo and Xprt are attempting to revolutionize phone calling and customer service respectively, and make these more efficient and enjoyable services.

With the advent of texting, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp, it should come as no surprise that phone calling has fallen by the wayside. Israeli tech company Yallo is attempting to revolutionize the phone call by adding fun and innovative features to the decades-old method of communication. The company, based in Tel Aviv, was founded in 2012 by Tal Elyashiv and Yosi Taguri and currently has fifteen employees. In an interview with tech site Geektime, Yallo's CEO Tal Elyashiv remarked that his plans for the future include "continuing to innovate and bring the phone call into the 21st century, for both personal and B2B use." In explaining why he thinks Yallo will become a success, Elyashiv pointed to the fact that "voice communications have not fulfilled their potential and could undergo as much innovation as texting platforms like WhatsApp have done..." Yallo is already live on the Google Play app store and is coming soon to Apple's App Store.

Included in Yallo's product are a whole host of features that are radically different than the phone calling we know of today. Among the usages of Yallo are firstly that the app automatically re-connects dropped calls, which helps users avoid those few moments of uncertainty when each person doesn't know who is calling the other one back. Secondly, the app provides the ability to save calls and search through them later, using keywords and phrases. Additionally, Yallo enables users to send an advance notice called 'Call Caption' that informs someone why you're about to call them, and allows users to add extra numbers to a Yallo account, say if you want to have different home and cell phone numbers, or add an international number. In terms of its more fun usages, Yallo allows users to make group calls with existing groups from apps like WhatsApp.

Yallo certainly contains some great ideas - ideas that should've been implemented into phone call capabilities long ago - but with the popularity of text messaging, multimedia messaging, and apps like Snapchat, it will be difficult for a phone service, as good as this one may be, to rekindle the seemingly ancient phone call.

A second company, Xprt, is seeking to transform the computer and hardware purchasing experience. Ariel Rosenthal and Uri Katz, the two Israelis who started the company, each have immense experience programming and designing software. Their app, which is available for a free download via the Apple App Store, will provide users the dual functions of computer support, and computer shopping advice. After filling out a short form, users are connected with an experienced professional in under five minutes, and interact with the professional through a live chat. If they are seeking advice on what computer to purchase, they can fill out short forms indicating their price and size preferences, and any other specifics that they are looking for in their new computer. Xprt's services are free, and when you finish receiving advice on the app, you are asked to rate your expert and also have the option to tip your expert. While obviously a small sample size, the nineteen reviews that the app has received so far on Apple's App Store indicate that users are happy with this new take the classic customer service interaction.

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**PHONE CALLING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE ARE TWO FORMS OF INTERACTION THAT HAVEN'T UNDERGONE ANY INNOVATION OR UPDATING IN MANY YEARS, AND CAN EVEN BE FRUSTRATING AT TIMES FOR USERS. TWO ISRAELI START-UP COMPANIES, YALLO AND XPRT ARE ATTEMPTING TO REVOLUTIONIZE PHONE CALLING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE RESPECTIVELY, AND MAKE THESE MORE EFFICIENT AND ENJOYABLE SERVICES.**

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*www.wirtschaft.ch*



*www.itproportal.com*

*Above: Yallo seeks to "innovate and bring the phonecall into the 21st century, both for personal and B2B use."*

*Left: Xprt seeks to transform the computer and hardware purchasing experience.*



## Dr. Hy Pomerance: “Know Thyself”

By Raymond Cohen

### About The Executive Series:

Through ‘The Executive Series’, The Commentator provides its readership with access to the thoughts and experience of highly accomplished individuals in the business world. The column has a conversational style and expresses the individual journey of each business leader, including their motivations, struggles, successes and failures. The Executive Series also serves as a forum for a broader conversation about leadership in business and in life.

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### About Dr. Hy Pomerance (Adapted from High Performance Workforce Summit 2014):

Dr. Hy Pomerance currently serves as Chief Human Resources Officer for QBE North America, an Australia-based insurance company that is ranked #734 on Forbes’ Global 2000. Dr. Pomerance has more than 18 years of experience as a human resources executive, holding senior leadership positions at a wide range of public, private, and mutual companies, including Arcadis, Inc, UBS Investment Bank, and New York Life.

Prior to receiving his bachelor’s degree from Yeshiva University, Dr. Pomerance served as a Captain in the Israeli Defense Forces. He also received his Doctorate in Psychology and Masters in Organization Behavior from Yeshiva University’s Einstein College of Medicine.

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**Raymond Cohen (RC):** What was your first leadership role? What did you take with you throughout your career?

**Hy Pomerance (HP):** If I’m literal about ‘first leadership role’, I’m the oldest of five children, which meant that there were tacit expectations that I behave differently than my siblings. From an early age I learned to be accountable for others; I also learned a sense of ownership of outcomes, which was key to my own development as a leader. But one of the main skills I picked up as the oldest child - and developed throughout my career - is what is known as ‘sensemaking’. I grew up observing the outside world before my siblings, I would pay attention to what was going on around us and bring my observations back to my ‘organization’.

**RC:** Why is sensemaking so important?

**HP:** ‘Sensemaking’ often involves taking in information that may be contradictory to the way we understand the world at a given point in time. The common mistake of leaders is that they tend to ignore that information -- because its sometimes disruptive. That information could include data which suggests that a pattern is being broken, that the world is changing and that business as usual is not an option. Leaders need to be able to sense even the slightest changes to the business environment in real time, otherwise you have what is known as the ‘boiling frog scenario’: If you take a frog, and throw him into a pot of boiling water, the frog will immediately jump out of the water. But if you take that same frog, put him into lukewarm water and heat it up slowly, the frog won’t jump out - it will die. The reason is because a frog doesn’t know how to detect subtle changes in temperature - the

frog can detect dramatic change but not subtle change. Detecting subtle change is the first step toward adapting and is one of the most important qualities of a leader.

**RC:** How did you become interested in human resources and leadership development?

**HP:** I graduated from Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology with Psy. D. in clinical psychology, and started my own clinical practice in New York City. As I was building my practice, I discovered that many of my patients were very interested in talking about their work lives, not as much what we would think of as their personal lives. I learned about how work life can be very personal and, in many ways, can be more helpful in understanding what’s going on with someone and some of their challenges. I became interested in examining clients’ work-lives and their leadership experiences, and started a practice called Red Oak Consulting, outside of my clinical practice, conducting assessments of executives, and trying to determine what made executives successful, I provided 360 [degree] feedback on executives in their companies.

By interviewing people who worked for them, with them, who they worked for, and sometimes even their spouses, I was able to better understand what they’re made of and help them, essentially, be more effective in their jobs. I was able to provide them with insight into, really, what made them tick ... Into their motivations, their values, their derailers, how they behaved under stress. We ultimately grew Red Oak to a business with an organization of 25 people and literally dozens of multi-national clients.

**RC:** How were you able to grow the practice to such a large extent?

**HP:** I’d say I learned a lot about teamwork earlier in my life, mostly through the military, being a member of an Israeli IDF unit at a pretty stressful time in Israel, I got to test the power of a team under real combat situations and learned a lot about how teams work and what it takes to keep a team aligned and focused. In terms of the building the firm, it was like a two-fer. In other words, I used what I learned in the practice to inform the decision making for my business. I learned a tremendous amount about change management, and used that to create a reactive and also a pro-active planning capability that I built into Red Oak, and it was a great experience.

**RC:** What separates a successful leader from an unsuccessful one?

**HP:** I think, for me, a leader needs to think big, start small, move fast. You’ve got to be able to chunk what you’re trying to do down to very practical, measurable steps. That’s what the business world values, and some people will like to take baby steps but they don’t have the vision, they don’t really have a long-range goal. Whether or not a person is comfortable with complexity is what I’d say separates the two. The more comfortable you are with complexity, the more likely you’re going to be able to both chunk it but also see the big picture.

If you’re anxious, you gravitate to one end of the continuum or the other, you try too hard to gain control over a situation. There are

some for whom control is in the details until they get microscopic. For others, when they’re anxious, they can’t focus on the details. They actually have sort of big ideas and they’re trying to solve the world’s problems, they sort of gravitate to grandiosity or big thoughts, or almost philosophical positions. I think that a golden rule for leaders is “know thyself”; self-awareness is, in many ways, the secret sauce to success. The more you know about yourself, the more you know what your triggers are, the more you can be flexible and adapt to change, you have to know what makes you anxious,



because if you know it, you can manage it. You can’t eliminate it - because that’s not possible - but you can manage it.

I can’t tell you how many times throughout my career this comes up with some of the most talented CEOs and C-Suite leaders. It boils down to the fact that they’re anxious, and that’s what is behind their challenge, or their mistake, or their lack of success in a given moment of time. Self-awareness, to me, is the key to coming back, or preventing yourself from slipping into a ditch.

**RC:** What, would you say, makes you unique as a leader?

**HP:** Leadership for me is really about bringing out the best in people. Yeah, it’s the traditional ‘you got to set a direction, you’ve got to have a vision, you have to communicate that very clearly to people’ but that gets old quickly, it doesn’t actually get you very far because there are plenty of people who are very good at that. I think of leadership much more in terms of empowerment. That’s why I say it’s about bringing out the best in people, for instance instead of telling people what to do, teach people what to do. I try to encourage team members to think for themselves. The challenge with that is that it takes a long time. It’s a hard approach to take because you have to invest time. It’s not a shortcut. It takes a much longer conversation when you say to somebody, “What do you think we should do and why do you think we should do it?”. I’ve always been committed to that approach, so it’s second nature now to me. Even today,

when I start in a new organization or I have a new person join my team, they’re struck by that. It is a little different, it’s not as common place, and I usually get a very positive reaction. But I also have to manage the trade-off, which is I might not see the kind of speed-to-action order or result that you might get if I just simply told you how to do it.

**RC:** Tell me about a time when you failed. What were you able to learn from the experience?

**HP:** In around 2008, at the onset of the recession, it was clear that my company had a crisis on our hands. My mistake was that I continued to lead with the approach that I normally take. When it come to decision making, I usually make sure to build consensus with my team. But, like I said earlier, that takes time. The mistake was that we moved too slowly and missed some opportunities as a result of the slow move-to-action. I learned a lesson in situational leadership. You have to know how to adapt your leadership style to the surrounding environment’s demands. In that situation, what would have been right would have been for me to be authoritative-- to tell people what to do. Sometimes telling people what to do is the right thing to do. If the house is on fire - you tell people to get out, you don’t ask them what they think we should do. My mistake was that I didn’t make that adjustment.

There are times when you want to be very authoritative and make quick decisions, other times you want to be on the opposite extreme -- encourage thinking, be open to new ideas and other people’s thinking. And then there are times in the middle - between crisis and a steady state - where you might want to maintain a balance between the two and give your team options but let them work to come to a conclusion.

**RC:** How do you compare your experience in the Israeli Army to acting as a leader in business?

**HP:** You have to be prepared in the army. It’s about knowing what the game plan is. I compare it to a football game where you have to be prepared to call the play for many different situations. You never know what the other team is going to do. You have a very complex set of plays in your head as a member of a unit for any given situation. There’s still a decision-making process, it’s never purely one thing or the other. But ultimately, proper execution was about learning to communicate with your team members.

I believe I realized that you should never

see **Know Thyself**, cont. on p. 30

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**I THINK A LEADER NEEDS TO THINK BIG, START SMALL, MOVE FAST. YOU’VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO CHUNK WHAT YOU’RE TRYING TO DO DOWN TO VERY PRACTICAL, MEASURABLE STEPS. THAT’S WHAT THE BUSINESS WORLD VALUES, AND SOME PEOPLE GET LOST IN THE BIG IDEAS.**

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**Know Thyself,**  
cont. from p. 29

lose sight of the fact that you're part of a team and that your role is interdependent. I had to understand that my job in the army, not only impacted the person walking next to me, but my job, or our job, also impacted a unit of tanks that were 15 miles away, and a fleet of planes that were 50 miles away, that we were all interdependent. Understanding you're part of a system, that you're a cog in a wheel. In the military and in organizations alike, that's a success factor for me.

**RC:** *What kind of culture are you trying to cultivate at QBE North America?*

**HP:** I believe strongly in corporate cultures that can walk the talk, and provide sort of an open-minded leadership. At QBE, we're trying to foster that kind of environment. We call it the "teach, don't tell" culture, where leaders are teaching people to think for themselves

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**LEADERSHIP FOR ME IS REALLY ABOUT BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE. YEAH, IT'S THE TRADITIONAL 'YOU'VE GOT TO SET A DIRECTION, YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE A VISION, YOU HAVE TO COMMUNICATE THAT VERY CLEARLY TO PEOPLE' BUT THAT GETS OLD QUICKLY, IT DOESN'T ACTUALLY GET YOU VERY FAR BECAUSE THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE VERY GOOD AT THAT. I THINK OF LEADERSHIP MUCH MORE IN TERMS OF EMPOWERMENT.**

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at every turn, not just getting through it and moving on, taking time at the end of a staff meeting to 'debrief lessons learned' as we say. "What were the lessons learned today? Three things, let's put it up there." My whiteboard is always filled with the lessons learned from

the meeting and I take the three to six minutes to write them up. Everyone's rushing out, we're done, and it's like, "No, we're not done. Now is the most important part of the meeting." They're silly in some ways but when you get into a habit of being consistent that way, it's amazing how impactful it is, how, first of all, people come to expect it and they're almost there before you are. "Okay, lessons learned everybody," and they're doing it before I even ask.

**RC:** *How do you hire? What do you look for, and what do you ask?*

**HP:** First of all, I always hire smart people, I hire authentic people. Meaning people comfortable in their skin. I always hire for the job at hand and the next job. I never just hire for today's job. I always hire for potential. I measure potential by the agility that they have to learn. The extent that I pick up that a candidate is an agile learner, the more interested I am in that candidate.

I ask a lot of question about what they've learned and how they've learned in the past.

A lot of my questions test out their evolution as a person, their development. I ask about experiences where they've learned things or where they haven't learned things. I ask for situations where they may have adapted. Tell me about a situation where you made a huge mistake. What happened before, what happened during, what happened after? I'm very curious to hear how they think. I'm testing for learning agility because that is the essence of potential.



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