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LEAVING THE LIBRARY

BY BENJAMIN GOTTESMAN,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Well, that was quick. Three years go fast when a pandemic takes up two of them. Starting school in September of 2020 made for an interesting college experience and, to a certain extent, I feel that I am graduating before I ever had a chance to get settled. YU is an underratedly big place and it can be challenging to find your niche. Not having campus life for the first half of that experience does little to help that post-*yeshiva* transition. In those first few months, I struggled to get my bearings. However, there was one place in which I felt at home from day one. This, of course, are the friendly confines of the Mendel Gottesman Library.

Mendel Gottesman served as Yeshiva University's treasurer for twenty-eight years, a tenure highlighted by the generous endowments he personally made to the school, and, perhaps more importantly, his founding of the school's Endowment Foundation. His particular interest in the school's growing library was immortalized in 1937, when his name was selected to grace its walls. He died just five years later at the age of 83.

Decades later, his portrait, affixed to the right side wall of the fifth floor, ensures his visage is remembered, along with his legacy. Many people may not know that two versions of that portrait were commissioned. One was placed in the library, and the second kept by Mendel's family. It hung proudly in my grandparents' living room for a half-century and is now displayed in my uncle's Neve Dan-



iel home. My uncle is also named Mendel, named for our illustrious forebearer, my great-great-grandfather, who we simply refer to as Grandpa Mendel.

When I started YU, classes were on Zoom, masks were a given, and *sedarim* highlighted by plexiglass dividers felt more like a county prison visit than the transcendent *chavrusa* experiences I had grown accustomed to in the Days of *Elul Zman Past*.

For an FTOC it was particularly daunting. I felt alone. One night I found myself in the library, back when it was possible to be the only person in a public place, asking myself how I was supposed to feel a part of any community, when community itself was impermissible. How could I feel a part of my new environment, smoothly integrating into the "best years of my

life," if life had been put on an indefinite leave of absence? It felt, to paraphrase Dolores Umbridge, that progress, for progress's sake, had been discouraged. Growth, whether personal, religious, academic, or social, seemed like a luxury of a bygone age.

Then I found the library. More accurately, I found Grandpa Mendel. In a sea of unfamiliarity there was a face I knew; a countenance I had recognized since I was a toddler, running across my grandparents foyer with a toy Tyrannosaurus Rex in one hand, and a stale strawberry sucking candy in the other (a choking hazard if there ever was one), unaware who the serious looking man in the painting was, except that he was someone whose pronounced greatness was only matched by the intimate closeness he shared with my kin.

Okay. I probably wouldn't have phrased it that way at three years old, but I knew he was important. And I knew that he was real. And then, some twenty years later, I saw that portrait's counterpart, hanging in an empty library, and I knew I was not alone.

I was raised to value knowledge. From a young age, I was taught that the key to success in this world was through the mastery of the written word. When I began to grow into my religious persona, this home ethic was revealed to be the ethos of a people; a multi-millenia tradition of study that sustained my ancestors and had been marked for me as an inheritance. All my life, learning had served as the stalwart. I now know that this is what it means to be a Jew- so long as our thirst for knowledge survives, we survive as well.

So there I stood, alone in a dark room, as apt a metaphor as there could be for a stagnant, aloof world, staring up at a man who passed well before I was even a hypothesis. "Nu, Benjy," he said, "what do we do now?"

The answer was obvious. We do what we always do. I climbed the stairs to 5a, grabbed a *sefer*, sat on the floor, and learned. I, like any Jew who ever turned his eyes to the mountaintops, searching for salvation, found comfort in the wisdom of old. There was hope nestled between the shelves, as hidden and

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FOUNDED BY THE WOMEN OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY



BY AARON SHAYKEVICH,
MANAGING EDITOR

“Founded by the women of Yeshiva University’s Stern College in 1958, the YU Observer is one of two student-run, independent newspapers representing the undergraduate student body of Yeshiva University.”

The above quote is the main headline of the YU Observer. We send it in our emails, applications, and it appears in the “about” section of our website. It is the first sentence many read when they come across our paper. This sentence is how we have chosen to define our paper and its mission. It encompasses the truest essence of our paper and hidden within it is the ideologies of acceptance and empowerment of all. That is why I love it.

To be honest, last year, when I was promoted to managing editor and therefore first presented with this mission statement, I was not the biggest fan. In fact, I thought the YU Commentator’s “about page” greatly surpassed ours in both word count and detail, with a clear and comprehensive view of their history from past to present, as well as their goals and aspirations. Simply put, I thought they did it better.

However, over this past year as managing editor for the YU Observer, my opinion regarding the seemingly mediocre mission statement of our paper has changed drastically. I’ve realized that what we have, represents our

paper better than anything I could ever formulate to relay its values and aspirations. We have our history. “Founded by the women of Yeshiva University’s Stern College in 1958” is undeniably the most powerful introduction our paper could have and should be present on all of our communications for the rest of time.

In recent history, the editors-in-chief of the YU Observer have strongly focused on women’s issues, fostering a range of articles from discussing laws regulating women’s bodily autonomy to discussing sexism at YU. The editors-in-chief have managed to underscore areas that not only pertain to the voices both on the Beren campus but also echo those opinions that are active on the world stage. Furthermore, they have emphasized and facilitated helping students amplify their voices upon issues that directly and indirectly affect their YU experience. Our paper has been a platform for marginalized students, featuring the pride alliance and providing an accepting and safe platform for LGBTQ+ students to express themselves. Since its inception in 1958, the YU Observer was founded to bring a voice to the Beren student body and all those who wish to make a difference and speak out their truth.

Therefore, I believe it is pivotal for the editor-in-chief of the YU Observer to be aware of this legacy and put forth all of their efforts to maintain the values and goals as relayed in its history and mission statement. Furthermore, they

must ensure they pass this foundational message on to their staff and the next editor-in-chief. That isn’t to say that a male couldn’t or shouldn’t be in the highest positions of the paper, but it means that they would need to ensure and embody this integral legacy of the YU Observer. Not only should the editor-in-chief effectuate this mission statement, but they should also incorporate these important issues and discussions pertaining to both women on the Beren campus and globally. Otherwise, all we’ve done is take away a voice from those who already are facing an uphill battle.

Next year I will be the editor-in-chief of the YU Observer. I will have to make tough choices regarding the future of the paper, and I am sure I will be controversial at points. However, if I could share the primary goal for next year, it is to embrace our history. This paper began because Stern needed a voice, and it will continue to be there for when they do.



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THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER: EXPLORING THE WORLD WITH THE YU OBSERVER

BY EMILY GOLDBERG,
LAYOUT EDITOR AND SOCIAL
MEDIA MANAGER

I sat down at my dorm room desk on a gloomy Wednesday afternoon, opened my laptop, and attempted to come up with a topic for my final speech for my Speech 1010 class taught by Professor Russell. Yes, I am a sophomore in Speech 1010, don't ask me how that happened, because I don't know either. Deciding on a topic to present is actually a lot harder than it seems. I delved deep into the apparently dark and empty depths of my mind in an attempt to conjure up an idea that I am passionate about, but to no avail. I contemplated all the extracurricular activities I participate in, the causes I like to support, and even the school topics I enjoy, each one popping up in my head only to cross the idea off my not-so-long list of proposals because of some inherent flaw.

As my last resort, I opened up a new tab on my computer and entered "speech topics" into Google in a desperate attempt to find some sort of solution. I endlessly scrolled through the extensive lists of subjects on various websites without any success. I started to wonder if I was really such a boring person. Was there really nothing I was passionate about, even if just enough to prepare a 7 to 9-minute presentation for a class? I could literally present anything, yet I still could not think of a proposition.

Then, a topic on one of these lists caught my attention, and I am pretty sure it appeared out of thin air.

At the very bottom of one internet page, there was an idea to present "the history of one's hometown." I thought to myself, I grew up in a pretty unique place. This idea might just work. I grew up in a small town in Massachusetts that I promise you have never heard of before. When I tell people where I grew up, most often the response I receive is "You grew up where?"

So in an endeavor to finish my speech so that I could at least cross one assignment off my list of never-ending homework, I started to work on preparing my presentation (don't worry Professor Russell, I would never "make a speech"). One piece of advice that Professor Russell always stresses in his class, is to make the ending of your presentation deliberate. Naturally, while thinking of a unique way to end my speech and leave my audience with a message that they could all relate to, I got to thinking about all the experiences I had growing up in my small town that I could potentially share.

This reflective activity made me ponder not only my childhood experiences, but my future as well. As I move on to new stages of my life, I would be remiss if I did not admit that I am a little bit sad that I no longer get to enjoy the daily experiences of growing up in my bright and cheerful hometown. It will most likely never be my permanent residence again.

However, I am very thankful to live in New York City while I attend Yeshiva University, because

of the new encounters and resources it has provided me with, even if this experience will eventually come to an end as well. I am grateful to be able to explore this city, which I retrospectively understand is only a small extent of the world we live in. However, I have also come to terms with the fact that in time, I will leave this city in the past too, and move on to the next adventure in my life.

Moreover, with the experience of rendering this presentation came with the recognition that I am not without passions. For example, the moment I joined YU I knew undoubtedly that I wanted to join the newspaper staff. I was the layout editor for my high school newspaper and thoroughly enjoyed the experience, so applying to be a layout editor for the YU Observer was an obvious decision for me.

Being a layout editor and writing for the YU Observer has opened my eyes to the amazing opportunities that journalism provides to those who choose to delve into it. Personally, it allows me to research topics I am interested in, and might actually need to learn more about, and to utilize my passion for writing in order to share my ideas with others.

The world that we live in is so wide, and there is so much out there that we just don't know about. Especially after growing up in a small town, I know how easy it can be to remain insular and within a small community for a long period of time. However, G-d created every aspect of this world and

gave it to us in order to seek out the knowledge hidden within it. What a waste it would be if we did not endeavor to explore every aspect of this amazing universe G-d provided us with. Journalism has provided me with the opportunity to step outside my small-town life in order to explore this vast world in my own way, and for that I am grateful.

The world is your oyster. At times, it might seem like a solemn place full of daunting tasks, but we are all capable of achieving anything we put our minds to. If you want, you can follow in my footsteps and use your new discoveries about this world and your talents to write an article for the YU Observer. Or if that doesn't speak to you, use them for something else. Conquer your passions, and maybe, just maybe, you'll learn something new about the world along the way.

This might be the end of my last 7 to 9-minute speeches for speech class. It might be the end of a semester. It may even be the end of growing up in my small town. But I have come to appreciate that this is only the beginning of a never-ending journey of exploring the great wide and precious world that G-d has given to us as a gift.

As I am writing this article, I am sitting on the train traveling from my small suburban hometown back to the great and sometimes daunting New York City with a new speech presentation on my laptop waiting to be shared with others. I sure hope my teacher likes it. We'll just have to see how it goes.

LEAVING THE LIBRARY

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profound as the message of perseverance pulsing between the sacred lines.

Three years have passed and it is now time for me to leave my grandfather's library. My college experience did not look like what I expected and I am at peace with that. I can look back and know that I did exactly what I was supposed to do. I learned from Lewis, challenged Chrysostam, wept with Whitman, and sang the sonnets of Shakespeare. I sat at the feet of *gedolim*, both the ones on the pages of *sifrei kodesh* and the very real giants that move around our *Beis Medrash* with the quiet majesty that only comes from *Talmud Torah*. For three years I immersed myself in

the tent of Shem (although maybe spent a disproportionate amount of time studying with Japeth); what more could I have asked for?

Here's the thing. Although I may be leaving the library, I am by no means leaving Grandpa Mendel. In August, 1921, over twenty years before his death, Grandpa Mendel authored an ethical will—a final statement of moral instruction to guide his children after he left to the *Beis Medrash* on High. There, he reminds us of the: "sweetness and light and beauty of the Torah—which is pure and maketh the eyes bright, is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold." He enjoins:

It is incumbent upon every Jew, be he rabbi or layman, rich or poor, in possession of good health or

burdened by bodily infirmities to set apart fixed times for the study of Torah. I have tried to fulfill this duty... You will remember how when you were at home you would find me devoting a part of the early morning, before proceeding to business, in this study. By reason of the special advantages you have enjoyed, the careful schooling you have received, and the precept and example I have tried to hold before you, it is especially incumbent upon you to study Torah—and more than others who have not enjoyed your greater opportunities: Therefore, set apart a certain part of each day. However small it may be, let it be fixed, regular and continuous from day to day.

If the Torah goes with me, so does Grandpa Mendel. If love of learning remains the beating pulse of

my everyday, have I really left the library?

Sharing my journey with all of you over the past year has been a privilege beyond description. I am grateful to my mentors, my friends, my classmates, and the innumerable people who have made my YU experience what it is.

To those not leaving with me, cherish your days here. The opportunity to study Torah seriously is not one to be taken lightly. Grandpa Mendel remained a student all his life, I pray that I am privileged to wear that proud title for all my days, as well.

Well YU. It's been real. Thanks for everything.

Mamba out.

GMOS VS. NON-GMOS: TIME TO GET THE FACTS STRAIGHT



BY YOSEF SCHER, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDITOR

This past week, I walked into Walmart hoping to have a pleasant shopping experience, only to be greeted in the produce section by two combative customers arguing about GMOs. On the one hand, the mother was making her case that GMOs are unhealthy for you and have been shown to cause cancer. She told her daughter that it would be better for their family to get non-GMO produce to avoid the possible harmful effects GMOs could have on their health. On the other hand, the daughter was not convinced and proceeded to voice her opinion, by telling her mother that GMOs are just as good as non-GMOs, and that the mother should stop worrying so much.

While I did not get involved in their argument, I wondered who was right: was the mother correct in

saying that GMOs are harmful for you and can cause cancer, or was the daughter's point that there was virtually no difference between GMOs and non-GMOs more accurate? Later that night, I decided to research the answer and resolve this perplexing conundrum.

Although both sides of the argument have some validity, I have concluded that the daughter was more correct than her mother, based on the plethora of articles from credible sources on the internet that support her point. However, before I explain why the daughter had the better argument, it is essential to define what GMOs are. According to the Non-GMO Project, "[a] GMO, or genetically modified organism, is a plant, animal, microorganism or other organism whose genetic makeup has been modified in a laboratory using genetic engineering or transgenic technology." While some evidence supports the mother's argument, it lacks compared to the benefits that GMOs

provide for our society. These benefits include producing tastier and more nutritious foods, allowing plants to grow faster where farmers now have the opportunity to make more money, increasing the shelf-life of many foods, and yielding crops that have more desirable traits. These are just a handful of the benefits that GMOs contribute to our society. Regarding the mother's point that GMOs cause cancer, there has been no evidence to suggest a correlation between the two. The only negative aspect of GMOs is the rare allergic or toxic reaction that can ensue from eating them, but the number of cases that are a result of eating GMOs is so insignificant that it is hardly relevant.

Based on the evidence collected, there should be no reason why you should insist on putting only non-GMOs into your shopping cart. Besides the fact that non-GMOs are more expensive than GMOs—due to the extra care needed to tend to the crops—scientific research has

not shown any benefit to eating non-GMOs compared to GMOs. Even with all of the data out there, I was shocked to learn that 46% of consumers are still skeptical about GMOs, and 70% cited concern about possible health issues that may arise from eating GMOs. As someone who bases his information on the facts, I am appalled that after all this time and knowledge presented to the public about GMOs, consumers still continue to pay higher prices for non-GMOs. The next time you go to the store, I urge you not to fall for the marketing trap of non-GMOs and make the intelligent and frugal decision to buy GMOs.

MINDFULNESS, BUT JEWISH

BY RACHELI JIAN, LAYOUT EDITOR

I've always been a person who is go-go-go. I always looked for what else I could do, and when I was in college, this became difficult. Not only was I overloaded academically, but also socially. On top of all of that, it is general knowledge that college students are some of the most stressed out people. According to the American Institute of Stress "Eight in 10 college students experience frequent bouts of stress." With everything piling up, it was not long before my family came to realize just how much I needed a break, and my father gifted me a book titled *Mindfulness: A Jewish Approach* by Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Feiner. In all honesty, I thought mindfulness just



had to do with yoga and meditation, something only reserved for Buddhists and hippies. I do still think that some parts of mindfulness are for the more extreme, but there was a lot I learned about the intersection of Judaism and mindfulness.

First off, what is mindfulness? Mindfulness is noticing that you're reading these words. Now notice the way you're breathing, the different sounds in the room. Mindfulness is about taking a second to acknowledge what is happening around you in that moment. But how does this connect

to Judaism? Rabbi Feiner brings a *mishna* from *Pirkei Avot* to prove the connection. "He [Rabban Yohanan] said unto them: go forth and observe which is the right way to which a man should cleave?... Rabbi Shimon said, *haro'eh et hanolad*" (Avot 2:9). Rabbi Shimon's words are translated literally as someone who sees what is being born. *Nolad* is something that is in the present, and according to the Rashbatz, what Rabbi Shimon means, is that we should focus our resources on the present, and what we cannot change, we should believe that Hashem has a greater plan. This doesn't mean to completely give up and say it's all up to G-d. We still can

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IT'S OK TO BE A FOLLOWER



OPINIONS

BY ELIYAHU SOLOMON,
STAFF WRITER

One aspect of college that I feel gets a lot of attention thrown at it is the area of leadership. The message of leadership is imparted to us through different opportunities such as the ability to run clubs and societies, participate in sports teams, or hear them given in different courses or speeches that emphasize the role of leadership throughout our daily lives.

I am certainly not standing here and criticizing this. It is quite important that students are given the opportunity to take charge in areas in which they thrive or learn about different aspects of leadership which they can take with them post-graduation. Yet is this always the case? Is there a thing as too much leadership?

One thing I have noticed during my time in college - as opposed to high school - is that I have been far more careful about how I utilize my time. In high school, my main goal was to run as many clubs as I could, be

active in student government, volunteer in my free time, and then use the rest for athletics and classwork. I wanted to be a leader in all aspects of my high school career and would feel insulted when I was passed over for different opportunities and refused to work alongside others in that case.

Over my time at Yeshiva University, however, I began to have more of a shift in attitude toward positions of leadership and responsibility. Maybe it was time to let others take the rein and I would follow in their lead. This mindset change, I believe, was paramount to my success these past three years. Instead of filling my day with countless club events and meetings, I worked part-time to earn some money in order to pay tuition, pay for my apartment, as well as make some money for discretionary use. I chose not to take an active role in student government for my first few years and instead enjoyed doing things I found pleasure in, even if it meant not having the best

resume activities.

This does not mean that my way was the correct way, or that other people cannot set their schedule to do both of these things. All I am pointing out is that I made a choice to not focus my entire day on active roles, allowing other people to take over. One more example of this is when I was not chosen as captain of the YU Baseball team. At first, I was upset. I was a senior and had committed a lot of time to the team, yet it was given to a freshman, much to the dismay of many of my teammates. As time in the season progressed I began to feel thankful that I was not the captain, as I did not have the time, the patience, or the ability to lead the team. Instead, I took a valuable role as a supporting team player, someone who was not the lead but rather just another player looking to improve his skills.

When the time was right I did take chances in areas of leadership. I served as the Amendments Com-

mittee Chair - a venture which taught me the values of failure - as well as playing a number of roles working in athletics and my own side job where I was responsible for important decisions and duties. My time spent as a follower, shadowing other leaders and decision-makers helped me thrive in these roles.

There will be a time in the future when I or many others will have a choice to become a leader or choose follow someone else's lead. What to do in that situation will be entirely dependent on the scenario and the players involved, but what I hope to explain is that there is nothing wrong with being a follower at certain times. We are limited in what we can do and accomplish, and sometimes it is the right thing to do to give over decision-making to someone else,

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recognize the power we have to act in the moment and plan for the future based on the past. However, it is beneficial that we don't plan for the future just to miss out on what's going on in the present.

Being present isn't something new or foreign to Judaism; we just have a different name for it - *kavanah*. In *Duties of the Heart* it says, "one [who] prays with his tongue but his mind is distracted in a matter other than the prayer, his prayer will be like a body without a soul" (Sha'ar 8, 3:59). This shows just how much our thoughts can change how we view our relationship with Hashem. Even if one isn't praying, just

take a second to make a *bracha* and realize what you're saying. The apple tastes 10x better when you focus on the *ha'etz* you made before. The intention when learning Torah is also not something revolutionary. Most of us have heard of learning Torah *l'shema* (for the sake of G-d), or not *l'shema*. It is, of course, difficult to guide our thoughts since the nature of the mind is to wander, but taking a second before doing something spiritual or anything else and focusing on your intent can change the whole experience.

Rabbi Feiner concludes the book by looking inward. Many of us, including myself, can barely sit a minute alone with our thoughts. We have all heard of the dangers of social media, yet the dangers of

constant stimulation we get from our phones and laptops are not only a warning on a billboard. We have lost the ability to just be. We constantly feel as if we have to be productive. Something beautiful I read in this book is that, "there is a part of us that is valuable for merely existing. The fact that we were created by G-d and created in His image makes us a diamond... still it is up to us what we do with the diamond" (Feiner, 45). We are inherently worthy by just existing, and the obsession with always being productive burns us out. The balance, though, is to make sure we are not only being but also doing. This balance is different for everyone, but both sides are beneficial.

The knowledge I gained taught

me that there is value in taking a break. When done right, a break can be more productive than working 24/7. So, for all the college students that are feeling burnt out, or for anyone who's still suspicious of this mindfulness thing, I recommend trying it out.

THE BEGINNING OF A CHESS REVOLUTION AT YU



BY DAVID YAGUDAYEV,
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
EDITOR

On April 24, 2023, the Yeshiva University Chess Association (YUCA), helped host an organized competitive USCF rated tournament at Yeshiva College featuring 10 competitors, its first in a very long time. After four arduous and tense rounds of competitive play, Ephraim Balsan emerged as victor of the tournament with 4.0/4.0 points. Tied for 2nd place were Pinchus Cohen and Ean Fish with 3.0/3.0 each. At the end of the tournament, GM Semyon Lomassov decided to give a blindfold simul playing six people in a row. No one thought he could do it, but he sur-

prised us all, as he began to defeat his opponents in gradual succession until no one remained. At least 15 random YU students showed up and began watching the event and the exhibition that occurred after in utter disbelief. Many had not even known that a chess club existed on campus until that day.

There is a demand for chess events and active participation on campus. After this event, despite the busy week in which it was held, there were many inquiries about when the next event would be held and how they could become involved.

However, this is only the beginning of the chess revolution YUCA plans to bring on campus. When I met fellow incoming students GM

Semyon Lomassov and NM Bryan Weisz at the Fall 2022 orientation, I knew that our collaboration as a team and shared interests as avid chess players and fans would revitalize a dying chess scene at YU. Thankfully, they agreed and from then, we began working on making our vision come to fruition. We created the “Chess Learning Program,” in which chess players of varied skill levels can receive guidance on learning on how to improve their game in class-style format from Semyon, Bryan and I. Soon enough word spread, and people began to attend these lessons, fitting time out of their busy schedules to learn the beautiful game. As of today, across all WhatsApp chats, YUCA has over 150 YU students following the lat-

est international chess news and events happening on campus.

YUCA has great plans for the next academic year. We plan on hosting monthly rated and unrated chess tournaments, chess lessons, as well as delivering up to date recaps on the latest chess events in the world. There are other plans, but we don't want to announce everything. That will ruin the surprise...

I hope that by writing this article, I will be able to reach out to more of the YU student body. Whether you play chess or not, come join and attend an event or two- it's all free of charge. Trust me, you will have fun and meet new people in the process.

A LIFE WITH A LEGACY: MRS. CHAVA WILLIG LEVY

BY DANIELLA WEISS,
STAFF WRITER

After her recent passing, I was inspired to write about Mrs. Chava Willig Levy, whom I was privileged to get to know over the past months. Although many have known Mrs. Levy much longer than I, I was privileged to spend two Shabbosim at her home with a friend of mine. After listening to the Behind the Bima podcast and the Welcome to my World interview conducted by the Jewish Orthodox Women's Health Association, I came to realize the true greatness of the person I had been in the presence of...

Just after the polio vaccine had been approved for use but before it was widely distributed, Mrs. Levy was diagnosed with polio. However, she explained that she wasn't angry with Hashem about her diagnosis. She said that Hashem's plan was for her to experience the disabilities of Polio, and that it must

be for reasons that are beyond her. Mrs. Levy speculated that perhaps Hashem gave her Polio because she loved to sing. Had she not been sick, she might have faced the hard test of violating the *halachos* of *kol isha* by becoming a professional singer. Although there is so much to say about her, I would like to share some personal thoughts on what I learned from Mrs. Levy over the two Shabbosim I spent with her.

When we arrived, Mrs. Levy would welcome us in with a smile, and always thank us for coming to help her place food on the *blech* and to set the table for Shabbos. She was always so humble, and whenever the meals began, would immediately ask us about ourselves and make us feel right at home. She loved playing Scrabble, which came from her love of words, and she found great joy in sharing new words she had found in the dictionary as she played Scrabble with her husband Michael on Shabbos. She also loved to talk about her children and grandchildren.

Her care for other people was quite profound. I was once talking to her at the meal, and a lady in the community came over to ask for help from Mrs. Levy, and I was interrupted in the middle of what I was saying. When she returned a few hours later, she mentioned what I had been speaking about and urged me to continue. I was so surprised that she remembered.

I still remember being at the Shabbos table and hearing Mrs. Levy sing *Shalom Aleichim* and *Eishes Chayil* with such joy and serenity. Her emunah was palpable. She was always careful to be positive and optimistic even when she was in great pain. I remember I had gone to Patis to get challah for Shabbos. She enjoyed the challah from Patis and made me feel like I had done a great favor by bringing extra challah. She excelled in the way that she treated people and she was concerned with their honor.

Some people, in their own mod-

est and humble way, show their greatness. I was so fortunate to see someone that despite her painful disabilities and illness, she still managed to live a happy, positive, and meaningful life. Mrs. Chava Willig Levy taught us all how to live with and overcome disabilities and to positively impact the Jewish world. Yehi Zichra Baruch.



MY NAME IS MENACHOM AHARON WALLACH, WELCOME TO YU

BY MENACHOM AHARON
WALLACH

My name is Menachom Aharon Wallach.

I started at Yeshiva University's Makor program in August 2017. And I haven't left YU since. Before YU, I also went to MTA, from 2009 - 2014, which is Yeshiva University's high school for boys. So, I have basically been in the Heights since 2009, and while that may be a very long time for some people, it's been so much fun.

I have gotten to do so much at YU. For starters, I was and still am the team water manager for the Yeshiva University basketball team. This means I give water to the students and the referees. In addition, I was part of the 50-game winning streak that the team had from November 2019 to December 2021 (which is the second-longest streak in Division 3 college basketball!). Another experience I've had is getting to work in the YU Seforim sale. I've also had the privilege to work for the YU Dean's office. I also was an MTA assistant JV basketball assistant head coach, which was so cool to say the least. I was also on the Student Council last year which was a ton of fun. I even finished Shas Mishnayos in YU.

In YU all of my Rabbis and teachers were so nice to me. I also made a lot of friends. I enjoy the fact that I had a very fun time getting to know a lot of new and old faces.

I'd like to thank a lot of people who helped me during my time at YU and MTA. Rabbi Perner, Dr. Glicksman, my parents, President Berman, Rav Dan Cohen, Nicholas Pitsirikos, Dean Bacon, Dean Sugarman, all the other deans, Adina Kushner, all the men's basketball team players and coaches the last five years, and everyone in YU and Stern, both students and faculty. And most important thanks goes to Hashem.

There is so much to be thankful for at YU so I decided to ask my friends what they thought about YU and what was their favorite part of YU:

SJ Tannenbaum who graduated

from Yeshiva University, and who now works for Syms said his favorite part of his YU experience was being a sideline replacement for YU MacsLive.

Shmuel Aberman said, the energy and simcha that comes with all of the events that YU hosts is unparalleled.

Baruch Lerman said, his time on student council with me was one of his highlights in his YU career.

Eitan Auerbach said that he was thankful for all of the opportunities to hear from and interact with the Roshei Yeshiva.

Avrohom Frohlich said that the environment in YU is warm and the people here are great.

Eli Levi said YU has some great people to connect with.

Mijal Gutierrez said YUMUM was the highlight of her experience. She said it's a rich experience with the YU community, and that there are many different impactful events such as the Chanukah American Dream Mall celebration, YUPAC, and the Stomp Out the Stigma event.

Jon Greenfeld said it is always impressive to see all the YUPAC events put together and to participate in them.

Reuben Hartman said YU has offered him the opportunity to explore all of his academic interests.

Ariel Kashizadeh said being a part of the Sephardi *Minyan* and *Birkat Kohanim*, as well as Rabbi Weiderblank's *Shiur*. "When people ask me why I am in YU, I say that there is not much like it, but the reason here is because I get to wake up in the morning and go to Rabbi Weiderblank's *Shiur*."

Ezra Seplowitz said, his highlights in YU are spending time with Menachem Aharon Wallach (me), learning from Rav Rosensweig and Rav Twersky, as well as with his incredible Chavrutot, enjoying all that the Straus program has to offer, and spending time with all of his friends!

Rabbi Green said everyone coming back to classes after COVID was very impactful.

David Lifshitz said, "My time in

YU has been a true blessing, and the moments I've made here with my friends will stay with me for the rest of my life."

Tali Rosensweig said Friendship Circle and all their wonderful staff, members, and events.

Yoni and Ariella Broth said the Chanukah concert in December of 2019.

Bianca Curitz said the teachers here.

Nitti Heinemann said American Dream Mall and Yom Haatzmaut.

Ayelet Brown said the opportunity and extra curriculum that the school provides for us.

An anonymous person said that the Torah is such an important part of being at Stern.

Another anonymous person said learning from so many scholars of the Jewish community and included in that both students and teachers.

An anonymous person said they love the extracurricular programming.

Micheal Stark said a positive highlight he had at YU was playing on the volleyball team with his friends.

Dean Strauss said he likes being with the students. He enjoys spending quality time with them to discuss their career aspirations, their time at the school, or any other issues or challenges they have.

Jose Lopez said he enjoys the time with students and faculty.

Yuval Nitzan said "My most enjoyable moment at YU is playing basketball on the team. We became a family and I made friends for life. I couldn't be more grateful and thankful!"

Dean Bacon said the mission and values and the students like Menachem Aharon Wallach.

An additional anonymous person said, "YU combines secular studies with Torah studies. I am grateful to have grown both academically and spiritually at YU."

Jonathan Miller said the people who work here and the students are *menches*.

Kristine Ahmetaj said YU gives the sense of belonging and being part of a team.

Dean Noam Wasserman said, 'My first week at YU in May 2019, was quite memorable and set the tone for much I've experienced since then. The Wednesday night of that week was the night before finals. R' Herschel Schechter was going to be giving the pre-Maariv shiur in the Glueck Beis Medrash. I figured, "Great! It'll be pretty empty and I'll get a seat." I showed up a few minutes before he was going to start ... and the Beis Medrash was packed. Even the night before finals, our students were prioritizing Torah. Fortunately, I found one empty seat, but it was my introduction to how our students ensure excellence in both Torah U'Business. (I assume they had prepared days in advance for their Syms and YC finals!) It was also my introduction to Night Seder, which has become a regular highlight of the day for me. That day and the day before, I conducted my first "Chats With the Dean"—one on each campus. Drinking in the students' perspectives, having a dialogue with them about potential solutions to long-time problems, and getting to know them personally was another highlight. Those discussions also helped set the table for some of our most important initiatives since then, including our developing a distinct strategy for the Honors Program and investing in it, and our needing to strengthen the grading consistency across courses and professors. Regular Chats With the Dean have been great complements to what has become a daily occurrence for me: one-on-one chats with students. A final highlight was on Thursday of that week, when we convened our first Faculty Day for the Sy Syms faculty. In addition to bonding together, we threw the professors into a case study in which they experienced being a student (and even doing a role play about the difficult conversation between a passionate wantrepreneur and the hesitant spouse), then debriefed it to set the table for a more all-encompassing teaching workshop. We have continued doing our Faculty Days each semester, tackling together the biggest issues faced

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THE WILLOW PROJECT: PUMPING GAS INTO THE HOUSE FIRE THAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE

BY GILA KALMAN

What is Willow?

On March 13, 2023, the Biden administration signed off on one of the most controversial environmental decisions of the year: The Willow Project. One of the largest oil projects in the country, Willow is projected to cost anywhere between 8 and 10 million dollars. The Willow Project was proposed by the American multinational oil company, ConocoPhillips, and was initially approved by the Trump administration in 2020. Dubbed the National Petroleum Reserve, the region where Willow is to take place was designated specifically for oil production under the 1976 Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act. Certain areas within the reserve were set aside as protected land in order to preserve parts of the habitat. Due to Willow's status as federally protected land, federal approval is vital to moving the project forward.

Why is Willow So Controversial?

Willow quickly became controversial as talks of its commencement began to resurface during the Biden administration. While Willow had been approved by the Trump administration, Biden had the power to overturn that decision and not allow the project to begin. Instead however, Willow will go forward with certain limitations that Biden has required. He has reduced the original five drill pads to three, still allowing ConocoPhillips to drill 90% of what they originally wanted. Many feel that this decision is a betrayal of the trust they had put in Biden. One of the most key elements to Biden's campaign and eventual election was his firm stance on environmental protection. During his campaign, Biden made a pledge to focus on clean and renewable energy, saying that "by 2050, the United States will be a 100% clean energy economy." Despite his promises, Biden

has turned a blind eye and let the show go on- leaving many feeling as though he has gone back on his initial claims of creating a more environmentally conscious country. These feelings led to widespread lobbying against Willow. Over one million letters have been written to the white house, the Change.org petition 'Say no to the Willow Project' has gained more than 5 million signatures, and organizations like the non profit EarthJustice are suing to stop the drilling before it starts. This action is not unfounded. Willow could prove detrimental for the environment, having a total footprint of 499 acres and creating 70 million metric tons of carbon dioxide. According to Professor Herb Leventer, "The Willow Project itself obviously is not a make or break thing, but it's symbolic of a type of activity which is really suicidal for the environment". Leventer is a professor of philosophy at Stern College for Women and specializes in medical ethics. He is highly invested in issues like the Willow Project as he sees environmental ethics as an extension of his strong science background.

Biden's Compromise

Some supporters of Willow are eager to have an energy supply which does not rely on unreliable foreign governments while others are excited about the influx of money and jobs to the Alaskan economy. "So," says Leventer, "he (Biden) thinks he's made a nice compromise, and on the face of it it looks like a nice compromise." Leventer explains that this 'compromise' would please Biden's supporters in Alaska while adding limitations to the project- everyone's happy. Right? Wrong. Leventer says this idea of a strengthened Alaskan economy is a "false claim" made by oil companies. In reality, ConocoPhillips will eventually stop needing Alaskan workers and the majority of money made from oil sales will go to the company, not Alaska. In fact,

not only will it only temporarily help Alaska, it will hurt them far more in the long run. Alaska "will suffer 10-20 years down the line" says Leventer, "and for the next ten years, there'll be a brief influx of money and jobs". While both sides of the argument are understandable, Leventer feels that allowing the project to go forward is "just over the line of unacceptable, and from his (Biden's) point of view, it's just before the line of unacceptable".

Alternative Action

This action, from Leventer's view, wasn't the only way Biden could have gone. He says Biden "could have withdrawn his approval in a clever way" by forcing the oil company to pay for the cleanup and pay substantial fines for any mess they do cause. Oil spills happen because there are not enough sanctions on companies dictating how the drilling should be done in a way that is safer and healthier for the environment. If oil companies are not forced to put safety measures into place, why would they spend the money to be careful? The answer is, they won't and they don't. The obvious solution is to make a spill more expensive for the company than safety and cleanup is, argues Leventer. However, he does still feel that although this would be a better solution, it should only happen if the drilling will without a doubt continue. Drilling for oil is not something that should ever really happen, says Leventer, because "Once you build a road in the tundra of Alaska, you can't undo it. You've destroyed the natural environment." As an alternative, he suggests supporting the Alaskan economy in more permanent and environmentally friendly ways, such as opening up factories to build clean energy.

The Future of Environmentalism

The Willow Project is not just bad on its own, but it is another large-



scale event which will bring the earth closer and closer to its breaking point. With climate change come severe natural disasters that are felt first by island countries, but will nonetheless be felt by all of us eventually. "When it's in our face", says Leventer "it will be too late to do anything about it." Leventer is adamant that no matter how justifiable, any extraction of oil is unacceptable as we get closer to the point of no return in climate change.

So what do we do? The planet is dying faster every day. The ice caps are melting, the sea level is rising, the ocean is acidifying, and everywhere there are real people suffering because of it. As dismal as the picture looks, and as hopeless as climate change reversal becomes, Leventer feels strongly that as fighters of truth and justice, we should never stop pushing back against the institutions which threaten the ground we stand on. We do what we can as citizens. We change our habits and adopt a more conscious mindset. We lobby for policies which attempt climate change reversal. We build communities based on love for the earth and its creatures, not disdain. There is still so much more we can do to breathe life back into our resilient planet. "We shouldn't be discouraged," Leventer assures "even though it's very discouraging." Although Willow has been approved, this is not the end of the story just yet.

WELCOME TO YU

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by the faculty and the school.'

Rabbi Dovid Bashevkin said "my favorite part about YU is the people. And one of my favorite people is you! You are Menachem Aharon. Me-

nachem means to comfort, and Aharon was renowned for bringing Jews together. You do both. Through your joy and kindness, you bring comfort and hope to everyone who meets you."

Even President Berman's suite added something nice to say about me. They said, "Menachem Aharon has been such an important part of the YU community and we know he will accomplish great things in the future. He is beloved by all and is basically the mayor

of YU!"

Thank you for your time. I hope you always enjoy YU the same amount as me, if not more. I wish you much success in all you do. Thanks again!

FACULTY PROFILE: ORLEE HAUSER

FEATURES

BY RAQUEL LEIFER,
FEATURES EDITOR

Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight a YU faculty member. For the May 2023 edition, the YU Observer is highlighting Dr. Orlee Hauser.

RL: Please introduce yourself.

OH: Hi! I'm Dr. Orlee Hauser. My parents are Israeli as is my husband, but I'm Canadian (eh). I earned my PhD at McGill University in 2005 (which makes me pretty old!).

RL: How long have you worked at YU?

OH: I started at YU 2 ½ years ago. Before this I was working at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, so this has been quite a change!

RL: What do you like most about working at YU?

OH: The Students! The students at YU are wonderful and motivated to learn. I've always loved

my students everywhere I have ever worked, but there is something special about the students here. I also love working in a Jewish environment. I'm used to places where they know nothing about Jews and so it is nice to work at YU and feel at home.

RL: What made you passionate about your field?

OH: I'm not sure that you want to get me started on this... I love sociology because I am fascinated by the way that our most intimate thoughts and behaviors are patterned. Everything from how we choose what clothes to wear and what foods to eat, to our most intimate feelings... it's all patterned! And when we learn what those patterns are, we can understand society better and even make changes in our world.

RL: Is there anything interesting you are currently working on?

OH: My last research topic, which has been put on the back burner since moving to YU from the midwest during a pandemic, was

strangely interesting. I conducted research on something called "the elevator community." This is a virtual community of elevator enthusiasts who film elevators and post them online for the purpose of entertainment. They have their own culture, slang, rules, etc. A very interesting subculture indeed!

RL: Do you have any advice for students interested in a career in your field?

OH: Yes. You can use sociology for any career that you choose. So, get involved in what you are passionate about early.

RL: What makes your field special?

OH: Sociology encompasses so many areas— everything from elevator filmers to farmers, tzadiks to serial killers. It is a great way to look at society and understand the social forces that create it. It's not about the individual, it's about the system. This is a very productive way to look at things.

RL: If you could bring in any guest lecturer, alive or deceased,

who would it be, and what would they speak about?

OH: I have no idea! I'm tempted to say that I'd resurrect the Sociological theorist Durkheim. He was very influential in the field. He did not really identify much with Judaism, but he was the son of a Rabbi, and the grandson of a Rabbi, so he'd fit right in (of course, so was Krusty the clown so maybe that is not saying much).

RL: What is one thing you want students to know about you?

OH: That I really do care about them (even if they don't earn an A in my class). And also that I learn a great deal from them, even if that is a bit of a cliché thing to say it really is true.

RL: Is there a particular book you would recommend that everyone read?

OH: Other than the Torah? Just kidding... I know what you mean. Not sociology related at all, but I'd recommend anything from Margaret Atwood. I'm a huge fan— and not just because she's also Canadian.

IN MEMORY OF ELAN GANELES

BY REGINA MESIZTRANO

It was the evening of February 27, 2023, when my mom called me and asked, "are you sitting down?" Beginning to take rapid breaths, my mom proceeded to tell me that Elan Ganeles had been shot and killed in a terrorist attack in Israel. That moment will forever be etched into my memory — I felt myself break into pieces. The school work in front of me became unimportant. I cried. I Googled his name. I laughed and insisted it wasn't true. I cried more. No part of me could or wanted to accept this jarring reality.

For the past few months I have been living two realities: my school life and my "Elan" life. At school it's almost as if nothing happened. I am surrounded by people who did not know Elan, but when I am with my sister or anyone who also intersects in my "Elan life," the harsh reality of him being gone comes flooding back in. My two realities box me into a dialectic where I either feel immense sadness or pure denial. My hope is to mesh these two seemingly opposite realities. I often feel disoriented trying to understand my current frame of mind and how to live in the present, as I watch my memories of him feel as though they are distant and fading. But I don't want to distance myself

from Elan, and most of all, I don't want to let this violent and inexplicable death ruin my memories of who he was and the life he lived.

Let me tell you a little about Elan. I had known Elan for a few years through my sister and brother-in-law. He was my brother-in-law's best friend. I had heard stories



about this "Elan character" for years, but I had no idea what to expect. When I finally met him, he always had a goofy smile and was always willing to have a deep conversation about literally everything, because he knew so much about various topics. Besides his fun-loving personality, he genuinely cared about others. He loved my sister, arguably the same amount as my brother-in-law, and because I was "Rebecca's sister" he cared for me too

in the same way. Last year, one night in the middle of midterm season I got a text from Elan. He had texted me to check in, to see how my exams were going. He wanted to make sure I was okay and reassured me that I would succeed despite the challenges of the end of semester anxieties.

Elan gave unconditionally and expected nothing in return. He was full of life and wisdom, and unique ways of connecting with others. For example, Elan hosted and cooked a weekly soup night, where he would make a new soup from a different part of the world. I remember standing in his kitchen and giving me life advice on my path and where my journey could take me. When I take a step back and think about the situation, I realize what was happening at that

moment. I was standing in his apartment, he was cooking food for everyone, and he was giving me advice. He was the most giving person to friends, friends of friends, and friends of friends of friends. Elan saw people for who they were and celebrated that. He would say things that people were thinking, but would never dare to say out loud. And he did it out of love. Out of kindness. Out of compassion. Out of respect.

I have a lot of questions that don't have answers I am satisfied with. But what I do know is that life is short. Be your genuine self because that's all you have. Do things for others without expecting anything in return. Call people you love and tell them how much they mean to you.

Elan, I'll be honest, I am struggling. I miss you and the people around me miss you. I have been racking my brain trying to figure out a way to honor and remember you. I am lost, sad, and angry, but ultimately I am so unbelievably happy I got to know you.

May Elan's memory continue to be a blessing for all who knew and loved him. With love,

Regina

“INTERACTING PHILOSOPHIES, SHARED FRIENDSHIPS”

BY RUCHAMA
BENHAMOU,
FEATURES EDITOR

On Wednesday May 3rd, 2023, the Yeshiva University Bernard Revel Graduate School of Judaic Studies, in conjunction with the Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities, hosted an impactful event bridging cultures and religious identities at the Crossroads of Civilization Museum in Dubai.

Yeshiva University's undergraduate centers, including the Zahava and Moshael Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, and the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs, participated in cultivating a historic conference upon the vivid influence and overlap between Jewish and Islamic philosophy, truly effectuating its namesake “Interacting Philosophies, Shared Friendships.”

This unique event began with opening remarks by Dr. Ahmed Obaid Al Mansoori, the museum's director, as well as Rabbi Dr. Stuart Halpern from the Zahava and Moshael Straus Center of Torah and Western Thought. Dr. Mansoori opened with a powerful teaching from the Quran: “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another” (49:13). Dr. Mansoori explained that fostering interfaith relationships with similar, yet diversified nations, cultures, and religions, was a foundational value of the Islamic faith, and that the conference was created to embody this notion. Rabbi Halpern conveyed similar sentiments upon this first primordial conference, through a meaningful message we learn from *Sefirat Ha'Omer*. The counting of our liberation, to *Shavuot*, as Rabbi Halpern relayed, displays our prudent aspirations towards future events and endeavors, while also remaining faithful to our memories of the past. Memories that have fashioned our nation's identity, traditions, and faith, that have paved the path to who we are today and who we can be tomorrow. The deputy mayor of Jerusalem, Fleur Hassan similarly expressed this, in her introduction to this conference, by recounting an event in 2020 with Jews and Emirates which fashioned firm and insightful relations between both nations and religions, which honored our ancestors and will continue to revere them in the future.

The first speaker of this event, Dr. Daniel Rynhold, discussed the im-

portance of “Maimonides and the Parable of the Sultan's Palace” found at the end of Maimonides' major philosophical work, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. The parable of the sultan demonstrates the incomprehensibility of God's true essence and nature to mankind. Maimonides argues, similarly to how the sultan's true identity is hidden from his subjects, although God's nature too is enclosed, one can still gain knowledge of God through his actions and attributes. Dr. Reynold understands this notion similarly to the contemporary writer on medieval Jewish Philosophy, Stephen Harvey. He examines this parable and indicates that God is closely related to the human experience and emphasizes the significance of interpretation in comprehending religious literature. Harvey contends that the tale inspires readers to use interpretative strategies that are based on a thorough knowledge of the religious tradition as well as to confront and question conventional interpretations.

The next speaker, from the Mohamed Bin Zayed University for Humanities, “On the Relationship between Ibn Rushd and Ibn Maimon” was given by Dr. Ibrahim Burshashen. Dr. Burshashen discussed the synthesis of Jewish and Islamic Philosophies, particularly regarding the major works of Maimonides and Ibn Rushd, including their shared influence of Aristotelian notions interwoven in their commentaries on religious philosophy as a whole. In Dr. Burshashen's insightful lecture, he relays the strong influence Ibn Rushd had on Maimonides' work *The Guide for the Perplexed*. He expanded that this major philosophical work integrated and encompassed the views and ethics of Aristotle and Averroes in clarifying confusion in different names, pseudonyms, and hidden proverbs, which was thoroughly analyzed and deliberated in Ibn Rushd's works.

Dr. Haider Hussein then provided an in-depth discussion titled: “The Role and Impact of Islamic Civilization on Jewish Philosophy: A Look at the Joint Interaction, with Moses Ben Maimon as an Example.” In his hopes of fashioning this excerpt into a book, Dr. Hussein examines the influence of Islamic philosophy, particularly Ibn Rushd's thought on the development of both Maimonides and Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's works on Jewish philosophy. He highlights the humbling fusion of seemingly contrasting religious commentaries

into a vivid harmonization of philosophical creed in the realms of Judaism and Islam. In his speech, Dr. Hussein emphasized the importance of recognizing the interrelation and thus connection between faiths and their ideologies. He stressed the great beauty and humility in learning the humanities and their meaningful overlap, ending with the commendation, “God bless Maimonides, every person who pursues the humanities is a blessing from God.”

The last two speakers from Yeshiva University were Dr. Ronnie Perelis from the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs, and Dr. Shira Weiss from The Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership. Dr. Perelis spoke on “A Global Society: A Cosmopolitan History of the Jewish-Muslim Encounter,” in which he examined the influence of not only Islamic rule over various countries, but the impact of Arabian culture and language upon their indigenous peoples. Not only were governmental policies and laws conducted in Arabic, but the Mediterranean trading routes and overall system were also dominated by the language. From Baghdad to Basra, and all places in between, Arabic was the conducive language of connection and consumerism for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Dr. Perelis then relates this to a famous manuscript from Genesis written in the *tafsir* of Rabbi Saadya Gaon, who realized the importance of Jews speaking in the vernacular, and therefore created a Judeo-Arabic translation of foundational Jewish works and texts. Dr. Perelis underscores the crucial impact of how this Judeo-Arabic dialect not only immensely affected Jewish understanding and participation in Arabic culture, but how throughout the ages of modernity to the present day, these translations have transformed Jewish literature, and the methods of grammar, linguistics, and poetry, obtained through this incorporation, are still being analyzed and utilized in research. Dr. Perelis closed, “I look forward to more transformations come about through our encounters, through our coming to listen to the other, to appreciate the other on their own terms, and to share our own journeys, our own struggles, and our own questions, and to find solutions together.”

The conference's last speaker, Dr. Shira Weiss, presented on “The



Influence of Ibn Rushd on the Philosophy of Joseph Albo.” Dr. Weiss opens with a pivotal question of whether Judaism has explicit dogma within its creed. She explains that Maimonides was among the first Jewish philosophers to popularize this idea with the formulation of the thirteen principles of faith that he believed were implicit and foundational to living an observant lifestyle. Dr. Weiss then separates these principles into three distinct categories. The first five belong to the Nature of God, the four that make up the middle relay views of prophetic revelation, and the last four relate to retribution and punishment of sin as well as rewards for good deeds. She highlights the Aristotelian notions that are deeply intertwined in the Maimonidean conception of these principles, in that he claims if one were to renounce or disbelieve in a principle, even accidentally, is cut off from the spiritual community of the Jewish nation. Maimonides views this disconnection from the world to come as one of a spiritual and intellectual realm much like Aristotle, and thus emphasizes the importance of retaining this theological basis in the afterlife. This enumeration of dogma, which stemmed from Maimonides' popularization of it, influenced many Jewish philosophers to fashion their own system of dogma. The most famous Jewish thinker who was heavily inspired by the thirteen principles of faith, Joseph Albo, established his own set of principles in his major work *The Book of Principles*. Albo formulates three major principles (Acknowledgment of God, the truth of Prophecy, and the notion of Reward and Punishment) that can be dated back to the influence of Ibn Rushd, who viewed Albo's principles as inherent to every revealed religion and universally binding as stated in his philosophical commentary *The Decisive Treatise*. Dr. Weiss concluded that “regardless of such a debate, what is clear is the profound influence that Islamic Philosophy, and especially Averroes' philosophy had upon the medieval discussion of Jewish dogma, and this discussion continues to be contested today.”

BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY'S WALLS

BY MIRA POSTELNEK

START Science is an initiative that mobilizes college students to bring exciting and engaging scientific experiences to local public elementary schools, particularly those with inadequate education in the sciences. The program offers weekly modules covering a wide range of topics, from biology and chemis-

try to physics and engineering.

Currently, START operates in four public schools in Washington Heights, primarily working with 4th grade classrooms, as well as teaching a few classrooms in the 6th and 7th grade. Each volunteer is assigned to a specific team that works with a specific classroom throughout the semester.

Volunteers for START come from

diverse backgrounds and majors, as everyone has something valuable to contribute. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, START organized end-of-the-year events for the participating public schools and classrooms. To enhance the impact of these events and keep students inspired and interested in STEM, START partnered with BioBus, an organization dedicated to helping students who have been excluded

from the scientific community due to factors such as race, gender, economic status, and physical access.

The end-of-the-year event took the form of a science fair, with START volunteers and members from BioBus collaborating to set up various stations. START stations featured hands-on activities, like making lava lamps, slime, chromatography flowers, DNA bracelets, and performing dissections. BioBus brought research-grade microscopes and live organisms for the children to observe. This setup allowed students to explore the STEM stations at their own pace. Six public school classrooms attended the event with their teachers, and the students had an incredible time engaging with the experiments and collecting souvenirs.

The event successfully achieved its goal of inspiring the children. One particular moment captured the essence of START's mission: three 4th-grade girls, while dissecting



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SEACHANGE: A NOVEL APPROACH TO FIXING RISING GREENHOUSE GAS LEVELS

Science &
Technology

BY YOSEF SCHER, SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY EDITOR

As most people know, climate change has become a worldwide problem over the last few decades. Since the second industrial revolution began in the 1950s, the rate of warming has nearly doubled every decade. According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospher-

ic Administration, the “average global sea surface temperature has increased by approximately 0.13°C per decade over the past one hundred years.” Our oceans can act as a buffer by absorbing large amounts of carbon dioxide emissions. However, like any buffer system, there is a limit to how much carbon dioxide can sustain a buffer system; unfortunately, our oceans have nearly reached

their limits. Marine life and ecosystems suffer drastically as our oceans continue to absorb more carbon dioxide levels. Fortunately, researchers from UCLA’s Samueli School of Engineering have devised a possible solution to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases absorbed by our oceans.

Led by Gaurav Sant, the director of the Institute of Carbon Management and a professor of civil and environmental engineering at UCLA’s Samueli School of Engineering, he and his researchers invented a machine called SeaChange to convert dissolved carbon dioxide, calcium, and magnesium into solid limestone and brucite. SeaChange works by sending an electrical charge through seawater flowing through massive tanks on one-hundred foot boats. Once the seawater is in the tanks, a series of chemical reactions traps any greenhouse gases into a solid mineral that consists of calcium carbonate. By transferring the greenhouse

gases to this mineral, the filtered seawater can be returned to the ocean, where the sea can absorb a new amount of carbon dioxide from our atmosphere. Finally, the solid mineral formed in these tanks is returned to the ocean to settle on the sea floor. While one might assume that putting the calcium carbonate mineral back into the ocean would be counterproductive, it is actually quite beneficial, as it acts as seashells for animals to use for shelter.

Dante Simonetti, one of the project's lead researchers, believes that SeaChange will help societies “develop operational best practices to ensure scalable, cost-effective and durable carbon dioxide removal.” In order to show the world the potential benefits this machine can have, the creators of SeaChange have

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YES, FINALS SEASON DOES AFFECT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM: A TIMELY GLIMPSE INTO PSYCHONEUROIMMUNOLOGY

BY TALIA SIMPSON

As finals loom on the horizon, stress levels tend to rise as we attempt to cram all our studying and assignments into a limited allotment of time. We know that prolonged stress can cause us to feel physically run down, but how does this mechanism work? Why do emotional states impact our physical health?

The answer lies in the field of psychoneuroimmunology. Although it sounds like a mouthful, when it is broken up into three words it is actually pretty simple- “psycho” as in the workings of the mind, “neuro” as in the workings of the nervous system, and “immunology” as in the workings of the immune system. Psychoneuroimmunology, as its name suggests, studies the psychological and neurological influences on our immune systems and how these three systems, along with the endocrine system, interact with one another.

The brain is in constant communication with the immune system through two main pathways,

each going in a different direction. The first is through autonomic nerve fibers, specifically noradrenergic sympathetic postganglionic axons, which go from the brain to the spleen and thymus to increase immune cells and the production of

with axons at the vagus nerve to release acetylcholine which in turn inhibits the immune cells from releasing more cytokines.

Since the brain and the immune system are connected, it follows

to those who were unhappy socially. In another study, it was found that people who experienced more positive emotions were more likely to have an increased level of antibody production in response to being vaccinated against the flu.



In terms of stress due to exams specifically, there is evidence that found that during exam season/a time period of stress, immune cells and cytokine levels decrease. Another study took this a step further and showed that in comparison to during the summer, small wounds took 40% longer to heal during exam season, with the immunological response declining by as much as 68%.

This is all to say that stress really matters in terms of our health. It is extremely important that we take the time, especially during finals, to nurture ourselves in ways that relieve stress- whether it be by exercising, hanging out with friends, or just doing things that spark joy.

Wishing everyone a healthy and successful finals season!

antibodies. The second is the opposite way- circulating cytokines from the immune system are monitored by neurons in the hypothalamus and cerebral ventricles, as well as by peripheral axons of the vagus nerve, and when these neurons sense too many cytokines they trigger certain brainstem neurons

that mental states can influence our immune function. In fact, numerous studies have demonstrated this. One study conducted showed that when exposed to a virus that causes the common cold, people who were happy socially were less likely to actually become infected in comparison

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partnered with AltaSea, a company invested in cleaning our oceans, and Singapore's Public Utilities Board to demonstrate the effectiveness of this technology within the upcoming year. Researchers at SeaChange hope that the “successful operation of these plants will

lead to the rapid adoption of this technology at much larger scales.”

While SeaChange is a significant development in greenhouse gas removal technology, the researchers calculated it would take approximately 1,800 industrial-scale plants to remove ten billion tons of atmospheric carbon dioxide annually. Even though that would remove a lot of harmful carbon diox-

ide from our atmosphere, it would not be nearly enough because humanity releases thirty-seven billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere yearly. That being said, the researchers at SeaChange know that their technology is a major breakthrough for the planet and are hopeful that there will be a day when greenhouse gas

levels can return to their normal levels seen before the second industrial revolution in the 1950s.

BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY'S WALLS

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a frog, turned to a volunteer and expressed their aspirations to become biologists. Witnessing such enthusiasm reaffirmed the program's commitment to inspiring students and provide them with opportunities for further exploration.

The event was attended by the Bickoff family, who are the generous donors that make START possible. Mr. Bickoff spoke about their support for the program and their belief in spreading Yeshiva University's values beyond the university's walls. The event left a lasting impact not only on the

children, but also on the volunteers, who had the opportunity to make a difference in their lives. START is a club that embodies the values of Yeshiva University, and extends their impact to the Washington Heights community. By fostering a love for science and

providing access to engaging educational experiences, START is making a significant difference in the lives of students and promoting a brighter future for STEM.

BED BATH AND BANKRUPTCY: A LOOK INTO THE IMPENDING DOOM OF A RETAIL GIANT

BUSINESS

BY YAFFA SHEKHTER

I have early memories of Bed Bath and Beyond, a huge retail store right in my neighborhood. I remember getting something random on an errand with my mom like a new immersion blender for Pesach. I remember wandering aimlessly in that massive store watching the infomercials for an air fryer that somehow also becomes a grill. Bed Bath and Beyond was a staple for the American family, with its large selection of home goods at relatively low prices. Their famous big blue coupon, mimicking a postcard, on the back of catalogs and magazines made the brand iconic and recognizable to the average budget-conscious consumer.

Bed Bath and Beyond was founded in 1971 by Leonard Feinstein and Warren Eisenberg in New Jersey. Then called “Bed n’ Bath,” it was a store specializing in home and bath products. By the mid 80s, Bed Bath and Beyond expanded into its bet-

ter-known superstore concept, creating a competitive advantage over traditional department stores, by selling a wide variety of products rather than just a few items. This business model aimed to bring more consumers into the store by offering something to suit every-



one's needs. The approach became a success, and the company built more superstores across the East Coast and California, reaching record sales in 1991. The company was made public in 1992 and reached 1 billion dollars in sales by the turn of the century. Since

then, the company has made numerous acquisitions of businesses in the home goods industry.

As a result of the increase in e-commerce and other cross-category retailers, however, Bed Bath and Beyond now has to also

compete with mega retailers like Target and Walmart. Although the company did see a boost in sales at the beginning of the pandemic due to the demand for home goods, the recent supply chain dysfunction has led to the start of the company's downfall.

Another aspect of the downfall was

Every sizable corporation these days has had to do major layoffs, from tech companies like Microsoft and Twitter, to retailers such as Walmart, Amazon, and Gap. Bed Bath and Beyond has been no different as they laid off 1,300 employees recently in New Jersey stores alone. Bed Bath and Beyond (NYSE:BBBY) is what investors call a meme stock. The “hype” of a stock price going down caused the trading of over 1.8 million shares for short positions of BBBY in January. The impending bankruptcy of the company makes investors eager to short the stock for profit. As of April 19, the stock traded \$0.46 which is at loss of almost 80% for 2023 YTD.

Is there anything left to do now? It is still difficult for the company to raise capital to cover operating costs. For this reason, Bed Bath and Beyond has the option of reorganizing their financial structure under Chapter 11. In the long run, it is doubtful that the company will remain in business.

INTERVIEW WITH A REAL ESTATE MANAGER

BY JOSHUA FEIGIN,
BUSINESS EDITOR

The following is an excerpt from a conversational interview between Joshua Feigin (JF) and real estate manager Shira Simchon (SS):

JF: Hi, can you introduce yourself?

SS: Sure, my name is Shira Simchon. I live in Brooklyn, attend Penn State online where I am studying business administration. In my free time, I like to sing and am president of an acapella group.

I also enjoy cooking and traveling.

JF: Can you tell me about where you currently work?

SS: I work at a real estate management office in Brooklyn, that owns forty buildings and deals with the affairs of the tenants. We are also developing new buildings. Our company oversees the entire leasing process beginning with marketing new units, finding applicants, and maintaining the day to day affairs of our properties.

JF: What is your role within the

company?

SS: Due to the small size of the company, I take on multiple departmental roles that would typically be split amongst more employees. Personally, I run the mortgage and insurance departments, scheduling maintenance, drafting leases, and much of the backend expense tracking.

JF: Where did you learn the skills to do all these things?

SS: That's a great question. About a year ago when I first started at my current position, I had very little knowledge of real estate. Perhaps the only transferable skill I had was my knowledge of Excel. However, as my firm is small and I was a quick learner, I was given intensive hands-on training and grew into my role quite quickly, as many responsibilities needed to be taken care of. My boss and coworkers supported my learning and were responsive with feedback.

JF: If you barely had relevant experience, how is it that you even found this role and thought to apply?

SS: I previously worked as a head

waitress, where I in a sense also acted as a manager of a multifaceted operation. I bounced around between a few positions in the restaurant industry, but I felt like I was hitting a dead end and wanted to transition into a more serious long term career with stability. I knew that I always liked real estate. In fact, sometimes I browse around on Zillow or StreetEasy and I am passionate about interior design as well. Anyways, I stumbled upon a secretarial position posting on a job recruiting website that did not require any previous experience and that offered training. That posting was at my current company. After a few months, I was looking to develop my skills more and they were happy to have someone assist.

JF: It sounds like you have everything so figured out and perfectly integrated in your life. How did you get to this point? What advice would you give to fellow students and young professionals?

SS: Although I am quite satisfied now with how everything is working out, not everything always

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FROM JOHN TO JOHN: A LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS OF ELTON JOHN'S "EMPTY GARDEN"

ARTS & CULTURE

BY KIKI AROCHAS

After the tragic shooting of Beatles legend and music icon John Lennon, a reeling world was left with nothing but memories of the all-time great musician. Elton John, an icon in his own right, was good friends with Lennon, even being named godfather to his son, Sean. After Lennon's death, Elton, who is no stranger to tribute songs, was at first reluctant to produce one for Lennon, fearing it would be inadequate. That was until his brilliant lyricist, Bernie Taupin, sent him the lyrics for this gem - "Empty Garden."

John opens the song by describing the setting of the event.

"What happened here, As the New York sunset disappeared I found an empty garden, among the flagstones there"

The "Empty Garden" will be the primary recurring motif of the song. John Lennon is metaphorically referred to as a "Gardener," as he tends to his 'garden'--the music world and actual world--with as much care and tenderness as a gardener does to his garden. Without his presence, then, the world is now an "Empty Garden"--without him to care for it.

Alternatively, Elton himself said at a live 2007 performance in Madison Square Garden that the "Garden" was in reference to MSG itself--the very place he and Lennon performed multiple times. Without Lennon, MSG is an empty garden, and not the same without his presence.

Who lived here? He must have been a gardener that cared a lot, Who weeded out the tears and grew a good crop

Consistent with the Garden metaphor taken literally, Lennon "weeded" through difficult times and 'grew a good crop'--perhaps produced good music, or positively impacted the world.

And now it all looks strange It's funny how one insect can damage so much grain

The "insect" refers to Mark David Chapman, Lennon's murderer. The grain are those impacted--Lennon's friends and family, the music world, and the world at large--all those who Lennon cared for and cultivated have been damaged by Chapman, the same way an insect 'damages' a gardener's work through attacking grain.

And what's it for This little empty garden by the brownstone door And in the cracks along the sidewalk nothing grows no more

I took this to be in reference to the great expanse of Lennon's influence--even in places where grass does not normally grow, Lennon's influence has permeated. Now, however, these distant places have no more grass growing.

And we are so amazed, we're crippled and we're dazed A gardener like that one no one can replace And I've been knocking but no

one answers And I've been knocking most of the day Oh and I've been calling, oh hey hey Johnny Can't you come out to play

Elton has been 'knocking' on Lennon's door, begging him to come back, but to no avail. "Come out to play" has a twofold meaning here--in sticking within the garden metaphor, "play" could refer to playing in the fields, or in the more literal Madison Square Garden sense, "play" as in play and perform with Elton on stage.

I didn't catch this, but this is also a reference to Lennon's song "Dear Prudence," a song which opens: "Dear Prudence, won't you come out to play?"

And through their tears Some say he farmed his best in younger years But he'd have said that roots grow stronger, if only he could hear

Through the hardship, while recalling him, some say Lennon performed better when he was younger, that his old music was better than his more recent songs and performances. He, though, would have said that his roots--his formative experiences--shaped who he is today. Additionally, 'roots' stick within the garden theme, with another plant-based reference. *Now we pray for rain, and with every drop that falls We hear, we hear your name*

Now we pray for the next gardener--the next artist that can tend to the music world in the same way rain grows gardens. But, with every drop that falls, with every new icon that comes and goes--we hear your name.



We will never forget the one who originated it all--who inspired all who came after, all who never will quite be able to tend to the garden the same way Lennon did.

And I've been knocking but no one answers And I've been knocking most all the day Oh and I've been calling, oh hey hey Johnny Can't you come out, can you come out to play, Johnny

The rest of the song sees Elton begging Lennon to come back, with increasing desperation.

Can't you come out to play in your empty garden, Johnny Can't you come out to play in your empty garden, Johnny Can't you come out to play in your empty garden, Johnny Can't you come out to play in your empty garden, Johnny Can't you come out to play in your empty garden, Johnny Can't you come out to play in your empty garden, Johnny...

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clicked into place so well. When my high school classes were on Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic period, I realized that I enjoyed learning at more of my own pace. I also felt disconnected from the school and many of my class-

mates, so I decided to pursue an expedited graduation. I then chose to attend Montclair State University, and spent a year there before being able to go to school in New York closer to home. I went to Baruch, also for a semester, until I realized that I once again wanted more independence, flexibility, and a like-minded social group. It was a coincidence that I saw a fli-

er for my choir at Baruch, which motivated me to apply. The choir provided and still does provide me with a nice artistic and social atmosphere, while Penn State offers a flexible education while I gain practical work experience. Point being, it was a bit of a crazy few years bouncing around between schools and jobs until I found what worked best for me.

And who knows what the future brings? I would share with fellow students that they should not be afraid to try new things and branch out. This age is a great time to develop one's self and discover new passions, people, perspectives, and experiences. As long as you have a goal in mind, be it short term or long term, you are on the right track.

WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

BY DAVID YAGUDAYEV,
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
EDITOR

After 25 arduous days and extremely tense games that took place between GM Ian Nepomniatchi and GM Ding Liren for the World Chess Championship 2023 Title, Ding Liren ultimately prevailed during the 4th Tiebreaker match. Despite Nepomniatchi having an early advantage in the classical portion of the championship, Ding remained composed and was able to claw back and force tiebreakers. With Ding's win, the ten-year "Carlsen" era, in which GM Magnus Carlsen was the undefeated World Chess Champion, has officially come to an end.

What makes this truly special, is the story behind Ding Liren and his rise to achieving this title. Liren was not meant to play in the World Chess Championship at all! He was not able to qualify for the 2022 Candidates Tournament (the qualification tournament to play the defending world cham-

panion for the title). However, after Russian GM Sergey Karjakin was banned by FIDE, a spot opened up and Liren was given the spot. On top of this, Liren was unable to compete in tournaments outside of China due to COVID-19 restrictions, and was not going to reach the required number of rated games to play in the 2022 Candidates Tournament even with an invitation for the remaining spot.

At the Candidates Tournament, Liren finished at an impressive second place position, behind Nepomniatchi, which meant that Carlsen was set to play Nepomniatchi for the second time in the World Chess Championship setting. Then, Carlsen dropped a news-bomb on the chess world that no one expected. Carlsen officially decided to not defend his title, stating in his Magnus Effect podcast, "I am not motivated to play another match; I simply feel that I don't have a lot to gain." World Chess Championships require intense and rigorous preparation from both players, which often involves

learning and preparing opening repertoires for months before playing an emotionally and mentally draining tournament that can last over a month. Carlsen's decision opened up the door to the second-place player at the 2022 Candidates, Ding Liren, which never originally existed.

When the World Chess Championship event began, Ding Liren was struggling. He lost the initial matches, and forecasters predicted Nepomiachi to finish the job and finally take the title, after losing to Carlsen in the previous World Chess Championship. However, in game 12, something struck that would change the course of the mental battleground for Nepomiachi and Liren. Liren was struggling in the match and remained critically composed and sharp, outwitting Nepomiachi to take the win. As GM Viswanathan Anand tweeted (<https://twitter.com/vishy64theking/status/1651207435015553027>) after the game, "Nepo played

at an incredible level and deserved to win. However, Ding is showing courage and taking big risks. It seems that he had to face the prospect of losing the match before luck smiled on him."

Then the tiebreakers came. The first three tiebreakers were drawn. The last tiebreaker was an extremely mind-intensive game, as you see Nepomiachi and Liren's facial expressions as they played, especially at the end. What's incredible about Liren's win is that he never had a lead in the matches until the final game of the tiebreaker. This event not only set a new record for the first World Chess Champion from China but also showed the Chess World Liren's incomprehensible composure, grit, determination, and most importantly resilience. When it looked like it was all over, Liren remained calm and kept playing his best, taking risks, and ultimately came out a champion.

MOVIE REVIEW: AIR

BY ANDREW WARREN,
STAFF WRITER

Air is the story of Sonny Vaccaro, the head of Nike's failing basketball division in 1984. In a last-ditch effort to save his job, Sonny bets the entire marketing budget on building a shoe line around the hottest new rookie, Michael Jordan. He only has to convince the CEO of Nike, the marketing head of Nike, Michael Jordan himself, and most importantly, Michael Jordan's mom.

The film is directed by Ben Affleck, his fifth directed feature. I've believed for a long time now that Affleck is a better director than actor and I think this film proves me right. As a director, he's fairly modest. He never shows off with impressive long takes or with lengthy footage of natural landscapes. He just tells a good story without bor-

ing the audience, which is harder than it sounds. Just take a look at George Clooney's directing career.

The real strength of the film, and most of its 70 million dollar budget, lies in its cast. Sonny is played very well by Matt Damon, who has a proven track record of playing loveable losers who take wild chances. I'm thinking of *We Bought a Zoo*, *The Martian*, and *Ford V Ferrari*. He's funny, convincing, and delivers a classic movie speech at the end. It's all stuff you've seen before, but that doesn't make it any less fun to watch.

The other Nike executives are played by Affleck (as CEO Phil Knight), Jason Bateman (as marketing head Rob Strasser), and Chris Tucker (Howard White as Nike-player relations). Like Damon, Bateman and Tucker are both playing to their strengths. Tucker does his fast-talking make-fun-of-white-people shtick and it works. Bateman does his wry and sarcastic performance and it works. But in my opinion, Affleck had the most impressive performance. His character is very funny but never strains credulity as a real person. Affleck never goes for the cheap laugh at the expense of his performance.

Chris Messina, who plays Jordan's agent David Falk, definitely goes for the laughs. Messina is hysterical as the angry and vulgar Falk. My favorite scene was when he screams at Sonny over the phone for a full five minutes, cursing at him and threatening his career. He probably only has 15 minutes of screentime but leaves quite the impression.

The last actor I need to talk about is Viola Davis, who plays Deloris Jordan. All the dramatic weight is on her shoulders. Every actor gets to make witty banter or have some fun except Viola Davis. Mrs. Jordan is intent on making sure her son is given the respect and prestige his talent deserves. She cuts through the corporate BS and always gets straight to the point. Davis' grounded portrayal keeps the movie from becoming a full corporate satire. Her ability to mesh so well with the other actors, given their differences in tone, is very impressive. When Viola Davis walks into the room, every other actor gets on her wavelength. I'm predicting an Oscar nomination for her.

I've spoken a lot about the act-

ing because there's not much else to talk about. The script, editing, and cinematography are all fine. Neither egregiously bad nor overtly great, just okay.

My biggest gripe is with the subject matter. On the surface, *Air* is a movie about a shoe. Deep down, it's still a movie about a shoe. There are scenes that have heavy themes, such as compensating players fairly, or the pressures of celebrity. However, they come off as tangential to the real message: "The AirJordan was a cool shoe!" *Ford V Ferrari* is about more than racing and *Moneyball* is about more than baseball. But this film never rises above its subject matter. One could say *Air* never gets off the ground.

SCORE: 6/10

Score if you care about Michael Jordan: 7/10



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