

THE COMMENTATOR

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Israel at War



The Israeli flag at half staff on Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus, as Yeshiva University mourns the over 1400 Israelis murdered by Hamas

JONATHAN LEVIN/
THE COMMENTATOR

Over 1000 YU Students and Faculty Members Attend Assembly in Solidarity with Israel

BY SRULI FRIEDMAN

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

Approximately 1200 Yeshiva University students and faculty members attended an assembly in Lamport Auditorium Tuesday in solidarity with Israel during the current Gaza crisis, with more watching online.

Entitled “Stronger Together – YU Stands with Israel in Crisis” and coordinated by the Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership, the Counseling Center, Wilf and Beren campus student governments and the Office of Student Life, the event included

messages from YU faculty, political leaders and IDF veterans and soldiers.

For security reasons, backpacks were not allowed into Lamport during the event; attendees were also required to be current YU ID card holders to attend, although the



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

program was also live streamed for a broader audience. The lines to enter the building stretched up 186th St., and Lamport was standing room only. The balcony on the second floor was full as well.

The program was hosted by Erica Brown, director of the Sacks-Herenstein Center and vice provost for values and leadership, and had opening remarks by *Rosh Yeshiva* Rabbi Hershel Schachter, who spoke about the theological background of the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel.

YU President Ari Berman also shared his thoughts on the conflict, talking about his own son who was called up for reserve duty in the IDF, and describing the obligation of the broader Jewish community to support

Israel in wake of Hamas’ Simchat Torah attacks on Israeli civilians and villages.

“We also have a role to shine a light of moral clarity,” Berman said. “That this is a fight not just for the Jewish people, this is a fight not just for Israel. This is a fight for anyone with a moral conscience. Hamas is ISIS. The depravity, the brutality, the inhumanity. Killing babies, mutilating bodies, taking elderly as hostage. This isn’t about Israel and Palestinians, the Palestinians themselves are victims of the cruel rule of Hamas. This is about isolating Hamas and telling the story of evil that must be eradicated ... Under the glaring light of truth, evil cannot stand!”

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We Should All Read Mary Oliver

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Over These We Weep

BY THE COMMENTATOR
EDITORIAL BOARD

This article was originally published online on Oct. 9

על־אלה אני בוכיה עיני עיני ירדה מים
“For these things do I weep, my eyes flow with tears.” (Lamentations 1:16)

Along with all other Yeshiva University students and diaspora Jews, we of The Commentator are shocked and heartbroken by the unspeakable atrocities currently unfolding in Israel at the hands of Hamas terrorists.

As our joy from Simchat Torah was turned into mourning yesterday, our pain mirrors the words of the prophet Jeremiah.

We had hoped that the days when innocent Jewish men, women and children could be dragged, raped and beaten in the streets to the cheers of evil men would be left in the days of Nazi Germany or Czarist Russia; that the days when Jewish blood could be spilled like water were over.

“Over the catastrophe of my people, I am shattered; [my countenance] has darkened, shock has seized me.” (Jeremiah 8:21) We are crushed by the profundity and scope of this tragedy. Words fail in the attempt to describe the horror unfolding upon our people.

Like Yirmiyahu, we find ourselves mourning this week's tragedies, the deadliest events to befall our people since the Holocaust. As he watched Jews be taken into captivity, so too we watch our brothers and sisters, young and old, taken by the enemy.

At this moment, we feel abandoned

and a profound sense of loss, sitting here, like Iyov, wondering why we hope for light, only to receive darkness.

The Mishna in Sanhedrin teaches that one who kills a person is considered to have destroyed an entire world; this weekend, 800 worlds were destroyed by an evil paralleled only by the darkest days of human history. This number will likely only increase.

He answer the prayers of his children in captivity on their own land and protect them from those who seek to do them harm.

As Jews, we mourn the loss of our people and pray for the stability of our community. As Americans, we call on our elected officials and government to stand with our ally, Israel, in its war against those who seek to destroy it

*May God avenge the murder of the innocents.
Hashem Yikom Damam.*

Over our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters, our parents and grandparents, we weep, our eyes flowing with tears watching the evil of those who relish in murder. “Their feet run after evil, they rush to shed the blood of the innocent; their thoughts are thoughts of wrongdoing, plunder and catastrophe are on their roads.” (Jeremiah 59:7)

The terrorists in Gaza show no pity or mercy to the elderly, no kindness to women and children; even their children taunt and strike Israeli children.

In the coming weeks, we must pray for those innocents currently in the hands of our enemies, and for our fellow students who have been called to war. We must pray for divine protection from those who seek to destroy us, whether in Gaza, Beirut or Tehran. We must pray for the success of Israel's soldiers, our brothers and sisters, as they work to destroy Hamas and defend our people.

As God answered the prayers of Moshe and David as they were set upon by their enemies, and as He answered the prayers of Shimshon and Menashe when in enemy hands, may

and slaughter its people.

Now is the time to mourn, bury our dead and destroy the terrorists who perpetrated these atrocities.

May God avenge the murder of the innocents. *Hashem Yikom Damam.*

Editors Note: as of the original publishing online, the total number of people murdered by Hamas was 800. The number has since risen to over 1400

Editor's Note: for an article to be designated under the byline of “The Commentator Editorial Board,” a minimum of 75% of editorial board members, including the editors in chief, are required to give their assent.

THE COMMENTATOR

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 89 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.

Read more at yucommentator.org

7 UP By Commentator Staff DOWN



Things YU Students Are Doing for Israel



1 Talmud Torah

Whether through special *shiurim* on both campuses, or setting up 75 hours of uninterrupted learning, students have been pushing back at Hamas with more Torah.



2 Tefilah

Whether it was Tehillim rallies on Beren, Tehillim chats, Avinu Malkeinu as per the *psak* of Rav Schachter (even on Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh), having extra *kavanah* or taking a *kabbalah* to put on *tzitzit*, YU students have been storming the heavens.



3 Donations

Whether opening their wallets, donating items or volunteering to help collect and donate from others, YU students have been working to ensure that the Israeli Defense Forces have the weapons and gear they need.



4 Rallies and Political Campaigns

Whether through the multiple rallies that YU students have attended, YU-run vigils in Lamport Auditorium, open letters to Congress or to The New York Times, private letters to President Biden, calling congresspeople to thank them for supporting Israel, going on live TV, signing petitions to punish anti-Israel professors or posting “kidnapped” posters throughout New York, YU students are flexing our national muscles.



5 Fighting in Israel

Whether serving in combat or support units, YU students who have been called up to serve in the IDF are taking the fight to Hamas.



6 Volunteering in Israel

Whether they stayed in Israel after Sukkot or traveled back, YU students are helping Israel on the home front.



7 Staying Strong & Dreaming On

No matter what happens, YU students have not allowed Hamas or antisemitism to get at them and remain strong, dreaming up new initiatives and praying for the return of our captive siblings.

ASSEMBLY

Continued from Front Page

Tsach Saar, Israel’s acting consul general in New York, also spoke, detailing the “unparalleled” scale of Saturday’s attacks, and warning about Israel’s determination to win the war.

also sent a written message explaining his regrets for being unable to attend in person and his feelings of “resolute solidarity” with the State of Israel and his commitment to do “everything in his power” to deliver military aid to Israel in Congress.

A special focus of the event was also

attendees for their solidarity with Israel.

“We thank you for your support,” Sackett told the crowd. “*Am Yisrael Chai*. We will get through this!”

Besides speeches, the program also included students singing songs such as *Acheinu*, *Am Yisrael Chai* and *Ani Maamin*. The program closed with *Hatikva* and *Maariv*.

Students said they found the event and the outpouring of attendance inspiring.

“Everything from the evening was such a

meaningful show of support for our brothers and sisters in Israel,” Mikey Fishkin (YC '25) told The Commentator. “The powerful singing of hundreds of YU students gave me goosebumps, and still rings in my ears.”

Following the event, pamphlets were distributed by the Sacks-Herenstein and Counseling Centers, giving advice on mental health and sharing more ways students could get involved in helping Israeli soldiers and citizens, through public support and donations.

“We need to tell the world that Jewish blood is not cheap, and indifference is inhumane. As whenever Jews suffer at the hands of the cruel, the world suffers as well. Our history does not lie. This is an existential fight for all of humanity. We cannot afford to lose it and we will not lose it. We will win.”

—
President Ari Berman

“From civilians to soldiers, from young to the elderly, the horrors committed were beyond words,” Saar stated. “... These atrocious actions were not just against Israel, but also against America, against the free world, against all humanity. Hamas ... will face the consequences. Our response is driven not by revenge, but by a deep seated commitment to ensure that such terror never occurs again.”

Other speakers included Washington Heights’ City Council Representative Carmen De La Rosa, and Aya Keefe, Manhattan deputy borough president, both of whom expressed strong support for Israel and the Jewish community. New York Senator and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer

highlighting and thanking YU students and faculty who served in the IDF or who were called up for reserve duty.

Didi Levy, assistant director of the Yeshiva University Counseling Center and an IDF veteran gave a presentation about ways for students to protect their mental health. Two current students who had served in the IDF, Mendy Kanofsky (SSSB ‘25) and Kfir Slonimsky (SSSB ‘25), recited the prayers for the State of Israel and IDF.

Gabi Sackett, YU’s Israel program director, and soldier Yair Jablinowitz, both of whom were called up for service, sent video messages to the event, thanking the



Approximately 1200 students and faculty members attend an assembly in support of Israel in Lamport Auditorium Tuesday.

YU Security and NYPD Announce New Measures in Response to Threats of Antisemitism

By SRULI FRIEDMAN

This article was originally published online on Oct. 16

Yeshiva University's security department announced extra security measures on YU's undergraduate and graduate campuses, with stepped up New York Police Department (NYPD) patrols, following Hamas's terrorist

attack on Israel Oct. 7. Extra security measures were also taken Friday in response to Hamas' call for a worldwide "Day of Jihad."

All campuses received increased security officer coverage and NYPD patrols, including officers stationed on campus, according to emails from the security department last week. Students were also advised to carry their ID cards, travel in groups and report any suspicious activity.

Some of the officers were from the NYPD's

Counterterrorism Response Command resources and Critical Response Group, which were also on random deployments to "local synagogues and other sensitive areas,"

students avoid "demonstrations, protests and other large non-YU affiliated gatherings." An email from Dean Karen Bacon sent Thursday morning also urged students not

"The NYPD's Intelligence and Counterterrorism Bureau deploys a wide array of resources to protect the city based on events unfolding here and around the world... Given the situation unfolding in Israel, we have surged resources to sensitive locations out of an abundance of caution and to ensure that all New Yorkers stay safe."

NYPD Spokesman



The YU security department and the NYPD announced new measures being taken to protect against threats of antisemitism following the current war in Israel.

JONATHAN LEVIN/
THE COMMENTATOR

including YU.

"The NYPD's Intelligence and Counterterrorism Bureau deploys a wide array of resources to protect the city based on events unfolding here and around the world," an NYPD spokesman told The Commentator. "This includes high-visibility resources like the Critical Response Command and Counterterrorism officers, as well as our Intelligence Division personnel. Given the situation unfolding in Israel, we have surged resources to sensitive locations out of an abundance of caution and to ensure that all New Yorkers stay safe."

Neither the security department nor Security Supervisor Jose Morales replied to The Commentator's multiple requests for comment.

The security department also recommended in multiple emails Thursday that

to attend "possibly violent" demonstrations on campuses of other universities. This came after several students reportedly considered attending a pro Israel counter protest taking place at Columbia University. The Columbia administration later decided to bar students from other universities from attending protests on campus.

Although no incidents were reported Friday, security did send out an email notifying students that a student had had her necklace stolen while entering the Benjamin Residential Building, which houses a Cardozo dorm on Lexington Avenue Thursday. The perpetrator fled the scene on a bicycle. The Commentator independently confirmed that the victim was a Cardozo graduate student. As of publishing, it is unclear whether the incident was motivated by antisemitism.

Torah and Tehillim Programs Held on Beren Campus in Response to War in Israel

By RIKKI ZAGELBAUM

This article was originally published online on Oct. 17

Following Hamas' terrorist attack on Shemini Atzeret, YU students and faculty

In addition, since the return to campus, daily Tehillim readings have been held at the *beit midrash*. Led by Campus Rabbi Azi Fine, Tehillim is said each day at 8:40 a.m. and 1:10 p.m. These readings have seen the participation of dozens of students, taking time out of their day to pray for Israel's well-being. These ongoing Tehillim readings will

"This was a really nice way for the Stern community to come together and do a mitzvah for the sake of Israel. It was beautiful to see everyone so spiritually involved and connected in the midst of such a difficult time for Klal Yisrael."

Tali Pinsker (SCW '26)

on the Beren Campus sprung into action, hosting numerous on-campus events in a show of support for Israel.

These events, which had the participation of hundreds of students, included a challah bake, a shiur and a number of Tehillim readings and *kumzitzes*.

Students looking for opportunities to pray and seek inspiration attended Beren *kumzitzes*, which occurred the nights of Oct. 9 and 10 in the *beit midrash* at 245 Lexington Ave.

According to the event organizers, the *kumzitzes* were intended to bring students together to "daven and learn in merit of our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael and be there for one another during this time." Another *kumzitz* is set to take place this Wednesday, again in the *beit midrash*.

continue every day for the foreseeable future.

On Thursday, approximately 80 students packed into room 101 of 245 Lexington Ave. for a community challah bake and Tehillim reading, led by campus Rebbetzins Michal Schonbrun and Ellie Fine. The event was at max capacity.

Students crowded around one table and hand-made the challah dough from scratch. While the dough was rising, Rebbetzin Fine led the room in reciting the *brachot* for the mitzvah of *Hafrashat Challah*, followed by *perakim* of Tehillim for the soldiers and families in Israel. The night concluded in song, as everyone gathered together to sing *Acheinu*.

"This was a really nice way for the Stern community to come together and do a mitzvah for the sake of Israel," Tali Pinsker (SCW

'26) shared with The Commentator. "It was beautiful to see everyone so spiritually involved and connected in the midst of such a difficult time for Klal Yisrael."

The Beren Chabad Club also kicked off its programming on Thursday with a *Tanya* shiur by Rav Shalom Shapiro in order to "combat the darkness with the light of Torah," Chabad club board member Leila Fishman (SCW '26) told The Commentator.

The event, held in the *beit midrash*, explored concepts such as spreading spirituality throughout the world and the power each individual holds to enact meaningful change. "Our job right now is to spread light and positivity," Fishman said. "We not only have

the ability to... it is truly within our reach!"

The Beren Campus Student Government (BCSG) informed The Commentator that it is working around the clock to plan and execute more events like this as fast as possible.

"We are trying to balance our regular programming, like the Beren Itim L'Torah Program, with special events geared towards what is going on in Eretz Yisrael," Gaby Rahmanfar (SCW '24), president of the Torah Activities Council (TAC), told The Commentator.

More opportunities to show support for Israel are projected to be announced in the coming days and weeks.



Torah and Tehillim programs were held on Beren Campus last week in response to the current war in Israel.

THE COMMENTATOR

YCSC Holds Inaugural Tech Career Fair

By AVIEL PARENTE

This article was originally published online on Oct. 13

Yeshiva College Student Council (YCSC) hosted its first tech career fair last month. The fair, created to help expand students' professional networks, was aimed at students majoring in computer science, mathematics and physics, and other STEM fields.

Attended by over 150 students from both campuses, the Tech Career Fair, held on Sept. 6, was the first such event held for Yeshiva College (YC) students in recent years. Students were able to interact with industry professionals and YU alumni, apply to internships and job opportunities and survey the future job market with companies in attendance, including Amazon, Google and JPMorgan.

Similar recruiting events have been previously held for students at Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). YCSC President Shlomo Schwartz (YC '25) told The Commentator that YC students expressed strong interest in similar style events for STEM majors. Although the event was not aimed at students outside of the tech sphere, Schwartz told The Commentator that they hope to host

similar fairs for students in non-STEM fields.

The event, which lasted for approximately two hours, was held in the Weissberg Commons in Belfer Hall on the Wilf Campus,

"They were instrumental in helping us arrange this event.

Many of the YU alumni representing companies at the event expressed a desire to

"It's so nice that people are coming here to talk to us. Seeing alumni with jobs is comforting because I can see where I might be in the future."

Shoshana Pomerantz (SCW '25)

and was mostly attended by upperclassmen majoring in computer science. Students arrived and crowded outside the doors at around 6:30 p.m. — which is when the fair was called for — but the doors only opened some twenty minutes later. Despite the late start, the fair ran smoothly, with representatives from a total of ten companies interacting with students.

In addition to YCSC, faculty, including computer science department Chair Prof. Judah Diament, helped plan the event, with staff at the Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development providing advice.

"We are very fortunate to have a faculty that spends considerable time and effort helping to prepare students for life after leaving YU," Schwartz told The Commentator.

give back and help create a support system for students looking to get into competitive industries.

"I care deeply about YU students getting a fair opportunity in the technical community," Joshua Feldman (SSSB '97), head of engineering for the product office at JPMorgan Chase, told The Commentator. "I wish that I had these types of connections and relationships when I was a student at YU to help me launch my career — I feel a sense of duty. It's been my experience that YU students perform well at JPMorgan, so I'm here to find the next tranche."

Other alumni at the event shared similar views. "I think it's important to get more YU students at our companies," said Julia Chase (SCW '21), a senior developer at Avanade, a tech consulting firm. Chase had previously

been referred to a job at Avanade by another SCW graduate.

Robert Hannan, another recruiter for Avanade, also expressed his hope to involve YU students in the company, telling The Commentator about the "strong relationship" Avanade has with YU and that he's "grateful for the opportunity to work together."

Many students found the event helpful.

"It's so nice that people are coming here to talk to us," Shoshana Pomerantz (SCW '25), a computer science major, shared with The Commentator. "Seeing alumni with jobs is comforting because I can see where I might be in the future."



YCSC held its first tech career fair last month. JOHNATHON HENNINGER / YCSC

Beren and Wilf Fall Election Results Released

By MIJAL GUTIERREZ

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

Fall 2023 student government election results for Beren and Wilf campus student governments were released Sept. 20 and 21 respectively.

The Beren elections, held Sept. 14, included races for freshman and sophomore student council representatives. On Wilf, three additional races were held for YSU senior representative, SOY JSS representative

and Katz representative, positions not filled in the previous spring elections. Wilf elections took place Sept. 20.

Elections in Wilf experienced a minor change, as voting was done through CampusGroups rather than through the usual form and took place on a day of virtual instruction.

The Wilf elections saw a decline in turnout with only 170 total votes cast, including 60 votes for sophomore representative and only 13 votes for JSS Representative. No votes were cast for the Katz representative position.

Unlike Wilf, the Beren student

government is not constitutionally bound to release vote totals.

The following are the results:

Beren:

First Year Representative Post Israel

Talia Sarah Feldman

First Year Representative True Freshman

Elle Deena Ohayon

Wilf:

Freshman Representative

Doron Sedeghat — 9 (40.91%)

Zev Nusbaum — 7 (31.82%)

Sophomore Representative

Aryeh Hirt — 34 (56.67%)

Boaz Kapitanker — 14 (23.33%)

Senior Representative

Yaakov Baker — 26 (37.68%)

Yitzchak Stein — 25 (36.23%)

JSS Representative

Joshua Asaraf — 12 (92.31%)

Katz Representative

No votes cast

Karen Bacon, Dean of Stern and Yeshiva College, to be Promoted to Provost's Office

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was originally published online on Sept. 22

Karen Bacon, dean of the undergraduate faculty of arts and sciences at Yeshiva University, will be promoted to associate



Karen Bacon will be promoted to associate vice president for academic affairs upon the conclusion of a national search for her replacement. YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

vice president for academic affairs at Yeshiva University following a "national search" for her replacement, YU announced last week. Bacon has maintained a position as dean for nearly 50 years.

First announced in a faculty-wide email by Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Selma Botman on Sept. 13, Bacon's

"I am so grateful that Dean Bacon will be joining the Provost's Office, applying her experience and passion broadly throughout the University."

Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Selma Botman

new role, which she will fill upon completion of the national search, will involve joining the office of the provost to strengthen academic affairs and student life while working with Botman, undergraduate and graduate deans and YU's board of directors.

Botman and YU spokesperson Hanan Eisenman declined to comment or issue any specifics on details of the search, including the search committee, scope, timetables or what qualifications YU is seeking.

Bacon (SCW '64) was first hired by YU as a professor at Yeshiva College's (YC) biology department in 1975, before being promoted to Dean of Stern College for Women (SCW) in 1977, a position she held for nearly 40

years. In 2015, she was named Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Yeshiva University, where she began to oversee Yeshiva College as well.

"Over the years, Dean Bacon has built an extraordinary liberal arts and sciences college at Stern, and more recently lent

her considerable skills to Yeshiva College," stated Botman's email announcing Bacon's promotion, which Botman shared with The Commentator. "I am so grateful that Dean Bacon will be joining the Provost's Office, applying her experience and passion broadly throughout the University.

"On a personal note, I have long relied on Dean Bacon's judgment and advice in my role as Provost. To have her at my side in the Office of Academic Affairs and to benefit from her sage counsel and her leadership of new initiatives will be an honor."

Bacon told The Commentator that President Ari Berman and Botman were in conversation with her about the promotion

for "some time," with the timing of the announcement, following her acceptance of the position, made by the president's office.

"This promotion is a singular honor for which I thank President Berman and Provost Botman," Bacon told The Commentator. "But in addition to the honor, I am gratified by their endorsement of the work I have done in the past. And while I look forward to assisting Provost Botman on University wide initiatives, I will sorely miss my daily involvement with colleagues, both faculty and staff, and with the students of SCW and YC whom I treasure."

In a Sept. 14 announcement on YUNews, Yeshiva University's blog, regarding Bacon's promotion, Berman thanked Bacon for her nearly 50 years of service to YU, adding that Dean Bacon's "achievement[s]" will be "celebrated" at YU's 99th Hanukkah dinner, YU's largest annual fundraiser, this December.

Eisenman declined to comment on how Bacon's work will be recognized. The dinner, set to be hosted at The Ziegfeld Ballroom in Midtown, will commemorate the 70th anniversary of SCW.

Bacon was honored at YU's 79th Hanukkah dinner, held in 2003, where she received YU's first presidential medallion.

No previous associate vice president for academic affairs is listed on YU's website. Eisenman declined to comment on whether the position was filled in the past.

Yeshiva University Students Raise Nearly \$19,000 for Morocco Earthquake Victims, Exceeding Goal

By RIKKI ZAGELBAUM

This article was originally published online on Sept. 27

Yeshiva University's Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership and students who participated in the Global Citizenship 2023 program in Morocco have raised nearly \$19,000 in a fundraising campaign that was launched on Sep. 11. The campaign was started to help aid victims of the recent Morocco earthquake with the goal of raising \$18,000.

The money, mostly raised in the first five days of the campaign, will be sent to the High Atlas Mountains Foundation (HAF), which is raising \$5 million to provide aid to the hundreds of thousands affected by the earthquake. As of publishing, they have raised close to one million.

More than 3,000 people died following a 6.8 magnitude earthquake that occurred near Marrakech, Morocco, on Sep. 9. The deadliest to strike Morocco in over six decades, the earthquake affected an estimated 300,000 people.

Yeshiva University has strong ties to Morocco, having visited in January with 31 students from the Sacks-Herenstein Center's

Global Citizenship 2023 program.

Most of the trip, which also involved meeting with Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique (UM6P) students, was spent in and around Marrakech and the Atlas

which impacted citizens have taken the initiative to help, organizing fundraisers and offering stranded families food and shelter, while also explaining the need for a long term solution.

"We feel strongly connected to the people of Morocco especially in the most devastated areas as we spent significant time there. Many of the villages we visited are now reduced to rubble."

Aliza Abrams Konig, senior program director of the Leadership Scholars at the Sacks-Herenstein Center



YU students at a Moroccan outreach center during the Global Citizenship program in January

TOVIT LIPNER

Mountains, the region most impacted by the earthquake, Aliza Abrams Konig, senior program director of the Leadership Scholars at the Sacks-Herenstein Center, told The Commentator. "We feel strongly connected to the people of Morocco especially in the most devastated areas as we spent significant time there," Konig said. "Many of the villages we visited are now reduced to rubble."

The Sacks-Herenstein Center also hosted a Zoom meeting for YU and UM6P students on Sep. 14. Students recounted current and ongoing tragedies caused by the earthquake, including the deaths of classmates and professors.

"We never could have expected something like this to happen," one female UM6P student said on the call. "We see other people in villages who have lost their families, their schools. They have lost everything."

Nevertheless, the students expressed a sense of hope. They spoke about ways in

"In a few weeks the donations are going to stop, but these people will still be in need," another student said.

"[Our time in Morocco taught us] so much about the wonderful people that live there, the many Muslims who have dedicated their work to preserving Jewish historic sites as well as about the extreme poverty and challenges of those living in areas like the High Atlas Mountains," Konig told The Commentator.

"The large majority of children living in the High Atlas Mountains go to schools where there is no running water, something that seems unimaginable to us. Now after the earthquake, the wells they relied on were destroyed. Every dollar we raise is going towards their rebuilding efforts. We hope that YU students will consider donating and helping the people of Morocco rebuild their homes and schools and return to their normal lives."

YU Falls 38 Spots in College Rankings Amidst US News Methodology Changes

By SRULI FRIEDMAN

This article was originally published online on Sept. 21

Yeshiva University fell 38 spots in the US News and World Report's 2024 national university rankings released Monday, falling to 105th place, where it is tied with ten other universities, in what YU attributed to changes in the ranking methodology.

YU's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law also fell in US News' law school rankings this year, dropping to 69th place after hitting 52nd in the 2023 rankings.

US News' widely circulated annual study of over 1,500 US colleges and universities calculates its results based on weighted factors including graduation rates, graduate pay, SAT/ACT scores and peer assessments by officials at other universities.

Despite the large drop in the general rankings, YU did increase its standing in several categories, including rising to 47 in the list of best value schools — the highest in NYC. YU also retained its spot among the top 10 universities with 5,000 or fewer undergraduates, taking 9th place in the category.

Changes to the methodology include removing factors such as class size, faculty degrees, alumni giving, high school class standing and the proportion of graduates who borrow federal loans, with a greater emphasis on "social mobility and outcomes for graduating college students," according to a US News press release.

YU isn't the only university with significant changes in rankings, with private universities such as Brigham Young University falling 26 spots to 115, and NYU falling from 25th to 35th place. Some schools, such as

Texas A&M, rose 20 places.

"We are thrilled to report that once again YU has achieved record breaking enroll-

ment at both our undergraduate and graduate schools," A YU spokesperson told The Commentator. "Moreover, our core metrics — retention, graduation, admission to graduate and professional schools and jobs secured — are all up.

"This year, however, US News & World Report changed some of the key metrics it used to calculate its rankings, focusing instead more on non-educational areas that don't capture the unique nature of the YU experience, the quality of education or the success of our graduates in their personal and professional lives."

YU Spokesperson

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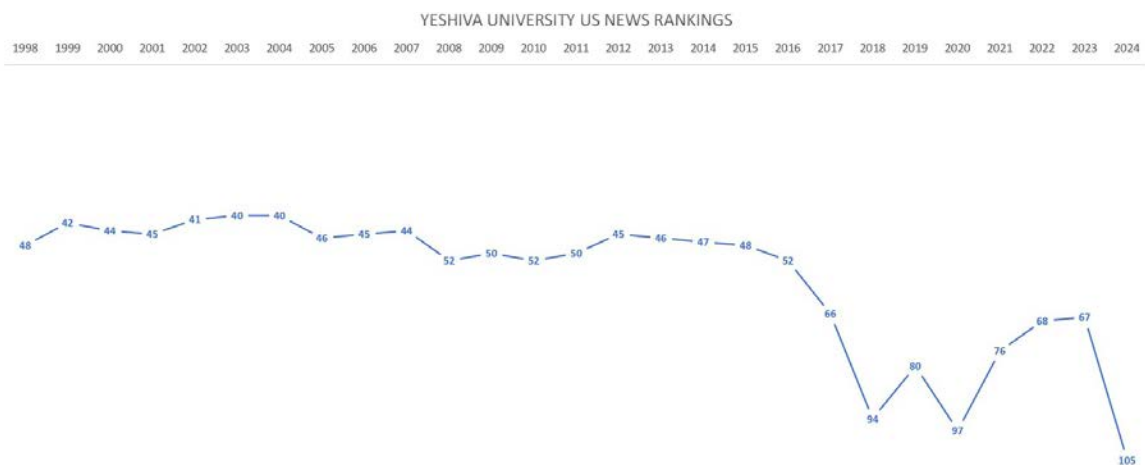
success of our graduates in their personal and professional lives. Regrettably, US News has downgraded these areas. YU is not alone. Given US News & World Report's altered focus, 79% of private national universities declined in their rankings, while 66% of public national universities rose."

The changes in US News' methodologies come amidst growing criticism of the

rankings, with several major medical and law schools announcing that they would no longer share information with the outlet since last year, with Yale Law School in a 2022 statement calling the system "profoundly flawed," and accusing US News of disincentivizing "programs that support public interest careers, champion need-based aid, and welcome working-class students into the profession."

Schools that tied with YU for 105th place include City University of New York (CUNY) City College, Arizona State University and American University in Washington D.C. In the Wall Street Journal / College Pulse Rankings, another prominent ranking of American universities released earlier in September, YU fell to 227th place, a decline from 138th place last year.

YU has fallen in college rankings before. In 2017, YU dropped 28 spots to 94th place after spending almost two decades mostly between the 40s and low 50s. In 2019, YU was ranked 97th, before recovering in recent years.



YU has fallen to 105th place in the US News and World Report's 2024 national university rankings.

THE COMMENTATOR

“We Are Not Alright:” Hundreds of Students Join Rally in Support of Israel

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was originally published online on Oct. 11

Standing among hundreds of Yeshiva University students and over ten thousand New Yorkers Tuesday, Avygayl Zucker (SCW '24), president of Beren Campus's student government, was in awe of New York's support for Israel.

“Standing in line, even before I entered through security, I watched the masses of people of all different demographics, Jews religious and non-affiliated alike, swarming up Second Avenue,” Zucker shared. “The sheer turnout of people, going to publicly stand up for Israel, took my breath away.”

Zucker was among hundreds — estimates were at 500-700 or more — of YU students and *roshei yeshiva* who traveled to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in Midtown to join the 12,000-person strong rally, organized by the

UJA Federation of New York and Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), on the day classes resumed following the Sukkot break.

The student effort to attend the rally was

“This was an attempted genocide, and therefore, we come together in sheer horror over what happened in Israel.”

New York Attorney General Letitia James

organized by the student councils, the Sacks-Herstein Center for Values and Leadership and the Office of Student Life (OSL).

On Wilf Campus, students and *roshei yeshiva*, including Rabbis Hershel Schachter, Yosef Blau, Mayer Twersky and Yosef Kalinsky, filled buses, subways and Ubers, heading downtown in the hundreds. Students on Beren campus, located closer to the rally, walked in large groups, many draped in Israeli flags and wearing blue face

paint.

“Being in America and New York, feeling so far, there's only so many things I can do to show my support,” said Ozzie Jesolohn (SBBB '25). “Going to this big rally was the

least I could do to show my support for Israel and its soldiers.”

The square was filled to capacity, with crowds spilling onto Second Ave and 47th St. Among the featured guests were New York politicians and dignitaries, including New York City Mayor Eric Adams, New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New York Attorney General Letitia James, who all spoke, condemning Hamas's atrocities and standing with Israel.

“We are not alright,” Adams told the crowd, quoting Lisa Zornberg, New York City Hall chief counsel, from a briefing he received earlier in the day. “We are not alright when we see young girls pulled from their home and dragged through the streets. We are not alright when we see grandmothers being pulled away from their homes and children shot in front of their families.”

“This was intentional,” Adams told the crowd. “This was bitter. This was nasty. This is something that shows Hamas must be disbanded and destroyed.”

“This was an attempted genocide, and therefore, we come together in sheer horror over what happened in Israel,” said James, who also called for Hamas's destruction and said she stood with Israel.

“We will defeat evil right here in New York ... New York stands with Israel!” Hochul told the crowd, who reacted with cheers.

Other speakers included Gilad Erdan, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations;

Tsach Saar, Israel's acting general counsel in New York; people who spoke about the victims, and the parents of Long Island-native Omer Neutra, who is missing in Israel.

Cosponsors for the event included the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of New York and New Jersey, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) of New York, the American Zionist Movement, the Association of Reform Zionists of America, Council of Jewish Émigré Community Organizations (COJECO), Strength through Unity, Israel American Council (IAC), the New York Board of Rabbis, the Orthodox Union, the Union for Reform Judaism and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

Rav Schachter, who publicly encouraged students to attend the rally, later went on stage and sang “*Oseh Shalom Bimromav*,” together with leaders and representatives from other organizations that cosponsored the event.

Many students who attended the rally told The Commentator that attending the rally and declaring their support for Israel was meaningful, and they felt it made a difference.

“Many of us Jews in the diaspora are desperate to contribute to Israel in any way we can,” said Tehilla Bitton (SCW '24). “This rally allowed us to unite in our anger and hope, as we demanded support for Israel. Tens and thousands of us stood together, our home in our hearts. We send them our prayers, donations, tears and support.”

Some students didn't go to the rally. Approximately a dozen students headed to Columbia University with Rabbi Itamar Rosensweig instead to show support for the campus's Jewish community, which was facing pro-Hamas counter-protests during a vigil students ran for the victims.

Hundreds of YU students attended a similar rally in Midtown on Monday, one of hundreds of such rallies held throughout the tri-state area, the United States, and across the world in support of Israel.



Hundreds of students joined over ten thousand New Yorkers in Midtown Tuesday to support Israel.

Yael Sabo

How the YU Israel Campus Has Responded to Operation Swords of Iron

By ZACHARY BEER

This article was originally published online on Oct. 19

The entire world, and certainly the entire Jewish world, has had their eyes on Israel since the outbreak of the war on Shemini Atzeret.

Despite significant confusion and anguish when the war broke out on Yom Tov, the Gruss Kollel and Yeshivat Torat Shraga (YTS), which are housed on the Yeshiva University in Israel (YUI) campus, have been doing as much as they can to aid soldiers, the displaced and anyone who has been affected by the war.

Since being called back from *Bein Hazmanim* early by Rosh Kollel Rabbi Dovid Miller, learning on campus has proceeded as usual, with regular *shiurim* and *sedarim* taking place. However, the situation at hand has not been ignored; Kollel fellows and their families have been involved in aiding soldiers and many others affected by the war. They have raised money and organized donations of toiletries and other essentials to those on the front. Many, including staff, have donated blood.

Further, there has been more localized *chesed*, with one Kollel member driving multiple hours to ensure that a YTS faculty

member's family could still have access to their car. Kollel families have also been providing laundry service for families who have been displaced from their homes in the south

Despite significant confusion and anguish when the war broke out on Yom Tov, the Gruss Kollel and Yeshivat Torat Shraga (YTS), which are housed on the Yeshiva University in Israel (YUI) campus, have been doing as much as they can to aid soldiers, the displaced and anyone who has been affected by the war.

to Bayit Vegan, meal trains for women whose husbands were called up and grocery shopping for those who can't leave their children or who feel uneasy leaving their homes.

Kollel members, families and YTS students have also been tying *tzitzit* for soldiers and have been reciting Tehillim to provide spiritual protection.

Additionally, with Har Herzl being in relatively close proximity to the Kollel, many have gone to help volunteer there or attend funerals for the fallen.

While campus attempts to mostly function as normal, the reality of war clearly affects the daily routine. Some Israel-based Kollel fellows have been called up to service, as well as friends, and children of Kollel faculty. Additionally, *sedarim* and *shiurim* have been interrupted by sirens on a number of occasions. Even so, the Gruss Kollel

continues its learning even in the face of the overall threat to the country.

The acts of *chesed*, and the Torah and *tefillah* from those around the world, including those on the YUI campus, will hopefully provide physical and spiritual aid to Klal Yisrael at this time.

Zachary Beer is a rabbinical student at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, who is spending this year at the Gruss Kollel in Jerusalem.



The YU Israel Campus in Jerusalem

Yeshiva University

Israel's Best Friend: American Assistance to Help Fight Hamas

By RIKKI ZAGELBAUM

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

“As we continue to account for the horrors of the appalling terrorist assault against Israel this weekend and the hundreds of innocent civilians who were murdered, we are seeing the immense scale and reach of this tragedy.”

These were the opening words of President Joe Biden in a written statement released on Monday. Since then, the United States has remained steadfast in its support for Israel and the IDF, sending its own warships and aircraft to the Eastern Mediterranean and providing the IDF with additional equipment, resources and munitions.

Under President Biden's leadership, the Biden Administration has firmly supported Israel in the ongoing fight against Hamas, who launched a deadly attack against Israeli civilians Saturday. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken headed to Israel on Wednesday, at the same time as aid packages began to arrive from the U.S. The U.S. Embassy has announced that Blinken will meet with senior officials to “reiterate his condolences for the victims of the terrorist attacks against Israel and condemn those attacks in the strongest terms.” He will “also reaffirm the United States' solidarity with the government and people of Israel ... [and] discuss measures to bolster Israel's security.”

“Our support for Israel remains unwavering,” Blinken wrote in a statement posted to X, the site formerly known as Twitter, as of Tuesday, a few hours before flying out.

In addition, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin released an official statement on Oct. 8, detailing the current and future actions the U.S. is taking to “bolster regional deterrence efforts.”

Mediterranean Sea on Tuesday with its eight squadrons of attack and support aircraft, guided missile cruiser and guided missile destroyers. One day later, the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower strike group was rerouted

is a strong signal of deterrence should any actor hostile to Israel consider trying to take advantage of this situation,” said General Michael E. Kurilla, commander of the U.S. Central Command, in a statement on Oct. 8.

Austin also stated that the U.S. will replenish the IDF's stockpile and supply the IDF with additional equipment and munitions following Israel's urgent appeal for more arms. However, this emergency request comes at a time of deep dysfunction in Washington, with Congressional appropriations required to ensure Israel is given the materials and resources it needs. The House can only pass legislation once it elects a speaker to replace Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who was voted out of the job on Oct. 3. Republicans are scheduled to vote for a new speaker this week, but no nominee has the requisite votes to win the election yet.

Despite Congress's dysfunction, the Biden administration has continued to send weapons to Israel, rapidly replenishing air defenses and military equipment, with lawmakers on both sides pledging to grant Israel whatever it needs. Eventually, though, Congress will need to appropriate money, and those efforts will be affected by how the leadership drama in the House plays out in the coming days.

The United States' assistance, unequivocal position, and condemnation of the recent Hamas attacks underscores its fortified relationship with Israel and serves as further confirmation that Israel is no longer “the nation that dwells alone (Bamidbar 23:9).”

“The United States and the State of Israel are inseparable partners,” Biden wrote at the conclusion of his statement. “The United States will continue to make sure Israel has what it needs to defend itself and its people.”

The United States' assistance, unequivocal position, and condemnation of the recent Hamas attacks underscores its fortified relationship with Israel and serves as further confirmation that Israel is no longer “the nation that dwells alone.”

He announced that two U.S. aircraft carrier strike groups have been deployed to the region. First, the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier — the Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier — arrived in the Eastern

from its original destination and set out to join the Ford. Austin further stated that the U.S. has taken steps to increase the number of Air Force assets in the region. “The arrival of these highly capable forces to the region



The USS Gerald R. Ford underway. The carrier arrived in the eastern Mediterranean Tuesday to provide support for Israel.

UNITED STATES NAVY/
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Help in Hard Times: How the Counseling Center is Responding to the Situation in Israel

By CHLOE BAKER

This article was originally published online on Oct. 18

The recent events in Israel have come as a shock to everyone, including YU's undergraduate students, and are leaving many with intense feelings and emotions they have never felt before. It can be very hard to navigate through everyday routines, as we, the Jewish nation, are in a crisis. Given the amount of emotional turmoil caused by Hamas's terrorist attack and the ongoing war, the Counseling Center has implemented several changes to provide the utmost support to our YU community.

The Counseling Center is expanding its offerings in the realm of outreach as well as services they offer. They have partnered with different YU departments — including the Offices of Student Life, Residence Life, International Services and the Provost — to better reach students who may need help. Additionally, they have been offering drop-in hours during which students can come by for a check-in without an appointment.

On top of one-on-one therapy, the Counseling Center has been hosting daily group mindfulness sessions on Zoom with Outreach Coordinator Rabbi Avraham Kener. They have also held in-person support groups and are open to meeting with any group of students who want to talk together in a calm and quiet space. The Counseling Center has been reaching out to ensure that students know how to best take care of themselves during this time. Dr. Debra Alper, assistant director of the Counseling Center, created a sheet full of tips on how

to manage anxiety, which has been distributed around the school and was advertised this past Wednesday at the university-wide solidarity event held on Wilf Campus.

In the coming weeks, the Counseling

Center notes that it is important to look for causes that “feel personally meaningful, as these give us a semblance of control in a situation that otherwise makes us feel very helpless.”

Given the amount of emotional turmoil caused by Hamas's terrorist attack and the ongoing war, the Counseling Center has implemented several changes to provide the utmost support to our YU community.

Center will continue to host mindfulness events and individual and group therapy sessions, and will be working with other departments and student groups such as Active Minds to continue to provide support in the best ways possible. Additionally, they hope to run workshops around topics such as resilience and unity in an effort to improve students' overall mental health.

“Many students express the feelings of ‘survivors’ guilt’ and shame for not being in Israel, or for continuing with their education and daily activities,” Counseling Center Director and Dean of Mental Health and Wellness Yael Muskat told The Commentator. “We want to stress that in order to get through these trying times we need to take care of ourselves so we can be there for others and so that we can engage successfully in our endeavors.”

To try to manage anxiety and stress, the Counseling Center recommends sticking to a daily routine, exercising, having a healthy diet, staying connected to family and friends and limiting the amount of media you consume. Furthermore, they recognize that many students have expressed a desire to contribute positively to the situation in

Israel. The Counseling Center notes that it is important to look for causes that “feel personally meaningful, as these give us a semblance of control in a situation that otherwise makes us feel very helpless.”

devastating mental health effects on everyone in the community, and we want to do all we can to support our students, and our friends and family in Israel,” Dr. Muskat shared with The Commentator. “We are proud to be at Yeshiva University at this time, and proud of our students, who have displayed their deep commitment to Israel and to our community, and respond with kindness and love to one another and efforts to contribute.”

On behalf of the entire Yeshiva University community, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Counseling Center for all that they have done to be extremely supportive to both students and faculty as we figure out ways to manage dealing with this crisis.



Wilf Campus

THE COMMENTATOR

It All Seems like a Blur: A Firsthand Account of October 7

By SARA COHEN

This article was originally published online on Oct. 13

There was a boom.

And then, I went back to sleep.

In my drowsy state, I disregarded the ominous noise, assuming it was fireworks or construction. Some time passed. I don't know how much. A short time later, probably around 8:30 a.m., I woke up to my mother and cousin telling me that there were rockets sent into Israel and we were under attack. The noise I had previously heard was the Iron Dome intercepting barrages of missiles. I had apparently slept through the sirens.

I don't think I completely processed their words. I tried to go back to sleep, but I couldn't.

We were in Petach Tikvah, not far from Tel Aviv, in an apartment about a five minute walk from my cousins. At about 9:30, I got dressed and walked to my cousins, confused and apprehensive, but not entirely scared. My cousin's husband, Yossi, greeted us with a broad, sardonic smile, and a "Welcome to Israel." He advised us not to worry and that HaShem was in charge. My cousins and I hung out as if things were normal with a slight tension lingering in the air. We still did not know any details besides that missiles were fired from Gaza.

Then we heard voices from the street. It was a car with a man on a loudspeaker from the town announcing to everyone that for the first time in the history of the country, Israel was in a state of emergency.

Then, the phone rang.

My cousin, Naomi, who is a Bat Sherut at the Ministry of Defense, received a call from her boss.

"Wow." "Wow" "Wow." "Wow."

Her exact words.

Although my cousin is prone to exaggeration, my insides twisted. I instantly knew something was terribly wrong: There was no way this was an exaggeration.

Hamas had invaded Israel.

They took captives.

An IDF base fell into terrorist hands.

Hundreds of rockets, shot at civilians.

Noami mentally and physically prepared herself to go to the office in case they called to say she was needed — on Shabbat, on Simchat Torah. We attempted to go on as normal, trying not to let the fear consume us, but I felt physically ill. I had no appetite. We sat down for lunch, and attempted to keep things light-hearted for the most part. We told funny anecdotes and when we laughed, it felt like medicine. It felt like we hadn't laughed in forever. And for a moment, only a moment, the fear was washed away. Then it returned. We became hyper alert to outside sounds, and any noise made us instantly alert. We proceeded to sing *zemirot*, as we had many times before, but this time it was different. It was prayer itself. I willed our songs to be lifted up to the heavens itself.

The afternoon passed quietly for the most part, while a sense of unease hung in the air. Most of the time it felt surreal; like a bad dream, I was going to wake up soon and everything would go back to the way it was — the way it should have been.

When Simchat Torah ended, we walked

to our cousins to hear *havdalah* and heard more updates about the situation. Nothing sounded good. I then realized I had forgotten something at the other apartment, so my mom offered to come with me. About

of the stairwell and stayed in the corner. While the four of us remained on the stairs, I busied myself with saying Tehillim. After a few minutes of silence, the woman and the taxi driver said it was probably okay to go out

their apartment to the room that doubled as a shelter. Once there, we tried to talk and laugh over the echoes of booms, unsuccessfully attempting to ease the knot that as of late had become embedded in my stomach.

The following 24 hours passed in a haze. Our cousin drove us back to our Airbnb in Netanya, where, thankfully, no sirens had been sounded. We packed our bags and proceeded to get a restless, short, amount of sleep. The next morning we went to a nearby hotel where we had decided to stay one night until we could figure out what our next steps would be. Throughout the day, I was hyper aware of any slight noise once again, and the smallest thing would make me jump. I saw helicopters circling overhead repeatedly from the hotel window, serving as a constant reminder that all was definitely not well. When I looked out at the picturesque ocean view, it seemed like madness that such a peaceful sight could coexist with the absolute chaos and violence that was occurring in the land.

Around 9 p.m., we received news from our travel agent about an El Al flight. It would leave at 4 a.m. In order to return back to America though, we would need to travel from Tel Aviv to Prague, then Prague to Frankfurt and finally Frankfurt to the U.S. It would be a total of 31 hours of traveling. We readied ourselves for the long journey ahead, and left for the airport at midnight. The airport was a chaotic scene, lines of people trying to leave, and getting more crowded by the hour. Thankfully, we made our flight.

As I sat on the plane, I should have felt relief for leaving a country at war, but it's not just any country, it's our country, and it's our people under attack. So no, I was not relieved. No matter our differences, religiously, *hashkafically*, politically or ancestrally, we are one nation, and that is enough.

Unfortunately for us, a security code was required to gain access. As my mom and I stood in front of the random building, staring at the keypad, I thought, "This is not happening. It can't be happening." There was another woman who had run to this building for shelter as well and was trying to punch numbers in too, but to no avail.

three minutes into our walk, we heard an all encompassing noise. "I think that's a siren!" I exclaimed. My minimal knowledge about this kind of situation came to me: run for shelter in the nearest building and find a stairwell. We looked around and saw that we were surrounded by unfamiliar apartment buildings, but we just ran to the closest one. Unfortunately for us, a security code was required to gain access. As my mom and I stood in front of the random building, staring at the keypad, I thought, "This is not happening. It can't be happening." There was another woman who had run to this building for shelter as well and was trying to punch numbers in too, but to no avail.

"We're done for," I thought.

Every second felt like minutes. Just then, out of the blue, a man wearing tzitzit and yarmulke ran up to us as well, and quickly put the correct code in. He let us, the woman and a secular cab driver who had just pulled up into the building and we dashed towards the stairs. It was from there that we heard the booms. Thank G-d, we had made it just in time. The religious man went to the bottom

now. But the man in the kippah had already vanished. Was he Eliyahu HaNavi? Perhaps.

As I made my way back, keeping a brisk pace, aware that another siren could go off at an moment, the verse from Tehillim 130 flashed in my mind:

"שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלֹת מִמַּעַמְקִים קָרָאתִיהָ ה'":

"Out of the depths I call You, O Lord."

I have never felt more connected to that verse than in that moment.

When we returned to our cousins a few minutes later, my mom received an email that our flight back to the United States, which was scheduled for Monday, had been canceled. In addition, all airlines other than El Al, Turkish Airlines and Emirates Airlines had halted flights from Tel Aviv. The general sense of growing stress presently reached a new sense of alarm as it dawned on us that we might not be able to return when we originally planned.

However, before we could form a plan B, another siren sounded. This time, at least, it was a quick sprint to the other side of



An Iron Dome battery firing in May 2021

IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT

Mental Health Tips for Managing Anxiety During this Crisis

By DR. DEBRA ALPER

This article was originally published online on Oct. 11

We are all heartbroken at the news coming out of Israel, and are looking for ways to support our family and friends who are there.

At the same time, it is important that we find ways to care for ourselves as well. Anxiety and worry take their toll, and we all need to find ways to protect ourselves from the onslaught of stress and fear that we see and feel all around us.

Here are some things we can do:

Try to create a routine for yourself and stick to it.

When we are struggling, routine is often what gets us through. Start with the building blocks of your day, scheduling times for waking up, going to bed, and eating meals. From there, build in time for socialization with friends and other restorative activities such as physical exercise and spending time outside. *Structure is so valuable when living through a crisis, and taking care of our bodies allows us to take care of our minds*

and souls.

Avoid excessive news coverage.

Often we find ourselves checking the news compulsively. *While we all want to know what is going on, excessive consumption ceases to be informative and is actually detrimental to our mental health, as it can weaken and exhaust us.* Be mindful about how often you check the news, by limiting yourself to twice or three times per day and/

Anxiety and worry take their toll, and we all need to find ways to protect ourselves from the onslaught of stress and fear that we see and feel all around

US.

or limiting the length of time you spend checking it.

Be wary when consuming social media.

Be careful about the type of media you consume. Stay away from images and videos that can be traumatizing to view. This means

being selective about where you find your news, and staying away from platforms like TikTok and X (formerly Twitter).

Feelings of guilt are common during a crisis like this. Please practice self compassion instead.

We often feel we should be doing more. In response to this many of us watch the news perpetually, seeking to gain some sense of control. Others overextend ourselves in other ways. *While we want to feel as one with our friends and family in Israel, we must recognize that depleting our own reserves does not help and is not what our nation needs.* Notice if you are feeling guilty and talk about it with others.

Allow yourself to take breaks and be distracted. Play games, watch a movie, spend time with friends.

We are not created to sustain unending stress. *It is both healthy and necessary to take breaks, and we should never feel guilty about allowing ourselves to be distracted from our worries.* Similarly, we can encourage our friends to do the same. We are all in this together, and we want to stay strong together.

Think about the ways you can help others.

Stay active in your families and local communities, and connect with organizations in Israel. The benefits of giving are vast and well documented. *Participating in a cause that is important to us is a healthy and productive way to restore a sense of control and give some meaning to the challenges we are facing.* “Look to the helpers” is age old sage advice; “Be one of the helpers” is as well.

Watch out for your own mental health, and seek help when needed.

Those individuals with preexisting mental health conditions should be especially careful to keep up with treatment plans and watch out for any uptick in symptoms. For all of us, if distress inhibits your ability to perform activities of daily living please reach out for help. *At YU, the Counseling Center is here for you and can be reached at counseling@yu.edu.*

Remember that as individuals and as a community, we are very strong. These times are terribly challenging, and we may not feel that we are “ok.” But we will get through this together.

Debra Alper, PhD is assistant director of the Yeshiva University Counseling Center.

Statement by Nearly 80 Yeshiva University Student Organizations and Athletic Teams on the War in Israel

BY YU UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

This article was originally published online on Oct. 10

Editor's Note: Following the terrorist attack on Israel perpetrated by Hamas terrorists on Oct. 7, during the holiday of Shemini Atzeret, and the mass tragedy and war that have unfolded as a result, Yeshiva University student organizations issued an open letter in support of Israel. The letter was signed by nearly 80 undergraduate student organizations—including student councils, publications, NCAA teams and clubs across the political spectrum.

We are entirely unequivocal: We stand with Israel. Am Yisrael Chai.

Statement by Yeshiva University Student Organizations on the War in Israel

We, the undersigned, are disgusted by and strongly condemn the unprovoked terrorist attack committed by Hamas in Israel, as well as statements to the effect that the slaughter, rape, abduction, and mutilation of Israeli civilians and foreign nationals by

Hamas terrorists can be blamed on Israel.

The blame for this act, and all military responses that follow, falls squarely on Hamas and their Iranian backers. To say otherwise at the deadliest moment for the Jewish people since the Holocaust is anti-semitic and reprehensible. We wholly reject the vile notion that these horrific acts can be justified in any way. We condemn this barbarism, and call on all decent Americans to reject it entirely.

We mourn those who have been slaughtered and brutalized. We pray that God ensures that justice be served to those who spilled the blood of innocents. We pray that we may soon see peace.

We are entirely unequivocal: We stand with Israel. Am Yisrael Chai.

Hashem Yikom Damam

*Yeshiva Student Union
Beren Campus Student Government
Legislature*

*Beren Campus Student Government
Executive Branch*

*Yeshiva College Student Council
Sy Syms School Of Business Student
Council*

*Student Organization of Yeshiva
Student Life Committee of Wilf Campus
Beren Campus Religious Affairs
Committee*

*Wilf Campus Student Court
Beren Campus Student Government
Judicial Branch*

YU Commentator Editorial Board

YU Observer Editorial Board

YU College Republicans

YU College Democrats

Yeshiva University Political Action Club

Yeshiva University Pride Alliance

Yeshiva University Israel Club

The Seforim Sale @ Yeshiva University

Clarion Political Science Journal

Dunner Political Science Society

Food For Thought Food Distribution

Active Minds Mental Health Awareness

Club

Macslive

YU Environmental Club

Yeshiva University Blood Drive Club

YU Sepharadi Club

Yeshiva University START Science

YU Feminism Club

Stern College Dramatics Society

Yeshiva College Dramatics Society

Beren Campus Computer Science Club

YU Volunteering Chessed Club

YU College EDge

YU Tikvah Fund Campus Chapter

Yeshiva University Music Club

YU Fantasy Book Club

YU Magic The Gathering Club

YU Midwest Club

YU Economics Society

YU Chess Club

Yeshiva University Poetry Club

YU Technology Awareness Group

YU Music Club

YU Sudoku Club

YU Anime and Manga Club

YU on Broadway Club

YU ADHD Awareness Club

YU Student Support Services Committee

YU AMC Club

YU Women's Daf Yomi Club

Yeshiva University Stock Exchange Club

YU Project Sunshine Club

Sharsheret at YU

Chizuk From the Heights

YU Winter Sports Club

YU Star Wars Club

YU Engineering Club

YU Philosophical Society

YU Esperanto Club

CAMERA on Campus

The Chevraya

YU Psychology Club

CommYUnity

Yeshiva University Comedy Club

Stern Sports Club

Men's Basketball Team

Women's Basketball Team

YU Men's Baseball Team

Women's Softball Team

Men's Volleyball Team

Women's Volleyball Team

Men's Fencing Team

Women's Fencing Team

Men's Soccer Team

Women's Soccer Team

Men's Golf Team

Women's Cross Country Team

Men's Tennis Team

Staying in Israel

about this question. Though I frame this as addressed to parents, the discussion is also intended for the students themselves.

Let me begin with two caveats. Families

In truth, nothing in life endows us with complete protection although we obviously try to minimize potential dangers. Nonetheless, I think there are compelling reasons for students to remain in Israel.

that have already experienced the trauma of loss or students with serious anxiety issues will understandably confront these questions in a different fashion. The analysis below does not apply to them in the same way.

Secondly, I cannot guarantee that nothing bad will happen. In my philosophy, doing *mizvot*, reciting *Tehillim*, and powerful faith do not provide assurance of safety. In truth,

nothing in life endows us with complete protection although we obviously try to minimize potential dangers. Nonetheless, I think there are compelling reasons for students to remain in Israel.

Given the current situation, the risks are minimal. Most of these foreign students study at *yeshivot* and seminaries located in the relatively safer Yerushalayim and Beit Shemesh areas. They are not close to Gaza or Lebanon nor do these locations receive the bulk of the rocket barrage. Their educational institutions create strict guidelines about travel during these tense periods.

Remaining in Israel strongly sends a message of identification and support for the Jewish people. Imagine how Israelis would feel if every student from abroad left the country; it would be quite demoralizing. Israelis would justifiably say: “Our brothers

Continued on Page 14

Operation Torah Shield (Jan. 14-28, 1991): Reflections on Joining Other Roshei Yeshiva and YU Students Flying to Israel at the Start of a War

By **RABBI YOSEF BLAU**

This article was originally published online on Oct. 13

In August of 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United States led a group of 42 countries that demanded from Saddam Hussein that

organization's largest donor.

Yeshiva students asked me to assure their parents that the trip was safe. Unfortunately I had no inside knowledge allowing me to make that statement. I decided that the best I could do would be to join the flight. Then students could tell their parents that I felt it was safe to go. My wife was surprised by my last-minute decision and we were unable to

flight, was upset that a whole plane filled with people from Yeshiva came and his father wasn't coming.

I said *shiurim* that were interrupted in the middle by the sounds of sirens. One amusing exchange was when my son asked me to speak to his friend who, besides putting on his gas mask, wore rubber gloves and a protective collar. My son pointed out that it was extremely unlikely that the Iraqi military would send a missile to bomb the small village of Alon Shvut. When I spoke to the friend, he had wanted to approach

me. Would I explain to my son to be more careful — doesn't he realize that there was a war going on?

I recall Rabbi Schachter and the late Rabbi Tendler giving *shiurim*. After two weeks we flew home with a sense that in our small way we had helped the morale of the students who had come for the year and were staying. The Israeli government, based on the request of the American government, showed restraint. Saddam Hussein's strategy failed and the war ended with his defeat.

Adding a few people who had no other way of getting to Israel, we flew in a full plane, landing on the first day of the war.

Iraq withdraw to the recognized boundary. An ultimatum was issued for January 15. Hussein threatened to bomb Israel with ballistic missiles with chemical warheads. Israel was not part of the coalition against Iraq, but he was inviting Israeli retaliation which would lead to his gaining aid from other Arab countries.

A wealthy supporter of Israel offered to subsidize a flight to Israel for Yeshiva students. Other flights to Israel had been canceled. Quickly the flight filled up. On the Saturday night before the deadline the American ambassador met with Hussein and reported that he would not back down. Prior to this meeting most people were confident that there would be no war; Saddam Hussein had to know that Iraq had no chance to win the war.

On Sunday morning pressure by parents led to mass cancellations. The philanthropist wanted a tax break but neither the congregation that was the original sponsor nor Yeshiva was willing to take on the risk if anything went wrong. Rabbi Charlop solved the problem by convincing the friends of Ateret Cohanim to be the official sponsor. This anonymous philanthropist became the

call our son who had returned to Israel to learn after graduating from Yeshiva.

Adding a few people who had no other way of getting to Israel, we flew in a full plane, landing on the first day of the war. We were greeted at Ben Gurion Airport by members of the government. After taking buses to Yerushalayim, we went to the Kotel and heard more speeches praising our coming. We spent the night in an empty Plaza Hotel. In the morning we were given gas masks and were learning how to put them on when we heard the sound of a siren. I tried many times to call my son, but could not get through to him. (This was a world before cell phones.)

Tired of the celebrations, I took public transportation to Alon Shvut. I stayed at the home of the late Rabbi Binyamin Tabory *z"l* and his gracious wife, Naomi. First off the bus I went directly to the Gush where my son was learning. On the way I met a group of students. One who recognized me said, "It's a good thing that you came." I responded that if I didn't think it was a good thing, why would all of us come to Israel for a war and have to wear gas masks? He explained that my son, not knowing that I joined the



An F-117 Nighthawk, an aircraft associated with the Persian Gulf War, flies over the Persian Gulf in April 2003, during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Operation Torah Shield, Rabbi Blau writes, happened during the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

From The YSU President's Desk

Responding as Only We Can

By **ZAKKAI NOTKIN**

This article was originally published online on Oct. 13

I write this article as I have trouble sleeping. I spent *Simchas Torah* in a smaller community on the West Coast. The Jewish security volunteer at the synagogue was the first to inform me that there was a desperate situation in Israel. Later, the rabbi announced that despite the tragic situation, we would nonetheless attempt to observe the festival.

The next forty-eight hours were a blur. I couldn't get the gnawing thoughts out of the back of my mind. I didn't get a real chance to read the news until I was about to board my flight. Needless to say, I hardly slept.

The next day, I met with other student leaders and administrators to organize our response. I was desperate to think of a way we could make a difference.

I attended rallies, organized meetings and tried to get things done. Sleep-deprived, I overwhelmed myself. My empathy for my brothers across the world turned into a doom scrolling-fueled mental health issue. I know I am not the only one who experienced this.

Notwithstanding that, I remain committed to helping our fellow Jews. One of the most important ideas to come out of these meetings was a community-wide gathering to show our support for Israel. This became

the gathering held in Lamport Auditorium on Wednesday night. I was struck by how, at that event, we showed our unity on this issue, no matter any disagreements we might have.

"I truly hope that our entire community, no matter their background or community, can make a point of saying, each in our own way, that we stand together as Am Yisroel."

On a positive note, I have noticed that no matter who we are or what corner of Yeshiva University we find ourselves in, we have each responded in our own ways. Some went to rallies holding Israeli flags, while others fasted and prayed. In the first few days of the crisis, I thought the best thing would be to coordinate our response as one. That didn't happen. Instead, every group responded in the way it found most meaningful. While that at first seemed like a betrayal of unity, it instead became a source of inspiration to me. While we may not agree on every detail, we agree that everyone should respond in the way that is most meaningful to them.

This is Yeshiva University. It is not a simple place. Our strength is that we do not

have one unified way of looking at things. Instead, we value each perspective as part of a symphony of voices.

This is not to say that every instrument has been in harmony. In these difficult times, disagreements have arisen. Given the immense stress and uncertainty of the situation, it is easy to try to impose one's specific views onto others or to question the validity of others' views within our community. That is not the right thing to do. The important

thing is that we stand united with our brothers and sisters in Israel.

I truly hope that our entire community, no matter their background or community, can make a point of saying, each in our own way, that we stand together as *Am Yisroel*, both to directly help our brothers, and so that the stains of *Sinas Chinam* that once tore our nation apart can be healed.

Am Yisroel Chai



A picture from the event in solidarity with Israel

ROSENFELD STUDIOS

Libi Bamizrach Va'anochi B'sof Maarav: The Guilt of an American Jew

BY GABY RAHMANFAR

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

I am trapped in a pit of guilt, and I know many of you are in it with me.

Guilt can be defined as “the fact of having committed a specified or implied offense or crime.” My offense — lounging in my NYC dorm while my brothers and sisters huddle in bomb shelters. My crime — going to bed tonight with no fear that a terrorist will abduct me in my sleep.

I know I'm not alone in these feelings. The sense of guilt and sheer helplessness on campus and in our community is palpable. This sort of phantom pain we're experiencing

is hard to articulate. We feel affected, yet are unscathed. All so deeply connected, yet so far removed.

What can we do? “Pray,” they tell us. I am personally nauseous of reciting the same *perakim* of *Tehillim* over and over.

If you're like me, and you feel like there's nothing you can actively contribute to our siblings across the sea, maybe we need to stop looking so far.

“Donate,” we're told. I'm a college student with no money to my name. “Life must go on,” some suggest. It simply cannot.

Is there any way to quell this guilt? I don't know. If you're reading this for answers, I don't have any. Perhaps this is what *galus* really feels like — a pain that has been

harboring inside us all along. The anesthesia of our cushy American lives is now wearing off.

But I refuse to remain helpless, and when all else fails, we turn to those wiser than us. After returning to campus, I turned to

far. I'm very fortunate to have a position on campus that allows me to give to my sisters right here in Midtown. What's your role? Is it going to a rally on a secular college campus to support our friends who don't have the same security we take for granted at YU? Or is it volunteering to sit with a sick child in Columbia Presbyterian through organizations like Ahavas Chesed? Maybe it's taking yourself for a walk because sometimes you just need to take care of yourself.

Will any of this alleviate the guilt we're entrenched in? I'm not sure. Personally, it remains a struggle. I originally thought I needed to amplify the pain to compensate for my distance to the plight of our people, but that is a harmful attitude. I have a role to play and so do you. Find what it is and hold on to it tight.

Rabbi Yosef Blau *shlita* who shared with me that even when someone cannot show responsibility in one context they can show responsibility elsewhere. If you're like me, and you feel like there's nothing you can actively contribute to our siblings across the sea, maybe we need to stop looking so

Hatikvah: The Hope of The Jewish People

BY YAEL TANGIR

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

On the morning of Simchat Torah, a day



Jewish women praying at the Western Wall

Yael Tangir

from the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, Hamas terrorists surprised Israel by firing over 2,000 rockets from Gaza. Even though Israel is often threatened by missiles from our neighbors, this attack was different, and quickly became the country's worst nightmare.

Hamas' actions helped mask a massive infiltration of terrorists into Israel by land, air and sea. Later that morning, terrorist units invaded Israeli territories and shot at every civilian they passed. They burned and broke into homes, took hostages and massacred families. These coordinated surprise attacks were the beginning of a horrifying and devastating chapter in our history as a Jewish nation.

Sometimes, I feel like it's difficult to communicate the pain a Jew feels when something happens in Israel to people who don't experience it themselves. As a Jew born and raised in the diaspora, I always felt immense love for, commitment to and identification with Israel. This feeling transcends physical borders and rises above understanding, connecting us to a primordial source that unites us as a single people.

Israel is our home, even if we have not lived there.

Israel is our family, even if we do not know any names or even familiar faces.

Israel is somehow our past, present and future.

Israel is our heritage.

Our army is not just an army and our soldiers are not just veterans. They are those who risk their lives to keep us safe. Every Jew, whether they are in Israel or not, knows that they have a homeland where they can

“We cry as a family. We act as a family. We are a family.”

find security and freedom thanks to these soldiers. We are not just united in times of strength, but we are also united in times of suffering. When any Jew is in pain, every Jew around the world is in pain. We cry as a family. We act as a family. We are a family.

It is difficult to sleep, disconnect from the news or study. We are legitimately concerned for our family. But that concern should never become fear; fear is the objective of terror. Hamas seeks to paralyze us, break us and damage our faith, but that faith is and will be unbreakable because the people of Israel continue to live on. We live to tell the world “We are here.” We live to demand our right to exist, to fight for a better world and because God has decided that we must, despite the many empires, kings and governments that

have sought our annihilation and found their own.

We have grown apart for various reasons, but we must remember that we are one people, and despite differences of opinion or religious identity, unity must be our main objective.

The Hebrew words “*Geula*” (redemption) and “*Gola*” (diaspora) are written the same way except for one letter — “Aleph.” The Aleph in *gematria* (an ancient Hebrew alphanumeric cipher) symbolizes the number 1, indicating that the difference between exile and redemption is whether or not we become united as one. Respecting our differences and focusing on the good in each person is more than just a nice idea, but a requirement from the Torah. “You must love your neighbor as yourself” commands us to accept and value all of our fellow Jews.

For the first time in a long time, the Israeli government has left political and religious differences by the wayside in order to come together and face struggle because they recognize that we are strongest when we are united.

As is written in Chapter 29 of Psalms:

ה' עז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום

“God shall grant strength to His people; God shall bless His people with peace.”

A Diaspora Girl's Message to Israel: You Are Not Alone

BY SHAYEL CHOCRON COHEN

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

Dear brothers and sisters in Israel,

In the midst of tragedy, violence and sadness for each one of us, I can't explain my

“All we can do now is love and respect one another no matter the culture. Whether someone is Ashkenazi, Sephardic, religious, secular, conservative or liberal — it does not matter. This is Hashem calling each one of us to unite and show the love, gratitude and empathy we have for one another.”

emotions about everything occurring in our homeland. Rockets were fired everywhere, people moved to bomb shelters, women were raped and babies were stuck in cages. However, within all the madness, I feel that all of our *neshamot* are connected and feel that Hashem is demanding something from

us. He wants *Ahavat Chinam*, for all of us to love, respect, help and be there for one another without any hesitation.

As a girl living in the diaspora, I can't help but feel powerless in the face of everything occurring and wish I could do more, but all we can do right now is pray, unite and donate. All we can do now is love and respect one another no matter the culture. Whether someone is Ashkenazi, Sephardic, religious,

secular, conservative or liberal does not matter. Hashem is calling each one of us to unite and show the love, gratitude and empathy we have for one another.

This whole situation makes me wonder: Why do we need to wait for such brutal, harsh times to realize the importance of

“loving our fellows like ourselves?” Why do we need to wait until tragedy strikes to unite, grow spiritually, pray with greater force, donate and just be there for our brothers and sisters?

We can answer that a different time, but in the meantime, start loving a little harder today! Appreciate all the positive aspects of your life, as you never really know if it will be taken away from you. We should unite

today in order to grow spiritually and be there for one another. At the very least, we should feel proud of our Judaism and our love for Israel.

Finally, *Am Israel Chai!*
Love,

Your sister living in the Diaspora



Israeli soldiers standing together

ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Debunking Popular Claims Against Israel

By SALLY JARADEH

This article was originally published online on Oct. 15

Due to the recent war between Israel and Hamas, there has been a drastic increase in the number of people spreading anti-Israel and anti-Jewish myths, both online and all over the world at pro-Palestine rallies. Many of my peers at secular universities have expressed their desire to counter these claims and defend Israel, but do not feel well-versed enough to do so. In this article, I hope to disprove some of the arguments being used to attack Israel.

Myth #1: “Anti-Zionism” is just a political movement, not a form of “antisemitism.”

The anti-Zionism that we are currently witnessing, both online and in-person, is absolutely antisemitism. It is not just the open and shameless antisemitism we are seeing, such as the display of swastikas and chants calling for “death to the Jews;” it is also what Israeli politician and human rights activist Natan Sharansky has coined the “Three D’s”: delegitimization, demonization, and holding Israel to a double standard. These, he states, demonstrate when anti-Zionism crosses into antisemitism. All three of these are being forcefully employed by pro-Palestinian protesters. Palestinian activists delegitimize Jewish claims to Israel by claiming they have no historical ties to the land, demonize Israel when they claim they are responsible for ethnically cleansing Palestinians and scrutinize Israel more critically than they do other countries.

Myth #2: Israel is a colonialist state, settled by white, European colonialists and there is no proof of Jews living in Israel before 1948.

The Jewish people are indigenous to the land of Israel, as evidenced by various archaeological artifacts. One pertinent example is the Ketef Hinnom Silver Scrolls: Found among the graves in the Valley of Hinnom in Jerusalem, these scrolls contain Torah fragments from the 7th century. Another critical archaeological find are the Dead Sea Scrolls, a series of documents from the 3rd century BCE (nearly 1000 years before Islam was even founded). They contain preserved collections of Torah books, accounts of day-to-day affairs, several pairs of *tefillin* and more. A final piece of evidence worth considering is the Tel Dan Stele, found in Northern Israel. This artifact (dated to the 9th century BC) explicitly mentions the “King of Israel” and the “House of David.”

Additionally, Jews have lived in Israel continuously since before Islam was founded in 610 CE. There has never been a land called “Palestine” that was ruled by Palestinians, and before the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the land was known as the British Mandate of Palestine, and was considered to be a part of the British Empire.

The name “Palestine” is not even of Arabic origin and instead originates from “Syria Palaestina,” (originating from the Pelishtim, a historical Aegean enemy of the Jewish people) the name given to the land by the Romans after they had destroyed the Second Temple and killed/expelled the Jews from the land. The land was previously known as Judea, named after the tribe of Judah, from which the kings of Israel were born. So how can Palestinians claim that they lived in the land before Jews if their own name originated *after* the Jews had been living and then expelled from the land of Israel?

In addition, the myth that modern Jews are descendants of Khazars who converted to Judaism, not the Jews of ancient Israel, lacks reliable evidentiary support. Professor

Shaul Stampfer argues that “The silence of so many sources about the Khazars’ Judaism is very suspicious” as there are no mentions by the *ge’onim*, the Byzantines or the Egyptians of this mass conversion.

Myth #3: Israel is an apartheid state, similar to South African apartheid.

In the South African system of apartheid, certain racial groups were denied access to the political and judicial systems in their country, forced to live in inferior

“Due to the recent war between Israel and Hamas, there has been a drastic increase in the number of people spreading anti-Israel and anti-Jewish myths, both online and all over the world at pro-Palestine rallies.”

living spaces and given worse educational opportunities and medical care. Israel does not meet the criteria of being an apartheid state, as Arabs living in Israel have the same rights as Jewish Israelis.

In South Africa, Nelson Mandela fought for the rights of black people to live where they chose, have equal access to medical care and have equal education. In Israel, these rights are already given to all Israeli citizens, including Arab Israelis. Arab Israelis have the right to serve in the government and Arab political parties have even had a place on the Israeli Knesset.

Israel is the opposite of an apartheid state, and is the only democratic country in the Middle East. In the case of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel is not practicing apartheid, because these areas wish to be considered Palestinian territory, with their own governing authority, and are thereby not considered to be Israeli citizens. The security barriers around the West Bank and Gaza are not there to separate people based on ethnicity or religion, but rather to protect the citizens of Israel from terror groups like Hamas.

Myth #4: Palestinians are subject to ethnic cleansing and/or genocide by Israel.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, ethnic cleansing is defined as “the expulsion, imprisonment, or killing of an ethnic minority by a dominant majority in order to achieve ethnic homogeneity.” There are no policies or plans in place in Israel that call for the extermination or expulsion of Palestinian populations. In addition, Israel handed over the land of Gaza to the Palestinians in 2005, even forcibly removing Israeli families who were living there so that the Palestinians would have their own land.

On the contrary, it is often Arab/Islamic countries surrounding Israel that are guilty of ethnic cleansing. According to the UN Commission of Experts, ethnic cleansing also consists of “coercive practices used to remove the civilian population.” This includes but is not limited to torture, murder, arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial executions, destruction of property and confinement of civilian populations. The 1941 Farhud pogrom of Iraq, in which Jews were killed, injured, and had their homes destroyed, is just one example of violence perpetrated by Arabs against Jews; similar acts of violence took place in the countries of Syria, Egypt, Libya and more. In addition to this violent treatment, Jews were discriminated against. They were not permitted to hold public office, travel freely, wear religious articles or speak Hebrew.

Eventually, these Jews were expelled from the Muslim countries that they lived in, or were forced to leave because of the discrimination and abuse they faced.

Myth #5: Hamas is not a terrorist organization, they are a group of freedom fighters fighting for the

Palestinian people.

Both the US and the EU have declared Hamas to be a terrorist organization.

In the past few days, this terrorist group has taken Israeli hostages, tortured and raped Israelis, directed attacks towards innocent civilians, desecrated dead bodies and much more, all of which are considered war crimes under the Geneva Convention of 1949. Hamas has made it clear that they are not fighting for the people of Gaza nor are

they fighting for the freedom of Palestinians. Rather, they are fighting to kill all Jews, not just in Israel, but around the world.

This conflict is not a conflict of Israel versus Palestine, or even Jews versus Arabs. This is a conflict of Jews versus extremist Islamic terrorists. This is evident when reading the original Hamas charter, which *directs* the killing of Jews, stating “The Day of Judgement will not come about until Muslims fight Jews and kill them.”

In a 2023 poll, only 45% of Gazans said that they would vote for Hamas. Hamas uses its own citizens, including Gazan children, as human shields, placing their weapons and military equipment beneath or within schools and other public places, so that if Israelis target their weapons, they can publicize the number of civilians killed. They have no regard for their own people’s safety. They train their kids to participate in terrorism and violence against Jews from the time that they are young children. There are many videos showing Palestinian children in the Gaza strip being taught to hate Jews and being trained to use guns, throw rocks, and participate in violent riots and attacks.

Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of one of the founders of Hamas who later left his radical upbringing stated that “Hamas does not care about the lives of Palestinians, does not care about the lives of Israelis or Americans.” He added that members of Hamas do not care about their own lives, believing that self-sacrifice is a form of worship. He further notes that Hamas is not looking for co-existence or compromise, but to conquer and implement a global Islamic state.

Myth #6: Israel has been doing the same thing as Hamas to Palestinians for years.

There is no documented evidence that

the Israeli government has ever called for the IDF to act in any of the ways that Hamas has acted towards Israelis within the past few days, or evidence of similar atrocities.

In the rare case that Palestinians are attacked by Israeli citizens, these actions are never government-backed, instead they are performed by a few rogue individuals, and their actions are quickly condemned by both the Israeli government and its people, who prosecute them with the full power of the law.

The IDF has a clear code of conduct that obligates them to preserve human life and dignity, prevent unnecessary harm, and only use necessary force to subdue the enemy. Hamas, on the other hand, has no such code of conduct.

As previously mentioned, Palestinians in Gaza are under their own jurisdiction and are therefore not Israeli citizens. Therefore, there is no obligation for Israel to help the citizens of Gaza. Despite this, Israel has helped Gazan citizens in a myriad of ways. They have treated thousands of Gazans for various medical conditions, and have, on occasion, even treated injured members of Hamas, a group that has constantly attacked and harmed them. Israel further allows the passage of humanitarian goods such as water and electricity into Gaza, and even provides some of these goods themselves. For example, Israel supplies Gaza with about 50 percent of its electricity. Israel allows Gazans to cross the border to work in Israel, issuing about 17,000 work permits to Gazan civilians as of 2022. These activities can hardly be said to be characteristic of an apartheid state. Probably the most important thing to know is that the Israeli army warns Gazans of incoming attacks to give them time to evacuate. This puts Israel at a military disadvantage, as they cannot use sneak attacks on Hamas, but Israel continues to warn civilians because of their commitment to humanitarian principles. This is in sharp contrast to Hamas, who gave no warning before raining bombs upon civilian villages and homes. Additionally, there have been reports that Hamas is telling Gazans to ignore warnings from the IDF. They claim the warnings are a form of psychological warfare that are being sent randomly to instill panic. They have even set up blockades to prevent Gazans from evacuating.

In conclusion, many claims that are used to attack Israel are myths, based on misinformation and false propaganda. I hope that this article clearly explains the counter-claims to these myths, and that through it, people will feel more confident in educating others about Israel’s history.



A group of people holding up Israeli flags and signs with sayings such as “HAMAS = TERROR”

BRUCEEMMERLING / PIXABAY

Ani Shayach Le'am

BY CHLOE BAKER

This article was originally published online on Oct. 15

On the morning of October 11th, after my usual scroll through Instagram, various news websites and WhatsApp, I decided to finally check Snapchat. Maybe I would see something entertaining enough to take me away from the negativity and sadness consuming me. I scrolled up to look at my “one year ago today” flashback. It turns out that I was at an Ishay Ribo concert that night. I remember it so vividly. *Chol Hamoed*, the amphitheater in Ashdod beach, and a crowd full of all different kinds of Jewish people, coming together to have fun and enjoy a night of singing and *tefilah*.

Now, a year later, the country is in an entirely different place. A horrific, unfathomable nightmare is taking place right in front of us.

Shortly after I heard about the tragic attack in Israel, I had to make my way to the subway I was trying to catch. I didn't want to be a wreck on the train, so I decided to push off processing my feelings until I arrived back at my dorm. In an effort not to cry on the train, I opened an Israeli playlist

that I curated during my first visit to Israel years ago. The playlist has grown since then, and is now 29 hours and 42 minutes long. The song that started playing was *אני שיחך לעם* (“Ani Shayach Le'am”) by Ishay Ribo. Without understanding the lyrics, it would probably seem like an ordinary upbeat pop song, but it couldn't be further from that, especially given the context. Through the lyrics, Ribo tells the story of the miraculous

“I can confidently say that there has never been a time in my life where I have ever felt prouder to be a Jew.”

and storied Jewish nation. He emphasizes our uniqueness by referring to the fact that we have survived every era, and that no historians or philosophers can understand how. The end of the chorus declares that Hashem is our God.

I can confidently say that there has never been a time in my life where I have ever felt prouder to be a Jew. Even Jews who don't live in Israel are consumed by emotional stress, and many of us cannot eat or sleep properly because of our identification with our brothers and sisters in Israel. A Jew is

a Jew. We are one nation, I belong to this nation and there is no one like us.

I can't think of any other nation who could put as much light into the world during such a dark time as we are doing now. On top of fighting in a war, *chayalim* (Israeli soldiers) are making weddings, handing out candy to civilians that line the streets as they drive by in their tanks and thanking them for living in Israel. Reservists are coming from all over to serve, and just the other day, a man at JFK anonymously paid for 250 flight tickets to Israel for them. Hundreds of soldiers are looking to wear *tzitzit*. Men, women and children of all ages are showing up at shuls and community centers with t-shirts and strings to spend hours tying away. Non-kosher restaurants in Tel Aviv are *kashering* their kitchens in order to ensure they can serve all soldiers. Challah bakes are happening worldwide, Sefer Tehillim is being completed daily, people are doing *mitzvot* and the Jewish people are coming together better than ever before.

I am proud to be part of a nation that is a light unto the rest of the world. I am proud to be part of a nation where everyone is family. When one Jew is hurt, all of Klal Yisrael is hurt; similarly, when one Jew does something good, Klal Yisrael starts to follow, and a ripple effect is formed.

It's no coincidence that I heard this song on my playlist that night. It has been one of the few things that has given me *chizuk* (encouragement) this past week, and every time I listen to it, I am reminded of what an honor and privilege it is to be a part of the Jewish Nation. *Am Yisrael Chai*.



CHLOE BAKER

An art piece in a synagogue in Netzer Hazani. The arrows represent the twelve tribes coming together in unity to form Am Israel.

Sirens Over Israel

BY DOV PFEIFFER

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

On Shemini Atzeret eve, I couldn't sleep. This wasn't in itself unusual; I often struggle to get to sleep. And then I heard sounds coming from my roommate's phone. Had he set an alarm by mistake? The arrhythmic pattern of the rings indicated not. What else could it be? No, it wasn't an alarm he told

“During every minute of slight pain caused by my tossing and turning, I imagine the sadness and desolation of families and communities torn apart and lives senselessly lost.”

me, groggily awaking. This was the red alert app. He had set it to feel connected to Israel. Now, it was going off.

Sirens sounding over Southern Israel. It was a concept so familiar that I didn't think much of it. Hearing it, I didn't think too much of it. Yes, I was scared, but in a twisted way, this was normal. During both of my years in Kerem b'Yavneh, located not far from Ashdod, we lived with sirens, but usually only for a short time. This time, the alerts didn't stop. For hours on Shemini Atzeret,

my Torah Tours roommate and I listened to the red alert notifications continue.

Back when I was in Kerem b'Yavneh I had a similar experience. Near the end of my Shana Bet, including over Shavuot, we were cooped up in bomb shelters for two weeks. We had frequent sirens and knew how much worse it must have been surrounding the Gaza Strip. I remember waking up late at night to go to the bomb shelter, many of us preferring to sleep there. Still, it hadn't been too bad. Though our minds were scarred, our bodies remained unharmed. I assumed this was similar to my experience then. I commented that it was probably a lot of shelling over Sderot with some volleys along the coast. I didn't know. I couldn't have.

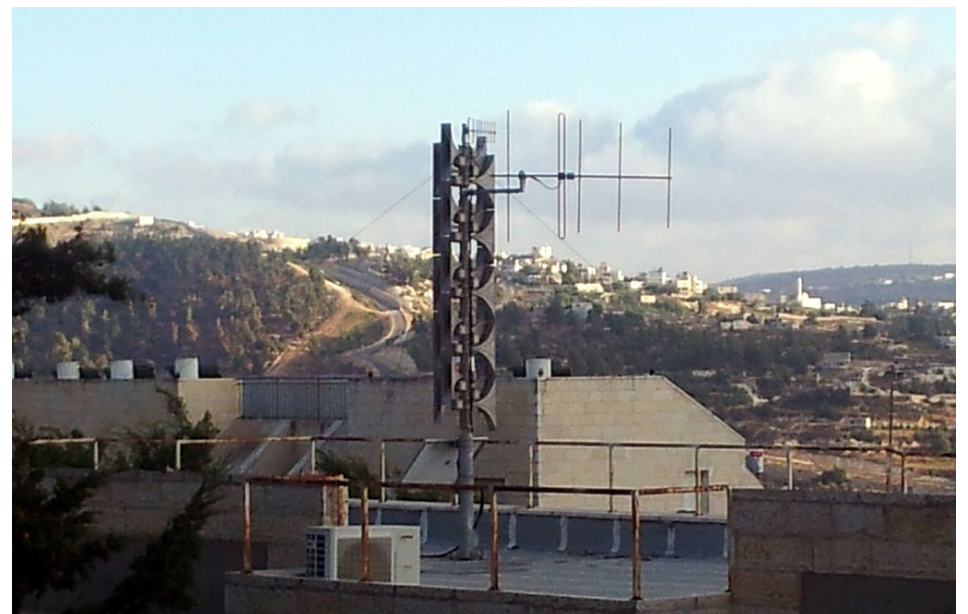
I had Israel in mind over Simchat Torah. But we didn't know the magnitude until after. The reality was incomprehensible. I entered Simchat Torah to fill a community with joy; I left an animated corpse. I reached out to a friend in Kerem b'Yavneh. Thank God, they were okay. They are now hunkered down, physically unharmed, in the bomb shelter, like I had been. But in so many places, too many places, they are not okay and never will be. There is no need for me to spell out the extent of atrocities perpetuated; for those who read the news, it is permanently etched in our hearts and minds. With the loss of so many Jews, some part of me has died as well. And here I am in America, unable to help, unable to express my sympathy, unable to do anything but mourn.

Now, in the aftermath, I still can't sleep. The lives of 1300 dead Jews stir in my

conscience. Now, Israel is going off to war. Everyone, in Israel and here in America, is mobilizing to actualize the call of Never Again. Far away in this foreign land, I feel bereft. I feel that in the justified rush to respond the scope of tragedy has been lost. As I lie awake and my sleepless eyes see the morning hours arrive, the magnitude of loss comes into focus. Over this week, I will have slept about 1300 minutes less than usual. One minute per dead Jew. During every minute of slight pain caused by my tossing and turning, I imagine the sadness and desolation of families and communities torn

apart and lives senselessly lost. Each minute the destruction of another world.

In the coming weeks, as attention focuses further on helping Israel, I will feel empty, unable to help. All I can do is mourn. All I can do is wander the streets I've known so long through good times and bad, broken. In the present moment, I hope we can keep the tragedy in our minds beyond preparing for difficult times to come. As years pass, we must not let this tragedy fall from our consciences. We must mourn our dead. We must cry over our loss.



A siren

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

*STAYING IN ISRAEL
Continued from Page 10*

and sisters abroad love to visit during happy times but disappear when things turn tense.” Thus, the mere fact of staying helps in and of itself. Furthermore, students can actively help in a myriad of ways. In the past two days, Orayta students cleaned shelters, packaged food, babysat children, donated blood, sang at an old age home, and brought joy to a wedding in addition to their learning Torah. Even just shopping or eating at a restaurant may be helping out local store owners in a difficult economic time.

Being in Israel now is not just a responsibility; it is an opportunity. Will our eighteen

year olds look back and say I participated in the resilience and renewal of the Jewish state or will they go a lifetime thinking they left when the situation got tough? In 1973, a fellow named David Landes z"l was studying in Yeshivat Har Etzion when the Yom Kippur War broke out. His letters home were recently made public (<https://thelehrhaus.com/timely-thoughts/the-yom-kippur-war-and-yeshivat-har-etzion-letters-from-a-talimid/>) and they reveal how remaining in yeshiva during this period deeply impacted this young student. David went on to many impressive achievements including serving as chairman of the Etzion Foundation and completing a PHD in Anthropology from Princeton University with a thesis about the

YU Beit Medrash (admittedly much easier than spending months in a third world country). I believe this crucial time in Israel influenced David's fine character and his lifetime of involvement in communal causes.

The following may be melodramatic and we are certainly not asking these foreign students to go into battle or to feel cursed but I cannot help but think of the speech Henry delivers in Henry V (Act 4, Scene 3) on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt.

This story shall the good man teach his son;

And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered—
We few, we happy few, we band of

brothers....

And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were
not here,

And hold their manhoods cheap whiles
any speaks

That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's
day.

There are a hundred differences between Harry's request of his men and the circumstances of foreign students studying Torah but the parallel of how people will look back remains intact. The fortunate will merit the ability to reflect about a time when they participated and aided in the remarkable story of the Jewish state.

In the City of Solidarity

By TAMARA YESHURUN

This article was originally published online on Oct. 12

How readily the phrase rose to their lips: “They, the Israelis,” instead of “We, the Jews.” They did not remember that the ancient blood that soaks the ground of Israel was their own. I saw the cultural disconnect between American Jewish children and their Israeli cousins, I saw the abysmal state of Hebrew literacy in America, I saw American Jews’ lack of involvement with the political upheaval in Israel, and I despaired of American Jewry.

I thought to myself, “To them, Aliyah is a fanatical statement, an eventual theory never meant to be proven. They can hardly string together an intelligible sentence in the language of our tradition. The new generation of American Jews does not remember

a time we had to fight for the *kotel* (Western Wall). They do not remember the Intifadas. They do not even remember the terror of 9/11. They have no idea what it means to live under constant threat, nor do they attempt to understand it.” I saw how, when Americans

an Israeli citizen. I have family in the Golan Heights, Be’er Sheva, Tel Aviv, Efrat and Jerusalem. My Saba and all of his sons served in the IDF. Two of my cousins are currently in combat on the front lines. My younger cousins must dismantle Sukkahs in their

mural clay,

The spattered blood and dried brains of the dead.

Kishinev was a horrifying massacre of unimaginable scale, immortalized in Bialik’s poem “In the City of Slaughter.” Jewish idealists wielded the Kishinev pogrom as an accusing finger, a withering criticism of Jews in Europe for being defenseless and weak.

This week we witnessed the most brutal slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust, unprecedented in a time when we have a state of our own. As sickening, vile, gruesome reports of this pogrom are flooding social media, I shudder and think of Kishinev. Look at us. We thought humanity had learned. We thought we were living in a new age.

“Evil in our times is different. It is well-intentioned,” we said. “Or at the very least it has the sense to mask its true face.” But no one is hiding now. Evil is real. We see it in the gleeful clips of savagery and torture, in the blood-soaked baby cribs, in the hostages set aflame. We recoil from the devastation in disbelief, but cannot tear our eyes away from it.

But the age of Jewish shame is behind us. We do not lower our eyes in self-contempt or mortification. Through our tears, our faces are shining with pride. At Tuesday’s pro-Israel rally in Manhattan, the Orthodox Union and the Union for Reform Judaism stood side by side, throats raw and eyes ablaze. Gone is the self-abasement, the victim-blaming, the internalized antisemitism. World Jewry has come very far since Kishinev; we are loud, we are warriors, we rally behind a flag of our own. At all of the rallies and protests I attended in the past few days, I heard the same chant over and over again, “Jews, united, will never be defeated!” I have never seen more Jewish unity in my life.

Please God, may Hamas be crushed thoroughly and swiftly, once and for all. Please God, may we be unified through harmony and peace and not through desperate sorrow. Please God, may we be able to live safely and freely in our land, a land of Zion and Jerusalem.

When the nightmare began, all existing divides of language and nationality vanished. We remembered afresh that when the Jewish State is threatened, all Jews are threatened.

visited the Jewish State, they hid in enclaves of familiarity; American pockets surrounded by exotic, raucous, weather-beaten, opinionated Israeli foreigners. I had seen all of this and I had despaired.

And yet, as I shook my head at the false divide, I participated in it, priding myself on my Israeli-ness. I insisted I was always closer to the heart of the battles, ideologically, emotionally, socially. Wasn’t I? I am

neighborhood because fathers have joined the fight. My aunts had to stock their bomb shelters with three days worth of supplies as explosions sounded overhead.

But Israel is the Jewish State, not the Israeli State. I had forgotten. The Jewish State is populated by lone soldiers, students in *yeshivot* and seminaries and families who made Aliyah, all of whom understand living in fear far better than I, a “true Israeli,” living safely in the United States. It is wrong to hoard suffering that belongs to us all.

When the nightmare began, all existing divides of language and nationality vanished. American Jews remember afresh that when the Jewish State is threatened, all Jews are threatened. We are not merely related to the victims in Israel. This war is being waged against our entire nation. Hamas craves the death of every single Jew; they do not discriminate as we do.

Jews in the Diaspora have always felt self-conscious about exhibiting their Judaism. But now we are not self-conscious, we are conscious of each other. Every Jew in New York bears the weight of two crowns. One is a crown of weeping, the other a crown of defiance. Returning to Stern College after the Chagim, my accusations dissolved in our mingled tears; my churlish disgust went up in smoke. No, cultural divisions did not exist in Kishinev:

ARISE and go now to the city of slaughter;
Into its courtyard wind thy way;
There with thine own hand touch, and
with the eyes of thine head,
Behold on tree, on stone, on fence, on



Pro-Israel Rally at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza on Tuesday, Oct. 11 TAMARA YESHURUN

Finding Comfort on the Field

By ALAYNA HIGDON

This article was originally published online on Oct. 17

I feel lost. Like many people during this horrific time, I feel heartbroken, guilty, shocked and enraged. I feel as if I do not have energy for the mundane. I ask myself, why am I sitting in class, listening to my psychology lecture, when my brothers and sisters are fighting for our homeland, fighting for the lives of *Am Yisrael*? How can I go on with my life as normal, while the lives of the Jewish people have come to a halt, or for many, have come to an end?

My teammates and I on the Yeshiva University women’s soccer team contemplated these questions while we were on the bus to a recent soccer game. On Thursday, just days after we all heard the news of the tragedy in Israel, we had our first game back since before Rosh Hashanah and the attacks on Israel. It was clear from the atmosphere on the bus that soccer was the last thing we wanted to be doing. On the bus, there was no music. There was no chatter, laughter or excitement. As a captain, I tried my best to uplift my team and put them at ease, but nothing I could say would have as great an impact as what we experienced on our opponent’s field.

We arrived at Mount Saint Mary College (MSMC) in Newburgh, NY, and began to warm up for the game. I tried to encourage

the team to use this time as a mental break to let off some tension and told them that the score didn’t matter. What mattered was that we would be there as a team, supporting each other. I tried to convince myself just as much as I tried to convince my team.

After warm-ups, the formalities began. As

“Before this game, I knew that Jews were hurting, I knew Israelis were hurting, I knew Zionists were hurting. What I didn’t know was that a Catholic school, which was meant to be my opponent, was thinking about me and about the Jewish people.”

per standard Skyline Conference practice, both teams walked out to the middle of the field to announce the starting players. As usual, we lined up in front of the spectators and cameras and waited for our roll call. The MSMC announcer then began speaking, introducing both teams.

What happened next was unexpected and unprecedented. The announcer called up Father Gregoire Fluet, the interim president, campus chaplain, director of campus ministry and adjunct instructor of history and religious studies at MSMC, to speak. Fr. Gregoire said that MSMC and YU have been supporters, competitors and friends for years, and announced that MSMC sympathizes with us and shares in our community’s sorrows. Following this powerful speech, both teams and the crowd shared a moment of silence for the victims and hostages.

This moment of connection touched me deeply. Before this game, I knew that Jews were hurting, I knew Israelis were hurting, I knew Zionists were hurting. What I didn’t know was that a Catholic school, which was meant to be my team’s opponent, was thinking about us and about the Jewish people.

When I arrived at the field, I was expecting to sleepwalk through a game of soccer. Perhaps I could have a distraction from the constant newsfeed. Maybe I would be able to release some tension. I was not expecting to feel love and support from the other team.



Players from the women’s soccer team stand with the Israeli flag before competing in a match against Mount Saint Mary College

JOSE MARIA ABERASTURI

Make Unity a Reality, Not Just a Response

By AVIEL PARENTE

This article was originally published online on Oct. 17

It goes without saying that the events we heard unraveling in real time over the past week have been horrifying and unconscionable. The death toll is over 1,400 — of which the overwhelming majority are civilians. 250 hostages are being held in Gaza — mainly women and children. Thousands more are injured. No word exists to describe the absolute tragedy that befell the Jewish people just a few days ago. Most of my family and many friends of mine are there, some serving, and I know many people who had direct connections to victims — who at this point doesn't? I have not much to offer that has not already been spoken about, but there's one important point that has not gotten enough attention in thought as much as it has in practice.

Since the dawn of man, siblings never really got along. And whether you are a Darwinist or religious, the story of Cain and Abel read in last week's Torah portion speaks volumes about the dynamic of sibling rivalry and relationships. Throughout *Sefer Bereishit*, the Book of Genesis, story after story relayed is about sibling rivalry.

For thousands of years, Jews have been feuding over anything and everything, from the time of the Twelve Tribes until the destruction of the First and Second Temples. In that time, we even experienced civil wars and the splitting of our kingdom.

Since the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel and its dispersion throughout the Diaspora, we have continued to become more and more polarized. With the formation of new sub ethnic groups — Sephardim, Ashkenazim, Mizrachim, etc. — each followed their own tradition with a superiority complex that bleeds into Jewish society to this day. We all hear and make jokes about the different groups and stereotypes. But a lot of the time the comments are not so lighthearted. Some of these communities still don't allow marriage between these groups, following a trend over the course of centuries.

Starting in the Age of Enlightenment, civic dispute shot even higher amongst international Jewry due to the fractures within the community into different denominations. Reform Jews were not Jewish enough while Orthodox Jews were far too observant — and then you have everyone else in between. This interdenominational infighting continues all the way to the present day, a time in which we have countless “flavors” of Judaism.

And the resentment did not die down. With Zionism gaining popularity in the late nineteenth century, everyone had what to say with their own spin on it, and many who disagreed in the slightest viewed everyone else as absolutely wrong. Even in the founding of the State of Israel, different factions fighting, albeit for the same cause, began targeting each other. And just a few weeks ago, due to disagreements on government actions, Israelis were at each other's throats. Some had even started saying earlier this year and as late as August that Israelis were on the brink of civil war!

And to this day, political unrest in Israel, inter-Jewish discrimination, tribal elitism and true ideological hatred continue to plague our people. As the age-old adage goes: What happens when two Jews are stranded on an island? The establishment of three synagogues — we even joke about it! This is known as “*Sin'at Chinam*,” or “baseless hatred,” which is essentially the disdain between people for no justifiable

reason. *Sin'at Chinam* has been a cancer on *Am Yisrael* since before there was even an *Am Yisrael* throughout the stories of inter-sibling hatred and envy told in the Book of Genesis, and we have yet to find a remedy.

But if I may, in wake of the greatest tragedy to befall the Jewish people in eight decades, there is also a lesson to be learned.

“Being unified cannot just be a response to tragedy, it must continue beyond this hour of horror and these days of despair.”

As incredible as the response from Jews everywhere has been, I fear that if we do not explicitly discuss the lesson and or analyze what led to such a reaction, it will all quickly fade out of our minds and with it, we will slip back into our antiquated ways. And that is: unity.

Hamas appallingly and unspeakably attacked Israel at the moment of greatest civil unrest in the country's short history, unjustifiably seizing an opportunity to catch us at a moment of peak vulnerability. And, again, as strongly in our hearts as we know their actions to be inconceivably inhumane, there must be something to take away; the only way that the innocent bloodshed of our dear brothers and sisters will not have been in complete vain is to understand this lesson of unity. Being unified cannot just be a response to tragedy, it must continue beyond this hour of horror and these days of despair.

Unity tends to be a cliché spewed by our politicians to garner votes and admiration in the public eye. It hardly seems attainable, rather appearing to us far-fetched and out-of-reach. But you have to be living under a rock to have not seen the Jewish people from around the world and all walks of life coming together in an unprecedented effort to fight unified together against our common enemy. I sit here, writing this article, with a pit in my stomach trying to grapple with this massacre, but with a tear in my eye thinking about the countless stories of *chesed*, loving-kindness and self-sacrifice circulating the internet of all the Jews rallying together in various different places and ways.

Hamas thought that attacking when we were most vulnerable would break us. But saying that they miscalculated would be an understatement. They committed ruthless and merciless crimes against humanity. And the “*achdut*,” the “absolute oneness” of *Am Yisrael* in its entirety, has prevailed. Hamas' actions are “sheer evil.” And we, the Jewish

people, respond with sheer goodness. In the face of a godless enemy we must emulate G-d by becoming One. And that is precisely what we did. Any time the Jews have fallen throughout history it was because we stood fractured and broken in front of our enemies. And any time we have overcome challenges no other nation could, it was because we stood strongly and proudly together.

I pray that this lesson be realized and taken to heart, and I call upon world Jewry to do so. Whether you are Ashkenazi or Sephardi, secular or observant, regardless of which country you come from or what your wear on your head, if you are *neged reforma* or *be'ad reforma* (against Israeli judicial reform or in favor of it), Chassidic or *Mitnaged*, scholarly or not so learned, and so on and so forth, we are all part of a collective. And we have our differences, and we continue to believe that “I am correct and others are not.” But we must never lose sight of the fact that despite those differences, we are brothers and sisters. We have defied the test of time, and will continue to do so, by sticking together.

Once this war is over and our captives and soldiers have returned home safely, G-d willing soon, everyone will continue to live their own lives, their own way, with their own beliefs. Some tell me that it is too soon to speak of these events in such terms — as a lesson to be learned. And it might be. But if we do not recognize the opportunity we have for true unity, we are doomed to fall back into our own vicious cycle of “baseless hatred.” We must use this momentum of being unified and carry it into the future.

If anything good can come of this tragedy, even just a little bit, it must be the long-term peace and cooperation of our people despite our differences. The cost was beyond imagination, a hefty price our people paid to say the least. Let it be a lesson learned and never forgotten — a call to action answered by all, together, as one.

To drive this point home, here is an idea my late grandfather, Chazan Moti Fuchs *z”tl*, taught me:

King David writes in Psalms, “Behold! How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together!” (Psalm 133:1).

As straightforward as the idea expressed by King David seems to be in theory, we struggle to make it our reality. It is not easy. But hidden within the words is the key. The Hebrew word for “together” is “*yachad*,” spelled *yud, chet, daled*. My grandfather teaches not to read *yachad* as a word, but rather as an acronym: *Yesh Chelukei De'ot*, which means, “there are differences in opinion.” And that's just it. There will always be a different way of thinking and practicing, but once we put those aside and realize, yes, we are “*Am Echad, K'Ish Echad, B'Lev Echad*,” “One Nation, like one man, with one heart,” and yes, we are brothers and sisters, only then, with that understanding, will we learn to live well together and pleasantly with one another.

May those injured have a complete and speedy recovery. May our people be comforted for the calamity and carnage. May Heaven comfort those who directly lost loved ones among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and that their loss not be in vain. May the souls of those stripped away from us in cold, vicious blood rest in eternal peace in Heaven. May those held hostage return home safely and quickly. May our soldiers who fight to defend and protect the Jewish people be swift, strong, and courageous! and their return home be safe and hasty. May we continue to love one another, be there for each other, not just in these dire times of need, and may we continue to be unified.

B'sorot Tovot, only good news! *Chazak V'Ematz*, be strong and courageous! *Am Yisrael Chai!*



Am Yisrael Chai!

Repent Today Lest You Die Tomorrow

By JOSHUA SHAPIRO

This article was originally published online on Sept. 23

At a recent *I'chaim*, a friend asked me what seemed to be a pretty ordinary question: “So, what are you reading this *Elul*?” While I thought about a few things that I need to improve upon in the coming year, I was slightly abashed that I did not start reading any works relating to *teshuva* yet. So, I sheepishly admitted that I was getting around to reading one of the classics, Rav Soloveitchik’s “On Repentance.”

Over the next few minutes I contemplated what my friend asked me and had an epiphany. Much of the dialogue in *Elul* consists of what people are reading or learning — the classic *teshuva* works like Rambam’s *Hilchot Teshuva* or more contemporary books. However, very seldom is the focus on what we are actually planning on changing.

Along similar lines, the Gemara in *Masechet Shabbat* (153a) presents a



An empty journal

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fascinating dialogue:

Rabbi Eliezer says: Repent one day before your death. Rabbi Eliezer’s students asked him: But does a person know the day on which he will die? He said to them: All the

Elul and the Yamim Noraim are not merely about finding the next best approach to teshuva as recorded in a sefer. It is a period of brutally honest reflection and recalibration.

more so this is a good piece of advice, and one should repent today lest he die tomorrow. (Translation by Sefaria)

Regarding this passage, the Maharal (Chapter 2, *Netiv Hateshuva*) asks an interesting question: Why couldn’t Rabbi Eliezer immediately state that one should repent every day? Put differently, why did Rabbi Eliezer seemingly include the theme of death unnecessarily?

Most directly, Rabbi Eliezer might be spurring the sinner towards repentance. The prospect of death creates a sense of urgency for someone, lest he encounter the Judge of the heavenly court unprepared. According to this interpretation, Rabbi Eliezer is making a quantitative suggestion: Someone might have a lot of sins to repent for, so make sure you do *teshuva* and check off all your boxes before you reach the afterlife.

However, death doesn’t just create a sense of urgency for our daily repentance; it qualitatively changes how we approach it. Upon the advent of death, people suddenly realize what is important in life. As David Brooks writes in his essay “The Moral Bucket List,”

there are two categories of virtues: resume and eulogy. In his own words, “The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral.” Before death,

people are no longer concerned with material goals and external appearances — how much money they earned, how they look or how successful they were. Rather, they ask questions that cut much deeper: Will people at my funeral speak of me as a genuine and kind person, one who listened to people well and actively looked out for the welfare of others? Was I a good family man — one who set aside time each week to be there for his sisters, frequently called his parents and successfully prevented work or learning from interfering with the time allocated towards his brother? Did I leave a positive impact on this world through my daily encounters and hours at work?

Rabbi Ysoscher Katz similarly emphasizes that the prospect of death should color our experience of *teshuva*. In a poignant reflection on his father’s passing, he writes that we misconceive that life has only two stages: life and death. “But there is also a middle stage,” he writes — one where we are “merely dying.” At this stage, Rabbi Katz explains, “we are actually hyper-alive. We [breathe], think and perhaps eat, but we are no longer involved

in the negative aspects of life. Our worries are gone, our jealousies dissolved.” It is this feeling of utter aliveness, reflectiveness and clarity, he concludes, that we should strive for on Yom Kippur.

After my friend asked me that question, it hit me. *Elul* and the *Yamim Noraim* are not merely about finding the next best approach to *teshuva* as recorded in a *sefer*. It is a period of brutally honest reflection and recalibration. Specifically gauging my productivity, balance between learning and family and overall friendliness might seem overly practical but it is also the most profound. Granted, and I mean this, *sefarim* and books can wonderfully inspire us to improve in certain areas. However, while we are *kovea itim* in *Elul* for learning different works on *teshuva*, do we ever allot real time to sit down and actually reflect on where we are at, ask ourselves these important questions and effectively concretize the wonderful teachings that we came across in the past month? Within our busy schedules, do we designate a *sefer* to carefully ponder how our relationships with our siblings are and methodically take notes on which Jewish rituals we can perform with more consistency and intention this year?

Indeed, contemplating death can be quite depressing, but it reminds us of what is truly important in this world. While we should undoubtedly set aside time this month to read, we must also set aside time to reflect — to temporarily insert ourselves into this state of “dying” and focus on what is most crucial. For after all, as Rabbi Eliezer said, “Repent today lest you die tomorrow.”

Flying Out of Our Comfort Zones

By ZACHARY WINTERS

This article was originally published online on Sept. 23

If you want a test in *emunah*, just book a flight. Nothing you do can prepare you for the endless lines, delays, cancellations and panic attacks that flying offers. From the time you book the cab to get to the airport until the

How is it that three people are for hours forced to sit so close to each other that they can smell each other’s sweat, yet will never even introduce themselves or ask what their name is?

moment you get your bag at the carousel, it is one long stress-inducing rollercoaster.

But all of this stress and emotion is just the pre-game. When you finally get on the airplane and squeeze into your seat, usually between two strangers, the age-old question suddenly pops into your head: Will I talk to the people next to me or will I stay quiet the entire flight? Or maybe even worse, will they talk to me and force me into a never ending conversation that only the hitherto ignored, emergency landing video can put to a stop?

Yet upon further thinking, those initial questions seem quite absurd. How is it that three people are forced to sit so close to each other that they can smell each other’s sweat for hours, yet will never even introduce themselves or ask what their name is? Each with their own life, family, profession and story, but each one remains as silent as the next, waiting for the announcement to fasten their seatbelt for the descent into their arriving airport.

What is it that stops us from being friendly and inquiring about the people we wouldn’t have met or talked to in a million years? Are we afraid to break out of

our comfort zone and learn about someone else’s life? How could it be that humans are described as social animals according to philosophers like Aristotle, and we magically break down into a shell of ourselves and have no problem becoming silent to the people next to us for several hours? What does it say about the person that does talk to their seat-buddy? Does it perhaps signal that they are too friendly or even slightly creepy for going out of their way and showing interest

in their neighbors’ personal life?

I always adhered to the idea expressed by Natalie B. Compton in a Washington Post article titled “The Unofficial Rules for Talking on Planes,” where she argued that greeting your seatmates at the start of a flight is proper courtesy, with anything past that remaining optional. I always adhered to those standards, so it wasn’t until I was on a flight with another YU student and he started chatting up our seatmate that my perspective changed for the better.

We met a fellow New Yorker named Mike who had just started Columbia Law School and spoke with him briefly about our school and the dual curriculum that is offered at YU. I thought the conversation would end at that, and I would be permitted (by social standards) to put in my earphones and watch my movie; however I was very mistaken. Our conversation continued and led us to explore topics including peace in the Middle East, Jewish heritage and the importance of family. I came away from this experience shocked by how much we had in common and with an appreciation for a lifestyle that was unlike my own.

Now I didn’t come away with this ready to

exceed all the social conventions expressed by Compton’s article and talk up my neighbor on the next flight I take, but I began to appreciate the power of a simple conversation. While the relationship Mike and I forged on our flight probably will not continue, the moment and the conversations we shared did make a profound impact on me.

As the High Holidays approach us, we begin not only the new calendar year but the new school year. With every new year, YU receives a fresh young class of freshmen and sophomores, usually continuing their religious journeys that started in Israel. Some students come in with a yeshiva friend group while others are trying to get away from it, but all of them are sprung into a new world with limitless possibilities and a myriad of responsibilities. While many will seem unfazed and closed off, entering a new place with this much pressure is daunting and can

break you down without the right guidance and mentors. While I am not expecting current students to be always checking in on the newcomers, for someone who is even remotely struggling to adjust, it goes a long way when you know that someone is there thinking about you.

So, I challenge everyone to go out of their comfort zone and strike up conversations with FTOC’s and other students they don’t know in school. Although our preexisting friend groups could be great and don’t require much extra social attention, the new relationships you are missing out on are enormous. Granted, you don’t need to be the chatter on the plane, but don’t let that stop you from going outside your bubble to meet new people because, who knows, the next small conversation you have might be life changing.



Speaking to people on planes serves as a microcosm for what we should work on this year.

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It's Time to Do More

By Dr. Erica Brown and Jon Greenfield

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Over these past ten days, we have seen an outpouring of love and tears, learning and davening, from YU undergraduate students that has been breathtaking. Our students have filled buses and been to rallies. They've shown up. They're singing, saying Tehillim, responding to *tzedaka* drives, organizing challah bakes and contacting Israeli friends and relatives. Our students are so committed to supporting Israel, that many have reported carrying the strain of this war vicariously in terms of their own mental health. Anxiety is high. Concentration and focus are low. Sleep is difficult.

At the same time, YU students have a gift that perhaps was not fully appreciated until this war broke out. While students at other college campuses around the world feel themselves under siege for being Jewish or supporting Israel, our students can express their Jewish identities and observance fully and their Zionism freely and openly. Our students have also been giving support to college students who do not enjoy these freedoms on their respective campuses.

Our students need not cower, hide or feel ashamed by the provocations of others. They are not battling isolation or the silence of fellow students, professors or college presidents. They have a president and an administration that supports their deepest convictions. Our leadership has taken a strong public role in combating antisemitic and anti-Zionist sentiments on other campuses

and has/is marshaling those who support Israel in higher education to come together in pride and solidarity. All of this is against a background of an American president who flew to Israel in the midst of war to show his commitment to the impermeable U.S.-Israel relationship.

This level of support and privilege should ideally give YU students the confidence and courage to be leaders among other university students in this fight. As President Berman has said repeatedly, we are all called in our own way to serve. And we must. However, as these days of war drag on and the hostage crisis deepens, we have noticed that while our students are deeply committed to religious activism, they are not yet fully committed to political activism. That involves campaigning, lobbying, voting and petitioning for political and social change.

The inevitable response to this call for political action is "but, what difference can I make?" You will hear it from friends and classmates. You may even think this yourself. And yet, as history has shown, the answer is always "more than you think." After all, one hundred years ago right here in New York, Jewish immigrant workers in the city's garment factories — most in their teens and early twenties — took to the streets to successfully campaign for worker protections that would lay the groundwork for New Deal policies nationwide. It was student activists on college campuses that advanced the aims of the Civil Rights Movement and changed the course of the Vietnam War. More recently, it was your predecessors at Yeshiva University that helped lead the grassroots student organizing on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

You have a unique opportunity to continue this great tradition of organizing. Yeshiva

University is located in a city with a long history of community organizing and the greatest and most influential media market in the country, if not the world. What you chose to do here to advance the needs of our friends and family in Israel can and will reverberate around the country. Through coordinated and progressive action, you can indeed make a difference.

Grassroots organizing is critical. We must bombard members of Congress with letters and call local political leaders to demand that hostages be free. We must make clear Hamas's complete disregard for Geneva Convention policies against kidnapping civilians and abducting international children. We can't only talk to ourselves. We must talk to those in positions of authority who can make a difference. Who better to understand the significance of the mitzva of *pidyon shevuyim* than our students? Have each of us done all we can to redeem the captives of this war?

Religious reactions to crisis often inspire feelings of unity and healing. In contradistinction, political activism focuses on the importance of justice and our outrage at injustice. Religious activism brings comfort. Political activism creates discomfort. Both are critical and necessary.

More than that, political activism is not separate from religious activism; it is an outgrowth of it, as is evident by the calls of Judaism's first activists: Avraham, Miriam, Moshe and Esther. Our long, long prophetic tradition of calling out injustice continues to our modern-day heroes who brought us the State of Israel in the first place. These heroes help us understand that true leadership requires personal sacrifice.

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein makes this

point about our Zionist commitment and leadership unambiguously. He argues that a key to Zionism lies in the status of each human being acting, "as initiator, as active agent, as one who makes historical processes happen and promotes the achievement of social and historical objectives. This, in fact," he continues, "is the alpha and omega of all forms of Zionism."

We in the Diaspora must act and not leave it to anyone else, as Rabbi Lichtenstein continued: "Religious Zionism believes that, even under God's providence, it is within the ability of man and of the nation to free themselves from the passivity that characterized the life of the individual and the community in the Diaspora." With resounding simplicity, Rav Lichtenstein asks us to fulfill and protect the dream of our people: "Religious Zionism encourages man to lift his head with ambition, and to act accordingly."

To the student who thinks that political activism makes no difference, we say loudly and clearly that it is often one of the only things that does. Our outcry must be loud and unceasing. It is what changed the historical landscape of this country and so much of the country we are praying for. We cannot let the families of more than 200 hostages fight this alone because we are their family also. And we will and we must do whatever it takes to bring them home. We must pray, and we must write. We must sing, and we must speak out. We must learn, and we must stand up publicly with conviction at this dark hour.

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Arts & Culture: Welcome!

By LIEV MARKOVICH

Editor's Note: After increased student interest and initiation, The Commentator is excited to announce the introduction of a new "Arts & Culture" subsection in our physical edition, which will include select content published in our online features and opinions sections.

Students interested in writing should reach out to us at arts@yucomentator.org.

Welcome, Commentator readers, to the Arts and Culture sub-section! In order to properly introduce it, I thought it appropriate to release a manifesto of sorts which outlines our goals in opening a special area dedicated to the arts. To me, the goal is quite simple: to bring greater attention and awareness to the arts and to give artistically dedicated writers their own space to thrive. However, this seemingly simple goal takes many unanswered questions for granted. It assumes that the arts are genuinely important, and for the many practically-minded readers of The Commentator, that is not an assumption we can simply make. So let's set out to answer three questions: What is art's



Artistic expression brings down to earth complicated concepts, making relatable and understandable many ideas that were previously only accessible to few.

JANKO FERLIĆ / UNSPLASH

function? Why is art criticism and analysis important? And why do the arts need their own space to thrive?

The first question is the most important to answer since, as you will see, the answers to the latter two flow from the first. Now, a lot of ink has been spilled discussing and debating these questions, but both for my sake and for yours, I will delve into only two notions

The artistic process of creation, communication, translation, and reimmersion that the artist, critic, and audience play their role in is a highly delicate ecosystem that requires its own space to thrive.

of art's function: Romantic and linguistic. (If you would like to have a more in-depth look at art theory, I suggest looking here.)

I am sure many of you are well-acquainted with Romantic notions of art's importance. The phrases "art expands your horizons," "art opens up new worlds" and similar clichés are heard in 10th-grade English classes far and wide. Art, to the Romantics, is a revolt against practicality; it is meant to take us out of the doldrums of everyday life, bringing us to a higher, transcendent plane. Although formally preceding the Romantic era, "The Defence of Poesy," written by 16th-century poet Sir Philip Sidney, demonstrates a Romantic attitude toward art, stating that poetry's "final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of," and criticizes those who "cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry" as having "so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry." However, such a transcendent function can also potentially have utilitarian benefits, as expressed two centuries later by Percy Bysshe Shelley in the similarly titled essay, "A Defense of Poetry." He asserts that poetry brings civilizational progress through "lift[ing] the veil from the hidden beauty of the world" and that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

We can apply this train of thought to

the aforementioned questions regarding criticism and creating specific areas for artistic expression. Romantic notions of art's function devalue the role of the critic. If art is meant to engender a sublime experience, existing on a higher plane than everyday life, then why bring it down to earth through analysis in plain language? While criticism can be of some help in determining whether

a piece of art has reached its exalted, transcendent goals, it cannot truly facilitate artistic appreciation, as one's appreciation of Romantic art is mainly temperamental: You either "get it" or you don't. Criticism and analysis will merely demean artistic forms that are meant to be self-sufficient. However, it is clear why art needs its own space in the Romantic view. For the arts to fulfill their goal of transcendence and civilizational progress, they must be separate from other topics, encountered on their own terms.

While the Romantic approach may appeal to artists already unsatisfied and bored with ordinary life, it does not provide much to the vast majority of people who are content with life on the ground, those who hate Wordsworth and think Shelley and Lord Byron were kooks. What role could art play in the world of ordinary people, as opposed to the world of transcendence and exalted progress? On this lower plane, art's utility is *linguistic*. Often ideas and emotions are ineffable, unable to be expressed in everyday words. Art, whether it be poetry, literature, portraiture or any other form, fills that hole, providing the means for expressing what cannot be expressed formally. I find this true especially for expressing moral and philosophical ideas and concepts; artistic expression brings down to earth complicated concepts, making relatable and understandable many ideas that were previously

only accessible to a select few. For example, Dostoevsky's literature makes his themes dramatic, fascinating and incredibly human when they could have been dry, preachy and inaccessible had they merely been expressed in a theological or psychological treatise. Phrases such as "Kafkaesque" and "Shakespearean" show the central role that art plays in illuminating everyday life, giving us the language to capture what was previously ineffable.

The linguistic conception of art gives much power to the critic. It is the critic's role to decipher artistic language and illuminate a given work's content, helping art achieve its goal of expressing that which was previously inexpressible. Daniel Mendelsohn, in a New Yorker article titled "A Critic's Manifesto," asserts that "when operated on by his taste in the presence of some new example of the genre he's interested in," a critic's function is "to make sense of that new thing, to analyze it, interpret it, make it *mean* something." Critical analysis helps us understand art in a real, substantial manner, and this understanding allows us to revisit a work with greater appreciation and actually incorporate its message into our lives.

It is also clear why art needs its own space within the linguistic approach. The artistic process of creation, communication, translation, and reimmersion that the artist, critic and audience play their role in is a highly delicate ecosystem that requires its own space to thrive. Art and criticism's illumination of the world should be encountered on their own terms.

Now, whether one, both, or neither of these approaches are appealing to you, I hope that the writing on display in the Arts and Culture sub-section will be inspiring, illuminating or at least interesting to The Commentator's readers. In order for the section, as with any endeavor, to thrive, we will need passionate participants. So if you have an idea for an article, let it grow and please do not be afraid to write and submit it. I hope that we can build a thriving artistic community within The Commentator's hallowed pages.

We Should All Read Mary Oliver

By REBECCA GUZMAN

As is the curse that befalls many young, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed literature enthusiasts, I discovered one of my favorite writers a year after her death. The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver slipped under my radar for a long time, though when I came across her poetry during the pandemic, there was something familiar about it. Her poems, I realized later, did exactly what poems are supposed to do. They spoke to something I had never been able to verbalize, some deep sensitivity that was not unique to only me, but that belonged to Oliver's hundreds of thousands of devoted readers. "She just gets me," I texted a friend recently, along with the link to a poem titled "Invitation."

Most, if not all, of Oliver's poems use the natural world as a starting point for her broader social and philosophical observations. Her poems begin outside. Oliver's relationship with nature goes beyond respect; it is a reverence, a profound sense of awe. As described by Ruth Franklin of The New Yorker, "For America's most beloved poet, paying attention to nature is a springboard to the sacred." She records her observations of her environment in Provincetown, Massachusetts, with stunning precision, and implores readers to do the same, wherever they may be. But it is not enough to merely notice the beautiful and complex natural processes that occur around oneself; for Oliver,

everything contains a lesson. Watching a swan take flight inspires an almost spiritual moment of contemplation, a walk through the changing autumn forest becomes a meditation on the passage of time. These are just

Her poems, most of which are focused on the question of how we are meant to live, offer solace to those of us who are exasperated by this frenzied age. The answer is simple: by paying attention to the world around us, we can learn and grow.

two examples of what is a limitless body of beautiful, heartbreaking and tender poetry.

But when I step outside Brookdale Residence Hall, I see an endless amount of office buildings, coffee shops selling overpriced drinks and men and women walking frantically down gum-covered sidewalks. It is almost as though Mary Oliver and I occupy two different Americas. Mine is obsessed with consumption, fixated on racing through every day, while Oliver's is bright and green and peaceful, an oasis where the chirping of birds can bring about a work of art. What can Mary Oliver — "America's most beloved poet" — tell me about *my* world? From what I've read, she doesn't know much about concrete jungles, only natural ones.

What I realized recently, and what has struck me about Oliver's poetry since I first discovered it, is that she paid attention. She noticed everything, even the things that seem insignificant. She walked through this world

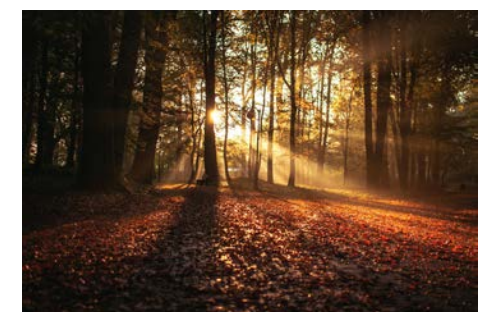
in a state of awareness that I wish to emulate. This is exactly what Mary Oliver can tell me about my world: the importance of slowing down, of looking at the pigeon — did you know that they have iridescent feathers? —

the baby in the passing stroller, the shifting trees in Central Park. Her poems, most of which are focused on the question of how we are meant to live, offer solace to those of us who are exasperated by this frenzied age. The answer is simple: By paying attention to the world around us, we can learn and grow.

Oliver's gentle moral conclusions are simple yet shockingly profound. Her vast descriptions of nature are reminders that we are mere inhabitants, not lords. Revoke your ego, she seems to say, then pause to watch and listen to what is happening around you. This should not be an unfamiliar concept for us, as Judaism views humility as paramount. As the Ramban writes in his Iggeret HaRamban, "I shall explain how you should become accustomed to the practice of humility in your daily life. Let your voice be gentle, and your head bowed. Let your eyes be turned earthwards and your heart heavenwards." And mankind's responsibility to

respect and preserve its home is not a foreign idea either: "The land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me. Throughout the land that you hold, you must provide for the redemption of the land" (Vayikra 25:23-24).

I return once more to my central question: What can Mary Oliver tell me about my world? For starters, to keep a notebook and pen on me at all times. To be patient, aware, and mindful. To hold myself accountable, the way her voice often does to her readers in the final lines of her poems, and to examine this life that I am very privileged to have. If you can, I suggest taking a trip to your favorite bookstore and selecting a volume of Oliver's poetry, or typing her name into any search engine. What you find may make you laugh, cry or smile. Maybe even all three at once.



But it is not enough to merely notice the beautiful and complex natural processes that occur around oneself; for Oliver, everything contains a lesson.

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